The Community of Philosophical Inquiry in Question
Examining the Role of the Facilitator in Deliberative Discussion

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Abstract
This article examines the democratic hopes for the community of philosophical inquiry (CPI), a mode of deliberative discussion, when social justice is both the topic and the goal of discussion. It shares insights from a CPI that was used as a research method (Golding, 2015) to enable the authors to interrogate their assumptions about “teaching for social justice.”

Much has been written about the educative power of deliberative pedagogies (e.g., Crocco et al., 2018; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Parker, 2011; Parker & Hess, 2001). As one approach to deliberation, communities of philosophical inquiry (CPI) are closely associated with Philosophy for/with Children [P4C], a diverse range of pedagogies that have developed and diverged from the work of Matthew Lipman and Ann Sharp since the 1970s (Gregory et al., 2017; Splitter & Sharp, 1995). This article reflects more recent “second-generation” theorization, which questions unitary and essentialist assumptions about P4C and manifests as a “medley of approaches” (Vansieleghem & Kennedy, 2011). Broadly, participants in a CPI engage in open-ended, collaborative discussion about philosophical concepts and questions that arise from the emerging interests of the group. Through participating in critical, creative, and caring collaborative dialogue, the aim is to think better,
Facilitating a CPI is a complex undertaking (e.g., Canuto, 2015; Kizel, 2021; Murris, 2000, 2008; Weber & Wolf, 2016). Akin to the improvisational nature of jazz, the role has been described as creating the conditions for emergence in philosophical discussion by modeling dialogical skills, intervening at strategic points, and keeping abreast of the group’s argument (e.g., Kennedy, 2004; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2010, 2011; Zorzi & Santi, 2020). The role requires practice, insight into the nature of philosophy, and complex thinking (Gregory, 2007; Kohan et al., 2017; Santi, 2017). Kennedy and Kennedy (2011) have described the CPI as horizontal and distributive, in which the success of the facilitator is measured by the extent to which her regulative function—distributing turns fairly and showing concern for the argument as a whole rather than just her individual perspective—comes to be shared by every other member of the group. In a mature group, each member takes the same care for the procedural and the substantive process itself, which allows the facilitator to become more philosophically, and not just procedurally, active. (p. 271)

A prevailing norm is that the facilitator commits to philosophical neutrality for the sake of progressing the inquiry. It has been argued that loosening procedural and substantive neutrality may be required in classroom contexts and that this can still be compatible with the CPI (e.g., Gregory, 2014a; Hand, 2020; Sovry & Lockrobin, 2020; Sprod, 2020). Among adults, however, the “philosophically self-effacing facilitator” (Sharp, 2017) seeks to develop epistemic equality among inquirers and mitigate the effects of their positionality influence on their facilitative moves, for example their choices about stimulus texts and lines of argument that are pursued (Chetty, 2017; Murris, 2008; Reed-Sandoval & Sykes, 2017). At first glance, at least, a CPI, with a philosophically self-effacing facilitator striving for epistemic equality would seem like an ideal methodology for engaging in deliberative democracy to consider what it means to “teach for social justice.”

A shared interest in teaching for social justice within our disciplines brought us together as facilitators. As three middle-aged, white, middle-class academic women, whose life experiences and institutional contexts have afforded considerable privilege, we anticipated that the CPI would provide a reflexive surface to interrogate our own assumptions and practices. It certainly did, but through an arguably dangerous route and one that troubled the very foundations of our selected research method and approach to facilitation. This article questions the effects of neutrality in the facilitator’s role and raises doubts about the capacity of the CPI to perform as a collaborative self-study research method. Our experiences also lead us to challenge the very possibility of experiencing democracy as political equals, or something roughly approximating that, within the CPI. After reflecting on our methodological and facilitation errors, we offer some constructive guidance around effective teaching methods for CPI that support deliberative democracy. But we remain skeptical that the CPI itself is a vehicle conducive to deliberative democracy, at least when it comes to the topic of social justice. Haynes and Murris (2012) and Chetty and Sussa (2017) have identified race as a problematic no-go area for CPIs; our experiences suggest that social justice may be another no-go area to add to the list.

Method

This article reflects on part of a collaborative self-study project initiated by two of the authors (Lucas & Milligan, 2019). Self-study methodology can use a range of methods to enable educators to reflect on their experiences, assumptions, and practices and generate insights for a wider audience (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2013, 2015; Vanasse & Kelchtemans, 2015). Such methods include the CPI (Makaiau et al., 2016, 2018). Harnessing the potential of collaboration (e.g., Curtis et al., 2013; Davey et al., 2011; Mena & Russell, 2017), we set out to challenge our preferred identity as social studies initial teacher educators with a commitment to social justice using the CPI as one self-study method. We used a range of self-study methods within the wider project, including observations of each other’s teaching practices, interviews, and surveys with our preservice teachers, and three CPIs (with colleagues in the United States and New Zealand, and with U.S. preservice teachers). This article reports on one part of the data, the CPI conducted in New Zealand. This CPI involved all three authors: Milligan, Lucas, and Bacharach. Bacharach entered this aspect of the project as a coresearcher because of her experience in facilitating communities of inquiry and because she was similarly interested in exploring her teaching for social justice. This CPI created the most dissonance of all the methods used in the collaborative self-study, stayed with us over time, and engaged all three authors in a long process of reflection. By contrast, a CPI conducted with colleagues in the United States, without the benefit of Bacharach’s facilitation expertise, was highly convivial and lacked “sticky” moments of emotion and disagreement that we experienced in the New Zealand CPI.

For Golding (2015) the CPI has four characteristics as a research method: “It is used to address philosophical problems and questions; the method blends collaborative philosophical inquiry and empirical data collection and analysis; the research is thus..."
done with the participants, and; produces philosophical and empirical results” (p. 208). Aware that social justice is something of a floating signifier in initial teacher education (Hyttten & Bettez, 2011), we were interested in the philosophical, conceptual analysis that a CPI could generate. We selected this method because we wanted to trouble our conceptions of social justice. CPIs are expressly concerned with conceptual questions and, even within a 90-minute session, the degree and depth of conceptual travel can be impressive. Children’s stretches in thinking can be observed as they develop procedural skills and consider new ideas and/or wrestle with confusion. Studies that involve adults (e.g., Chesters & Hinton, 2017; Golding, 2011; Tibaldeo & Lingua, 2018) are less typical than those that involve children in the P4C literature. We assumed that the adults in our group would have the procedural skills to engage in philosophical inquiry, which would enhance a focus on the concept of social justice. Lucas and Milligan hoped that the inherent intersubjectivity of a CPI could challenge our like-mindedness, which in part stemmed from our common orientation to social studies education, and that the reconstruction in our personal beliefs would be mutually influenced by the wider group (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2011). Further, we felt that the intersubjective nature of the CPI would position all participants as being “in this together” rather than the object of our research.

Using a snowballing recruitment method, and through our professional networks, we invited educators within and affiliated to a university in New Zealand to participate in a CPI at a mutually convenient time on the university campus. We deliberately sought to include participants who are racialized other than white. Six educators—Hannah, Nigel, Elizabeth, Kaia, Madeleine, and Adam (all names are pseudonyms)—with experience in informal, secondary, and tertiary education, agreed to participate, all of whom identified as having an interest in social justice education. Of the six, two identified themselves as a person of color, including one as Indigenous Māori, and four identified as white.

CPIs typically begin with different kinds of texts as a stimulus for generating philosophical questions that could motivate discussion. In this instance, we invited participants to reflect on their experiences in writing prior to meeting together. We asked each inquirer to consider questions or puzzles of practice that they had about their own teaching for social justice and to be willing to share these reflections in the discussion. An analysis of the written reflections prior to the CPI identified that three kinds of questions were of interest to the group: (a) What does social justice look like as a theory or a philosophical view, if it is a philosophical view? What does it look like as practices and concerns for teachers in terms of (b) authentic engagement and (c) leading to change?

Although Bacharach facilitated the discussion, each of us participated as facilitators because we were involved in determining the broad focus for discussion, bringing together the group, and keeping the discussion focused. Teaching for social justice sustained nearly 90 minutes of conversation, with most engaged in the conversation and one member mostly listening intently.

After transcribing the audio-recorded CPI, we used a thematic approach to analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Examples of issues and actions that participants connected to teaching for social justice were summatively coded, and then a layer of semantic, inductive coding focused on what was emphasized in discussion. The authors independently read the transcripts and identified 14 initial themes, compared coding, and reduced these to seven codes, recoded the transcript using these, and then discussed and agreed to the final coding. A second layer of latent coding focused on how the topic of social justice was discussed, noting where the discussion took a sudden turn or where contributions were not taken up. Again, we undertook this process collaboratively, debating and agreeing to our coding as we went.

In addition to a range of methodological shortcomings that are discussed in this article, the collaborative analysis did not extend beyond the three authors, although we did follow up with all participants afterward to seek their further reflections. We were conscious of not wanting to command too much time in a project that, while of interest to the group, was not directed to their central interests. For the purposes of our collaborative self-study, the reflexivity centered around us and how we work and think. This required an intimacy and vulnerability that would be more challenging, but not impossible, if the collaborative approach was extended to the entire group. As it happened, and as this article goes on to describe, the CPI generated limited enthusiasm or forward momentum for the wider group. In the absence of this, we committed to go where that larger group could not, in part because of the intimacy of our smaller collaboration.

The next section discusses the most compelling themes that were derived from our thematic analysis. While our CPI could readily identify a need for other teachers and students to “get beyond the bake sale,” that is, to critically consider social justice, four conversation-stopping maneuvers held us largely, and metaphorically speaking, in a convivial and comfortable conversation at the bake sale table. The subsequent section provides a deeper diagnosis for why the conversation became stuck at the bake sale, born of a deliberately long period of collaborative analysis among the three of us. Our professional experiences and world events since our CPI such as Black Lives Matter and rhetoric against critical race theory in the United States opened up more opportunities for us to discuss and consider our positionalities, complicity, and the context of our CPI.

**Stuck at the Bake Sale**

An initial discussion about recyclable coffee cups and banning plastic wrap set the tone for a CPI that was mostly attuned to perceived non-examples of social justice actions. The bake sale, mentioned 16 times, stood as a recurrent metaphor for what the members of the CPI saw as well-meaning school-based actions that involved limited emotional investment, risk-taking, and opportunities for children and young people to question their core beliefs or motivations for action. The group acknowledged that actions such as gold coin donations and beach cleanups can be starting points but viewed these as often failing to “stretch” students to engage more deeply or critically in relation to injustices. The group instead emphasized the need to teach for “thicker” understandings of social justice that cognize structural injustices, summarized by Hannah as involving “greater investigation; that...
deeper understanding of imbalance or what is really at the core of whatever the issue is. Whereas you can do an action and be quite superficial.” Three elaborations of this idea were suggested and agreed with by the group. First, Nigel added that social justice often involves collective action that cannot be solved by individuals alone. Second, Elizabeth emphasized that power-relationships raise questions that are “harder than what is right and good . . . [and involve questions such as] what is possible for people given their historical situation, given the box they are allowed to occupy?”

Third, the group stressed that social justice involves more than merely cognitive engagement and necessarily involves “giving something up,” such as being challenged in one’s position and having feelings of discomfort.

Despite concordance about the nature of social justice, subsequent feedback from other participants affirmed our sense that the discussion had failed to move us forward collectively and individually. Notably, the group largely externalized and depersonalized the topic, discussing teaching for social justice in distanced and unemotional terms rather than in terms of our own positional-ity, involvement, or responsibilities. The most emotionally charged moment in the discussion came at a point where participant Kaia suggested that a starting point for mutual respect could be to contextualize white privilege within New Zealand’s history of colonization. Not for the first time in the discussion, Kaia’s contribution lay unaddressed. Instead, Hannah steered the conversation toward the need to recognize cultural contributions more broadly, Nigel put in a plea for “modest aims” to teaching colonization in schools, and Elizabeth and Hannah then discussed children’s reticence to learn about colonization. When Kaia countered that children’s often-expressed claims that they had “already learned about New Zealand’s history” were a “smoke-screen,” a heavy silence fell.

This emotionally charged moment typified four main, interconnected strategies that members of the group employed to avoid discomfort. A first strategy bracketed what could be said about the topic. Issues such as poverty, racism, and the enduring effects of colonization were quickly set aside as off-limits for exploration. For example, noting the disparity between two geographically proximate schools in the city, Kaia implored that “if we are ever going to get real about those sorts of things, we need to talk about those types of issues,” that is, the ones in our own backyard. The group agreed, but the discussion ended there, without an acknowledgement of how this disparity touched us all or our complicity in the matter.

A second maneuver was to abstract away from injustices at stake in our conversation. For example, when racism and white privilege was brought up by one of the authors halfway through our conversation, the discussion went in several directions. Nigel connected it back to Martin Luther King’s speech from 50 years ago and the Malcolm X movie; Bacharach abstracted away from the issue to compare race to bake sales; and then Elizabeth redirected the subject to parents and others, rather than herself.

A third avoidance strategy was to shift our gaze and the locus of discussion to a (largely empathetic) consideration of the challenges, faults, and excuses of educators. It was notable that the puzzles of practice that participants were asked to prepare in advance of the CPI were not a strong feature of the discussion. Members of the CPI instead noted a range of challenges other teachers experience, including students’ success “on paper” (Milligan), teachers’ lack of knowledge and “time to sit down and really think about what they are doing” (Hannah), and the “hard work” (Elizabeth), vulnerability, and discomfort of teaching for social justice. We discussed teachers being negatively judged in the context of a system that does not reward teaching for social justice (Madeleine) and where teachers can be accused of being “high priests” (Madeleine and Hannah) for appearing to instigate social actions.

A fourth avoidance strategy was to disregard the contributions of others in our group, most notably Kaia’s. Despite Lucas and Kaia sharing a memorable experience of their interest in teaching for social justice having been dismissed by a colleague, at many points contributions to the discussion were similarly disregarded. When Kaia raised the need to examine one’s own biases and systemic injustice, everyone avoided the topic. No one picked up on her comment that structures are “all around us. We use it to navigate our lives, and if we don’t touch on that we are painting a sort of facade. It is important to teach the principle [of social justice], but the principle needs to be applied.” The conversation veered instead toward schools’ efforts to raise money for international charities.

A Diagnosis of Failure

A glum sense of failure hung over our initial debrief. Unable to significantly challenge each other’s thinking or move forward productively, the inquiry had largely amounted to sharing and confirming our existing positions and was missing a sense of cognitive and emotional work that turned back on each member of the group. In holding ourselves as facilitators accountable for this blocked inquiry, this section diagnoses the failure through the lens of (dis)comfort, which is explored through three levels.

At one level, we underestimated the importance of comfort with each other, that is, the relational trust within the group. Previously described limitations of a “one-off” CPI (D’Olimpio & Teschers, 2014; Hyland, 2012; Millett & Tapper, 2012; Sharp, 2004) compounded this problem. We naïvely assumed that our group would engage in a rich discussion and open up because we were all adults and claimed to be interested in social justice issues. Several of us were meeting each other for the first time, and we did not consider the asymmetrical power relations in the group that, for example, could have made the graduate students uncomfortable to speak up or made it difficult for colleagues and friends to challenge each other’s deeply held beliefs. These barriers to sharing power among participants (Burgh & Yorshanky, 2011) meant that substantive sharing happened in subsequent hallway and email conversations, instead of in the CPI.

At another level of discomfort, the inquiry lacked a sense of communally felt difficulty. The information that was shared with the group prior to participating made clear that the research was part of a self-study, and we invited participants who were similarly interested in teaching for social justice. However, the purposes and
Lurking Questions: Questioning the Foundations of the CPI

Those problems highlight challenges to running a CPI about social justice. Individually, any one of the challenges may seem surmountable. Collectively, they belie a more serious question lurking in the background: Is it even conceptually possible to run a CPI about social justice? We offer reasons to be cautiously optimistic, though our reasons are constrained with limitations. The CPI is one avenue into conversations about social justice. Ultimately, however, such a philosophical investigation must eventually connect to the real world by taking account of the existing state of affairs and contextual/contingent claims, enable members of the inquiry to be able to introspect with self-reflexivity and hold one another accountable, and work for change and progress in the real world. These aspirations have already been articulated in second-generation and critical approaches to P4C (e.g., Gregory, 2014b). However, Chetty (2017) argues:

> It is not merely that actual communities of inquiry fall short of their ideal, which may be inevitable, it is that they foreclose opportunities to move closer toward the ideal—an ideal that includes encounters with the other, rethinking of ways of philosophizing, the development of empathy, a questioning of our deepest assumptions—by the way they function in reality. To put it in stronger terms—philosophizing about diversity, equality and difference in “gated communities” needs to be recognized as incongruous—and perhaps even absurd. (p. 479)

We are sympathetic to Chetty’s worries. However, persisting in philosophizing about diversity, equality, and difference in a gated community is as incongruous and absurd as it is essential and vital. After all, it is precisely inside those gates where such philosophy is missing, where it is urgently needed, and where it has potential to make an impact. If white philosophers want to be good allies and make a difference in the philosophical community, a vital starting point is inside those gates.

Our failed research project and CPI supports Chetty’s (2017) concern that philosophizing about diversity and difference is difficult, if not downright impossible, within gated communities. This skepticism notwithstanding, our reflections reveal an important lesson about the facilitator: They cannot take on a neutral role focused solely in pursuit of cognitive reconstruction. Instead, they must open the discussion to questions about the CPI itself and be willing to allow those questions to be directed at themselves as much as they are to other members of the discussion. In our CPI, it was taken for granted that the facilitator would be neutral with respect to the substance of the conversation. But this turned out to underscore the elephant in the room, that the identity politics between the facilitator and inquirers cannot be ignored. (Burgh & Yorshanky, 2011). The very idea of a neutral facilitator would require minimizing or ignoring identity politics. The viability of a robust conversation about social justice requires members to recognize their positionality, their status, and their power in that conversation, and the identity of the facilitator is just as much at stake as it is for other participants in the conversation. Unfortunately, this is at odds with the expectation that a CPI facilitates a neutral observer. To be a neutral observer is to somehow be “above” or “outside” of the subjective and personal attributes of the members of the CPI, and this is fundamentally at odds with the very idea of a CPI about social justice. Social justice CIs therefore require giving up the neutral facilitator.

At this point, one might be tempted to wonder why the CPI facilitation requires neutrality. Why not simply give up the requirement? Chetty’s (2017) skepticism suggests that it is conceptually impossible to run a CPI about social justice in a way that acknowledges the content of social justice as fundamentally being about identity politics, while attempting to present the facilitator as a neutral party in the discussion. Before we buy into Chetty’s skepticism, the next section explores the feasibility of giving up the neutral facilitator. In addition to acknowledging the intimate connection between social justice and identity politics, giving up the neutral facilitator may offer a way of fostering true deliberative democracy within the CPI. As we shall see, it does not solve all the problems—but it is a start.
Rejecting the Demand for Facilitator Neutrality

Communities of inquiry about social justice are by their very nature focused on the role that identity politics plays in conversations about social justice. Acknowledging the role of social, racial, ethnic, economic, and other facets of our identities is key to addressing social justice. Burgh & Yorshank (2011) have persuasively shown how forcing egalitarianism can backfire within a CPI by shutting down authentic emotional responses and views, thereby blocking inquiry (p. 437). Our research builds and extends on this idea in two ways. First, it is not just power dynamics among the group that can block inquiry; social, racial, ethnic, economic, and other emotionally charged facets of identity from outside the group can also seep into the CPI, causing the internal power dynamics to mirror society. It is a mistake to believe that identity politics can be left at the door, and we saw this explicitly in our CPI. Second, it is not just inquirers who are unable to leave their identity politics at the door; facilitators also can fail to do so. If we accept that identity politics can stymie productive group dynamics, then it should come as no surprise that they can equally hinder the ability of the facilitator to unblock a faltering CPI.

The problems posed by identity politics infiltrating the CPI shows itself in a variety of ways. Most simply, it can block an inquiry. Normally, the facilitator is supposed to rise above substantive debates about how identity is related to addressing social justice; as a third party, they are not meant to be meddling in the debate. The idea, however, that the facilitator can rise above the identity politics of the CPI is hypocritical at best and undermining at worst. It is a mistake to think that the facilitator would, could, or should be above acknowledging their own identity politics as they play out within the CPI. So, our recommendation for the facilitator’s role in a CPI about social justice is that the facilitator acknowledge their own positionality in relation to identity politics within the community. We argue that this one key move could generate a multiplicity of flow-on effects for everyone in the CPI.

Acknowledging the Emotional Stakes in the CPI

Forgoing the neutral observer enables a CPI about social justice to move beyond the bake sale and opens the conversation in several ways. For another, it makes room for emotions. Emotions are a central feature missing from social justice conversations that remain stuck at the bake sale. It is not enough, in other words, to restrict a CPI about social justice to exclusively philosophical and cognitive discussions. Doing so strips social justice conversations from their inherently lived and emotionally charged experience. Just as P4C textbooks “can be read as cultural products that perpetuate Whiteness by providing narratives that are seemingly about racism but that remove its temporal and spatial realities,” the bake sale plays this role in our CPI (Chetty, 2017, p. 40). Social justice, after all, involves a response that invokes the robust dimensions of its impact: The CPI must make room for our emotional responses, even when they do not reflect philosophy’s stereotypically disembodied or fully rational aspirations. These emotional responses to injustice arise out of particular lived experiences. Those lived experiences, and the emotions they elicit, ground particular ways of perceiving, processing, and evaluating salient aspects of the situation—they explain why a poor person of color sees a situation differently than a rich privileged white person. Staying at the bake sale was the facilitator’s way of enforcing what Chetty (2017) has called the “safety of whites,” which he suggests “may be observed by choosing to speak in such a way that Whiteness is not interrupted, and White people are not forced to think anew about their relationship to racism. Alternatively, it may be observed by silence” (p. 49).

Facilitators who harness emotions, rather than taming them, can break that silence because those emotions are necessary to open up the dialogue to concepts, ideas, and issues that sit at the intersection of our (philosophical) values and our (emotional) identity. Concepts like guilt, responsibility, and accountability are notions that invoke both philosophical values and our emotionally laden identities. They arise out of lived experiences and their emotionally qualitative feelings. All these experiences are shared by the facilitator and the members of the CPI, and they all are essential to a productive CPI about social justice.

It is not enough to simply acknowledge experiences of guilt, responsibility, and accountability. They must be put on the table for examination, discussion, and reflection. Accepting the discomforting force of social justice concepts enables participants to deliberately question the constitution and operation of the group itself. The social justice topic, in other words, can fold back onto itself and explore the role that social justice plays in the CPI. This involves seeing ourselves as facilitators and the CPI as being in question (Biesta, 2017). In contrast to a philosophical dialogue about the dialogue itself (Murris, 2008), room is made for other kinds of questions, such as how injustice is present and felt within the dialogue. When we introspect into one’s own role and positionality within the group, we are engaging in an activity that is at once cognitive and emotional.

Toward a New Working Model of the CPI

How do we turn this target of this investigation onto ourselves as members of the CPI? It is not obvious what would need to be in place to make this possible—for example, could the facilitator be white? What constraints around ethnic and racial diversity need to be put in place? What boundaries need to be in place to enable the expression of emotions? Many factors would need to be examined and these issues are complex. These issues, however, make much more obvious why we failed in our initial inquiry: As privileged, middle-class white women, we should have known better. This neither absolves us from responsibility nor erases the motivating force of our shame. It is, however, a vivid reminder that the complex facets of social, ethnic, racial, political, and economic identity explain why our CPI became stuck at the “bake sale.” It also underscores that it is a mistake to believe there is no philosophical role for identity or emotions in our quest.

This discussion brings us back to our original question, reformulated: Is it possible for a CPI to explore social justice, when the foundations of philosophy—truth, rationality, and objectivity—deny the very concepts at stake in social justice, such as identity politics, lived experiences, and the emotional dimension of injustice. We do not think so. Suppose we take the lessons
from our failed inquiry seriously and we reject the demand for facilitator neutrality; acknowledge the identity politics at play both within the CPI and between the CPI members and the facilitator; and embrace the pedagogy of exposure and interruption, and all the hesitation it may bring. Do CPIs have sufficient capacity to wrestle the kinds of absences and silences we have described? We had hoped that adopting a CPI as an intersubjective research method would be more generative than other research methods. This seemed reasonable; since CPIs typically operate from democratic principles and since they are designed to be bracketed off from ordinary conversations, they often can alter the embedded power-relations that operate in everyday lives. Our hope that a CPI for social justice would be methodologically appropriate was, however, unconsciously underwritten by assumptions about the relationship between philosophic inquiry, democracy, and ordinary conversation. Among these assumptions was that we can only be democratic to the extent that we are willing to overlook the role that experiences of injustice plays in a CPI. Our research suggests a healthy dose of skepticism and introspection are needed to do this successfully.

This skepticism, however, extends beyond the CPI. The uneven playing field of identity politics in the classroom means that all conversations around social justice require a healthy dose of skepticism and introspection. Experiences like ours offer insights into ways of improving our working model of a CPI in ways that have the potential to foster richer conversations about social justice and make room for the social, emotional, psychological facets of the debates, alongside the philosophical ones. But this requires us to rethink how we engage with philosophy. Our CPI offers us an opportunity to interrupt—to stop, to introspect, to question and challenge—the status quo. A pedagogy focusing on exposure and interruption (Biesta, 2011, 2017) may bring about hesitation, an experience of not knowing that makes us stop rather than rush into the pseudo-security of questions, hypothesis, reasons, examples, distinctions, connections, implications, intentions, criteria, and consistency.

Under these conditions, could this alternative model of engagement be extended to a possible self-study methodology? Interestingly, the method worked as a collaborative self-study approach because its failures pulled us up short. But the route was dangerous and circuitous. We are not confident we could be capable of identifying the relevant opportunities to interrupt, of holding our experience of not knowing, sufficiently to be productive. Indeed, we think it is also an open question about whether conceptual analysis is what we really need when it comes to this alternative engagement with philosophy for the purposes of extending deliberative democracy. We think taking up other opportunities for lived experience that lessened the distance of travel between ourselves and people of color in the group would have been better. Our own later experiences have shunted us out of our own constructs and assumptions, but while we are open to further reconstruction, we are doubtful that submitting them to philosophical inquiry would offer us any additional insights.

Conclusion
Using the CPI as a research method, we set out to explore teaching for social justice. At least three issues contributed to our endeavor’s failure: (a) The group, including ourselves, used a range of tactics to avoid personalizing social justice education and exploring issues in any great depth. (b) We made a number of mistakes in relation to constituting group and ignoring the power, emotional, and race dynamics within it. (c) The method itself prioritized rationality and neutrality over the historically contingent, emotional, and ethically charged nature of social justice issues that entwine issues of power, race, and positionality. Such challenges not only pose problems for CPI but also connect to a wider conversation about the limitations of deliberative pedagogies. Our failures provide some insight into how to improve CPIs: Greater attention to the skills of the facilitator, we contend, could loosen the expectation of objectivity and leave room for a more nuanced understanding of the role. We have suggested that the mistakes and problems we experienced could be the result of an outdated model of P4C that makes certain assumptions (truth, rationality, objectivity), which in turn caused us to adopt an outdated model of the facilitator. At least for social justice, perhaps these models are anathema to the subject and hence also call for a new kind of facilitation and facilitator role.

References


