

compos mentis

Accounting for Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance

Andrew Kesler

Eastern Michigan University

ABSTRACT

In this paper I argue that the most useful and important epistemic resources come out of the marginally situated position and these resources are the ones most subject to neglect. I also assert that willful hermeneutical ignorance develops out of cognitive missteps within both individual's and group's cognition. Epistemic resources are tools for understanding one's own experience, others' experiences, and furthering the development of useful and meaningful knowledge. These resources give way to entire bodies of knowledge, new ways to perceive the world, and they are necessary in order to highlight and subdue epistemic injustices. A marginally situated knower has more trouble affecting epistemic resources than a dominantly situated knower. Those dominantly situated in social positions are more likely exhibit what is called willful hermeneutical ignorance, or being blind and/or dismissive to certain concepts and ways of thought. Willful hermeneutical ignorance develops from cognitive missteps that lead to the dismissal or overlooking of epistemic resources. Cognitive missteps can include having a fundamental misunderstanding of one's own situatedness and a misunderstanding of others' as well.

KEYWORDS

Epistemology, Hermeneutical Ignorance, Epistemic Resources, Marginally Situated Knower, Dominantly Situated Knower, Epistemic Injustice

INTRODUCTION

In order to fully explain what willful hermeneutical ignorance means, I begin by defining epistemic resources and their role in the transfer of knowledge. I then use Miranda Fricker to introduce epistemic injustice and illustrate hermeneutical marginalization. Gaile Pohlhaus Jr. expands on Fricker's work to define willful hermeneutical ignorance, a type of epistemic injustice that is absent from Fricker's account. The main concepts necessary for understanding willful hermeneutical ignorance are situatedness and interdependence along with the relationship between the dominantly situated knower and the marginally situated knower. I discuss Jose Medina's explanation of epistemic vices in order to further define why and how knowers remain willfully hermeneutically ignorant. I assert that the most useful and important epistemic resources come out of the marginally situated position and these resources are the ones most subject to neglect. I also assert that this type of ignorance develops out of cognitive missteps within both individual's and group's cognition.

Epistemic resources are tools for understanding one's own experience, others' experiences, and furthering the development of useful and meaningful knowledge. These resources give way to entire bodies of knowledge, new ways to perceive the world, and they are necessary in order to highlight and subdue epistemic injustices. Because the spread of knowledge is a social endeavor, epistemic resources are social tools. A single individual cannot formulate useful epistemic resources successfully without conference with other individuals that share similar or somehow relatable knowledge. Even though these are social tools, not everyone has the same access and influence on epistemic resources. As I later explain in further detail, a marginally situated knower has more trouble affecting epistemic resources than a dominantly situated knower. Those dominantly situated in social positions are more likely to exhibit what is called willful hermeneutical ignorance, or being blind and/or dismissive to certain concepts and ways of thought.

WILLFUL HERMENEUTICAL IGNORANCE AS EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

Miranda Fricker offers an account of two kinds of epistemic injustice that she calls testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. I mainly focus on hermeneutical injustice. In Chapter Seven of her work, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, she discusses hermeneutical marginalization. She affirms that, "When there is unequal hermeneutical participation with respect to some significant area(s)

of social experience, members of the disadvantaged group are hermeneutically marginalized" (Fricker 2007, 153). The marginalized group has a lesser ability to interpret experience which puts them at a disadvantage. The disadvantage on one hand is the unequal participation in forming meaning through experience, and on the other hand having to expend more effort for understanding while being subject to the advantage group for confirmation. Fricker defines this sort of injustice as, "Having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to hermeneutical marginalization" (Fricker 2007, 158). She makes a point that the various hermeneutical disadvantages one may face are not always clear and not always continuous, yet have lasting consequences. As a knower, one may slowly lose confidence over time, for instance, if people are consistently skeptical of her account of her own experiences. This can lead to self-doubt and inhibit the acquisition and spread of new knowledge and epistemic resources. A notable aspect of Fricker's account is the relation of power between the advantaged and disadvantaged. Because the disadvantaged are in a position of lesser power, they must be more aware of their position by experiencing injustices. The advantaged group need not accept the burden of responsibility for the position of the disadvantaged or even acknowledge their dominant position, thereby disregarding the power relations altogether. The advantaged group, I will argue, has a greater responsibility in educating themselves and noticing inadequacies in epistemic resources because they hold more power over the resources.

Fricker labels two kinds of epistemic injustice which are testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. Her work has been expanded upon in order to highlight another form of injustice that she does not discuss. Gaile Pohlhaus Jr's *Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice: Toward a Theory of Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance*, provides another form of epistemic injustice that is absent from Fricker's account. Pohlhaus utilizes Fricker's example of Tom Robinson from Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* to emphasize what Fricker's work is missing. According to Pohlhaus, Fricker does not go far enough in defining the real injustice that occurs during Robinson's trial.

In the following paragraphs I will detail Pohlhaus's work on willful hermeneutical ignorance in order to lay a groundwork to further her argument. Pohlhaus defines a unique kind of ignorance where the subject as a knower denies or discredits resources for knowledge acquisition, thereby discounting entire bodies

of knowledge. She calls this willful hermeneutical ignorance and defines it as, "The knower's continued engagement in the world while refusing to learn to use epistemic resources developed from marginalized situatedness" (Pohlhaus 2012, 722). The problem stems from the knower's continued engagement in the world, because by refusing to learn to use certain resources the knower is navigating with outdated, inefficient epistemic resources. This has the possibility to lead to distortions of one's worldview.

Pohlhaus points out an interesting dialectic relationship between an individual's situatedness and interdependence. Situatedness depends on how one is positioned with relation to others as knowers. Interdependence refers to the social aspect of epistemic resources. As knowers, we operate and manufacture epistemic resources collectively. These two ideas create a tension which can be observed in the asymmetrical relationship between marginally situated knowers and dominantly situated knowers.

The situatedness of the dominantly situated knowers is determined by their ability to affect epistemic resources with more influence than the marginally situated, and also to have these resources recognized and accepted. For the marginally situated knower, her situatedness is determined by her lesser ability to affect epistemic resources. Yet, the marginally situated knower is at an epistemic advantage, according to Pohlhaus, in that she more aptly notices injustices and hermeneutical gaps that are deeply entrenched in social norms (Pohlhaus 2012, 720). This is because her marginalized position provides her with a certain worldview and what Pohlhaus describes as a vulnerability. When an individual is vulnerable to others, "She must know what will be expected, noticed by, and of concern to those in relation to whom she is vulnerable" (Pohlhaus 2012, 717). This is an example of how power relations within different social positions affect individuals' worldviews. Due to the position of the marginalized knower in such relations of power, she experiences much more subtle and nuanced injustices that are not common experiences for the majority of knowers. Furthermore, because the experiences are not so commonplace, the epistemic resources commonly used by the majority of knowers are not going to be as suitable for the marginally situated. The advantage of being positioned to notice deeper epistemic inadequacies comes with the disadvantage of not relating to other epistemic resources that come from the dominantly situated. This leads to tension between situatedness and interdependence. How knowers are situated in relations of power affect the

epistemic resources that are available to them and affect the transfer of knowledge between differently situated knowers.

The example that Miranda Fricker uses to further her ideas on epistemic injustices is Tom Robinson's trial from *To Kill a Mockingbird*. On Fricker's account, Robinson experiences testimonial injustice because the jury does not take his claims seriously due to the color of his skin and position in society. These aspects can be analyzed as his situatedness. Fricker explains that this is the jury giving Robinson deflated credibility on account of identity prejudice. Pohlhaus furthers this example by explaining that Robinson also experiences hermeneutical injustice, and the jury exhibits willful hermeneutical ignorance. Robinson experiences hermeneutical injustice in that the jury "Consistently misinterprets his words" (Pohlhaus 2012, 725). All the while Robinson is aware of what is happening, yet he cannot make this clear to others. Pohlhaus states, "The economy of hermeneutical resources preempts Robinson from transferring that knowledge to the jury" (Pohlhaus 2012, 725). The jury's misunderstanding goes deeper than Fricker's assertions of identity prejudice. In this case, Robinson is hermeneutically marginalized. Robinson is unable to communicate the jury's misunderstanding and social position. Furthermore, according to Pohlhaus, the jury can be held culpable for distorting Robinson's credibility and not utilizing epistemic resources that would help the jury understand Robinson's position. The case is not that the epistemic resources for understanding are unavailable to the jury, but rather the resources used by the jury are faulty and wrongly distort their views of the world.

Pohlhaus evaluates this example in terms of situatedness and interdependence. The jury fails to enter into a cooperative interdependent relationship with knowers that are outside the juror's experienced world i.e. Tom Robinson. She explains, "The individual jurors' past and continuing failure to enter into cooperative epistemic interdependence with marginally situated knowers results in a current structural problem with regard to the transfer of knowledge" (Pohlhaus 2012, 725). The structural problem with the transfer of knowledge is that social inequalities inhibit the formation of cooperative relationships. If the jury were to analyze the situation with the epistemic resources developed out of Robinson's situatedness, thereby allowing interdependent relations between knowers, then there would be a much greater possibility that the jury would not successfully misinterpret Robinson's testimony. Because of his marginalized position as a knower, Robinson has a heightened sense of awareness about concerns of those to whom he is

vulnerable. This is the reason that he is able to recognize the jurors' simultaneous misinterpretation of his testimony, whereas the jurors see no fault in their own reasoning. Being the dominantly situated knowers, the jurors need not worry about Robinson's concerns because they are not vulnerable to Robinson in that same way that he is to the jurors. Robinson's credibility is deflated because of identity prejudice, he is unable to communicate his experience and others' misunderstand his words, and the jurors neglect to even consider alternate epistemic resources when evaluating his case.

Pohlhaus is making normative claims about the spread of knowledge in society. First, that situatedness and interdependence determine the formation of epistemic resources, and second, that epistemic resources that come out of marginalized positions are neglected or not even acknowledged. Situatedness is defined by Pohlhaus as, "How relations with others position the knower in relation to the world" (Pohlhaus 2012, 717). One's social position warrants her a certain amount of power over accepted epistemic resources, but this power is also determined by social positions of other knowers in relation to her. This is where tension between situatedness and interdependence can be observed. Differently situated individuals may have trouble properly communicating experiences because they may not share the same epistemic resources. This would make forming a cooperative interdependence more difficult, but because the tension is greater, that is all the more reason to enter into honest interdependence.

She explores some reasons why dominantly situated knowers are more prone to exhibit willful hermeneutical ignorance. Some dominantly situated knowers, or people in positions of power, choose to actively resist epistemic resources. This lack of utilization can be attributed to an absence of need to enter into a cooperative interdependent relationship with knowers in a different position. This reluctance is the case for both the marginalized and dominant positions. Some dominantly situated knowers may not necessarily have motivation to seek out such a relationship. I will detail reasons behind this motivation later. The marginalized might be hesitant to enter into a cooperative relationship due to a lack of trust, or possibly a fear of not being taken seriously. Individuals and groups of people may fail to recognize the social and cultural relevance that such resources hold. Another possibility is that some dominantly situated knowers prematurely disregard marginalized knowers as authorities of knowledge, or assume that they are unable to properly understand their own situation. The knower may be

confident in the epistemic resources that forms her worldview, so she sees no need for correction. All of these responses can be attributed to identity prejudice, unfounded skepticism, or a lack of information and/or misinformation that leads to a fundamental misunderstanding of epistemic resources.

Interesting complications arises when considering how knowers come to utilize faulty epistemic resources and do not realize the faultiness, deny it, or are indifferent about it. Faulty epistemic resources can be partially attributed to structural norms that, for example, carry historically racist, classist, or sexist attitudes. As norms, these attitudes may go unnoticed and thus remain uncorrected. Considering faulty epistemic resources, determining the degree of culpability onto a knower who exhibits willful hermeneutical ignorance comes into question. Pohlhaus explains that the jury sees the world through certain frameworks, and these effectively block out other perspectives. If the jury were to view the world from some framework other than classist, racist, sexist, white supremacist, etc. then they could partially open themselves up to Robinson's experienced world. The problem is that the jury fails to open themselves up to alternative frameworks, thereby making them culpable for the injustice done onto Robinson and culpable for not correcting the relevant frameworks. For cases that are not so obvious in determining the reasons for individuals and groups exhibiting willful hermeneutical ignorance, the party's culpability may not be so clear.

I have thus far explained Pohlhaus's argument for willful hermeneutical injustice. To further consider what motivates knowers to remain willfully hermeneutically ignorant, I will discuss Jose Medina's explanation of epistemic vice and epistemic virtue, while focusing mostly on epistemic vices as reasons for willful hermeneutical ignorance.

Jose Medina's *The Epistemology of Resistance* can be analyzed in order to expand on Pohlhaus's account of willful hermeneutical ignorance, and further explain the motivation behind willful hermeneutical ignorance. In Chapter Two of *The Epistemology of Resistance* titled "Resistance as Epistemic Vice and as Epistemic Virtue," Medina explores the epistemic vices of privileged groups, epistemic virtues of oppressed groups, and how resistance and responsibility play a role in our cognitive processes as knowers. Medina makes clear that the vices and virtues are not generalized uniformly throughout an entire group of people, nor does being part of a certain group automatically grant an individual such conditions. He argues that being in a certain social position leaves one

more prone to specific epistemic virtues and vices. The privileged knower and the oppressed knower on Medina's account can be respectively compared to the dominantly situated knower and the marginally situated knower on Pohlhaus's account. The epistemic vices Medina connects with the privileged knower are epistemic arrogance, epistemic laziness, and close-mindedness. The epistemic virtues connected to oppressed knowers are epistemic humility, intellectual curiosity, and open-mindedness. Again, not all privileged knowers exhibit these vices and not all oppressed knowers exhibit these virtues, but they are very helpful in understanding the motivation behind ignorance.

The epistemic vices that Medina labels can further our understanding about why individuals and groups of people are willfully hermeneutically ignorant. Epistemic arrogance explained by Medina involves, "Indulging in a delusional cognitive omnipotence that prevents him from learning from others and improving" (Medina 2013, 31). Here, the knower has a superfluous and unwarranted amount of credibility, and this also prevents any possible resistance against his provided knowledge from others. Epistemic arrogance works to block the formation of interdependent relationships between knowers of different social positions. This also sustains the dominantly situated position because no motivation is pushing one to seek out new perspectives. For epistemic laziness, Medina argues that, "A habitual lack of epistemic curiosity atrophies one's cognitive attitudes and dispositions. Continual neglect creates blinders that one allows to grow around one's epistemic perspective, constraining and slanting one's vantage point" (Medina 2013, 33). This can be exhibited by knowers who do not see relevance of other perspectives, or do not even acknowledge the existence of other perspectives outside one's worldview. Epistemic laziness as a vice is an attitude of not seeing certain knowledge as necessary, when in fact certain knowledge would be beneficial in some way for the knower and for others. The third epistemic vice Medina covers is close-mindedness. Close-mindedness, as Medina states, "Involves the lack of openness to a whole range of experiences and viewpoints that can destabilize (or create trouble for) one's own perspective" (Medina 2013, 35). This closed-off perspective discriminates against other perspectives in order to maintain a privileged social position. Closed-mindedness also selfishly asserts the attitude 'I already know everything that I need to know.'

These three epistemic vices work to expand Pohlhaus's view of situatedness and interdependence. They can also all be tied to reasons for not accepting and

acknowledging epistemic resources. Arrogance, laziness, and close-mindedness all contribute to the formation of worldviews that inhibit the spread of knowledge. As previously explained, the dominantly and marginally situated can be looked at as the privileged and oppressed respectively. The dominantly situated knowers are more prone to exhibiting these epistemic vices, which will help make clear the reasons that knowers maintain willful hermeneutical ignorance. Some dominantly situated knowers disqualify other marginalized knowers as authorities of knowledge. Those dominantly situated may not take others' experiences as true due to skepticism, or because they simply believe that others do not know what they are talking about. These various responses can be categorized as epistemic arrogance. Some dominantly situated knowers fail to recognize the relevance of other perspectives in their own lives. They may believe they have all the experience necessary for them and not search for anything outside of that framework. Such responses can be categorized as epistemic laziness and close-mindedness. All these vices can be seen as motivation to not enter into cooperative interdependent relationships with knowers who are differently situated.

To have blinders over one's epistemic perspective is a useful analogy to understand how willful hermeneutical ignorance is maintained. One may have blinders that block out ways to view the world and not even realize that one has blinders, or they recognize the blinders and maintain the closed-off perspective knowingly. Willful hermeneutical ignorance does not have to be actively acknowledged by the knower who is exhibiting it, which makes accounting for ignorance and working against it much more difficult.

EXPANDING ON POHLHAUS

In the following paragraphs I will explain what I believe to be missing from Pohlhaus's account of willful hermeneutical ignorance. First, Pohlhaus does not explicitly state this but all knowers are subject to exhibiting willful hermeneutical ignorance, it is not exclusive to the dominantly situated knowers. This is because a knower can be dominantly situated with some aspects of knowledge, yet marginally situated in other categories. Also, marginally situated knowers can fail to recognize and acknowledge epistemic resources that were developed out of a similar situatedness. Different areas of situatedness work together in order to determine one's position in relation to epistemic resources. Pohlhaus somewhat simplifies the two classes of knowers, but situatedness can be viewed as a complex

compos mentis

composition of multiple power relations that exist through one's social identity and relationships.

Secondly, Pohlhaus does not talk much about how, as knowers, we can determine the necessary relevance of other's experiences. This is a complicated question when searching for the importance of our own experience as well. For example, consider the two following scenarios. A young woman in college is at a social gathering, and a young man under the influence of alcohol approaches her. She may be interested, but throughout the night he insists on making comments and inappropriately feeling her, making her uncomfortable and a bit threatened. This young woman has never encountered a situation such as this and she is unsure how to navigate it. Now compare this with a different scenario. A middle-aged male actor is at a gathering with other individuals who are associated with riches and fame. A well-known movie producer approaches him and compliments his looks. The producer proceeds to tell him that he would look great in one of his films and that he could provide him ample opportunity. The producer begins to make inappropriate sexual comments and advances, making the male actor very uncomfortable and confused. He would like to accept the job to further his career, but he would be subjecting himself to possible further harassment. Even though these two individuals are very differently situated, the young woman and the male actor, they still can be said to share similar experiences of some sort of unwarranted sexual advances and social pressures. Yet, the question of how much they can relate to one another's experiences comes into play. Can the young woman see her situation through the male actor's predicament, and vice-versa? Both are at risk of being hermeneutically marginalized when sharing their experiences, and I can imagine a case where the hearer(s) exhibit willful hermeneutical ignorance. Such a response would entail the denial of any sexual harassment and the passive assertion that says that is just how things operate in the real world. Both responses neglect the real concern and show how easy misinterpreting experience can become. Though these situations share some similarities of individuals being taken advantage of, complicated questions arise of how much can be taken from both scenarios in order to further our understanding of experience. Relating certain experiences is a context-dependent task, which is why remaining open to new perspectives and alternative viewpoints is so important.

Pohlhaus explains that dominantly situated knowers may experience difficulties in recognizing and accepting alternate epistemic resources, and it may be rather

easy to refuse certain epistemic resources. Yet she makes note that, "Such a refusal is not an inherent inability, but rather a willful act," (Pohlhaus 2012, 729). One reason she offers for the difficulty involved in recognition and acceptance is that for some dominantly situated knowers, learning of alternate, marginalized perspectives is disorienting. She states, "It opens one's eyes to aspects of one's situatedness with which it is not easy to contend" (Pohlhaus 2012, 721). In some sense, becoming aware of any new perspectives can be disorienting because the new experiences are shaping the way in which the world is viewed. This sheds light on the importance of recognizing and becoming aware of one's own perspective. Understandably this is a complex idea, and may be impossible to fully recognize every single aspect of one's social situatedness. Yet, working to actively shape and expand one's worldview can make entering into cooperative interdependent relationships with those differently situated a much easier process. This can work to alleviate willful hermeneutical ignorance. As previously explained, marginally situated knowers are more aware of their positions because they are vulnerable to those dominantly situated and often experience injustices. For the dominantly situated knower, there is nothing motivating her to investigate other parts of the world in light of others' concerns (Pohlhaus 2012, 721). Because of this, the dominantly situated knowers may have more work to do in order to further their understanding of their own situatedness. This does not excuse them of the responsibly to educate themselves, rather more responsibility rests on them to learn of injustices to which some marginally situated are subject.

So far I have provided accounts of Fricker's epistemic injustices, Medina's epistemic vices, and Pohlhaus's overview of willful hermeneutical ignorance. With the example of Tom Robinson from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Pohlhaus utilizes Fricker in order to show what she was missing from her explanation on epistemic injustices. Pohlhaus introduces willful hermeneutical ignorance as another type of injustice that Fricker fails to take into consideration. Marginally situated knowers are, "In a position to notice inadequacies in our epistemic resources that are more entrenched" (Pohlhaus 2012, 720). The problem is that some dominantly situated knowers do not acknowledge or consider the resources needed to grasp marginalized individuals' experiences. They may consider the experience of others, but by not utilizing proper epistemic resources, the consideration may be through a faulty framework, causing a misunderstanding of perspective. Jose

Medina's work on epistemic vices helps further understanding of the motivation behind willful hermeneutical ignorance.

The most important and essential epistemic resources are conceptualized by marginally situated knowers. This would include people facing structural injustices, such as women, African Americans, immigrants, disabled, etc. The epistemic resources that come out of marginalized situatedness are the most important because they highlight structural injustices and social injustices that are more subtle and under the surface. The marginally situated knowers do not have as much influence over implementation and recognition of epistemic resources, so the dominantly situated knowers, in a sense, have a certain degree of power over the spread of knowledge, more-so than the marginally situated knowers. Because of their epistemic situatedness, dominantly situated knowers should have a greater responsibility over epistemic resources and should be continuously correcting for injustices when possible. Unfortunately, their epistemic situatedness also provides them with the option of ignoring and/or not acknowledging epistemic resources for their own benefit whether the ignorance is exhibited knowingly or unknowingly.

Willful hermeneutical ignorance develops from cognitive missteps that lead to the dismissal or overlooking of epistemic resources. Cognitive missteps can include having a fundamental misunderstanding of one's own situatedness and a misunderstanding of others' as well. To completely understand one's situatedness is basically asking an individual to be wholly aware of her social position with relation to everyone in her life under consideration of all experience. This does not require the knower to completely understand her situatedness, but she should be open to consideration and being aware of epistemic vices. Also, one should acknowledge the importance of useful epistemic resources. Another cognitive misstep is not recognizing the use-value of certain resources. In other words, an individual or group of people may not see any real importance in the acceptance of other perspectives or frameworks. They may fail to recognize the social and cultural significance of useful epistemic resources. Because of this, they overlook whole bodies of knowledge and ways of understanding. Some people may also be content or indifferent about certain knowledge and perspectives. This tracks back to the vices of epistemic laziness and close-mindedness. This is a worldview which asserts that no new perspectives are necessary and other ways of understanding are unimportant. Such a worldview is very epistemically closed-off.

Pohlhaus explains that a reason that some dominantly situated knowers do not acknowledge or accept certain epistemic resources is because learning of one's social position is disorienting and not especially easy. I argue that becoming aware of one's own privilege is necessary in order to form cooperative interdependent relationships with others whom are differently situated. If a dominantly situated knower is self-delusional and considers himself oppressed as a knower, then he will be constantly misinterpreting his own experiences and others'. Yet, determining the necessary epistemic resources needed to grasp certain experiences which may be foreign to an individual seems difficult. Constantly considering the epistemic resources that are available to oneself is an arduous task and may not be so straight forward. The first step is understanding the concepts of situatedness and interdependence, and how they interact within one's own life.

The structural aspects of willful hermeneutical ignorance can be correlated with structural inequalities in society. Even though the example of identity prejudice from *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a bit outdated, still racism, classism, and sexism are all relevant issues when considering identity prejudice. Yet, these certain prejudices may be even more deeply imbedded in a social worldview in a much more nuanced way. Prejudices can affect cognition underneath the surface without us noticing the effects. That is a cognitive misstep that needs critical attention to manage because some norms that have been widely accepted in ways of thought have proven to cause epistemic harm.

In her conclusion, Pohlhaus offers her solution, she states, "The solution is for dominantly situated knowers to catch up and learn to use epistemic resources they lack by forging truly cooperative interdependent relations with marginally situated knowers" (Pohlhaus 2012, 733). When individuals fail to form honest interdependent relations with other knowers, they effectively maintain their own ignorance and deny the usefulness of epistemic resources. Yet, dominantly situated knowers may not see importance in forging an epistemic relationship of this kind. So then, the question arises of how to motivate and convince the dominantly situated knower to enter said epistemic relations, and thus take responsibility for correcting his faulty epistemic resources into his own hands. The source of motivation can be argued to come from nowhere else other than the knower himself. The duty of eliminating willful hermeneutical ignorance lies on the shoulders of those exhibiting the ignorance. Marginally situated knowers should

not have the responsibility to push dominantly situated knowers into cooperative interdependent relations, yet they should be helpful in forging interdependence.

Because learning of new epistemic resources is a sort of challenge for a knower's worldview, the new perspective may be difficult to accept. Yet, the restructuring of one's epistemic framework is necessary in order to step out of ignorance. When one has a worldview built upon faulty, out-of-date epistemic resources the reconstruction of one's framework is necessary, regardless of how disorienting that it may be. Furthermore, because epistemic resources are social tools, a social responsibility exists surrounding willful hermeneutical ignorance. This means that dominantly situated knowers that continue to engage in the world while lacking important epistemic resources indirectly affects all of us as knowers. Culpability is a complicated issue when discussing willful hermeneutical ignorance, but more importantly the focus should be on the causes of the ignorance and the ways in which knowers, both dominantly and marginally situated, can work against ignorance.

CONCLUSION

Willful hermeneutical ignorance develops out of cognitive missteps within one's own worldview, and out of a lack of necessary knowledge of one's own situatedness. The most useful and important epistemic resources come out of the marginally situated knowers' position, yet these are the resources that are most neglected. Fricker provides groundwork for epistemic injustice and labels hermeneutical injustice as one of the two injustices done onto knowers. Her account of injustice lead to Pohlhaus forming the concept of willful hermeneutical ignorance as another separate form of epistemic injustice. Medina offers three epistemic vices, arrogance, laziness, and close-mindedness, which furthers understanding of the motivation that sustains willful hermeneutical ignorance. Pohlhaus asserts that situatedness and interdependence are essential in the understanding of willful hermeneutical ignorance, and are essential to grasp the relationship between marginally situated knowers and dominantly situated knowers. Her explanation shows how power relations affect the transfer of knowledge. Furthermore, because epistemic resources are necessary social tools that help give way to new ways of understanding, they help us access entire bodies of knowledge and further understand knowledge as a social entity. The most attainable solution I believe is the solution in which Pohlhaus offers, which is

the dominantly situated knowers must become more open-minded and work to forge honest, cooperative, interdependent relations with the marginally situated knowers so to develop and become aware of necessary epistemic resources.

REFERENCES

- Fricker, Miranda. 2007. *Epistemic Injustice: Power & the Ethics of Knowing*. New York. Oxford University Press.
- Lee, Harper. 2006. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York. Harper Perennial Modern Classics.
- Medina, Jose. 2013. *The Epistemology of Resistance*. New York. Oxford University Press.
- Pohlhaus, Gaile Jr. 2012. *Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice: Toward a Theory of Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance*. *Hypatia* vol. 27 no. 4. (715–733).