

2021

## Racial Injustice and Information Flow

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### Recommended Citation

Bayruns García, Eric. 2021. "Racial Injustice and Information Flow." *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly* 7 (4). Article 4.

## Racial Injustice and Information Flow

Eric Bayruns García

### Abstract

I submit that the critical epistemology of race and standpoint literature has not explicitly focused on the properties of information about racial or gender injustice in a way similar to how epistemologists have focused on propositions and information when they describe propositional justification. I present an account of information flow in which I describe information in the racial-injustice-information domain in a way similar to how epistemologists describe propositional justification. To this end, I argue (C1) that if subjects in racially unjust societies tend to violate norms that promote a community's reliable information flow because racial prejudice is widely held in racially unjust societies, then racial injustice can make information flow less reliably in a community. And I argue (C2) that if racial prejudice can make information flow less reliably in a community, then information that nondominant subjects are *more likely* to have will *less reliably flow* to community members who lack it.

**Keywords:** racial injustice, race, identity, epistemic injustice, information flow, epistemic communities, identity prejudice

Epistemologists have taken up how social injustice can affect the transmission of information from speakers to hearers (Alcoff 1999, 2007, 2014; Bayruns García 2019, 2020; Collins 1990; Davis 2016, 2018; Dotson 2011; Fricker 2007, 2016; Hookway 2010; El Kassar 2018; Kukla 2014; Medina 2013; Mills 1997, 2007; Peet 2017; Pohlhaus 2012; Woomer 2019). And others have taken up how a community's features can promote information transmission independent of social injustice qua community feature (Alston 1994; Goldberg 2010, 2018; Goldman 2008, 1987, 1999, 2015; Goldman and Cox 1996; Greco 2016, 2017; Kitcher 1990; Zollman 2007).

But epistemologists have *not* taken up social injustice's effect on whether information about social injustice itself flows properly through a community. Epistemologists have not drawn out the epistemic consequences of epistemic injustice phenomena such as agential insensitivity, testimonial injustice, testimonial quieting, testimonial smothering, participatory injustice, and white ignorance for how well or poorly information flows through *communities* and even societies (Dotson 2011; Fricker 2007; Hookway 2010; Mills 2007; Woomer 2019). They have not drawn

out these consequences because they have focused on *subjects* as the target of analysis. I draw out these consequences because I focus on *information of a particular kind* or with a particular kind of *content* as the analysis target. This change in target of analysis matters because there is an epistemic upshot for information-set kinds where this upshot is distinct from epistemic upshots that obtain for subjects in the individualistic or doxastic sense.

That “Black and White persons do *not* have equal opportunity in the US job market” is an example of the informational content that falls within the scope of the information kind I focus on. Some evidence that this information does not flow well through society is that according to a Gallup poll, 69 percent of White people in the US believe that Black and White people *have equal* opportunity in the US job market (Jones 2016). That “New York Police Department officer Pantaleo is guilty of murdering Eric Garner, a Black man from Staten Island, New York,” is an example of this content. Evidence that this information’s flow is depressed is that only 47 percent of White people in New York State believed this, even though 90 percent of Black people did (Snyder et al. 2017). That “the US has not done enough to remedy racial injustice” is another example of this content. Despite the protests in the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, the percentage of White people who believed the negation of this information decreased from 62 percent to 60 percent (Horowitz et al. 2020).

I will draw out the epistemic consequences of epistemic injustices for how well or poorly information flows where I focus on information that *nondominant-group members are more likely* to have than dominant-group members.

But one might think that critical epistemologists of race and standpoint theorists have already described how systemic injustice relates to how well or poorly information about racial or gender injustice flows through a community. For example, Charles Mills (2007) has pointed to “structural group-based miscognition,” and Gaile Pohlhaus Jr. (2012) has described how dominant-group members will tend not to use the interpretative resources that nondominant-group members develop. Here they describe bad epistemic states that dominant-group members are in and how their group membership relates to these epistemic states. These philosophers helpfully describe the *doxastic* attitudes that these subjects bear toward content in the domain of systemic-injustice information. A subject’s doxastic attitude is the attitude she bears toward some content.

Epistemologists invoke the notion of the “doxastic” to distinguish between doxastic justification and propositional justification (Goldman 1979; Silva and Oliveira, forthcoming; Volpe 2017). A proposition is propositionally justified if a subject could be epistemically justified were she to believe it. Propositional justification need not involve any cognitive commitment or belief on the part of a subject. As a result, epistemologists can describe either the phenomenon of epistemic justification in

terms of the cognitive commitments that subjects instantiate or, on the other hand, the propositions or information themselves to which subjects can cognitively commit. Thus, when epistemologists describe propositional justification, they primarily describe features of information rather than features of subjects.

I submit that the critical epistemology of race and standpoint literature has not explicitly focused on the properties of information about, say, racial or gender injustice in a way similar to how epistemologists have focused on propositions and information when they describe propositional justification. I present the account of information flow that follows to describe information in the racial-injustice-information domain in a way similar to how epistemologists describe propositional justification.

White ignorance, testimonial quieting, standpoint, meta-ignorance, testimonial injustice, and epistemic appropriation are just a few of the phenomena that critical race epistemologists and feminist epistemologists have described that involve how systemic injustice can affect whether subjects accurately or inaccurately believe (Mills 2007; Dotson 2011; Medina 2013; Fricker 2007; Davis 2018). But a central feature of these phenomena is systemic injustice's causal influence on a subject's doxastic state relative to information where this information need not be systemic-injustice information. For instance, someone is in a white-ignorant state if she believes, say, a false claim in the domain of science because of White supremacy or anti-Black racism. Here Mills describes a doxastic phenomenon rather than some property of information, even though one of white ignorance's most important consequences is that White subjects will tend to get things wrong about racial injustice. A similar case is how standpoint theorists describe how nondominant subjects' doxastic states differ from dominant subjects in the domain of injustice in terms of these states' accuracy. In contrast, I describe information flow of a specific informational set which is a property of information rather than subjects.

Take the following case. Suppose that Marisol, an Afro-Latina, tells Chad, a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant man, that she did not get a financial-market-analyst job she is eminently qualified for because (1) employers falsely thought she did not have the requisite analytical skills and (2) because of economic obligations that her parents and siblings expected her to fulfill such that she ultimately had to take a less remunerative bookkeeping job. Suppose that this is accurate testimonial information regarding racial injustice that nondominant groups such as Afro-Latinas are more likely to have than dominant-group members. But suppose that Chad does not believe Marisol partly because he *misperceives her as untrustworthy* due to a negative identity prejudice he bears against Afro-Latinas. Chad's misperception of Marisol *not only* is an interpersonal phenomenon, but it also partly constitutes racial injustice's effect on the *flow of information* in their group or community. Here, Chad is less likely to communicate this information to other subjects and thus he contributes to making

the flow of information poorer in his community. And if other dominant-group members, like Chad, also tend to misperceive nondominant members, like Marisol, then information that nondominant members are more likely to have will flow less reliably through this community. So, here, *information of a certain kind* is less likely than other information to flow well through a community because information of this kind is more likely to encounter situations such as this one between Chad and Marisol. Here I describe a property of one kind of information relative to another kind of information where I take a difference in these two kinds to inhere in the content of the information.

In this paper, I argue (C1) that if subjects in racially unjust societies tend to violate norms that promote a community's reliable information flow because racial prejudice is widely held in racially unjust societies, then racial injustice can make information flow less reliably in a community. I also argue (C2) that if racial prejudice can make information flow less reliably in a community, then information that nondominant subjects are *more likely* to have will *less reliably flow* to community members who lack it.

I understand "information" as true information, and I refer to information that is not true as "false information." I also assume that if racial injustice obtains in a community, then racial prejudice is widely held, either consciously or subpersonally, by subjects in this community.

I employ the notion of information *flow*, where information is transmitted in a community from speakers, groups, or institutions who have it to others who lack it through mechanisms such as face-to-face testimonial exchanges.

The analysis that I present is a structural one rather than an individualist one. Accordingly, I take it that the norms that I appeal to are norms that society and its constituent parts, such as communities and groups, can comport with rather than individuals. So, even though I refer to individuals to explain how structural phenomenon and information relate to injustice, I assume that these norms are not action guiding for individuals.

In section 1, I describe a view of what an epistemic community consists in, and I argue that if a subset of a community's members systematically violates norms that promote reliable information flow, then information will flow less reliably in this community. In section 2, I argue that if racial prejudice is widely held in a community, then a subset of the community's members will systematically tend to violate norms that govern a its reliable information flow. In section 3, I argue that if racial injustice obtains in a community, then information that nondominant groups are more likely to have will unreliably flow in a community.

## 1

In this section, I describe a view of what an epistemic community consists in, and I argue that if a subset of a community's members systematically tends to violate norms that promote reliable information flow, then information will flow less reliably in this community.

### 1.1. *Epistemic Communities*

Suppose that I know that a highly regarded philosopher gave a talk at my department's weekly colloquium yesterday, because I read an email and a social media post that a departmental administrator sent. This is an example of information flowing from (i) individuals in a community that have information to (ii) individuals that lack it because a community member with information that other community members lack shared it with other community members through an email. Here, the community is the group of philosophers, philosophy students, and administrators who are involved with doing philosophy in this university. That is, this group shares a practical task that depends on sharing information.

Communities can be understood politically, culturally, religiously, legally, and so on. Here, I understand and describe communities *epistemically*. John Greco provides this rough definition of an epistemic community:

a collection of cognitive agents, joined in relationships of cooperation, with respect to one or more information-dependent practical tasks.  
(Greco 2016, 491)

Greco (2016) understands practical tasks to include theoretical tasks such as asking questions and solving problems. On Greco's view, epistemic communities have norms that regulate both information acquisition and information distribution such that its members reliably receive information that is relevant to accomplishing its practical task or tasks.

Greco (2016, 491) thinks that a person can simultaneously belong to more than one epistemic community. And Greco thinks that epistemic communities can consist in things such as

universities, private corporations, work details, governments, government agencies, families and circles of friends (Greco 2016, 491).

Greco takes up the notions of an epistemic community and information flow because he thinks they can help explain (1) why some testimony cases seem like cases where a hearer knows that  $p$  on the basis of a speaker's say-so and (2) why other cases

seem like testimony cases where a speaker's say-so cannot serve as a basis for a hearer to know that  $p$ .

### *1.2. Identity and Epistemic Communities*

Suppose that Marisol and Chad both hold business degrees from the prestigious Wharton School of Business. They are part of a group of colleagues from Wharton who are now on the financial-analyst job market. They exchange information and inform each other of their successes and failures where they aim to share best practices and practices that did not work. Marisol and Chad, on Greco's view, belong to the epistemic community of Wharton graduates who are attempting to secure employment for which they were trained. That is, they share an "information-dependent practical task" because the likelihood that the group's members are successful in the job market is increased if information flows reliably from those who have it to those who do not.

But suppose that Marisol is one of two Afro-Latinas in this Wharton-graduate epistemic community. The information she has is not likely to flow to those who do not have it because of racial injustice's effect on whether subjects in this community comply with the information-distribution-and-acquisition norms. Their information-dependent practical task qua helping each other secure a job in part depends on information flowing because they can only advise each other relative to the information that they all share. So, here, racial injustice and identity play a role in whether information reliably flows in this community such that they are more likely to accomplish their shared practical task.

Now, some job market advice that is good advice for Chad will not be good advice for Marisol because men can present themselves in ways that women cannot due to structural sexism and because White persons can present themselves in ways that Afro-Latinx persons cannot due to structural racism. But there will be some advice that will be good advice for both of them, despite the fact that their identities differ, and there will be advice that, say, Marisol has that will only be relevant for the other Afro-Latina in the group. So, here, racial injustice and identity not only impede the flow of advice that does not involve racial-injustice-related content but will also impede content that does relate to racial injustice. And if a condition of the group's success is that the Afro-Latinas' odds of success are promoted by the group's activities, then that the flow of racial-injustice information is depressed will tend to depress the likelihood that the group satisfies this success condition.

### *1.3. Information Flow*

Suppose that a philosophy department constitutes an epistemic community. And suppose that there are two groups that compose this community—namely, the political philosophers and the metaphysicians. Jose, a political philosopher, tells

William, a metaphysician, that there will be a colloquium held next week in room 1000. William tells other philosophers in the department who in turn tell other philosophers such that this information reaches most of the department's members. Here, William *believed* what Jose told him on the *basis of his say-so*; and as a result, information flowed from Jose to William, and in turn William passed this information on as testimony such that it continued to flow to others.

By John Greco's (2016) lights, William is acting in accordance with a norm that governs good, or what I will call reliable, information flow in an epistemic community. Greco calls this the norm of *information distribution*. Communities have an interest in information moving through them without much hinderance or fettering. By Greco's lights, when a hearer believes a speaker merely in virtue of her say-so, she does so because this speaker belongs to the same community as the speaker. If a speaker belongs to a hearer's community, then she should believe the speaker because the information is not likely false. The basic idea is that if a community has an interest in promoting the distribution of information once it is inside a community and a community member tells another community member something, then this speaker should believe her because the community has an interest in the information's efficient distribution through the community. And I as a community member should believe what a fellow community member tells me because this information that my fellow community attempts to convey has likely been subject to someone in my community taking an interrogative stance towards it. That is, if someone from outside my community asserts something to someone who belongs to my community, then it is unlikely that this community member will have believed this community nonmember only on the basis of her say-so.

Suppose that Simon, a historian, tells William that a philosophy of science view is wrong. And suppose that William does not immediately believe him in virtue of his say-so. He does not trust him. Here, by John Greco's lights, William acts in accordance with a second norm that governs reliable information flow in a community—namely, the norm of *information acquisition*. Communities have an interest in letting information in and keeping false information out. Simon does not belong to William's philosophical community, and as a result, William does not immediately believe his testimony regarding this philosophy of science view. Suppose that William, instead of immediately believing Simon, asks him questions and interrogates his claim about this philosophy of science view. Here, William holds Simon to a higher standard before he believes his claim and thus allows it entry into his community.

The basic idea here is that if a community's members act in accordance with the norms of distribution and acquisition, then this community increases the likelihood that information will enter the community and spread through the community. Put differently, these norms promote that false information is kept out



of a community and that information, once in a community, reliably makes its way to the members who lack it.

#### *1.4. Systematic Norm Violation*

If a community reliably violates the norms of information acquisition and distribution, then the community will not reliably acquire or distribute information. And, if a community's members systematically act in accordance with the norm of acquisition *when they should* act in accordance with the norm of distribution, then this community's information flow will be unreliable.

But a community's members need not be aware of these norms to be properly taken as violating them because these are norms that third-party evaluators use to assess information flow. I take this evaluation as a kind of externalist third-party veritistic evaluation of whether a community's or society's social practices cause more true beliefs and fewer false in its members (Goldman 1987, 1999). What is more, this externalist veritistic evaluation not only assesses the epistemic end result for subjects of a community's social epistemic practices but also assesses the consequences for information of a particular kind.

Suppose that a philosophy department qua community is largely composed of metaphysicians and that the remainder of the department is composed of political philosophers. And suppose that the metaphysicians tend not to believe the political philosophers. But suppose these political philosophers tend to make true testimonial claims. Here, the metaphysicians violate the norm of information distribution because they should believe the political philosophers in virtue of their say-so at least partly because they belong to the same community. That is, these metaphysicians violate the norm of information distribution because if the political philosophers are likely to pass on information, then the metaphysicians should believe them. These metaphysicians impede the flow of information that has entered the community.

Now, suppose that these metaphysicians tend not to believe the political philosophers because they hold a prejudice against them that political philosophers deal with imprecise and unclear things such as justice, rights, and freedom. Thus, the prejudice goes, political philosophers are similarly imprecise and unclear about most things. As a result of this prejudice, metaphysicians tend to hold political philosophers to higher standards than other community members. Here, these metaphysicians are acting in accordance with the norm of information acquisition when they listen to political-philosopher speakers because of their anti-political-philosopher prejudice, even though they should act in accordance with the norm of distribution when listening to political-philosopher speakers. To put the point differently, these metaphysicians act in accordance with the wrong norm because of their prejudice. And, this mal-accordance results in the community's information flow suffering,

because speakers with information are less likely to successfully pass it on to hearers who lack it.

### 1.5. *Evaluative Criteria*

A community's information flow can be assessed in terms of *distribution*. If information flows to all of a community's members, then this community's information flows well in terms of distribution. But, if this community's information does not get to members who need it, then this community's information flows poorly in terms of distribution. Alvin Goldman (1999) points out that one community's information-distribution needs can differ from others. A judge, as a member of a legal community, needs information about whether evidence is prejudicial that members of a jury do not need and should not have (Goldman 1999). A legal community does well in terms of distribution when its judge gets this information from, say, prosecution and defense attorneys, but juries do not.

Distribution *speed* is a second way that information flow can be assessed. If information gets to a community's members quickly, then this community's information flows well in terms of distribution speed. But if a community's information flows slowly, then this community's information flows poorly in terms of distribution speed. In the philosophy department-community case, information that the political philosophers have may take longer to reach the entire community because the metaphysicians tend not to believe them, and thus this community would likely score poorly in terms of distribution speed because of this anti-political-philosopher prejudice. Here, the metaphysicians improperly act as an information-distribution bottleneck.

Information *quality* is a third way that information flow can be assessed (Greco 2016, 2017). If false information does not flow to a community's members, then this community's information flow does well in terms of information quality. But if false information flows to a community's members, then this community's information flows poorly in terms of information quality.

## 2

In this section, I argue that if racial prejudice is widely held in a community, then a subset of a community's members will systematically violate norms that govern a community's reliable information flow.

### 2.1. *Racial Prejudice and the Information-Distribution Norm*

Racial prejudice can affect whether a speaker successfully passes information on to a hearer through testimony in several ways. One way is testimonial injustice. A speaker suffers testimonial injustice if a hearer misperceives her as less credible because of an identity prejudice (Fricker 2007). Identity prejudices include negative

generalizations or stereotypes about an identity group's members. Racial prejudices are a kind of negative identity prejudice. Here, a nondominant speaker does not pass on information because of racial prejudice's effect on her audience's credibility judgement or perception of her.

A second way that racial prejudice can affect whether a speaker successfully passes on information to a hearer is through testimonial quieting. Testimonial quieting obtains if a hearer takes, say, a Black woman speaker as not in the business of giving knowledge or as not a knower because of a controlling image, racial prejudice, or identity prejudice about Black women (Dotson 2011). Here, information is not passed on because of a controlling image, identity prejudice, or racial prejudice's effect on whether a hearer takes a nondominant speaker as a knower and thus capable of passing on knowledge.

A third way is utterance misinterpretation (Peet 2017). Utterance misinterpretation obtains if a hearer misinterprets a speaker's utterance because of an identity or racial prejudice. Here, information that a speaker has is not passed on because the hearer misinterprets and thus ends up with different information than what the nondominant speaker intended to pass on.

These phenomena represent ways a community's hearers can violate the norm of information distribution. Suppose that Marisol is a member of the Afro-Latina nondominant group and that she attempts to assert true information to Alistair, Ben, and Chad. If (a) Alistair commits testimonial injustice, Ben commits testimonial quieting, and Chad commits utterance misinterpretation, then (b) this information is less likely to be *maximally distributed* in the community than if these hearers did not instantiate these phenomena. This information is also less likely to be distributed quickly. So, here, racial prejudice impedes this information's proper distribution because racial prejudice affects hearers' proper reception of speakers with information.

## *2.2. Racial Prejudice and the Information-Acquisition Norm*

If racial prejudice obtains in a community, then this community's hearers will tend to act in accordance with the norm of information acquisition even though they should act in accordance with the norm of distribution. Testimonial smothering is an example of this.

Testimonial smothering obtains only if a speaker refrains from fully conveying information because she senses that (1) conveying testimony is unsafe, (2) her audience demonstrates that they are unlikely to find this information intelligible, and (3) the audience cannot find the information intelligible because of pernicious ignorance or racial prejudice (Dotson 2011).

Suppose that Marisol and Alistair are members of the same community, but Marisol is a nondominant-group member, and Alistair is an Anglo-Saxon Protestant

man and thus a member of the dominant group. Suppose that Alistair asks Marisol what she is writing her dissertation on, and she replies that she is writing about police brutality against Black and Latinx folks. Alistair responds by asking in a skeptical tone, “How does police brutality against Black and Latinx folks differ from police brutality in general?” Here, Marisol elects not to respond or explain her dissertation further because the three conditions of testimonial smothering obtain. In particular, Alistair has made it clear that he is unlikely to find this information intelligible because of racial prejudice. Here, Alistair has taken an interrogative or questioning stance because of racial prejudice he bears, and thus he is acting in accordance with the norm of information acquisition even though he should act in accordance with the norm of distribution. He should act in accordance with the norm of distribution because (i) Marisol is part of his community, (ii) she has information, and (iii) if he believes her because of her say-so, he will more likely pass this information on.

### 3

Suppose that Marisol has information about the difficulties that Afro-Latinas face when applying for financial-analyst jobs that they are eminently qualified for. In this section, my task is to argue that information of *this* kind is much less likely to reliably flow to the rest of the community because of racial injustice’s effect on whether subjects act in accordance with norms of information distribution and acquisition. The basic idea here is that information that nondominant-group members are *more likely* to have *is less* likely to reach community members who lack it because a community’s subjects tend to violate the information-distribution-and-acquisition norms. And, if a community’s subjects tend to violate these norms, then information they have is less likely to reliably flow through the community because these norms promote reliable information flow.

#### *3.1: Nondominant-Group Information*

The information that Marisol has about the difficulties that Afro-Latinas face when applying for financial-analyst jobs is information that Afro-Latinas are more likely to have given their social location. This is information that she is more likely to have because of her social location qua identity. Here I assume a standpoint theory view of the relation between identity and a subject’s likelihood of believing the truth about injustice.

For Nancy Hartsock (1987), women’s role in reproduction and caring for family members provides them with a standpoint such that women are more likely than men to know the nature of oppression in a patriarchal society. For Patricia Hill Collins (1990), Black women’s experience of both racism and sexism makes it more likely that Black women will understand or know how racism and sexism function in society. By Linda Martín Alcoff’s (1999) lights, a subject’s identity can bear on whether she

accurately believes in certain domains of information, and thus proper credibility judgements of speakers should involve identity as a criterion. According to W. E. B. Du Bois, Black Americans experience a double consciousness that involves seeing the world from their perspective and seeing the world from a white perspective, and as a result, Black Americans have more knowledge or deeper understanding of how America works and the role that race plays in America (Du Bois 1903; Taylor 2016, 39). A common feature shared by these views is that a subject's situation increases the likelihood that she knows or understands about injustice or oppression in her society. I assume this common feature that these standpoint views share.

### *3.2. Standpoint Information and Information Flow*

If (a) Afro-Latinas qua nondominant-group subjects are more likely to have information about particular difficulties in the job market and (b) Afro-Latinas are less likely to successfully convey this information through testimony to other dominant-group members because dominant-group subjects tend not to comply with information-distribution-and-acquisition norms in testimonial exchanges with nondominant groups, then (c) this information is less likely to flow to those who lack it because compliance with these information norms promotes the flow of information in a community.

The basic idea here is that racial prejudice not only reduces the likelihood that nondominant racial groups can successfully transmit information in general, but it also reduces the likelihood that they will transmit particular information that they are more likely to have than other groups. And the rest of the wider community will tend to lack this particular information more than other information.

This view of information trades on the notion that there are two kinds of information. The first kind is information that Afro-Latinas qua nondominant group are just as likely to have as other identity groups. The second kind of information is information that Afro-Latinas qua nondominant group are more likely to have than other groups. This is information that a group has in virtue of their social location. Now, these two information kinds not only differ in terms of the likelihood that a subject will have it, where this likelihood depends on a subject's identity, but these two information kinds also differ in terms of their likelihood of flowing through a community reliably to those who lack it.

This information is less likely to flow to those who lack it partly because dominant-group subjects are likely to violate the information-distribution-and-acquisition norms due to racial prejudice's influence on them. But this information is also less likely to flow to those who lack it because dominant-group subjects are likely to reject this information. They are likely to reject this information because standpoint information tends to be inconsistent with dominant-group subjects' positive self-conception. And this positive self-conception is in part constituted by false core

beliefs that are supported by misleading evidence and subjects' tendency to avoid cognitive dissonance (Bendaña and Mandelbaum 2021; Elliot and Devine 1994; Mandelbaum 2016, 2019; Thibodeau and Aronson 1992).

### 3.3. *Standpoint Information and Dominant-Group Subject Positive Self-Conception*

If racial injustice obtains in a society, then not only will racial prejudice widely obtain, but dominant-group subjects will tend to hold false core beliefs that are (i) consistent with their positive self-conception, (ii) supported by misleading evidence, and (iii) stubbornly resistant to revision due to subjects' general tendency to avoid cognitive dissonance.

Recall that Marisol told Chad, a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant man, about the particular difficulties that she, as an Afro-Latina, faced in getting a financial-analyst job despite being eminently qualified. Suppose that Chad ultimately rejects this information because it is inconsistent with a core belief that partly constitutes his positive self-conception—namely, “I deserve what I have.” This information is inconsistent with this false core belief because if he acknowledges that Marisol is unsuccessful in the job market because of unfair *disadvantage* due to race, then he would have to acknowledge that he has succeeded on the job market because of unfair *advantage* due to race. And an unfair advantage due to race is inconsistent with his false core belief that “I deserve what I have.” This is an example of what Charles Mills calls white ignorance because Chad's membership in the dominant racial group plays a role in preventing Marisol from conveying information and thus sustaining his ignorance (Mills 2007, 34). Someone is whitely ignorant if whiteness, racism, or racial injustice plays a role in their lacking a true belief or holding a false belief (Mills 2007).

Michelle Moody-Adams (1994) has developed the notion that whether a subject accurately believes in such cases relates to a subject's maintenance of her positive self-conception. She calls it affective ignorance. A subject is affectively ignorant if she avoids learning moral truths that are incompatible with benefits she enjoys or with her own positive self-conception. A subject such as Robert E. Lee rejected the immorality of maintaining slavery because if he would have accepted its immorality, then he would have had to recognize not only the immorality of the benefits he enjoyed but also that his positive self-conception of himself as a good person was false. For Moody-Adams, dominant-group subjects' moral ignorance allows them to persist in their belief that they are, say, morally good people while simultaneously continuing to benefit from immoral states of affair, such as slavery, that benefit them.

Beliefs regarding whether subjects are “good people, smart people, and reliable, consistent, strong people” are examples of core beliefs, because they concern positive characteristics of the subjects who hold them (Bendaña and

Mandelbaum 2021; Mandelbaum 2016, 2019). That is, core beliefs' content concerns the positive features of those who hold them.

Suppose that Chad, like other dominant-group members, holds his false core belief in part because his society is replete with misleading evidence. Elementary and grade school curricula, museums, monuments, statuary, newspapers, and national anthems sung at sporting events are examples of what partly constitute Chad's misleading evidence base (González and Torres 2011; Mills 2007). That is, this evidence base's constituents support Chad's belief that "he deserves what he has."

This evidence base misleads in part because hermeneutical marginalization obtains in his society. Hermeneutical marginalization involves that a nondominant group unequally contributes to a society's shared set of concepts and shared social meanings that subjects draw upon to understand each other and the world (Fricker 2007). For example, African Americans and Native Americans have had unequal access to positions like journalist, professor, and lawyer, such that they can equally, or proportionately, contribute to the shared set of meanings and concepts that US subjects use to both communicate and understand each other and the world.

Suppose that Chad rejects Marisol's standpoint information partly because of a general tendency subjects have to avoid believing what feels bad (Bendaña and Mandelbaum 2021; Elliot and Devine 1994; Mandelbaum 2016, 2019; Thibodeau and Aronson 1992). That is, suppose that subjects' general propensity to avoid cognitive dissonance explains why he does not believe Marisol's testimony. When Chad hears Marisol's testimony, he can resolve the discomfort he feels upon receipt of this evidence by either (a) accepting the new evidence and as a result accepting the information that "I don't deserve what I have" or (b) rejecting the testimony and as a result retaining his false core belief that "I deserve what I have." But if subjects typically believe in ways that allow them to retain their core beliefs partly because jettisoning the false core belief would result in feeling bad, then Chad is likely to reject this information that conflicts with his false core belief. As a result, Chad violates the norm of information distribution because he does not believe a community member in virtue of her say-so. And a further result is that information about racial injustice is less likely to flow through the community.

### **Conclusion**

I have argued that racial injustice not only affects the doxastic standing of subjects such that they are properly evaluated as justified or knowing information, but also that it affects information of a specific kind—namely, information about racial injustice. I have argued that the combined collateral effect of epistemic injustices and white ignorance is that information of this kind is less likely to flow through communities where racial injustice obtains. I have focused on the epistemic upshots for information of this kind as a unit of analysis rather than subjects' doxastic

features because whether information of a certain kind flows through a community is a feature of a community rather than the believers that compose it.

### Acknowledgements

I thank Linda Martín Alcoff, Miranda Fricker, Charles Mills and Sandy Goldberg for their very helpful comments and feedback on early drafts of this article. And I thank *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly's* two anonymous referees for their insightful suggestions and comments. This article has benefited greatly from these comments, suggestions and feedback.

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