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The Scholarship of Critique and Power

ABSTRACT

Critique can be defined as disciplinary feedback, analysis, or assessment provided to an individual or within a group, be it a classroom or a team. At a fundamental level, it is an exchange of ideas, impressions, evaluations, opinions, reflections, judgments, speculations, or suggestions to oneself or between two or more participants in a defined context. Scholars describe critique as a signature pedagogy in many disciplines, a cornerstone of the educational experience. There has been scant critical analysis of how critique also represents a performance of power with roots in positions of authority, expertise, or assigned roles. Such power dynamics have been explored in some areas within SoTL, for example in scholarship on assessment, epistemic disobedience, social justice, feminist pedagogies, and critical race theory. However, this has not been the case generally within the scholarship on critique. To better understand the dimensions of power in the context of critique we developed a conceptual framework that can be applied at the individual level (teacher to student, student to student) as well as the systemic level (critique as a construct of cultural hegemony in a specific episteme). Drawing from theoretical and pedagogical literature in areas such as cultural studies, whiteness studies, design education, and assessment, the conceptual framework defines power in three main expressions: power as inequity, power as authority, and power as cultural hegemony. The framework can be used to identify and define power within the critique context and to also inform reflection and shift perspectives at various academic levels.

KEYWORDS

authority, critique and power, cultural hegemony, feedback, inequity

SCHOLARSHIP OF CRITIQUE AND POWER

Critique can be defined as disciplinary feedback, analysis, or assessment provided to an individual or within a group, be it a classroom or a team. At a fundamental level, it is an exchange of ideas, impressions, evaluations, opinions, reflections, judgments, speculations, or suggestions to oneself or between two or more participants in a defined context. Critique can be diagnostic when it is designed to identify current knowledge of a subject, formative if it provides feedback during the learning process, or summative when it takes place after the learning path is completed.

Critique is the terminology and pedagogical model used within creative fields like art, design, and architecture. Feedback, workshop, criticism, or analysis are terms used in many other disciplines to describe the dialogical process of offering responses to a piece of work that is presented within an academic context. In this article, we use the word critique to indicate the method of systematic analysis

of a written, oral, or visual discourse within the learning environment; we refer to feedback as the piece of information and commentary returned to the learner by an agent (being peer or instructor). Feedback can live outside of the confines of a critique, but critique does not exist without feedback.

Critique and feedback carry different weights depending on the actors involved and their relationship with the learning process, especially when associated with grades or performance review. It can be argued that critique is an extension of critical thinking, which is a byproduct of the 17th century European Enlightenment that privileges rational thought over intuition, values objectivity over individual situatedness, and downplays lived experience over abstraction (Bailin 1995). At the disciplinary level, in design education, for example, critique can be understood as the operationalized concept of critical thinking and the place where critical thinking is made visible and given value (Sara and Parnell 2013).

Foucault sees power itself as discursive, therefore critique is just one of the many discursive practices tied to power (Hall 2001). Power appears as a complex network of micro-social structures, aiming to influence and regulate behaviors: it is visible when there is an unequal relationship—in the case of the classroom power can be codified as relational (Azmanova 2018). Power can be described as an influential inequity in positioning and access to resources between two entities—in other words, an advantage often used to exert control over another. In an educational context, power often is equated with the degree of explicit and implicit scholarly and institutional knowledge, as well as status.

Premises and goals

In higher education there is a willful blind spot on the part of instructors, or as Grant (2008) highlights, a “willed forgetting” of the power dynamics that undergird every interaction. This forgetting, perhaps more accurately stated as dismissing, allows instructors to pretend that critique and feedback is neutral, particularly when done so in a mentoring capacity. In reality, critique is always framed by the personal and educational experiences of the participants and the cultural context in which it is rendered. Critique is anything but neutral.

Both students and faculty are complicit in the power dynamic, but students often frame themselves as a silent actor experiencing being overpowered “rather than noticing their own implication in it” (Grant 2008, 11). According to Abdelmalak, “Students come to see themselves as powerless in their own education and see professors as having a majority of power to educate and to produce learning” (Abdelmalak 2016, 193). This epistemic asymmetry is inherent in educational settings (Lymer 2010) and in some cases, that asymmetry can be beneficial to the learner with respect to productivity (Grant 2008).

It is reasonable to ask that SoTL explore power within the context of critique practices as power dynamics shape critique and determine its efficacy as a learning device. Critique is identified as a signature pedagogy in art and design education (Shulman 2005) and is used as a fundamental tool to facilitate students’ learning and enhance their educational experiences. In some disciplines, critique is the primary vehicle for assessing student learning via the artifacts of that learning. It is also a process by which students critically evaluate their own work (Chick 2012). Critique is a metacognitive process that allows students to examine their own thinking about the knowledge they have acquired, evaluate their work and their reflection on the work, and iterate that work. This metacognition creates a framework for problem solving that aids student learning (Hargrove 2013). Additionally, students are introduced to the pragmatic requirements of their discipline, as well as a professional culture during critique or

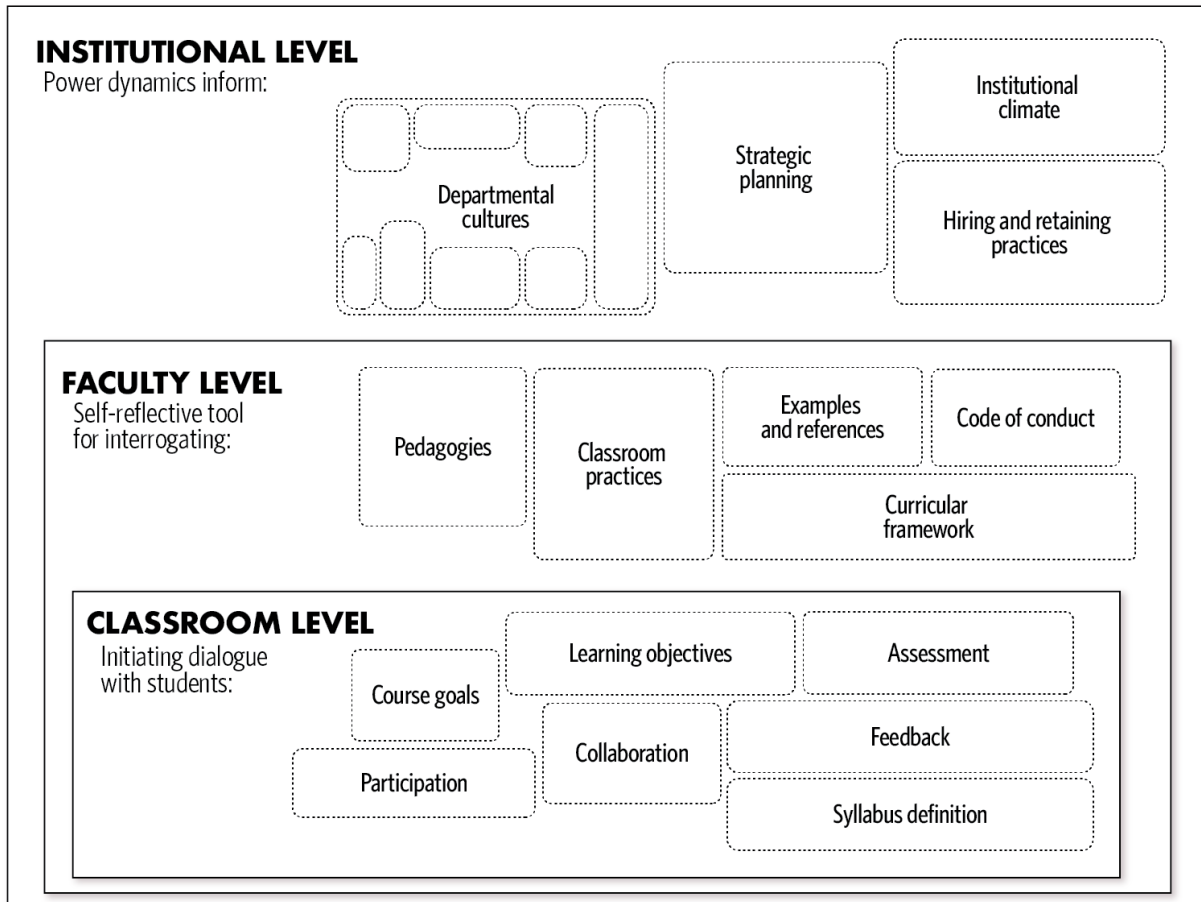
feedback sessions (Housley Gaffney 2015). Critique allows for the definition of professional and social identities among students (Scagnetti 2017).

While there is good research on critique as a signature pedagogy in SoTL journals, any reference to a power dynamic within the critique is oblique at best and in most cases is not addressed at all. Blair (2006) expertly examined the efficacy of a critique as a learning tool relative to the self-critical habit of mind and the emotional impact of the critique (Blythman, Orr, and Blair 2007). But we have not found direct mention of the power dynamics at work during a critique. The power dynamics inherent in language, tempo, spatial arrangement, and choreography of the actors are all components of critique that can be examined rather than seen as perfunctory in critique. To date, power dynamics are the stunt double in a critique that goes unacknowledged in the performance.

The following conceptual framework identifies the power dynamics inherent in critique and feedback not only at the individual level (teacher to students, student to student) but at a systemic level (critique as a construct of cultural hegemony in a specific episteme), the academic levels of influence are described in figure 1. Critique can be used to reinforce the construct of a body of knowledge or provide intellectual confidence to a body of ideas in a context or point in time. The instantiations of power that are at play during a critique are visualized in figure 2. The framework can be used to identify and define power and also to inform reflection and broaden perspectives at the following academic levels:

- **Institutional or departmental level.** Recognizing the visualized instantiations of power can help administrators and faculty in developing strategic plans and assessing and changing institutional climate and departmental cultures. Efforts in hiring and retaining diverse faculty, staff, and students; championing decolonial methodologies and practices; decentering whiteness in curricula and syllabi; and prioritizing outreach and engagement with the surrounding community are all efforts that emerge from an analysis of power dynamics at the institutional level.
- **Faculty level (individual instructors, teachers, lecturers, academics).** The presented framework is a tool for interrogating individual pedagogies, practices, code of conduct, and curricula framework. Are the examples and references used to teach a subject matter presenting only canonical knowledge and sources? Which behaviors are encouraged or discouraged? Are the pedagogies inclusive of diverse students' identities and abilities?
- **Classroom level.** Discussing power is a way to initiate a dialogue with students about learning objectives and course goals; collaboration and participation are forms of power distribution; assessment and feedback are a performance of power.

Figure 1. Academic levels of influence



METHODOLOGY

Initially designed as a systematic exploratory review of how critique and power are addressed in literature published in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) journals since 2013, the original research was reframed. The shift from a systematic review to the development of a conceptual framework occurred after discovering a lack of discussion of issues of power in relationship to critique and feedback. The heuristic publication framework developed by Healey, Matthews, and Cook-Sather (2019) describes the importance of conceptual papers in offering a new perspective on existing theorizations to advance and expand the scholarly conversation about teaching and learning.

The conceptual framework emerged out of an attempt to understand how power is defined and discussed in SoTL literature through a constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz 2006) based on a review of articles published in four international academic journals since 2013. We selected all articles that mention the word “power” or “critique” in the *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching*

and Learning (IJSoTL), the *International Journal of Teaching and Learning In Higher Education* (IJTLHE), the *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (JoSoTL), and *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* (TLI). These journals were chosen as representative of the international academic discourse in SoTL across disciplines. The journals present broad coverage of higher education pedagogy across diverse contexts, educational institutions, and levels of instructional expertise. At the same time, they all employ a double-blind peer-review process. Since TLI started publication in 2013, we used the same starting year for the systematic research of the literature to guarantee uniformity.

Our group (a multi-disciplinary, international team of educators who were a part of the ISSOTL 2019 International Writing Collaborative Group) read the abstracts and skimmed the content of 102 papers (TLI 23, IJSoTL 31, IJTLHE 29, JoSoTL 19) that use the word power (P) and critique (C) in the text (see table 1). Most of the articles were false positive to Power (P0) or to Critique (C0) or to both (C0P0)—e.g. the word power or critique was used only in the bibliography or used with meaning not relevant for our search like “PowerPoint” or “brainpower.” Only nine of the papers presented true positive results with both terms (C1P1).

Table 1. Mentions of the word Critique (C) and Power (P) in the selected journals

Journal	Total	C1P0	C0P1	C0P0	C1P1
<i>TLI</i>	23	1	6	13	3
<i>IJSoTL</i>	31	6	3	19	3
<i>IJTLHE</i>	29	5	9	13	2
<i>JoSoTL</i>	19	2	6	10	1

During the coding process, the group found too little material to discuss: most of the articles did not discuss power dynamics in relation to critique or feedback even when mentioning both terms in this context. Even in the few articles that reference power dynamics in the classroom, power was not directly addressed and the term was not stated, defined, or examined. Instead, authors tended to write as though the power dynamic is benign or discuss it obliquely by using terms like hierarchy. As researchers, we decided that discussing this absence by specifically identifying the articles we coded and pointing out that they do not address power would conflict with our rulesets for integrity and code of conduct. Furthermore, we have no information and evidence of the reasons why each individual paper did not discuss power dynamics when examining critique practices. However, at this point, we realized that the lack of acknowledgment of power in articles about critique and feedback was an important factor in SoTL and merited further discussion.

We decided to write a conceptual article that proposed a framework for understanding power in critique contexts, drawing from a range of fields including cultural studies and whiteness studies. As a group, we analyzed the concept of power and mapped the ways in which power is deployed in an academic context. We developed a framework to visualize definitions of power and the constructs within which they exist to discuss why power should be present in SoTL discourse. We considered the idea and manifestations of power in a process of asynchronous concept mapping. This methodology has been used in many fields as both data collection and data analysis. In our research, we used it as a method to support theory development through the ideation, distribution, and interpretation of the relationships

among a set of defined concepts (Given 2008; Trochim 1989). In our concept mapping process, we used stimulus material generated by the group members themselves. The goal of concept mapping is to generate a diagrammatic visualization of their thinking and use it to produce insightful data (Morgan, Fellows, and Guevara 2008).

The first phase of the mapping lasted three months and involved a group of eight researchers who used collaborative documents to expand, comment, probe, and refine the conceptual framework by combining our expertise in our disciplines (architecture, communication design, geography, academic health care, and teacher education). During the second phase, we met in person as a group of six researchers and redefined and completed the conceptual framework during the ISSOTL19 conference. This article examines the ways in which power manifests itself in academic practices such as critique and feedback, and provides a conceptual framework to help identify and analyze it.

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Our conceptual framework defines power in three main expressions: power as inequity, power as authority, and power as cultural hegemony. As such, it extends beyond power dynamics within the critique context by encompassing forms of power in broader academic contexts. However, it uses critique as an illustration of how these expressions play out. The visualization of the conceptual framework contains additional illustrations of the three expressions of power (see figure 2).

Power as inequity

We describe power as unequal access to resources and unequal relationships. This definition leads us to the following questions: How do students' abilities to access more resources than their peers influence critique? How does it influence grouping and collaboration in the classroom? What happens between students who have different levels of knowledge and skills? Students in a classroom are constantly confronted with the challenges of overcoming unequal access to resources. There is strong research on resource and power inequities, notably by Alon (2009), and Astin and Oseguera (2004). It is the responsibility of the teacher to consider these complexities and inequities during a critique. This requires the instructors to attend to each student's situation and recognize how they influence the student's participation and experience. In the proposed conceptual framework, we visualize some of these factors to support instructors in such analysis—time, space, technology, content, cultural capital, and mentorship. For example, if a student is more wealthy and able to access higher level technology, materials, or tutoring, will the outcome of the work seem more professional? Would it yield an advantage in the type of feedback they receive? If a student has the same cultural background or shares an affinity group with the critic, how would that relationship affect feedback? How might a critique be different for a student who had an early introduction to knowledge or concepts that can be applied to their work in higher education vs. a student who has no previous exposure to that knowledge? If they are comfortable with public speaking, how does that lend to an advantage in critique? Inequities also show up in language as discourse in most forms of critique is based on conflict, debate, coercion, and winning, so by its very nature yields an unequal relationship.

Power as authority

Authority manifests itself in multiple ways depending on the type of influence: Weber (1947), French and Raven (1959), Parsons (1963), and Laupa (1995) have provided extensive knowledge on

the topic. Their definitions and application of authority were used to categorize and inspire the development of the conceptual framework. This authority can validate or invalidate students' ways of knowing. The authoritative power extends beyond the individual and classroom to institutional power. This authority is the lens through which a student's work product is evaluated, feedback is rendered, and grades are determined. The ripple effect is seen in the conferring of scholarships based on Grade Point Average (GPA), forward progress in a degree program determined by grading and letters of recommendation, and admission into advanced degree programs, fellowships, etc. Power can be wielded to exert control and is explicit and implicit in scholarly and institutional knowledge and resources. This includes money, as well as status within the realm of academia. The authority in the classroom is also the gatekeeper of behavioral norms. Is discrimination allowed to take place in the classroom? Is discrimination modeled by the authority figure or body in an institution? Often critique is the manner through which students are selected to receive scholarships, employment opportunities, research opportunities, and networking that can yield further professional development opportunities.

Power as a tool is used to control, exclude, and limit actors' mobility—socially, financially, and educationally. What classes are taught and by whom? What is the application and admittance process? What is the student body composition and why? What type of funding is available and how is it allocated? How are performance reviews and tenure granted and what is the impact on what is being taught and how students learn as a result?

In critique, one way that power as authority manifests is through dialogue. When, how often, and in what context are students' voices centered? When are students allowed to speak? Are students allowed to ask questions or only those in positions of authority (the jury, respondents, instructor)?

The rapport between teachers and students often develops on the basis of affinity of perspective, alignment, and ability to converse rather than quality and impact of the work and disciplinary contribution. This affords an advantage to those students who align themselves with authority. That advantage is reflected in mentorship and coaching, in allocated time for knowledge and skill transfer, and, more generally, in care.

Power as cultural hegemony

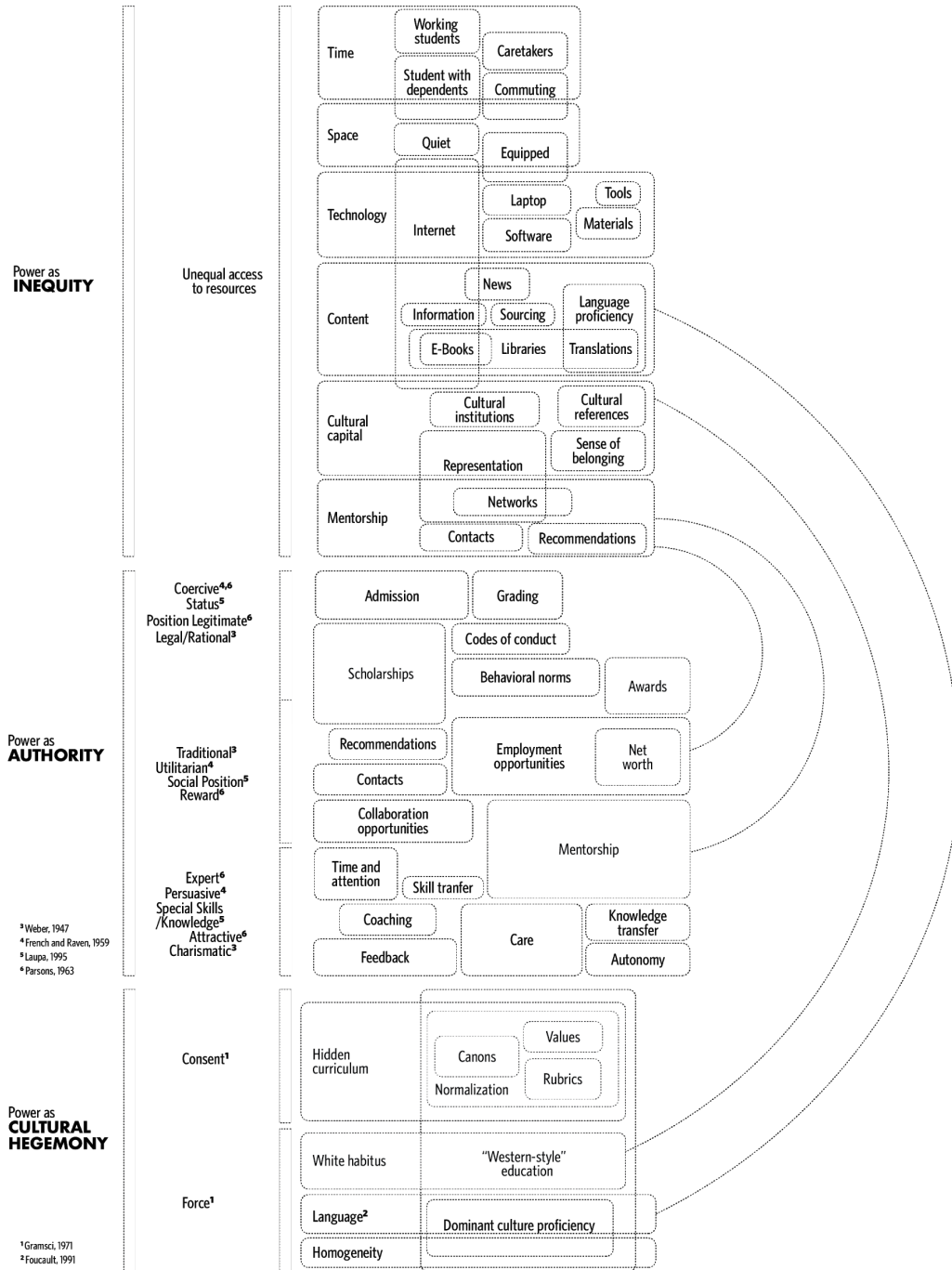
According to Gramsci, cultural hegemony refers to the internalized systems of beliefs of a subordinate group: "the 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production" (Gramsci and Hoare 1971, 102). Discourse is the primary manner in that critique and feedback are offered. In the context of critique, discursive practices reinforce the cultural and epistemic domination that both Gramsci and Foucault have recognized is the pillar of learning and education. The use of language and understanding of language is a gateway to power in learning. As students become familiar with the language required in their discipline, there is often a forced homogeneity in the language used, embodiment, and performance of critique. During critique and/or feedback, power is embedded in the language: specific cadence, tone, and vocabulary are used during critique to elevate the critic in relation to the learner. There has been research on the relationship between language and power, especially in the context of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2001, 2013). In higher education, there is research on language imperialism (Phillipson 2009), language

around communities of practice (Barton and Tustig 2005), and institutional discourse (Mayr 2008; Mumby 1988, 2001; Mumby and Clair 1997).

Evaluation of students' learning proficiency goes beyond the work product and includes the way the student has exhibited language proficiency and embraced the performance. The dominant culture's language competency becomes a critical component and is a gatekeeper or barrier to student understanding and advancement. As such, use of language in discourse and the subject matter of the discourse itself can be reinforcing constructs of cultural hegemony.

By analyzing the framework and drawing from theoretical and pedagogical literature in areas such as cultural studies, whiteness studies, design education, and assessment, we argue that (1) critique is a performance of power with roots in the perpetuation of authority, inequity, or hegemony; and (2) discussing power dynamics embedded in pedagogical contexts should be a meta-objective of SoTL: power should be addressed more widely.

Figure 2. Conceptual framework



Critique is a performance of power

Critique typically perpetuates the values and canons of the dominant system, often reaffirming the powerful rather than offering meaningful instruction (Lymer 2010). Critique too often reinforces these constructs of cultural hegemony.

In American education, classroom authority is mostly defined by the *white habitus* of academia (Inoue 2015). White habitus is defined as the hyper-segregation of white people in a way that physically,

socially, and psychologically limits meaningful interactions, relationships, and understanding with others (Bonilla-Silva, Goar, and Embrick 2006). As such, in-group solidarity and identity are strengthened and even normalized to the point of imperceptibility (Andersen 2003; Lipsitz 2006; McIntosh 1988; Perry 2001 as cited by Bonilla-Silva, Goar, and Embrick 2006). In academia, this manifests in the pervasive teaching of a singular world view, set of histories, and aesthetic as being correct—or even more dangerously—as neutral. Most often, the evaluation of student learning and proficiency is based on homogeneity in the embodiment and performance of critique and even more on dominant culture language competency, and disciplinary language proficiency.

The shift in the last decade toward more inclusive pedagogies highlights a recent awakening about the white habitus and culturally hegemonic pedagogies in academia. This realization has called for institutions of higher education to look at ways of diversifying and decolonizing their curricula. According to Henao, “The Eurocentric linguistic hegemony that permeates higher education not only disadvantages minorities in the academic sphere but quells the cultural value and identity of minority social groups, due to the unorthodox habitus they possess” (Henao 2017). Henao argues furthermore that the dominant legacy perspective of critique practices is often mischaracterized as a neutral baseline. Hegemony in academia is often represented by the fallacy of the neutral classroom. Legacy curricula, its perspectives, and narratives are the result of centuries of eurocentric, male-dominant influence in education (Henao 2017) and not an innate characteristic. A broader hegemonic discussion on knowledge and the western-style academy is seen in the common narrative of satisfying students by providing them with a *western-style education* and is often coupled with little critical engagement with any of the meanings of knowledge, critique, or what western-education means and how it is commodified. Within the white habitus of academia, the “sameness” is considered a desirable equal and neutral playing field in which victors are chosen by merit. If differences are denied, unaccepted, or unacknowledged, or if conformity is required, then the perception of meritocracy remains unchallenged.

In the US, the idea of meritocracy is strong. According to Richards and Camuso, “American undergraduates tend to believe that the United States is a meritocratic society where one’s position in the class structure is largely influenced by innate intelligence and hard work” (Richards and Camuso 2015, 94). While the US certainly may be a salient example of the meritocratic myth, meritocratic underpinnings show up globally in academia. Assumptions of an academic meritocracy continue to persist even if they are inherently flawed: they fail to account for power dynamics and inequities, thus effectively normalizing such gaps as part of the dominant culture’s narrative. The inequities and their costs become acceptable, inevitable, and—worst—invisible. In academia, the belief of meritocracy persists as a powerful vehicle for the reinscription of hegemonic power structures. Extrapolating from Young’s (1994) critique of meritocracy, an academic meritocracy—a deeply hegemonic belief that solidifies the rightful place of those with power and privilege—implies that all students have a fair and equitable chance to succeed and that success is inevitable if they have the ability and simply try hard enough. Meritocracy is at the basis of a critique that ignores power dynamics. Furthermore, the insistence that meritocracy is the foundation of critique provides an excuse for the failure to discuss the existence of power.

In this context, the power structures that undergird feedback in critique are also rendered invisible. Critique is held as an equalizer where all students can present work, get objective feedback, and learn equally successfully. Not only are students able to receive, understand, and use feedback differently

to transform their work due to their self-critical habit or mind (Blair 2006), the feedback they receive can be distributed unevenly based on their persona; perceived position about the work; and the preferences, biases, and prejudices of the critic giving the feedback. Meritocracy gives cover to inequitable power distributions and conditions for student learning.

Critique is a moment where power becomes visible: the knowledge, identities, and ideologies of everyone involved shape the dynamic of the critique. Feedback and discussion are shaped by the relationship of power between the primary participants—students, faculty, critics. For example, a panel discussion sees a significantly different distribution of power and authority than a juried review or peer-to-peer feedback. Those relationships of power are influenced by socially perceived differences in authority, age, gender, familiarity and intimacy; background and culture; and more. Failing to address those relationships means to silence a great part of the classroom experience. Even when educators are working intentionally to empower students and break free from traditional models of teaching and learning, critique will be a performance of power. The power dynamic can be described, pointed at, and observed, but never eliminated.

The lack of acknowledgment of power dynamics in critique

The lack of explicit recognition of power in critique as concepts can be framed in the Foucauldian lens of whether we think about them as language or as discourse (Hall 2001). The nature and attributes of power are the privileged knowledge of faculty in the academy in relation to students and are strictly correlated with authority. The authority of the powerful (in most cases faculty and instructors) in the classroom and critique setting, often remains unchecked by the lack of discussion of power dynamics. The lack of reflection on faculty authority in the critique and feedback process can be traced back to the white habitus of the American classrooms. The power of whiteness and maleness as identities privileged by academic institutions' cultures and structures shapes our discourse on authority. As Chesler and Young (2007, 12) point out, “as the dominant face of the faculty, white and male faculty members can make—and can assume that students will make—assumptions about the high level of their subject matter expertise.”

A lack of consideration of authority reflects a position of privilege, a pedagogy where doubts about faculty subject matter expertise and questions about the authority of the faculty role are not under discussion. The experience of faculty of color and women is considerably different: many researchers have addressed how students questioned their competency as professors and did not recognize or respect their expertise as scholars on the basis of race and gender (Pittman 2010). Several studies report that students describe women of color faculty as less credible and less intelligent and hold racial, gender, and ethnocentric stereotypes and biases of their teaching capabilities and course offerings (Hendrix 1998; Hune 2011; Rubin 2002; Williams et al. 1999). This dynamic is stated by Vianden (2018, 467) “White students specifically tend to not value content that interrogates their self-professed non-racist identity or their beliefs in a meritocratic society.” While white students will not always outwardly resist diversity initiatives, “they may purport not to need additional training or development in issues of power, privilege, and oppression because they perceive themselves as progressive and anti-racist” (Vianden 2018, 466). The inability to note their need for development on topics of race, power, and privilege is white resistance (DiAngelo 2018; Vianden 2018). Haynes (2017, 91) does not address critique processes but analyzes “how deeply embedded educational norms and traditions, such as

academic freedom, faculty rank/status, and the academy's reliance on student course evaluations, cultivate white supremacy (i.e., normalcy, advantage, privilege, and innocence), giving white interests an institutional context that is reinforced by the participant through the embodiment of whiteness." Inherent educational norms directly informed critique practices: instructors often employ critique methods that embody the legacy of their particular discipline, the culture of their school and department, or the traditions of their teacher cohort. Consequently, a critique often reinforces the current pedagogical hegemony and authority structures, thereby promoting fewer learning pathways and ways of knowing.

Students often reinscribe traditional power structures by showing resistance to peer review or failing to give truthful or direct critique to each other, fearing alienation (Anderson and Flash 2014), or resist wanting to feel they have power over their peers (Abdelmalak 2016).

If, however, students are to be positioned as equals in at least some manner and experts in their own experiences, increased use of student-to-instructor critique may be needed. While there is a large body of work that focuses on the sharing power in assessment and many pedagogical approaches have ardently innovated on traditional modes of evaluation, assessment is still firmly in the hands of the faculty, especially in reference to grading, as Abdelmalak (2016, 193) pointed out. According to Falchikov, unilateral control of assessment reinforces the power imbalance between instructors and students and is driven by the needs of the instructor rather than the needs of students (Falchikov 2005). Boud and Falchikov argue that unilateral assessment is disempowering for students and forces them to be passive consumers of their experience (Falchikov 2005; Boud and Falchikov 2007). It is important to note the need for formal and intentional student-to-instructor critique beyond typical institutionalized feedback such as course evaluations, but this will require addressing how disruptive this will be to comfortable power arrangements and positionality. Critique and feedback are not currently deployed to either question or disrupt the hegemonic barriers on which academic traditions are built.

Critique exists within what is referred to as the *hidden curriculum*, those "unstated values, attitudes, and norms which stem tacitly from the social relations of the school and classroom as well as the content of the course" (Dutton 1987, 16). Ultimately the hidden curriculum can yield unequal access to knowledge that leaves too many students underserved. As Dutton, an architecture educator, astutely noted, educational environments mirror inequities and constructs present in society at large.

The selection and organization of knowledge and the ways in which school and classroom social relations are structured to distribute such knowledge are strongly influenced by forms and practices of power in society. That is, the characteristics of contemporary society—characteristics such as class, race and gender discrimination, and other asymmetrical relations of power—are too often reproduced in schools and classrooms, including the design studio (Dutton 1987, 16).

CONCLUSIONS

Critique is a performance of power with roots in positions of authority, expertise, or assigned roles. Furthermore, power dynamics that are often beyond the control of the student can affect student learning and contribute to the evaluation of proficiency of work and learning. In that way, student

success is based on homogeneity in the embodiment and performance of critique and even more on dominant culture language competency and disciplinary language proficiency: critique too often reinforces constructs of cultural hegemony.

Critique is a moment where power becomes visible, failing to address those relationships means to silence students and faculty alike. It is reasonable to demand that we explore critique within the context of understanding power. However, power is rarely addressed in SoTL publications, suggesting that discussing power dynamics is not currently a meta-objective of SoTL. When discussed in SoTL, power dynamics are typically addressed through frameworks such as social justice scholarship, feminist pedagogies, or critical race theory. When conversations around power are relegated only to research around race, gender, social justice, poverty, sexual orientation, we perpetuate the “othering” that is pervasive in academia. Certainly, power ought to be identified and discussed in all teaching and learning environments and especially at critical moments of feedback like in critique.

While there has been more focus in recent years on the need to include students as participants and partners in research, institutional policymaking, and even course design, the power dynamics between instructors and students remain fundamentally intact. Critical feedback is mostly discussed in the context of peer-to-peer evaluation and student-to-instructor critique is reserved for institutionalized platforms as course evaluations.

Through understanding and making visible the inherent power dynamics involved in critique, we have an opportunity to interrogate the ways in which power dynamics can be disrupted to aid student learning. Identifying and defining power dynamics within critique can inform the shifting of perspectives toward more accessible, inclusive, and equitable institutions, faculty, and cultures. The conceptual framework for analyzing such power dynamics could be used by faculty and academic developers to change pedagogical practice and analyze how student learning improves when power dynamics are addressed. What if students could get feedback on their work that was completely divorced from their personal characteristics or affect? What if personal bias and expectations were removed from the work altogether? We have witnessed prejudiced and biased feedback happening daily in classrooms and observed how it destabilizes students' sense of self and authority in the authorship of their own work.

As we look toward future research, we intend to examine how critique can be used as a liberatory tool for marginalized, underserved, and oppressed populations—or at the very least, how critique can be recalibrated into an assessment tool that responds to differences in student work and celebrates pluralism rather than one that promotes conformity under the guise of instruction. Indeed, critique can become a counter-hegemonic tool to support learners if faculty are willing to examine and let go of rituals and performance of critique that are part of an inequitable academic legacy.

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