



PHILOSOPHY AND THEORY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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1. Controversial Speakers, Moral Disagreements, and the Middlebury Moment

ASHLEY FLOYD KUNTZ, UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA, BIRMINGHAM

Abstract: Student protests have developed on campuses throughout the country in response to controversial speakers. Overwhelmingly, these protests have been framed as conflicts over the right to free speech and the importance of free inquiry on college campuses. This essay reframes conflicts like these as moral disagreements over the role of individuals and institutions in producing and disseminating knowledge that supports or undermines justice within a pluralistic, democratic society. Using the specific case of Charles Murray’s visit to Middlebury College in spring 2017 and drawing insight from social moral epistemology, the essay aims to clarify the moral concerns at stake in clashes over controversial speakers and to identify possibilities to advance the moral aims of institutions of higher education in response to such events.

Keywords: controversial speakers, moral epistemology, cognitive bias, deliberative democracy, higher education

In recent years there has been no shortage of incidents on college and university campuses involving protests of invited speakers.¹ To offer just a few examples, protests have erupted: at UC-Berkeley in response to alt-right speaker Milo Yiannopoulos; on the campus of Whittier College when conservatives chanted “Build That Wall” to deter California’s Attorney General Xavier Becerra from speaking; at the College of William and Mary as Black Lives Matter activists

¹ This chapter was initially presented at the American Educational Research Association’s Annual Meeting in New York in April 2018.

shouted down Virginia's ACLU executive director Claire Guthrie Gastañaga; and within the City University of New York Law School to delay a talk by conservative professor Josh Blackman.² Middlebury College experienced similar conflict when students from the campus chapter of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), a right-leaning think tank, invited Charles Murray to discuss his book, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010*.³ Clashes like these have been the subject of extensive media coverage, and the events at Middlebury, in particular, sparked a joint statement on truth-seeking and freedom of inquiry signed by more than 4,500 academics. Additionally, multiple state houses have proposed legislation regarding free speech on university campuses,⁴ and the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary held a special meeting in June 2017 to discuss "The Assault on the First Amendment on College Campuses."⁵

These conflicts and the ways they are framed in public discourse raise several important questions for institutions of higher education. Who should be allowed to speak on campus and under what circumstances? How should campuses handle dissenting voices, including disruptive protests? Should universities prioritize free speech above other democratic values? Are universities responsible for limiting harmful speech, and if so, how? Clashes over controversial speakers illuminate underlying tensions over how to negotiate sometimes competing aims of higher education, including free speech and inclusion.

National surveys conducted by Gallup, the Knight Foundation, and the American Council on Education find broad support among college presidents, faculty, and students for both protecting speech and creating an inclusive learning environment.⁶ When asked about whether offensive or biased speech should be permitted, 96% of college presidents support allowing even these contentious

² John Lederman and Scott Jaschik, "Amid Violence, Yiannopoulos Speech at Berkeley Canceled," *Inside Higher Ed*, February 2, 2017; Scott Jaschik, "Presidents and Provosts Gather to Consider Free Speech Issues," *Inside Higher Ed*, October 16, 2018; Jeremy Bauer-Wolf, "ACLU Speaker Shouted Down at William & Mary," *Inside Higher Ed*, October 5, 2017; Scott Jaschik, "Shouting Down Talk on Campus Free Speech," *Inside Higher Ed*, April 16, 2018.

³ "The Charles Murray Event at Middlebury College," Newsroom, <http://www.middlebury.edu/newsroom/Information-on-charles-murray-visit>.

⁴ Chris Quintanta and Andy Thomason, "The States Where Campus Free-Speech Bills Are Being Born; A Rundown," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 15, 2017.

⁵ Senate Committee on the Judiciary, "Free Speech 101: The Assault on the First Amendment on College Campuses," June 20, 2017, <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/meetings>.

⁶ Knight Foundation, "Free Expression on Campus: What College Students Think About First Amendment Issues," <http://www.knightfoundation.org/reports>; Lorelle Espinosa, Jennifer Crandall, and Philip Wilkinson, "Free Speech and Campus Inclusion: A

forms of speech, as do 70% of students and 69% of faculty. Yet, 49% of students also indicated support for college and university policies to restrict biased speech using student codes of conduct, suggesting that students are conflicted about the best path forward to create both open and inclusive learning environments. While these data reveal differences in degree of support for certain policies surrounding the execution of citizens' free speech rights, they also call into question the narrative of an "assault" against the First Amendment on college campuses.

In this chapter, I offer an alternative narrative, one in which clashes occurring on college campuses are better understood as moral disagreements over the role of individuals and institutions in producing and disseminating knowledge that supports or undermines justice and fairness in a pluralistic, democratic society. These cases are typically framed in terms of free speech rights, which focuses our attention on protecting speech in a legal sense and justifying the importance of free inquiry on college campuses. By reframing these cases as moral disagreements, I aim to emphasize their consequences for achieving moral aims of institutions of higher education. I use the protests at Middlebury College in response to Charles Murray's visit as a case study to clarify the moral concerns at stake in clashes over controversial speakers. Drawing from social moral epistemology, I then argue that colleges and universities play a key role in supporting the true beliefs of knowers, which, in turn, support their capacity to make moral judgments as citizens and thus contribute to a more just society.⁷ Finally, I consider possibilities to advance moral aims of colleges and universities in response to recurring conflicts over controversial speakers.

Moral and Civic Aims of American Higher Education

Colleges and universities have long been understood to have moral aims and, in many cases, these aims are spelled out directly in mission or value

Survey of College Presidents," *Higher Education Today*, April 9, 2018; Samuel Abrams, "Professors Support Free Speech," *The American Interest*, April 18, 2018.

⁷ I take a primarily liberal egalitarian view of justice throughout the chapter in that I am concerned with equality of opportunity, unequal background conditions, benefiting the least advantaged, ensuring fairness and nondiscrimination, and the like. That being said, I am concerned with non-ideal theory. In writing about American higher education's responsibility to correct historical injustice, philosopher Lionel K. McPherson outlines several "practical obstacles" to achieving justice in the non-ideal case, including "lack of compliance, absence of political will, inadequate resources, and legacies of past injustice" (114). To this listing, social moral epistemology adds another obstacle: cognitive errors, such as bias and epistemic deference (discussed at length later in the chapter), which undermine our moral functioning as citizens and thus serve as an obstacle to achieving justice.

statements. Such statements not only typically focus on student development goals (e.g., developing ethical student leaders) but also include statements on the university's contributions to creating a more just society through the advancement of knowledge.⁸ Additionally, many universities include language in mission statements about serving diverse populations and creating inclusive communities.⁹ As Brighouse and McPherson have argued, even when universities do not expressly state their commitments to moral aims, the decisions they make regarding who has access to education, what students learn, and how the university impacts society are unavoidably connected to larger concerns of morality and justice.¹⁰

While there are any number of valid moral aims colleges or universities might pursue, this chapter focuses primarily on the role universities play in supporting the moral functioning of students and faculty. I use the term *moral functioning* to encompass one's moral and civic dispositions and behaviors, broadly speaking. As others have before, I make the assumption that "the moral and civic are inseparable" in that morality involves "prescriptive judgments about how one ought to act in relation to other people."¹¹ This relational definition of morality emphasizes the other-oriented consequences of individual moral functioning. Morality, then, is not just about personal, micro-moral decisions but also about how the dispositions we develop and the behaviors we exhibit contribute to our capacity as citizens to support macro-moral democratic values such as justice and fairness. Our moral functioning is a facet of our development as citizens and speaks to our capacity to make decisions of moral consequence when we enter the public sphere (e.g., as voters, advocates and activists, community servants).

Educational institutions have the potential to support development of these capacities—not only in preparing individuals to assess the rationality of

⁸ Anne Colby, Thomas Ehrlich, Elizabeth Beaumont, and Jason Stephens, *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2013), 13.

⁹ Erin Kelly, "Modeling Justice in Higher Education," in *The Aims of Higher Education*, eds. Harry Brighouse and Michael McPherson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 143. Kelly argues that colleges and universities are not like democracies in many respects (e.g., students do not vote in the president), but they can help prepare individuals for civic life by modeling justice on their campuses, including: ensuring fair opportunity and distribution of educational goods, cultivating moral and civic dispositions such as empathy and perspective-taking, and including diverse stakeholders in decision making.

¹⁰ Harry Brighouse and Michael McPherson, *The Aims of Higher Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 2.

¹¹ Colby et al., *Educating Citizens*, 15.

public policies or civic actions but also in preparing them to make normative decisions about the right course of action. Empirical research has consistently demonstrated that college attendance, in particular, supports moral reasoning development in that college students begin to shift toward principled decision-making based less on personal interest or social convention and more on shareable moral ideals.¹² Additionally, Allen Buchanan's work in social moral epistemology has called attention to "the role of social practices in helping to form, preserve, and transmit those classes of beliefs that are typically especially important for the well-functioning of our moral powers: our ability to engage in moral reasoning, to make moral judgements, and to experience moral emotions, such as sympathy or a feeling of indignation in the face of injustice."¹³ Buchanan argues that social institutions, such as colleges and universities, play a key role in establishing social practices that either support true beliefs or promote false beliefs. These false beliefs, often rooted in bias or epistemic deference to authority, can disrupt moral functioning and thus undermine democratic aims.

This responsibility of colleges and universities to support the moral functioning of faculty and students (and, in turn, their civic capacities) has been given insufficient consideration in the dominant discourse concerning clashes over controversial speakers. In the following section, I turn to the particular case of protests at Middlebury College in response to Charles Murray's visit. I first call attention to educational policies and practices that contributed to the conflict and its aftermath before taking a closer look at written statements prepared by Middlebury faculty and students. I aim to emphasize features of the Middlebury case that have been overlooked in existing accounts, particularly those that speak to the potential for Middlebury to impact the moral functioning of its students and faculty through the production and dissemination of knowledge.

¹² Patricia King and Matthew Mayhew, "Moral Judgment Development in Higher Education," *Journal of Moral Education*, 249.

¹³ Allen Buchanan, "Education and Social Moral Epistemology," in *The Aims of Higher Education*, eds. Harry Brighouse and Michael McPherson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 98. Buchanan does not make the strong claim that developing these classes of beliefs will always result in advanced moral functioning, and the empirical literature makes clear that individuals may know the right thing to do and yet not take moral action. That being said, the argument here is that true beliefs support one's capacity to make sound moral judgments, and such judgments are one important facet of overall moral functioning (for a more detailed discussion on the relationship between moral judgment and holistic moral development, see: James Rest et al., *Post-Conventional Thinking: A Neo-Kohlbergian Approach* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1999)).

The Case

The Middlebury College case is unique in several respects. First, Middlebury's administration had greater autonomy over decisions made in response to Charles Murray's invitation to speak than many administrators have on other campuses. When controversial speakers are invited to public colleges and universities, those institutions are typically limited in how they can respond. For example, Auburn University, a public university in Alabama, attempted to cancel a speech by white nationalist Richard Spencer, but a federal judge ruled that doing so would violate the First Amendment. Private colleges like Middlebury, however, have a greater degree of freedom in deciding which speakers to allow on their campuses and setting the parameters for such visits. Middlebury did not have to support the student chapter of the AEI in inviting Murray to campus, nor did their department of Political Science have to agree to cosponsor the event. Yet, a combination of preexisting policies, stated principles, and institutional practices resulted in their decision to provide Murray with a forum to speak.

Another reason for selecting this particular case is that it is so well-documented, not only by national news sources but also by the institution itself. Middlebury has elected to catalog the details of this event on their website and to establish a special collection at the college library entitled "The Middlebury Moment."¹⁴ Unlike other incidents on college campuses, interested scholars can watch a video of Murray's talk and the associated protests, read thoughtful statements from faculty and staff, review numerous national news accounts, and evaluate disciplinary measures taken by the College. The written statements made by Middlebury faculty and students are particularly useful in understanding the assumptions and principles undergirding the moral disagreement in this case, which may be salient for other, similar cases. Thus, while Middlebury College is a small, elite institution that is not representative of American higher education in many ways, it is a compelling and well-documented example of the types of incidents we see occurring on college and university campuses.¹⁵

¹⁴ "The Charles Murray Event at Middlebury College," *Newsroom*, <http://www.middlebury.edu/newsroom>.

¹⁵ In their book on the *Aims of Higher Education*, Harry Brighouse and Michael McPherson have also argued that elite institutions like Middlebury are worth examining closer given that graduates of these institutions are overrepresented in positions of power and influence within our society, and these institutions have historically been complicit in reinforcing power structures that result in systemic injustice.

Murray's Visit

On March 2, 2017, Charles Murray visited Middlebury College at the invitation of the student chapter of the AEI. Murray is a well-known libertarian thinker and author of controversial books, including *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* and *Coming Apart: The State of White America*. He had been invited to discuss *Coming Apart*, in which he argues that there has been a profound cultural shift in the last fifty years that has led to the “demoralization and deterioration” of the white working class while simultaneously creating a new upper class of cognitive elites. Though the college did not fund Murray’s visit, the Department of Political Science elected to cosponsor the event in keeping with a prior policy, which states that they will cosponsor events relevant to political science when asked by official student organizations. President Laurie Patton also attended the event and gave introductory remarks, consistent with her policy to attend student organization events when invited and not otherwise engaged. Allison Stanger, professor of political science, agreed to serve as interlocutor.

Middlebury students began voicing dissent during the prefatory remarks. Though they applauded President Patton for stating unequivocally that she did not share Murray’s views, they were less pleased with her description of Murray as a controversial, yet influential speaker and rejected the reasons she gave for allowing Murray to speak and deciding to attend the event herself. They also booed and heckled two of their peers, Ivan Valladares and Alexander Khan, both of whom were student leaders in the AEI campus chapter. For example, when Khan called for Middlebury to be a place for liberal thought, an audience member countered that it should be a place for inclusive thought.¹⁶

Charles Murray’s arrival to the podium was met with more booing, then physical and verbal protests. Students first rose silently and turned their bodies away from him. They then read a prepared statement in unison, which referred to his talk as hate speech. For the next twenty minutes, they shouted a series of call-and-response chants, including “Who’s the enemy? White Supremacy!” and “Charles Murray, go away! Racist, sexist, anti-gay!” Eventually, Murray and Stanger were moved to a remote location and began video-recording their remarks but were interrupted several times by fire alarms being pulled. As Murray and Stanger were leaving the building, they encountered a smaller, violent group of protesters, one of whom assaulted Stanger and gave

¹⁶ Will DiGravio, “Students Protest Lecture by Charles Murray at Middlebury College,” March 2, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6EASuhefEI>.

her a concussion. Middlebury ultimately disciplined 74 students to varying degrees, but the police department was unable to determine who may have been responsible for injuring Professor Stanger.¹⁷

Responses to the Protests

The protests at Middlebury resulted in a firestorm of national media coverage, including articles in the *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times* and stories on major news outlets such as Fox News and NPR. Robert George and Cornel West, both of whom hold faculty appointments at other institutions, issued a joint statement on “Truth Seeking, Democracy, and Freedom of Thought and Expression” calling for the cultivation and practice of intellectual virtues essential to democracy, which was signed by more than 4,500 individuals.¹⁸

To a large extent, public discourse surrounding the protests at Middlebury has focused solely on assessing the legal right to free speech and justifying its importance in free inquiry on college campuses. These are important considerations, but I contend they provide an incomplete philosophical engagement with the foundational disagreements that led to the events at Middlebury and contribute to similar instances on other college campuses. Written statements by Middlebury faculty and students reveal other substantive issues at play in the protests. While the faculty statement foregrounds the importance of free speech above and beyond other democratic values, the student statement raises concerns about justice and fairness that have not been given adequate attention to date. In many ways, faculty and students are speaking past each other as they emphasize different aims of higher education and prioritize different features of the case.

Faculty Statement

On March 6, four days after Murray’s visit to Middlebury, the *Wall Street Journal* printed a statement from Middlebury faculty, which was later posted online to the website of Heterodox Academy. This statement, “Free Inquiry on Campus,” was signed by 31% of Middlebury faculty.¹⁹ The statement focuses largely

¹⁷ “The Charles Murray Event at Middlebury College,” *Newsroom*, <http://www.middlebury.edu/newsroom>.

¹⁸ Robert George and Cornel West, March 14, 2017, <https://jmp.princeton.edu/statement>.

¹⁹ Jay Parini and Keegan Callahan, “Free Inquiry on Campus,” March 6, 2017, <https://freeinquiryblog.wordpress.com>. For simplicity’s sake, I use the terms “Middlebury faculty” and “faculty statement” throughout the chapter to refer to the signatories of the faculty statement, even though two-thirds of the faculty did not sign the statement.

on critiquing the manner in which students protested Murray's speech and affirming the importance of free inquiry on campus. It is rooted in what faculty perceived to be the purposes of American higher education, namely:

1. to expose faculty and students to ideas, even if these ideas counter their previously held positions or make them uncomfortable,
2. to refrain from promoting "any particular political or social agenda,"
3. to cultivate the mind and its capacity for rational deliberation, and
4. to instill intellectual humility and open-mindedness with regard to one's own perspectives.

Faculty claim that "genuine higher learning is possible only where free, reasoned, and civil speech and discussion are respected." In a subsequent principle, they express concern that the "incivility and coarseness" on display in American politics is spilling over into debates on college and university campuses. Faculty affirm students' rights to "protest non-disruptively" but condemn disruptive protests (i.e., loud and continuous chanting) as "coercive" acts. In addition to concerns about the expression of dissent, faculty make claims about how knowledge is produced and disseminated, which they use to justify the importance of free inquiry on college campuses. At the heart of their argument is this assumption: "Only through the contest of clashing viewpoints do we have any hope of replacing mere opinion with knowledge." Faculty do not reference any particular philosophical theories, but this assumption is consistent with arguments for deliberative democracy expressed by Gutmann and Thompson, Dryzek, and others who argue that democracy is best served by open, rational debates of controversial issues and who have faith that the best ideas will win the day in such deliberative contexts.²⁰

Building upon this assumption about the contestation of discourses, faculty assert that professors and students do not have the right to decide which opinions other students may entertain. Further, they state that professors and students do not have the "right to determine for the entire community that a question is closed for discussion." This principle appears to take aim at a particular point of contention with students—that Charles Murray's views, especially those expressed in *The Bell Curve*, have already been discredited and thus should not be brought up for discussion again (a claim the students made in advance of the event and reiterated in their own written statement). The faculty statement does not directly comment on the scientific integrity or

²⁰ Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1996); John Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

trustworthiness of Murray's work. Instead, its primary focus is on the importance of free and unrestrained production and dissemination of knowledge within a democratic society.

Finally, the faculty statement attempts to address perceived points of contention with student protesters. First, faculty state that it is impossible to create "a perfectly egalitarian sphere of free discourse," but this impossibility does not justify restricting speech. This is perhaps the only moment their statement gets close to addressing what students perceive as issues of justice and fairness. Second, faculty express their conviction that speech is not violence. Prior to the event, students raised concerns that Murray's viewpoints were particularly harmful to people of color, women, and other marginalized students. Faculty countered that the presence of a controversial speaker is not a violent act against marginalized members of the community.

Student Statement

Six days after the faculty statement was published in the *Wall Street Journal*, students responded with their own statement: "Broken Inquiry on Campus: A Response by a Collection of Middlebury Students."²¹ The statement was posted online and signed by more than 150 (6%) students.²² The student response quoted each of the principles outlined by faculty, then offered a paragraph or more of reasons for why the faculty principles were limited, misguided, or unjust. Students took issue with administrative decisions surrounding Murray's visit, including limited time for community deliberation about his invitation and legitimacy afforded to his visit (i.e., official sponsorship by an academic department and opening remarks by the president of the college). Additionally, students disagreed with faculty referring to the principles they outlined as being "unassailable" and argued instead that these principles warranted "robust, nuanced, and continuing civil debate." Importantly, the student statement explicitly expanded the scope of the conversation beyond free speech to larger concerns of justice and fairness in our current context.

²¹ "Broken Inquiry on Campus," March 12, 2017, <https://brokeninquiryblog.wordpress.com>.

²² Again, I will refer to "Middlebury students" and the "student statement" for ease throughout the chapter, acknowledging that only a small percentage of the student body signed the statement. It is unknown why such a small percentage of the student body signed the statement. Some, including AEI members, presumably disagreed with the principles. Others may have feared punishment, as Middlebury administration made clear that protesters would be sanctioned to varying degrees for violating school policies. Still others may have been ambivalent and/or uninformed about the event.

On the view of students, part of creating a just and fair campus environment is prioritizing inclusion. They express concern that many minoritized students feel as if they have to continually justify their presence at Middlebury, and thus argue that students who are underrepresented within the community be given a seat at the table to derive, in a democratic fashion, community principles surrounding invited speakers. They take issue with the faculty's dismissal of an egalitarian sphere of free discourse. Even if a perfectly egalitarian space is not possible, students argue that universities ought to at least aim for this type of space.

Additionally, Middlebury students take a stand against intellectual and moral relativism throughout their statement. They describe the views of Charles Murray as having been “academically discredited,” which is to say that they believe certain perspectives can be supported by evidence while others cannot. On their view, colleges and universities ought to be disseminating knowledge that can be supported with sound evidence rather than giving a forum to outdated or disproven ideas. Thus, they do not view Murray as a credible speaker worthy of an invitation to speak at an elite liberal arts college like Middlebury. They argue that Middlebury erred “by elevating bigotry and engaging with it in open debate under the misguided view that all ideas must be respected,” which risks “elevating biased opinions with no solid, factual foundation into the realm of ‘knowledge.’”

Students claim that universities have a role to play in articulating parameters for which viewpoints are worthy of being given a hearing. They make the case for using two basic criterion: (1) whether the views are supported by strong evidence and have not been discredited by other scholars and (2) whether the views respect the basic human dignity of all members of society. The first criterion rejects intellectual relativism, while the second takes aim at moral relativism—both of which students perceive to be dangerous to democracy. Indeed, students argue that “a commitment to open-mindedness is compatible with the decision to reject intolerance. We musn't be required to ‘hear both sides’ when one side seeks to undermine the core values of a free, democratic society.”

From the perspective of students, knowledge claims are intertwined with issues of justice and fairness. Murray's presence is a moral problem for them, and they refer to him using the term “racist,” which has obvious moral connotations. They argue that the College's decision to let Murray speak is not neutral; it reinforces biases and prejudices which undergird policy decisions that negatively impact marginalized communities. In this way, the College's decision is an intellectual failure in advancing rigorous research and a moral failure of its “duty to provide an environment that supports [students] as equals and humans.”

Building upon these ideals of advancing knowledge and protecting human dignity, the students repeatedly position themselves as advocates for justice. While the faculty statement makes no mention of justice, the student statement includes eight references to justice, injustice, and fairness. They contend that disruptive protest is an acceptable means of seeking justice and point to the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam War protests as examples of disruptive resistance. Though they unequivocally reject the physical violence that resulted in Dr. Stanger's injury, they argue that chanting is a nonviolent form of protest, even if it is disruptive. Further, they point to what they see as inconsistencies in how we categorize civic actions, noting that "in our society, disruptive protest is often considered violence, while the stripping of healthcare from millions, policy." Students clearly see themselves as advocates for justice who are pushing against social and intellectual norms that legitimize individuals like Murray and provide them with a forum to express views that undermine equality. To do nothing in the face of injustice is morally unacceptable to them.

It is important to note that this moral conviction is grounded in the belief that knowledge and the pursuit of knowledge are contextual. Murray's visit, on their view, must be understood in the context of increased white supremacist activity throughout the country, Murray's prior work and public comments, and the present moment in which many students still feel marginalized with the Middlebury College community. In this context, Murray's views are not just "academically discredited" but also potentially harmful to the well-being of students and, in a larger sense, democracy.

A Moral Disagreement

As discussed previously, the events that unfolded at Middlebury have been largely described in the press and in written statements from Middlebury faculty and other academics as a conflict over the legal right to free speech and the importance of free inquiry on college campuses. The concern being emphasized here is that free speech is essential to the production of knowledge and vital to democracy. Students, both those who signed the Middlebury statement and those polled in national surveys, appear to agree that free speech is important to democracy. That being said, the Middlebury student statement emphasizes another important feature of democratic life—justice. In particular, Middlebury students are concerned with the consequences of knowledge production and dissemination in reinforcing prejudices, biases, and unjust power structures within a pluralistic democracy. In light of these competing ideals, I argue that the Middlebury case is best understood as a

moral disagreement, one which may have implications for other clashes on college campuses in response to invited speakers.

Moses characterizes *moral disagreements* as those concerning “enduring, contested, public issues involving values, relationships, and ideals.”²³ Unlike personal disagreements, these disputes have societal impact. They stem from differences in underlying theories of justice or differences in moral evaluation (i.e., what action to take in response to an injustice). While Moses takes an optimistic view of moral disagreements and argues they can contribute to social change, it is also possible for moral deadlock to occur when conflicting moral ideals are not resolved.²⁴

Political philosophers have given considerable attention to how to resolve such moral disagreements. Gutmann and Thompson’s work on deliberative democracy developed in response to the presence of moral disagreements and has since been challenged and refined by other scholars. Briefly, Gutmann and Thompson argue that citizens within a democracy should justify their decisions to one another by engaging in public reason-giving. On their view, this approach is the most justifiable way to resolve moral disagreements in democratic societies. They specify that such instances of rational deliberation must be based on the moral claim of *reciprocity*, which requires that people be treated as autonomous agents deserving of mutual respect. Importantly, they understand deliberative democracy to be a *dynamic process*—reasons are given in favor of or against positions, a decision is made to resolve the conflict, and that decision is then subject to further discussion and future reconsideration as part of an ongoing democratic dialogue.²⁵ Actors may not be fully in agreement, but through the deliberative process, they can avoid deadlock by reaching a reasonable decision and moving forward.

Statements from Middlebury faculty, President Patton, and George and West are all built upon this assumption that deliberative democracy is indeed the most justifiable approach to resolving conflicts about controversial issues. The Middlebury faculty statement expresses the strong belief that it is the clashing of viewpoints that results in greater knowledge production. Further, the structure of the event agreed upon by AEI members and the Department of Political Science, which included an interlocutor with contrasting views, re-

²³ Michele Moses, “Why the Affirmative Action Debate Persists,” *Educational Policy* 20, no. 4 (2006): 569.

²⁴ Ronald Milo, “Moral Deadlock,” *Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy* 61 (1986): 453–471.

²⁵ Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1–56.

flects a core commitment to deliberative democracy. The assumption underlying this structure is clear: controversial views should be publicly challenged in a rational manner with each side giving reasons for their claims.

George and West extend this argument further by connecting the contestation of ideas to the functioning of democracy. They admonish citizens, and particularly those on college and university campuses, to “listen attentively and respectfully to intelligent people who challenge one’s beliefs and who represent causes one disagrees with and points of view one does not share.”²⁶ Given that we are all fallible, George and West argue that we should also all be eager “to engage with anyone who is prepared to do business in the currency of truth-seeking discourse by offering reasons, marshaling evidence, and making arguments.”²⁷

In a similar fashion, President Patton’s article in the *Wall Street Journal* makes clear that she prioritizes rational, public discourse over other essential features of democratic life. For her, free speech, open debate, and inclusion of diverse perspectives are all hallmarks of university life within a democratic society. That being said, she advises other university leaders to “Let students know that, when these values come into conflict, as they did at Middlebury this past spring, educational institutions have a primary obligation to foster open and civil discourse.”²⁸

Thus, the statements from faculty and other academic leaders are rooted in a firm commitment to the basic tenets of deliberative democracy. They believe that free speech and public discourse should be preserved, even in the face of morally repugnant views. This position is shared by Dryzek, who considered whether some views that are antithetical to democratic life should be excluded from discursive democracy. He ultimately decided in favor of including these views in rational deliberation for two reasons: (1) deliberation provides a forum to challenge oppressive discourses and (2) we can have faith in deliberation to “root out bad arguments and sectarianism.”²⁹ Though Dryzek outlined a more expansive view of discourse—one that also allowed for rhetoric, humor, storytelling, testimony, and other forms of communication—he still concluded that airing ideas publicly is important and that when we enter into such discursive moments, we ought to be open to changing our minds in light of claims made by others.³⁰

²⁶ Robert George and Cornel West, “Truth Seeking,” March 12, 2017.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Laurie Patton, “The Right Way to Protect Free Speech on Campus,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 9, 2017.

²⁹ Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy*, 169.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 170.

Students appear to be working from a different set of assumptions, one that directly challenges the effectiveness of deliberative democracy in our current context. Their statement raises several challenges in response to the claim that a contestation of ideas is unequivocally supportive of a healthy democracy. First, they argue that the condition of reciprocity is not being met in this case, claiming that Murray “denies the basic equality of those invited to engage in such discourse, and therefore undermines the foundation of such discourse.” For students, Murray’s body of written work and public statements over the last several decades are evidence of racist, sexist, and classist viewpoints that are antithetical to the principle of equality and undermine the potential for mutually respectful deliberation.³¹

Second, students express concern that the type of deliberation faculty have in mind privileges a certain style of discourse and often excludes marginalized individuals. Indeed, students reject what they refer to as “the hegemony of rational thought-based perspectives often found in a university setting” and affirm that “experiences and emotions are valid ways to see the world.” The forced dichotomy on rationality and emotion aside, what students are suggesting is that reasons communicated with emotion or grounded in daily lived experiences are given less epistemic weight on college campuses. Sanders articulated similar concerns against deliberative democracy in general, suggesting that “The invitation to deliberate has strings attached. Deliberation is a certain kind of talk: rational, contained, and oriented to a shared problem.”³² Importantly, these strings may reinforce existing power structures in which individuals from more privileged backgrounds are given greater credibility within deliberative spaces due to the ways in which they articulate their concerns (i.e., in a manner that is perceived as intellectually sophisticated and socially acceptable).³³

³¹ Assessing the validity of Murray’s body of work and the allegations that his views are racist, sexist, and classist is outside the scope of this chapter, though I will provide limited examples in subsequent sections of the potential for his work to tap into existing biases. Suffice it to say, students are not alone in raising concerns about his work. Scholars have critiqued Murray’s work in both the popular press (e.g., Siegel, 2017; Turkheimer, Harden, & Nisbett, 2017) and academic journals and books (e.g., Bullen, & Kenway, 2004; MacDonald & Marsh, 2001; Winship & Korenman, 1997). The Southern Poverty Law Center (2018) also alleges that Murray ascribes to a White Nationalist ideology.

³² Lynn M. Sanders, “Against Deliberation,” *Political Theory* 23, no. 3 (June 1997): 370.

³³ Recall, for example, that George and West encourage individuals to “listen attentively and respectfully to *intelligent* people” (emphasis added). Though they do not specify what they have in mind by intelligence, in the context of their other statements about reasoned debate, it would seem that their qualification of listening to intelligent people would be subject to the concerns raised by Sanders.

Moreover, students emphasize the contextual nature of knowledge production and dissemination and thus reject the notion that deliberation is essential to challenging oppressive discourses. Instead, they argue that giving such views a public forum increases their legitimacy and serves to reinforce societal prejudices and biases at a time in which white supremacist activity is reemerging in very public ways both in society at large and on university campuses.

Finally, the student statement reveals a foundational disagreement with faculty and President Patton about the positive impact of deliberative democracy. In her prefatory remarks, President Patton echoes Dryzek's confidence in the capacity for deliberation to root out bad arguments contending that "...if there ever was a time for us to challenge influential public views with better reason, better research, better logic, and better data, it is now."³⁴ Students take a less optimistic view of the potential for deliberative democracy to root out bad arguments. Indeed, they argue that Murray's views have already been academically discredited, and yet they continue to be discussed within the academy as open questions subject to further consideration. For students, the fact that Murray continues to be provided with forums to share his views, and that these views continue to be influential, casts doubt on the effectiveness of deliberative democracy.

Public intellectual and journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates articulates a similar lack of faith in the deliberative process, one that may be relevant given the timing of the protests, which followed the 2016 US presidential election. Drawing from an interview with President Obama held during the campaign, Coates writes that Obama expressed confidence in the American people to evaluate racist, sexist, and anti-immigrant statements being made by candidate Trump and others in his campaign and to use the ongoing public debates concerning these statements to inform their decision-making. Coates wanted to believe that such public, rational deliberation would result in the most defensible views defeating the most damaging ones, but he reflected that his own life experiences as a black man in America convinced him that the opposite outcome was also possible.³⁵ The presence of public, rational debate did not ensure a positive outcome. Perhaps at least one way of understanding the recent protests on college campuses, including Middlebury, is to understand them as symptomatic of this lack of faith in the capacity for rational thought to win the day and for views that are antithetical to democracy to be defeated using better reason, research, logic, and data.

³⁴ DiGravio, "Students Protest Lecture."

³⁵ Ta-Nehisi Coates, *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy* (New York: Penguin, 2017).

In this section, I have outlined foundational assumptions made by faculty and students and framed them in terms of a moral disagreement. Though many would argue that deliberative democracy is the most justifiable way to resolve such moral disagreements, this approach may not be feasible when students question its effectiveness and appropriateness within the current context. Faculty and student statements, as well as national media coverage of this incident and others on college campuses, paint a picture of moral deadlock. Students engage in disruptive protests, they are chastised for doing so, colleges take disciplinary action, and the cycle begins again. In the next section, I argue that social moral epistemology provides greater clarity into the moral issues at stake in these types of cases and illuminates possibilities for colleges and universities to promote the moral functioning of faculty and students.

Social Moral Epistemology

Briefly stated, *social moral epistemology* is concerned with the ways in which social practices inform our epistemic beliefs, which, in turn, impact moral functioning at individual and institutional levels.³⁶ In describing the connection between the epistemic and the moral, Talisse contends that certain “normative epistemic commitments are prior to or at least as basic as our moral commitments.”³⁷ One can think of many examples of this connection and its impact on civic life. For example, false beliefs about the intellectual and physical fragility of women resulted in paternalistic moral commitments within families (e.g., focusing on preparing daughters for domestic life, rather than providing them with formal education) and public policies that treated women as second-class citizens (e.g., not allowing women to vote). Buchanan refers to this phenomenon as the “ethics of believing” and argues that institutional virtues contribute to developing factual beliefs that support greater moral functioning.³⁸ On the other hand, institutional vices, such as ignoring the psychological processes at play in developing false beliefs, can result in decreased moral functioning at the individual level and harmful policies and practices that undermine justice and fairness at the societal level.

Thus, social moral epistemology informs our understanding of the moral implications of knowledge production and dissemination. Drawing from

³⁶ Buchanan, “Education and Social Moral Epistemology,” 2015.

³⁷ Robert Talisse, “Toward a Social Epistemic Comprehensive Liberalism,” *Episteme* 5, no. 1 (2008): 68.

³⁸ Allen Buchanan, “Philosophy and Public Policy: A Role for Social Moral Epistemology,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 26, no. 3 (2009): 285.

empirical studies in cognitive psychology, social moral epistemologists paint a more accurate description of knowers as they actually are, not as we wish them to be, and calls attention to the ways in which existing biases and cognitive limitations undermine moral functioning. Of particular concern to social moral epistemologists is the epistemic deference we give to individuals deemed to be “experts” in our society. We are all more epistemically dependent on others than we would like to admit, and our deference to authority figures has real consequences for our moral decisions and actions as citizens.³⁹ By heightening our awareness of these limitations within ourselves and other knowers, social moral epistemology aims to improve moral functioning and thus contribute to a more just society.

Buchanan’s recent work on social moral epistemology as an aim of higher education has particular bearing on the Middlebury case for two reasons: (1) he identifies four “morally crucial factual beliefs” that institutions of higher education should treat with special scrutiny and (2) he addresses the moral implications of advancing knowledge using deliberative democratic methods given what we know about our cognitive limitations.⁴⁰

First, Buchanan outlines beliefs that “undermine moral performance in catastrophic ways.”⁴¹ He is particularly interested in beliefs that have contributed to mass violence, including false-factual beliefs concerning genetic differences between groups of citizens, false historical claims about these groups, false alarm over our own group’s vulnerability in relation to others in society, and fabricated blame ascribed to certain groups for social ills. Buchanan identifies both formal and informal ways in which these beliefs are socially transmitted. These informal methods of transmission are particularly insidious in that they do not directly question moral principles but rather utilize “folk psychology that is accurate enough to work for their purposes.”⁴² Buchanan points out that some of the most egregious consequences of these beliefs developed within liberal democracies with free speech rights and were promulgated using existing structures of epistemic deference found within institutions of higher education. He cites the obvious example of eugenics research and the rise of Nazism, but other examples are readily available. Consider that in the 1990s multiple social scientists warned of a rising wave of “superpredator” youth, instilling fear in citizens and politicians. This false belief resulted in irreparable damage by ushering

³⁹ Talisse, “Social Epistemic Comprehensive Liberalism,” 2008.

⁴⁰ Buchanan, “Education and Social Moral Epistemology,” 2015.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 108.

in a wave of “tough on crime” policies that contributed to mass incarceration.⁴³ In light of historical examples, Buchanan cautions colleges and universities to apply strict scrutiny to such beliefs.

With regard to the Middlebury case, there is reason to suggest that Murray’s views warrant such strict scrutiny. Students claim that Murray’s views have been academically discredited, and certainly many scholars have criticized Murray’s work over the years, including an edited volume devoted solely to his claims about IQ and race.⁴⁴ Still, Murray continues to find an audience for what psychologists Turkheimer, Harden, and Nisbett refer to as his “slipshod” logic and methods.⁴⁵ And, as President Patton acknowledges in her prefatory remarks to his speech, Murray remains a controversial, yet influential, public presence. Siegel argues that the reason academics have never been able to fully defeat Murray’s views is that they have failed to attack them at their most vulnerable point: prejudicial premises.⁴⁶ It’s not that Murray cites incorrect data; it’s that he asks questions that are prejudicial and uses data that are accurate enough to support illogical leaps and gross generalizations.

Take, for example, Murray’s now famous remark that “No woman has been a significant original thinker in any of the world’s great philosophical traditions.” Murray defends this remark by saying that he is not arguing women are genetically inferior but rather drawing conclusions from existing data about the number of women who have won major prizes for intellectual activity. He then goes on to state what he believes to be self-evident claims about sex differences in parenting (e.g., men can forget about their kids when they go to work but women cannot) and argues, without providing empirical evidence, that these perceived sex differences are tied to the “neurophysiology of being female.” He concludes that women are more motivated to have children and to rear them and thus deemphasize professional accomplishment.⁴⁷ What makes claims like these so potentially harmful is that they play into existing cognitive biases given the society in which we live. Gender dis-

⁴³ Retro Report, “The Superpredator Scare,” *New York Times*, <https://ejournal.org/videos/superpredator-scare>.

⁴⁴ Bernie Devlin et al., eds., *Intelligence, Genes, & Success* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1997).

⁴⁵ Eric Turkheimer, Kathryn Paige Harden, and Richard Nisbett, “Charles Murray Is Once Again Peddling Junk Science about Race and IQ,” *Vox*, May 18, 2017.

⁴⁶ Eric Siegel, “The Real Problem with Charles Murray and ‘The Bell Curve,’” *Scientific American*, April 12, 2017.

⁴⁷ Charles Murray, “No, I Don’t Think Women Are Genetically Inferior,” *American Enterprise Institute Ideas*, <http://www.aei.org/publication/charles-murray-no-i-dont-think-women-are-genetically-inferior/>.

crimination is a well-documented problem within the United States and contributes to tangible injustices such as a persistent pay gap between men and women (one that has an even worse impact upon women of color).⁴⁸ Within that context of socially distorted biases regarding men and women, Murray's statements can tap into confirmation bias, in which previously held prejudicial beliefs are reinforced when encountering new information.⁴⁹

Moreover, given that Murray cites data, holds an academic appointment with a think tank, and otherwise makes his claims in a manner consistent with the trappings of an expert, individuals may fall prey to the novice–expert problem in which they assign epistemic deference to someone with a greater level of perceived expertise. Murray does not have to state that women are genetically inferior to men; the way in which he presents correlational data can play into existing biases and leave others to infer genetic inferiority.

This leads to Buchanan's second point, which concerns the moral implications of advancing knowledge using deliberative democratic methods. The underlying assumption on the part of Middlebury faculty and other academics responding to this case is that a free market of ideas will, over the course of time, advance knowledge within liberal democracies. With time and rational deliberation, the best ideas will rise to the top and the weaknesses of inferior or harmful ideas will be exposed. Buchanan argues that this belief is based on what we *wish* to be true about knowers but not what science tells us they are actually like. He warns of a widespread, mistaken belief in our own epistemic independence in which we think we are more rational than we are.

Instead, Buchanan describes knowers as having “flawed and limited cognitive faculties...aware of only a fraction of the available information, with the bits of information he or she is aware of already endowed with epistemic weights attached through the mediation of defective social epistemic practices that subject him or her to moral and prudential risks to which he or she is largely obliv-

⁴⁸ AAUW, *The Simple Truth About the Gender Pay Gap* (Washington, DC: AAUW, 2018).

⁴⁹ Similar issues arise with respect to Murray's book *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010*, which was the subject of his invited lecture to Middlebury. As Nicholas Confessore outlined in his *New York Times* review of the book (February 10, 2012), Murray uses statistical data to paint a bleak picture of the white working class. When compared to what Murray describes as a high IQ elite class, working-class individuals are more likely to have children outside of marriage, more likely to be on disability, and less likely to have a job. These statistics feed into existing stereotypes about working-class individuals and are predicated upon certain normative assumptions (e.g., the superiority of having children within a legally recognized marriage). As Confessore points out, Murray glosses over or fails to include data concerning social policies that contribute to an underclass (e.g., a lack of affordable healthcare).

ious.”⁵⁰ One way in which these epistemic weights can undermine knowledge production, rational deliberation, and equality is that they contribute to a form of testimonial injustice in which we unfairly discredit the views of another given our biases and prejudice.⁵¹ When we bring these undue biases into spaces of rational discourse, we may give too much credit to some individuals because they hold similar positions to our own or articulate these positions in a socially acceptable manner and, at the same time, assign too little credibility to individuals who present contrasting views or express these views in ways we find unclear or uncomfortable.⁵² The point here is not that knowers are completely incapable of rational deliberation, but rather that they are prone to committing cognitive errors, and they are largely unaware of their own cognitive limitations. These errors and limitations, or ethics of believing, have very real consequences for moral functioning at the individual level in that epistemic beliefs contribute to moral commitments and undergird moral actions; in turn, the moral functioning of individuals impacts society at large as individuals take these commitments with them into the public sphere as citizens.

Advancing Moral Aims

In the preceding sections, I have attempted to reframe the existing narrative in response to conflicts over invited speakers to college and university campuses. Rather than emphasizing the legal right to free speech and the importance of free inquiry, I have called attention to the moral ramifications of knowledge production and dissemination given what we know about the cognitive limitations of knowers. I turn now to the potential for college and universities to support the moral functioning of individuals on their campuses as they wrestle with who should be given a forum to speak, why, and in what manner. Specifically, I contend that educators at Middlebury and others throughout the country are allowing opportunities for moral education to pass by when they work from within the dominant narrative (i.e., the right to free speech), rather than foregrounding the moral disagreements at play over the production and dissemination of knowledge within a pluralistic, democratic society.

⁵⁰ Buchanan, “Education and Social Moral Epistemology,” 2015, 106.

⁵¹ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵² Rebecca Taylor and Ashley Kuntz, “Protecting Speech, Seeking Truth, and Cultivating Intellectual Fairness in American Higher Education” (American Educational Research Association, New York, April 2018).

One factor to consider at the outset is the extent to which biases against college students may undermine such educational opportunities. It may be that educators are overlooking the possibilities for moral learning given a chorus of voices in recent years questioning the moral capacities of emerging adults. College students are credited with multiple ethical failures, including increased instances of sexual assault and cheating,⁵³ and they are depicted as aimless and deficient in moral reasoning.⁵⁴ They are also alternately described as being snowflakes who are overly morally sensitive⁵⁵ and, at other times, not sensitive enough to the complexities of moral and social problems.⁵⁶ Ebels-Duggan suggests that perhaps we have misdiagnosed the problem and thus employed the wrong medicine; in her view, college students are best understood not as lacking in moral beliefs but rather as being overconfident in the views they do hold.⁵⁷ When Middlebury students allege in their statement that faculty have bought into false narratives about them which undermine their credibility, these are the types of narratives they may have in mind.

Yet, in this case we see potential for a different narrative about college students. The Middlebury student statement rejects intellectual and moral relativism, takes principled stances, expresses empathy for peers, and demonstrates a beyond-the-self motivation. Indeed, students note that they put themselves at risk of college sanction and subjected themselves to national scorn in an effort to promote a more inclusive campus environment that respects the inherent dignity and equality of all Middlebury students. Video from the event clearly shows that protesters came from multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds, indicating that underrepresented students and allies worked together to advance a principle they believed to be important. Moreover, these students raised reasonable concerns about the moral implications of unlimited free speech in producing and disseminating knowledge that undermines democratic aims.

With only a week's notice of Murray's visit, students voiced their concerns in the form of petitions, signs, and shouting down the speaker. Perhaps

⁵³ Thomas G. Plante and Lori G. Plante, *Graduating with Honor: Best Practices to Promote Ethical Development* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2017).

⁵⁴ Christian Smith et al., *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁵⁵ Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning, "The End of Academe: Free Speech and the Silencing of Dissent," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 21, 2018.

⁵⁶ Paul Weitham, "Academic Friendship," in *The Aims of Higher Education*, eds. Harry Brighouse and Michael McPherson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

⁵⁷ Kyla Ebels-Duggan, "Autonomy as Intellectual Virtue," in *The Aims of Higher Education*, eds. Harry Brighouse and Michael McPherson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

indicative of the types of “strings attached” to rational deliberation that Sanders describes,⁵⁸ the faculty statement appeared to miss the concerns for justice and fairness students were raising early in their dissent. Instead, their written response focused on staking a claim for free inquiry. Thus, one takeaway from the Middlebury case may be to pause and consider not just the manner in which dissent is being voiced but also what foundational disagreements are underlying that dissent and how those disagreements can be addressed in a way that supports moral learning.

There is potential for moral learning to go both ways in this case. Faculty are right when they claim that “a good education produces modesty with respect to our own intellectual powers and opinions as well as openness to considering contrary views.”⁵⁹ They, along with President Patton and other academics, make several important points about the importance of free inquiry in producing knowledge, which is undoubtedly an aim of higher education. Faculty can and should take time to educate students on the ways in which free speech can support equality and justice within society, especially when it is used to protect oppressed individuals speaking out against unjust social practices.

That being said, students call attention to radical changes within the US and American higher education, and faculty may need to reevaluate deeply held beliefs in light of this shifting context. Take, for a moment, these contemporary realities: (1) colleges comprise increasingly diverse student populations, (2) the number of hate groups is on the rise in the United States, nearing historic highs,⁶⁰ and (3) white supremacist activity on college campuses tripled in 2017.⁶¹ Within this context, students rightfully point out that university commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion must extend beyond merely recruiting racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse individuals to campus. It must also include supporting the well-being of these individuals, inviting them to the proverbial table, and treating them as equals. Students do not disagree with faculty—they *are* capable of hearing offensive speech. They simply question whether a college that repeatedly expresses a commitment to inclusion ought to provide a public forum to someone whose views run counter to this commitment, and in light of the current sociopolitical context, add to the burden minoritized students already feel on campus and within society at large.

⁵⁸ Sanders, “Against Deliberation,” 370.

⁵⁹ Jay Parini and Keegan Callahan, “Free Inquiry on Campus.”

⁶⁰ Southern Poverty Law Center, “Hate Groups 1999–2017,” <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map>.

⁶¹ Anti-Defamation League, “White Supremacist Propaganda Surges on Campus,” January 29, 2018, <https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/white-supremacist-propaganda-surges-on-campus>.

This question gets at the heart of the role of colleges and universities in producing and disseminating knowledge that either supports or undermines democratic aims. Faculty argue that a chief aim of education is to cultivate the mind and its capacity for rational deliberation, and they see the contestation of ideas as the mechanism to achieve this aim. Yet, students point to the moral implications of providing certain speakers with a public forum, especially one that is legitimized by formal sponsorship from an academic department and includes an appearance by the president. They do not view all ideas as equally worthy of consideration, and they do not view free inquiry as neutral in its impact.

Buchanan's work sheds light on what is at stake from a moral perspective in situations like these—both with regard to supporting the moral functioning of individuals and with regard to supporting justice and fairness within society.⁶² History is replete with examples of harmful ideas based on shoddy science that have been advanced in societies with free speech protections and promulgated by institutions of higher learning, even to the point of mass violence.⁶³ Additionally, new insights from social epistemology and cognitive science have made us more aware of our own cognitive limitations and biases and the errors we are all prone to making. Thus, as Buchanan argues, colleges and universities would be wise to heed “the crucial dependence of our moral performance on our epistemic performance.”⁶⁴ Doing so would require moving beyond a commitment to teaching critical thinking and promoting rational deliberation and also give attention to preventing moral damage in the advancement of knowledge. Buchanan encourages universities to use historical case studies to prepare students to evaluate the premises of arguments and also to make them aware of the consequences of particularly dangerous false-factual beliefs. This type of deliberation that is mindful of epistemic biases stands to advance justice by subjecting ideas to moral scrutiny. Colleges that create environments where such conversations can unfold can produce and disseminate knowledge that reduces harm and supports inclusion.

Conclusion

Conflicts over invited speakers show no sign of decreasing on our college and university campuses, and conversations about how best to respond to these conflicts are ongoing. Middlebury has continued to engage students in discussion of the events that unfolded during Murray's visit and to explore

⁶² Buchanan, “Education and Social Moral Epistemology,” 2015.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 109.

possibilities for more inclusive dialogue about free speech and justice. In this chapter, I have identified features of the Middlebury case that may be useful in responding to similar conflicts on other campuses. Specifically, I have argued that we need to give consideration to not only the legal right to free speech and the importance of free inquiry in producing knowledge but also the moral implications of disseminating knowledge.

As mentioned earlier, it is not always possible for colleges and universities to decide who can speak on their campuses. However, even if they must provide a forum for a speaker, they do have some autonomy over the circumstances surrounding the speaker's visit. When considering which speakers are invited and the format used for their lectures, it is important to consider what Buchanan refers to as the responsibility of institutions of higher education to not only teach critical thinking but also to reduce harm. On his view, reducing harm involves recognizing the epistemic limitations of knowers and how easily we all fall prey to the pitfalls of bias and epistemic deference. For that reason, we ought to apply strict scrutiny to false-factual beliefs that undermine moral functioning by playing into existing stereotypes about certain groups or assigning blame for social ills to certain classes of people. When possible, colleges and universities should mitigate the reach of speakers who propagate such false-factual beliefs.

Additionally, colleges and universities should recognize and authentically respond to the very real lack of trust students have in rational deliberation to advance knowledge and support democratic aims. Students in this case, and potentially others, did not have faith that the best ideas would win the day and the worst and most damaging ideas would be relegated to the margins. To avoid moral deadlock in cases like these, faculty and administrators must engage students in conversations about balancing protecting speech *and* promoting justice. Retrenching into debates over free speech, without addressing the moral consequences of such speech at both the individual and societal level, is unlikely to move the conversation on our campuses forward. Instead, we must tackle the very real complications that arise in a society in which speech is protected, knowers are subject to cognitive limitations and epistemic biases, and producing and disseminating knowledge can support or undermine the moral functioning of citizens and thus democracy as a whole.

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2. The Neoliberal and Neoracist Potentialities of International Doctoral Student of Color Admissions in Graduate Education Programs

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Abstract: The increasing internationalization and globalization of higher education exist in relation to a globalized capitalistic economy driven by neoliberal ideologies. Based on neoliberal and neoracist theory, this essay begins a conversation on the ways that the recruitment and admissions of graduate-level international students of color in Education programs bolsters the academic capitalist/knowledge regime to the detriment of understanding the nuances of the human experience on college campuses. International students are recruited from countries with high economic potential, admitted to producing prestige-bolstering outputs, exploited to provide financial capital to the university, and treated as dehumanized commodities. This essay, therefore, peels away layers exposing the related and perceived purposes of international student recruitment and the neglectful treatment of those students. It points to a nuanced understanding of international admissions that must be considered in higher education.

Keywords: graduate, admissions, international, neoracism, higher education

As states continue to reduce funding to higher education, institutions are left to find new ways to reduce costs and increase income. At the same time, globalization persists in shaping the international marketplace, and universities have capitalized by increasing internationalization efforts on their campuses in part to

offset lost revenue.¹ Post-World War II, institutions increased their presence in countries around the world “as part of the nation’s cultural, political, economic, and military forms of domination”² while also maintaining and increasing the internationalization of research and scholarship on home campuses.³ Increased multinational university systems (e.g., U.S. branch campuses in other countries), lack of access to education in many countries, and the United States’ widely recognized institutional prestige and “massification” of higher education led to increased numbers of international students who sought out higher education in the United States and points to an important juncture in understanding higher education broadly.⁴

Rhoads and Liu (2008) argued that increasing internationalization and globalization of higher education exist in relation to a globalized capitalistic economy driven by neoliberal ideologies. Neoliberalism is a global social and economic theory that understands society to be organized around market-based values of individualistic capital gain, fiscal austerity across a range of social structures, and an increased competitive ethos.⁵ As it relates to international student enrollment in the United States, neoliberalism suggests that universities admit students from outside the United States because they pay higher tuition rates and/or may be supported by their countries financially. These students increase production that boosts a university’s competitive advantage via research production⁶ but universities provide fewer resources to support them (e.g., funding, mental health, job placement, English-skills training, writing support, assimilation support). Lastly, universities tout international students as successful and diverse students of color in marketing materials, thereby continuing to capitalize on their physical bodies.⁷

¹ Philip G. Altbach, *Global Perspectives on Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2016).

² Jeong-eun Rhee and Mary Ann Danowitz Sagaria, “International Students: Constructions of Imperialism in the Chronicle of Higher Education,” *The Review of Higher Education* 28, no. 1 (2004): 80.

³ Scott Andrew Schulz, Jenny J. Lee, Brendan J. Cantwell, George McClellan, and Doug Woodard, “Moving Toward a Global Community: An Analysis of the Internationalization of Student Affairs Graduate Preparation Programs,” *NASPA Journal* 44, no. 3 (2007): 610–632.

⁴ Altbach, *Global Perspectives on Higher Education*, 2016.

⁵ Henry A. Giroux, “Democracy in Crisis, the Specter of Authoritarianism, and the Future of Higher Education,” *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs* 1, no. 1 (2015): 101–113.

⁶ Altbach, *Global Perspectives on Higher Education*, 2006.

⁷ Jennifer F. Hamer and Clarence Lang, “Race, Structural Violence, and the Neoliberal University: The Challenges of Inhabitation,” *Critical Sociology* 41, no. 6 (2015): 897–912.

The potential dehumanization and commodification of international students of color by way of monetizing them for capitalistic gain is the focus of this chapter, a phenomenon examined through the perspectives of College of Education faculty of color engaged in a doctoral admissions cycle. While not the initial purpose of the research study, findings emerged that pointed toward a troubling trend in the field of education as it related to graduate admissions. This field was selected due to a stated engagement with work that affects diversity and equity-related campus outcomes, a historic mission to focus on social justice and inclusion in curriculums and research in the field, and continued calls to supporting all students in their learning development.⁸ Therefore, it is thought that faculty would be more cognizant of the potentially troubling results of international student admissions within their discipline. As people of color, a political term⁹ used in racial solidarity projects with multiple racial groups, faculty are also theorized to have a personal investment in the success of students of color and a nuanced understanding of diversity in the admissions process as they both engaged in those processes as students and now engage as faculty members. As a result of data collection, these claims proved true. This is not to conclude that faculty were aware of and utilized frameworks that centered an analysis of neoliberalism or neoracism by name, but rather that they were constructing understandings of international graduate admissions that provide an apt scholarly analysis using those lenses. In this engagement, they trouble the neoliberal global marketization of higher education broadly by recognizing the problematic nature of international admissions for understanding the neoracist climate, explained in the next section, within which international students enter the academy in the United States, the purposes for those student's admissions, and for recognizing the unique experiences of both domestic and international students of color.¹⁰

With a 72% increase in international student enrollment since 2000, almost 1.1M students are international, making up 5.3% of total graduate enrollment.¹¹ In Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields, international

⁸ American Council on Education, *The Student Personnel Point of View* (Washington: American Council on Education, 1949).

⁹ Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review*, 43 (1993): 1241–1299.

¹⁰ Brendan Cantwell and Jenny Lee, "Unseen Workers in the Academic Factory: Perceptions of Neoracism among International Postdocs in the United States and the United Kingdom," *Harvard Educational Review* 80, no. 4 (2010): 490–517.

¹¹ IIE (Institute of International Education), *Open Doors 2017 Executive Summary*. Retrieved from <https://www.iie.org/Why-IIE/Announcements/2017-11-13-Open-Doors-2017-Executive-Summary> (2017).

graduate students make up anywhere from 50 to 70% of enrolled students.¹² Students also tend to come from certain countries. In 2017, there was a 12.3% increase in enrollment of students from India, 6.8% from China, and 20% from Nepal.¹³ There were drops in enrollment from some countries due to the ending of State-subsidized tuition programs¹⁴ and the travel ban including in places like Iran, India, and Saudia Arabia. Other countries saw upticks in enrollment including Brazil that saw a 34% increase in 2014, for example.¹⁵ Overall, there was a 1.9% increase in graduate enrollment in 2017,¹⁶ following steady year-over-year increases such as a 9.8% increase in 2014.¹⁷ The U.S. Department of Commerce placed the domestic contribution at over \$39B in 2016, \$4B more than in 2015.¹⁸ Therefore, the purposes of international admissions and the subsequent experiences of students is of contemporary importance.

The research question for this study is: How do faculty in education programs make sense of increasing international doctoral admissions and enrollment in predominantly white institutions (PWIs)? Based on neoliberal and neoracist theory, I begin to reveal the ways that the recruitment and admissions of international students of color skew an arguably historic public good mission of higher education for the purposes of bolstering the academic capitalist/knowledge regime¹⁹ at the detriment of understanding the nuances of the human experience on college campuses. I posit that through an academic capitalist knowledge regime, fueled by neoliberal principles, international students are recruited to campus from particular countries with high economic and wealth potential, admitted to campus to produce outputs that bolster the prestige of universities, exploited to provide necessary financial capital to the university coffers, and are treated as commodities and dehumanized in the process.²⁰ This chapter, therefore, peels away layers exposing the related and perceived purposes of international student recruitment, the neglectful

¹² Stuart Anderson, *The Importance of International Students to America* (Arlington: National Foundation for American Policy, 2013).

¹³ IIE (Institute of International Education), *Open Doors 2017 Executive Summary*, 2017.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ H. Okahana and E. Zhou, *International Graduate Applications and Enrollment: Fall 2017* (Washington: Council of Graduate Schools, 2018).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2004).

²⁰ Philip G. Altbach, Liz Reisberg, and Laura E. Rumbley, "Tracking a Global Academic Revolution." In *Global Perspectives on Higher Education*, edited by Philip G. Altbach (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2016).

treatment of those students, and points to a nuanced understanding of international admissions that must be considered in higher education.

Theoretical Foundations

In order to understand the climate surrounding international graduate student of color admissions, I draw from foundational understandings of globalized neoliberalism,²¹ imperialism,²² and the concept of neoracism in higher education.²³ Through these lenses, I began to observe the continued construction of an academic capitalist/knowledge regime²⁴ that guides the actions of the university toward the commodification of bodies of international students toward economic gains and uncovers “the hidden cultural stereotypes that dictate”²⁵ the experiences of international students.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism in its most basic form is a theory, practice, and mindset that aims to deregulate capitalistic endeavors in order to provide unrestricted capital gain, with little attention paid to human dignity. An embedded exercise engaged across all neoliberal contexts is globalization.²⁶ Within higher education, neoliberalism presents itself expansively; however, for the purposes of this chapter, I highlight the academic capitalist knowledge regime²⁷ and link it to a globalization enterprise.

Globalization, and its intended resultant, neocolonial economic domination, is integral to the success of neoliberal logic.²⁸ Altbach (2016) called higher education-related globalization “the new neocolonialism” (87). Rhoads and Liu (2008) described globalization as local and worldwide social relations and human interactions that have

altered the very nature of society...[and] increasingly shape[d] the operations and functions of the nation-state and its foundational institutions, including the

²¹ Peter Evans and William H. Sewell, “Neoliberalism: Policy Regimes, International Regime, and Social Effects.” In *Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era*, edited by Peter A. Hall and Michèle Lamont (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

²² Rhee and Sagaria, “International Students,” 77–96.

²³ Jenny J. Lee and Charles Rice, “Welcome to America? International Student Perceptions of Discrimination,” *Higher Education* 53, no. 4 (2007): 381–409.

²⁴ Brendan Cantwell and Ilkka Kauppinen., eds., *Academic Capitalism in the Age of Globalization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

²⁵ Cantwell and Lee, “Unseen Workers in the Academic Factory,” 497.

²⁶ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

²⁷ Slaughter and Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy*.

²⁸ Rhee and Sagaria, “International Students,” 77–96.

university. [Globalization] raises the issue of neoliberalism and the ways in which the world economy is being shaped by a particular view of capitalism and global economics...where in fact, neoliberalism's most dangerous and oppressive effects often are intentionally concealed. (276)

This chapter begins to unveil these concealed effects.

In theory, states should reduce restrictions for goods to pass between borders in order to facilitate global exchange.²⁹ Ordorika and Lloyd (2015) aptly recognized that globalization's development provides the ability for goods, politics, people, and cultures to "transcend national borders" (137). In higher education, this is seen through the ways that universities leverage resources behind academic services that assist students in obtaining visas and send admissions counselors abroad to recruit, among many others.³⁰

Neoliberalism specifically addresses economic capital accumulation, although it may do so through the eradication of a country's cultural, political, and social idiosyncrasies in the name of freedom and thereby employing imperialistic principles in the name of U.S. economic and social domination.³¹ Altbach (2016) wrote, "most international students pay for their own studies, producing significant income for host countries and a drain on the economy of the developing world [or home country]." Additional resource depletion and the consumption of foreign markets as resources and commodities ensues feeding a continued imperialistic reign.³²

The Institute of International Education found that international students contributed over \$39B to the U.S. economy in 2017, international graduate students add to university prestige and rankings, and they have a direct and positive impact on patent applications and grants.³³ These benefits speak directly to neoliberal policy and practice and the academic-capitalist knowledge regime. Even though Posselt (2014) found that graduate faculty at elite institutions do believe that international students are important to include in institutional definitions of diversity, few spoke to the concerns associated with the admission of those students. She argued for more research on this conflation, and this study provides nuance for this continued discussion.

²⁹ Evans and Sewell, "Neoliberalism," 35–68.

³⁰ Stephanie Saul, *Recruiting Students Overseas to Fill Seats, Not to Meet Standards*. Retrieved from <http://nyti.ms/1SrJR13>.

³¹ Altbach, *Global Perspectives on Higher Education*.

³² Rhee and Sagaria, "International Students," 77–96.

³³ Gnanaraj Chellaraj, Keith E. Maskus, and Aaditya Mattoo, "The Contribution of International Graduate Students to US Innovation," *Review of International Economics* 16, no. 3 (2008): 444–462.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was developed from Critical Legal Studies and has five tenets: (a) race and racism are endemic to U.S. society and influence and organize every part of our society; (b) liberal, meritocratic, and color-blind analyses are insufficient lenses from which to study race and racism; (c) intersectional identities should be taken into account when studying people of color; (d) the voices of people of color are central to creating a counter-narrative of the dominant, white narrative often highlighted in research; and (e) social justice and action-taking are key outcomes of utilizing CRT.³⁴

Important to this study, deconstructing liberal, meritocratic, and color-blind rhetoric unveils the ways that racism historically and currently shapes the higher education landscape.³⁵ Essentially, liberal, meritocratic, and color-blind ideologies are born from the belief that each person should have the same chances and opportunities for success; however, this thinking is also void of historicized understandings of systems of oppression such as racism, classism, or ableism inherent within U.S. society. In this study, one can apply this tenet to better understand the ways that policies are applied “equally” across all student groups despite underlying constructions of dehumanizing capitalistic gain created from the utilization of their bodies. By resituating the experiences of people of color within the context of white supremacist historicity, critical race theorists are better able to illuminate the mechanisms utilized to maintain white domination including standardized tests and the various forms of capital necessary for successfully pursuing advanced education. Additionally, CRT can reveal the “racist epistemologies [that] are deeply embedded in the meaning-making structures that inform the naturalization or oppression and the normalization or racial inequality” in higher education,³⁶ thereby providing a space for reconstructing those systems toward equity and liberation. Essentially, in revealing racist epistemologies that dictate decision-making processes, one can unveil the ways that practices stemming from racist thinking against “the other” work to maintain a racially stratified workforce.

CRT is an appropriate lens from which to study this subject because institutions of higher education were created to forward a white, elite, and religious dogma from the moment colonial settlers landed in the country.³⁷ Additionally,

³⁴ David Stovall, “Out of Adolescence and into Adulthood: Critical Race Theory, Retrenchment, and the Imperative of Praxis,” *Urban Education* 51, no. 3 (2016): 274–286.

³⁵ Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate, *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

³⁶ Garrett Albert Duncan, *Critical Race Ethnography in Education: Narrative, Inequality, and the Problem of Epistemology* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 74.

³⁷ Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2013).

universities were quite literally built on the backs of enslaved Africans and Indigenous peoples of the land now known as the United States of America.³⁸ Therefore, the epistemologies of these first white inhabitants and university architects have extended through time and space in the ways that universities currently organize themselves.³⁹ CRT helps to excavate the ways that universities continue to enact racist violence on certain communities and maintain white supremacy. CRT also provides for people of color's voices to be central to the exploration of this topic as their voices are often silenced or whitewashed.⁴⁰ Lastly, CRT does not allow for taken-for-granted assumptions related to the experience of people of color; everything is suspect through a critical examination.⁴¹ The application of a CRT lens interrogates underlying thought and processes of the participants in order to more clearly articulate a racist social structure.

Neoracism

Neoliberal and racialized projects of globalization and internationalization also fuel a secondary outcome as a result of the commodification of international students of color called neoracism, or racism stemming from a national origin that is described mainly by culture and ethnicity.⁴² Neoracism is the deployment of neocolonial mindsets that homogenizes diverse international identities, commodifies bodies, and creates third-class citizenship (arguably the first being whites and the second being domestic students of color). Neoracism does not erase historical U.S. understandings of racism; however, it provides a "way to discriminate by using new categories."⁴³ Therefore, one can mask their racism with arguments against national origin.⁴⁴ Neoracism leverages the whiteness of an organization against the international bodies of color as well as domestic bodies of color when those domestic students are misidentified as "foreign" even as

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Leigh Patel, "Desiring Diversity and Backlash: White Property Rights in Higher Education," *The Urban Review* 47, no. 4 (2015): 657–675.

⁴⁰ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

⁴¹ Bradley A. Levinson, Jacob P.K. Gross, Christopher Hanks, Julia Heimer Dadds, Kafi Kumasi, and Joseph Link, *Beyond Critique: Exploring Critical Social Theories and Education* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

⁴² Lee and Rice, "Welcome to America? International Student Perceptions of Discrimination," 381–409.

⁴³ Christina Yao, "'They don't Care about You': First Chinese International Students' Experiences with Neo-Racism and Othering on a U.S. Campus," *Journal of the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition* 30, no. 1 (2018): 89.

⁴⁴ Lee and Rice, "Welcome to America? International Student Perceptions of Discrimination", 381–409.

diversity remains a desired commodity.⁴⁵ As it relates to this chapter, neoracism, Lee and Rice (2007) argued, may affect the types of student services provided to international students, writing that “many support services at [international students’] U.S. institution, including admission, registration, residence life, and dining do not well accommodate international students despite the greater needs such students have as compared to native students” (386). Through this logic, I argue that neoracism manifests in the commodification of bodies of international students by using them to raise the academic capitalist knowledge regime by not providing them necessary services or developmental opportunities. Neoracism is an apt theory from which to view this project as it grounds a specific understanding of the treatment of international graduate students.

Methodology

This study specifically focuses on the perspectives of the faculty of color at PWIs in the United States, a position in line with the Critical Race Methodology that guided this study.⁴⁶ This group is underrepresented on college campuses and therefore sits in the margins.⁴⁷ As people of color, they are also subject to ongoing and pervasive racism and racial projects in our country.⁴⁸ As mentioned previously, faculty of color were theorized to have direct insight into the admissions processes and had an understanding of their institutional context for communities of color, acted in solidarity with other racialized groups, and worked in a field with a social justice and equity guiding principle. The methods guiding this research were chosen as they centralize the experiential knowledge of the faculty of color and are based on transdisciplinary perspectives.⁴⁹ Additionally, critical race methodologies center the voices of people of color and challenge the liberal, meritocratic nature of education by analyzing the power and oppression inherent within the educational system. As a result, justice for marginalized racialized groups is reached through an application of findings to higher education contexts, or praxis.

⁴⁵ Patel, “Desiring Diversity and Backlash,” 657–675.

⁴⁶ Daniel G. Solórzano and Tara J. Yosso, “A Critical Race Counterstory of Race, Racism, and Affirmative Action,” *Equity and Excellence in Education* 35, no. 2 (2002): 155–168.

⁴⁷ Kimberly A. Griffin, Marcela M. Muñiz, and Lorelle Espinosa, “The Influence of Campus Racial Climate on Diversity in Graduate Education,” *The Review of Higher Education* 35, no. 4 (2012): 535–566.

⁴⁸ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994).

⁴⁹ Solórzano and Yosso, “A Critical Race Counterstory of Race, Racism, and Affirmative Action,” 155–168.

Participants

For this study, each participant (a) must identify as a person of color. A person of color is a person who identifies as a racial/ethnic minority (e.g., Black, Asian, Latinx/Hispanic, multiracial) and not exclusively as white; (b) is an assistant or newly tenured (1–2 years tenured) associate faculty member at a predominantly white U.S. university; (c) works in a doctorate-granting Higher Education and Student Affairs program (or its aptly named equivalent). In total, I recruited 14 participants, 13 untenured faculty and one newly tenured faculty member through Facebook and discipline listservs. A total of 13 institutions were represented and were geographically dispersed across the United States and represented various institutional types. Participants later noted that they shared the call with colleagues who fit the criteria. For the broader study, understandings of how lack of tenure affected decision-making agency as people of color in the admissions process were important to analyze. Upon consent to participate, participants completed a demographic form where race, gender, years in the position, stated epistemology, and other demographic information were gathered. These data assisted me in understanding the participants' intersectional identities as it related to their experiences.

Methods

Three primary methods of data collection were utilized, including a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of university mission and diversity statements, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group. A demographic questionnaire was used to collect relevant information about the faculty including their stated epistemologies, which were stated to be anywhere from constructivist to critical. Additionally, an analysis of university documents and websites provided me with a better understanding of the context of each university and its relation to globalization and internationalization of the campus. Broad demographic data, percentages of international students, mission and vision statements, and strategic plans all provided clues to better understand the context of the faculty members' experience.

CDA is both method and methodology that addresses deep social problems such as racism, sexism, and ableism⁵⁰ in text and images and helps examine how language is linked to society.⁵¹ Both graphic and text ("images") were analyzed through the conceptual lens outlined for the given study.

⁵⁰ Teun A. Van Dijk, "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis," *Discourse and Society* 4, no. 2 (1993): 249–283.

⁵¹ Margaret R. Rogers and Ludwin E. Molina, "Exemplary Efforts in Psychology to Recruit and Retain Graduate Students of Color," *American Psychologist* 61, no. 2 (2006): 143–156.

I analyzed the following documents: (1) institutional mission statements and (2) institutional diversity statements. I chose to only review these documents because each participant's university had these two documents while other potential documents (e.g., strategic plans, program-level diversity statements) were not available for all universities. In these analyses, I examined what language was utilized to "talk" about, activate, or forward diversity, equity, and justice⁵² utilizing Gee's (2014) Building Tasks. I first open coded the documents for diversity, equity, and justice text, including information on globalization, neoliberalism, and racism. I also looked at the positioning of a diversity-related word (e.g., how early it shows up in a mission statement, where the word is on a website). Fourteen codes were utilized.

Second, I utilized Gee's (2014) Building Tasks to conduct the CDA. Gee (2014) identified four tools of analysis to analyze discourse. Those are social languages (e.g., formal, vernacular), discourses (e.g., combination of language, actions, beliefs that make up identity), intertextuality (e.g., references to other texts), and conversations (e.g., common themes that are publicly known, ongoing public conversations such as global warming, terrorism). The analysis of these documents took place before the one-on-one interview to provide me with context for the interview and to better understand how diversity, equity, and justice are engaged in each participant's university.

Semi-structured interviews were completed with all faculty. All interviews were recorded, lasted approximately 60 minutes each, and took place in February 2015 through Skype or Google Voice.⁵³ An initial open coding round revealed 82 codes.⁵⁴ Those were collapsed into 12 axial codes that were then organized into the themes of the broader study.⁵⁵ The theme and data associated with international graduate admissions are presented in this manuscript. Three auditors assisted me in open coding at least two interviews each and discussing and fine-tuning the initial open coding and 12 axial codes.

After interviews, three faculties took part in an in-person focus group and two took part in an online focus group. The focus group protocol provided the first opportunity for faculty to member check my findings from the interviews and to be in community with other faculty of color as they may have been isolated on

⁵² Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

⁵³ Hannah Deakin and Kelly Wakefield, "Skype Interviewing: Reflections of Two Doctoral Researchers," *Qualitative Research* 14, no. 5 (2014): 603–616.

⁵⁴ Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2015).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

their campuses.⁵⁶ The focus group lasted 120 minutes long. Two additional note takers provided memos from the focus group for analysis. All transcripts were coded with the 12 axial codes because the focus groups were used mainly as a member check method, thereby reifying my understanding of the faculty's perceptions. After completing the data analysis (i.e., open and axial coding) and composing the findings, results were sent to participants for final member checking.

Presentation of Findings

The data are presented in two sections. The first subsection provides a brief overview of the CDA of mission and diversity statements found in an earlier publication.⁵⁷ The second section presents the findings regarding how faculty think about issues of diversity in international admissions.

Globalization and Internationalization in Mission and Diversity Statements

Presenting an overview of the institutional context sets up the analysis of faculty recognition of neoliberal and neoracist undercurrents in international graduate student admissions. This section will not explicitly identify any university as to protect the identities of the faculty. What became clear in this analysis is that universities are content with continuing "happy talk" rhetoric⁵⁸ around diversity issues; that is, language that is welcoming and inclusive of diverse bodies with little, if any, attention to systemic oppressions facing those communities or recognition of the realities of those groups' experiences on the college campus.⁵⁹

As it relates to internationalization and globalization, most universities did recognize the place of the university as situated within a global context. For instance, one university noted that it "strives for a culturally diverse community that reflects the state and nation" and does so mainly through international programs and study abroad. Another university noted that "globalization is a priority."⁶⁰ In an additional mission statement, the word "world" was mentioned twice, in the first and last sentence of the statement, providing place-based im-

⁵⁶ bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990).

⁵⁷ See Dian D. Squire, "Shifting Narratives in Doctoral Admissions: Faculty of Color Understandings of Diversity, Equity, and Justice in a Neoliberal Context" (PhD diss., Loyola University, Chicago, 2015).

⁵⁸ Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*.

⁵⁹ Squire, "Shifting Narratives in Doctoral Admissions."

⁶⁰ Ibid.

portance on the word by framing the rest of the statement. It also did so by relating the “world”-orientation to being a part of the Association of American Universities (AAU) of which there are only 62 research institutions. Inherent in that relationship is an elite status that is bolstered by top research dollars, grants, publications, and global notoriety. This relationship between institutional type (high-research) and words relating to globalization and internationalization was unequivocal (e.g., global challenges, global partnerships). Only one statement mentioned an overt goal of admitting international students.

As it relates to the neoliberal underpinnings of the institution, picking up on the linguistic inferences was important. For instance, one university mentioned that a mission was to convert research into products. At this public institution, the university takes public dollars to create public ideas, which are then sold in, produce revenue for, and are accessible to private industry.⁶¹ Another university mentioned technology transfer processes; and yet another the creation of online and distance education. Neoliberalism and globalization must be paired with understandings of neocolonial, neoracist, historical, and geographical impacts. Technology transfer, distance education, and the privatization of public goods are not inherently value-neutral, or value-positive entities.

In an interesting combination of both diversity rhetoric and neoliberal rhetoric, one university discussed diversity as giving the university a competitive advantage. Rather than situating diverse student bodies as having educational value, it rather provides the university with the ability to “win” in a business marketplace. In this statement, one sees the most explicit statement regarding the commodification of diverse bodies and the leveraging of those bodies for a competitive advantage. Language that refers to the university as an “enterprise” is synonymous with corporation or companies.

A Big Push

The analysis of faculty interviews around understanding issues of diversity in graduate admissions revealed a disturbing trend around understanding international admissions as an opportunity for universities to make additional revenue while providing little support to these students. The interests of the university in admitting international students are predominantly linked to the positive outcomes of higher rankings and income for universities.

In line with universities recognizing globalization as a priority in their mission statements, Greg reflected on the role that internationalization plays in this admissions process on his campus. He noted:

⁶¹ Slaughter and Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy*.

The international piece is a big push. We end up attracting a lot of international students in our program as well. In our program, we have people from Portugal, Spain, from Jamaica, from all over, Saudi Arabia. It's a big piece. A big piece to that. A lot of times a lot of the faculty push back on [the fact that we are] focused on these international things at the expense of some of these domestic issues that are really pressing around access to college and things like that.

What is most reflective of Greg's statement is that the push is from countries where students who enroll will be seen as "diverse," or not-white. Not only are universities aiming to admit international students, but they are also hoping to admit students of color outside of a domestic context. Universities get both students of color and increased tuition dollars. As a result, they receive double benefits in both capital and visible racial diversity metrics.

Amber reflected on this homogenization of identity across race, ethnicity, and nationality, a result of neoracist thinking about international students. She stated, "The other thing is at the university level; the phrase that is used a lot is 'diverse students.' And that's a catchall phrase for any person of color... it's okay to talk about race and ethnicity and nationality."

Jennifer agreed to note that there's "a lot of conflation between populations of color...they would report the number of racially and ethnically minoritized students.... And then when we go back in the numbers really we're talking about international students and not domestic racially and ethnically minoritized populations." Kathleen called the creation of this narrative of a massification of students of color a "myth." Jennifer reflected, "at my institution we have more students from one country than all domestically racially and ethnically minoritized students together."

This conversation harkens to a threat of neoliberal rhetoric creeping into doctoral admissions that challenges a historic focus on remedying the marginalization of domestic students of color. There is a continued narrative on campuses that having visually diverse students on campus raises the quality of education.⁶² New students are looking for diverse campuses and if universities can show that diversity in pamphlets, websites, and in their numbers, and do it with international students as well as domestic students of color, then they "win."⁶³

Once again, the intertwining nature of a capitalistic enterprise and the admission of students of color challenges education for education's sake and instead dehumanizes international students, reducing them to a dollar sign and the bottom

⁶² Ellen Berrey, *The Enigma of Diversity: The Language of Race and the Limits of Racial Justice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

⁶³ Nana Osei-Kofi, Lisette E. Torres, and Joyce Lui, "Practices of Whiteness: Racialization in College Admissions Viewbooks," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 16, no. 3 (2013): 385–405.

line. Kathleen continued discussing her understanding of the international graduate admissions process. She explicitly noted the financial component. She stated:

You think about the interest that these students are serving the institution, especially in the graduate level, I know there's like a financial component. If you're an international student, I know that you have to show that your parents can pay or that you have enough money to pay or your government has to be funding you. So there's this monetary incentive for the university, for universities broadly to bring in international students and they pay more. So, I think that it just really works out for the business model, capitalist way we see the trend of higher education broadly, so I think it may not even really be about diversity.

Complicating the understanding of international students as a monolith, the faculty in this study were acutely aware of the countries where the students were heavily recruited from and their ability to pay for and attend the university with little institutional support. Reflecting back to these faculty members' understandings of the purpose of higher education, some faculty felt a tension between admitting affluent students and providing broad access. Greg clarified this point:

All these international folks—[they] are affluent international folks for the most part. The international students tend to be more affluent, so in many ways, it doesn't speak to a lot of the issues and the mission of the university. I do question that around this international piece. The challenge is that, yeah, there's this globalization, but the globalization is really from people that have access to the internet and all of these resources.

He continued, "when we're saying 'international,' we're really talking about students who are Asian; students from China. Let's not pretend like 'Oh, look at that student from Germany!'.... They're really talking about Asian students because it's visible and there's a large population."

Roger and Amber echo Greg's sentiment with comments on their experiences, noting that these students are a "cash cow" (Roger) and "bodies to fill" (Amber); that is, institutions see international students as easy money and as a way to meet diversity quotas. What is less discussed by institutions, but understood by these faculty, is that students are seen as commodities, and treated as such once they arrive at the institution. Little attention is paid to the intricacies of national dynamics, language barriers, and college readiness.

Kathleen noted, "My question in the faculty meeting has always been 'How are we constructing environments for these students to be successful?' Because we're not." She continued by stating that it is "real cute" that universities want to admit students, but when they arrive on campus, the lack of support is "really problematic." As evidenced through interviews and collected demographic data, these faculties are concerned not only with knowledge dissemination, but also knowledge creation, equitable classroom environments, and issues of di-

versity and inclusion, including examination of structural oppressions. Jennifer added, “institutions do a lot around international student recruitment, but ya know, really not very much at all around their engagement, success, or persistence which I think goes back to the whole interest convergence piece.”

For many international students, success is dependent on being able to engage with faculty and other students despite language ability, and may also mean engaging with peers, socially acknowledging the complicated histories of their home countries. Faculty in this study were aware of some of these dynamics as a result of their experiences teaching in the classroom and working with an international student through research and noted that many of their faculty peers were not concerned with these dynamics despite the importance of understanding them.

Kathleen noted:

a lot of the doc students are coming with high TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores, and when they get into the classroom there's a lot of low conversational English proficiency and so a number of faculty members have been like 'Okay so we're not really sure what, ya know, what's happening?' We're not really sure about the learning environment about the community—the learning communities that are or are not being built in the classroom spaces, and we haven't as a faculty had conversations about our role in creating those spaces.

Faculty noted that when they are unsure about student admissions, they will interview students to attempt to assess readiness or ask for writing samples. However, they may ultimately admit those students due to institutional articulation agreements. This was reflected in Kathleen's experience in particular around her idea of “automatic admission.”

“The writing issue has come up in our admissions decisions. Do all international students write well? They need support, sometimes a lot of support. But we admit them with poor writing skills,” Kathleen said. “A lot of what we're seeing is do we have articulation agreements with certain universities in China? So most students are coming from these particular institutions, there also seems to be this sense of like an automatic admission for them.”

Lastly, concerning language dynamics, Roger shared his experience around admitting students from countries that has historical national conflicts, in this case between China and Indonesia. He asked rhetorically, “So did anybody ever think about the fact that like China and Indonesia there are some issues between these two places? And we're bringing students and not really talking about like sort of what kind of environment we wanna make it.” Once again, there are dynamics within international graduate admissions that are often overlooked or not understood when only considering the economic impact of admitting those students rather than considering them multifaceted human beings.

Analysis and Discussion

Since WWII, universities expanded their global footprint, and the United States solidified itself as the premier country of study for doctoral students from around the world.⁶⁴ However, faculty of color in this study resisted very specific practices around international student of color admission during the enrollment management process that conflated domestic students of color with international students of color and treated international students of color as commodities. This resistance to a neoliberal shift in admissions practices that concurrently has neoracist implications points to a nuanced understanding of how neoliberalism plays out in international admissions.

As one participant noted, “The international piece is a big push” and reflects an institutional reframing of diversity that conflates international students of color with domestic students of color. Analysis of these faculty narratives unveils a change on the participants’ campuses that highlights a neoliberal project of capital gain, domestic minority community dissolution, prestige increase, and global expansion vis-à-vis international admissions.⁶⁵ This global project is supported through recruiting and admitting international students, particularly those students from Asian countries such as China, India, Vietnam, and Nepal and South American countries like Brazil.⁶⁶ It is theorized that university leaders are rejecting individualization of student identity (in this case country of origin and the racialization of student body upon entry to a U.S. context) for a more convenient understanding of a “racial minority” student in order to drive capital accumulation and at the same time bolster prestige by highlighting “multicultural” campuses. Greg discussed that his university enrolled students from a few countries where there are affluent, well-educated students who bring their wealth to the United States and also countries that are “of color.” Therefore, not only is international student admission a neoliberal project, but the combination of internationalization and the need for “good” bodies of color makes it a neoracist project.

The intertwining phenomenon of universities stressing racial diversity, yet turning a liberal eye toward the circumstances by which many communities of color have been kept out of higher education requires administrations to then falsely justify reliance on international students of color at the expense of the

⁶⁴ Robert A. Rhoads and Amy Liu, “Globalization, Social Movements, and the American University: Implications for Research and Practice.” In *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, edited by J. C. Smart (New York: Springer, 2008), 273–315.

⁶⁵ Hamer and Lang, “Race, Structural Violence, and the Neoliberal University,” 897–912.

⁶⁶ Imanol Ordorika and Marion Lloyd, “International Rankings and the Contest for University Hegemony,” *Journal of Education Policy* 30, no. 3 (2015): 385–405.

enrollment of domestic students of color. As a secondary outcome, the universities are bolstered in prestige and regard. International students require less institutional financial support and are mainly supported by their country,⁶⁷ are productive in ways that support an academic capitalism regime (e.g., patents, adjunct teaching; Chellaraj, Maskus, and Mattoo 2008; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004), and as a result positively impact rankings and institutional prestige.⁶⁸ Some universities such as Iowa State University and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign impose a “tuition tax” onto international student tuition, thereby shifting the burden of supporting students back onto the students rather than the institutions that recruit and admit them. Ultimately, universities increase their profit margins, even at nonprofit universities.⁶⁹ Altbach (2016) wrote, “the universities that attract the most international students and scholars and host the largest numbers of postdocs and visiting scholars may tend to be ranked higher than others” (136).

Jennifer confirmed this when she said, “really we’re talking about international students and not domestic racially and ethnically minoritized populations” when she referred to diversity admissions. As market logics have crept into higher education since the mid-1970s,⁷⁰ the community has become less localized and more transnational and “universities shifted from their social institution character to their industry form to cope with attacks on their legitimacy.”⁷¹ Therefore, international admissions are highly valued despite a continuing need to create equitable admissions opportunities for domestic students of color. In essence, a public good mission of higher education has now become privatized.

Faculty in this study are particularly attuned to this continuing shift and engagement in market behaviors and the fact that their university leadership is engaging in a public deception, or “myth” as Kathleen called it, in conflating statistics on international students of color with domestic students of color and the issues that ensue when campuses do not take particular measures to support international students of color. This rhetoric has the implication of shifting the

⁶⁷ IIE (Institute of International Education), *Open Doors 2017 Executive Summary*, 2017.

⁶⁸ Blanca Delgado-Márquez, Nuria E. Hurtado-Torres, and Yaroslava Bondar, “Internationalization of Higher Education in University Institution Rankings: The Influence of National Culture,” *Journal of International Education and Leadership* 2, no. 1 (2012): 1–17.

⁶⁹ Philip G. Altbach and Jane Knight, “The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities,” *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11, no. 3/4 (2007): 290–305.

⁷⁰ Giroux, “Democracy in Crisis, the Specter of Authoritarianism, and the Future of Higher Education”, 101–113.

⁷¹ Rhoads and Liu, “Globalization, Social Movements, and the American University,” 273–315.

narrative of diversity discourse away from remedying historical representation and equity work for domestic students of color. What ensues is the creation and replication of a neoracist society.

Though neoracism as a framework has not been applied widely in higher education literature, the experiences of the faculty in this study lend credence to this theory. Neoracism reveals itself in the ways that liberal notions of identity are implicated in the (under)resourcing of campuses to support students. The lack of a critical understanding of the sociopolitical histories, languages, cultures, and experiences of international students applied to a U.S. context adds nuance to a CRT analysis of the experiences of students of color in higher education. Much like students of color are asked to fit into a system that is violent toward their bodies and being, international students of color are asked to do the same. Their bodies are racialized within the context of the United States and therefore are, at the minimum, susceptible to similar experiences of domestic students of color. Neoracism provides an additional layer of understanding the ways that, once again, language, cultural norms, histories, and ways of being influence the human experience. In these faculty member's views, university leaders can invest little aid and campus resources in international student admissions and success (Jennifer: "[institutions don't do] very much around their engagement, success, or persistence"), meet or exceed diversity measures (Amber: "Like bodies to fill"), and increase prestige and income (Roger: "they come from a privileged background").

Importantly noted by the faculty, there is also the potential for less academic success for international students of color as they deal with the resultants of neoracism. As Kathleen noted, "it's real cute that you want to recruit Chinese international students here, but then they get here, and they need things in order for them to be successful, and we aren't providing them, and so I think that's really problematic." Many universities are not situated to support international student learning and language challenges. There is also concern that some faculty do not have a significant understanding of global issues that may affect student interrelationships. As Roger noted, "we're bringing students and not really talking about like sort of what kind of environment we wanna make it and how we wanna help build community." As Hamer and Lang (2015) write, neoliberalism has the intended side effect of the dissolution of community in order to protect elite property, physical or otherwise, to maintain and increase capital assets. A lack of community formation may lead to the consequence of drop out, extended time to degree, and the continued dehumanization of international students.

While faculty noted that they fully supported the admissions of international students, they did not want the admissions of international students to take away from the admission of domestic students of color. They also did not want to make

those admissions decisions without the necessary support for international student success. As Kathleen questioned in her interview, “Do all international students write well? They need support, sometimes a lot of support.” Faculty of color understand their own experiences of marginalization and recognize the potentialities of marginalization for international students. This marginalization stems from some international students’ lack of capital, particularly those associated with navigational, linguistic, and social⁷² stemming from poor student services, general cultural adaptation, and a normative understanding of excellence situated within a majoritarian white supremacist context.⁷³ Faculty of color are concerned with the student experience of international students, how they and their faculty peers can support international students, and lack of support services for those students.

Implications

This study revealed the ways that faculty are perceiving the role of international admissions, the lack of support for international students, and therefore student experience and development. Implications support three areas of possible change. First, university administrators must be clearer about the purposes of international admissions and clearly explicate the role of international admissions as it relates to the broader mission and vision of the university. Beyond that, administrators should also delineate the ways that international student enrollment can fulfill certain outcomes that domestic students of color or other populations cannot whether that be around diversity-related outcomes, financial enhancements, or otherwise. To this end, universities must be more transparent about who is considered “diverse” by being specific when reporting statistics. International students of color are not the same as domestic students of color in experience, historicity, subjectivity, or knowledge-base. Therefore, conflating statistics of both groups to inflate racial diversity statistics does more to marginalize communities of color than it does to improve institutional prestige when the campus reality is inaccurate. It also reifies a liberal notion of identity and success at the detriment of all students of color. This is not to suggest that international students should not be admitted to U.S. institutions. Rather, these steps should be taken to provide a clear path of understanding for how each unit should be working with these students toward their overall success within the scope of the university’s mission.

Second, university administrators must find funding structures that will support the academic and social transition of international students into U.S.

⁷² Tara J. Yosso, “Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth,” *Race Ethnicity, and Education* 8, no. 1 (2005): 69–91.

⁷³ Lee and Rice, “Welcome to America? International Student Perceptions of Discrimination,” 381–409.

institutions. One way this may be done is through allocating the differential between domestic and international student tuition to student affairs units or specialized offices that support international students in the logistical maneuvering of visas, but more importantly, in the navigation of academic and social barriers to success. In these cases, money is being spent on international students and also does not place a tax upon them. International students should not be paying more than domestic students for support. These include conversational language skills, reading comprehension, understanding local cultural contexts, way-finding activities such as navigating a new city or finding housing and learning about institutional realities (e.g., policies, programs). Additionally, the university must create intentional spaces for domestic community members to interact in authentic dialogues with international community members.

Last, to address neoracism, faculty (including staff-instructors and contingent faculty) can begin to modify curriculums to include the narratives of international students in course readings and other curriculums. There is an inherent belief currently that international students are expected to perform and compete with domestic students by assimilating into a U.S. program. In situating international students of color as a commodity, it dehumanizes them and regards their success or lack thereof as secondary to income those students bring.

By addressing dehumanization by faculty, faculty create inclusive courses that signal to international students the importance of their lived experiences and to domestic students that this is an important community to provide focus. In STEM fields, where many of these students study, this may not be a major concern. However, datasets that include international students, examples that utilize international student issues, and conversations that are pertinent to global issues are keen areas where inclusion of international students in STEM are valid. Additionally, international students should be given the opportunity to meet with faculty outside of class time to review materials, prepare questions and comments ahead of a course session, and practice conversational English in order to be prepared for larger class discussion and to receive feedback. Faculty must address any instances of discrimination occurring within their purview and explain why discrimination is not a value of the university and the importance of diverse students and perspectives on campus. Faculty can then begin to question and illuminate the ways that systems of oppression are affecting international students.

Conclusion

These findings give nuance and expand upon the conversation around a growing issue on college campuses and within graduate education, internationalization, and globalization. Through these findings, there is a revealing of market-based logics, situated within the neoliberal theory, that define diversity

in broad terms that may be problematic (e.g., including international students in diversity). These trends reveal a troublesome myth spreading across U.S. college campuses. The myth argues that the current human economy in the United States is not sufficient and that universities must reach globally to seek superior collective mindfulness and economic growth. The myth forwards a liberal ethos that all students are the same regardless of ethnicity, nationality, generational status, ability, and gender. The myth highlights only the positive effects of globalization ignoring two centuries (and more) of structural whiteness built on a foundation of colonial rule. The myth is overtaking campuses to the detriment of the good public mission of higher education, in full favor of a capitalistic regime⁷⁴ and at the peril of the humanity of international graduate students.⁷⁵ Faculty of color in this study, who have lived racialized experiences, understand the opportunity for systemic oppressions and marginalization to affect the international student community and are resisting those behaviors while highlighting the ways that neoliberalism and neoracism play out in this sector of enrollment management. Ultimately, this broad paradigm shift warrants attention and faculty of color have the potential to provide insight on how to make that shift happen.

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⁷⁴ Hensley, Brad, Mika Galilee-Belfer, and Jenny J. Lee, "What Is the Greater Good? The Discourse on Public and Private Roles of Higher Education in the New Economy," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 35, no. 5 (2013): 553–567.

⁷⁵ Lee and Rice, "Welcome to America? International Student Perceptions of Discrimination," 381–409.

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3. Student Complaints: Performative or Passionate Utterances?

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Abstract: In a well-documented case from late 2016, Oxford University graduate, Faiz Siddiqui, sued his alma mater, claiming that the “appallingly bad tuition” he received cost him the first-class degree that he felt he should have received. In tracing how the rise in such complaints seems ineluctably linked to the increasing commodification of the sector, we ask what it means for a student to express her voice within the university. In doing this, we draw a contrast between the (safety of the) formal procedures to which many students resort when making a complaint, and the possibilities of addressing issues in a face-to-face encounter. To understand the differences in these two approaches, we make an unusual move to consider the work of J. L Austin (1962). We then outline Stanley Cavell’s criticisms of the formal procedures that underlie such utterances. We suggest that a commitment to passionate utterance along Cavellian lines, highlights not only the place of emotion in a complaint, but also the responsibility, and answerability, of each party to the other.

Keywords: student complaints, Cavell, Austin, passionate utterance, performatives

The Rise in Numbers of Student Complaints

In a current and well-documented legal case, Faiz Siddiqui, a graduate from Oxford University in the UK, sued the prestigious institution for £1 million pounds. In his claim for loss of earnings, Siddiqui argued that the ‘appallingly bad’ teaching he received as an undergraduate prevented him from getting a first-class degree, thus impacting upon his career outcomes, and preventing

him from becoming an international commercial lawyer (Pells 2017). He also claimed that receiving an upper second-class degree impacted on his health, a further factor in his claim for damages. The University stated that Siddiqui's case was baseless, but Siddiqui's claim was judged as legally reasonable, and in January 2017, the UK High Court ruled that 'the university has a case to answer, and that a trial should take place as soon as possible' (Pells 2017).¹ In a case from the United States, Jennifer Wright sued Walden University as part of a class action suit alleging that the University misled students about the time and money required to obtain advanced degrees online. She, along with other plaintiffs, alleged that the University, part of the parent distance learning company, Laureate Education, misrepresented how long it would take to gain a degree, and constantly changed study requirements. This left her \$224,000 in debt, and still without her doctoral degree (Schecter 2016).

These high-profile cases highlight not only the rise in the overall numbers of student complaints across the Higher Education (HE) sector, but also the measures that students are taking in terms of escalating complaints, and seeking forms of redress and compensation (Jones 2006). This rise in student complaints can be seen as a consequence of the increasing marketization, 'customerization' (Love 2008, 18) and 'corporatization' of higher education (Marginson 2013, 355). As student identities are reframed in marketized terms, that is, as 'customers' and 'consumers' of HE, the implication is that students have higher expectations of what they should receive from universities (Guolla 1999; Rolfe 2002; Mark 2013). 'Value for money' becomes akin to a 'gold standard' for Higher Education Institutions wishing to maintain their competitive advantage in an ever-expanding market (Wilkins et al. 2012; Dean and Gibbs 2015; Higdon 2016). If universities do not meet or exceed student expectations—a prerequisite for positive evaluations of service quality (Alves and Raposo 2009)—then complaints are likely to be made, whether this is done informally via word of mouth or more formally through an array of procedures and regulatory bodies (Khoo et al. 2017).

In such a highly marketized culture, perhaps it is not surprising that 'price consciousness' exists (Gursoy et al. 2007, 358), and that there is a direct link between price and propensity for complaining (Cooper-Hind and Taylor 2012). But the picture is far more complex, with complaints behaviour influenced by a whole range of personality and behavioural factors (Harris 2007; Hart and Coates 2010). Moreover, the number of formal complaints received may only be the tip of the iceberg, as students who are 'private complainers'—

¹ This case has now been formally resolved through the UK courts. The judge stated that Oxford University tutors could not be held responsible for Siddiqui achieving a 2:1 classification rather than a 1st, and he was not awarded financial compensation for this. For further information, see Rudgard (2018).

those confining their concerns to social media and feedback mechanisms—largely outnumber the ‘voicers’ who persist with seeking institutional redress (Millward 2016, 137–138). The dominance of market imperatives is seen in the strategic importance that universities give to rapid and effective settlement of complaints. Dissatisfied students can affect future student recruitment and funding by engaging in negative word of mouth comments, by refraining from making alumni contributions, and/or by going elsewhere for subsequent educational services (Khoo et al. 2017). As Wilkins et al. state, ‘achieving positive word of mouth from current students and alumni is a vital element of every institution’s promotional mix’ (2012, 544). Ensuring positive word of mouth comments and student–consumer loyalty—of fundamental importance to corporatized universities—is contingent upon student satisfaction (Vuori 2013; Santini et al. 2017). Any dissatisfaction, evidenced in student complaints, must be addressed before it is formalized, thus securing institutional reputation.

Complaints tend to be in relation to academic provision and programme delivery (including teaching, supervision or feedback); deficiencies in facilities (including car parking), and the behaviour of individual members of staff (Harris 2007). However, complaints in relation to academic matters heavily outweigh those related to services (Behrens 2015). Students evaluate the potential costs and benefits of making a complaint, considering issues such as the timescales (Cooper-Hind and Taylor 2012), negative impact on grades and the lecturer’s ‘punishment power’ (Lala and Priluck 2011, 241). While it is inevitable that there are power relations inherent in the academic-student relationship, these concerns are often addressed in codes of practice that emphasize confidentiality. Cooper-Hind and Taylor (2012) argue that, despite such codes, students still have worries over confidentiality that may prevent them from making a complaint, especially if the complaint is about a senior member of staff (given that they may have influence over the complaints procedure itself). Of course, universities seek to resolve complaints informally to minimize cost and reputational risk, but Behrens (2015) highlights that students are resorting to escalating complaints to bodies external to their university. It is to a discussion of the use of these formal procedures for complaints, independent of academic institutions, that we now turn.

The Externalizing and Formalizing of Student Complaints

We are less interested here in the types of informal complaints such as negative conversation that can take place between students, than in those formal complaints which are recorded and actioned, and which are increasingly common in a marketized system where students are re-positioned as consumers (Fulton Philips 2004; Lala and Priluck 2011). In particular, we want to highlight the way in which student complaints are not only formalized *internally*

in the university, but also to draw attention to the move to have them dealt with *externally* by independent bodies, and the courts. In the UK, the Quality Assurance Agency² has developed a framework for universities to follow in order to deal with student complaints effectively, and there are rights of appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) in England.³ In the United States, if student concerns are not addressed by the formal college procedures, then the complaint can be escalated to the State Department of Education or State Higher Education Agency, the final arbiter prior to litigation. In formalizing and externalizing student complaints, government and state bodies, as well as the courts, often refuse to deal with matters that are presented in terms of disagreements over ‘academic judgement’.

However, this is not the case where litigation is brought under consumer rights legislation. In Australia, for example, student complaints can be considered through the courts as matters of ‘consumer protection’, whereby bad teaching is dealt with as a case of ‘educational malpractice’ (Fulton Philips 2004, 42). From the students’ point of view, invoking the formal procedures of the university’s complaints system demonstrates that the matter is being taken seriously. Having a clearly defined complaints policy, with strict timescales and reporting mechanisms, does something more: it ensures that complaints are treated fairly, and that outcomes are broadly consistent, thus avoiding the reputational risk of complaints being escalated externally. However, there is a further consequence in that academic judgement, and trust, risks being diminished, though others view academic judgement as merely a ‘Get-Out-of-Jail-Free Card’ (Palfreyman 2010, 114).

The formalizing and externalizing of complaints is representative of a wider shift towards contractual student-academic, or student-institution, relationships. In a well-publicized legal ruling in the case of *Moran v. University College Salford* (1993), the court applied a ‘conventional contractual analysis to the student-university relationship’ (Fulton Philips 2004, 41).⁴ Nearly a

² The body for safeguarding standards of UK Higher Education wherever it is delivered around the world.

³ There is scant literature that discusses whether student complaints are more likely to be put forward in for-profit/private universities, or those publicly funded institutions. However, in England, all for-profit/private universities have been required, since 2015, to join the scheme set up by the OIA which hears cases referred from universities when internal procedures have been exhausted (see Behrens 2015).

⁴ In November 1993, Paul Moran brought a student complaint through litigation to be examined under contract law. Because of a clerical error, Moran was incorrectly offered a place on a *University College Salford* course; he accepted this offer but then the university refused him entry as he did not meet the requirements. Moran sought a mandatory injunction that he should be allowed onto the course but the judge ruled against this (Magrath 1993).

quarter of a century later, the idea of a contractual relationship is once again at the heart of higher education; indeed, it is now trumpeted as a guardian of student rights and protection. In one example, England's Office for Students consulted in December 2017 on the introduction of student contracts to address a perceived lack of consistency in universities' adherence to consumer protection law, and to guarantee standards in what amounts to the introduction of formal service-level agreements. Universities, mindful of such changes, take legal advice with regard to what is put into prospectuses and marketing campaigns, and so are concerned with limiting their liabilities (Jones 2006). In a startling example of this, the University of Chester, UK, has an explicit policy to limit its liabilities for: 'loss of profit, loss of earnings, loss of opportunity, disappointment, distress or injury to feelings' (Harris 2007, 571). Of course, the dangers with such contractual obligations are first, that the contract assures the student of a particular outcome, and second, that the contract could support weak forms of student entitlement that reduces the idea of a higher education to the supply of, and payment for, certain services (Finney and Finney 2010; Palfreyman 2010).

What the use of regulatory bodies and litigation shows is that there is an increasing tendency to resort to the safety of formal procedures in securing an effective outcome. Students value the 'safety' of the structured procedural approach that avoids the risk of embarrassing confrontation with faculty staff. Universities, for their part, rely on their own internal formal procedures to protect their interests in cases where their preferred use of informal resolution has failed, and so avoid the exposure that appeals to external agencies and litigation can bring. But there is a further issue here to which we want to draw attention; this concerns the way in which such developments affect university communications with their students in the complaints process, and more particularly, the kinds of dialogue that take place between academics and students in the invoking of a complaint. To illustrate this, we offer below a dialogue. Although it is a fictional account, it draws heavily on our respective experiences of working and studying in a contemporary university.

Scenario

A final year university student and her friend from the same course have come to see their Head of Department (HoD). They are all in the HoD's office, the students sat opposite the HoD across a large desk.

HoD: Good morning, how are you?

Student: Fine, thanks.

HoD: How can I help today?

- Student: Well, I've come to see you because we wanted to talk to you about something. I, er, want you to...It's about my research project course.
- Friend: (*interrupts*) She wants to complain...
- HoD: Oh, ok (*shuffles papers nervously*) I just want to be clear. Are you both wanting to make a complaint, or is it just one of you?
- Friend: No, it's just her (gesturing to her friend)
- HoD: (*addressing the student's friend*) Well, it's fine that you're here to support. That's ok, and it is in the University Regulations. But you must let your friend give me all the details—you understand?
- Friend: Yeah
- HoD: (*turning towards the student*) Now, what's this all about?
- Student: I don't really know what I'm meant to be doing for my research project. My supervisor—well, he's not helping me at all. Other students in the group are getting lots of help from their supervisors, and I haven't had any proper feedback. He said it was ok—what I was going to do—then when I showed him it again, he said it wasn't very good. I just don't know what to do next. I need to get a good mark for this.
- HoD: I see. Who's your supervisor?
- Student: Dr Jones—I've only met him a couple of times. When he's in his office he's always really busy and says the project is about independent learning, but others in the group are getting a lot more help. I just don't think that's fair.
- Friend: (*interrupts*) Yeah, I've seen some of the emails she's sent, asking for help, and if she gets a reply, the advice is really vague and confusing...
- HoD (*interrupts*) I know this is frustrating, but if it's your friend who's making the complaint, I really need to hear from her. (*addressing the student again*) So, are you saying that you haven't had any tutorial support for your project?
- Student: Erm, well, I had a couple of meetings when we started, last month, but then it's just been by email, and he's not answering my questions really; I'm not getting the right support. I don't want to get a bad mark, and the handbook says that we should have meetings every 2 weeks with our supervisor, and that we should get detailed feedback.
- HoD: And those meetings aren't happening?
- Student: No...not really. So I'm complaining.
- HoD: (*after a brief pause*) Have you spoken to Dr Jones about this?

Student: Er...No, erm, not really.

HoD: But I think that would be a sensible course of action; things might be resolved easily if you said to Dr Jones that you need to see him for support with your project. Perhaps follow it up with an email with some specific questions too. You could copy me into the email if that helps (*smiles broadly at the student in a reassuring way*).

Student: I know, I've tried to say I need more support, but...but I'd rather just make a complaint. I want to know something's going to be done.

HoD: Well, if you feel so strongly about this, then there is the University complaints procedure. Have you read it? I'll print you off a copy. Do you really want to go down this route?

Student: Yeah...Not sure...I suppose...(*shrugs her shoulders in an indifferent manner*)...if it gets things done without having to speak to him; that'd be embarrassing.

HoD: Well, the procedure is you will need to put your complaint in writing, stating all the details, people, dates etc, and what you have tried to do to resolve this already. The university will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days, and then the Dean of School will appoint someone to make a formal investigation. We will then write to you within 4 weeks detailing what action will be taken. You also have the right to appeal if your complaint is unsuccessful. It's all here in the complaints procedure (*handing the student a document*).

Student: Thanks

HoD: One last thing: I need to have this in writing from you before I invoke the procedure. Ok? And it's important that you don't try to sort things out yourself now while the investigation is ongoing. Just keep any appointments that you have for supervision, and keep on doing your work. It's important that you keep this process confidential and don't talk about it with others in the group—or with Dr Jones, of course (*laughs nervously*). You don't appear terribly upset by all of this—even though this is, of course, a difficult time for you—but if you need any extra support, remember you can always talk to your personal tutor, or there's the University Counselling Service. Is all that clear, or do you have any further questions?

Student: No, it's fine. Thanks. Bye.

Many academics working in contemporary universities, and even students themselves, may well recognize aspects of the conversation in the scenario above. We use this scenario as a heuristic to open up our thinking about the kinds of dialogue that characterize many instances of student complaints. Based on our experiences of working in higher education, and of encountering and addressing complaints, we are not suggesting that complaints always follow this kind of process, or escalate as quickly as this example suggests.⁵ Rather the purpose of the scenario is merely to illustrate that complaints tend to follow strict formal procedures. More importantly, it highlights the proceduralized forms of language that inevitably dehumanize and hinder the dialogue in common between human subjects. Just as the language used is constrained by a ‘script’ (for what is acceptable to say, and by whom), so too the relationship itself seems limited to what the procedures allow (what the role of each party is and how they are responsible to each other). In our scenario, the language used is ineluctably linked to the making of the complaint itself; the language used *is* the initiation of the procedure—a kind of performance. Of course, we are not saying that formal procedures are unnecessary. Having clearly laid out procedures is helpful for students and for faculty staff; there is protection for all parties and this helps to ensure that complaints are dealt with fairly and with a degree of consistency. However, our aim is to draw attention to where procedures are valorized at the expense of engagement with the other in dialogue.

Our scenario illustrates a kind of over-reliance on, or prioritization of, the procedural over the personal. The Head of Department, keen to resolve the student’s complaint, turns to, and relies heavily on, the university’s formal procedures. This is shown in the way she talks to the friend: the regulations stipulate that the complainant can bring a friend to act as a support, but must make the complaint herself. And so we see the Head of Department enforcing this regulation, and preventing the friend from speaking. So she follows policy and procedure, but in so doing, is stripped of her academic judgement to resolve matters locally. And the student is happy to proceed in this way (because she does not want to engage in dialogue with Dr Jones, and now perceives that she is being taken seriously, and feels safe in the process. The student perhaps also recognizes that the Head of Department is either inept at communicating, or feels constrained in what she should say).

In thinking further about the language in our scenario—typical, perhaps, of some contemporary universities where there is an increasing culture of

⁵ This example demonstrates that formal procedures are clearly in place for dealing with student complaints; however, they tend to be institutionally specific, with a range of formal appeal processes at a state or national level.

student complaints—we turn to the work of J.L. Austin on performatives in language, and to Stanley Cavell’s development of Austin’s ideas in his concept of passionate utterance. This may appear, at first, a somewhat awkward and unusual move. But we will show how certain characteristics in the conversation in the scenario are significant for thinking about the procedures involved in making a complaint (and we will lay these out in relation to Austin’s work), and for re-thinking the complaint as a site of encounter (for which we turn to Stanley Cavell’s writing about passionate utterance). First, in order to provide the context for our discussions, we will give a brief overview of Austin’s work on language and, in particular, on the idea of the performative.

Austin and Performatives

One of John Austin’s major contributions to contemporary philosophy has been his idea that some uses of language have a performative dimension. This is in contrast to what Austin calls the concern of the other philosophers of language with ‘constatives’—assertions concerning the state of affairs that can be analysed in terms of their truth or falsity. Austin’s particular interest was in types of utterance that could not be thought of in terms of truth or falsity, but were equally not nonsense statements. He called these ‘performatives’ and claimed that their special quality was that in their saying, they effected an action that could not usually be performed by any other means. In his lectures in Sweden (1959), the recordings of which have recently come to light, Austin gives the following as examples of performatives: I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth; I apologise; I beg your pardon; I bid you welcome; I warn you, and I advise you. Austin writes this about such utterances: ‘If a person makes an utterance of this sort we should say that he is doing something rather than merely saying something...In saying what I do, I actually perform that action...I am indulging in it’ (Austin 1979, 235). For Austin, to say the words ‘I pronounce you man and wife’ (as part of the marriage ceremony), the priest is not merely reporting the fact to the assembled guests that the couple are now legally married, he is *effecting* their marriage through uttering a particular form of words. To say the words *is*—in some senses—to perform the action.⁶

⁶ We cite Austin’s original texts here. However, since the original publication of these, there has been a long debate not only over speech act theory itself, but also over its educational implications. Jacques Derrida has critiqued Austin for being overly concerned with the external context of speech acts without considering the ‘iterability of language’ itself (1988; Munday 2010, 286). For a fuller discussion of this, see Munday

But Austin warns that to simply say the words is not all that is necessary to perform the action. A number of conditions must be satisfied for an utterance to be classed as performative. Austin provides six rules, or conditions, that need to be met in order for the utterance to be classified as a performative—for it to be ‘happy’ (Austin 1979). The utterance must take place as part of a conventional procedure, where the context and people involved are appropriate. The procedure must be executed completely and in an appropriate fashion, and the utterance must be backed by appropriate feelings by the people involved. These people must conduct themselves accordingly afterwards. Austin (1962) calls these happiness or ‘felicity conditions’ for performative utterances. So, for example, actors saying the words ‘I do’ as part of a wedding enacted in a film is not a performative utterance; they are not enacting their marriage. In this example, a number of Austin’s felicity conditions are not met: the words are not spoken in an appropriate context (they are uttered on the film set rather than in the church or registry office); the words are not backed by appropriate feelings (of love, commitment etc.) by the couple involved; and they do not conduct themselves as a married couple afterwards (off the set).

Austin’s felicity conditions lay out the formal procedures for the effective operation of performatives in language. Having set these out, Austin (1962) then discovers that what holds for performatives also holds for constatives—that for a performative utterance to be happy, it must also be true (there would be no sense, for example, in saying, ‘I apologise’ if the person saying it does not have the feelings of remorse, and so for a performative to be happy, it must also be true). But this ‘crisis’ in Austin’s account, to which Cavell draws our attention (2005, 166), is not the main point for our discussions here. It is rather that the strict and formal procedures for performatives are foregrounded over—as Cavell notes—the issue of the emotions and the expressive in speech (and so the motivation for the speech). Cavell puts it like this: ‘Austin’s avoiding as far as he could the issue of passion or expression in speech leaves what he does say about it with the air of conceding that the passional side of utterance is more or less a detachable issue’ (2005, 163).

To see how the formal procedures of the felicity conditions that mark the performative play out in language, let us return briefly to the scenario. That we are dealing with a performative here is clear: when the student says:

(2011). In terms of how Austin’s ideas have been taken up and discussed in education, Renia Gasparatou’s recent work (2018, 1) has advocated that we ‘revisit speech act theory and treat it as an educational theory’. Austin’s work has also been more broadly discussed specifically in relation to higher education (see Peters 2004; Fisher 2010; Munday 2010; Fulford 2012; Skilbeck 2014).

'I'm complaining', she is not merely reporting a complaint, she is *effecting* it, bringing it into being, so to speak. But the felicity conditions for the performative here are also evident in this scenario. First, the context is appropriate, and there is a conventional procedure for complaining (that the student first tries to resolve matters with the tutor concerned; that there is a formal procedure to which matters can be escalated; that there is a procedure for investigation of a formal complaint). Second, the persons involved are appropriate (note how the Head of Department is assiduous in allowing only the student involved to effect the complaint). Third, there is a procedure that must be followed (the written complaint must come from the student before the Head of Department can investigate further). Fourth, the student seems to have appropriate feelings to justify a complaint, and is reminded how to conduct herself following the meeting as someone who has lodged a complaint.

While we have used the scenario as an example of performative utterance that is felicitous according to Austin's criteria, it also illustrates three particular aspects of student complaints that we further want to highlight: (i) First, that there is an avoidance of engaging with the other: the student chooses to avoid an encounter with Dr Jones, or to make her complaint to him directly. She prefers to escalate the issue, and to invoke formal procedures, partially to avoid the embarrassment of having to speak to her tutor, but also just to get something done. (ii) Second, the reliance on formal procedures affords a measure of 'safety' for the student, yet leaves little room for the relational and the expression of emotion. The student shrugs indifferently when asked about the complaint, and the Head of Department notices how unmoved the student seems by making the complaint. Of course, this is not to say that all students behave in this way when making a complaint, or that complaints are not genuinely felt. But it is to highlight what Cavell calls the 'imperative of expression' in our language that is 'less in need of weeding than nourishment' (2005, 188). Without this expressiveness, we are, as Cavell puts it: 'stopped short in the obligation to make our desires, hence our actions, intelligible...and hampered in our demand and right to be found intelligible in those desires and actions' (2005, 188). (iii) Third, there is a sense here that there is a lack of risk (of embarrassment, of exposure etc.) in the invoking of the formal procedures, and the confidentiality that these bring. These features strengthen the felicity of the formal complaint procedure for the student. Cavell's concern is not with the conventional procedures of Austin's performatives, but with the expressiveness inherent in what he calls our 'passionate utterance' (2005, 155).⁷

⁷ While Cavell is not normally considered a philosopher who writes directly about education, the educative force of his work has been widely recognized (Fulford 2012;

Cavell and Passionate Utterance

The American philosopher Stanley Cavell outlines how, in the face of criticism of the binary distinction between constatives and performatives, Austin develops a ternary model of different aspects in language: the locutionary force of words (where we simply say something meaningful); the illocutionary force (where we do something *in* saying something) and the perlocutionary effect of our words (we do something *by* saying something). The illocutionary force of our words relates to acts of *performance*, to performatives—hence Austin’s interest in them. But for Cavell, things are rather different; if Austin is somewhat dismissive of perlocutions, then Cavell *pursues* them. Cavell finds that the idea of doing something by saying something is ineluctably linked with the idea of an encounter with the other that is marked by the passion in our speech. He critiques Austin for being ‘skittish about emotion’; that in his focus on the felicity conditions which make an utterance count as a performative, he neglects the ‘passions, or say, the expressive, in speech’ (2005, 159). Ian Munday argues that, for Cavell:

Taking seriously the importance of the perlocutionary effects of language is to acknowledge the individual/expressive uses of speech in which people establish relationships with another (2009, 63).

For Cavell, the perlocutionary effect of language is seen in what he terms ‘passionate utterance’. This idea might seem suggestive of strong desire, and perhaps brings to mind certain contexts: the intimate exchange between lovers, or even a frenzied argument between sworn enemies. Though these might well be the scene of passionate utterance, they are extreme examples. Cavell’s passionate utterance might well take place in much more mundane contexts (the conversation between a Head of Department and a student, perhaps?). It is not as if Cavell is always thinking of the extreme points of passion, but also of the everyday expression of our feelings that are characteristic of our ordinary lives. In this sense, even the expression of a feeling of indifference might be thought of as passionate utterance. Indeed, one of Cavell’s examples of passionate utterance is, ‘I’m bored’ (2005, 177).

In developing his examples, Cavell takes Austin’s six felicity conditions for performatives, and provides analogous conditions for passionate utterances, in

Saito and Standish 2012). The relevance of Cavell’s work on passionate utterance for education – particularly moral education – has been explored (see Munday 2010; Skilbeck 2014).

an attempt to extend Austin's theory. Cavell writes that he is trying to: 'determine how...[Austin's] theory of speech as action may be extended, in a sense re-begun, in order to articulate a theory of speech as passion' (1997, 28). We now briefly outline these moves below.

From Avoidance to Invitation to Exchange

In passionate utterance, one is moved to put oneself, and one's relationship with the other, at risk. This is not merely invoking a procedure as in Austin's performatives, but inviting exchange; this might be accepted by the other, but equally might be denied, postponed or left unfulfilled. In inviting exchange, there is a 'demand from you for a response in kind, one you are in turn moved to offer' (Cavell 2005, 181). What it is we are doing in conducting a passionate utterance is nothing less than 'staking our future' together (Cavell 2005, 185), putting the future of our relationship at risk—if you decline my invitation to exchange then there is inevitably nothing left to say. Cavell summarizes it like this: 'in acknowledging a mode of speech... through which... in confronting you, I declare my standing with you...demanding a response in kind from you...so making myself vulnerable...[we are] staking our future' (2005, 187). It is this kind of invitation to exchange that is avoided in the scenario we presented. In the reliance on the security of proceduralized forms of 'dialogue', the Head of Department and the student both secure their own positions, thus avoiding any possibility of vulnerability. What is missing, however, is an encounter with the other in which there is the kind of dialogue founded on mutual understanding; it is marked not by separateness and detachment, but rather by inescapable relation.

From the Procedural to the Passional

Whereas for Austin's performatives to be felicitous, the staging and setting must adhere to conventional procedures, for Cavell, speaking from my passion is 'grounded in my being *moved* to speak'. There are no formal procedures. Cavell resists any succinct, or easy definition of passionate utterance, yet points (in a rather impish way) to Austin's felicity conditions for performatives (2005, 180–182), and suggests some analogous conditions for perlocutions. What these demonstrate is that, unlike the ritual performance that marks Austin's performatives, there is no accepted conventional procedure and effects for passionate utterances (or perlocutions). In passionate utterance, it is clear that passion itself has a role to play in successfully executing the perlocutionary effects of our words. Cavell writes: 'A performative utterance is an offer of participation in the order of law.' But he goes on: 'And

perhaps we can say: A passionate utterance is an invitation to improvisation in the disorders of desire' (2005, 185). In passionate utterance we must actually be 'suffering the passion' (2005, 181). This means that we do not: 'stop at what we should or ought to say, nor at what we may and do say, but take in what we must and dare not say, or have it at heart to say, or are too confused or too tame or wild or terrorized to say or to think to say' (Cavell 2005, 185). Such dialogue is markedly absent from our scenario, which is marked instead by dispassionate speech in the name of objectivity and compliance with the procedures. In fact, the very thought of the student talking with her friends, or with Dr Jones, and perhaps of exposing the rawness of her emotion, leads the Head of Department to laugh nervously. Safety, it seems, is in the procedural.

From Safety to Risk

The spoken exchange that is at the heart of Cavellian passionate utterance is one that does not sit easily with a view of conversation between individuals as chatter or mere idle talk. Using the title of another of Cavell's works here, in answer to the question *Must We Mean What We Say?*, the appropriate response seems to be a resounding yes. Munday writes that 'the element of risk that characterises Cavell's passionate utterance involves freedom to say what it is difficult to say—to be confrontational when necessary—to say what one has to say' (2009, 71). There is something here that resonates with Michel Foucault's discussion of the risk that *parrhēsia*, frank speaking, entails (2001). Such speaking is denied in the scenario, with the Head of Department directly instructing the student not to talk to Dr Jones. But Cavell reminds us that 'each instance of [the passionate utterance] directs, and risks, if not costs, blood' (2005, 187).

Throughout Cavell's work, we find him repeatedly returning to examples from literature, film and television, and music—among many others to Shakespeare, Coleridge, Poe, to 1930s Hollywood film and to jazz. Vincent Colapietro, in writing Cavell's 'literary achievement', argues that 'his philosophical accomplishment is inseparable from his literary practice' (2012, 123). But it is in Cavell's discussion of voice (in philosophy; his own philosophical voice, and the repression and recovery of voice) that he turns to opera. He writes: 'I provisionally characterise the medium of opera as music's exploration of its affinities with expressive or passionate utterance...[it] allow[s] the study of opera to inspire philosophy's interest in passionate speech' (2005, 15). In finding a theory of passionate speech in opera, Cavell draws examples from the following: *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Carmen*, *La Bohème*,

Otello and Lucia di Lammermoor. In another example, he uses Wagner's 1845 opera, *Tannhäuser* (Cavell 2005). The plot, on the theme of sacred and profane love, runs like this: Heinrich Tannhäuser, a minstrel knight, returns from the mythical world of Venus and her pleasures, and meets pilgrims who remind him of the beautiful Elisabeth (who has been pining for him in his absence). Tannhäuser and Elisabeth are reunited at a song contest where Elisabeth confronts Tannhäuser as to his absence. The libretto runs like this:

TANNHÄUSER

O princess!

ELISABETH

Heavens! Do not kneel! Leave me!

I may not see you here!

TANNHÄUSER

You may! O stay

and let me remain at your feet!

ELISABETH

Rise, I beg you!

You must not kneel here, for this hall
is your kingdom. Arise!

Accept my thanks for your return!

Where have you tarried so long?

TANNHÄUSER

Far from here,

in very distant lands. Dark oblivion
has fallen between yesterday and today.

All memory has suddenly deserted me
and one thing only must I remember,
that I never dared hope to greet you again
nor raise my eyes to you.

ELISABETH

What was it then that led you back?

TANNHÄUSER

It was a miracle,

a mysterious, mighty miracle!

ELISABETH

This miracle I praise

from the depths of my heart!

Forgive me if I know not what I say!

I am in a dream, and more foolish than a child.

helpless before the might of this marvel.

I scarcely know myself any longer: o help me
 solve the riddle in my heart!
 To minstrels' beguiling music I formerly
 lent a willing and a constant ear;
 their singing and their paeans
 seemed a delightful recreation.
 But what a strange new life
 your song aroused in my breast!
 Now I was as if wracked with pain,
 now as if pierced with sudden joy.
 Emotions I had never felt!
 Longings I had never known!
 What once had delighted me had vanished
 before these yet unnamed raptures!
 And then when you left us,
 my peace and joy were gone;
 the melodies the minstrels sang
 seemed stale to me, and cheerless their ideas.
 In dreams I felt dull pain;
 waking, I was filled with troubled fancies;
 joy had fled from my heart —
 Heinrich! What did you do to me? (Wagner 1845, Act 2, Scene 2).

Cavell finds that Elisabeth's emotional plea to Tannhäuser with the words: 'Heinrich! What did you do to me?' is an example of passionate utterance. In fact, this section of the opera illustrates the features that Cavell finds definitive for such utterances. There are several invitations to exchange. First, Tannhäuser appeals to Elisabeth with the exclamation, 'O princess!' This invitation is initially declined when Elisabeth responds: 'Do not kneel! Leave me! I may not see you here!' But she then offers further invitations to exchange, as *she* is moved to ask: 'Where have you tarried so long?', and 'What was it then that led you back?' That the answers to her questions are not straightforward, and that despite these questions, what follows this meeting is a love duet, illustrates that passionate utterance is not marked, unlike Austin's performative, by any conventional procedure. The iterative nature of passionate utterance is highlighted by Cavell when he writes: 'In the mode of passionate exchange, there is no final word, no uptake or turndown, until a line is drawn, a withdrawal is effected, perhaps in turn to be revoked' (2005, 183). The passional in speech—at the extremes of emotion—is central to this scene. Both characters are moved to speak, and are suffering the passion. Elisabeth is being 'racked with pain' and 'pierced with sudden joy'. But the talk is also of the everyday: where Tannhäuser has been, and why he has been away so long. There is risk in this encounter, too. Risk that costs blood. In the closing scenes, the pair's encounter leads not to happiness, but to their respective grief and death.

Towards Passional Speech in Student Complaints

Cavell's example from *Tannhäuser* may seem a long way from the encounter between the Head of Department and the student in the scenario we presented. But there is something in the distinction between Austin's performative, and Cavell's idea of passionate utterance, that we find helpful in thinking about how complaints might be addressed in higher education. We stress that we are not seeking to suppress legitimate student complaints, nor are we claiming that there should not be published procedures for addressing complaints. We are also not offering the idea of passionate utterance as a theory to repair—in the manner of a panacea—the kind of proceduralized dialogue that we argue tends to be relied on in addressing formal complaints. We are, however, drawing attention to the way that such procedures can, in seeking to provide a 'safe' and confidential process, lead to a form of detachment. In the invocation of formal procedures, and the escalation of complaints, the student is cocooned in a system (something like Austin's 'order of law'). The demand placed on the 'other' here is simply to fill in some paperwork—to encounter the other genuinely would unnecessarily complicate and delay matters. While there is a kind of 'safety' and detachment built in to the complaints process which is valuable in terms of keeping the process consistent, and indeed in 'protecting' the student, this is to the detriment of the expressive in our speech—to participation in 'the disorders of desire' (Cavell 2005, 185). The passional or expressive nature of the complaint is often lost in the drive to invoke and follow procedures correctly. What results is an apparent lack of emotion and avoidance of the other, with the passional aspects lost in the service of a means–ends calculation of utility.

Our scenario also showed that there was no "invitation to exchange"—at least in the way that Cavell understands this. No encounter or conversation (from the Latin *com vertere*—turning together) takes place between the student who is complaining and the tutor concerned. For Cavell, such avoidance is nothing less than the 'denial of the human self' in the process (1979, 154). As he puts it, 'saying something is never *merely* saying something, but is saying something with a certain tune and at a proper cue and while executing the appropriate business' (Cavell 1994, 30). The thoughts, feelings and emotions that compel one to speak cannot be separated out from what is said and what is spoken about; instead these aspects of an utterance are central to the perlocutionary speech act, to passionate utterance. Complaints made that engage the other; that are the context for a conversation in which we are moved to speak; that allow us to make ourselves intelligible to others, are those that are risky. But they are ones in which we are staking our future together.

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4. *The Autopsy of Quality in Online Higher Education*

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Abstract: The purpose of this essay is to critically and philosophically explore the role of and impetus for quality assurance regimes in online education and their most salient manifestation, the Quality Matters program. The author argues that online courses are particularly vulnerable to autopsic quality examinations under neoliberal rationality as a result of their corporeal, digital nature. This essay will also consider the implications for faculty and others who must abide by and perform quality in online higher education and will consider ways in which those facing the incursion of quality assurance in online education can resist its threats and coercions, leveraging the promise of the liberatory aspects of distance education.

Keywords: quality assurance, distance education, Quality Matters, audit, autopsy

Online education has become a pervasive and embedded instructional modality in American higher education, with more than a quarter of all students taking some courses at a distance and another 14% enrolled in exclusively online courses. The vast majority of these students attend public institutions, dispelling any suggestion that this is a largely for-profit phenomenon.¹ With no signs of abating in the public sector, online education is a space in need of increased and continued critical inquiry.

Concomitant with the growth in online education has been increased pressure from institutions, administrations, lawmakers, accreditors, and the

¹ I. Elaine Allen et al., "Online Report Card: Tracking Online Education in the United States," 2016, <http://onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/online-report-card.pdf>.

public to regulate the quality of online courses. Mandates to ensure and certify online course quality have been initiated at the state, institution, and academic unit levels. For example, in my home state of Florida, the Florida Board of Governors has declared a goal of ensuring that 90% of online courses at Florida's public universities bear a "high-quality" rating.² No such goal exists for other instructional modalities.

For some, this might lead to the question of why online courses have been subjected to higher levels of scrutiny. Is it because popular perceptions of online education as being of low quality continue to persist, despite a body of research suggesting otherwise? Or is there the possibility of a deeper, more complex machination at work, specific to the intricacies and vulnerabilities of online education?

The purpose of this chapter is to critically explore the role of and impetus for quality assurance regimes in online education, as well as the implications for faculty and others who must abide by and perform quality in online higher education.³ Furthermore, this chapter will consider ways in which those facing the incursion of quality assurance in online education can resist its threats and coercions, leveraging the promise of the liberatory aspects of distance education.

Quality and Online Higher Education

An inquiry into the roles of quality assurance should begin with an exploration of what is meant by "quality." The idea of quality assurance is an import from the world of business and finance, where the definition of "quality" has assumed different meanings in different historical and material contexts. These different definitions include conformance to specifications, value for money, and the degree to which the expectations of customers are met.⁴ Even those who advocate the implementation of quality assurance programs struggle with defining it. Returning to my example of Florida, the Board of Governors Online Education 2025 Strategic Plan suggests that:

² Florida Board of Governors, "Online Education 2025 Strategic Plan," 2015, https://www.flbog.edu/board/office/online/_doc/strategic_planning_online_ed/2015_11_05%20FINAL_StrategicPlan.pdf.

³ I am fully aware that by defining quality assurance as a "regime," I signal a certain criticality toward the topic. By regime, I broadly mean a system of institutionalized power with embedded practices and norms. This is my own definition. Making no claim of objectivity, I fully embrace the authoritarian connotation of the word.

⁴ Carol A. Reeves and David A. Bednar, "Defining Quality: Alternatives and Implications," *The Academy of Management Review* 19, no. 3 (1994): 419–445.

the “quality” of online education can be complex and difficult to define. In fact, different organizations define quality in a variety of ways, including the number of students that are successfully completing courses, comparison to face-to-face instruction, the number of support services, or students’ assessments. Various organizations are also recognized as curating best practices, distributing those best practices, and developing guidelines for evaluating those practices based upon their organization’s viewpoint of quality. Each organization differs slightly in its definition of “quality.”⁵

Given the nebulous and contentious nature of the definition of “quality,” it may be useful, analytically, to position it in relation to a similar, but distinctly different discourse, that of “excellence.” Bill Readings’ compelling polemic on the corporatization of the university describes the shift in the purpose of the university from the University of Culture to the University of Excellence.⁶ If, according to Readings, “excellence” refers to a discourse that is “entirely meaningless, or to put it more precisely, non-referential,”⁷ then perhaps “quality” might be seen as a related (and possibly inverse) discourse that includes specific and measurable referents and corresponding performances, although the resultant degree of “meaning” may be similarly problematic or questionable. As in other quality assurance regimes in higher education, such as regional accreditation bodies, those in online education rely on rubrics or checklists of specific standards to determine the extent of the quality of the course or program in question; these standards comprise the specific referents of a given regime of quality.

In response to the increased scrutiny of quality in online higher education, a veritable panoply of quality assurance regimes has emerged, including the Quality Matters (QM) Program, the Online Learning Consortium Quality Scorecard, the Blackboard Catalyst Exemplary Course Award, and the Open SUNY Course Quality Review (OSCQR). Notably, each of the popular programs except for OSCQR is operated by third-party organizations that are unaffiliated with higher education institutions, and both the QM rubric and Online Learning Consortium scorecard are only available to paid subscribers of their respective programs. This may raise questions about the proprietary nature of quality and the profit-seeking behavior of private firms that make claims on the quality of education. Despite the existence of these myriad quality assurance regimes in online higher education, I focus my analysis in

⁵ Florida Board of Governors, “Online Education 2025 Strategic Plan,” 2.

⁶ Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

this chapter on the QM program, as it seems to be the overwhelmingly predominant form used by institutions today.⁸

QM is a nonprofit organization that facilitates a peer-reviewed quality assurance program for online courses and online aspects of hybrid or blended courses. The QM program evaluates courses based on a rubric of eight categories, each containing between four and nine standards, comprising a total of 43 items that are weighted on a three-point scale. The broad categories include elements of course navigation, learner support, accessibility, and, most crucially, alignment between and among measurable course- and unit-level learning objectives, instructional materials, and assessment instruments.

QM reviews are conducted by a team of QM-certified peer reviewers comprising one reviewer who is a subject matter expert in the content area of the course being certified, at least one reviewer who is external to the institution submitting the course, and a QM-certified “Master Reviewer.”⁹ These reviewers are granted access to a version of a completed, “mature,” online course that has been stripped of all student activity.¹⁰ The remaining course shell may contain the syllabus, instructional materials, assignments and tests, discussion prompts, meta-instructional items (such as instructions, lists of learning objectives, rubrics, and policies), and records of one-way communications from instructors to students. Independently, the reviewers evaluate the course and determine whether each standard has been “met” or “not met.”¹¹ To successfully pass a QM review and be designated as a certified quality course, all standards reflecting a point value of 3 must be met and 85% of the total point value of all standards (or 84 of 99 points) must be earned.¹² As of September 2017, a fee of \$1,400 is assessed for a QM review, or \$1,000 for QM subscriber institutions.¹³

⁸ I am unaware of any empirical evidence comparing adoption rates of different online education quality assurance programs. However, Quality Matters is the only program that has a series of regional and national conferences, special issues dedicated to it in academic journals, statewide initiatives like the one described herein, and so on. It is the only program whose parent organization exists only for quality assurance; the other programs are offshoots of organizations with broader aims.

⁹ Quality Matters, “Review Process for Course Design,” 2018, <https://www.qualitymatters.org/qm-membership/faqs/how-course-review-works>.

¹⁰ Quality Matters, “Preparing for a QM Course Review,” 2017, <https://www.qualitymatters.org/qm-membership/faqs/course-review-preparation>.

¹¹ Quality Matters, “Review Process for Course Design.”

¹² Quality Matters, “Quality Matters Rubric Standards, Fifth Edition, 2014, with Assigned Point Values,” 2014.

¹³ Quality Matters, “2017 Fees for Memberships,” 2017, <https://www.qualitymatters.org/qm-membership/faqs/2017-fees>.

The quality assurance review can be interpreted as a form of audit in that it is intended to responsabilize and accountabilize in what Power calls a “ritual of verification”: faculty members should be held answerable for ensuring that their courses meet certain standards of quality in order to provide students with the best possible learning experiences.¹⁴ These standards are external to and imposed on faculty, and the criteria of quality are presumed to be universal.

Similar to Readings’ characterization of excellence as “incontestable ground,”¹⁵ quality standards seem natural, normal, and unquestionable; “any question of...performance indicators is positioned as a resistance to public accountability, a refusal to be questioned according to the logic of contemporary capitalism.”¹⁶

According to Power, “the idea of audit shapes public conceptions of regulatory or control which reflects deeply held commitments to checking and trust.”¹⁷ Audit necessarily takes place in the context of institutionalized distrust; in online education, faculty members and instructional designers are assumed incapable of self-regulating the quality of their outputs. Furthermore, since auditing reflects “a system of values and goals which are inscribed in the official programmes which demand it,”¹⁸ quality standards are necessarily imbued with a certain normativity that privileges a narrow range of pedagogical choices. For example, a course will not pass a QM review if an instructor prioritizes outcomes that may not be associated with particular observable and measurable behaviors or opts to forego the use of “tools that promote active learning.”

The QM audit can also be seen as a disciplinary mechanism of examination, which Foucault calls “a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to quantify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates and judges them.”¹⁹ The audit “manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected.”²⁰ It configures courses and instructors into objects of knowledge which can be “described, judged, measured, compared with others,...trained, corrected, classified, normalized, excluded, etc.”²¹

¹⁴ Michael Power, *The Audit Society: Rituals of Verification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁷ Power, *The Audit Society*, 7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 184.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 184–185.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 191.

The QM rubric is applied universally to online courses regardless of content area, pedagogical priorities, student population, or curricular context—an introductory biology course is expected to meet the same set of standards as a graduate philosophy course. It follows what Espeland and Stevens call a logic of commensuration, or “the expression or measurement of characteristics normally represented by different units according to a common metric...a way to reduce and simplify disparate information into numbers that can easily be compared.”²² Commensuration further normalizes objects of inquiry by reducing or erasing differences among them; not only are the biology course and philosophy course evaluated by the same rubric, abiding by the expected quality performances reduces the difference between them. Both courses, per the QM rubric, must have a network of behavioral objectives or competencies, must be organized in easily consumed “modules,” must have “instructional materials that are current,” must have “assessment instruments [that are] sequenced, varied, and suited to the learner work being assessed,” must ask “learners to introduce themselves to the class,” must have multiple provisions that support “ease of use”—as though a learning experience is simply something to be used, must provide expectations for etiquette for communications and state “requirements for learner interaction,” and so on.²³ The QM rubric creates a norm—an archetype—by which all courses are compared and judged. In this way, not only do regimes of quality limit pedagogical choices, reducing the agency and autonomy of the teacher, they, as Espeland and Stevens put it, “create what they purport to describe.”²⁴ This fundamentally and necessarily represents a process of educational homogenization.

Digital Artifacts and the Autopsy of Quality

Despite research indicating no significant differences between learning outcomes in face-to-face and online courses,²⁵ the emphasis on quality assurance in online education seems to be outpacing that in face-to-face courses. For example, returning to the case in Florida, the Quality Workgroup of the Online and Innovation Committee of the Florida Board of Governors (such a thing exists) has announced its intention to implement QM as the statewide

²² Wendy Nelson Espeland and Mitchell L. Stevens, “Commensuration as a Social Process,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 315–316.

²³ Quality Matters Rubric Standards, Fifth Edition, 2014.

²⁴ Espeland and Stevens, “Commensuration as a Social Process,” 338.

²⁵ D. Derek Wu, “Online Learning in Postsecondary Education: A Review of the Empirical Literature,” 2015, 1–45, <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.221027>.

official quality metric as a strategy to meet the goal of ensuring that 90% of online courses at Florida's public universities bear a "high-quality" ranking.²⁶ According to FloridaShines, Florida's statewide catalog of online courses offered at public colleges and universities, 8,218 online courses were offered in the spring of 2018; certifying 90% of these courses through QM would cost the state nearly \$7.4 million for that semester alone, assuming the subscriber rate.²⁷ No such quality goal exists in Florida for other instructional modalities, nor does a specific committee exist in the state university system's governing body to address other instructional modalities. In another example, in response to a class action lawsuit in which former George Washington University students claimed that the quality of their online programs was inferior to that of their face-to-face counterparts, that institution now requires that all its online courses meet QM standards, all its instructional designers must take QM training, and faculty members "will have the option to take a Quality Matters seminar to recognize firsthand the importance of those standards."²⁸

Why does the particular preoccupation with course quality exist in relation to online courses, while there is seemingly little formal scrutiny for 500-seat lecture halls or the learning outcomes resulting from underpaid, under-supported, contingent faculty? The immediate, superficial explanation is that the public perceives the quality, value, or rigor of online courses as inferior to face-to-face courses,²⁹ making the scrutiny deserved and appropriate. However, this explanation overlooks the complexity of the issue, in which, I argue, the nature and vulnerabilities of the particular form of online courses are much more germane. Rather than an inherent inferiority to traditional face-to-face teaching, I argue that the digital nature of online courses makes them more vulnerable to examination under the guise of quality improvement in a neoliberal climate increasingly focused on accountability and managerialism.

²⁶ Florida Board of Governors, "Minutes, State University System of Florida, Innovation and Online Committee, March 29, 2017," 2017, 1–6, [http://www.flbog.edu/documents_meetings/0265_1080_8180_4.2.2IOC02a_Minutes March 29 2017 MeetingFinal.pdf](http://www.flbog.edu/documents_meetings/0265_1080_8180_4.2.2IOC02a_Minutes%20March%2029%202017%20MeetingFinal.pdf).

²⁷ Florida Virtual Campus, "FloridaShines," 2018, <https://courses.flvc.org>.

²⁸ Mark Lieberman, "Rejecting Criticisms – and Addressing Them," *Inside Higher Ed*, February 13, 2018, <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2018/02/13/george-washington-university-announces-efforts-improve-online>, par. 7.

²⁹ Kim Parker, Amanda Lenhart, and Kathleen Moore, "The Digital Revolution and Higher Education," *Pew Research*, no. 202 (2011): 29, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>; Lydia Saad, Brandon Busteed, and Mitchell Ogisi, "In US, Online Education Rated Best for Value and Options," *Gallup News Service*, 2013, <http://news.gallup.com/poll/165425/online-education-rated-best-value-options.aspx>.

Before further exploring the idea of the vulnerability of online courses in this context, it is prudent for me to explain, briefly, how I conceptualize neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is a concept with many meanings (or non-meanings) to many people; Clark lists some of these as including “states, spaces, logics, techniques, technologies, discourses, discursive framework, ideologies, ways of thinking, projects, agendas, programs, governmentality, measures, regimes, development, ethno-development, development imaginaries, global forms of control, social policies” and so on.³⁰

Synthesizing the work of thinkers like Harvey,³¹ Peck,³² and Brown,³³ and put simply, I understand neoliberalism as a rationality that elevates and applies economic logic to all spheres of life and society, emphasizing competition as a “natural” allocator of resources and the market as determiner of value or worth. There are a variety of manifestations of this, including the reconfiguring of global financial capital; transfer of power and control from public entities to private; application of business concepts and processes to traditionally public sectors; and the entrepreneurialization and responsabilization of institutions, groups, families, and individuals.

Neoliberal rationality has had a distinct influence on higher education. For instance, Olssen and Peters contend that neoliberalism has driven significant changes in the academy, including a shift from collegial governance to hierarchical managerialism, increasing managerial specification over workloads and course content, and the erosion of faculty professionalism and autonomy.³⁴ Giroux suggests that the advent of neoliberalism has promoted a pedagogy that “strips education of its public values, critical contents, and civic responsibilities as part of its broader goal of creating new subjects wedded to the logic of privatization, efficiency, flexibility, the accumulation of capital, and the destruction of the social state.”³⁵

³⁰ John Clarke, “Living With/in and without Neo-Liberalism,” *Focaal—European Journal of Anthropology* 2008, no. 51 (2008): 138, <https://doi.org/10.3167/fcl.2008.510110>.

³¹ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007).

³² Jamie Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³³ Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015).

³⁴ Mark Olssen and Michael A. Peters, “Neoliberalism, Higher Education, and the Knowledge Economy: From the Free Market to Knowledge Capitalism,” *Journal of Education Policy* 30, no. 3 (May 2005): 325.

³⁵ Henry A. Giroux, “Bare Pedagogy and the Scourge of Neoliberalism: Rethinking Higher Education as a Democratic Public Sphere,” *The Educational Forum* 74, no. 3 (2010): 185.

Regardless of any given context, neoliberalism shapes and configures material conditions unevenly in spaces that are more or less prone to its effects; it is adaptable and predatory. For example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, conservative elements swooped in to promote privatization policies, deregulation, voucher programs, and the fostering of so-called “entrepreneurial activity,”³⁶ leading to, inter alia, the decimation of the public school system through the proliferation of charter schools owned and operated by private firms. In higher education, programs and departments that are less capable of generating revenue for the institution are constantly under the threat of defunding or altogether elimination.

Online courses are uniquely susceptible to this adaptable, predatory nature of neoliberal rationality, albeit on a different scale than Hurricane Katrina, in that they are vulnerable to a particular kind of examination—one that cannot be conducted on face-to-face courses. To describe the technique of this examination, I will present what I find to be a useful analogy in conceptualizing college courses as living bodies. In some particular ways, any college course, regardless of modality, resembles a sort of living being; it begins at a particular moment, its components (students, instructors, materials, communications) interact, and it progresses and develops. It is made up of smaller living subunits, the course participants, who all act according to particular roles and motivations while contributing to the growth and movement of the bigger entity. In other words, the whole is more than the sum of the pieces. Finally, both the living being and the college course end. The living thing dies, its constituent organic elements recycled into the environment; the college course concludes, textbooks are sold, notes are discarded, and the institution awards each student a predetermined number of credits.

However, a distinct difference exists in the corporeal form of traditional face-to-face classes and online classes. Face-to-face courses are ephemeral and fleeting; the teacher and the students meet periodically in a physical space, carry out the physical and cognitive actions of teaching and learning, and disband, leaving no material indication or record of their presence. When the course concludes—when the living entity dies—there is no body left behind.

Online courses, in contrast, leave behind a *digital cadaver*, a tangible artifact of the teaching and learning experience that is stored on databases indefinitely. This digital cadaver is produced through the use of a learning management system, such as Blackboard Learn or Instructure’s Canvas. Digitized versions of instructional materials, records of interaction and communication between instructors and students, stored examples of student work,

³⁶ Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*.

and the structure and presentation of a course make up this artifact. These records, stored in perpetuity on databases and file servers, make online courses more susceptible to examination and evaluation, procedures typical of and within neoliberal rationality. Without the presence of the instructor or students, an auditor, from a distance, is able to examine the totality of the learning environment in what amounts to the equivalent of sitting through every moment of a face-to-face course and listening in on every conversation, but compressed in time to suit the auditor.³⁷

Since QM reviews are conducted on “mature courses that have been taught previously,”³⁸ they correspond in form and function to a particular type of audit carried out on the dead, the autopsy. In a medical autopsy, the major objective is “the establishment of final diagnoses,”³⁹ and a QM review evaluates aspects of an online course design based on a rubric of standards. In either case, the audit is pathological in nature; the goal is to diagnose. The findings of a quality audit on a course cannot improve or change the educational experience for students *post factum* any more than the results of an autopsy can cure the dead. The audit, like the autopsy, exists solely for the sake of diagnosis.

Quality audit as autopsy is not necessarily a new concept. In Morley’s study on the relationship between power and quality assurance programs in the United Kingdom, one of her interviewees, an academic department head, described the futility of student teaching evaluations as an autopsy: “As far as I’m concerned the autopsy model of quality, where you inspect the patient to see what they died of, and then think what you might do to the next patient is really not very helpful.”⁴⁰

Of course, college courses are not living things in an actual biological sense, so this metaphor has its limits. Online courses that undergo revisions as a result of a quality audit may, in a sense, return to life for a new group of students, another unique characteristic of the digital nature of online courses, and it could remain for philosophical speculation whether the reborn course

³⁷ While face-to-face courses increasingly use a learning management system, this use is generally limited to storing a syllabus and materials that are used in the face-to-face environment, not the totality of the learning environment as in fully online courses. See John F. Gomez, “Higher Education Faculty Use of a Learning Management System in Face-to-Face Classes,” California State University, Stanislaus, 2015.

³⁸ Quality Matters, “Preparing for a QM Course Review.”

³⁹ Andrew J. Connolly et al., *Autopsy Pathology: A Manual and Atlas*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Saunders Elsevier, 2009).

⁴⁰ Louise Morley, *Quality and Power in Higher Education* (Berkshire: McGraw-Hill Education (UK), 2003), 138.

is a new body or a zombie of the old. But the idea of autopsy, particularly in the context of online education, where the remains of an online course assume a distinct corporeal form in its totality, the idea of autopsy takes on a greater physicality, a reduced level of abstraction. Importantly, the manner in which quality auditors enter, inspect, and evaluate the digital artifact of an online course reflects the pathological, diagnostic function of an autopsy and is distinct from dissection, which is exploratory, experimental, or analytical. As a process necessarily enabled by online teaching and learning technologies, this autopsic examination was foreshadowed by Rhoades, who suggested that instructional technologies could enable surveillance of course delivery, thus contributing to managerial control of pedagogy and curriculum while reducing faculty autonomy.⁴¹

Does Quality Matters Matter?

Perhaps the invasive and autopsic nature of the quality audit could be overlooked or accepted if it resulted in substantive or meaningful positive changes for future students in revised iterations of audited courses, so a brief discussion of the literature on online course quality as it pertains to students' educational experiences, particularly the literature surrounding QM, is apt. While QM purports to be research-based and to support QM-related research, much of their supporting research is QM-funded and unpublished,⁴² making critical evaluation of this research impossible and limiting the amount of literature that can be examined. However, based on the published findings, there is scant evidence suggesting that designing online courses to meet QM standards results in meaningful positive changes to learning outcomes or student perceptions of the course. Swan, Matthews, Boles, Bogle, and Day studied a graduate education course redesigned to meet QM standards and found that student grades increased after the redesign, although not significantly so, but measures of cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence based on the Community of Inquiry framework all remained relatively the same or dropped.⁴³ Miner found no significant differences in student satisfaction, grades, or retention rates between pre- and post-QM certified course de-

⁴¹ Gary Rhodes, *Managed Professionals: Unionized Faculty and Restructuring Academic Labor* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 185.

⁴² Quality Matters, "Curated Research," 2017, <https://www.qualitymatters.org/node/253>.

⁴³ Karen Swan et al., "Linking Online Course Design and Implementation to Learning Outcomes: A Design Experiment," *Internet and Higher Education* 15, no. 2 (2012): 81–88, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2011.07.002>.

signs.⁴⁴ Similarly, Aman found QM-certified courses did not positively affect retention rates or overall student satisfaction in comparison to noncertified courses.⁴⁵ Hollowell, Brooks, and Anderson found that final exam scores in an Introductory Biology course actually fell four points immediately following implementation of QM standards in a course and were lower in two of the three post-QM terms than in the pre-QM version of the course.⁴⁶

The mixed and largely disappointing findings on the impact of QM suggest that the process does not result in substantive or meaningful positive changes to online learning environments. The much more substantial effect, then, of QM, and presumably other quality assurance regimes in online higher education, is the application of a disciplinary technology that normalizes, homogenizes incommensurable human experiences, reduces pedagogical possibilities, and renders faculty and students as objects that can be evaluated and subjects that can be controlled.

Educational Criticism and Counter-conduct in the Culture of Quality

Given the threats and coercions presented by the culture of quality assurance, how can educators involved in online education—faculty members, instructors, instructional designers, course developers, and others—resist its normalizing and pedagogically limiting regimes? Refusing to submit to processes of quality assurance, such as QM, is an obvious answer, but this may not be possible or easy for those in professional contexts that require submission and participation as a condition of employment or promotion. Furthermore, mere refusal or insubordination represents a negative engagement with the problem—we cannot merely turn our backs while the monstrosity grows. Instead, we can seek to engage in what Foucault calls “counter-conduct,” or the “struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others”—one

⁴⁴ Allison G. Miner, “The Effect of Quality Matters Certification on Student Satisfaction, Grades, and Retention at Florida International University” (EdD diss., Morgan State University, 2014), 137.

⁴⁵ Richard R. Aman, “Improving Student Satisfaction and Retention with Online Instruction through Systematic Faculty Peer Review of Courses” (PhD diss., Oregon State University, 2009).

⁴⁶ Gail P. Hollowell, Racheal M. Brooks, and Yolanda B. Anderson, “Course Design, Quality Matters Training, and Student Outcomes,” *American Journal of Distance Education* 31, no. 3 (2017): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08923647.2017.1301144>. Interestingly, despite the lackluster results of a QM-based intervention, the authors still seem to advocate the use of QM in faculty development.

that has “a productivity, forms of existence, organization, and a consistency and solidity.”⁴⁷ We must work to develop an alternative—a positive engagement—to the disciplinary mechanisms of quality assurance.

However, the problematic understandings and applications of words like “quality” and “excellence” complicate the discussion related to the improvement of teaching (and its complement, course design). The questioning of the ideas of quality and quality assurance in online higher education should not be conflated with or mistaken for a misguided idea that the goodness of teaching, including in online spaces, does not matter, or that we should not genuinely strive to engage students in the best possible learning and meaning-making experiences. Indeed, the opposite: the desire to improve student learning experiences is virtuous and appropriate, but the ideas of “improving the quality of courses” or “striving for teaching excellence” are rendered hollow in the context of meaningless watchwords. How then, can we endeavor to improve (and help each other improve) the acts of design and teaching without resorting to reductionism or authoritarian measures of discipline and control—forms favored by and endemic to the corporate university?

This form of counter-conduct could materialize as any one of an infinite number of possibilities, but I want to speculate, optimistically, about the possibility of a self-supporting, non-hierarchical community of educators who support each other in the improvement of teaching. It may be helpful here to return to Readings and his call for a “community of thinkers” in the university.⁴⁸ In Rolfe’s *The University in Dissent*, his spiritual successor to Readings’ seminal work, he envisions this community as following a rhizomatic structure—one which resembles a botanical network of underground stems that expand horizontally, “an underground, acentred, non-hierarchical, transdisciplinary network” of “thinkers come together temporarily in order to pursue specific short-term collaborative teaching and research projects.”⁴⁹

These short-term projects of supporting each other’s teaching could draw from the ideas of educational connoisseurship and educational criticism, as put forth by Elliot Eisner.⁵⁰ Connoisseurship, according to Eisner, is “the ability to make fine grained discriminations among complex and subtle qualities.... It can be displayed in any realm in which the character, import, or value of objects,

⁴⁷ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France, 1977–1978* (New York: Picador, 2007), 200–201.

⁴⁸ Readings, *The University in Ruins*.

⁴⁹ Gary Rolfe, *The University in Dissent: Scholarship in the Corporate University* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 44.

⁵⁰ Elliot W. Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2017).

situations, and performances is distributed and variable, including educational practice.”⁵¹ The educational connoisseur, like the wine connoisseur, is able to “differentiate between the subtle and complex qualities”⁵² based on antecedent knowledge, an “understanding of the conditions that give rise to these qualities.”⁵³ Here, it is necessary to differentiate between “quality” and “qualities,” where the latter refers to “those features of our environment that can be experienced through any of our senses”⁵⁴; according to Eisner, the meaning we assign to qualities constitutes the content of experiences.

Contrary to the reductionism of checklists and rubrics conventional among quality assurance regimes, educational connoisseurship assumes a holistic approach that respects the educational context, the background of and relationships between the teacher and students, and the particularities of the subject matter. Connoisseurship is a type of “epistemic seeing”; it is “the means through which we come to know the complexities, nuances, and subtleties of aspects of the world in which we have a special interest.”⁵⁵ The dimensions explored by the educational connoisseur, according to Eisner, are the intentional, the structural, the curricular, the pedagogical, and the evaluative.⁵⁶

Related to educational connoisseurship is the idea of educational criticism. Criticism (not necessarily negative in this sense) is the published account of the connoisseur’s observations of a given educational phenomenon, generated for the purpose of assisting others. The educational critic’s task is to perform what Eisner calls a “mysterious feat”: to transform the particular qualities of a given learning experience, such as an online course, into a form that illuminates, interprets, and appraises them.⁵⁷ According to Eisner:

Since there is no literal linguistic equivalent for qualities per se, the task cannot be simple translation. With no rules of equivalence, there is no one-to-one correspondence of referent to symbol. Thus every act of criticism is a reconstruction. The reconstruction takes the form of an argued narrative, supported by evidence that is never incontestable; there will always be different interpretations of the “same” [course].⁵⁸

⁵¹ Ibid., 63.

⁵² Ibid., 64.

⁵³ Ibid., 65.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 68.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 72–81.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 86.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

In other words, educational experiences, as complex human activities, are open to multiple interpretations or perspectives, depending on the sensibilities and perceptions of the connoisseur—a stark contrast to the rigid reductionism and universality of the QM rubric. Eisner suggests a structure for educational criticism: the dimensions of description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics, which each intersect with the dimensions of connoisseurship at the point of criticism. However, Eisner is clear to point out that these dimensions “do not prescribe a sequence among the parts of an educational criticism,” nor do they “imply that each is wholly independent of the others.”⁵⁹

Essentially, educational criticism involves the holistic interpretation and feedback of a more practiced (or differently practiced) educator with the aim of improvement of the educational environment. However, rather than emulate an archetype rendered by a narrow rubric, education criticism fosters and supports pedagogical distinctiveness, the different capacities of teachers and students, the particular educational contexts of those learning experiences, and, importantly, academic freedom.

Crucially, what differentiates a process of educational criticism from audit is the relation of trust: unlike the audit, which exists in and because of the absence of trust, educational criticism enables the possibility of a dialog between the teacher and the connoisseur predicated on trust. Whereas the quality audit is necessarily a disciplinary formation with dubious outcomes, educational criticism may have the potential to meaningfully improve student experiences in a context that is not dependent upon disciplinary relations, a dynamic of power, or the sour taste of accountability.

Eisner’s frameworks have already been successfully employed in online course environments in limited capacities.⁶⁰ The challenge, then, is to develop structures and communities around these ideas: self-supporting, self-regulating communities of educational connoisseurs—Readings’ “community of thinkers” put into practice.⁶¹ However, in the formation of such a community, we must be careful not to reinscribe the bureaucratic, hierarchical formations of power and distrust.

To reemphasize, this is a single, highly speculative possibility for educators involved in online education to engage in counter-conduct in the face of quality assurance regimes. However, some sort of resistance is necessary, not

⁵⁹ Ibid., 88.

⁶⁰ Kelvin Thompson, “Constructing Educational Criticism of Online Courses: A Model for Implementation by Practitioners,” 2005, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13398-014-0173-7.2>.

⁶¹ Readings, *The University in Ruins*.

only because of the effects on teachers and instructional designers, but of the ultimate impacts on students who rely on the access to education enabled by online courses.

Online Education and the Diffusion of Access

The infiltration of pervasive and disciplinary quality assurance regimes is one of many articulations of neoliberalism in the distance learning space. Online education is often positioned in terms of cost savings, revenue generation, competition, and branding, leading critics to question its roles in the corporatization of the university and the commodification of knowledge.⁶² To some, online education

is seen as a lever of neoliberal reform, an extension to the university of a capitalism that is now digital, global, and knowledge-based...online education is reified around political-economic interests which it is claimed, unequivocally, to represent. Commodification, commercialisation, and corporatisation understood as fundamental dimensions of the technology and its consequences for higher education and the university.⁶³

However, educators who lament online education as a *fait accompli* may want to consider the original aims of distance education vis-à-vis the diffusion of access to educational opportunity. Charles Wedemeyer, considered by many to be an early pioneer and visionary in the field of distance education,⁶⁴ wrote:

We now know that intelligence and needs are distributed randomly throughout the world, our global village. Yet schools are distributed discretely. As a result, opportunity to learn has been uneven and unequal. Educational opportunity has historically been related to power—social, economic, political, military.⁶⁵

⁶² Paule Chau, "Online Higher Education Commodity," *Journal of Computing in Higher Education* 22, no. 3 (2010): 177–191, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12528-010-9039-y>; Kenneth J. Saltman, "The Right-Wing Attack on Critical and Public Education in the United States: From Neoliberalism to Neoconservatism," *Cultural Politics: An International Journal* 2, no. 3 (2006): 339–358, <https://doi.org/10.2752/174321906778531637>; Edward Hamilton and Andrew Feenberg, "The Technical Codes of Online Education," *E-Learning* 2, no. 2 (2005): 104–121, <https://doi.org/10.2304/elea.2005.2.2.1>; Henry Giroux, "Neoliberalism, Corporate Culture, and the Promise of Higher Education: The University as a Democratic Public Sphere," *Harvard Educational Review* 72, no. 4 (2002): 425–464.

⁶³ Hamilton and Feenberg, "The Technical Codes of Online Education," 105–106.

⁶⁴ William C. Diehl, "Learning at the Back Door: Charles Wedemeyer and the Evolution of Open and Distance Education" (PhD diss, Pennsylvania State University, 2011).

⁶⁵ Charles A. Wedemeyer, *Learning at the Back Door: Reflections on Non-Traditional Learning in the Lifespan* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 99.

Long before the Internet was an idea known outside computer science research circles, Wedemeyer suggested a solution to this problem of access: “Wherever learners may live, however remote from instructional resources, whatever their socioeconomic condition, the ancient restrictions to access derived from a space-time-elite perception of learning can be overcome by various communications media.”⁶⁶ In other words, distance education, today manifested primarily by online education, holds a certain liberatory potential—an ability to provide educational opportunity to learners who would not otherwise have access.

Crucially, however, by limiting pedagogical possibilities and rendering educators as objects that can be evaluated and subjects that can be controlled, the disciplinary modes imposed by regimes of quality threaten this liberatory potential of online education and reinforce the commodification and commercialization of knowledge as part of the corporatization of the university. In order to embrace online education as a possible means of educational liberation, educators ought to resist and engage in counter-conduct against the disciplinary forms of quality assurance.

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⁶⁶ Ibid., 61.

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5. Absolution and Participation in Privilege: The False Fronts of Men Student Affairs Professionals

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Abstract: Student affairs, a helping field focused on outside-the-classroom activities in higher education, has been traditionally associated with feminine gendered expectations. Using Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity and Foucauldian discourse analysis, we investigated how men student affairs professionals use and perpetuate gender privilege in the workplace. We identified a cycle of discourse whereby men student affairs professionals deployed discursive tactics to obscure their benefit from male privilege while simultaneously garnering cultural status and social capital. Deconstructing these discursive nodes provided insight to the impact of conflicting gender discourses. We suggest our analysis can expose rules that regulate, perpetuate, resist, and oppress, which opens up new understandings and meanings for men student affairs professionals and their gender performances.

Keywords: gender, performativity, thinking with theory, Foucault, student affairs
This poststructural study investigated the performance of gender by cis¹ men student affairs professionals in the context of competing expectations for appropriate gender behavior. Student affairs, the portion of higher education

¹ All participants in this study were cis gender men and, though discursive environments affect trans and nonbinary communities differently, they too are trapped in a system regulating heteronormative and often binaristic gender performances; indeed, they are often more penalized (sometimes violently) for transgressing those normative expectations.

administration typically focused on outside-the-classroom activities for students in college,² enforces a conflicting set of expectations on men who work in the field. Historically, the work of student affairs has been associated with cis gender women and feminine-perceived activities such as caretaking³ and, since its inception, the work of student affairs has been intended to provide discipline, take responsibility for students' well-being, and support readiness for the postcollege experience.⁴ Its history and contemporary norms within higher education, however, mimic the expectations of many other so-called "helping" fields of work in its ties to feminine ideals or roles.⁵

For cis men in student affairs, these feminine associations set up a gender role conflict. Genders are socialized along a discursive binary,⁶ and cis men are conditioned through that socialization to perform behaviors perceived as heteronormatively masculine.⁷ For men operating in a field with tasks associated with feminine roles,⁸ there is a conflict between the wider society's discourse on masculinity and the professional discourses associating student affairs with femininity. This conflict produces competing ideologies and discursive nodes from which male student affairs professionals can (and are expected to) operate.⁹

In exploring gender performance, we are less concerned with the "truth" about privilege or statistics based on the numerical proportion of men in a field associated with women and instead are drawn to how gendered expectations, allowances, and restrictions are known, deployed, perpetuated, and resisted within individual departments and the field of student affairs as a whole. In particular, we are concerned with how men navigate the concept of male privilege in a field that espouses values of social justice,¹⁰ and how men student affairs professionals work to enforce or undermine socially just concepts in student affairs work.

² Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education (NASPA), About Student Affairs.

³ Jennifer Duffy, How Women Impacted Student Affairs.

⁴ Jeff Doyle, Where Have We Come From.

⁵ Joan Williams, *Unbending Gender*.

⁶ Caroline Smith and Barbara Lloyd, Maternal Behavior.

⁷ Douglas Schrock and Michael Schwalbe, Men, Masculinity, and Manhood Acts.

⁸ Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education (NASPA), What Is Student Affairs; Sarah Sturtevant, Ruth Strang, and M. McKim, *Personnel Study of Deans*.

⁹ To clarify, while we find the gendering of fields of work problematic (e.g., student affairs, nursing, and teaching as feminized and, for instance, construction work, engineering, and some tech fields as masculine), the field of work is not the unit of analysis of this study. Instead, we focus here on the men who work in such a field to explore gendered discourses. We situate the field as the context influencing their gendered performances.

¹⁰ ACPA and NASPA, *Professional Competency Areas*.

In order to examine the experiences of men student affairs professionals, we have chosen to employ a technique from Jackson and Mazzei¹¹ known as *thinking with theory*. Jackson and Mazzei issued a challenge to researchers to “accomplish a reading of data that is both within and against interpretivism.”¹² They asserted data cannot be confined by traditional qualitative interpretation and coding alone since all data is incomplete. Instead, they recommended an integration of methodology and philosophy that deconstructs data to examine why certain stories are told and others are not. In their discussion of qualitative and postqualitative research, Jackson and Mazzei¹³ used a variety of methodological lenses, looking to theory in order to unveil unique nodes of discourse and power in their research data.

Rather than sorting our participants’ thoughts into themes, our goal in this analysis is to “reverse the mode of analysis”¹⁴ and examine discursive practices as they relate to power, privilege, and gender performance. Within our data, we became aware of how the stories presented in our interviews could not be taken at face value. We realized the stories represented not only the content being told but also discursive nodes within which societal gender norms, power, and practice intersected. Thus, norms of gender, power, and practice in these nodes led our participants to present stories to us in certain ways, or through particular performances. Rather than interpreting the data and stories from our participants “free of context and circumstance,”¹⁵ our thinking with theory approach is designed to bring those undercurrents of the data to the forefront. Though student affairs is, in many ways, a unique field of disparate roles within university contexts, the gendered expectations set up throughout its history—as well as the conflict between male expectations and female roles—provide a space to explore gender performance and the relationship of competing discursive environments.

Discourse in Student Affairs

We begin with our own conceptualization of discourse and how we view theory in order to situate our analysis and discussion. Within this chapter, when we refer to “discourse” we refer to the discursive structure and organization of what can be said (and done). It encompasses not only what is stated, but also what is not stated. Discourse also refers to the set of rules understood (either consciously or subconsciously) by those who operate within specific fields of

¹¹ Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa Mazzei, *Thinking with Theory*, vii.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *Two Lectures*, 95.

¹⁵ Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa Mazzei, *Thinking with Theory*, vii.

discourse. Kendall and Wickham, channeling Foucault, offered the explanation that discourse is “a corpus of ‘statements’ whose organisation is regular and systematic.”¹⁶ Discourse is both the production of statements, including both what is said and what is done, and the contextual rules determining what statements can be made. To assist in our understanding, we also apply Jackson’s¹⁷ notion of strategies and practices, where strategies refers to discursive tactics or designs that deploy discourse, while practices refers to how an individual interacts, does their job, and influences discourse through their work. For instance, a strategy may take form as an organizational mission statement, rules of the office, or other professional discourses designed to create workplace culture, while practices appear in employee interactions, job performance(s), speech, and dress.

In thinking with discourse, we begin with Butler¹⁸ and her concept of gender performativity. Butler described gender not as a static fact but rather an ongoing performance that is a “reiteration of a norm or set of norms.”¹⁹ Gender performance occurs through how individuals communicate their perspectives on reality, carry out social activities, and enact social identities.²⁰ In the context of Butler’s performativity, these performances produce gender as an effect of practice. For example, men dressing in a suit and tie, talking in a deep, projecting voice, helping a female coworker lift something heavy, or behaving in domineering ways associated with masculine leadership norms²¹ may reinforce the idea of their gender as man to both themselves and others. Behaviors not conforming to traditional societal expectations have the opportunity to be miscoded as another gender or to disrupt concepts of gender, particularly gender binary discourse.

Societal cues also work discursively to affirm “correct” behavior and police “incorrect” behavior. Friends, colleagues, family, and even strangers can be unwitting agents of gender socialization, both communicating and reifying perceptions of what is normal and expected. Butler’s²² concept meshes well with Jackson’s²³ concept of practices, whereby how an individual engages in discursive practice simultaneously creates, deploys, and sustains their gender. The study of discourse and gender, therefore, is critical to understanding how gender is constructed and how specific contexts influence the performance of gender within those discursive contexts.

¹⁶ Gary Kendall and Gavin Wickham, *Using Foucault’s Methods*, 42.

¹⁷ Alecia Youngblood Jackson, *Fields of Discourse*.

¹⁸ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 538.

²⁰ James Gee, *The Social Mind*.

²¹ Adrianna Kezar, *Expanding Notions of Leadership*.

²² Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*.

²³ Alecia Youngblood Jackson, *Fields of Discourse*.

Jackson and Mazzei employ Butler to examine performance in terms of “how gender identities get done as reiterative practices within discourse, power relations, historical experiences, cultural practices, and material conditions.”²⁴ Several elements of performance are relevant to our study, in particular how binary gender expectations (man/woman) are set up not just in appropriate performances for individuals, but also in career choices. A career choice serves as an act either perpetuating or disrupting notions of traditional gender. For men, student affairs work would not classify as an historically masculine career because student affairs has historically gendered expectations as a helping field.

As Jackson and Mazzei point out, Butler’s theory of performativity draws from Foucault’s conception of power relations and requires “normative identity categories”²⁵ as a context for gender performance. In this study, the normative categories for men student affairs professionals compete; in other words, masculine social norms and institutional social norms are in conflict. Butler’s work, through the lens of Jackson and Mazzei, helps us uncover how the performances (in this case, discursive acts that both reproduce and contextualize gender identity norms) create and limit discursive possibilities for the men in our study.

This study uses the contrast between student affairs work and societal gendered expectations to interrogate discursive practices. This contrast provides opportunity for disruption of typical, assumed discursive norms. It also creates the possibility for gender performance confusion for male student affairs professionals socialized in multiple, competing discourses.

Gender in Student Affairs

Butler’s theory of performativity is rooted in poststructuralist understandings. Poststructuralism focuses not on the meaning of language or discourse, but instead its function.²⁶ For instance, Kendall and Wickham, channeling Foucault, noted that “medical discourses about ‘folly’ and ‘unreason’ produce the mentally ill person, penological discourses produce the criminal, discourses on sex produce sexuality, and so on.”²⁷ The performance of gender, then, is both influenced by and influences the discourses in which it operates.

In this study, it is therefore critical to discuss the historical context of student affairs and how particular professions are gendered. Foucault stated that one of the goals of poststructuralism was to make “discourses visible.”²⁸ Exam-

²⁴ Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa Mazzei, *Thinking with Theory*, 67.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Elizabeth St. Pierre, *Poststructural Feminism in Education: An Overview*.

²⁷ Gary Kendall and Gavin Wickham, *Using Foucault’s Methods*, 34.

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *Prison Talk*, 38.

ining the discursive structures of gender expectations and allowable gendered activities will help to unveil the impact of the performances of men student affairs professionals. Foucault reminded us that “truth isn’t outside power.”²⁹ The concept of what are appropriate gender actions and performances is conditioned by the structures that dictate our conceptions of gender. Gender norms, both societally and in careers, impact our concepts of masculine and feminine. These contexts of gendered professions and student affairs specifically are significant to how gender is produced and replicated. Jackson (2010) stated that her reasoning in using a Foucauldian poststructuralist lens was to reveal “complex intersections among power, identity, change, and community to show they are imagined, idealized, and maintained.”³⁰ Similarly, we looked to poststructuralism in this study to better investigate the relationship between the gender performance of men student affairs professionals and the multiple competing gender norms in which they operate. Student affairs presents a compelling scenery for a discussion of male privilege, gender performance, and illustrations of power due to its rich history of conflicting gender norms.

Since the inception of student affairs, much of the work of practitioners in the field has been associated with stereotypically feminine tasks and roles.³¹ Student affairs departments tend to be numerically women-dominated (NASPA and ACPA current membership has roughly a 2:1 ratio of women to men³²) and, like many other “caretaking” professions, has continually carried gendered expectations and been dominated by women.³³ Because student affairs typically consists of a wide range of nonacademic, student-centered portions of higher education, we looked to participants from housing and residence life, orientation and new student services, diversity initiatives, student conduct, student leadership, mental health services, recreational sports, sorority and fraternity life, and student activities. Primarily, these departments are focused on developing “life skills,” providing student services, and taking care of students. While our list is not exhaustive, it is representative of the breadth and range of student affairs work.

Furthermore, Duffy found that student affairs work followed a parental, feminized narrative, while “intellectualism was considered masculine.”³⁴ It follows that student affairs is a feminine counterpart to academic affairs, as positioned by

²⁹ Michel Foucault, *Truth and Power*, 131.

³⁰ Alecia Youngblood Jackson, *Fields of Discourse*, 73.

³¹ Sarah Sturtevant, Ruth Strang, and M. McKim, *Personnel Study of Deans*; Jennifer Duffy, *How Women Impacted Student Affairs*.

³² Brenda Fogg, e-mail message to author, February 15, 2018; Alexis Wesaw, e-mail message to author, February 23, 2018.

³³ Joan Williams, *Unbending Gender*.

³⁴ Jennifer Duffy, *How Women Impacted Student Affairs*, 241.

cultural and discursive forces. Jackson and Mazzei pointed out that our sense of structures in language and discourse is traditionally sorted into binaries (man/woman, good/bad, etc.).³⁵ Student affairs, following as a feminine counterpart to academic affairs, therefore serves as a backdrop that influences, produces, and limits the range of acceptable and unacceptable gendered behaviors.

Men are conditioned through these binaries of discourse to be “masculine” and to demonstrate their masculinity through their chosen profession, which may pose a difficulty for white-collar workers, as Williams discusses:

Where blue-collar work is suffused with masculinity—it is dirty, and requires strength—white-collar work is clean, gender-neutral knowledge work unrelated to physical strength. This leaves white-collar men searching for ways to imagine their work as the appropriate arena in which to prove their manliness.³⁶

Extending this analysis to our context, student affairs caretaking work does not qualify, discursively, as masculine under typical social norms. Men in the student affairs field must therefore confront the issue of demonstrating manliness through their work on a regular basis. Because men experience a “strong, negative emotion associated with stereotypic feminine values, attitudes, and behaviors,”³⁷ operating in a context where student affairs is associated with feminine values has the potential to produce dissonant messages for male professionals.

Jackson and Mazzei reminded us that Butler’s concept of performativity does not ask about intention or whether or not subjects intentionally make choices “by their own volition.”³⁸ Instead, the social practices—in this case, doing the work of student affairs—produce the discursive possibilities. Jackson and Mazzei interpret Butler as saying that the subject becomes an effect of the discourse. This harkens back to the poststructuralist understandings of discourse from Foucault, in which practices and performances would play both a “conditioning and conditioned role.”³⁹ In other words, the context produces the discursive possibilities of men’s performance of societally normative masculinity, and their performances perpetuate those norms in a cyclical fashion. In student affairs, we are viewing multiple contexts, not only of society’s expectations of men but also of the institutional expectations of feminized behavior in a helping profession. The juxtaposition of role and societally normative gendered expectations complicates the performance of “maleness” within higher education and the conditioning factors for the men in our study. These competing

³⁵ Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa Mazzei, *Thinking with Theory*.

³⁶ Joan Williams, *Femmes, Tomboys, and Real Men*, 698.

³⁷ James O’Neil et al., *Gender-Role Conflict Scale*.

³⁸ Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa Mazzei, *Thinking with Theory*, 68.

³⁹ Michel Foucault, *Power and Strategies*, 142.

gender discourses produce competing expectations for men student affairs professionals, which our thinking with theory approach helps us unravel.

Methodology

Our epistemology is feminist and poststructural in nature, concerned with how gender impacts both everyday interactions and interactions with larger societal structures, both explicit and implicit. We view “gender as a basic organizing principle that shapes the conditions”⁴⁰ of people’s lives. In addition, we seek to avoid gender essentialism or exclusion in practicing these feminist assumptions. We both take seriously and attempt to avoid what Z Nicolazzo has termed the “deeply entrenched gender binary discourse”⁴¹ in educational and other environments. We perceive all knowledge to be constructed by our experiences and interactions with the world,⁴² but we also contend that power and language shape how we know and what we can know. Language impacts what it is possible for us to think. Again, we do not claim to offer any truths; instead, we offer our analysis as a way to illustrate the way gender, power, and practice operated in these nodes; our findings can only ever be incomplete and partial.⁴³

Analytic Approach

Our approach was designed to be fluid and follow a discourse analysis informed by specific authors and concepts; we intertwined Butler⁴⁴ and Foucault⁴⁵ with the framework of Jackson and Mazzei’s thinking with theory technique to reveal new possibilities into our reading and understanding of the experiences of men student affairs professionals. Specifically, our analytical approach stems from the movement of “postqualitative” research led by the work of Elizabeth St. Pierre, Alicia Youngblood Jackson, and Patti Lather. As Elizabeth St. Pierre noted in a recent work, “methodology should never be separated from epistemology and ontology (as if it can be) lest it become mechanized and instrumental and reduced to methods, process, and technique.”⁴⁶ Similarly, we found we were unable to disconnect the idea of a discourse analysis from our conceptual and epistemological positionality.

⁴⁰ John Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 29.

⁴¹ Z Nicolazzo, *Imagining a Trans* Epistemology*, 18.

⁴² John Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*.

⁴³ Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa Mazzei, *Thinking with Theory*.

⁴⁴ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*.

⁴⁵ Michel Foucault, *Prison Talk*.

⁴⁶ Elizabeth St. Pierre, *A Brief and Personal History of Post Qualitative Research*, 3.

Therefore, we are not overly concerned with the exterior trappings of the logic of deterministic studies. Instead of constructing knowledge through traditional methodologies, we use a more adaptable approach that attempts to deconstruct the intent or assumed effects for the behaviors of the men in our study. We do this intentionally to examine *how* discursive contexts produce the subjects of our study and what performative acts the men in our study engage in that (re)produce their gender identity within the context of competing gendered expectations.

We approached this study using a thinking with theory analytic approach. Thinking with theory is designed to “describe the surface links between power, knowledge, institutions, intellectuals, the control of populations, and the modern state as these intersect in the functions of systems of thought.”⁴⁷ This mode of inquiry allowed us to reach further into the discursive structures of student affairs and the intersection of competing gendered expectations and roles for men student affairs professionals.

Our approach is intentionally nontraditional. Thinking with theory allowed us to use Jackson and Mazzei’s work as a framework to investigate the intersections between our data and Butler’s concept of performativity within webs of power. In her work, Butler recognized how power relations and structures serve to center discourse and how those webs of discourse create and limit opportunities for performance of gender through language and action. We employed the thinking with theory approach to decouple discursive contexts and interrogate how discourses of masculinity, student affairs, and individual actions reproduce, influence, resist, and fight one another. In particular, Butler’s concept of gender performance allowed us to focus on gender as the predominant lens for a discourse analysis of the experiences our participants shared with us.

To collect our data, we contacted potential participants from a large, research-intensive public institution in the southern United States by sending e-mails to the research team’s campus contacts. The site institution is a large, research-intensive public university, chosen for convenience and research familiarity with its norms. Most participants had experiences in non-southern states (work or growing up) and did not consider themselves “Southerners.” While the southern context came up at times for specific participants, the researchers did not find southern norms and practices to be a fruitful avenue of analysis. To be included in the study, participants had to identify as a man and have full-time work responsibilities related to student affairs (we did not require participants to work in traditional student affairs areas or units). To put our participants in dialogue with each other, we conducted two focus groups in 2016, each lasting approximately one hour. As we are interested in

⁴⁷ Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa Mazzei, *Thinking with Theory*, 55.

discourse not merely as words but as social forces, it was important to provide a situation in which participants could interact with each other and use the dialogue to build their collective knowledge about masculinity in their work.

Analytic Techniques

In our analysis, we employed a thinking with theory approach⁴⁸ with our data in order to “expose pernicious logic”⁴⁹ regarding gender performance of men student affairs professionals. To accomplish our analysis, we plugged one text into another,⁵⁰ meaning that we worked with chunks of traditional data from our focus groups and engaged in a process whereby we examined these data as manifestations of theoretical concepts in poststructuralism. The process of plugging data into theoretical concepts allowed us to better understand not only the participants’ interpretations of their own experiences but also additional discursive ramifications that they might not note themselves. By viewing our data through the lenses of theory and using this technique, we were better able to understand the discursive forces surrounding the narratives our participants presented. As Jackson and Mazzei reminded us, the concept of plugging in requires “an intimacy with *both* the data and the theory,”⁵¹ so we turned to specific poststructuralist authors with whom we were familiar and whose work spoke to the intersection of gender performance and discourse to create a strategy for a poststructuralist discourse analysis.

Beginning from Butler’s⁵² concept of gender performativity, we then developed a series of guiding questions with which to interact with our participants’ stories, thoughts, and feelings about their work and gender in student affairs. While Butler was our starting place for uncovering discursive processes, we could not avoid the connection to Foucault. Not only does Butler’s work stem from Foucault’s theory of power relations,⁵³ but Foucault’s⁵⁴ notion that power is intrinsic in all institutions guides our understanding of the discursive structures in which these men’s gender performance takes place. The societal structures of hegemonic masculinity, intertwined with the feminine ideals of student affairs, create a discursive web of power relations impacting the possibilities and limits of participant discourse. Each practice and

⁴⁸ Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa Mazzei, *Thinking with Theory*.

⁴⁹ Kelly Clark/Keefe, *Invoking Mnemosyne*, 26.

⁵⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

⁵¹ Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa Mazzei, *Thinking with Theory*, 5.

⁵² Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*.

⁵³ Alecia Youngblood Jackson, *Fields of Discourse*.

⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, *Prison Talk*.

production of their gender reinforces or resists dominant discourses and has the potential to impact power relations for all genders working within the discursive realm of student affairs.

Combining the work of Jackson⁵⁵ with methodological considerations from Foucault⁵⁶ and discourse critique methods from Kendall and Wickham,⁵⁷ we used the following questions to guide our analysis:

1. What historical conditions form and deploy discourses of work and gender?
2. How is discourse in student affairs surrounding gender produced and regulated?
3. What strategies or practices are present in the participant data that illuminate or obfuscate particular discursive nodes?
4. What strategies or practices are present in the participant data that perpetuate or resist dominant discursive structures?
5. How do particular strategies and practices of discourse impact power relations and gender performance in student affairs?

Using these questions with the data allowed us to discover discursive processes and webs for the men student affairs professionals in our study. Most compelling among the emergent processes in our work were narratives of *absolution from privilege* and a *cycle of privilege*. These processes were not necessarily known or considered by our participants. Instead, they represent our understanding of discursive machinations through the convergence between theory and data. Their emergence provides a glimpse of the discursive structures present in the student affairs field and ways in which gender performance is intertwined, both conditioned and conditioning, of discursive contexts and power relations.

Trustworthiness

To examine the experiences of the men in our study from a lens of production and performance rather than intent, we first conducted the discourse analysis using the guiding questions above. We then engaged in significant peer debriefing through national and regional presentations at student affairs and higher education conferences and with members of the NASPA (Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education) Men and Masculinities Knowledge Community,

⁵⁵ Alecia Youngblood Jackson, *Fields of Discourse*.

⁵⁶ Michel Foucault, *Body/Power*.

⁵⁷ Gary Kendall and Gavin Wickham, *Using Foucault's Methods*.

where the authors have been involved as members and leaders for several years. The purpose of these member-checks⁵⁸ was to investigate further the contexts of the gendered expectations for both men and student affairs professionals as well as the intersection of those identities. Turning to Maxwell's guiding principles of research design, these efforts embody not just a triangulation member-checking strategy, but also his call for long-term involvement, which provides "more complete data about specific situations and events than any other method."⁵⁹ These member-checks helped us refine our discursive analysis.

Positionality and Limitations

We are insiders and outsiders to this work. The authors include one White cis man who works full-time in student affairs and teaches on an adjunct basis for a student affairs/higher education program, one White cis woman who is a doctoral student in that same program who works part-time in student affairs, and one queer cis White woman who is full-time faculty in that same program and conducts research using intersectional lenses. Our positionalities give each of us partial access to the potential worldviews of our participants and their contexts, and our working relationships, developed over the past four years, yielded rich discussions throughout our analytic process, these debriefings⁶⁰ were critical to our analytic approach; however, our interactions and analysis are intrinsically intertwined with our own subjectivities and histories as professionals and researchers.

The study is also limited because we could not control or observe all discourses operating for men student affairs professionals through our interactions with the data. Even though we investigated discourse, power, and gender in student affairs, we also work within the frameworks of those discourses, which may have concealed discourses surrounding us. In addition, countless other discursive processes could have been uncovered.

Jackson notes that her analytical categories "are not contained. Instead, the descriptions are meant to show how these conditions intersect, combine, and fracture to produce discourse."⁶¹ Similarly, although we name discursive processes in this chapter, we do not view these as all-inclusive, comprehensive, or ubiquitous. Our analysis was designed to draw attention to competing discourses and how they create/limit opportunities for gender performance, and our findings are not meant to prescribe a set of ideal recommendations for

⁵⁸ Joseph Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design*.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Alecia Youngblood Jackson, *Fields of Discourse*, 79.

navigating gender universally. Foucault⁶² cautioned that there are always hidden discourses, and we acknowledge these themes are merely the discursive nodes our data and theory most prominently displayed. Our findings reflect an analysis of men in our study, and should not be read as an assertion that all men in student affairs operate at all times in the manner we describe below.

Findings

The two discursive processes we identified, *absolution from privilege* and *the cycle of privilege*, work in concert to perpetuate discursive strategies and practices that support male privilege within student affairs, even though it is a numerically women-dominated field with feminine gendered expectations. These processes do not arise from traditional qualitative interpretation like coded themes would, but instead emerged as consistent among our participants in terms of gender performance and discursive context. These processes are not intended to be all-inclusive of men in student affairs everywhere, but instead to reveal the discursive power relations present in how these men perform gender. As Foucault stated, it is important to “try to locate power at the extreme points of its exercise.”⁶³ What Foucault is referring to here is that rather than look for a top-down framework for power, we should investigate how power and discourse impact the extremities of a discursive web. The men in our study represent those edge points for student affairs. We therefore have provided these processes as findings to help conceptualize the discursive trends and machinations impacting the men in our study through the context of competing binary discourses.

Paradoxically, the way male student affairs professionals perpetuate discourse involves obfuscating their benefits from male privilege by highlighting the emotional gender-role conflict of being a man in a field with feminine expectations, as well as taking advantage of opportunities male privilege provides. This juxtaposition within student affairs makes the field a fertile ground for exploration of gender conflict and is also the discursive process by which male student affairs professionals deploy, maintain, and support male privilege.

“A White, Straight Guy Just Tip-toeing Through the Land of Privilege”: Absolution from Privilege

Absolution from privilege is a process involving men first acknowledging they are recipients and beneficiaries of unearned male privilege, then following

⁶² Michel Foucault, *Truth and Power*.

⁶³ Michel Foucault, *Two Lectures*, 97.

those statements with a number of diversion strategies. The acknowledgement of privilege is a critical step in this discursive theme, because our participants were aware that student affairs is seen as a field focused on social justice⁶⁴ and that they were men in a field of primarily women. The combination of those external discursive forces frequently led the men in our study to start their answers or interject into their stories acknowledgments of their own privilege.

Our participants deployed their male privilege like camouflage,⁶⁵ wearing it when they wanted to fit in with student affairs values and blend in with their coworkers. However, they expressed discontent when their camouflage was ineffective or when their gender identity was a detriment rather than a benefit to them. They also wanted the ability to remove their camouflage at will and receive the full advantage of the career opportunities available to them as men. Primarily, we saw men pivot from acknowledging their male privilege to talking about the difficulties or struggles of other minoritized identities, some of which they possessed, including racial, ethnic, and sexuality identities.

Our participants acknowledged their privilege, which they perceived to be a tool for social justice. One participant Tim, who identified as a White, heterosexual man,⁶⁶ also expressed concern that his experience as a “White, straight guy just tip-toeing through the land of privilege” meant he was required to learn empathy for students with experiences different than his own. In a similar vein, Nathan, a Latino, heterosexual man, commented, “comparatively to women, we probably have it easier just because of the privilege that is associated with being a man...[in student affairs] we show more care to students than we will with each other.” The participants in our study all expressed an awareness of privilege, and their comments regarding their actions presented this awareness in terms of learned enlightenment.

This enlightenment requires them to share the good news with those less fortunate and with a less developed, empathetic perspective on social justice. As a discursive tactic, Tim and Nathan’s processes assisted them in framing their own behaviors as enlightened and present their identities as “the good guys” who understand privilege. Naming privilege functioned to disarm its presumed impact in the men’s lives. Though Tim’s opinions were shared among our participants, Tim spoke at length and with the most clarity about these topics. By associating privilege with other White men, Tim, for instance, then disassociated himself with that group and aligned his actions with those

⁶⁴ ACPA and NASPA, *Professional Competency Areas*.

⁶⁵ Camouflage is a type of false front, a concept discussed below.

⁶⁶ We have used our participants’ own language throughout in describing their identities.

outside the privileged group. His strategy camouflaged his own privilege and adopted a discursive tactic of social justice to absolve himself from privilege.

Our participants also used privilege as a weapon when their camouflage was ineffective. Privilege manifested in a desire to model positive behavior for male students. As men in the study noted a perceived need of mentor and a “male role model” for male students, they tended to give more attention, support, and time to male students over students of other genders, perpetuating a cycle of privileged resources and efforts. Our participants disavowed behaviors contrary to the espoused social justice orientation of the student affairs field at a surface level, but they also absolved themselves from the privilege they claimed, noting they were, as Tim said, “not allowed to be offended along our lines of privilege.” This use of masculine privilege as a weapon of the enlightened man to justify behavior is reminiscent of imperialism.

The combination of Tim’s disassociation from privilege and his perceived need to wield privilege to help other men sets up a discursive context situating Tim as absolved from privilege in multiple ways. Tim’s actions and words are designed to allow him to escape negative ramifications as well as neutralize the possibility of student affairs professionals associating with privilege writ large. This absolution from privilege creates a context whereby his wielding of power is justified when helping other men who are less educated. This strategic use of privilege to benefit the unenlightened supports the discourse of the “oppressed male student affairs practitioner” while simultaneously affirming the validity of a paternalistic approach to education. Thinking with theory, we then see Tim’s false fronts—the simultaneous disavowal of privilege while reaping its benefits—build into a notion of what is true. As Foucault⁶⁷ noted, truth (knowledge) is an effect of power. By focusing on his situation in a women-dominated field as an ally for men, who need an ally and role model, Tim then perpetuated a discursive environment suggesting men in his situation are not privileged but rather entitled to additional support and mentorship. At the same time, this narrative of “men needing support” obscures the effects of privilege and enhances the ability of Tim to benefit from privilege under the cloak of absolution. The use of a student-centric discursive strategy both affirms and disguises male privilege.

In addition, we observed our participants reference times where the conflicting gender roles and hegemonic expectations of gender in the workplace positioned them as “other.” Ineffective camouflage was difficult for our participants to accept. Workplace conflict took the form of disagreements over the appropriate manner of expressing emotions, office gossip, and clothing

⁶⁷ Michel Foucault, *Truth and Power*.

choice. Our participants were conscious about the ways in which men and women student affairs professionals were allowed to perform their masculinity within the profession. John, a White, heterosexual man, said the following: "I see even women I know who are in [high-level] positions or president positions, as well as men I see at the high levels exhibiting high levels of stereotypical masculine traits." John did not personally believe he possessed these traits, which has led to comments from superiors that he was "too nice" and was allowing those he supervised too much leeway. He conveyed this "felt gender based" as female colleagues did not receive similar feedback. John's behavior, which would have been acceptable if a female student affairs professional performed it, unintentionally resisted the dominant discursive paradigm and created a feeling of inadequacy; in other words, he was policed for not performing his gender in a stereotypically masculine manner.

Alternatively, men student affairs professionals can also police gender themselves, as Michael, a White, gay man discussed:

Sometimes I'm the person [in a staff of mostly women] that's calming everyone down and being the rock for the staff. I'm tired of playing that role...where I'm constantly [saying] "...Let's bring it back down.... Yelling does not mean that there's a concern, it just means that they are expressing a difficult emotion..." it helps me because I stay away from the gossip of the office.... It has been helpful to stay away from the gossip but also sometimes have to kind of be the one that says "no, this is not okay."

As a man in a staff of primarily women, Michael perceived his role as managing and translating staff and student emotions. Heightened emotion expressed through "yelling" is permissible in Michael's role as a male student affairs practitioner, and he felt obligated to redefine and reframe the "difficult emotion" to make it acceptable to female staff. This translation effort was tiring, and he also found it difficult to engage in female-coded behavior such as gossip. Michael expressed similar assumptions as John but from the reverse perspective. Michael removed his camouflage, accepted masculine norms regarding emotion, but became exhausted by the process. In this sense, Michael is embracing traditional expectations of leadership (and male leadership),⁶⁸ but becomes exhausted by doing so in competition with female norms serving as a backdrop for his behavior.

The concept of conflicting emotional requirements for men created the discursive space for a false front (camouflage), or diversionary tactic. Men student affairs professionals, appropriating the gendered expectations that position emotionality as feminine, were able to shift conversations from the

⁶⁸ Adrianna Kezar, *Expanding Notions of Leadership*.

privileges and benefits of being a man to the emotional, societal difficulties of being a man. While discursive forces are at play for all sides of this context, participants acknowledged their privilege and discussed feelings of inadequacy and gender-role conflict in order to shield themselves from conversations about male privilege. In thinking with Foucault,⁶⁹ this behavior then functioned to make the forces of male privilege invisible, which perpetuated the assumption of male-coded behaviors as normative in our concepts of leadership, professionalism, and appropriate male and female behavior.

Our participants' camouflage of male privilege failed when they were unable to participate in the same social spaces with the same reception as their women coworkers. They experienced a disconnect between their expectation of belonging in any space and their coworkers' reaction to their presence. Casual social interactions were closed to them, for example. They may have expressed less interest in gossip than their women coworkers, as Michael noted, or they could be interested but not feel welcome in those conversations. Lack of conversational inclusion manifested in a sense of "missing out on important parts of the office dynamic," a comment Tim made in response to Michael's observation. Tim was dissatisfied with his ability to participate in female-coded office conversations like "gossip." He was especially concerned with being left out of conversations and missing opportunities to bond with his female colleagues; he used a parallel from a typically masculine setting, the military, to express what is lacking in his office dynamics. Tim's expectation for his camouflage to work in all aspects of life was thwarted. Thus, our participants felt lost without access to the full range of tools they expected their privilege to provide.

Other participants commented on their own conscious changes in communication styles within the student affairs field. Matthew, a gay, Asian American man, had to make shifts to speaking more slowly, smiling more, and using phatic expressions to connect with women colleagues. He made these shifts to serve his career goals, framing the change as "a type of very indirect power in student affairs" in which men, especially men of color, were required to "impress White women to be able to do as well as a [White] man in this field." Our participants made or perceived the need to change their conversational norms to achieve a sense of belonging in a field that seems unwelcoming to them. Conscious of their privilege, they also monitored their own language to avoid labels like "mansplainer."⁷⁰ Their presence in a numerically women-dominated field led to code-switching to fit perceived norms.

⁶⁹ Michel Foucault, *Prison Talk*.

⁷⁰ Jessica Coccimiglio, *What is Mansplaining?*

Participants also experienced difficulty in wearing appropriate attire and evaluating the clothing of others as appropriate. The lack of a clearly defined dress code for office-appropriate attire for women irritated participants, causing discomfort in addressing sartorial concerns to women colleagues. The clear articulation of acceptable dress for men provided an unpleasant contrast with the fuzzy boundaries of acceptable dress for women. Adam, a heterosexual, Black man, participated in rewriting dress code policies and noted the language was straightforward for men's clothing but for women, "it was all over the place." He was upset about the perceived lack of equality in dress code, and asked "why is it okay for you to wear open toed shoes but as a male I can't, and where are those expectations coming from?" Adam reported that upon complaining about the disparity in gender expectations, his supervisor told him, "Well, if you want to wear man capris and sandals, go ahead." This comment was a challenge to Adam's complaint of inequality and to his masculinity, a challenge he declined to accept. Even though he expected "equality," Adam was given the opportunity to resist dress norms, but he opted to support this aspect of gender relations and preserve his masculinity.

When office behavior and norms did not directly benefit our participants, they were confronted with an uncomfortable challenge to their expectations. The tensions our participants experienced between male privilege they possessed in and outside of student affairs and the social justice orientation of the field manifested itself in quotidian experiences including clothing and interactions. Our participants felt required to adhere to strict dress codes based on their gender, a limit not present for their women colleagues. The benefit of unthinkingly wearing clothes with the expectation it will be acceptable and appropriate for the occasion is reserved for men. Clothing and gossip are the sites at which our participants' privilege (their camouflage) failed them and caused complaint. When our participants were confronted with seeming inequality of clothing, a marker of belonging inscribed on the body, they were forced to reckon with an area in which their behavior was not seen as normative.

The discursive theme of *absolution from privilege* functions to pivot from privilege to victimhood and intersectionality, which served as discursive false fronts. Because "knowledge is an effect of power,"⁷¹ the perpetuation of false fronts creates a sense of knowledge that men are not as privileged and are not a dominating gendered force. By presenting the difficulty of their own gender performance, the participants were able to quickly shift discourse within the focus group away from narratives and forces of male privilege that might permeate their working roles, even in (and perhaps more so because of) their

⁷¹ Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa Mazzei, *Thinking with Theory*, 49.

positioning within a feminized professional environment. In reexamining our discourse analysis questions, the practice of creating these false fronts perpetuates dominant discursive structures. Though the men in our study may have resisted specific gendered practices related to emotionality, clothing, or other methods, they did so within a context of erasing knowledge and spotlighting their own privilege as men. Whereas our task in this analysis is to make “discourses visible,”⁷² the purpose of these false fronts was the opposite. Forgetting and obscuring are powerful discursive tactics reinforcing traditional gender norms and traditional notions of leadership and power that support men. Furthermore, these actions perpetuate the regulation of gender for men student affairs professionals, situating behavior in both traditional masculine norms and in an absolution of privilege, the combination of which is, again, the forgetting of the impact privilege has.

Thinking back to Clark/Keefe’s⁷³ concept of pernicious logic, the false front stories the participants told us operate on faulty logic. While gender-role conflict is presented as a significant issue, the perpetual machine of male privilege is largely ignored or minimized by the men in our study in favor of discussing their own gendered struggles. It is also important to recognize Foucault⁷⁴ was mindful that individuals cannot *have* power and intentionally control subjects. Though the men in our study benefitted from the way gender performance and false fronts advanced their power relations, power branches out “deeply into social networks.”⁷⁵ The discursive practices and structures surrounding and within higher education and student affairs in particular produce the circumstances presenting men as superior, to which the men in our study were responding.

“I Can Chime In, Because I’m the Only One Here”: Cycle of Privilege

The second major discursive theme we investigated was a *cycle of privilege* for our participants, which consisted of practices continually taking advantage of privilege, both consciously and subconsciously. Despite the absolution narrative above, which provided participants with discursive tactics to become one of the “good guys” who understand privilege and can be considered an ally, our participants also indicated (perhaps unknowingly) an eagerness to make

⁷² Michel Foucault, Prison Talk.

⁷³ Kelly Clark/Keefe, *Invoking Mnemosyne*.

⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, Prison Talk.

⁷⁵ Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa Mazzei, *Thinking with Theory*, 51.

gains from their privilege. Participants frequently spoke about being able to get more attention in meetings or on projects due to their gender. They also had at least some awareness of their upward mobility and promotional benefits of gender.

For instance, Matthew indicated he was readily willing to give his perspective, stating, “I think that generally men are just more likely to give it [our opinion], and we don’t really wait around to be asked.” Matthew’s assertion harkens back to Butler’s⁷⁶ concept of gender as performance. Matthew’s recognition of a social expectation for men to give their opinions, combined with his choice to give his opinion freely, produces expectations for men within student affairs. This also speaks to Foucault’s⁷⁷ concept of power/knowledge. Though the gendered expectations are set up that create this framework, Matthew actively and deliberately participated in the framework and perpetuates privilege through his gendered actions of speaking up and offering his opinion first, on top of, or over the opinions of staff members from other genders. As Foucault put it, power “is a machine in which everyone is caught.”⁷⁸ Other participants echoed Matthew’s notion, with Rufus, a heterosexual, biracial male, framing it as a responsibility: “I can chime in, because I’m the only one [man] here.”

Michael, too, felt it was his responsibility to “chime in,” not because he was speaking as the only man, but because as a man it was important for him to play the part of “calming everyone down and being the rock for the staff.” While Michael assumed this responsibility due to his privilege as a man, he also felt it was burdensome. Both the perceived experiences of having to speak up for men or calming women created opportunities for men to take advantage of male privilege that permit men to exhibit traditionally masculine behaviors and take control of meetings or situations. Some of our participants expressed confliction and a nod to self-awareness. John, for instance, mused on whether he should always provide his perspective or if that was not needed because “we are in this, like, male society,” and Tim felt some anxiety over potentially being seen as “the problem” or a “mansplainer.” Nevertheless, a trend of speaking up and its connection to upward mobility was evident in the actions and words of our participants.

Despite these sensitivities the men mentioned, participants were also aware of a societal, discursive expectation that men should be ambitious, but women should not. Despite an awareness of societal gendered expectations,

⁷⁶ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*.

⁷⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Eye of Power*, 156.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 156.

participants also expressed a need to, as Matthew put it, “look out for number one.” Participants were aware that playing by gendered norms would help them progress. For example, John stated that focusing on “actual student affairs work” (i.e., work associated with feminine stereotypes) was a disadvantage “when it comes to rising up the ranks and getting access to power.” Though our men were able to state the social justice values of the field and acknowledge their own privilege, their individual discursive actions betrayed a covert acknowledgment of societal gendered expectations and an understanding of the discursive workings described by the *great leader theory*⁷⁹ that perpetuated their own privilege and upward mobility by rewarding traditionally masculine traits and leadership ideals.

Men in our study also asserted women were to blame, at least partially, for their (women’s) lack of upward mobility, blaming women for career stagnation. Matthew, for instance, referred to his women colleagues as “content.” This notion of contentedness contrasted with notions of work–life balance struggles applicable to all genders mentioned by Matthew. As Tim put it, “I think women have that same exact [work-life balance] challenge in student affairs.” Tim equivocated his positioning and that of his female colleagues, while also privileging in his conversation his own struggles as a man. Taken in combination, these sentiments demonstrate how men in our study acknowledged their privilege then painted the conditions in which they and women work as the same. This framing functioned to create discursive space for men to perform actions perpetuating male privilege.

The numerical difference in the genders of the field also played into a victimization false front for participants. Rufus felt women had “the majority voice” and stated the conceptualization and focus in student affairs was on women, White women in particular. Michael’s comments on the overrepresentation of women in student affairs also pointed toward perceived emotional disadvantages in the field because of women’s “majority voice.” As Michael put it, he felt he was “being the one that constantly is managing the emotions of a female-dominated staff.” These discursive flourishes from our participants created additional space for men to rationalize speaking up in meetings, “taking charge,” and performing traditional masculine leadership traits that benefit them via male privilege, while also establishing women as an underclass struggling to control emotions or be appropriately ambitious, thereby further justifying the need for men to take charge. While actions such as speaking up in a meeting or taking charge of a project may seem minor,

⁷⁹ Adrianna Kezar, *Expanding Notions of Leadership*.

these are actions men could instantly identify with upward mobility and career success, which is the driving force behind their engagement in them.

Discussion

This cycle of absolution/advantage follows Foucault's⁸⁰ power/knowledge phenomenon, whereby the participants' work and life contexts produce discursive circumstances for their actions, which then perpetuate the knowledge around what creates promotional opportunities. As we uncover more of the discursive web, we discover how the absolution from privilege phenomenon feeds the cycle of privilege. Similar to how Foucault⁸¹ saw power and knowledge as perpetuating one another, the same synergistic relationship works with these two discursive processes. By acknowledging privilege, men create a discursive space (allowance) to speak up and take charge. By then taking charge, these men are rewarded under traditional gendered norms whereby men are perceived as natural leaders.

That men in this study were able to speak to their own privilege and take advantage of speaking up suggests these two sets of gendered expectations are dissonant while, in actuality, they work in concert to benefit male student affairs professionals. These two discursive strands form a doublet of absolution/advantage whereby even practices and strategies seemingly aimed as absolution perpetuate advantage. This doublet plays, as Foucault put it, both a "conditioning and a conditioned role."⁸² Men must acknowledge their own privilege due to the norms of discourse in student affairs and, when they do, are rewarded. When they are rewarded, it provides opportunities to take advantage of privilege. When thinking with this doublet as a phenomenon of discourse, it follows that men are prevalent in leadership positions despite their lack of overall numbers in student affairs.

Thinking again with Kendall and Wickham's⁸³ interpretations of discourse, the combination of the absolution narratives and the cycle of privilege allowed the men in our study to continually perpetuate the unsaid social and discursive rules situating the concept of man as leader, even in a feminized profession. Bourdieu and Passeron's⁸⁴ concept of cultural capital helps us

⁸⁰ Michel Foucault, *Prison Talk*.

⁸¹ Michel Foucault, *Body/Power*.

⁸² Michel Foucault, *Power and Strategies*, 142.

⁸³ Gary Kendall and Gavin Wickham, *Using Foucault's Methods*.

⁸⁴ Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*.

to further our understanding of how power and knowledge perpetuate one another within the discursive nodes of student affairs. Thinking with cultural capital, we saw that the men in our study were able to gain cultural and discursive capital by performing gender as a “self-aware man.” By presenting their own knowledge of privilege, they were able to cast shadows over that very privilege. They could be perceived as positive, contributing allies because they performed an awareness of male privilege, which diverted the spotlight away from how male privilege assisted them in upward mobility and social and cultural value, similar to Williams’⁸⁵ concept of the glass escalator. This parallels Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum’s reference to the concept of cultural capital as an implicit understanding and requirement for “certain knowledge and skills,”⁸⁶ though they investigated differences between students of varying socioeconomic status, not genders.

In our study, the concept of cultural capital is useful in understanding how male student affairs professionals (un)knowingly use discursive frameworks positioning men as leaders to their advancement. The combined discursive function of these two emergent themes is to pull focus toward identities and practices of male student affairs professionals who are in the margin, while obfuscating the benefits of male privilege that saturate their work regardless of espoused values; in other words, “every social order rests on a forgetting of the exclusion practices through which one set of meanings has been institutionalised and various other possibilities...have been marginalized.”⁸⁷ This process thereby not only ostensibly dismantles patriarchal processes but also ensures the perpetuation of discursive structures supporting men.

Conclusion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to investigate the performance of gender by men student affairs professionals and to unveil the interconnections between societal expectations of masculinity, the historical positioning of student affairs as feminine, and how those contexts create the men in our study as effects of structures of power and discourse. The men in our study navigated their male privilege in ways that both obfuscated their privilege and enhanced the impacts of male privilege. In a field that espouses social justice as a value, these contradictions suggest that for the men in our study, that value is more a veneer than a core tenet. And while the intent of these men student affairs

⁸⁵ Christine Williams, *The Glass Escalator*.

⁸⁶ Regina Deil-Amen and James Rosenbaum, *Social Prerequisites of Success*, 122.

⁸⁷ Michael Shapiro, *Textualizing Global Politics*, 321.

professionals may be rooted in gender equity and inclusivity, their discursive practices and strategies serve to continually reproduce hegemonic gendered expectations and possibilities for all genders.

The narrative and discursive tactics here may present a rather grim story where men doing caretaking work are shamed for how they navigate gender performance, but this analysis is not intended to castigate male student affairs professionals. Rather, our purpose is to point to the “paradoxical nature of the relationship between language and reality.”⁸⁸ As Foucault reminds us, “truth isn’t outside power.”⁸⁹ The experiences of the men in our study, through their discursive strategies and practices, showcase the way in which privilege is both perpetuated and lived. The men in our study did not necessarily benefit from privilege equally, but their actions and language also assisted in deploying a continually confusing set of gendered expectations for men. The conflicting pressures propagate discursive circumstances obfuscating practices of privilege. The men in our study were rewarded and reinforced in submitting to and perpetuating those discursive strands themselves.

Our analysis reveals how a field, situated in feminine ideals and practices and espousing social justice values, still can operate as a hierarchical system of exclusion. We might expect men working in a higher education caretaking profession to resist performing gender to enhance their male privilege, but this poststructural analysis suggests gender performance functions in the opposite. Those (presumed) positive notions for the field can further align truth, power, and discourse to perpetuate privilege for men and oppression for all other genders.

Returning to Jackson and Mazzei’s⁹⁰ thinking with theory, a more traditional viewpoint of this study would have perpetuated the very discursive structures we investigated. A traditional subjectivist qualitative analysis would have presented the men’s constructions of their own identities, experiences, and feelings as unproblematic and disconnected from discursive context. While traditional techniques are useful, here they had the potential to obscure the perpetuation of male privilege that our poststructural analysis excavated. Through a series of practices and strategies in a discursive web, participants were offered further benefits from male privilege by both camouflaging their privileges and presenting false fronts of other marginalized identities.

This study serves to open up the discussion rather than to provide a deterministic conclusion. As Butler reminded us, “gender is not a performance that a prior subject elects to do, but gender is performative in the sense that

⁸⁸ Maggie MacLure, *Discourse in Educational Research*, 3.

⁸⁹ Michel Foucault, *Truth and Power*, 131.

⁹⁰ Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa Mazzei, *Thinking with Theory*.

it constitutes as an *effect* the very subject it appears to express.”⁹¹ The gender performance of these men in student affairs is therefore not just conditioning of the environment, but also conditioned by it. The performances that these men engage in are influenced by the competing contexts of masculine societal norms and feminized professional norms. If we can continue to expose the rules of gender performance operating to regulate, perpetuate, resist, and oppress, then new understandings and meanings for men student affairs professionals and their gender performance are possible.

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6. *Melancholia and the Public*

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Abstract: In these preliminary reflections, I propose a re-reading of left-leaning political projects' attachment to the liberal idea of the "public." I will argue that this attachment is a wounded one that forces nostalgia for the past and prevents dealing with present realities. I want us to attend to this notion of the public by attending to some ideas in psychoanalysis, particularly Sigmund Freud's and specifically those of mourning and melancholia. This reading does not purport expertise in psychoanalysis and does not offer any kind of psychological diagnosis. I intend on reading psychoanalysis as allegory, as offering us imaginative devices for thinking about the present.

Keywords: the public, democracy, liberalism, Freud

In dealing with, and being discouraged by, the various global projects promoting consumerism, corporatization, marketization, privatization, neoliberalism, and other projects seeking to undermine the State,¹ since I started my academic career over 20 years ago in public higher education, I have been reflecting on the question of what is "public" in public higher education.² And so this essay, while generated by a concern with higher education, is really a

¹ Each of the projects I mentioned at the start of this essay has its own logic, but for the sake of an economy of words, I will group them in this essay mostly under the term "privatization."

² I use the term "public higher education" in this essay even though that term may not be recognized by all readers. In the United States, public higher education means higher education established, supported, and controlled by its political governments; in the rest of the world, the term "national" higher education or postsecondary education might be used instead of "public higher education."

reflection on the idea of the “public” and the appeal such an idea has for those of us on the left side of the political spectrum.

As a term, “public” originates from the Latin “populus,” or people, itself deriving from “pubes,” or “adult men,” but its authority lies in its claim to represent a social whole, even though many historical people have been excluded from projects justified under its name (indeed, “pubes” did not include women or children).³ For sure, the term has an empirical component—it has stood for actual individuals—but the exclusions associated with it belie its claims to represent everyone. So, it may be that the idea of the public is just that, an idea, a fantasy, and perhaps a technology (i.e., a device used to do something) for rationalizing actions and reactions. As an idea it is also tied to another idea, that of “democracy,” and, in fact, the two ideas are inextricably associated with each other.

Of course, the idea of democracy itself should be in question too, as it has been claimed in liberal as well as in totalitarian societies, in capitalist and in socialist ones, as both supporting individualism and communitarianism, and serving as synonym for singularity as well as typicality.⁴ Much like the idea of the public, therefore, the idea of democracy is also a fantasy or technology. At any rate, in higher education, privatization is justified *and* contested by calls for the “public good,” the “public interest,” or similar liberal ideas. Those advocating privatization argue that it is in the public’s interest to make institutions of higher education efficient, which happens through competition and marketization.⁵ Those arguing against privatization in higher education, however, argue that the public’s interest is hardly served, and is even threatened, by privatization.⁶ The idea of the “public” thus seems to serve both sides of the privatization debate in higher education. But what kind of debate is this?

I propose this essay as a call for philosophers of education to reconsider what is “public” in advanced liberal societies. I appreciate the difficulty of this task, since the question of what is “public” is considerably more slippery than

³ See Bruce Robbins, “Public,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, eds. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 183–187, 183.

⁴ Nancy Rutenburg, *Democratic Personality: Popular Voice and the Trial of American Authorship* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 10.

⁵ For a nuanced argument along these lines, see Matthew T. Lambert, *Privatization and the Public Good: Public Universities in the Balance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

⁶ For what is still, in my opinion, the best example of such an argument, see Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

one first imagines. It implies something other than liberal notions of the State but also something other than the selfish desires of any particular individual or groups of individuals. Yet, the question of what is public, or what is a public, has repeatedly been debated and the idea critiqued by many scholars and commentators. Indeed, when one attends to these critiques, one may conclude that the constant questioning of what constitutes “public” is probably what distinguishes liberalism from something else.

Liberalism, we know, is a political philosophy that emphasizes individual rights and freedoms.⁷ A liberal government is one premised on such logic. And thus it is the relationship between the individual and her government that is the overriding concern of liberal thought. In its classical forms it was characterized by a belief that the pursuit by each individual of his or her private interests ultimately leads to a system of voluntary cooperation that benefits society as a whole.⁸ Classical liberalism promoted the sanctity and sovereignty of the individual; a government, therefore, was justified to the extent that it could foster individual interests by, paradoxically, governing little. A government was required to take a stance of *laissez faire*, and, when at all possible, leave the individuals to their own devices. The “public” under this logic was likely what Jürgen Habermas understood as private citizens coming together to form a public to promote their interests *vis-à-vis* the State.⁹ It is in this public’s interest to have a *laissez faire* government that interferes only to resolve conflicts among private citizens.

In later forms, liberalism justified the promotion of social and collective interests, without which individual interests could not be maintained.¹⁰ A government under such a view, therefore, had a greater role to play in the affairs of individuals, since it had to ensure that the pursuit of their interest by some people does not impinge on that of others.¹¹ In

⁷ See Nikhal Pal Singh, “Liberalism,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, eds. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 139–145, 140. For a good discussion of the variations of liberal thought and the challenges associated with them, see Michael Sandel, ed., *Liberalism and Its Critics* (New York: New York University Press, 1984).

⁸ Gerald F. Gaus, “Public and Private Interests in Liberal Political Economy, Old and New,” in *Public and Private in Social Life*, eds. Stanley I. Benn and Gerald F. Gaus (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 183–221, 183.

⁹ See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989, c. 1962).

¹⁰ Gaus, “Public and Private Interests,” 184ff.

¹¹ Because of this, I would put the modern liberal ideas associated with figures like Ronald Dworkin and John Rawls in this category. See Ronald Dworkin, “Liberalism,” in *Li-*

this later version of liberalism, the public begins to be understood, not as private individuals coming together to form a public, but as a transcendent (of any particular historical being) collective needing the protection of a government.

If my reading of liberalism is even remotely correct, liberalism cannot simply reflect a description of institutional arrangements or societal values; it is also, perhaps primarily, a term we use to represent particular kinds of political rationalities that espouse different views about the relationship between individuals and their governments. Understood in terms of political rationalities about individuals and their governments, we may say that liberalism is characterized by an incessant critique of itself and its institutions.¹² And so it must by definition pose but, paradoxically, leave unanswered in any definitive sense the question of what a public is, and thus what it wants or needs.

So, does a “public” exist? What is “public?” In asking these questions, I am doing nothing particularly original, and, actually, my asking these questions makes me a good liberal in the sense I just indicated. As liberals, we must have angst over this question, or, rather, what an answer to this question might portend, not only for our imagination of ourselves as a public of any sort, or of ourselves as protecting something public, but more specifically for our professional identity as philosophers who are politically predisposed to collective interests. This angst is particularly keen, I think, because we are also thinking, and experiencing, as I suggested at the start, some things we have been calling privatization and a host of other projects that undermine, overtly or covertly, slowly or quickly, more or less, anything approaching a public, that is, something that is not entirely reducible to a statist or a selfish interest.

So, again, in having said all this, I have said nothing, or nothing particularly interesting. Many readers will have heard this before and will do so time and again, proving, perhaps contrary to certain points of view, that liberalism is alive and well, to the extent, that is, that it brings itself and its institutions under relentless and seemingly crippling critique. I join this chorus of critique, but I will also admit that I am growing weary of hearing a lament for something public that also fails to reflect on the attachment we have to this concept. How can we think the “public” via some understanding of this

beralism and Its Critics, ed. Michael Sandel (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 60–79; John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, c. 1993).

¹² See generally Michel Foucault, “History of Systems of Thought, 1979,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 8 (1981): 349–359.

attachment, and then, and only after then, how might we determine the extent of its usefulness as a mantra for political action? I can offer no definitive answers, of course, because liberalism prevents any, and because we must first think of why we need such a concept in the first place. Why do we want—need—the idea of the public? Why are we so attached to this idea, and what are the consequences of such an attachment?

In these preliminary reflections, I want to propose a reading of this attachment via a reading of narratives that traffic in attachments. I want us to attend to this notion of the public by attending to some ideas in psychoanalysis, particularly Sigmund Freud's and specifically those of mourning and melancholia, an attention that in combining what might seem like disparate ideas will, I hope, make us rethink all of them. This reading, in other words, seeks to show what will happen to the idea of the public if we read it via ideas in psychoanalysis and, conversely, what happens to psychoanalytic ideas if we juxtapose them to those of the public. Before doing this, I will readily admit that I am not purporting expertise in psychoanalysis and in the accepted meanings of any of its concepts, and I certainly do not want to offer any kind of psychological diagnosis. I intend on reading psychoanalysis as allegory, as offering us imaginative devices for thinking about the present, which in turn provides psychoanalysis with its allegories. Before moving on to a reading of Freud, let me state my reasons for engaging in such reading.

In line with Lee Edelman's call that queer politics must reject the vision of the future, and the protection of the child that subtends it, because of the abjections such visions require, I too think that it might be time to think what might appear unthinkable: "the space outside the framework within which politics as we know it appears and so outside the conflict of visions that share as their presupposition that the body politic must survive."¹³ My reading of melancholia asks philosophers of education to question their attachments to the "public," and, perhaps that we, in a sense, "kill off the public." In severing our ties to the idea of the public, might there be new ones that attend to ruptures in privatization instead of seeing it as all-consuming, and to reinvest our energies in new attachments that contain the traces of the public but that do not resort to a paralyzing nostalgia for the past that comes at the expense of the present?

As I see it, rightwing and neoliberal politics, while using the liberal language of the "public interest," clearly have detached themselves from some of the presuppositions about the public to which left-leaning politics still clings

¹³ Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 3.

and defends, such as consensus, community, and democracy. Interestingly, if I am correct, the political left becomes conservative by seeking to preserve a nostalgia for the public, while the political right is radical, breaking entirely with traditional liberal values. But could it be that by releasing themselves from the idea of the public that left-leaning projects might gain a renewed radicalism? I hope so.

Melancholic Attachments

In his 1917 essay, “Mourning and Melancholia,” Freud suggests that melancholia is a pathological form of mourning.¹⁴ Both concepts represent symptoms of grief arising from attachments to lost objects, whether those objects are persons, things, or ideals. Melancholia takes the physical form of intense self-hatred and aggression, which can be present in mourning but only temporarily. Freud further distinguishes mourning from melancholia by indicating that mourning ends when an individual severs his attachment to the lost object and reinvests his libido in a new object.¹⁵ The mourner goes through a process of testing reality in which she remembers why the lost object was dear to her and, most important, that it no longer exists. When the work of mourning is completed, the ego becomes free and uninhibited again.

With melancholia, however, there is an inability to break one’s attachment to the lost object, and the object is retained as part of one’s psyche. The ego becomes identified with the lost object, initiating what Freud calls a “critical agency,” or a superego, that attacks the ego for failing to live up to the object. The melancholic cannot acknowledge reality, that is, that the object has indeed been lost. Thus, as Judith Butler reads it, melancholy entails a foreclosure of the social world that has been eclipsed by a psychic one.¹⁶ The “real”

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *Collected Papers*, Volume IV (London: The Hogarth Press, 1956, c. 1917), 152–170.

¹⁵ For those readers not familiar with psychoanalytic language, providing a few definitions of terms I use in this essay is in order. Sigmund Freud divided the mind into the ego, superego, and id. The ego is what is understood as reason; the id refers to the passions; and the superego refers to conscience. If properly controlled by the ego, the id and superego lead to happiness, but a failure by the ego to control either the id or the superego can lead to physical or psychic pain. See Lucy Freeman and Marvin Small, *The Story of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Pocket Books, 1960), 113. The libido, Freud said, is analogous to hunger; it is “force by means of which the instinct...[e.g., hunger] achieves expression.” See Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: Washington Square Press, 1965), 322.

¹⁶ Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 134.

social world is rejected and an internal world emerges that is structured in ambivalence, which means that the subject directs antithetical feelings (such as affection and hostility) toward the object. This ambivalence prevents the work of mourning because while part of one's psyche wishes to detach itself from the object, another part upholds it. Freud suggests that it is only by declaring the object dead and offering the ego the benefit of continuing to live that the ego can give up its object. So for him, ironically, each single conflict of ambivalence, in disparaging its object, in denigrating it, even, as it were, in "slaying" it, loosens the fixation of the libido to it. Stated differently, only by "killing off the object" can one survive as a subject.

The process of mourning involves a testing of reality that confirms that the lost object has indeed been lost. With melancholia such a "reality check" cannot take place, and a close reading of Freud's text suggests why. For Freud, melancholia involves a "loss of a more ideal kind," indicating that melancholia is reserved for such losses that, by their very definition, cannot be perceived directly, such as ideals. If social ideals cannot be easily checked by reality, does that mean that melancholia is a structural condition of societies, and that the process of mourning those ideals is unlikely ever to end? Indeed, Freud indicates that the subject will not know precisely what about the object has been loved and lost. Melancholia, therefore, might not be a condition for recuperating a loss but a condition for negating a lack. As Slavoj Žižek argues, melancholia masks that the object is lacking in the first place.¹⁷ Indeed, as I indicated earlier in this essay, the conception of the public was premised on exclusions from the start, and so, perhaps, lament for the public has always been premised on the fact of its absence.

Before we reconsider this allegory in light of our concern with the public, let me elaborate further on mourning and melancholia. Freud's later work suggests that the distinction between mourning and melancholia was not as neat as he first understood it. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud appears to say that melancholia makes mourning possible.¹⁸ While previously Freud understood as pathological an ego that identifies with its lost objects, later he seems to argue that the very formation of the ego involves such identification. Thus, as Tammy Clewell explains, the ego necessarily reflects an embodied history of lost attachments.¹⁹

¹⁷ Slavoj Žižek, "Melancholy and the Act," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 4 (Summer 2000): 657–681, 661.

¹⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id. Standard Edition* 19 (1923): 12–66 (London: Hogart Press).

¹⁹ Tammy Clewell, "Mourning Beyond Melancholia" Freud's Psychoanalysis of Loss," *Journal of American Psychoanalytic Association* 52, no. 1 (2004): 43–67, 56.

If in “Mourning and Melancholia” Freud indicates that an individual must sever one attachment to make another, in *The Ego and the Id* he argues that only upon the condition that the lost object becomes internalized can the process of mourning ever be accomplished and new attachments created. Freud, then, appears to collapse the distinction between mourning and melancholia, making melancholic identification integral to the process of mourning. In his later work, Freud is indicating that only by internalizing the lost Other can one become a subject in the first place. Working through the loss, Clewell suggests, no longer depends on breaking one’s attachment to the lost other; it depends on taking the lost other into the structure of one’s own identity, a form of preserving the lost object in and as the self.²⁰

To read melancholia as a pathological form of mourning would mean that one must reject the Other, or the social, in favor of an individual capable of being a-social. But to even think this requires that one imagine the impossible: something without any social definition whatsoever. What appears to us like the individual is actually the effect of socially regulated norms in disguise. Freud himself seemed to acknowledge this. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, he explains that what characterizes “civilization” more than anything else—more even than its technology—is the manner in which social relationships are regulated, “relationships which affect a person as a neighbor, as a source of help, as another person’s sexual object, as a member of a family and of a State.”²¹ The replacement of the power of the individual by the power of the community constitutes the decisive step in civilization. It is impossible to overlook, he argues, the extent to which civilization is built up on a renunciation of instincts. Civilization aims to bind every member of the community together in a libidinal way, and it employs every means to that end. It favors every path by which strong identifications can be established between the members of the community so as to strengthen the communal bond by relations of friendship.

So, if the social is what determines the individual, and thus what constitutes the ego, then melancholia, which rejects the social world and replaces it with an internal one, and which was originally understood as a reproach of the self, can now be read as a refusal to see the social in the self. This understanding of melancholia as a refusal to see the social in the self now allows us to identify the lost ideal that cannot be grieved in melancholia: The ideal of the individual as a self-enclosed, willing entity, the ideal of the sovereign

²⁰ Ibid., 61.

²¹ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961, c. 1930).

individual—the liberal subject. Such is the ideal we have inherited from our Western ancestors, handed down for centuries and pounded into our brains and bodies by years of socialization in families, in churches, in schools, in almost every institution we have set up to regulate our behavior without the use of physical force. This is an individual who exercises agency, who has intelligence, who can be held responsible, who has obligations. This ideal not only informs our personal identities, but also our sense of ourselves as collectives, and thus as what counts legitimately, and perhaps paradoxically, as a public, as I hope to explain later in this essay. This ideal cannot be mourned, at any rate, because to do so will involve a disintegration of everything we hold dear: Morality, the law, the contract, and myriad institutions premised on the ideal of the sovereignty of the subject.

To make of melancholia a simple “refusal” to grieve its losses conjures up a subject who might be something without its attachments, that is, one who voluntarily extends and retracts his or her will. Indeed, as Clewell indicates, Freud’s original concept of mourning involves less a lament for the passing of a unique other and more a process geared toward restoring a certain economy of the subject.²² Yet from the start, an ego is something “other than itself,” and we can see now that what melancholia represents is that only by internalizing an Other as oneself can one become something at all. The social terms which determine social existence only appear to reflect individual autonomy, and so, as Butler explains, it is only by forfeiting the notion of such autonomy that social existence becomes possible; only such forfeiture releases the ego from its melancholic foreclosure of the social. To accept the “trace” of the other in one’s ego is to embark on a process of mourning that is never complete, for a severance of the other will only dissolve the ego. In recognizing that there can be no final severance of attachments without dissolving the ego, as one sees with right-leaning politics, Freud’s later work suggests a different alternative than the one he originally proposed, that is, the completely “killing off” of the Other: The mourn(er) can now affirm the endurance of ambivalent bonds to those loved and lost others as a condition of his own existence.

How might this allegory of attachment and loss allow us to reconsider the attachment we have for the idea of the public? While the concepts of mourning and melancholia have limitations in their usefulness for reading social life,²³ they do seem to me to provide fertile ground for reimagining our

²² Clewell, “Mourning Beyond Melancholia,” 47.

²³ For a very interesting, if too psychology-ist, attempt of applying such concepts to social life, see Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*, trans. Beverly R. Placzek (New York: Grove Press, 1975).

lingering commitment to social ideas that have undergone such substantial reconceptualization that they no longer seem to serve their original purposes. In this present time, with a systemic undermining of many of the social bonds that once held individuals together (such as the nation-state, the “public,” the school, and so on), the commitment to the “public good” starts to read like a wounded attachment, that is, a melancholic attachment to an object that is no longer justifiable as a coherent ideal for bringing people together under a common set of goals.

I hope to use this allegory of loss as a way of rethinking the grounding of our ground itself, that is, liberalism and the concepts that come from (or have been redefined by) it, such as the State, the market, the public, the private, and even that of the individual. One of the things we have learned from thinking of the forces reshaping higher education, for example—privatization, marketization, consumerism, and so on—is that the individual, the market, the private, the public, and the state have all become invested in one another, so that it is now more and more difficult to draw a line that distinguishes each from the others. It seems as if market logic has prevailed in reshaping the other concepts in its own image, but if it has, it has done so at an expense, at a loss, so to speak, since it can no longer guarantee that it is distinct from the others, and thus it is always vulnerable to an interjection by the others. At any rate, the grounds that grounded our sense of ourselves, individually and socially, have been lost. We have lost our grounding as liberal subjects; we might now feel that we are, as it were, in an abyss.

The critique of the liberal agentic subject has been pervasive.²⁴ But the allegory of attachment and loss I just narrated might allow us to read, more narrowly, liberalism’s attachment to the idea of the public, a reading which sees it, I propose, as a series of melancholic attachments. Its constant critique of itself suggests the ambivalence that characterizes melancholic violence. Let

²⁴ For just a few examples, see Stanley I. Benn and Gerald F. Gaus, eds., *Public and Private in Social Life* (London: Croom Helm, 1983); Graham Burchell, “Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self,” in *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-liberalism and Rationalities of Government*, eds. Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 19–36; Judith Butler, *Senses of the Subject* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015); Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, 2nd ed. (New York: Verso, 2011); Barbara Cruikshank, *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Alfredo Saad-Filho and Deborah Johnston, eds., *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader* (London: Pluto Press, 2005); Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2014).

me take as illustration two classic American narratives of the public, each written very closely to each other and that can be said to be in conversation with the other. Walter Lippmann argued in *The Phantom Public* that the notion of the public is nothing but an abstraction, a “phantom,” since the public does not have the tools or the time to be engaged in every issue affecting it. Public decisions are simply the wishes of those few individuals invested in particular issues. The only thing the public can do, and not very effectively, is to decide which of the interested parties will win out. It cannot reflect deeply on issues because neither can it know all the particulars, nor is it interested in them.²⁵

John Dewey in *The Public and Its Problems* takes exception to Lippmann’s foreclosure of the public, not because he was naive enough to believe it existed, but because he held out hope for its possibility. Dewey did argue that the public remains inchoate and unorganized, but only because decisions needing systematic responses are so wide and complex, the technical matters so specialized, and the details so many and so shifting that the public cannot identify and maintain itself. Dewey claims that the problem is not that there is no public, as Lippmann argued, but that there are too many publics, with divergent desires preventing them from coming together as an integrated whole. The public will remain “in eclipse” until the “Great Society” is converted into the “Great Community,” which is the coming together of different publics as an integrated whole.²⁶

These two narratives, seemingly in contradiction, at least in their conclusions, represent for me things other than themselves, and it is about this other thing that I would like readers of this essay to speculate. Let me propose a start, one which I already proposed: The narratives reflect a structural angst in liberalism over the question of the public. It matters less to me what Dewey and Lippmann said specifically about the public; it matters more to me that their texts can be read as attacks of each other’s positions on the subject. If Lippmann’s narrative reflects a kind of hostility toward the ideal of the public that grounds our form of government, then Dewey’s narrative reflects an antithetical affection for this ideal, and read together these texts reflect the ambivalence that characterizes melancholia in liberalism. Liberalism, in this essay, is characterized by a relentless critique of itself and its institutions, and as such it is structurally melancholic, bound to ambivalent views of itself and its ideals. These ideals cannot be mourned and severed because while parts of liberalism seek to dispense with them, other parts uphold them.

²⁵ Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002, c. 1927).

²⁶ John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problem* (Columbus: Swallow Press, 1954, c. 1927).

But there is a deeper ideal in liberalism that it cannot sever without dissolving itself: The sovereign individual, an illusion that grounds the ground we stand on. We may agree that the public does not stand for the state or for the selfish desires of any individual, but it does stand for the idea of private individuals coming together to form a public, as Habermas explains. For Habermas, the “bourgeois” public sphere was a sphere of private individuals coming together to form a public to debate state authority over the rules that governed private commodity exchange and social relations. The medium for these debates was the individual’s uses of their reason; the venues were institutions set up for public participation (e.g., parliament, the press, journals, coffee houses, salons, etc.).²⁷ Habermas’ critique of the failure of the public sphere is premised on the notions that all kinds of interests and individuals now lay claim to the public, and that powerful private interests dominate the state. These changes no longer allow for public debate based on rational arguments.²⁸ At root in this argument about the public is the idea of the sovereign individual.

For all the talk of a suppression of selfish interests in our conception of a public, we must grant that it forms itself voluntarily, for to argue otherwise strips individuals of their sovereignty and establishes totalitarianism or despotism of some kind. The public is premised, not primarily on acceptance of common interests or adherence to common goals, but on the fiction of the sovereign individual, one with the ability to choose (and, for us, one we hope chooses to suppress selfish desires for the good of the community). Lippmann, it must be noted, rejected the idea of the public, not because he believed the notion of the individual underlying it is a fiction, but because the individual is too busy to exercise his will rationally. Dewey’s elaboration of the public understood an individual who sees in himself an obligation to contribute to the decisions that will direct her actions. Both narratives reflect a melancholic attachment to the sovereign subject.

Having said that these conflicting narratives about the public reflect a narrative of loss characterizing liberalism’s ambivalent attachment to the liberal notion of a sovereign individual, I would like us to avoid the conclusion that the answer lies simply in severing this attachment and obtaining another. Thus, this re-reading of liberalism, and the public as one of its ideals, via psy-

²⁷ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 27.

²⁸ For critiques of the idea of rational debate, see Craig Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. For a different argument, but similarly premised on the idea of rational debate, see Hanna Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, c. 1958).

choanalysis now allows us to re-read psychoanalysis itself. For psychoanalysis cannot be read as reflections on psyches irrespective of these social attachments, irrespective, that is, of these mourned ideals. Freud's original conceptualization of mourning was premised on the model of the unified subject, and so the replacement of the lost object with a substitute seemed rather a non-problematic process, socially speaking, that is. Freud, at least originally, assumed the Western notion of a subject separate and distinct from others; he assumed, in other words, the sovereignty of the subject. Psychoanalysis, therefore, can only be read allegorically, for any reading of it as reflecting internal unities, separate and distinct from others, grounds it on a fiction.

Mourning the Public

Going back to the problem, giving up the attachment to the idea of public would require that we sever our attachments to others, that we gain independence from the social terms and relationships that make us who we are. Doing that is not only impossible but melancholic and thus potentially destructive. The neoliberal, neoconservative, or nationalist ability to grieve successfully the ideal of the public, if you will, and to reinvest libidos in other attachments, such as, for example, those of the market, nation/party, or organized religion, respectively, illustrates most violently what this radical independence from the other actually does. We must acknowledge lost ideals, but we cannot sever them from ourselves, for their incorporation into our lives is what defines us.

The concept of the public, premised on liberalism's ambivalent stance toward a sovereign subject, embodied in the individual or in the public as a collection of such individuals, has to be recognized as a lost ideal. I propose this allegory of mourning and melancholia, therefore, as a rethinking of what the public might mean for philosophers of education now, how they might incorporate that ideal into new attachments, ones that recognize the trace of that ideal in what we might become. They must avoid, according to Wendy Brown, what Walter Benjamin coined as "left melancholy," an epithet for the revolutionary hack who is more attached to a particular political analysis or ideal, even to the failure of the ideal, than to seizing possibilities for radical change in the present.²⁹ By clinging nostalgically to some imagined past, leftist politics around higher education are left only with defending a welfare state that confronts neither the contradictions within it nor the dominations that take place through it. Following Brown, what might be left of the po-

²⁹ Wendy Brown, "Resisting Left Melancholy," *boundary 2*, 26, no. 3 (1999): 19–27, 20.

litical left are ghostly spirits attached to a dead past, looking backward and punishing itself for doing so.³⁰

A melancholic refusal to acknowledge such loss might prevent us on the political left from seeing the possibilities of reinvesting that ideal. That is, the “public” cannot be an assumed transcendent (and thus under attack); it must be fought for, invented, and forged constantly, in every moment and in every space. This may mean refusing to attach all hopes in political institutions. It will mean reinvesting energy and work in different institutions; if not always in the institutions of higher education that have been co-opted by neoliberal projects, for example, then in nonorganized gatherings, such as blogs, clubs, and so forth. We cannot presuppose a public good that is now in danger of being lost; we must fight for one that never existed. We must insist against all politically acceptable reason on inefficiency and on waste, for acceptance of such logic installs neoliberal projects. If institutions of higher education are to maintain any semblance of a “public” space, we must rethink the ideals that require normalization and consensus and focus more extensively on providing opportunities for dissension, for serendipity, for interlocutory possibilities whose consensus or democratic potential cannot be guaranteed in advance. While we must mourn the ideal of the public, we cannot sever our attachment to it, for such ideals make us what we are, which only may be the embodiments of histories of lost attachments, which we must mourn in an endless but necessary process of becoming something.

³⁰ Ibid., 26.



7. Some Critical Reflections on the Counter-Education of Gur-Ze'ev and the Abductive Reasoning of Peirce

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Abstract: This essay seeks to promote a philosophical-theoretical reflection on the interrelationship of the abductive reasoning of Peirce with the philosophical ideas of the counter-education project of Gur-Ze'ev. This is expressed in the question: Is abduction the most widely used type of reasoning in diasporic philosophy and counter-education? Starting from this question, we present the basic concepts of the authors, and then initiate an approximate dialogue between the central concepts. We believe it is possible, through the characteristics demanded by the principles proposed by Gur-Ze'ev, to conclude that abductive reasoning is the predominant mode of logic in diasporic philosophy and of counter-education.

Keywords: counter-education, abduction, diasporic philosophy, Gur-Ze'ev, Pierce

Introduction

Thinking about education today is a sinuous and complex issue. It is a sinuous and complex phenomenon because we live in times of struggle, especially in the face of the dismantling of the initial and continuous education of teachers, of investment in the structure of schools and of policies granting access and supporting the permanence of students in schools and universities. A prime example of this is Brazil, where there is an attempt to implement new policies curbing neutral discussions

about gender, social and political issues in classrooms, which have a direct impact on teachers, since they might be denounced by students and parents, and prosecuted if they are perceived to do so (cf. Guilherme and Picoli 2018); the newly elected government has also signalled that it is against student quotas at universities for minorities and vulnerable individuals, which can be perceived as an attempt to disassemble social policies that facilitate social mobility in the country (cf. Santos et al. 2013). This goes against the UNESCO report, *The Dakar Framework for Action—Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments*, adopted by the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, from 26 to 28 April 2000:

Adult and continuing education must be greatly expanded and diversified, and integrated into the mainstream of national education and poverty reduction strategies. The vital role literacy plays in lifelong learning, sustainable livelihoods, good health, active citizenship and the improved quality of life for individuals, communities and societies must be more widely recognized. Literacy and continuing education are essential for women's empowerment and gender equality. Closer linkages among formal, non-formal and informal approaches to learning must be fostered to respond to the diverse needs and circumstances of adults. [Thus,] [s]ufficient resources, well-targeted literacy programmes, better trained teachers and the innovative use of technologies are essential in promoting these activities. The scaling up of practical, participatory learning methodologies developed by non-government organizations, which link literacy with empowerment and local development, is especially important. The success of adult education efforts in the next decade will be essentially demonstrated by substantial reduction in disparities between male/female and urban/ rural literacy rates. (UNESCO 2000: 16)

This was reiterated in the UNESCO report, *Incheon Declaration: Education 2030*:

On this historic occasion, we reaffirm the vision of the worldwide movement for Education for All initiated in Jomtien in 1990 and reiterated in Dakar in 2000—the most important commitment to education in recent decades and which has helped drive significant progress in education. We also reaffirm the vision and political will reflected in numerous international and regional human rights treaties that stipulate the right to education and its interrelation with other human rights. We acknowledge the efforts made; however, we recognize with great concern that we are far from having reached education for all. (UNESCO 2017: 5)

Recognizing the important nature of our role as educational thinkers, we will seek in this text to bring to light the thinking of two theorists, namely Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) and Ilan Gur-Ze'ev (1955–2012). We will explore Gur-Ze'ev's ideas, particularly his understanding of diasporic philosophy and counter-education, which demand a pragmatic attitude towards the truth; that is, as we shall demonstrate, Gur-Ze'ev, following the Frankfurt School, denies absolute truths professing that they are conditioned by society, culture and the historical moment (Gur-Ze'ev 2005). We maintain that this

should lead us to an alternative way of thinking because there is a need to refute a ‘safe base’, which is directly connected to absolute truths, demanding of us the adoption of provisional ‘hypotheses’ and thus encouraging our creativity. This understanding reminds us of Peirce and his three modes of reasoning, and particularly of his concept of abductive reasoning. This is that kind of reasoning that is “[...] the only logical operation that introduces any new idea” (CP 5.171). Our central aim in this chapter is to reflect on the following question: Is abduction the most widely used type of reasoning used in diasporic philosophy, and by counter-education?

Gur-Ze’ev’s Diasporic Philosophy and Counter-Education

Ilan Gur-Ze’ev (2016) emphasizes that his general conception of Critical Theory arises by way of the thinkers of the Frankfurt School, especially Adorno and Horkheimer. He points out that he sought from the outset a construction of Critical Theory that challenged critical hegemonic discourse, as well as bringing to light certain aspects of Critical Theory itself, such as its earlier focus on positive utopia, which later was pushed aside in favour of negative utopia. That is to say, according to Gur-Ze’ev the Frankfurt School has two phases between the 1930s and 1970s, which are characterized by: (i) “a positive optimistic utopianism” and (ii) “a negative pessimistic utopianism” (cf. Gur-Ze’ev 1998: 119). This understanding is important because it will help us make sense of Gur-Ze’ev’s philosophy of education, as he places Critical Pedagogy, the pedagogical branch of Critical Theory, as being directly related to the first phase of Critical Theory and to positive utopia, whilst positioning himself and his counter-education project as being immediately associated with the second phase, and to the notion of negative utopia—thus denying the need for a guiding truth, because it can become something that blinds the critical spirit. This means that Gur-Ze’ev sought to interpret and implement Critical Theory in the field of education in a direct re-articulation, re-conceptualization of Critical Pedagogy; and we believe that it was in the book *Diasporic Philosophy and Counter-Education* (2010) that the author devoted himself more fully to bringing to light his main contributions to contemporary education, to the principles which we wish to engage with in this text, namely, diasporic philosophy and counter education.

In diasporic philosophy, Gur-Ze’ev (2005) conceives of the diaspora—in the broad sense of the word—as the nomadic human in relation to being in the world, to thought and to existence itself. The aim of this as a philosophical notion, of diaspora, is to encourage the human exodus from emancipatory dogmatic conceptions that are presented as easy solutions to our

problems, and which must be implemented in our search to implement a utopia; Gur-Ze'ev seeks to release people from the normalizing ways of thinking. An example of such a way of thinking is Critical Pedagogy. This is the Critical Pedagogy that is connected to the first phase of the Frankfurt School and seeks to implement a utopia, such as Freire's vision of the liberation of an enlightened, oppressed poor (Freire 1970: 48–49); McLaren's through a socialist democracy (McLaren 1998: 458); Giroux's through a democracy of differences (Giroux 1991: 60) (cf. Yaakoby 2012: 16; Guilherme and Morgan 2018). Gur-Ze'ev seeks to distance himself from this critical pedagogy. What is common to each of these narrow visions of reality is, according to Gur-Ze'ev, that one side oppresses, whilst the other is oppressed; and even when the oppressor tries to engage with its own oppression, or the oppressed manages to somehow transform the situation so that it is less oppressing, they will ultimately be unsuccessful—these events have happened again and again in history, and the oppressor–oppressed dichotomy continuous to exist. I note that Gur-Ze'ev's reading is fundamentally based in Benjamin's negative utopia and pessimism about history. This is a potential problem as once a positive utopian ideal is created and a goal is to be achieved, then it becomes impossible to criticize and revise the ideal because doing so puts the project in danger. Thus, utopias cease to be an end and become the foundational principle on which an entire methodology and philosophy is constructed. In this respect, Critical Pedagogy becomes crystallized, adopting an absolute truth, whilst Gur-Ze'ev's counter-education project remains open to new possibilities, malleable in dealing with current and new issues and situations.

Gur-Ze'ev opposes any unique 'truth'—due to the mutability of things ontological and epistemological—and sees in the distant horizon the impossibility of establishing a solid foundation for ideas and actions, factors which, were they to be established, would destroy critical and creative alternatives in human thought and action. Hence, Gur-Ze'ev maintains that “[i]t is a central dimension of ‘counter-education’ within the framework of present-day Diasporic philosophy: while refusing any dogma, it reintroduces the exiled seriousness toward that which is called ‘redemption’ in Christian theology”. As Adorno observed, “it is even part of my good fortune not to be a house-owner”, as Nietzsche had already written in the *Gay Science*. Today we should have to add: “it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home” (Gur-Ze'ev 2005: 346).¹ In this quote, Gur-Ze'ev is rejecting positive utopia,

¹ On the same vein, see LACLAU, Ernesto. *On populist reason*. London and New York: Verso, 2005. LACLAU, Ernesto; MOUFFE, Chantal. *Hegemony and socialist strategy: towards a radical democratic politics*. London: Verso, 1985.

ideals, in favour of negative utopia, which is to be understood as a rejection of absolute truths and subscribing continuously to a critical attitude. Following the second phase of the Frankfurt School, Gur-Ze'ev (2005, 2010a, 2010b) gives up on positive utopia in favour of a negative utopia because any act that seeks to establish an absolute truth is an act inherent to instrumental reason (i.e. a practical form of reason that seeks to achieve an end), which seeks to homogenize thought, the cultural industry, to confer an air of similarity to all (Adorno and Horkheimer (2002). As Horkheimer (2002: 28) says: this search for normalization turns, for example, the so sought-after emancipation to its opposite, that is, "... a 'magical' entity that is accepted rather than intellectually understood". Hence, the human being moves away from critical thinking and returns to an instrumental form of reasoning, returning to the very condition from which he tried to escape.

Gur-Ze'ev's views serve as a motivation for us to rethink many contemporary attitudes and values, including important issues, such as 'democracy'. We might for instance ask: is democracy a positive utopia? Aren't we in search of an absurd project forever comprised of the oppressed and the oppressor? Evidently these questions alone would yield extensive work. However, in asking them and bringing such issues to light, our intention was simply to show that it is possible to think of alternative visions that can lead us to think of other paths, as well as to move us away from normalizing views, and in this case totalitarian regimes; it is possible to envisage wider perspectives that go beyond sharp divisions. Thus, we must sharpen our critical thinking, and this is to get out of our comfort zone, which is the sole purpose of diasporic philosophy. This means that those who follow diasporic philosophy know that their role in the world lies in the perpetual desire to maintain the ability to criticize and to self-criticize, and this is to be done without searching for a sure foundation, a 'promised land', that is found in objective and absolute truths. The diasporic philosopher, the diasporic teacher, aspires to help individuals to acquire critical tools that will offer, through their own action and autonomy, alternative and creative ways to understand issues. This is Gur-Ze'ev, as already mentioned, subscribing to the second phase of the Frankfurt School, defending the notion of negative utopia.

We believe it is worth noting here that diasporic philosophy seeks to unite our responsibilities to the ability to respond critically to the challenges faced by us. Moreover, it requires that this responsiveness considers the 'alterity of the Other'; that is, consider the diversity and difference of the Other, the uniqueness of the Other's identity that is above simple characteristics or mere cultural specifics (Yaakoby 2012). In view of this, we understand that the philosophical foundations of Gur-Ze'ev (2005, 2010a, 2010b) are important in the area of education, especially contemporary education committed to a humanistic form

of education; perhaps, even to a form of global citizenship education, if it is understood as a form of transformative education with a focus on living peacefully with the Other. That is, as the UNESCO (2015: 15) affirms:

Global citizenship education aims to be transformative, building the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that learners need to be able to contribute to a more inclusive, just and peaceful world. Global citizenship education takes ‘a multifaceted approach, employing concepts and methodologies already applied in other areas, including human rights education, peace education, education for sustainable development and education for international understanding’ and aims to advance their common objectives. Global citizenship education applies a lifelong learning perspective, beginning from early childhood and continuing through all levels of education and into adulthood, requiring both ‘formal and informal approaches, curricular and extracurricular interventions, and conventional and unconventional pathways to participation’.

According to Gur-Ze’ev (2010a), counter-education is the intellectual result of a combination of disquiet and moral concerns, as well as a unique encounter with a non-emotional intimacy, that is, critical. Gur-Ze’ev sees his education project as the result of a constant discomfort with the hegemonic and absolutizing theories. It seems to us that this understanding aims to alert and empower the human being to identify possible fallacies that lie in a normalizing ideal, and in achievements that will happen ‘automatically’—this ‘ideal’ approach avoids the necessary and ongoing angst involved in valid critical thinking. Therefore, counter-education to Gur-Ze’ev (2005) comprises educational activities that do not try to transcend the negativity embedded in the second phase of the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School. In other words, for Gur-Ze’ev (2010a), counter-education is present in acts that, starting from the principles of diasporic philosophy, in their core refuse any notion that seeks to standardize education; that do not encourage, or that hinder students from developing their critical capacity, with regard to their personal concerns, be this connected to the world, to their own life or to their own ‘self’.

At this point it is important that we return to the issue of instrumentalized rationality to more fully express the principles of counter-education. In accordance with Adorno and Horkheimer (1985), economic capital seeks, through cultural industry, the instrumentalization of consciousness; that is, through unrealizable promises, fanaticizes human reasoning, with a view to an impossible horizon to be achieved and to act on without ‘thinking’. This tendency ends up engulfing critical reason, denying it under the guise of a utopia of ‘freedom’—and this is whether it is through one’s way of thinking, acting or merely ‘consuming’. Adorno and Horkheimer (2002: 113) exemplify this by pointing out that:

This principle requires that while all needs should be presented to individuals as capable of fulfillment by the culture industry, they should be so set up in advance that individuals experience themselves through their needs only as eternal consumers, as the culture industry's object. Not only does it persuade them that its fraud is satisfaction; it also gives them to understand that they must make do with what is offered, whatever it may be. The flight from the everyday world, promised by the culture industry in all its branches, is much like the abduction of the daughter in the American cartoon: the father is holding the ladder in the dark. The culture industry presents that same everyday world as paradise. Escape, like elopement, is destined from the first to lead back to its starting point. Entertainment fosters the resignation which seeks to forget itself in entertainment.

As we have already noted, Gur-Ze'ev criticizes Critical Theory and its first phase, the positive utopia phase, by connecting it to the use of instrumental reason. This is a rejection of ultimate and absolute truths because when one believes or subscribes to a final truth, by having the 'ideal' as an ultimate goal, one loses ability to criticize this 'ideal', which forces one to partake in a mechanized approach. This is so because according to Gur-Ze'ev (2005) when one asserts a positive utopia, an 'ideal' to be realized as a goal, one incurs the danger of turning this 'ideal' into the very foundation of one's approach, of one's philosophy. This is similar to what the economic capital and cultural industry does in society when it normalizes our way of thinking and fanaticizing certain concepts; the fashion industry imposes on us the latest trends in clothes and our desire to buy them, instrumentalizing our way of thinking, and Freireans continuously advocate the liberation of the oppressed as a mantra without much reflection.² The crucial point here, being driven by Gur-Ze'ev, is not that we should not buy the latest trend in fashion or advocate the liberation of the oppressed; rather, it is that we should be critical about it to the point of ascertaining that this is what we desire or that this is a valid position to hold. Moreover, we should not just be critical of propositions (i.e. I is critical of X), we should also be self-critical. Everything must be criticized so to verify its validity, and nothing should be out of bounds to our critical attitude because to regard some as non-criticizable would be arbitrary.

Gur-Ze'ev (2010a) applies this philosophical understanding to the field of education, thus conceiving of his counter-education project. Due to its focus on a sharp critical capacity, the project aims at revealing that being validly critical cannot be characterized by naively offering simple 'democratic consensus' under the guise of freedom and emancipation; rather, the true critical attitude

² Guilherme and Morgan (2018: 792) note that: "A prime example is the *Freireanism* found in some academic circles in Brazil and abroad, which regard criticism of Paulo Freire's thought and their own *Freireanism* as heresy (cf. Weiler 1996; Brayner 2015)."

is a conscious awakening of one's difficulties and impossibilities that must be faced and dealt with maturely. This non-promise of 'democratic consensus', of 'emancipation', is what characterizes Gur-Ze'ev's notion of nomadism, diaspora and love of life, which in turn serve as a foundation for the ability to criticize, to unravel weak foundations, that are incompatible with society and reality. Ultimately, and because of this foundational everlasting critical attitude, counter-education encourages the emergence of new creative and philosophical possibilities in educational environments (Gur-Ze'ev 2010a); in other words, "[d]iasporic counter-education, in this respect, is an attempt to present the possibility of thinking and of responsible improvisational co-poiesis in an era which deconstructs, ridicules or fetishizes holiness and the kind of responsibility which conditions transcendence from ecstatic sinking toward something to becoming someone who is rich and free to the degree of refusing the temptation to return 'home' into the continuum of an aimless symbolic and direct emancipating violence or, alternatively, to the harmony of nothingness as presented by the suggestive powers of capitalist 'success' and other powerful drugs" (Gur-Ze'ev 2010a: 19). The idea of the 'homelessness' in education—of being continuously engaged in a critical attitude and not subscribing to absolute ideals—is very powerfully characterized by Gur-Ze'ev (2011: 38–39) in his analogy of the *Orcha* (i.e. the Caravan in Hebrew). He says:

In the Hebrew language 'Orcha' means a convoy of camels and humans with their belongings moving in an endless desert towards their destiny. The 'Orcha' is an improvised movement that is to find/create its own destiny.... The 'Orcha' is never totally determined by territorial sovereignty, not even by commanding knowledge and people. It is a kind of togetherness-in-movement [...].

This Orcha is not a negative process. It rests on the positive notion of people constantly in communion, one with the other, with the group, constantly questioning, discussing and seeking, developing new and dynamic relationship ideas, refusing to accept the simple and 'end in itself'. In 'practical terms', we might ask: what would an environment be like where counter-educational action is prioritized? As a possible answer to this question, we turn to the studies of Tova Yaakoby, who, referring to the writings of Gur-Ze'ev, indicates some principles that suggest the praxis of diasporic education. To Yaakoby (2012: 92–93), counter-education values the subject, that is, the human being must be at the centre of life, and not as an object to be manipulated for the sake of normalization in education and life. This education, therefore, aims to allow individuals to lose their bonds and define their own path; that is to say, counter-education aims at guiding individuals to seek creative alternatives and possibilities for their future whilst urging them to denounce

and renounce the deceptive consciousness of a ‘sweet home’. The diasporic subject has historical consciousness; however, she faces the future and the presence as an un-happened moment, as something full of potential (Yaakoby 2012: 92–93). This reminds us of Peirce’s warning that we should not fall into crystallization (cf. Peirce 2012)—and we shall return to this below.

Thus, counter-education encourages a creativity that refuses to give in to the commonly accepted, allowing for genuine creation in our educational settings, fertilized by sensitivity to various difficulties, imagination with regard to possibilities, hope for the future and commitment to the self-construction of the individual. Further, it must be noted that in diasporic education, creativity is coined as ‘improvisation’, manifesting itself as the doing of each diasporic subject. ‘Improvisation’, in order to conceive something new and unexpected, is the heart of this movement. That said, ‘improvisation’ should not be understood as lack of preparation or amateurism, but as creativity and criticality so sharp that it can handle the most varied situations. These aspects of diasporic life represent the aesthetic dimensions of existence, which allow for and justify rational and ethical liberation. ‘Improvisation’ and the ‘improviser’ can be associated with the arts and the artist, such as music and a professional jazz player, who so knows his field of work that he is able to ‘improvise’ beautiful ‘pieces of music’. In connection with this Guilherme and Morgan (2018: 793) comment on the action of Gur-Ze’ev’s ‘improviser-teacher’ whilst comparing to Freire’s ‘political-teacher’:

This means that Gur-Ze’ev’s improviser-teacher is critical, encourages criticism and everything can be the subject of critique, and this process brings about changes in reality; however, the improviser-teacher does not offer positive utopias, such as Freire’s liberation by enlightening the oppressed poor, and as such the improviser-teacher overcomes a crucial weakness faced by Freire’s political-teacher. That is, the political-teacher can become the propagandist of an ideological view (i.e. the liberation of the oppressed by enlightening the poor), and as a consequence of this, of using subjects as a means to an end (i.e. using the oppressed poor to achieve the goal of liberation, but constraining this within a very narrow form of liberation).

The above not only illustrates counter-education, it also provides the overview for counter-educators and counter-teachers. It seems to us that ‘improviser-teachers’ do not rely primarily on deductive and inductive logic, since both in one way or another attempt to normalize thinking. There seems to be a different kind of logic at play in counter-education and improvisation, and thus we now turn to Peirce’s abductive reasoning.

Is Abduction the Form of Reasoning in Diasporic Philosophy and Counter-Education?

We have the intuition that Peirce's abductive reasoning is the mode of logic that most frequently emerges in diasporic philosophy. For Peirce, abduction is the inference on which creative reasoning is structured, as well as a particular form of self-organized, dynamic systems (Gonzales and Haselager 2002: 22); and he defines inference as a "[...] controlled adoption of a belief as a consequence of other knowledge" (CP 2,442). To make better sense of Peirce's understanding of abductive reasoning, it is important to understand how it comes about. Peirce argues that a habit is consolidated through inferential relations, and this leads to the formation of rules that stabilize our actions. However, when a habit is shaken, becoming unsafe or unproductive because of changes and resistances that reality imposes on it, the permanence of such behaviour is problematic. The 'strange' behaviour, the 'unsafe' habit, generates uncertainties about the validity of our beliefs connected to it—beliefs which previously were held to be true. This forces us to establish a new belief, engaging in a dynamic movement seeking to correct and expand concepts, so as to acquire new beliefs and habits, which is done through the articulation of logical inferences (Cocchieri and Moraes 2009: 9). It is important to note that there are three kinds of inferences: (i) deduction; (ii) induction; and (iii) abduction (cf Douven 2017). Deductive inferences occur when premises lead to a conclusion and the truth of the premises guarantees the truth of the conclusion. For instance:

All Xs are Ys
 Θ is X
 Hence, Θ is Y .

The above example is the classic modus ponens (i.e. $P \rightarrow Q$; P ; Q) and is a primary deductive rule of inference.³ In the case of inductive inference the premises do not necessarily guarantee the conclusion, and for matters of space, we could argue that they are based on previous empirical 'statistical' knowledge. For instance:

The majority of people in Quebec speak both French and English
 Jerome is from Montreal, Quebec
 Hence, Jerome speaks both French and English

³ Another classic example is modus tollens, which is expressed negatively: $P \rightarrow Q$; $\neg Q$; $\neg P$. If it is sunny, then the sky is clear; the sky is not clear; thus, it is not sunny.

Whilst it might be true that Jerome is a typical Quebecois and speaks both French and English, which would make the above a sound argument, he may also be part of the minority of Quebecois who only speak French. Thus, in induction there is a degree of uncertainty because the validity of the premises is not necessarily carried to the conclusion. However, as Douven (2017) notes:

The mere fact that an inference is based on statistical data is not enough to classify it as an inductive one. You may have observed many gray elephants and no non-gray ones, and infer from this that all elephants are gray, *because that would provide the best explanation for why you have observed so many gray elephants and no non-gray ones*. This would be an instance of an abductive inference. It suggests that the best way to distinguish between induction and abduction is this: both are *ampliative*, meaning that the conclusion goes beyond what is (logically) contained in the premises (which is why they are non-necessary inferences), but in abduction there is an implicit or explicit appeal to explanatory considerations, whereas in induction there is not; in induction, there is *only* an appeal to observed frequencies or statistics. (I emphasize ‘only,’ because in abduction there may also be an appeal to frequencies or statistics, as the example about the elephants exhibits.)

Thus, it is clear that abductive reasoning is connected to a particular mode of logic: Inference of the Best Explanation. In fact, Lipton (2000: 184) notes that “the model of Inference of the Best Explanation” is designed to give a partial account of many inductive inferences, both in science and in ordinary life. One version of the model was developed under the name ‘abduction’ by Charles Sanders Peirce early in this century, and the model has been considerably developed and discussed over the last twenty-five years. Its governing idea is that explanatory considerations are a guide to inference, that scientists infer from the available evidence to the hypothesis which would, if correct, best explain the evidence. The same is done by individuals in their ordinary lives. Thus, unlike ordinary reasoning that always associates itself with a particular inference (thus inductive) or to a general and sound argument (thus deductive), abduction forces the individual to think in a singular way and for himself, making it more difficult for his way of thinking to be normalized whilst facilitating, in contrast, the idea of pursuing a unique and distinct path. Summing up: (i) in deduction the validity and truth of the conclusion are guaranteed by the premises; (ii) in induction the validity and truth of the conclusion are not guaranteed by the premises, and it is based on ‘statistics’; and (iii) in abduction the validity and truth of the conclusion are not guaranteed by the premises, but differently from induction, there is an appeal to be creative and to seek the best explanation—thus, thinking ‘outside-the-box’.

It is important to note at this point that, according to Peirce, abductive reasoning is connected to feelings and emotions, it is the sensual ingredient

of thinking (Peirce 2008), and for this reason, abduction is “[...] the only logical operation which introduces any new idea” (CP 5.171). Further, Peirce believes that “[c]reative thinking seems to oscillate between well-established beliefs and *doubts or surprises that shake them*, initiating the process of forming new beliefs, which will enable the substitution of previous beliefs” (CP, 5.524, emphasis added). Peirce’s characterization makes us think of ‘a gut feeling’ or ‘intuition’ anchored on evidence. We can argue that these ideas are also central to Gur-Ze’ev’s counter-education project because for respect and appreciation of diversity and difference, of respect for the Other, an openness that is manifested as creativity and improvisation is required; and for this to happen, the individual must be immersed in the task emotionally and rationally. As Gur-Ze’ev (2005: 354) says, education requires “a manifestation of love and a concrete realization of joy and creativity, *tikun olam*”. We draw attention to Gur-Ze’ev’s use of the concept of *Tikun Olam* (i.e. תיקון עולם), which in Hebrew means ‘repair of the World’, a central tenet of Judaism. It means that we, human beings, must engage in actions that will ‘repair’, improve the world, make it more perfect. Once again, in this aspect, there is an emotional attachment to the task, an utter desire to fulfil it, whilst also a demand that reason be applied in our endeavour to excel, and ‘perfect’ reality.

Further, abductive reasoning, in its attempt to create a new belief, gives the individual new ways of creating and self-organizing thought, which consequently create new habits and understandings that are consistent with actual experience. The constant self-creation, self-organization, refuses to allow our minds to crystallize, that is, they do not end up as ‘immutable thought material’ (Peirce 1974). In addition, it is noteworthy that abductive thinking is the mode of argument that is most closely related to the Peircean concept of fallibilism, banishing the idea of absolute certainty (Ibri 1992). This means that both fallibilism and abduction serve as impetuses to the idea of a constant ‘renewal’ through creativity, and this is closely related to understanding that everything must be criticized, something so strongly defended by Gur-Ze’ev. When we criticize something, when we self-criticize, we have the opportunity to ascertain that things are correct (or incorrect) and to reach new conclusions on the basis of the evidence we have at hand—the close affinity of Peirce’s abductive reasoning and of Gur-Ze’ev’s critical attitude is clear. Both require a letting go of the moorings, an opening to present and future experiences, a release from foundations; both require a nomadic existence. Therefore, it becomes very evident to us that Gur-Ze’ev’s diasporic philosophy and Peirce’s philosophy have strong approximations, particularly in connection to their notions of critical attitude and improvisation, and abductive reasoning.

In developing their ideas they exhaust the need for a utopia, for ‘a promised land’, in favour of a dynamic and ever creative ‘homelessness’.

Conclusion

Gur-Ze’ev’s (2005, 2010a, 2010b) philosophical and educational concepts encourage us to (re)think education today, from mundane daily issues that might happen in classrooms throughout the world, to the very idea that the educational system is instrumental in the normalization of individuals. Gur-Ze’ev invites us, through his discussions on diasporic philosophy and counter-education, to incorporate and develop a new state of thinking and acting, a critical and creative way of thinking, which refuses the comfort of positive utopias, of ideals. This rejection of positive utopias encourages us to live a nomadic life so that everything must be criticized, and self-reflection and criticism are very much part and parcel of this process, so to ascertain its validity, which in accordance with Frankfurt School’s dictums is always related to socio-political and historical contexts. In education, the image of the *Orcha*, the caravan encapsulates our journey through knowledge, feeling comfortable and momentarily at a safe-stop, and then soon after pursuing new pastures and unknown destinations.

Those who are well acquainted with Gur-Ze’ev’s writings will agree that he is not always quite clear in his arguments due to his constant insistence in using poetic language, and by reference to our imaginary—and in this respect, we have to keep some of his allusions in this chapter to be faithful to him. However, sometimes there is also a lack of clarity in defining some concepts, such as, what it means to be critical and improvising. There is no evidence in Gur-Ze’ev’s writings that he personally refers to abductive reasoning; however, here, Charles Sanders Peirce’s three reasoning modalities help to clarify his concepts: deduction, induction and abduction, of which abduction clearly offers the greatest assistance. This abductive modality of reasoning is responsible for creativity, and requires that the individual develop new habits through new ways of thinking, whilst also avoiding the crystallization of thought—as we argued, this is also encouraged by diasporic philosophy and counter-education as they encourage individuals to avoid normalization, to be creative and to seek new ways of thinking. Moreover, because the mode of reasoning is prone to identify fallibility, stimulating creativity and an intellectual richness in its search for new solutions, it has proved to be the only kind of inferential judgement that does not require a priori foundations, a departure point, guaranteeing in this way a permanent capacity to criticize. This is something crucial to understanding diasporic education, to the non-instrumentalization

of reason and to the action of the improviser-teacher. In summation, the answer to our original question is that whether Gur-Ze'ev himself explicitly refers to abductive reasoning or not, we have demonstrated that there is clear and strong evidence that abduction is the mode of reasoning in diasporic philosophy and counter-education.

It is also important to note that this theoretical discussion provides us with the foundations for an enquiry of a more practical nature. That is to say, in practical terms, what does this mean for education, particularly Higher Education? We started this chapter by stating that education is a sinuous and complex phenomenon because we live in times of struggle, especially in the face of the dismantling of the initial and continuous education of teachers, of investment in the structure of schools, and of policies granting access and supporting the permanence of students in schools and universities. We mentioned the case of Brazil, where there is an attempt to implement new policies curbing neutral discussions about gender, social and political issues in classrooms, which have a direct impact on teachers, since they might be denounced by students and parents, and prosecuted if they are perceived to do so. The attempt to implement these policies is being spearheaded by the Movimento Escola Sem Partido (i.e. School Without Party Movement), which now finds parallels in other countries—for instance, in Germany the AfD (i.e. Alternative für Deutschland) far-right party called for an Aktion Neutrale Schulen (i.e. Action Neutral Schools). Fundamentally, these endeavours represent an attempt to curb the actions of teachers, and the scope of education. This is so because teachers would become unable to put to discussion a whole range of important subjects, confining education to the mere instruction of a certain kind of knowledge that has been previously vetted by families (i.e. so that this knowledge does not go against family values). Our discussion on Gur-Ze'ev's improvisation and Peirce's abduction is very pertinent here. If these movements are successful in implementing their respective projects, there would be an impediment to critique, and creativity. As we have already argued, when we criticize something, when we self-criticize, we have the opportunity to ascertain that things are correct (or incorrect) and to reach new conclusions on the basis of the evidence we have at hand—and the close affinity of Peirce's abductive reasoning and of Gur-Ze'ev's critical attitude is very evident with regard to this. Further, the understanding that everything must be criticized enables us to develop our creativity by finding alternatives, thinking outside the box and, thus, to seek a constant 'renewal', transforming and improving ourselves and society. This means that opportunities for critique, and the consequent development of creativity, must be offered by teachers, schools and the educational system. However, movements such as Escola Sem Par-

tido (i.e. School Without Party) and Aktion Neutrale Schulen (i.e. Action Neutral Schools) would have important and negative implications insofar as the offering of opportunities to engage in critique in educational contexts is concerned. This is so because if we curb the scope of what can be discussed in the classroom, something that these movements could do aleatorily and arbitrarily, then we also curb opportunities to develop critique and creativity. In fact, as Peirce would argue, this would represent a crystallization of thought. Consequently, if these movements are successful, then a poorer conception of education would be implemented. Finally, we believe that their refusal to allow everything to undergo a process of critique might demonstrate a fear that their own beliefs and values do not stand on solid foundations as well as an endeavour to implement a process of normalization of individuals within the confines of a particular worldview.

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Response



Response to “Melancholia and the Public”: Melancholia for the Individual, but Not the Public, of Higher Education

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In his article, *Melancholia and the Public*, Ben Baez (this volume) identifies an important foundational issue related to contemporary conversations about higher education—the idea that access to quality post-K–12 education is a public good or what some would call an educational commons (Bowers, 2006; Means, Ford, & Slater, 2017). Since the 1980s, we have seen the gradual shift in the public perception of higher education from a public good to a private commodity. Public university budgets in the United States, for example, have declined and university budgets are increasingly reliant on tuition revenue (Mitchell, Leachman, Masterson, & Waxman, 2018), making college education less affordable to large segments of the population. It is not an exaggeration to say that the increased cost of educational opportunity combined with stratification of wealth in our country is reaching the level of a crisis for our democracy.

Benjamin Baez does not address these issues at a practical level, by talking about alternative university funding strategies or about building political coalitions that might support universities. Instead, befitting a philosophy journal, he examines a shift in political ontology that has contributed to these practical problems and asks what has happened to our general relation to liberal notions of the public that used to underwrite our investment in shared projects like higher education.

In pursuit of this end, Baez gave an account of why it seems more difficult to muster a commitment to projects for the public good in contemporary

liberalism. The last century has seen repeated critiques and deconstructions of the idea of a unified and unifying public good. Our world is full of nationalist, ethnocentric, patriarchal appeals to a common good that mask the privileging of some interests over others or serve as a pretext for terrible forms of violence.

Much of this violence has been done under the cover of the alleged expansion of liberal democratic politics, often into communities that have not asked for it. As a consequence, the liberal ideal of a common good has become tarnished and subject to warranted suspicion.

Baez refers to the liberal commitment to a conception of the public good as a “wounded attachment”—one that is no longer “justifiable as a coherent ideal” and thus cannot effectively bring people together as a community. *Nonetheless*, he argues that this conception of the public good is essential to the functioning of liberal democracies. He uses the concept of melancholia found in psychoanalytic theory to understand the complex dynamics of this wounded attachment. We find this application intriguing and helpful in the effort to simultaneously sustain a commitment to democratic politics and to critically analyze our enactment of those commitments.

“The Public”

Before addressing the details of Baez’s argument, we feel it will be important to consider the compromised history of the concept of the “public” in American social discourse in a bit more detail than “Melancholia and the Public” does. The “public” referred to by the author seems to be that of Habermas who stated, “By ‘the public sphere’ we mean first of all a realm of our social life [...]. Access is guaranteed to all citizens” (Habermas, Lennox, & Lennox, 1974, p. 49). “Citizens,” he explains, “behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion—that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions-about matters of general interest” (ibid.). This understanding of the concept of a “public” is directed at only certain populations, specifically those that have been allowed to express and have heard a public opinion, and those for whom the rights of freedom of speech and of assembly have never been in question. This assumption of the general applicability of a concept is not new, but rather falls in line with a long history of ideologies that elide the social experience of communities subject to things like imperial settler colonialism and institutionalized white supremacy.

Critiques of this erasure at the heart of liberal conceptions of social amelioration can be readily found in a variety of critical literatures, such as critical race theory (Delgado & Stafancic, 2001), feminist theory (Butler, 1997),

and Indigenous studies (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2017). So, the point we make here is not new. But in order to avoid reproducing a pernicious silence, we mention these critiques here. Baez defines liberalism as “a political philosophy that emphasizes individual rights and freedoms” and a “liberal government is one premised on such logic.” This individualism is not just an abstract fiction, which the author acknowledges. It is an actively functioning part of the current machinery of white supremacy. It is an essential component of the contemporary reincarnation of racist social policy behind the guise of “color-blindness” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Rosiek & Kinslow, 2016). This focus on individualism as a foundation for social order also renders mute any contentions that structural racism exists in a way that cannot be overcome by an individual’s force of will (Leonardo, 2013). The term “public” and its liberal roots have not included and in some cases actively excluded Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or even female Americans until well into the twentieth century, and access to it is still barred to many groups in the twenty-first century.

It is possible that these conditions are exactly what Dr. Baez had in mind when entering into this reflection on the need for a process of mourning the notion of a public good that underwrites a collective commitment to higher education. If a conversation is going to be had about re-energizing the concept of the “public,” however, it is necessary to acknowledge explicitly the way that concept has served to erase and exclude large numbers of people. Otherwise, the nostalgia for the “public” referred to in this article reinscribes the presumption of a privileged white subjectivity and fails to foreshadow the necessary criteria of inclusiveness by which the merits of any reconstructed notion of the public must be assessed. Having now made an effort to distance our response from what we felt was a problematic silence in the article, we now take up directly its arguments about the utility of psychoanalytic notions of melancholy and mourning for projects of reinvigorating public support for higher education.

Two Necessities

In this article, Baez uses the classic debate on liberal politics between Walter Lippmann and John Dewey to illustrate the implications of the disillusionment with the ideal of a public good and of a public generally. Lippmann argued that the concept of a public was a “phantom,” an abstraction with no real or stable referent and with which we would do well to dispense. The author draws a parallel between this and Freud’s theory of loss and mourning. A healthy process of mourning, according to Freud, involves severing an attachment to a lost object of affection, so as to enable new emotional attachments to be made. Lippmann’s solution, then, is read as a recommendation to

mourn the concept of a “public” and move on with the practice of democracy without the comfort of such illusions. This has the appeal of reconciling rationality, historical evidence, and democratic process.

Dewey’s position is to retain a commitment to the ideal of a public and a public good, even though our understanding of the boundaries of the public and what constitutes a public good is always subject to critique and revisions within a well-functioning democracy. Dewey argues that a liberal democracy requires sustaining a state of ambivalence toward even our most cherished values, so those values can be modified as social conditions change. Baez draws a parallel between this and Freud’s theory of melancholia—a form of pathological grief that cannot let go of a lost object of affection, and so becomes mired in attachment to an idealized fantasy that can never be realized. This has the advantage of preserving a notion of the common good, but at the apparent cost of delusion and dissolution.

Baez favors Dewey’s attachment to the public good and seeks to theorize how this commitment can be understood as constructive. He finds that understanding in some of Freud’s later work, where Freud allows that in some cases grief is not something we get past, but that it becomes integrated into our identity. Seen in this way, the attachment to the lost ideal of a public good is not pathological but is the enabling condition for the practice of fallibilism that is necessary to liberal democracy. This is the first necessity Baez cites related to the idea of a public good.

He then goes a step further. In addition to the illusion of a public and a shared good being necessary to democracy, Baez adds a second necessary illusion—that of the sovereign individual.¹ He argues that without a notion of the sovereign individual, voluntarism is impossible. Without voluntarism the ideal of citizens suppressing selfish interests for the sake of a common good becomes “totalitarianism or despotism of some kind.” This second necessity is the more foundational, he argues.

Two Concerns

The application of psychoanalytic conceptions of melancholy to the analysis of democratic citizen subjectivity is not new. Scholars such as Paul Gilroy (2001), Judith Butler (1997), Slavoj Žižek (1997), Wendy Brown (2003),

¹ We won’t bother here to recite the enormous body of empirical and critical research that has left the idea of an autonomous citizen subject in tatters. Baez presumes knowledge of this literature and refers to this idea as “an illusion that grounds the ground we stand on.”

Flatley and Flatley (2009), Bonnie Honig (2017), and many others have taken up this connection. The widely felt sense that the concept of melancholy is applicable to the topic of liberal democratic citizenship is itself a symptom of the malaise it seeks to diagnose. There is clearly a way in our contemporary times that we adhere to liberal political practices out of a habit that at times appears to be a fetish, certainly not a genuine conviction that the possibility of democracy is real. Yet abandoning those habits seems unwise, in a way that makes them seem like something other than an illusion in need of dispelling.

Most of the aforementioned literature focuses on the possibility of a more radical left politics. This article, on the other hand, is focused on the possibility of a liberal political practice. Nonetheless, the article would have benefitted by locating its intervention within the context of this broader literature on the melancholia of left politics in Western democracies. Butler's *Psychic Life of Power* (1997), for example, points out that part of the challenge for Western democracies is the fact that some people's experiences are erased from the shared vocabulary of public discourse. Without a vocabulary to name forms of social harm, its victims are unable to mourn their social loss and are consigned to a form of disempowered political melancholia. In other words, it is not just melancholia about the prospects of shared interests or our votes making a difference that is at play, it is also the discursive erasure of whole classes of experience as outside the boundaries of acceptable citizenship that erodes the viability of our democratic communities. Such erasure, according to Butler, requires the intervention of a certain form of identity politics that names the loss of exclusion so that the desire for inclusion and participation can be severed from the current political order and reattached to a new more inclusive vision of democratic practice. In its current form, "Melancholia and the Public" does not provide a pluralistic view of the different kinds of melancholia we can experience in the pursuit of democratic community.

It would have been preferable that some gesture had been made that acknowledged the broader literature on the relation between the subject and left/liberal politics. Our first concern is that failing to do so just reinforces the reputation of liberal political theorists working out of the pragmatist philosophical tradition as willfully refusing to acknowledge and engage more critical social theory. We believe this is a division that is no longer useful and that progressive political efforts can ill afford.

Our second concern relates to the second necessity mentioned above as part of this chapter's argument. The author essentially states without defense that the sovereign individual is necessary for a conception of voluntarism that is at the heart of the liberal political project, and therefore this individualism must be retained as a commitment lest totalitarianism result. On the other hand Dr.

Baez acknowledges individualism is a fiction. The sense of loss that comes with the acknowledgment that the individual subject is a fiction is at the heart of the melancholia the chapter discusses. This melancholia cannot be addressed in the traditional way psychoanalytic scholars have discussed—through severance and reattachment to a new ideal—because the liberal individual as currently imagined is presumed to be necessary for democratic political practice.

This is not an argument, it is an observation that the premise of the necessity of an individual subject has implications for a psychoanalytic conception of the connection between subjectivity and politics. It requires, according to Baez, looking to later Freudian theory that sees melancholia as a potentially constructive relation—not simply a disempowering one. We find the exploration on these terms interesting and well thought out. However, we are not persuaded by the original premise—that voluntarism requires individualism.

It seems to us that the voluntarism the essay claims is necessary to the liberal political project is neither identical to nor necessarily connected to the individualism. At the very least, the assertion of this essential connection needs justification.

Now, since this entire conversation is premised on the idea that the sovereign individual subject is a fiction, that justification would not come from a claim about the true nature of human subjectivity. Instead it would involve a more pragmatic justification of the sort—if we presume X then that makes Y possible. More precisely, since the claim is that *only* a presumption of the sovereign individual subject makes liberal democracy possible, the justification would have to take the form—Y is possible *only* if we presume X. In order to refute this stronger claim, one need only convince that it is possible for some other precondition to make democracy possible.

We think many such conceptions of the democratic citizen subject are possible. One recently emerging theorization of the relation between knowledge, subjectivity, and ontology can be found in new materialist philosophy of science. New materialists, such as Vicky Kirby (2011), Karen Barad (2007), Jane Bennett (2010), Hillevi Taguchi (2012), Ezekiel Dixon-Román (2017), and others, reconceptualize individual agency as something that emerges through relational intra-actions. Individual agency and anything resembling voluntarism, then, would be real, but constrained.

This constraint, however, is not a mechanical constraint that therefore gives lie to the voluntarism or lends itself to a totalitarian determinism. According to new materialism, the constraint is located in the coemergence of nonhuman agency. There is a reality beyond the human that is substantive and real, but that reality is itself protean, not stable or final, and therefore puts no final limit on possibility—social or material. The implication here is that

while the individual subject may not be entirely sovereign, neither is it absolutely determined. Our agency is dependent on our co-constitutive relation with other agents, including nonhuman agents.

In her book *Vibrant Matter* political theorist Jane Bennett (2010) observes how "Dewey presents the members of a public as having been *inducted* into rather than *volunteering* for it" (p. 101). Publics form around shared problems which individuals do not choose to have. This condition renders the origins and efficacy of individual intentions indeterminate, always blended with the activities and trajectories of agents, including nonhuman systems and beings. Bennett (2010) goes on to conclude "if human culture is inextricably enmeshed with vibrant, nonhuman agencies, and if human intentionality can be agentic only if accompanied by a vast entourage of nonhumans, then it seems that the appropriate unit of analysis for democratic theory is neither the individual human nor an exclusively human collective but the (ontologically heterogeneous) 'public' coalescing around a problem" (p. 108).

Since Baez seems interested in Dewey and the pragmatist philosophical tradition, it may be worth pointing out that resources for this kind of agential realism can also be found in the later work of Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce theorized that some form of agency is possessed by all parts of reality and that agency is enacted through processes of material semiosis. Peirce's semiotic theory is far too Byzantine to elaborate on here in this brief response chapter, but it is worth pointing out that Peirce thought even ideas have agency. Peirce argued that ideas like truth and right

...are instances of ideas which either have, or are believed to have, life, the power of bringing things to pass here below...[believers] hold that it is the idea which will create its defenders and render them powerful.... It is a perfectly intelligible opinion that ideas are not all mere creations of this or that mind, but on the contrary have a power of finding and creating their vehicles, and having found them, of conferring upon the, the ability to transform the earth. (Peirce, Houser, Kloesel, & Peirce Edition Project, 1998, p. 123)

Similar accounts of nonhuman agency and its co-constituting relation with human agency can be found in some versions of Indigenous philosophy (Bunge, 1984; Deloria, Deloria, Foehner, & Scinta, 1999; Kimmerer, 2017; Rosiek, Snyder, & Pratt, 2019).

These agent ontologies permit an acknowledgment of the porousness of the individual to outside influences, but not in the way Marxist conceptions of ideology and poststructuralist conceptions of discourse make individual agency a pathetic fiction. Individual agency within agent ontologies has more the character of an experience that waxes and wanes, depending on context, but is real and consequential. And voluntarism has less the character of a

choice made by a free-floating subject, and more the character of choices about whom (which agents) we seek co-constituting relations—a question of who we seek to serve, without the guarantee that the service will be welcomed or conditions will enable that service. This is a form of contingent voluntarism without the fiction of an antecedent individual subject from which an aggregate public could be generated.

So what would this have to do with the politics and practice of higher education? How would it provide a framework for envisioning effective response to the contemporary assaults on higher education? It would permit a reject of the ideal of absolute individualism that underwrites the market economics turning higher education into a private commodity as opposed to a public good. Within an agent ontology and its contingent voluntarism, individuality is not possible without a co-constituting relation with some more general idea and a community—perhaps a public—that sustains the liveliness of that idea. This kind of individualism and pluralism is reconciled through a recognition of the need for multiple and conflicting guiding ideas to be in circulation—multiple publics. Institutions of higher education are the incubators of this necessary resource. They encourage the generation, refinement, and continuing evolution of the ideas that make individualism effective and pluralism possible. In this way the public and the personal good are inextricably tied together. And the pursuit of such is neither melancholic nor self-deceived. Instead, it requires us to expand our conception of who and what is included in our conception of a “public.”

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