

Fostering a Personal-Is-Political Ethics: Reflexive Conversations in Social Work Education

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Abstract

This article suggests that interviews about past ethical dilemmas or transgressions can foster ethical skills for navigating interlocking power relations. It shows how narratives claiming relative innocence are widespread and that taking responsibility for personal implication in oppression is crucial for fundamental social and political transformation. Chris is instructor and creator of a social work ethics course; Nazia and Louise are former students. In the second half of the article, Nazia and Louise use their interviews from the class as illustrations of personal-is-political ethical reflexivity. The authors encourage the use of resonant processes in social work ethics education and other pedagogical contexts that politicize everyday ethical navigation.

Keywords: Foucauldian ethics, claims of relative innocence, interlocking oppression, moral economy, Invitational and Narrative Practice

Work to transform normative ethical practices of self-governance is politically urgent. To facilitate this transformation, there is a need to “create new structures of learning” (Mahmood, 2005, p. 56) that aim to have others take responsibility for their harm, abuse, or oppression (Bhabha, 1994, p. 35; Foucault, 1982, 1997b; Jenkins, 1990, 2009; Spivak, 2004a, p. 118, 2004b). This article articulates one such structure of learning as applied in a social work ethics classroom.

In Foucault’s (2006) studies of Ancient Greek and Roman ethics, the metaphor of navigation was often used to describe efforts to live an ethical or just life (pp. 248–249, 404). In this conception of ethics, all people at all times govern their lives in relation to particular and contingent norms about what constitutes justice, acceptable behaviour, integrity, and so on. This ongoing work on oneself is foregrounded in Foucauldian ethics, rather than emphasizing abstract notions, maxims, codes of conduct, or universal standards. Like navigating a ship, living ethically is always contingent on one’s particular circumstances and therefore should not be exclusively approached through abstraction, book learning, or top-down instruction. During this period of his research, Foucault (1997c) suggested that how people on top of social stratifications or institutional hierarchies navigate their lives is the “hinge point” between ethics and social justice (p. 299). For example, how white male teachers navigate their lives shapes students’ experiences of institutional racism, sexism, and interlocking oppression. Anti-racist and queer feminists have

also theorized that radical social transformation requires diverse people to responsibly navigate interlocking power relations (Ahmed, 2010; Butler, 2004; Fellows & Razack, 1998; hooks, 2003, 2004; Razack, 1999; Thobani, 2007). Reflecting upon one's own ethical dilemmas and transgressions can facilitate subsequent ethical navigation (Ahmed, 1998, pp. 193–194; Fellows & Razack, 1998; Jenkins, 2009), but sustaining such reflection and transformation requires the support of others with resonant commitments (Chapman, 2011; Foucault, 2006; White 2004b). The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how these concerns have been applied in a social work ethics classroom, and why it is politically urgent to find ways to foster a personal-is-political ethics.

Chris is instructor and creator of an MSW course at York University called “Ethics in Social Work Practice”; Nazia and Louise are former graduate students. Approximately half our class time is devoted to an interview process we describe below, which this article contextualizes through reviewing literature on perpetration and normative complicity in oppression. The class facilitates students' interrogation of their own ethical navigations through an interview about a time when they were positioned on top of an institutional or social hierarchy and either caused harm or were complicit in systemic violence.

In the second half of the article, Nazia and Louise's interviews from the class illustrate personal-is-political ethical reflexivity. We invite other instructors and non-academic facilitators to encourage students, group members, or community members to reflect upon their personal-is-political ethical navigations through the exercise we describe or in resonant ways that better fit their context.

The Classroom Interview and its Political Context

The Interview Process

The classroom interview mobilizes students' experiences of committing ethical transgressions or experiencing ethical dilemmas. Students reflect upon a transgression or dilemma in which they were positioned on top of a social stratification or institutional hierarchy, in order to explore with one another the connection between everyday ethical navigation and systemic oppression. Chris and another student facilitate this process by interviewing the student who is reflecting. The other students observe and are later invited to publicly share how their own ethical journeys were affected by witnessing the interview.¹

¹ Following Michael White's (2003) outsider-witnessing, students' responses to one another's reflections are carefully guided toward resonance and shared values, as a counter-practice to normative normalizing judgment (Foucault, 1995). Please see White (2003, 2007) for detailed descriptions of outsider-witnessing in various contexts and Chapman (2011) on its use in a social work history class. If reflections on one another's reflections were not carefully guided, normalizing judgment could potentially be about how good or bad the student's transgression had been, or about how good or bad their reflexivity was. Following Jenkins' (1990) provocations about inadvertently inviting irresponsibility, the exercise aims to have students problematize and explore their own transgressions and dilemmas, rather than having others do it for them—whether this be the professor or fellow students.

The interview mobilizes Foucauldian ethics. Foucault asserted that ethical knowledges and skills are collaboratively developed through conversation, partnership, and community, rather than primarily through individual self-reflection or consulting rules and codes (2006). His work shaped White's (2000a; 2004a) Narrative Practice, while Foucault's personal friend Deleuze directly inspired Jenkins' (2009) Invitational Practice. Invitational and Narrative Practice are most commonly understood as therapeutic, rather than ethical, models. However, here we follow the originators of these conversational practices in avoiding "therapy" as a term. Both approaches were developed in political and ethical opposition to normative therapy, and both have been used in many non-therapy settings (see Collective Narrative Practice, n.d.). Classroom interviews, such as the one we describe, are not therapeutic interventions.

Invitational and Narrative Practices structure conversations so as to invite people to reflexively engage their relationship with "externalized" political and social factors (White, 2007). This resonates with hooks' (2004) use of "feminism" and "patriarchy" as orientations that both women and men may mobilize in their relationships and identity formation, allowing her to advocate the fostering of feminist masculinities. It also relates to Ahmed's (2006b, 2010) treatment of "whiteness" as a force that shapes possibilities for white people as well as for people of colour. Situating whiteness or patriarchy outside of dominant groups' inherent ways-of-being enables white people and men to reflexively reconfigure how these social forces guide their actions, thoughts, and relationships.

Chris developed these interview skills working with men who perpetrate abuse (see Augusta-Scott, 2009; Chapman, 2007; Fisher, 2005; Jenkins, 1990, 2009). Invitational Practice is structured to invite a person's own responsibility-taking for their abuse, rather than inadvertently inviting their defensiveness by problematizing their abuse for them (Jenkins, 1990).

"Invitations to Responsibility" with Social Workers

Invitational and Narrative Practices politicize the helping relationship by asking helping professionals to take responsibility for their own violence, control, and domination. Jenkins (2009) referred to the relationship between counsellor and client as "parallel, political journeys." The "journey" of the counsellor is situated parallel to, and equally political as, the work required of men to end their violence. This may seem counterintuitive. Social workers do not tend to experience themselves as harmful. They often experience themselves instead as helpful, on the side of justice, and often largely getting through the day in trying circumstances with inadequate resources or recognition. However accurate this may be, critical social work, disability studies, mad studies, and anti-racist and anti-colonial critique regularly cite the helping professions as a primary site of systemic oppression (Barton, 2001; Chrisjohn & Young, 2006; Fournier & Crey, 1999; Heron, 2005; LeFrançois, 2013; Michalko, 2002; Rossiter, 2001, 2011; Smith, 2005; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006; Spivak, 2004b; Stiker, 1999; Thobani, 2007). Chris therefore suspected that the kinds of conversations he had with men who perpetrated abuse—about how they navigate their lives, relationships, and participation in systemic

power relations—might also be relevant to social workers’ reflexivity. This informs his research and his teaching with social work students.

Chris has written critical accounts of his own professional practice, taking seriously the assertion that social work is implicated in racism, colonialism, and disablism, and situating his own practices within these operations of structural violence (Chapman, 2007, 2010, 2012). Presenting this work out loud frequently resulted in other helping professionals approaching him afterward to share resonant concerns and experiences. The stories they shared with him were animated by a sense that Chris’s reflexivity had somehow enabled them to do something new with their shame, distress, and other feelings of discomfort (Chapman, 2013).² This seemed to facilitate a move away from what we describe below, following Heron (2007), as “claims of relative innocence”—specifically in the form of anger at other workers or abstract systems. Such exclusively outward-directed anger and critique leaves little personal agency or responsibility for things in which they had actively participated.

It seems, then, that such reflexivity is politically important. However, Badwall (2013) raised concerns about “admissions of bad practice as signs of good practice, such as of white people expressing feelings of anxiety and shame about having participated in acts of racial domination” (p. 93). She suggested these practices may not “perform” the anti-racist work they claim to, but may rather reinscribe a subject’s sense of goodness and innocence. We hope Nazia and Louise’s reflections below may illustrate how this can be (imperfectly and inconsistently) challenged: Their initial reflexivity problematizes past actions, but toward open-ended scrutiny, uncertainty, and moral complexity, largely enabled by others’ reflections and provocations.

Chris’s experience of “Ethics in Social Work Practice,” as well as feedback from its students, suggests it fosters a context for newly engaging difficult experiences and feelings. The centring of real-life difficulties guides our application of seemingly abstract theory (e.g., Ahmed, 2004, 2006a, 2006b;

² This indirect work on ‘the government of others’ through the sharing of such stories is illustrated in the following reference LeFrançois (2013) made to Chris’s work: “I am compelled by Chapman’s example (Chapman, 2010) to point to the ways in which the culture of care within ‘benevolent’ social work institutions ... are saturated with the discourses of ‘care’ whilst enacting the most coercive, inhumane, and violent forms of treatment, all contrary to social work ethics” (pp. 115–116). Saczkoski (2011) described the impact of Chris’s work in resonant ways (p. 4). This should not be read as a testament to Chris; it is a testament to this particular technique of ‘the government of others,’ which is also found in Ahmed (1998, 2004), Fellows and Razack (1998), Heron (2007), Jenkins (2009), Rossiter (2001), Spivak (2004b), and others. Feeling “compelled” is very different from having another person do the work of naming one’s implication in “the most coercive, inhumane, and violent forms of treatment.” Others will surely likewise feel compelled to their own reflexive critiques by reading LeFrançois’ powerful autoethnography of child welfare, Saczkoski’s interrogations, or those in the second half of this article by Nazia and Louise. The experience of resonance and resultant critical reflexivity is an example of the indirect work toward the ‘government of others’ that Spivak (2004b) described as a non-coercive rearrangement of others’ desires (p. 532).

Butler, 1990, 2004; Derrida, 1994,1995; Foucault, 1982, 1988, 1994, 1997a, 1997c, 2006; Mahmood, 2005; Spivak, 2004b). This enables what Paulo Freire (2000) called a “problem-posing” approach to ethics education, in which students learn through reflection upon their own and each other’s knowledges, rather than being taught exactly what to reflect upon and how. Freire (1999) said of student-directed take-up of such specifics: “That is their task, not mine. How can we find ways of working that create a favourable context for this to happen?” (p. 38).³

It is important to note, then, that others may adapt some aspect of this exercise without any background in Narrative or Invitational Practice. A commitment to democratic pedagogy, in which students primarily learn from one another’s actual experiences, efforts, and conceptualizations, may provide the necessary orientation to hold the reflections together and work productively with them.⁴ This class may be inspirational to instructors and facilitators but may require substantial revision for context, facilitators’ or instructors’ knowledge and training, class or group composition, and so on. The essence of the class is students collectively making connections between, and reflecting upon, actual ethical struggles from their lives.

Students relatively new to social work have often described this class as a crucial site to connect critical social work theory with everyday practice. Students with substantial practice experience often note that we have conversations that rarely occur in the field, but which practitioners would greatly benefit from. This feedback resonates with critical social work scholars’ assertion of the disconnect between navigating ethical difficulties, on the one hand, and institutionalized approaches to “social work ethics,” on the other (LeFrançois, 2013; Rossiter, 2001, 2011; Rossiter et al., 1996, 2002; Weinberg, 2005).

Interlocking Oppression, Moral Economy, and the Race to Innocence

The classroom interview is a strategic and contingent intervention into cultural norms of irresponsibility, which we will now discuss. Razack wrote that “if oppression exists, then there must also be oppressors” (1999, p. 23). Interlocking analyses of oppression suggest that we can all find some aspect of our lives in which

³ This is from Freire’s (1999) final interview before his death. It appeared in the *Dulwich Centre Journal*, since renamed the *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*.

⁴ However, we caution against only doing these reflections in private journals or reflective papers. There is nothing wrong with such activities, and we use reflective papers in this class (see note 8 below), but they do not mobilize the important work of local norms and collective learning in subjectification. Occupying a space in which it is normal and valued to interrogate how one participates in systems of violence is markedly distinct from doing such reflections privately. As noted above, this is fundamental to Foucault’s ethics, and it resonates with findings that social work practitioners want more dialogue and conversation about difficult ethical situations (Rossiter, Walsh-Bowers, & Prilleltensky, 1996, 2002).

we are complicit in others' oppression. We do not equally participate in interlocking oppression, but we can all consider our complicity in particular arenas of oppression. Notably, feminists of colour have paved paths for us to do so, often through reflexive critiques of themselves or people sharing their subject positions (Ahmed, 2004; hooks, 1984, 1989, 2003, 2004; Razack, 1999; Spivak, 1999, 2004b; Thobani, 2007). Interlocking analyses advocate careful attention to contingent, particular, and contradictory workings of multiple forms of power. Few people are positioned consistently either 'on top' or 'on bottom' of every form of social stratification and institutional hierarchy, and all social workers are positioned on top of the worker-client hierarchy. Badwall (2013) examined racialized social workers' experiences of racism on the job and cautioned against positioning the social worker-client hierarchy as the only power relation at play. She wrote, "Exploring the complexities of power and the ways in which it operates in multiple directions through various discourses is not commonplace yet in social work" (p. 87).

Thobani (2007) is also of particular relevance to social work ethics education. As a non-Indigenous woman of colour, she suggested that citizenship and status such as becoming a professional, when acquired by any non-Indigenous person in Canada, supports an ongoing colonial "moral economy." In this "economy," Indigenous bodies, philosophies, sovereignties, and ways of life are denigrated and delegitimized through the accumulated social and moral capital or "exaltation" of whiteness, settlerhood, citizenship, and (increasingly) liberal multiculturalism. The welfare state and helping professions are among her primary sites of critique for this colonial exaltation and denigration.

Thobani's theorization of "exaltation" can also be mobilized beyond racism and colonialism. For example, disability studies scholars Snyder and Mitchell (2006) wrote: "Debasement became an in-built feature of the charitable relationship in which the recipient degrades himself and the benefactor grows increasingly exalted" (p. 59). Exaltation and moral economy can usefully address the discrepancy that frequently occurs between social workers' narratives and the experiences of social service users. Clients routinely critique workers and agencies, but this occurs within a moral economy that accumulates the social and moral capital of workers and agencies and inseparably degrades clients. Clients' concerns are therefore depoliticized and may serve as evidence of pathology (Chapman, 2010, 2012; LeFrançois, 2013). The classroom interview we describe aims to prepare students to resist tendencies such as this.

Also relevant to a personal-is-political social work ethics is Fellows and Razack's (1998) "race to innocence." In this "race," diverse people each foreground their own experiences of subordination, injury, and intentional work for justice. As a result, nobody takes responsibility for participating in others' oppression. Fellows and Razack first observed this among a closed group of diverse women, each with a legitimate claim to subordination and responding to a legitimate injury. But even people imagined to be unambiguously oppressive "race to innocence."

Those generally accepted as oppressive often make claims of subordination and injury as a justification for their oppression of others. This is common in

contemporary homophobic (Blaine, 2005), white supremacist (Ahmed, 2004), and pro-war (Butler, 2004) discourse, framing diverse aggressions as self-defense. The narrative framing of oppressed groups as injurious to dominant groups also featured in historical justifications of lynching (Griffith, 1915; Wells 1892, 1901) and eugenics (Foucault, 2003b; McLaren, 1990; Rafter, 1997; Snyder and Mitchell, 2006).

Normative Claims of Relative Innocence

Claims of subordination and injury are not the only commonly found narrative structure by which people position others as relatively more responsible for oppression and violence than themselves. Mobilizing a diversity of narrative structures, it is normative to claim relative innocence. Not everyone participates in this to the same degree, nor does everyone's participation have the same effects. But if these narrative structures of claiming relative innocence are not individualized and thus depoliticized, then they must be approached as something other than characteristics of a certain personality type or population. They are practices of self-governance and meaning-making contingent on a particular "discursive tradition" (Mahmood, 2005) for understanding oppression, ethics, humanity, and responsibility. This depoliticizing tradition is currently normative in Canada and the Global North, and is most often taken for granted as how things are, rather than held to be a particular tradition (Foucault, 1978; 2003a; 2008; King, 2003, pp. 109–110; Samson, Wilson, & Mazower, 1999, p. 5; White, 2007). Mahmood (2005) framed ethical practices of self-governance within their historically and culturally contingent traditions, rather than as personality traits or other features best understood at the level of the individual. She wrote of her research subjects,

The activities and operations they perform upon themselves are [not] products of independent wills.... These activities are the products of authoritative discursive traditions whose logic and power far exceeds the consciousness of the subjects they enable. The kind of agency I am exploring here does not belong to the women themselves, but is a product of the historically contingent discursive traditions in which they are located. The ... individual is contingently made possible by the discursive logic of the ethical traditions she enacts. Self-reflexivity is not a universal human attribute here but, as Foucault suggested, a particular kind of relation to oneself whose form fundamentally depends on the practices of subjectivation through which the individual is produced (p. 32).

Claims of relative innocence "are the products of authoritative discursive traditions whose logic and power far exceeds the consciousness of the subjects they enable" (ibid.). These claims are not a product of certain kinds of people who are best understood through individualization and pathologizing. It is a 'normal' aspect of self-reflexivity to disassociate oneself from those who do serious harm. It is a normative tendency to stress others' 'real' agency or ill intent, in contrast to one's own good intentions or limited range of options. These claims do not reflect who is most culpable, but are rather a product of a tradition in which people tend to position themselves as relatively innocent and good. This happens even in the face of some

recognition that injustice exists, and even happens when people acknowledge causing harm or participating in oppression. Recalling Badwall's (2013) concerns that naming one's participation in racism can secure oneself as good, perhaps one aspect of this is that such practices take place within an authoritative discursive tradition through which people normatively experience themselves as relatively innocent. The implications are far-reaching: If oppression is acknowledged to exist but no people experience themselves as seriously implicated in its operations, this would significantly blunt the efficacy of efforts to end oppression and violence.

Jenkins (1990) complicated matters further. As previously mentioned, when one names others' responsibility, this frequently results in those others responding with defensiveness and irresponsibility. Alongside other work against oppression, there is therefore a need to transform the ways that cultural discourses of oppression and anti-oppression are translated into concrete ethical practices of the government of self and others. This includes practices of self-governance employed in efforts to have others become more responsible, reflexive, and critical. Discussing work with abuse perpetrators, Jenkins (2009) wrote that developing "new skills and intervention strategies is beneficial. However, it is our own ethical becomings which inevitably promote the cessation of violence and the development of respectful ways of relating by our clients" (p. x).

Below we explore claims to innocence among those within "perpetrator populations" followed by strategies of people not normatively⁵ conceptualized as perpetrators, in order to demonstrate the contingent social context in which the classroom interview is politically urgent.

Thinking with Perpetrators' Narratives

For those whose behaviour has never been labeled abusive, it likely seems reasonable that men who perpetrate violence against women are more culpable for perpetuating heteropatriarchy than the average person. While this would perhaps be demonstrable on a sociological level and may coincide with the subjective experience of many victims and survivors of violence, this is not how abuse perpetrators tend to perceive themselves. Perpetrators of abuse, following the authoritative discursive tradition described above, narrate their actions so as to allow them to maintain what Heron (2007) called a "unitary moral self"—a sense of one's fixed self that is coherent and consistently "moral". Successfully achieving this sense of moral coherence is facilitated by Thobani's (2007) moral economy, so that men, white people, non-disabled people, and so on, would have easier access to the sense that they are fundamentally good, even while acknowledging harm they cause. Research finds abuse perpetrators distinguishing themselves from "real batterers"

⁵ Discourses in which social workers, settlers on colonized land, and international development workers are considered oppressive groups certainly exist, but they are outside the normative or most freely available discourses in our time and place. In most social contexts in Canada, these claims fall outside the unwritten "rules of discursive formation" which determine what can be stated without seeming unintelligible or outlandish (Foucault, 1972).

regardless of the severity of violence they acknowledge perpetrating. Even men who have committed severe violence such as stabbing their partners are documented as distinguishing themselves from other men who intend to harm or who harm even more severely (Goodrum, Umberson, & Anderson, 2001; Wood, 2004). Perhaps as many as half the men Chris worked with who perpetrated abuse introduced themselves by saying they were “not like” other men he worked with. Like the rest of us, these men were familiar with discursive representations of batterers. They ‘knew’ this was a group to which they did not belong, even if they were taking responsibility for individual acts or generalized patterns of abuse.

Even those who admit to some involvement in genocide draw lines of guilt and innocence so as to narrate their own relative innocence. This does not minimize the distinctions between the various violences we are discussing. Our focus is only on structures of self-explanatory narrative that accompany people’s knowledge that they cause harm. These narrative structures need to be politicized and resisted—perhaps as urgently as we need to politicize and resist institutional and political structures that also foster violence and oppression. The interview we describe is one approach to politicizing and resisting these ubiquitous narrative structures.

Guatemalan activists have distinguished between “material authors” of genocide, who murder first-hand, and “intellectual authors” of genocide, who plan, organize, and command (Osorio, cited in al Nakba, 2008). This distinction can put language to a claim of relative innocence sometimes featured in narratives of genocide perpetrators. At his trial, Eichmann acknowledged organizing mass transportation to Nazi extermination camps. Nevertheless, he pleaded “Not guilty in the sense of the indictment,” describing his responsibility as “aiding and abetting” rather than being directly responsible for genocide. He said, “With the killing of Jews I had nothing to do. I never killed a Jew, or a non-Jew, for that matter—I never killed any human being. I never gave an order to kill either a Jew or a non-Jew; I just did not do it” (Arendt, 1964, p. 22). On the other side of this dividing line of relative innocence, Hatzfeld (2005) interviewed Hutu men who murdered Tutsis in the Rwandan genocide. These men openly admitted to being material authors of the violence, but they described themselves as relatively innocent compared to the intellectual authors who planned, organized, and commanded the killings.

The easiest and most comforting thing to do with these various accounts is to consider them aberrational. But we know how prevalent heteropatriarchal violence is, and some genocides, as in Guatemala and Rwanda, were materially carried out in large part by non-military neighbours who had previously lived with their victims in relative peace. To politicize the apparently personal experience of perpetration requires that we refuse to individualize, psychologize, and pathologize. Hatzfeld and Arendt both carefully attended to what actual perpetrators say about what they have done. While obviously not the final word on what should and can be said about violence perpetration, these narratives suggest that perpetrators may not be radically distinct groups in terms of the ethical practices they employ to govern themselves and make sense of what they do.

We will now therefore compare the findings above with those from people not normatively considered perpetrators. In doing this, our attention is again on the structures of ethical narrative that allow one to feel relatively innocent, even within accounts acknowledging complicity (as in the accounts above). This attention to such structures is entirely distinct from drawing equivalence between the various kinds of violence, oppression, and harm discussed.

Heron (2007) documented white Canadian women working as international development workers in Africa who drew analogous lines of culpability and innocence. She included herself among this group and wrote that she and her research participants shared an understanding that racism and “colonial continuities” shape international geopolitics, but

by distancing ourselves from *those other* expatriates who make what we see as racist comments ... these encounters with *real* racism secure oneself as not racist, and therefore moral.... With a moral self-conception safeguarded through comparison to other whites, one’s perpetration of racism becomes less detectable, and as Razack points out, there is then no need to take responsibility for it (p. 84).

Narrating perpetrators as aberrational perpetuates legacies of normative oppression. One can name racism as a serious problem and yet imagine it as a problem that has nothing to do with oneself. This also applies to discussions of the ongoing genocide⁶ of Indigenous peoples in what is now called Canada. Discussing Indian Residential Schools, Thobani (2007) wrote, “by placing the blame solely on individual perpetrators when recognition of the extent of the abuse cannot be avoided, the systemic nature of the violence can be denied” (p. 121). Chrisjohn and Young (2006) described the various narratives employed to accomplish this individualization and depoliticization as “what Eurocanadian society did to itself” (p. 73), which they suggested makes possible what Eurocanadian society did, and continues to do, to Indigenous societies. Recognizing the systemic and ongoing nature of colonialism would force all non-Indigenous people in white settler countries to face implication in centuries of violence.

Ahmed (2004) critically engaged her own claim of relative innocence in colonial violence in Australia. She struggled with a Stolen Generation survivor’s account because it did not place full and exclusive responsibility on government officials and school staff who were directly involved in stealing children from their families and communities. Thinking with her resultant discomfort, Ahmed suggested that blame is normatively placed on specific individuals in particular ways, so that everyone else (Australian settlers in her case) can avoid accepting that countless details of their everyday lives are only possible as a result of concrete and ongoing legacies of colonial violence.

Every example explored on the last few pages, covering a wide range of contexts, populations, violences, and degrees of involvement, involved a claim of

⁶ Please see Chrisjohn and Young (2006) on the legal applicability of this term.

relative innocence. It is because such claims are a part of what Mahmood (2005) called an “authoritative discursive tradition,” that they feature in so many diverse contexts. This is also why we have to actively work to foster ethical practices that subvert these normative claims.

Reflexive Explorations of Personal-is-Political Ethics as a Constituted Local Norm

At the start of “Ethics in Social Work Practice,” Chris shares interrogations of his own participation in disablism and colonialism (Chapman, 2010, 2012). Subsequently, all students are interviewed in front of the class about an actual ethical transgression they have committed. The transgression is either one in which the student was positioned on top of an institutional hierarchy (for example, as a social worker or teacher) or in which the student was positioned on top of a stratification such as class, race, gender, sexuality, or disability. Most have involved interlockings of institutional hierarchy and social stratification.

The interviews are public and collective in order to foster a local norm in which it is acknowledged that we are all implicated in oppression and that it is valuable to name it, reflect upon it, and try to work imperfectly toward lessening our oppressive impact on others. All people have diverse practical ethical knowledges that they mobilize to navigate their lives (Foucault, 2006; Mahmood, 2005; White, 2000a, 2004a, 2004b), but these knowledges are normatively subjugated by abstract theories, codes, laws, and other forms of ethical governance predicated upon rule-following and surveillance. We therefore need to create contexts in which people are collectively supported in articulating, honing, and sharing these skills and knowledge.

Rather than ending with simplifying closed answers for all contexts, class conversations are often punctuated instead with King’s (2003) haunting, “don’t say in years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You’ve heard it now” (p. 29). Hearing stories in which well-intentioned and likable peers actively participated in systemic forms of oppression is a powerful experience, but what does one do with it? It is essential to learn ‘stories’ about how systemic oppression exists. And, as difficult and essential as this is, it is relatively easy compared with navigating what to do with such knowledge in our everyday lives. In the remainder of this article, Nazia and Louise reflect on their experience of the interview and use examples from their interviews to illustrate what it has enabled for them. First, however, we share some cautions about this pedagogical approach that perhaps serve to illustrate how difficult it is to navigate “what to do with such knowledge in our everyday lives,” as we say above.

Moral Economy and Interlocking Oppression Revisited: Some Cautionary Comments

Students who are members of various oppressed groups have reflected on situations in which they were contingently positioned in dominance. For example, cisgendered and non-disabled students of colour have reflected on incidents in which

they were implicated in systemic violence against trans or disabled people. Other racialized students described navigating workplaces that were racist against clients, sharing their struggles about feeling implicated in these violent systems and situating their struggles and strategies of navigation within their own knowledges about racism. Chris feels that these were all politically important reflections.

Chris's certainty (and implicit claim to innocence) is troubled, though, by Badwall's (2013) astute observation that when social workers of colour experience racism at work, they are often disciplined to minimize its seriousness by the "professional" and even "progressive" moral imperative of critical reflexivity. Others who might adapt this course to their own contexts would be well advised to consult her work in preparation.

These interviews present different dangers depending on one's positionality. For example, in the moral economy in which we live, white people's naming of racism contributes to their exaltation as moral and as on the side of justice (Ahmed, 2004, 2006b; Badwall, 2013; Thobani, 2007). But when people of colour name racism, they are often denigrated as too sensitive or angry (Ahmed, 2010; Badwall, 2013). It is possible, then, that a racialized instructor's critical reflexivity might not be read equally as 'invitationally' (by white students, in particular) as Chris's seems to be. It is also possible that students of colour's reflections could be judged according to this moral economy that normatively denigrates racialized people's efforts. A further potential danger is that the radical situating of personal-is-political ethics within interlocking oppression could be read through a liberal lens in which we are all equally implicated in injustice, erasing the effects of power and oppression, exaltation and denigration. These concerns need to be carefully thought through and addressed if others choose to adapt any part of this article to their own classroom, community, or group settings. Chris is tempted to claim that these dangers have not yet transpired because of his care in politicization and other aspects of teaching within his control, but perhaps this has to do with how he is read as a white male within a moral economy in which his alignment with radical critiques contingently furthers his moral value. And it may be that students have, in fact, experienced the violences mentioned here but have not been able to put words to their experience or have not felt safe bringing this to his attention—again, perhaps in part due to his particular interlocking positionality.

Nazia's and Louise's Reflexive Processes

Navigating a Colleague's Sexism in the Context of Geopolitical Domination

Louise is a white, middle-class Canadian woman. Her interview explored working closely with a white male colleague from an economically oppressed Eastern European country. She found herself navigating her accountability to multiple people and concerns, with differing and often opposing needs. She could not possibly ethically support the needs of all involved.

Louise found many of her colleague's comments and actions sexist and misogynistic. Some female clients—including some from her colleague's home country—shared this experience of him. But Louise was also mindful of her positionality as a white, middle-class Canadian working with a colleague from an economically oppressed country, and she did not want to perpetuate legacies of geopolitical domination in their interactions (Ahmed, 2004; Spivak, 2004b; Thobani, 2007). Yet, as she said in her interview,⁷ "I was also simultaneously trying to maintain and create a safe place⁸ for the clients." She found herself in the impossible situation of trying to be accountable to the legacy of geopolitical domination, while also trying to provide clients with a safe space, as informed by Western feminist understandings of patriarchy and sexism. During her interview, Chris reflected upon what Louise had shared:

So that's how you were presenting yourself in terms of gender politics and whether you were creating a safe space there. At the same time, you're in tune with how you were performing your role as a Canadian. You recognize what you describe as domination and sexism, but then you bring in this other lens, an anti-colonial lens that complicates that first one.

The ethical complexity of Louise's experience involved her positions of power as a white Canadian citizen, alongside her experiences of gender subordination. From this positioning of interlocking power and subordination, she wondered how she could advocate for a shift in her colleague's behaviours without perpetuating geopolitical domination. And by avoiding geopolitical domination, how could she

⁷ The quotations from the interviews are from reenactments of the classroom exercise that the authors recorded and had transcribed. They are both about the same experience as the respective classroom interviews. In the original classroom exercise, Chris co-conducts the interviews with a different student each week, so as to build training in Invitational and Narrative Practices into the course. This is accompanied by readings on the ethical positioning advocated within these practices (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Jenkins, 2009; White, 2000b, 2004b), and is followed up by a reflective paper on the ethics of interviewing in social work practice. Each week, different students take on one of three tasks. They co-conduct interviews, are interviewed, and take notes on the interview. Each of these tasks is required and ungraded, but is followed by a graded reflective paper on the personal-is-political ethics of doing the task.

⁸ It can be dangerous to imagine that the right techniques, personnel, or theoretical groundings can secure an unequivocally "safe space." That said, in this case clients actively identified Louise's colleague's behaviour as contributing to a lack of safety.

also avoid the ethical trespass of her implication in her colleague's sexist comments and actions?

Ethical trespasses are “the harmful effects...that inevitably follow not from our intentions and malevolence but from our participation in social processes and identities” (Orlie, cited in Weinberg, 2005, p. 331). Thus, our very embeddedness within our current socio-political climate shapes the likelihood that we will cause harm. Weinberg (2005) wrote that social workers are often agents of ethical trespass: “Through their implementation of policies, legislation, and what they understand to be their professional duties, they determine what is acceptable and appropriate behavior” (p. 331). It is through such everyday practices that social workers “carry histories and locations that are potentially dangerous as well as advantageous to people in other locations and histories” (Rossiter, 2001, para. 19). Navigating such differences and dangers complicates our attempts to bring about advantages. This is perhaps the crux of a politicized social work ethics.

Louise's reflection on her attempts to work in partnership with her colleague, using the most equitable methods she could imagine at the time, was shaped in part by geopolitical power relations. In her interview, she described her colleague making a violent, sexist joke in front of service users. In response, Louise demanded that “we take a ten-minute break in which I shared with my colleague why I found his comment inappropriate and violent, and then we came back to the group and my colleague apologized to the group. Although our discussion was behind closed doors, the service users knew that I had talked to him and discussed it.” The service users were “not fooled that we had a really equitable discussion and we just happened to agree on the solution. I'm pretty sure that they knew I went in and kind of laid it down.” While having the discussion in private seemed more respectful than doing so in front of the group, it nevertheless could not help but perpetrate geopolitical domination.

In her efforts to interact ethically with her colleague, another ethical trespass in which Louise was implicated was that service users did not receive the quality of support she believes they required, and which their organization claimed to stand for in its mission and policies. Several female clients also noted this discrepancy and made formal and informal complaints about Louise's colleague's behaviour. As described above, while her colleague did apologize for his blatantly sexist and misogynistic jokes and comments, his words nevertheless created an environment characterized by a lack of respect and safety. As a female colleague of the worker who openly made sexist comments around service users, Louise was affected by, but also complicit in, his actions. Due to their shared positioning as service providers, she now questions whether the service users were therefore less likely to come to (either of) them for support.

An Ongoing Opening of Ourselves to Others' Reflexivity and Critique

While Louise can now think of some other strategies she could have used at this time, she cannot think of anything that would have allowed her to uncompromisingly work in an equitable partnership and also provide a sexism-free

atmosphere within the group. Any decision or action she might have made would have been an ethical trespass against someone. The route forward is perhaps to continue to try to make decisions in which the least harm is done, as well as to constantly reevaluate how our actions affect others in respect to diverse power relations.

This act of constantly critically reflecting on our role in perpetuating oppression applies even to the practice of reflexivity itself. Since originally drafting this article, concerns have been brought to our attention about the power associated with the questions Louise has raised. Although her colleague was a white male, he was from an economically oppressed country and thus geopolitical power relations are at play when Louise wonders what to do about his conduct. Is it possible to imagine him as capable of ethical interrogation and intervention into his own behaviour? Is it possible to imagine him as capable of ethical interrogation and intervention into her behaviour? How could one interrogate the power implied in initiating the work to make the organization a safe place, and with assigning oneself the role of protagonist in reflexivity? How is this positioning shaped by the moral economy in which Louise is already framed as anti-sexist, safe, and supportive, and her colleague as sexist, dangerous, and unsupportive (Thobani, 2007)? Further, how do her reflections and interventions perpetuate that very moral economy?

These questions haunt all reflexivity. What are the power relations that enable some of us to reflect upon our transgressions as a gesture toward justice and ethicality? When we do so, situating ourselves as protagonists, are we perhaps inevitably participating in the moral economy that objectifies the other as non-agentive and incapable of ethical self-interrogation? In Louise's reflection, for example, her colleague's actions are straightforwardly unethical and he is a passive recipient of her ethical interventions into what he says and does, rather than being ethically and collaboratively engaged in concerns about power or their clients' experiences. And, furthermore, their clients are likewise framed as having very limited agency: The only part they play in constituting their environment is lodging complaints about Louise's colleague. What other ways might they also have navigated this environment of interlocking geopolitical and sexist domination?⁹ How were their interlocking subjectivities brought into play when they did so? What kinds of questions would be required to think through how women from Louise's colleague's home country, in particular, navigated these interlocking relations of power?

We invite readers to read these questions as potentially applicable to their own ethical interrogations. In making this gesture, we assume that the questions we ask ourselves might open up possibilities for the kinds of questions readers might then be

⁹ See Mahmood (2005) and Smith (2005) for examples of contingently located navigations, both of which trouble studies that assume more universal navigations of power relations; see Chapman (2007) for a resonant reflexive critique of his own assumptions about a woman romantically involved with a man he was counselling.

enabled to ask themselves.¹⁰ This is a significant component of the operationalization of ‘ethical practice’ mobilized in this course. Following Foucault (2006), Mahmood (2005), and White (2007), ethics is always a collective venture, but is often not recognized as one. It is unlikely that Louise would ever have come to the questions raised above through private reflection or by consulting even the most thorough Code of Ethics. In ethical practice, “we cannot dispense with the other” (Foucault, 2006, p. 398); we cannot do this work alone.

Neo-liberalism and Preferential Treatment

Nazia’s interview explored how economics affect ethics in social services. The recent economic downturn, and how this was understood, resulted in ethical transgressions at her agency. Under neo-liberalism this is all too common. Agencies and workers increasingly have to do more with less. Workers, clients, and even management are then primarily judged on how efficiently they can participate in the illusion that there are no human costs to this.

Nazia assessed and accepted clients into her agency’s programs, which provided basic necessities for their client group to live in a dignified way. Her team was usually the first point of contact in providing direct service to clients and their families, determining who would be eligible to receive service, and deciding when these services would begin. In her interview, Nazia stated, “I started to notice a shift regarding clients’ start-dates.” The organization conducted a standardized assessment prior to initiating service, but they began to follow this inconsistently. There emerged a new practice whereby some clients were now served more quickly than others.

The government had recently released new means-tested funding, allowing qualified families (and wealthy families) to pay a higher fee than families who did not qualify. It became clear to Nazia and her team that families who received this funding or had large amounts of money were being fast-tracked. As she stated in her interview, “Families that came with a lot of money were starting services quicker than other families.”

In interviews with Ontario Social Workers, Rossiter et al. (2002) found that “practitioners needed reflective dialogue in order to deal with ethical dilemmas” (p. 545). As part of a close and cohesive team, Nazia found it useful to discuss this shift with her colleagues. Together they raised their concerns with management, who said that they understood what was occurring but that they could not address it. These funds, they said, were needed for the agency’s sustainability. “We were stuck and

¹⁰ This can be mapped onto Foucault’s operationalization of a relationship of power, offered during his ethical research, as a mode of action that acts upon others’ possibilities for action (1982, p. 220). One person’s actions create certain possibilities for others and close other possibilities. Yet this never happens “exhaustively” (1994, p. 324); there is always room for possible “responses, reactions, results, and possible interventions” (1982, p. 220). This is the operation of power involved in the micropractice of reflecting upon one another’s reflections. Each reflection potentially opens up new fields of possibility for each person present to reflect upon their own life.

there was nothing we could do about it. We just had to accept it, move forward, and try to accept as many clients as possible.” Nazia felt guilty about the families who were not given fair treatment. At the same time, she justified this by understanding that the economic downturn had necessitated this and that the unfair practice would therefore be temporary. Nazia also knew that families on the waitlist would be attended to once processing was completed with those who had been fast-tracked.

King (2003) wrote, “It’s not that we don’t care about ethics.... It’s just that we care more about our comfort and the things that make us comfortable—property, prestige, power” (p. 163). Looking at Nazia’s situation from the outside, readers might imagine that she accepted what was happening because, following King, she cared more about job security than ethics. But it was more complicated than only job security, which is not to say that this was not significant. She chose not to more actively push against the injustices, even though she was already in the process of leaving the job for unrelated reasons. Her choice to process clients as quickly as possible, and not more strongly challenge what was happening, was primarily motivated by the concern that service would have been further jeopardized if she had taken a more public stance against what she unequivocally felt was wrong. “My approach was to cause as little harm as possible to existing clients because ultimately it would be the clients who would suffer if there was management backlash.” She felt she was forced to act unethically, and she worried about the potential consequences for clients if she more actively challenged what was happening.

Uneven Distributions of Value, Accountability, and Responsibility

The primary justificatory narrative at Nazia’s agency was that the funding resulting from unfair treatment was necessary to keep the agency running. As unethical as this clearly was in terms of differential treatment, Nazia struggled with whether or not it was good for clients in the long term. What if it was truly needed for sustainability?

We needed the money so we could keep the workers we already had, so that clients wouldn’t suffer and would receive adequate support. I think a lot of people’s hands were tied, even upper management. They knew they had to give preferential treatment to some clients so we could save the organization as a whole.

This created a dilemma for Nazia: to whom should she privilege her accountability? She could not privilege her accountability to existing and future clients in general and also privilege her accountability to non-funded potential clients in particular (Derrida, 1995). This can also be framed as whether she privileged the guiding value of sustainability or that of fairness. She chose clients in general as her primary line of accountability and sustainability as her primary motivating value, even though she felt uneasy about the unfair treatment of financially disadvantaged clients.

But framing this as Nazia’s choice carries the danger of it being read through liberalism, with the assumption that we are implying she freely chose this route in a social and political vacuum. Nazia’s choice was, in effect, to ‘go with the flow’ of a

system not of her making or choosing. In this system, responsibility and support were unevenly distributed. Financially advantaged families received services more quickly than those who were financially disadvantaged, so they bore less responsibility for getting by without the agency's support. Further, because this took place without any outward acknowledgment that the agency had adopted a two-tiered system, the agency, its Board, and its management did not take any responsibility for the differential treatment. Full responsibility for serving financially disadvantaged clients now rested with front-line workers. If workers could not work more efficiently than they had in the past, only financially disadvantaged clients suffered.

We were constantly trying to accept as many clients as possible even though our caseload was building and building, because we didn't want these families to wait longer than they had to. We were trying to be there as much as we could for the clients who were there at the organization already, and for the clients who were waiting, and for the clients who were getting this preferential treatment. We tried to balance everything and not cause disturbance in the process.

Reflecting upon this experience through the classroom interview has helped Nazia to realize how important fairness is to her. It is a guiding principle that relates to her own life experiences: "I've been in situations where I felt that I've tried really hard to get something but then somebody else beat me to it because they had an advantage over me that had nothing to do with the target goal." In this work situation, however, she erred on the side of sustainability rather than fairness, even though she felt conflicted about doing so. Nazia ensured that spots were available to clients who were on the waitlist as a way of working toward fairness, but she knew this was not true fairness or equality.

Nazia's privileging of sustainability relied on her framing the economy as 'the culprit,' following the dominant framing of the situation in her agency. But through her interview she has started to wonder, what if the economy was not to blame? What if it was simply a choice to make more money? She has begun to reflect on her acceptance of the inevitability of the ethical transgression, and her justification for it, and is now wondering if the two-tier system might remain in place even if the economic climate improves. "In the future, if I found out that the organization was doing well again, but they continued to give preferential treatment to clients with more money, it would be devastating, because one of the ways I was trying to cope with it all was thinking it was a short term financial issue."

Nazia is fascinated that previous to her interview she had never considered that the agency's preferential treatment might be anything other than short-term. This illustrates again how others' participation in our reflections can bring us to previously unknown ethical deliberations. She has begun to reflect on how her navigation of the situation may have inadvertently reinforced ongoing ethical trespasses, rather than only mitigating them. Ethical trespass is inevitable due to our implication in an unjust social order (Weinberg, 2005), but these new reflections have left Nazia worried about how she responded to the unjust social order in which she was implicated.

Collective Strategies of Ethical Navigation

Nazia was fortunate to have a team that shared her values about service delivery. This enabled them to collectively mitigate the effects on their existing clients, even if she is now questioning those strategies. Weinberg (2005) stated that social workers' "resistance can inch toward trespass reduction when they question taken-for-granted notions, focus on social justice and on the elimination of inequity, and lead to action on those injustices" (p. 336). Nazia and her team's resistance entailed ensuring that existing clients continued to receive support, bringing concerns to management, and working toward non-funded clients' eventually receiving service. Without the support she had, she would have likely felt increased guilt, anger, alienation, and powerlessness. That said, specific social groups at specific times create particular possibilities for ethical reflection among individual members. The analyses and experiences of those in a contingent group shape what other members are exposed to as worry or critique. It is possible that Nazia might have been more worried about the policy shift being permanent if she had been a part of a differently configured team or even no team at all. It may indeed be the case that decreased feelings of guilt or anxiety may impede one's sense of urgency to act, without necessarily bringing about change (Chapman, 2013). This is not to suggest that support is bad or that this particular group was bad. The presence of a supportive group in situations like this can validate one's struggles and multiply possibilities for resistance. Even then, any group is limited by its particular membership and other contingencies, and a supportive environment does not automatically lead to greater resistance.

The role of others was also significant in Louise's reflection. Although she shared her process with her supervisor, explaining her challenges and the ways she was addressing these challenges, she did not directly ask her supervisor to intervene. This was partly because she conceptualized her value as a professional as being able to work amicably and proficiently with her colleague, while together providing clients with supportive services. This individualistic approach to navigating the situation was so engrained that directly asking management to become involved would have left her feeling incompetent in her professional role.

It was not until the classroom interview that Louise observed how embedded individualism was within her values and worldview. During her interview, Chris reflected,

In the West there's this idea that when we're met with these difficult situations we should be able to work through them individually to find a solution. It's a matter of how hard I'm going to try and if I can think about it in 'the right way.' If I can just think about it in the right way and work hard enough, I'm going to find a solution.

This relates to dominant Canadian understandings of professionalism, which Rossiter et al. (1996) suggested are strengthened under neo-liberalism. They described these as the

pressure to be credible. A professional knows the right answers. A professional is certain; in other words, a professional is worth paying for. Professionalism as certain knowledge, however, is a contradiction to the creation of a safe space for ethical discussions. Within ethical dialogue, the professional must be free to be a learner, to be uncertain, and to be ambivalent. For workers to show this provisionally in the current economic climate is to take the risk of feeling and being seen as unprofessional, as one who doesn't really know what he or she is doing (p. 310).

The classroom interview allowed Louise to expand the possible strategies of resistance she could have pursued, moving beyond individualism to consider collective ways of knowing and being. Mucina (2011) wrote, “Audre Lorde reminds us that the master’s tools can only lead to the creation of the master’s house. Similarly, colonial structures will only lead to the creation of neo-colonialism” (p. 78). Anti-colonial critique suggests that individualism perpetuates Western values and knowledges. Thus, if Louise wished to resist geopolitical domination within her interactions with her colleague, one strategy could have been to move toward a more collective approach. She now wonders: If she had put aside her belief that asking for support was equivalent to weakness and inability and if she had asked for help, is it possible that both she and her colleague would have had access to other resources and supports that would have enabled them to develop a more equitable and safe program?

Approaching the situation non-individualistically might have also tempered Louise’s centring of herself as protagonist, intervening in her colleague’s objectified and straightforward unethicity. Individual conceptualizations of intervention, when put into practice, are likely to have the impact of ‘inviting’ others’ defensiveness and political struggle. Spivak noted that certain kinds of interventions “do not allow me to be an ethical person; they drag me into being a political person” (Spivak and Dabashi, 2009)—that is, they can ‘invite’ a response of struggle rather than one of collaboration toward a shared endeavour. And had Louise’s clients also been invited into collaborative ethical navigation, they, too, would have emerged as ethical agents beyond those times they brought concerns to Louise. It is certain that Louise’s clients’ navigations went beyond these particular acts of lodging complaints, but we can wonder about what kinds of interventions and conceptualizations on a social worker’s part might allow client navigations to be recognized and effectual.

Ongoing Transformation—An Open-Ended Conclusion

We (Nazia and Louise) feel that being interviewed about past ethical transgressions gave us the opportunity to allow our stories to transform in directions they may not have otherwise. Through sharing and reflecting upon stories with others collectively, we had the opportunity to expand and shift the values by which we live. “If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives” (Okri, cited in King, 2003, p. 153).

The entire process of this activity, whether as storyteller or witness, was transformative. It allowed for the space, time, and support to reflect clearly and

critically on our own behaviours and the beliefs that motivated them. It provided the structure to support us in examining other possible perceptions that could potentially expand our ethical resources and options for the future. The exercise demonstrated that perception is malleable, and that with further critical reflection, different perspectives and opportunities for change are possible.

I (Chris) first taught this course in 2009 while in the midst of autoethnographies, research interviews, and theorizing ethics for my dissertation research. Since that time, going through this process with students several times now has continued to significantly stretch my understanding of the intimate connection between ethics and systemic oppression, between reflexivity and collective norms, and between affect and responsibility. Each time I teach this class I learn new lessons, have things I take for granted challenged, and resonate with students' stories so as to find myself pushed along new journeys of reflexivity and uncertainty. Other educators and facilitators who wish to adopt this approach should know that it may very well unsettle their sense of themselves and the world. This can be emotionally exhausting, but I believe it is also when teaching is most rewarding.

In working toward social work as social justice, it is essential that those who practice social work actively and continuously engage in the process of critical reflexivity. According to Heron, "Social workers who do so will be moving away from claims to innocence and instead acting more effectively to refuse their continued participation in and hence the perpetuation of, interlocking systems of oppression. Thus, they may become more truly anti-oppressive social work practitioners" (2005, p. 350). Where this is tempered by Badwall's (2013) concerns that social workers who are members of oppressed groups are not framed exclusively as participants in others' oppression, critical reflexivity can work toward transforming social work into a force that works with clients in increasingly anti-oppressive ways. The interviews in the ethics class provide support for journeys of reflexivity, reframing it from a process that is solitary and geared toward closure and certainty, and reconfiguring it into an open-ended and collaborative process. The exercise provides a framework for working together in community, supporting each other in the process of critical reflexivity oriented toward ethical transformations and social justice.

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