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EDICIONES COMPLUTENSE

Resisting Epistemic Injustices: Beyond Anderson's "Imperative of Integration"

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Abstract. In this paper, I take up the question of how epistemic injustices can be resisted. Miranda Fricker (2007), who introduced the term to describe situations in which subjects are wronged as knowers, has initially advocated an individualist, virtue-based account to counteract epistemic injustices. Epistemic injustices, however, do not merely operate at an individual level but are rooted in social practices and structures. Arguably therefore, individually virtuous epistemic conduct is not enough to uproot patterns of epistemic injustice. Institutional change and collective actions are needed. Recently, Elizabeth Anderson (2012) has proposed such a structural remedy. Diagnosing patterns of social segregation that track existing inequalities to be the principal structural cause of epistemic injustices, Anderson suggests that integration is required to achieve epistemic justice. Pace Anderson, I argue that certain segregated spaces —namely spaces provided by subaltern counter-publics— can function and, in fact, have historically functioned as important sites of epistemic resistance. In particular, I argue that even if integration is sharply distinguished from assimilation, Anderson's proposal insufficiently acknowledges the subversive potential of those spaces, in which shielded from the gaze of the oppressors, marginally situated subjects can assemble and question hegemonic epistemic practices.
Keywords: Epistemic Injustice; Epistemic Resistance; Integration; Counter-Publics; Safer Spaces.
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[es] Resistir las injusticias epistémicas: más allá del "imperativo de integración" de Anderson

Resumen. En este trabajo, investigo cómo se pueden resistir las injusticias epistémicas. Miranda Fricker (2007), que introdujo el término para describir situaciones en las que personas son agraviadas en su capacidad como conocedores, tomó en un primer momento una perspectiva individualista y basada en virtudes para responder a esta pregunta. Sin embargo, las injusticias epistémicas no operan meramente a nivel individual, sino están enraizadas en prácticas y estructuras sociales. Se puede argumentar, por lo tanto, que también se necesita un cambio institucional y colectivo para contrarrestar las injusticias epistémicas. Recientemente, Elizabeth Anderson (2012) ha propuesto un remedio estructural de este tipo. A partir del diagnóstico de que la principal causa estructural de las injusticias epistémicas son los patrones de segregación social basados en desigualdades existentes, sugiere la integración como requisito para alcanzar la justicia epistémica. En oposición a esta tesis de Anderson, sostengo que ciertos espacios segregados —espacios proporcionados por contrapúblicos subalternos— pueden funcionar y han funcionado históricamente como importantes sitios de resistencia epistémica. En particular, sostengo que Anderson no reconoce de forma suficiente el potencial subversivo de estos espacios, en los que, protegidas de la mirada de los opresores, las personas marginadas pueden reunirse y cuestionar las prácticas epistémicas hegemónicas.
Palabras clave: Injusticia epistémica; resistencia epistémica; integración; contrapúblicos; espacios más seguros.

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Silence falls when the oppressor approaches (Frantz Fanon, 2004, p. 31)

In her pathbreaking book *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, Miranda Fricker (2007) introduced the term *epistemic injustice* to describe situations in which subjects are wronged in their capacity as knowers.[2] Epistemic injustices can take at least two different forms: On the one hand, subjects can unjustly suffer

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[2] Of course, Fricker is not the first to analyse the phenomena which the term epistemic injustice is supposed to capture. These and related phenomena (for example, the exercise of epistemic violence or the exclusion of women of colour from epistemic practices through the operation of controlling images have been extensively discussed by authors such as Spivak (1988), Hill Collins (2000), and many others. Rather than shedding light on previously unexplored terrain, Fricker's contribution can be described as introducing a different kind of audience, i.e. analytic philosophers, to the discourse on the intersections of power relations and epistemic practices.

from a deflated level of credibility, which compromises their "inclusion and participation in knowledge-producing practices" (Medina, 2017a, p. 248). For example, this kind of epistemic injustice —which Fricker (2007) terms *testimonial injustice*— occurs when the police discount the testimony of Black witnesses due to racist prejudices. On the other hand, subjects can suffer from so-called *hermeneutical injustice,* which occurs when the available interpretative resources unjustly disadvantage members of a social group in their attempts to render their experiences intelligible. To illustrate this kind of epistemic injustice, Fricker suggests thinking about the experience of "sexual harassment in a culture that still lacks that critical concept" (2007, p. 1). As both examples might already suggest, situations of epistemic injustices do not only involve harm done to subjects in their capacity as knowers but are deeply entangled with "systematic political harms" (Medina, 2013, p. 87). That is, epistemic injustices are grounded in oppressive social and political relations, while at the same time they help to reproduce and reinforce these asymmetric power relations (Celikates, 2017; Pohlhaus, 2017). Hence, on various levels the persistence of epistemic injustices necessitates *epistemic resistance*: "the use of our epistemic resources and abilities to undermine" those social practices and structures that produce and reproduce epistemic injustices (Medina, 2013, p. 3). The resistance must involve specifically *epistemic* elements because, as Kristie Dotson argues, there are "features of our epistemological landscape" which sustain patterns of epistemic injustice (or to use Dotson's own terminology, patterns of "epistemic oppression"), which are not entirely reducible to oppressive social and political relations (2014, p. 120).[3] But how can our epistemic resources and abilities be used to resist and counteract epistemic injustices?

Fricker (2007) herself has initially advocated an individualist, virtue-based account— with the virtues of testimonial and hermeneutical justice at its core— to resist epistemic injustices. However, as many authors argue, and as also Fricker seems to acknowledge, epistemic injustices are firmly rooted in our socio-epistemic practices and structures, and do not merely operate at an individual level (e.g. Alcoff, 2010; Celikates, 2017; Fricker, 2017; Medina, 2013). Presumably therefore, individually virtuous epistemic conduct is not enough to uproot patterns of epistemic injustice: Institutional change and collective actions are needed.[4] In her paper "Epistemic Justice as Virtue of Social Institutions," Elizabeth Anderson (2012) sets out to systematically develop such a structural remedy. Starting from the diagnosis that the principal structural cause of epistemic injustices are patterns of social segregation that track existing inequalities, she suggests that widespread intergroup integration is required to achieve epistemic justice. This thesis is further substantiated in light of Anderson's (2010) extensive analysis of the manifold ills of racial segregation in her book *The Imperative of Integration*. There, she shows how segregation along racialized lines contributes substantially to the oppression of Black people in the United States —arguing in turn for integration as "an imperative of justice" tout court (Anderson, 2010, p. 2).

In this paper, I want to critically interrogate Anderson's proposal with regard to its potential to counter epistemic injustices.[5] Pace Anderson, I argue that certain segregated spaces —namely spaces provided by subaltern counter-publics— can function and, in fact, have historically functioned as important sites of epistemic resistance.[6] In particular, I aim to show that even if Anderson's use of integration is only understood in a weak sense and sharply distinguished from assimilation, her "imperative of integration" insufficiently acknowledges the subversive role of subaltern counter-publics in constituting "communities of epistemic resistance" (McHugh, 2017).[7] This is not to say, that I disagree with Anderson's analysis of the ills of segregation, nor that I disagree with her emphasis on the need to abolish perversive patterns of segregation.[8] Rather, by questioning Anderson's neglect of epistemic resistance by the oppressed, this paper aims to motivate a reconsideration of the place of subaltern counter-publics within the overall struggle against epistemic injustices.

The argumentative structure of this essay is as follows: At first, I will briefly re-introduce the notions of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice and explain how their mutual interactions give rise to a negative feedback loop. Based on this, I will proceed to outline Anderson's own diagnosis of the causes of epistemic injustice along with her argument for intergroup integration as a means for achieving epistemic justice. The next two sections are devoted to a critical discussion of Anderson's account. Drawing on scholarship from feminist theory and critical race theory, I will detail how subaltern counter-publics can provide indispensable spaces for the development of counter-discourses, which can effectively challenge entrenched patterns of epistemic injustice. Subsequently, I will suggest that Anderson's *imperative of integration* underestimates the historical importance of such spaces in the fight against epistemic injustices.

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3 Note that even though there is a significant overlap between Fricker's notion of epistemic injustice and Dotson's notion of epistemic oppression, these two concepts are not identical.

4 This is not to say that when combating epistemic injustices, one has "to choose between the individual and the collective level, without being able to operate at both levels simultaneously," as José Medina (2013, p. 82) rightly remarks.

5 Thus, my concern is not an overall assessment of Anderson's imperative of integration. For a critical discussion of Anderson's imperative of integration as a remedy for material inequalities see Shelby (2014, 2016).

6 For the notion of subaltern counter-publics see Fraser (1990).

7 In arguing for this conclusion, I elaborate and expand on Medina's (2013, pp. 7-9) concise (though sometimes overly benevolent) discussion of Anderson's imperative of integration.

8 However, calls for desegregation (Shelby, 2014, 2016) or anti-segregation (Bell, 2020) need to be distinguished from Anderson's call for integration. I will return to this point later.

On the Intertwinement of Testimonial and Hermeneutical Injustices

As already mentioned, epistemic injustices, that is injustices in which subjects are wronged as knowers, can occur in at least two different ways. Subjects can suffer from testimonial injustices and/or from hermeneutical injustices. In the paradigmatic case of testimonial injustices, the operation of prejudice leads an individual or collective agent to unjustly attribute a diminished level of credibility to the testimony of another subject.[9] Importantly, a subject's testimony is not to be understood restrictively as only including the conveyance of propositions. It might also include other speech acts such as asking questions as well as "the airing of an opinion, suggestion, or relevant possibility" (Fricker, 2017, p. 161), and presumably also certain gestures like showing or nodding. Moreover, it should be noted that subjects do not necessarily have to actually give their testimonies in order to suffer from testimonial injustice. Subjects "can be pre-emptively silenced by being excluded in advance from participating in communicative exchanges" (Medina, 2013, p. 91). Fricker (2007) calls this phenomenon "*pre-emptive* testimonial injustice" (p. 130). An example is the systematic exclusion of women of colour from educational facilities and "other social institutions of knowledge validation" (Collins, 2000, p. 5).

In the case of hermeneutical injustices, available interpretative or hermeneutical resources unjustly restrain members of social groups in their attempts to render their experiences intelligible. This is ambiguous. On the one hand, it could mean that subjects who suffer from hermeneutical injustice fail "to understand their own experience[s]" (Fricker, 2007, p. 147), i.e. they fail to render their experiences intelligible *to themselves*. On the other hand, it could mean that the subjects in question are prevented from successfully communicating their experiences, i.e. that they are unable to render their experiences intelligible *to others* (Medina, 2013, pp. 97-98). Sometimes, in particular when Fricker (2007) speaks of "a gap in the collective hermeneutical resources" (p. 151), she does not seem to differentiate between the two cases. Instead, she seems to suggest, as José Medina (2013) points out, that when hermeneutical injustices occur, "a range of experiences will be rendered unintelligible for everybody independently of particular communicative dynamics" (p. 101). However, this risks occluding the fragmentary character of our epistemological landscape. Marginalized social groups often have their own well-functioning hermeneutical practices or "alternative epistemologies" (Mills, 1988); and sometimes problems arise only if marginally positioned subjects try to communicate their experiences to members of privileged groups (e.g. Medina, 2013; Pohlhaus, 2012).[10] "[N]on-heterosexual subjects," for example, "had ways of signalling to themselves and to others like them that they were being sexually oppressed long before terms such as 'homophobia' and 'heterosexism'" were part of the collective hermeneutical resources, as Medina (2013, p. 99) emphasises. Thus, whether a subject is found to be intelligible depends on the context and is likely to change from audience to audience. It is precisely this fragmentation of the epistemological landscape, i.e. the operation of different hermeneutical practices in different contexts, that allows resistance against epistemic injustices —a point I will return to later.

Both types of epistemic injustices, hermeneutical and testimonial injustices, are closely related to one another. According to Fricker (2007), hermeneutical injustice is the result of *hermeneutical marginalization*: the exclusion of members from disadvantaged groups from equal participation in interpretative practices "with respect to some significant area(s) of social experience" (p. 153). Subjects who are hermeneutically marginalized "have less than a fair crack at contributing to the shared pool of concepts and interpretative tropes that we use to make generally share-able sense of our social experiences" (Fricker, 2016, p. 163). Against that background, it becomes clear in which way persistent patterns of testimonial injustice can contribute to the production and reproduction of hermeneutical injustices. Where persistent patterns of testimonial injustice emerge, the operation of prejudice leads to the systematic devalorisation of the contributions of certain social groups to sense-making activities and thus to a situation of hermeneutical marginalization. In such a situation, in which the shared pool of interpretative resources predominantly reflects the viewpoints and experiences of more powerfully situated subjects, marginalized groups are rendered vulnerable to suffer from hermeneutical injustices (e.g. Fricker, 2016; Medina, 2017a; Pohlhaus, 2012).

The entanglement of testimonial and hermeneutical injustices, however, cuts both ways. Not only do systematic patterns of testimonial injustice engender and sustain hermeneutical injustices, but testimonial injustices themselves are often rooted in pervasive hermeneutical injustices. Testimonial injustices arise when subjects are not adequately recognized as knowers, as competent epistemic subjects. One important way this can happen is via the operation of what Patricia Hill Collins (2000) calls *controlling images*, i.e. stereotypical images that play a role in the "ideological justification" for the oppression of targeted groups (p. 69; see also Dotson, 2011). In her book *Black Feminist Thought*, Collins (2000) details how women of colour are undermined in their epistemic status by being stereotyped as "mammies," "matriarchs," "welfare mothers," or "whores" (pp. 69-96). What is at issue here is not only that these controlling images cause women of colour to suffer from a deflated level of credibility, but at a deeper level that the social intelligibility of women of colour is compounded whenever they transgress their socially ascribed roles

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9 Note that Medina (2013) has argued that testimonial injustices can also arise if certain subjects are assigned an excessive level of epistemic authority.

10 Note that in her later work, Fricker (2016) acknowledges the existence of "localised hermeneutical practices" (p. 167). In fact, she argues that "a commitment to the existence of localised interpretive practices that may perfectly capture a given range of experiences but whose meanings are not sufficiently shared across wider social space is already present at the heart of the original account of hermeneutical injustice" (p. 167).

(Medina, 2013, 67-68). That is, controlling images such as "mammies" or "matriarchs" render certain activities of women of colour —for example, participation in knowledge-producing practices— incomprehensible for privileged others, and thus cause them to suffer from hermeneutical injustices. Hence, one could say that the testimonial injustices in question are *grounded* in hermeneutical injustices (Medina, 2013, p. 71).

In sum, testimonial and hermeneutical injustices are so closely intertwined that a negative feedback loop emerges. Testimonial injustices help to produce and reproduce hermeneutical injustices, and hermeneutical injustices, in turn, engender patterns of testimonial injustice. Thus, in the struggle against epistemic injustice, one should be sensitive to the need to resist both testimonial and hermeneutical injustices.

Anderson's Imperative of Integration

A prominent suggestion to combat epistemic injustices is developed in the work of Elizabeth Anderson (2010, 2012). According to Anderson, what is required to undermine those social practices and structures that lead to the emergence and persistence of epistemic injustices, is *integration*. By this she means "comprehensive intergroup association on terms of equality" across "all social domains" (Anderson, 2010, p. 112). As such integration contrasts with both *role segregation* —the assignment of social groups to different hierarchically-ranked roles— and *spatial segregation* —the assignment of social groups to different social spaces and locations (Anderson, 2010, p. 9). Why should widespread intergroup integration be needed to successfully counter epistemic injustices?

To answer this question, Anderson (2012) draws attention to three structural features of our communicative interactions: an unequal distribution of various credibility markers, ethnocentrism or in-group favouritism, and the shared-reality bias. To begin with, according to Anderson, segregation deprives disadvantaged groups of equal *access to the markers of credibility*, which includes, in particular, access to educational resources. These markers (for example "correct" pronunciation or academic degrees) affect whether a subject's testimony is perceived as credible, and thus whether the subject in question is included in knowledge-producing practices. When segregative processes systematically restrict the access of some social groups to educational resources and similar goods, the assessment of a subject's credibility by employing such markers will produce pervasive patterns of testimonial injustice. Subsequently, Anderson proceeds to argue that "[g]roup segregation along lines of social inequality turns otherwise innocent ethnocentric and shared reality biases into vectors of hermeneutical injustice and structural testimonial injustice" (2012, p. 171). So-called *ethnocentrism* describes the tendency to favour in-group members over out-group members, including the tendency to privilege the testimony of members of one's own group. Hence, if groups are segregated along lines of social inequality, the testimony of marginally situated subjects is likely to be discounted by members of more privileged groups. As a result, the contributions of members of marginalized groups tend not to receive proper uptake in universities, law courts and other mainstream institutions, which amounts to a case of structural testimonial injustice. The *shared-reality bias*, finally, describes the tendency of in-group members to converge in the way they interpret the experiential world. Under conditions of segregation —in which the interaction between marginally situated subjects and privileged subjects is severely constrained— communicative actions of those marginally situated will frequently be found unintelligible by more powerfully situated subjects because of their tendency not to fit with the dominant interpretative frame. Put differently, under conditions of segregation along lines of social inequality, the shared reality bias causes hermeneutical injustices (Anderson, 2012; see also Anderson, 2010, pp. 46-47).

Against this background, Anderson identifies patterns of social segregation that track existing inequalities as the principal structural cause of epistemic injustices. According to Anderson, segregation is "the key structural feature" that translates our reliance on credibility markers and cognitive biases "into vectors of epistemic injustice" (2012, p. 171). Based on this diagnosis, she suggests that if segregation is a fundamental cause of epistemic injustice, then what is needed to successfully fight epistemic injustice is widespread intergroup integration. Hence, Anderson concludes, the realisation of epistemic justice requires integration.

Anderson's thesis fits well with the empirically widely corroborated *social contact hypothesis*. According to the contact hypothesis —roughly speaking— frequent interactions between members of different groups with equal status should reduce prejudice and improve intergroup relations (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Since integration aims to enable such kind of interactions, integration could also be expected to reduce prejudice and, as a consequence, testimonial injustices and possibly also hermeneutical injustices (Anderson, 2010).[11] Moreover, Anderson's thesis gains further plausibility in light of her detailed and rigorous analysis of group segregation as "the linchpin of unjust systematic race-based disadvantage" in the United States (2010, p. 136). Following Anderson's analysis, racial segregation is essential for the maintenance of white supremacy, i.e. structural white domination.[12] Amongst other things, segregation deprives Black people of access to educational resources and other markers of credibility — compromising thereby their participation in dominant epistemic practices and institutions of knowledge-production. Racial segregation, furthermore, reinforces racial stigmatization and insulates the white interpretative frame from critical interrogation. It is thus complicit in the preservation of a state of affairs in which the contributions of Black people and people of colour to sense-making activities are systematically devalued and marginalized.

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[11] For doubts concerning the applicability of the contact hypothesis in the case of racial integration see Shelby, (2016, pp. 70-71).

[12] For an analysis of the term white supremacy see Mills (2017b).

In short, since segregation is a principal cause of various epistemic injustices, integration emerges as a promising structural remedy. According to Anderson, what is required to achieve epistemic justice is widespread integration. In fact, Anderson (2010) even speaks of an "imperative of integration."

Subaltern Counter-Publics and Epistemic Resistance

There is a lot to be said for Anderson's *imperative of integration*. The abolition of pervasive patterns of segregation seems to be urgently required not only to promote epistemic justice, but also to fight material inequalities (Shelby, 2014, 2016). This includes especially the dismantling of all kinds of barriers which protect the privileges of white and other powerfully situated subjects and which, in any way, compromise the access of marginally situated subjects to various social spaces as well as to many public and private goods. However, calls for *anti-segregation* (Bell, 2020) or *desegregation* (Shelby, 2014, 2016) need to be distinguished from Anderson's *imperative of integration*. There is an important difference between saying that —both formal and informal— obstacles have to be abolished so that Black and other marginalized groups "have the option to integrate (which is the demand for desegregation) and saying that justice requires that individuals actually integrate," as Tommie Shelby (2014, p. 277) explains. Put differently, to say that the privileged have to tear down their walls and desegregate, does not mean that marginally situated subjects should not be free to (spatially) self-segregate, at least temporarily, and certainly not that they should open up their hard-won safer spaces to the oppressors (Shelby, 2014, 2016; Medina, 2013, pp. 7-9). As I argue below, such safer spaces, or —more specifically— spaces appropriated by subaltern-counter publics, can constitute indispensable sites of epistemic resistance.[13] Yet, if integration is advanced as an imperative of justice and is thus presumably also a requirement imposed on marginally positioned subjects, it is at least prima facie unclear how this is supposed to be compatible with the preservation of such self-segregated spaces (Shelby, 2016, p. 59). This is especially questionable in light of Anderson's definition of integration as the realisation of "comprehensive intergroup association on terms of equality" across "*all* social domains" (2010, p. 112; emphasis added). Thus, while I agree with Anderson that desegregation is necessary to achieve epistemic justice, I am more sceptical with regard to her conceptualization and defence of integration as an *imperative of justice*, as something that ought to be realized across all social institutions and spaces.

Moreover, and this is my main point of criticism, even if Anderson's imperative of integration would allow for the preservation of certain self-segregated spaces, she still risks silencing the agency of marginally situated subjects and downgrading the role of subaltern counter-publics by assigning intergroup integration the centre-stage in the fight against epistemic injustices. According to bell hooks and in marked contrast to Anderson's proposal, it is marginality, and not the socially integrated and pacified public space, that is "the site of radical possibility" and "the central location for the production of a counter hegemonic discourse" (1989, p. 20). However, before I return to these points, let me first explain why one should think of subaltern counter-publics —to use hook's apt formulation— as sites of radical possibility in the first place. How can counter-publics function as sites of epistemic resistance? To address this question, I will start with an outline of why marginally positioned subjects tend to be in a better position to recognize the shortcomings of dominant epistemic frames.[14]

Following Gaile Pohlhaus, one can "distinguish between two senses in which the sociality of the knower is epistemically significant" (2012, p. 716). On the one hand, knowers are *socially situated*. That is, subjects with varying and intersecting group memberships find themselves thrown into different situations "due to the social relations that position [them] in the world" (ib.). These situations are associated with a distinctive set of experiences and challenges, that in turn influence which aspect of the social world is —and which aspect is not— recognized and "pursue[d] as an object of knowledge" (Pohlhaus, 2012, p. 717; see also Alcoff, 2006, p. 91; Mills, 1988). On the other hand, knowers are *interdependent* on each other. In order to navigate, interpret and acquire knowledge of the social world, subjects require hermeneutical resources (concepts, interpretative tropes etc.) which are collectively provided and maintained. Whereas a knower's situatedness refers to *what* one is *likely to know*, a knower's interdependence refers to *how* one conceives and knows the experiential world (Pohlhaus, 2012, p. 719; see also Dotson 2014, p. 121). The crucial point in the present context is that the interdependent nature and the social situatedness of epistemic practices are deeply intertwined with one another. The experiences and perspectives of those subjects who occupy a more privileged position in the social hierarchy tend to have a greater impact on the shared pool of interpretative or hermeneutical resources. Since their experiences and perspectives tend in general to be well represented in the dominant epistemic frames, privileged subjects can without much ado, in a nearly habitual fashion, rely on those concepts, interpretative rules or value judgements that they have already found useful in the past (Pohlhaus, 2012, p. 719). They

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[13] This is not to say that the promotion of such spaces is sufficient to effectively challenge entrenched patterns of epistemic injustice, nor that a commitment to the maintenance and proliferation of such spaces is incompatible with the emergence of certain integrated settings. Recall, however, Shelby's (2014, p. 277) insistence on the need to distinguish between the demand of desegregation (i.e. the abolition of formal and informal obstacles so that marginalized subjects have the option to integrate), on the one hand, and an imperative of integration, on the other.

[14] As is frequently noted in the literature, this and similar epistemic virtues that are supposed to be characteristic for members of marginalized groups, should neither be thought of as universal features (i.e. "there are oppressed subjects who lack these virtues") nor as automatic features (i.e. "they are not had by subjects just by virtue of their membership in a social group") (Medina, 2013, p. 43). Rather the development of these epistemic virtues can be seen as the result of a constant struggle on part of the oppressed (e.g. Celikates, 2017; Harding, 2004).

will, therefore, have "a special difficulty in realizing and appreciating the limitations of their horizon of understanding," as Medina (2013, p. 75) explains. Those at the margins, by contrast, will frequently find their experiences not reflected in the pool of shared hermeneutical resources. Fricker's example of women suffering sexual harassment in the United States at a point in time where this concept was still lacking illustrates this point all too well. Similarly, one could point to the diverse experiences of Black and people of colour who have to navigate under a "white racial frame" (Feagin, 2013). In such situations, marginally positioned subjects often tend to experience a tension, a "sense of dissonance," between the dominant epistemic frames and their daily experiences (Fricker, 2007, p. 167; see also Pohlhaus, 2012). According to Fricker, it is this sense of dissonance that is "the starting point for both the critical thinking and the moral-intellectual courage that rebellion requires" (2007, p. 168). Experiencing such a kind of dissonance can attune marginally situated subjects to the shortcomings of the dominant epistemic frames, to what is missing in the shared hermeneutical resources (Medina, 2013). Moreover, being in a position of profound vulnerability, marginally positioned subjects cannot afford to simply ignore the tension between the hegemonic hermeneutical resources and their own daily experiences. They have to find ways to *recalibrate* the existing hermeneutical resources and to create new radical perspectives in order to see the social world for what it is and to navigate under conditions of oppression and domination (Pohlhaus, 2012, p. 719). Hence, the sense of dissonance can be described as providing a practical impetus to develop alternative interpretative frames, which —qua emerging from marginality— "answer to more experiences" and not only to the particularistic interests of the privileged (Pohlhaus, 2012, p. 721).[15]

This is the point where *subaltern counter-publics* come in, i.e. those "discursive arenas" where members of marginalized social groups can assemble to "invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (Fraser, 1990, p. 67).[16] Authors like James Scott (1990) have repeatedly pointed out that when it comes to interactions in dominant public spheres, marginally situated subjects —out of prudence— will often not risk articulating their dissident experiences and their criticisms openly. Consider as an example the testimony of Richard Wright who recalls his experience of living under Jim Crow: "[T]he safety of my life in the South depended on how well I concealed from all whites what I felt" (Wright, 2000, p. 235; see also Litwack, 1998, p. 34). A motive, which is also reflected in the Black American proverb: "Got one mind for white folks to see/ Another for I know what is me" (quoted in Mills, 2007, p. 18). Besides this case of severe subordination, public spaces can function for a variety of other —more or less subtle— reasons as "oppressive 'rhetorical spaces'" (Medina, 2017a, p. 51). Amongst others, marginalized subjects have to expect to be systematically misunderstood due to biased interpretative practices and to be subjected to microaggressions whenever they participate in public communicative interactions. Against this background, subaltern counter-publics can provide urgently needed safer spaces, in which counter-discourses can emerge and flourish. In these spaces, shielded from the gaze of the oppressors, marginally situated subjects can articulate their sense of dissonance, share their dissident imaginations and reinterpret their differential experiences under conditions of "relative discursive freedom" (Scott 1990, p. 25). By interacting in this manner with other oppressed subjects, marginally positioned subjects can form "an oppositional epistemic community" (Mills, 2017a, p. 106), a community of epistemic resistance. Such communities of epistemic resistance facilitate the development of alternative interpretations, oppositional modes of valuation or crucial concepts such as "sexual harassment," which aim to reclaim the experiences, perspectives and voices of marginalized subjects (e.g. Fraser, 1990; McHugh, 2017; Medina, 2013). As such they can help to queer and pluralize the available hermeneutical resources, and —by undermining controlling images— help to reduce the exclusion of marginalized subjects from epistemic practices.

It should be emphasized that not all types of segregated spaces encourage the development of counter-discourses, but only those spaces which are appropriated and at least partially controlled by marginalized groups themselves, and thus function as safer or "free spaces" (Allen, 1970; see also Groch, 2001; Morris & Braine, 2001). The greater the interferences and surveillance exercised by dominant groups, the more difficult it becomes for a resistance discourse to set foot (think, for example, of the repression faced by those incarcerated in prisons).[17] In her celebrated essay "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness," hooks makes this point forcefully by drawing "a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance" (1989, p. 23). If, however, marginalized groups manage to obtain control over segregated spaces to a significant degree, these spaces have the potential to function as "location[s] of radical openness and possibility" (ib.), as indispensable spaces in which counter-discourses and emancipatory epistemic practices are forged.

In the end though, to actually transform the hegemonic epistemic frameworks and effectively challenge the exclusion of marginalized groups from knowledge-producing practices, these counter-discourses and oppositional epistemic practices have to leave marginality behind. To successfully resist entrenched patterns of epistemic injustice, they have to infiltrate the centre. Contestatory practices have to expose privileged subjects to counter discourses so that "*epistemic friction*" can occur: the confrontation with "significantly different perspectives" in order to disrupt

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15 See also Harding (1992) and Jaggar (1983) for arguments along this line.

16 Drawing on the work of Michael Warner (2002), one could add to this definition that a subaltern counter-public does not merely attempt to develop and disseminate an oppositional discourse, but that it does so out of "an awareness of its subordinate status" (p. 85) and its "conflictual relation to the dominant public" (p. 84).

17 However, as Nancy A. McHugh suggests, even "in spite of the oppressive and dehumanizing conditions that exist in the carceral system," prisoners can sometimes manage to form communities of epistemic resistance (2017, p. 276).

habitual epistemic practices (Medina, 2013, p. 18). As Medina explains it, epistemic friction can force "oneself to be self-critical, to confront one's limitations to become attentive to internalized patterns of ignorance" (2017b, p. 252). Importantly, the disruption of hegemonic epistemic practices via the exertion of epistemic friction need not operate only at an individual level. Equally, it might challenge, say, taken-for-granted modes of cultural valuation as embodied in film or other types of media, entrenched historical narratives or oppressive educational practices (e.g. Medina, 2011; Medina, 2017b). This can happen in manifold ways. Tommie Shelby draws attention to "the *Stand and Fight* tradition in black political thought," according to which resistance should be exercised openly in undisguised form: "in the press, in the legislative halls, in the courts, and in the streets" (2016, p. 6). More often though, resistance against hegemonic practices and structures is exercised in more subtle and hidden ways. Scott calls these "the infrapolitics of subordinate groups," which include amongst others the disruption of hegemonic practices and structures through the dissemination of "rumors, gossip, folktales, songs, gestures, jokes, and theatre of the powerless" (1990, p. xiii). In any case, the crucial lesson is that the starting point for these various agitational activities are the safer spaces provided by subaltern counter-publics. It is often here where one finds "the privileged site for non-hegemonic, contrapuntal, dissident, subversive discourse," and relatedly "the social and normative basis for practical forms of resistance" (Scott, 1990, pp. 25, 20). A commitment to the maintenance and proliferation of such spaces does not seem to fit easily with Anderson's call for intergroup integration across "all social domains" (2010, p. 112).

The Historical Significance of Subaltern Counter-Publics in the Struggle Against Epistemic Injustices

Anderson (2010) does not seem to share this concern. She sharply distinguishes her *imperative of integration* from the assimilationist ideal, according to which marginalized groups have to adapt to mainstream institutions and to the norms and practices of the privileged. According to Anderson, integration, by contrast, does not require that only marginalized groups change but —first of all— that mainstream institutions as well as hegemonic norms and practices are transformed. Unlike the assimilationist ideal, integration is supposed to be compatible with the preservation of group differences. With regard to racial integration in the United States, she suggests "that some degree of racial solidarity and affiliation on the part of the racially stigmatized is needed to spur integrative policies and cope with the stresses of integration," and emphasizes that integration is "not to be confused with the dissolution of black institutions or with the absence of racial clustering in neighborhoods" (Anderson, 2010, p. 113). It is in a similar context, that she also explicitly discusses the importance of providing safer spaces for marginally situated subjects. According to Anderson,

> members of stigmatized groups need places of refuge, social settings in which they can count on unquestioned acceptance and affirmation, share their experiences with integration among themselves, and generate strategies for coping with the stresses of integration. (2010, p. 183)

Thus, to a certain extent Anderson's imperative of integration seems to allow for the self-segregation of marginalized social groups. However, there is a significant difference between acknowledging the importance of such spaces for psychological reasons (stress reduction, mutual encouragement, etc.) and acknowledging them as indispensable sites of resistance, epistemic or other. Here, Anderson's loyalties are clearly divided. At the end of *The Imperative of Integration,* she stresses that "the integrated 'us,' not the self-segregated racial group, is the critical agent of racial justice" and concludes that "it is time to strike a new balance between moments of self-segregation and of integration, decidedly in favour of the racially inclusive 'us'" (Anderson, 2010, pp. 188-189).

One may wonder to whom this dubious figure of "the integrated us" is supposed to refer. Who is the other of "the integrated us"?[18] Which "subtle forms of control" are masked through the construction of an integrated "us," through "the transformation of 'I' into 'we'" (Mansbridge, 1990; see also Fraser, 1990)? Even though I take these questions seriously and think that they pose unresolved problems for Anderson's "imperative of integration," I want to interrogate her approach from a different (though arguably related) angle: Does Anderson's strict prioritization of integration do justice to the history of social struggles against epistemic injustices? To this question the answer clearly seems to be in the negative. Historically, the safer spaces provided by subaltern counter-publics have been of crucial importance in the struggle against dominant epistemic practices and the exclusion of marginally positioned subjects thereof.[19] In the past, such spaces have repeatedly formed the basis from which powerful oppositional discourses could emerge —as a brief overview of some elements pertaining to the formation of the English working class, the struggles against white supremacy in the United States, the various feminist movements in the second half of the 20th century and other exemplary cases strongly suggest. Viewed from a historical lens, Anderson's *imperative of integration* seems oblivious to the subversive role segregated safer spaces have played in the fight against epistemic injustices.

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[18] For Anderson the basis for "the integrated us" seems to be the identification with a national "we," the ability to see "one another as fellow citizens joined in a common project of living together democratically" (2020, p. 188; see also Besonne, 2019, p. 26). However, as Linda Alcoff (2006, p. 280) and Magalli Besonne (2019), amongst others, have argued, this merely shifts the layer of conflict and risks aggravating hostility and violence directed towards non-citizens and those identified as foreigners.

[19] See, for example, Fraser (1990) and Scott (1990) for a general assessment of the historical record along these lines.

To begin with, consider the social struggles of the English working class between the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. In his opus magnum, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Edward P. Thompson highlights the significant discursive freedom that "the chapel, the tavern and the home" provided for the lower class at times when "the countryside was ruled by the gentry, the towns by corrupt corporations, [and] the nation by the corruptest corporation of all" (1966, pp. 51-52). Following Thompson, Scott expands on how the hegemonic culture was undermined through various clandestine acts of resistance and the offstage discourse that circulated in places such as "the alehouse, the pub, the tavern, the inn, the cabaret, the beer cellar" or the marketplace (1990, p. 121). Locations like the tavern or cabaret provided important spaces where the lower classes could assemble without previous authorization by the privileged and develop a "popular culture —embodied in games, songs, gambling, blasphemy, and disorder— that was usually at odds with official culture" and hegemonic modes of valuation (ib.).

On the other side of the Atlantic, one could observe the emergence of a vibrant Black counter-public, which took shape already before the Civil War, gained significantly in importance with the implementation of the Jim Crow regime at the end of 19th century and continued to exist as crucial site of resistance against white supremacy at least until the 1960s (Dawson, 1994; Mills, 2017a). According to Charles Mills, it was precisely the segregation of Black communities —given that these were not too closely monitored and controlled by white subjects— that facilitated the development of "a collective counter-hegemonic worldview" (2017a, p. 107). Through the institution of a Black press, the publication of various Black journals and "the production and circulation of socially and politically sharp popular Black music" this counter-discourse was gradually disseminated into the wider public (Dawson, 1994, p. 206), contesting inter alia "the misrepresentations of the mainstream white academy" (Mills, 2017a, p. 107).[20] Those more sympathetic with Anderson's approach might point to the often assumed connection between the Civil Rights Movement and the struggle for racial integration. In fact, Anderson herself presents her book as an attempt "to resurrect the ideal of integration from the grave of the Civil Rights Movement" (2010, p. 1). However, as Scott argues, one cannot "understand the open break represented by the civil rights movement … in the 1960s without understanding the offstage discourse among black students, clergymen, and their parishioners" (1990, p. 199); i.e. without acknowledging the central importance of subaltern counter-publics for the genesis of the Civil Rights Movement. More importantly —at a symposium devoted to a critical discussion of Anderson's "imperative of integration"— Paul Taylor (2013) points to the growing historical consensus according to which the Civil Rights Movement is *not* to be regarded in the first instance as a movement aiming for integration, but as a movement fighting for self-determination.[21] As for example James Baldwin remembers, during the "great days" he was frequently "considered to be an 'integrationist'," whereas he never really thought of himself in those terms (2007, p. 93).

Perhaps, if one agrees with Nancy Fraser, "the most striking example" for the importance of subaltern counter-publics in the struggle against (what is now called) epistemic injustices —is the late-twentieth century U.S. feminist subaltern counterpublic" and its various "journals, bookstores, publishing companies, film and video distribution networks, lecture series, research centers, academic programs, conferences, conventions, festivals, and local meeting places" (1990, p. 67). In this counter-public,

> feminist women have invented new terms for describing social reality, including "sexism," "the double shift," "sexual harassment," and "marital date," and "acquaintance rape." Armed with such language, we have recast our needs and identities, thereby reducing, although not eliminating, the extent of our disadvantage in official public spheres. (Fraser, 1990, p. 67).

Many other feminist scholars have joined Fraser in emphasizing the critical importance of counter-publics and safer spaces for the disruption of sexist practices (e.g. Allen, 1970; Morris & Braine, 2001; Tuana, 2009). In particular, Catherine MacKinnon has emphasised the role of these spaces for the process of conscious raising in the women's movement, i.e. for "the collective critical reconstitution of the meaning of women's social experience, as women live through it" (1989, p. 83). As she explains,

> [t]he fact that men were not physically present was usually considered necessary to the process…. [M]en's temporary concrete absence helped women feel more free of the immediate imperative to compete for male attention and approval, to be passive or get intimidated, or to support men's version of reality. It made speech possible. (MacKinnon, 1989, p. 86).

Numerous other examples that testify to the crucial role of subaltern counter-publics and safer spaces in the fight against oppressive epistemic practices could be given: Alson Morris and Naomi Braine (2001) draw attention to gay and lesbian activism in the 1940s and 1950s and its attempts to create such oppositional spaces (bars, coffeehouses, gay neighbourhoods etc.), which later formed the material basis for the Stonewall rebellion. In the 1970s, the Mental Patients' Liberation Movement struggled for the creation of safer spaces where the victims of "the 'mental health system'" could assemble and question the basic premise of that system: "that one has an illness and the medical

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[20] Consider also Shelby's (2014) defence of Black solidarity and self-segregation "as a group-based effort to fight for racial justice or to protect the group's members from race-based maltreatment" (p. 271).

[21] Similarly, Candice Delmas (2018) cautions against pacifying and domesticating narratives of the Civil Rights Movements.

profession is there to provide a cure" (Rashed, 2019, p. 9). Sharon Groch (2001), finally, argues that deaf people in the United States could only develop a powerful oppositional consciousness because they managed to create various free spaces —the most prominent example probably being "The Gallaudet Experience" (Jordan, 2005). Noteworthy, blind people who often lacked such segregated safer spaces, could for a long time not form a similar oppositional consciousness. Today however, due to the sustained efforts of disability activist to create new spaces that include more disabled people, a strong "oppositional culture based on the larger experience of being disabled in America" has finally evolved (Groch, 2001, p. 97).

Besides these various paradigmatic examples from the history of social movements and struggles, as Scott suggests, "[t]he strongest evidence for the vital importance of autonomous sites in generating a hidden transcript is the strenuous effort made by dominant groups to abolish or control such sites" (1990, p. 124). One of the cruellest practices to this effect can be found at times of the Atlantic slave trade when slave owners separated slaves who spoke the same language and punished those who were found speaking an African language (Medina, 2017a; Scott, 1990, pp. 126-127). At the slave plantations in the United States, unsupervised assemblies with more than four slaves were generally banned, and various other repressive measures taken to prevent the implementation of spaces with even a minimal degree of discursive freedom such as secret gatherings at night (Raboteau, 1978; Scott, 1990). In the 20th century, state repressions (including police killings and the misuse of legal power) targeting, amongst others, the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement was one of the primary causes of the demise of the Black counter-public in the United States (Dawson, 1994).

What these two cases illustrate is not only that those in power are often well aware of the subversive, or sometimes even revolutionary, potential of subaltern counter-publics, but also that the safer spaces provided by these counter-publics cannot be taken for granted. They are the result of a constant struggle against attempts to suppress, contain or re-domesticate dissident voices. Importantly, this includes not only the struggle against what might be called "external oppression," but also the struggle against various intersecting axes of oppression *within* subaltern counter-publics themselves. Both the Black and feminist counter-publics have been vehemently criticised for their tendency to silence and marginalize women of colour (e.g. Collins, 2000; Dawson, 1994). Against this background, women of colour had to create safer spaces from which they could articulate a critical "group-based, collective standpoint" (Collins, 2000, p. 24) —a standpoint which helped to undermine and replace the various controlling images to which they were subjected (i.e. precisely those images, which systematically harmed women of colour in their capacity as knowers). According to Collins, the relative discursive freedom provided by these spaces, "however narrow," has been and still is "a necessary condition for Black women's resistance" (2000, p. 100). As a matter of course, "such spaces become less 'safe' if shared with those who were not Black and female" (Collins, 2000, p. 110).

What all this suggests is that those spaces appropriated by subaltern counter-publics —relatively free or safer spaces, in which shielded from the gaze of the oppressors marginally situated subjects could assemble— have historically functioned as indispensable sites of epistemic resistance. As Peter Stallybrass and Allon White put it, "in large part the history of political struggle has been the history of the attempts to control significant sites of assembly and spaces of discourse" (1986, p. 80). By assigning integration policies centre stage, Anderson seems to overlook precisely those social locations from which time and again epistemic resistance has been exercised in the past: the spaces provided by subaltern counter-publics.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have critically discussed Anderson's imperative of integration with regard to its potential to counter epistemic injustices. In particular, I have argued that her proposal insufficiently acknowledges the subversive potential of subaltern counter-publics in the fight against dominant epistemic practices. By doing so, it risks occluding the role of safer spaces as sites of epistemic resistance and silencing the agency of marginally situated subjects. Perhaps, this is part of the explanation of why the demand for widespread integration does not figure more prominently within marginalized social groups, and particularly not within Black communities (Sundstrom, 2013; Taylor, 2013). Merely making a terminological modification and to speak of inclusion instead of integration, as Anderson (2013) has proposed in reaction to such criticisms, does not do the trick. Instead, a re-appreciation of those acts of epistemic resistance that find their starting point at the margins is needed.

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