WHO'S IN DRAG?:
STRONG CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT PREJUDICE, NORMALCY, GENDER AND SEXUALITY

by

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ABSTRACT

This project undertakes a conceptual exploration of prejudice formation, maintenance, and reduction within the context of Educational Studies. It investigates some common sources of prejudice and offers an ethically defensible, realistic resource for teaching aimed at diminishing gender and sexual prejudice. In doing so, this project aims to make three important contributions to social justice research and practice. First, it brings together insights from the feminist, post-structuralist work of the identity theorist Judith Butler and from the philosopher of education Richard Paul. I argue that, taken together, their independent work on performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism offers a more complete picture of the dynamics that support and undermine social practice and belief than either can provide alone. Second, this project draws on the literature of strong critical thinking to argue that self-knowledge plays a vital but thorny role in reducing personal prejudice. To this end, it explores four interconnected aspects of self about which people may lack a deep understanding: (1) their modes of thinking, i.e., the manner in which they form their beliefs; (2) their background logics, i.e., the content and relationships of their beliefs about themselves and the world; (3) their dispositions, i.e., their habitual cognitive, affective, and behavioural inclinations; and (4) their identities, i.e., people's own experience of who they are, what they value, and how they relate to the world. I argue that the knowledges, competencies, and dispositions essential to strong critical thinking can reduce prejudices rooted in performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism, as it helps to develop self-knowledge, improve purposeful thinking, and modify character traits. Third, this project provides educators addressing heterosexism and homophobia a conceptual tool - The Continuum of (Subversive) Drag Performance -
designed to encourage strong critical thinking about gender and sexuality. The six ranges of the continuum facilitate the analysis of pervasive conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy and the wide-spread patterns of performance in which they are based. They also support educators in creating communities of inquiry that are relatively flexible, unconstrained by common conceptions of normalcy, humour-filled, and ripe with opportunities for the constructive practice of critical thinking.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Origins and Importance of this Project

There are many intellectual, social, and personal factors that motivate this conceptual exploration of prejudice formation, maintenance, and reduction within the context of Educational Studies. In the 1990s, I worked as a sexual health educator in British Columbia. As such, I spent much of my time talking to people in schools, community centers, and non-profit organizations about how to keep their bodily and emotional selves healthy and safe. One of the greatest challenges that I faced in my work was providing people – particularly young people – with the basic information necessary to guide them in their journey to becoming physically and sexually mature adults. While many adults think that they know everything there is to know about “the birds and the bees,” many others fight ferociously to keep their children from learning fairly rudimentary biological facts.

There are many reasons for the parental resistance that sexual health educators often encounter. Some parents are afraid that talk of bodies or sexual health will undermine what they characterize as their children’s innocence. These parents often fear that learning a scientific vocabulary for body parts and processes will only serve to truncate the sheltered, carefree childhood to which they feel their children are entitled. While working in BC schools, I found that providing a clear, detailed outline of the topics that I planned to address could often ease such fears, as could ensuring that the information provided was appropriate for the age of the students. In-depth discussions of contraceptive methods might be appropriate, and even prudent, in the high school years, but they are typically both ill-suited and unnecessary for early elementary audiences.
I also found that parents with innocence-based objections typically became more receptive to sexual health programming when I had the opportunity to provide them good reasons for allowing it. For example, I often suggest to people that the quickest way for children to truly lose their innocence is to be sexually assaulted. Alternatively, the best way to protect children against sexual assault is to teach them about their bodies. In interviews, convicted pedophiles frequently admit that children who lack a scientific vocabulary for their body parts make easy, safe targets (Hickling, 1999). Having often been targets themselves, sexual offenders know that children who giggle at the thought of having a “dinky” or a “pee-pee,” but who have no idea that they have a “penis,” typically have no adult in their lives who candidly talks to them about the health of their bodies and the integrity of their boundaries. As Hickling (1999) notes, “sexually intrusive people will almost always choose a victim who knows nothing and hence, will not tell either. The silence on the part of the parent has become a powerful message not to talk about it” (p. 32).

However, while innocence-based objections to sexual health education can often be offset by providing parents with factual information and good reasons, many objections cannot be reduced so straightforwardly. In BC schools, I often encountered fairly immovable opposition to forms of sexuality education that celebrate or support a diverse range of sexual identities and behaviors. Many communities strongly oppose any discussion of genders and sexualities that differ from the norms dominant in their own circles. Even when sexual health educators are allowed into elementary, junior high, and high schools to talk about human anatomy and physical safety, they are often not permitted to talk about homosexuality, other so-called “deviant” sexualities, or any
sexual practices deemed “abnormal.” Sometimes, such directives are rooted in the prejudices of school administrators and teachers. More often, they originate in the community, with the school principal acquiescing to and enforcing parental wishes. Either way, the intensity of the fear, shame, and anger that some people expressed when inquiring about whether I planned to talk about homosexuals and homosexuality always amazed and perplexed me. These people’s obviously deep-seated objections were directed both towards gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) people and towards what they mistakenly perceived to be sexual practices exclusive to GLBT. Even when I expected it - and I learned to pretty much always expect it - I was still always surprised by the vigour with which some people opposed even a mention of what one administrator actually referred to as “the h-word.” Encountering such resistance was both troubling and frustrating, not only because sexual health education promotes the development of (sexually) mature, well-adjusted adults, but also because it can reduce the very gender and sexual prejudice that often powerfully grounded some of the more immovable objections to sexual health education that I encountered. Such obstacles to delivering robust sexual health programming in BC schools played a significant role in my decision to study heterosexist and homophobic thinking, beliefs, and emotional reactions, and thus become more capable of reducing them.

While my experiences with parents, teachers, and administrators were sometimes frustrating, my experiences with students could be heartbreaking. For example, sometimes boys who have gynecomastia - i.e., the slight breast growth often seen in pubescent boys – would privately admit to having lived for some time in silent fear that they were dying of breast cancer. While gynecomastia is a completely harmless,
common, and passing stage of physical maturation - when the boy’s rib cage grows to adult size, the excess skin typically spread outs and is no longer noticeable – these pubescent boys’ customary fear that their bodies were transgressing gender or sexual norms prevented many of them from searching out the human and informational resources that could allay many of their medical and emotional anxieties. While boys tend not to use this language to explain why they have remained silent for so long, they do commonly express the horror that their new breasts make them a girl, and by extension, a “fag.” In fact, many boys whose peers find out that they have gynecomastia are teased or bullied relentlessly precisely for these reasons. While the harassment and emotional distress reflected in this example is perhaps not as straightforward as either the hiss of “dyke” in the hallway or the assault of “queer” on the way home, they are highly representative of the kinds of tragic consequences that can follow from gender and sexual prejudice. Witnessing this type of immediate, palpable harm only increased my desire to better understand the sources and dynamics of prejudice, so that I might be better equipped to respond to and reduce it.

While I cut back significantly on my sexual health work when I began my graduate studies, I have continued to meet regularly with a network of practicing sexual health educators. Their stories confirm not only that homophobia and heterosexism remain a major impediment to teaching body science, but also that tangible harm continues as a result. For example, they lament the difficulty of discussing the physical dangers, widespread myths, and opportunities for risk reduction associated with what is characteristically a very high-risk form of sexual contact: anal sex. The delicate nature of the mucous membranes in the anus makes them extremely susceptible to minute tears,
and thus, when unprotected, to the transmission of infection. Still, as my colleagues observe, some young people engage in anal sex both as a means of avoiding pregnancy and as a means of preserving their vaginal or “real” virginity. Unfortunately, however, while both heterosexuals and homosexuals engage in this type of sexual behaviour, it is still frequently perceived as the defining act of homosexuals and homosexuality. The fear and hatred integral to gender and sexual prejudice encourages people to erect this type of strict division between perceived gay and straight sexual behaviour, in part because it allows a strict, mutually-exclusive categorization and valuation of gay and straight people to be maintained more easily. However, when people and sexual behaviour are understood as either wholly heterosexual or wholly homosexual, and thus accepted as normal or derided as deviant, it becomes increasingly challenging to disseminate relevant, life-preserving sexual health information to the diverse audiences that need it. Thus, in these and many other ways, my involvement with sexual health education has contributed to my present active desire to better understand and effectively counter heterosexism and homophobia.

While this project originally grew out of my experiences as a sexual health educator in Canadian high schools, my time as a lecturer in the teacher education program at the University of British Columbia served to reinforce my concern with the formation, maintenance, and reduction of gender and sexual prejudice. In both these contexts, not only did I frequently come face-to-face with the lived, negative consequences of heterosexism and homophobia, but I also was reminded regularly of its pervasiveness and persistence. As an instructor at UBC, I continue to encounter many varied attitudes towards sexuality and gender that could benefit from critical reflection.
Some of my students think that prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender, or both, no longer exist. They see it as a problem of generations past that they will not face in their practice. Other students understand heterosexism, homophobia, and sexism as isolated problems, unconnected to policy decisions and institutional structures. They acknowledge that some individuals are biased, but not that government mandated educational programming, classroom texts, or the school system itself might also be. These groups of teacher education students usually lack an awareness of the extent and effects of heterosexism and homophobia.

Other students judge homosexuality itself to be morally problematic. Diverse but deep-rooted religious convictions ground the beliefs of many, but not all, of these students. Many of them claim that, although they do not condone lesbian and gay “lifestyles,” they will be able to care for and capably teach GLBT students. Others simply do not engage with questions of social justice as it relates to sexual orientation. Addressing the homophobia of these groups of teacher education students is particularly difficult, because it requires paying meticulous attention to the intimate bonds among their prejudices, their other core beliefs, and their personal identities. Regardless of the particular mix of attitudes towards gender and sexuality that teacher education students have brought to my classroom, the classes where we discuss how they might address (homo)sexuality in their own classrooms are always emotionally heated, psychically risky, and highly contentious.

Nonetheless, it is of vital importance to convince teacher education students that they should actively endeavour both to lessen their own heterosexism and homophobia and to provide their students with a learning environment free of gender and sexual
prejudice. Teachers greatly influence the moral development of their students. Moreover, they interact daily with students, parents, and the children of parents who identify as GLBT. If straight children are to grow up without biases against other, often marginalized, sexualities, they need teachers who will help them to explore their personal, familial, cultural, and institutional assumptions and prejudices about difference. If GLBT students, or students who love GLBT people, are to feel safe at school and develop healthy identities, they need teachers who do not tolerate homophobic name-calling in the classroom, the halls, or the playground. They need overt and hidden curricula that neither explicitly nor implicitly attack their realities within and beyond the school context. My experiences as a lecturer in the teacher education program at UBC reinforce my conviction that elementary, junior high, and high school teachers should be taught both to recognize and actively counter institutional heterosexism and their own homophobia and to knowledgeably and justly respond to homophobia and heterosexism when they do encounter them. However, my experiences both at UBC and as a sexual health educator also leave me convinced that better resources for – or, at least, more varied approaches to - countering gender and sexual prejudice would help in this endeavour.

Of course, the attitudes and apprehensions expressed by some of the teacher education students and parents whom I have encountered through my work are not theirs alone. The values they express reflect the varying degrees of gendered and sexual prejudice that run throughout most North American communities. Thus, while my experiences as a sexual health educator and an instructor at UBC primarily motivate my exploration of some common sources of prejudice and some possible resources for
prejudice reduction, my research interest extends beyond social justice education in
elementary or high schools and universities. Schools are not the only places where
heterosexism and homophobia are found. Research on the human and economic impacts
of heterosexism and homophobia bears out its pervasive presence and harm (Banks,
2001; Banks, 2003). As heterosexism and homophobia negatively affect every segment
of society, prospective and practicing teachers are not the only populations who should
closely and critically examine their sometimes morally problematic, normalized
assumptions about gender and sexuality. Social justice education must also help members
of the general population acknowledge and explore their personal biases, so that they
might begin to knowledgeably and justly respond to discrimination within their own
families, communities, and institutional structures.

Whether knowingly or not, people in most North American communities interact
daily with children, adults, and the children of adults who identify as GLBT. If GLBT-
people, and the people who love them, are to feel and be safe, and develop healthy
identities and lives, better resources for preventing and combating heterosexism and
homophobia must be developed. Thus, rather than focusing specifically on homophobia
and heterosexism within the formal school system, my thesis investigates gender and
sexual prejudice within the broader Canadian context. Specifically, not only does my
thesis set out to investigate some common sources of prejudice formation and
maintenance as well as the barriers against prejudice reduction that these sources of
prejudice can create, but it also offers an ethically defensible resource I have developed
that is well-suited to countering gender and sexual prejudice. In choosing this approach, I
hope to attract interest across diverse disciplines and communities, demonstrating both
the immediate relevance of my work to anyone working towards social justice in the 
areas of gender and sexuality and the possible applications of my work to anyone seeking 
to counter prejudice of any sort.

**Goals of this project**

This project aims to make at least three important contributions to the well-
developed and ever-growing field of social justice research and practice. First, by 
drawing primarily on the feminist, post-structuralist work of the identity theorist Butler 
and on the ideas of the philosopher of education Richard Paul, my thesis brings together 
insights from two fields of research that do not normally interact meaningfully with each 
other. Traditionally, the research in Butler and Paul’s different academic disciplines and 
intellectual traditions differs in both terminology and style, as well as in the assumptions 
from which they build and the guiding purposes towards which they strive. Still, in 
Chapters 2 & 3, I bring together Butler’s writing on performativity and Paul’s writing on 
undisciplined thinking and egocentrism to form the jumping off points for my subsequent 
examination of some common sources of prejudice. I argue that, taken together, their 
work offers a more complete picture of the dynamics that support and undermine social 
practice and belief than either can provide alone. In particular, I argue that Paul’s 
conception of strong critical thinking – which I present in Chapter 4 as a powerful 
resource for prejudice reduction – presents some serious challenges to Butler’s 
characterization of human agency, and therefore also to her analysis of the force of social 
practice and belief. However, Butler’s analysis of performativity also complicates Paul’s 
arguments about the effectiveness of strong critical thinking; prejudices that are formed
and maintained by frequent and consistent social practice may be largely unavailable to
critical reflection by the prejudiced person. In bringing together the arguments of a highly
controversial identity theorist and a foundational strong critical thinking theorist, I seek
to navigate the tensions between some iterations of Cultural Studies and the Philosophy
of Education, demonstrating that each tradition has much to offer the other. While my
work seeks merely to begin a dialogue between these traditionally disparate fields, the
manner in which they can enhance each other suggests that this conversation could and
should be continued.

Second, my project seeks to contribute to social justice research both by arguing
that self-knowledge plays a vital but thorny role in the reduction of personal prejudice
and by offering a conceptual tool that there is good reason to believe can help people to
increase the degree and honesty of their self-knowledge. When people have a poor
understanding of themselves and their thinking, they are unlikely to recognize or admit to
holding prejudices. They are, thus, unable to monitor and work through them. However,
as I argue throughout this project, people’s self-knowledge can be limited in many
profoundly knotted ways, including: the extent to which they are unaware of who they
are, what they genuinely believe, or why they believe it. In other words, people with
limited-self-knowledge can lack a deep understanding of at least four aspects of their
selves: (1) their modes of thinking, i.e., the manner in which they form their beliefs; (2)
their belief systems or background logics, i.e., the content and relationships of their
beliefs about themselves and the world; (3) their dispositions, i.e., their habitual
cognitive, affective, and behavioural inclinations; and, (4) their identities or conceptions
of self, i.e., people's own profound sense of who they experience themselves to be, what
they value, and how they relate to and in the world.

I argue that these domains of self-knowledge can be easily clouded both by
performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism and by the barriers to purposeful
thinking that these common sources of prejudice can erect. As a result, my project
focuses not only on how social practices, thinking, beliefs, emotional and behavioural
responses, and conceptions of self can impede self-knowledge, thereby contributing to
the formation and maintenance of personal prejudice, but also on how social justice
educators might use the resources offered by strong critical thinking to help people to
become more cognizant of the impact of these potential sources of prejudice on their own
self-knowledge. Thus, by arguing for the vital but thorny role that a well-rounded self-
knowledge plays in the reduction of personal prejudice and by constructing a practical
resource that my conceptual analysis suggests can help to increase self-knowledge,
improve thinking, and thereby work against prejudice, my project seeks to contribute to
social justice research both in its particular focus and in its proposed solution.¹

Last, my project seeks to contribute to social justice research by helping educators
to assemble more robust toolboxes for fighting social injustices. The very fact that

¹ In advocating that people strive to continually develop their self-knowledge, I am not suggesting
that the cultivation of absolute self-knowledge is likely to be achieved. In fact, there is good reason to
suspect that such an achievement would be impossible. As I argue in Chapter 4, the cultivation of even a
relatively modest degree of genuine self-awareness and self-understanding is typically an arduous, long-
term process. Moreover, the formation of people's identities, as well as their modes of belief formation,
background logics, affective tendencies, and patterns of behaviour - in short, the formation of people's
selves - never results in fixed, stable products. As Harding writes: "Identity is not an essence or an attribute
of the individual, but a positioning, a process, a performance which is always incomplete and must be
repeatedly reinvented and re-enacted within the context of history, power and discourse" (Harding, 1998, p.
128). Because the formation of identity and self is never complete, neither can be the process of self-
discovery and self-assessment. As long as the self is shifting, there will always be more to know about the
self. Therefore, in suggesting that people strive to develop their self-knowledge in order to reduce their
personal prejudices, I am suggesting that people must make a commitment to a life-long pursuit.
prejudice and its lived consequences still exist suggests that better – or, at least, more varied - resources for prejudice reduction would be useful. Until the day that prejudice and its far-reaching effects have been eradicated from the personal, the communal, and the institutional, there will be a demonstrated need for alternative approaches to countering prejudice in all of its complexities. I argue below that because the Drag Continuum that I present in Chapters 5 & 6 is designed to be relatively unthreatening, flexible, and humour-filled, there is good reason to believe that it is well-suited to accounting for the profound, deep-seated embedding of prejudice in the diverse aspects of the self. Furthermore, while Butler’s analysis suggests that prejudices formed and maintained by performativity are largely unavailable to critical reflection by the prejudiced person, the continuum that I present helps to draw explicit attention to these pervasive patterns of social practice and belief. In providing a wedge to break the mindless cycle maintained by performativity, this resource and others like it make the strong critical thinking approach to prejudice reduction a realistic possibility. Finally, because this resource attempts to overcome prejudice by means of developing strong critical thinking rather than by attempting to manipulate or indoctrinate, it is an educationally and morally desirable approach. Thus, my thesis seeks to contribute to the literature not only by beginning a dialogue between traditionally disparate fields and by highlighting the importance of self-knowledge to the formation, maintenance, and reduction of prejudice, but also by adding a promising, ethically-defensible method of prejudice reduction to social justice educators’ existing repertoires.

In establishing the scope of this thesis, I have chosen not to engage in formal empirical tests of strong critical thinking and the Drag Continuum that I present herein.
My own experiences employing these resources for prejudice reduction provide some anecdotal evidence supporting their potential effectiveness. I have used the continuum at academic conferences, in adult-oriented community workshops and seminars, and as a guest lecturer in teacher education classes. In these very varied circumstances, there has often been a perceptible excitement in the room, with contributions to the ensuing discussions coming fast and furious from many of the participants. Many of those not taking part verbally have still remained attentive, with eyes and body posture engaged. Some students have even been sufficiently interested to choose to write their final papers on the continuum.

Even with these encouraging signs, I have chosen not to focus my investigations into the formation, maintenance, and reduction of prejudice on further experimental verification. I only go as far as presenting some of the good reasons there are for believing that the drag continuum can produce strong critical thinking, which in turn can lessen heterosexism and homophobia. Presenting the kind of empirical evidence that stronger claims require would have necessitated a relatively cursory pursuit of the primary, more theoretical goals of this project. While future research designed to test my arguments is important, a careful conceptual investigation of prejudice is a valuable project, in and of itself. Even if strong critical thinking and the Drag Continuum ultimately prove to be less effective at reducing prejudice than my informal experience suggests they can be, a better understanding of the dynamics that can combine to create and sustain prejudice contributes to a better understanding of which other avenues for its reduction are most worth exploring.
Outline of This Project

In the next chapter, I begin my conceptual investigation of some common sources of prejudice formation and maintenance by examining Butler’s conception of performativity. There, I investigate how repeated patterns of social performance produce and sustain the conceptions of normalcy that constrain and regulate all future patterns of social practice and belief. In other words, I examine the force of consistent dress, behaviour, and speech to define what is commonly understood as normal and acceptable, thereby also defining what is commonly understood as deviant and blameworthy. I argue that because performative performances generate and then reinforce pervasive conceptions of normalcy and deviance, they are in part responsible for producing and sustaining the thinking, belief, emotion, and behaviour in which prejudice is based. In this way, the performative process should be understood as a common source of prejudice. However, I also argue that while performativity’s force can be tremendous, there are good reasons to maintain that it does not fully determine social practice and belief. As a result, performativity’s part in forming and preserving prejudice can be countered.

To make this argument, I first present and situate my own understanding and use of the term *performance*. Contra Butler, I argue that performance and performativity are closely linked. Then, I present, contextualize, and critique Butler’s conception of performativity, focusing on Butler’s arguments about the factors that contribute to and undermine the force of performativity to manufacture and constrain social practice and belief. Specifically, I address the following aspects of Butler’s linguistic, social, and bodily conception of performativity: where it comes from; what it is; what its relation is
to performance; on what its force depends; and how I am interested in using it. I conclude
Chapter 2 by introducing one of the central arguments of this project: people’s capacity
to engage in self-reflexive, self-corrective thinking that continually strives to increase
self-knowledge and better fulfill the standards of good reasoning can enable them to
recognize, assess, resist, and intervene both in the performative process that constitutes
them and in the other common sources of prejudice formation and maintenance that I
address in Chapter 3.

In Chapter 3, I continue my exploration of some common sources of prejudice
formation and maintenance by examining Paul’s work on prejudice, undisciplined
thinking, and egocentrism. There, I investigate Paul’s claims that people’s inherent
undisciplined thinking and egocentrism exert tremendous, but unwarranted, force on: (1)
the manner in which people form their beliefs; (2) the content and relationship of
people’s belief systems; and (3) the cognitive, affective, and behavioural tendencies that
people possess. In other words, I examine Paul’s claims that people’s innately
undeveloped rational capacities, misdirected rational competencies, and inborn self-
interest are foundationally responsible for the development of the irrational and
egocentric modes of thinking, background logics, and dispositions that permit the
formation and maintenance of people’s prejudiced beliefs and behaviours. While I do not
engage with the sticky question of whether undisciplined thinking and egocentrism are
inherent or learned, I do argue that there is good reason to believe Paul’s claims that,
once developed, undisciplined thinking and egocentrism make people highly susceptible
to prejudice belief, belief formation, and behaviour.
To make this argument, I present and critique Paul’s arguments both about the nature of undisciplined thinking and egocentrism and about their likely influence on people’s modes of thinking, background logics, passions, volitions, character traits, behaviours, and conceptions of self. I then examine Paul’s arguments about the ways in which people commonly misconceptualize prejudice, arguing that people’s underestimation of the pervasiveness, interconnectedness, and breadth of prejudice helps to explain its force and persistence. When people misunderstand and underestimate prejudice, it becomes increasingly difficult to dislodge. I conclude this chapter by bringing together the insights of Paul’s work on the nature, sources, and forces of prejudice with the insights of Butler’s work on performativity. I argue that prejudiced thinking, beliefs, dispositions, and behaviours are partly created and maintained by the interplay of performativity, egocentrism, and undisciplined thinking, as well as by the barriers to good thinking and self-knowledge that these sources of prejudice commonly erect. Finally, I broach the main argument of Chapter 4 by briefly returning to the claim I introduce in Chapter 2: there is good reason to believe that strong critical thinking can serve as an effective resource for reducing the prejudiced modes of thought, background logics, dispositions, and behaviours that performativity, egocentrism, and undisciplined thinking help to produce and maintain.

In Chapter 4, I shift my primary focus from an examination of some common sources of prejudice formation and maintenance to an examination of some possible resources for prejudice reduction. I argue that the resources offered by Paul’s conception of strong critical thinking can be expected to reduce prejudiced belief, belief formation, and behaviour by limiting people’s susceptibility both to the common sources of
prejudice that I explore in Chapters 2 & 3 and to the barriers to prejudice reduction that these sources of prejudice can create. I argue that the integrated knowledges, competencies, and dispositions essential to strong critical thinking enable and encourage the improvement of reason and the deepening of self-knowledge, thereby potentially reducing prejudice by lessening the undue force of performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism to manufacture and regulate beliefs, emotions, behaviours, conceptions of self, and social standing. Not only does strong critical thinking improve reasoning at its source, but it also promotes an active, reflective, self-disciplined engagement with self and the world. In other words, I argue that strong critical thinking can promote social justice by improving the quality of people’s own thinking, by augmenting people’s self-understanding, and by equipping people to purposefully engage with the normative and disciplinary process of performativity. There is good reason to believe that strong critical thinking promotes a highly self-reflexive, self-aware, self-correcting human agency, equipping people to consciously and self-consciously analyze and intervene in the processes that form both themselves and their worlds.

To make this argument, I begin with a brief look both at the intellectual context of strong critical thinking and at one of the definitions of strong critical thinking offered by Paul. Then, I investigate the nature, relationship, and likely consequences of the knowledges, competencies, and dispositions that Paul argues are essential to development of strong critical thinking. To this end, I explore the conceptual, contextual, and self knowledges that people must possess, as well as consistently and competently employ, to be considered strong critical thinkers. To this end, I also explore the three theoretically distinct, but highly interdependent, behavioural, affective, and cognitive components of
strong critical thinking dispositions: volitions, rational passions, and intellectual character traits. I conclude Chapter 4 by summarizing why integrated strong critical thinking knowledges, competencies, and dispositions can help to counter the undue influence of the performative process, un(der)developed rational capacities, misdirected rational competencies, and egocentrism on the formation of thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours. I argue that there is good reason to believe that strong critical thinking can reduce prejudiced belief, belief formation, and behaviour, because it provides people the resources to purposefully, competently, and consistently monitor and improve their reasoning, judgment, and self-knowledge.

In Chapter 5, my discussion of some possible resources for prejudice reduction shifts from a more general examination of Paul’s conception of strong critical thinking to a more specific discussion of how I intend to make use of the resources for prejudice reduction offered by strong critical thinking knowledges, competencies, and dispositions. To this end, this chapter is devoted primarily to introducing The Continuum of (Subversive) Drag Performance: the conceptual tool that I have developed to implement Paul’s insights about the potential of strong critical thinking to improve thinking, increase self-understanding, and reduce prejudice. In introducing the Drag Continuum, I narrow my focus on prejudice to the particular problem of gender and sexual prejudice.

As the Drag Continuum is a multipart conceptual tool, both the continuum and its presentation are somewhat complex. As a result, I devote all of Chapter 5 to explicating the evolution, structure, and language of the Drag Continuum, holding off on presenting my substantive arguments about why there is good reason to believe that it is well-suited to reducing gender and sexual prejudice. Only in Chapter 6 do I carefully address how a
serious engagement with the Drag Continuum can reduce heterosexism and homophobia: not only by stimulating generally improved reasoning about gender and sexual normalcy, but also by promoting the direct development both of self-knowledge and of the other resources necessary for strong critical thinking about gender, sexuality, normalcy, and prejudice. While I ultimately argue that the Drag Continuum offers social justice educators wishing to reduce homophobia and heterosexism a promising resource for achieving their goals, the focus of Chapter 5 is limited to presenting the Drag Continuum.

To this end, I begin my presentation of the evolution, structure, and language of the Continuum of (Subversive) Drag Performance by briefly connecting it to its theoretical underpinnings: Butler’s conception of performativity and Paul’s conception of strong critical thinking. Then, I describe and illustrate the six ranges of performance and its interpretation that fall along the Drag Continuum: Radical, Stealth, Commercial, Passing, Mainstream, and Privileged. Through explanation and example, I demonstrate how each range of the continuum provides an archetypal framework designed to facilitate the analysis of gendered and sexed dress, behaviour, and speech. It does so by encouraging people to consider which types of gendered and sexed performances are interpreted and valued as normal, which types are derided as deviant, for what reasons, and to what effects. I argue that by bringing attention to the important role that performance and its interpretation play in the construction, expression, and impact of gender and sexual normalcy, the Drag Continuum helps to make explicit the dynamics that in part create and maintain personal, communal, societal, and institutional heterosexism and homophobia. I conclude Chapter 5 by explaining three nuances of performance and its interpretation that have strong implications for how dress, behaviour,
and speech are understood, evaluated, and categorized both along the Drag Continuum and in the course of daily living.

In Chapter 6, I move onto my arguments about why the continuum that I present in Chapter 5 is well-suited to stimulating strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy, thereby potentially lessening heterosexism and homophobia. I argue that there is good reason to believe that the Drag Continuum can achieve these objectives, because it helps people to cultivate the knowledges, competencies, and dispositions important to recognizing and reducing the influence of performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism. In making this argument, I highlight why the Drag Continuum is particularly well-suited to addressing the vital but thorny problem of limited self-knowledge: the barrier to reducing personal prejudice that, as I argue throughout this project, is exceptionally difficult to dislodge. In doing so, I demonstrate how the Drag Continuum can be used by educators to help learners improve their reasoning about gender and sexuality, thereby creating opportunities for learners to resist some common sources of prejudice formation and maintenance, to counter the barriers to prejudice reduction that these sources of prejudice can create, and, ultimately, to reduce their gender and sexual prejudice.

To make this argument, I begin by demonstrating not only that the Drag Continuum is well-suited to providing learners access to particular types of learning environments and conversations, but also that these contexts and experiences are well-suited to stimulating the development of the resources important to strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy. The learning environments to which the Drag Continuum provides access have the potential to be relatively flexible,
unconstrained by common conceptions of normalcy, humour-filled, and located within communities of inquiry that provide opportunities for constructive practice. I demonstrate that contexts for learning are well-suited to stimulating the development of the resources important to strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy, because they tend to be relatively non-threatening, empathetic, imaginative, dialogical, dialectical, and responsive to the unique needs of particular learners, while also providing learners the models, focused instruction, and emotional encouragement that are additionally important to improved reasoning, increased self-knowledge, and prejudice reduction. I conclude this chapter by highlighting a few strategic considerations for educators intending to use the Drag Continuum to help reduce heterosexism and homophobia. To this end, I present three possible departure points for practical discussions of the Drag Continuum, as well as the broad educational strategies for cultivating strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy that follow from them. I suggest that social justice educators use the conceptual-incremental approach, the contextual-impersonal approach, and the applied-introspective approach to nudge learners towards a progressively more self-focused examination of heterosexist and homophobic thinking, beliefs, dispositions, and behaviours.

Finally, I conclude this thesis by summarizing its central arguments about the formation, maintenance, and reduction of prejudiced thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours. I also use the conclusion to touch upon some of the research questions to which this thesis gives rise, but which are nevertheless beyond the scope of this current investigation. These potential avenues for future research, include: a study of the implementation and effectiveness of the Drag Continuum in varied, practical settings; a
context specific exploration of what normal gender and sexual performance look like in
different ethnic, religious, sexual, workplace, economic, social, and other communities;
and, an illustration of how the Drag Continuum can be adapted to counter prejudices
beyond those based primarily in conceptions of normal gender and sexuality.

Statement of Positionality

When starting to think about the ways in which my social location likely impacts
this research, I began as philosophers often do: by first taking a step back to consider the
assumptions I bring to the project; in this case, my understanding of the contexts and
dimensions of identity that ground and complicate statements of positionality. In what
follows, I begin my statement by sharing some of these more general reflections, because
I find they help me to name and address the power dynamics inherent in my thesis
project. This gradual movement from theoretical analysis to self-focused introspection is
a strategy that has served me well as both a learner and a teacher, and is one that I
recommend in Chapter 6 as an educational approach to the Drag Continuum that I present
in Chapters 5.

I understand analyses and disclosures of postionality to be one of the ways in
which researchers currently seek to increase the transparency of what they bring to their
work. As I discuss in Chapter 4 in my examination of strong objectivity and strong
critical thinking, an investigator's assumptions, motivations, and experiences colour her
methods, perceptions, and conclusions. To help counter-balance these influences,
researchers construct statements of positionality to outline how their social locations and
life histories are likely to shape their inquiry. Which perspectives and voices are
privileged in knowledge construction is but one of the dimensions that can be influenced by a person's relationship to the topic under study and by the axes of power that permeate group interactions. Practically applied to teaching, concerns such as these have lead me to omit articles that I have written from my course reading lists, particularly when I am charged with passing or failing my students. While I would never intentionally reward or punish my students for their responses to my research, in such contexts I hold too much power over them to ask for a sincere, formal assessment of my work. As a general rule, classroom instructors and workshop facilitators should be alert to the possibility that their co-investigators may not engage honestly with each other, either as a means of self-preservation or in an effort to please both the facilitator and the rest of the group.

The process of considering my positionality with respect to this research has increased my appreciation of the complexity of the implications of social location. For example, a facilitator who identifies and self-declares as "straight" should be aware that she might have, or at the very least be perceived to have, a far less nuanced understanding of the varied ways in which gender and sexual prejudice are experienced and lived than would a GLBT person. Further, she should examine the possibility that she may unintentionally reinforce heterosexist privilege in her assumptions, behaviours, or speech. By contrast, a facilitator who identifies and self-declares as "lesbian" should be alert to the possibility that co-investigators might feel a pressure to disclose as lesbian when they are not ready to make such a disclosure; or, perhaps, that participants may not readily disclose beliefs or emotional responses that they fear might be perceived as heterosexist or homophobic. Each person's own social positionality is likely to shape how research and learning evolves, creating different types of blindspots and shaping the
evolution of related group interactions. For these and other reasons, I argue throughout that social justice researchers and educators – regardless of their own gender or sexual identification - must examine their own thinking, beliefs, emotions, behaviours, and conceptions of self, endeavouring to lessen whatever biases, perceived biases, and relationships they bring with them.

Notwithstanding my genuine concerns about the impact of my social location and life history on my research, I find it difficult to determine what constitutes an apt disclosure of my positionality. Because the degree and types of disclosures made should be appropriate to their specific, ever-shifting circumstances, I have struggled deeply with how to be true both to the spirit and requirements of my forthcoming statement of positionality and to myself. As difficult as it to gauge when, how, and how much of one’s insider or outsider status to reveal in face-to-face encounters with diverse communities, full declarations of positionality in far more static and one-sided written text are even more complex. When conversing with others, the positionality of the people curious about your relationship to the subject matter should always be taken into account. The spoken, or often unspoken, challenge of “and who are you to be asking/telling me this?” can be answered truthfully, but also very differently, depending on who is asking the question and with what purpose. In a written text, however, no such adaptations can be made.

Disclosures made in a formal, public document, such as this thesis, are by their very nature singular, fairly rigid snapshots. As such, they may obscure as much of the positionality of the writer as they are meant to illuminate. For example, because this project attempts to reduce heterosexism and homophobia, many readers may feel that the
fact that I identify as “straight” is deeply important. However, this declaration of sexuality may lead to any number of mischaracterizations, stereotyping, or outright dismissals. Perhaps I spent my teen years having sexual relationships with women, potentially even identifying and being perceived by others as a lesbian. Perhaps I dress or have dressed previously in ways that strongly deviate from widespread gender expectations. Perhaps I have accepted money as a sex trade worker. Perhaps I work in a sex toy store, listening without judgment to other people’s most “deviant” practices, exploring ways to better get them off. Perhaps I play publicly at S/M parties. Perhaps my current identification as “straight woman” is a wholly misleading representation of who I am, what I know, and what my relationship is to widespread assumptions about gender and sexual normalcy. Unless declarations of positionality delve into the most intimate and sometimes contextually inappropriate dimensions of a person’s life histories, they are unlikely to help others fairly assess power and authenticity. As such, they may do more harm than good.

This tension between the relevant, the multifaceted, and the invasive is further complicated in this thesis. Many of the life experiences that could reposition the declaration that I am a straight woman by revealing a nonetheless profoundly “deviant” relationship to gender and sexual normalcy might simultaneously undermine my standing as a serious academic. My academic, activist, and personal selves are not one and the same. Further, I am likely not alone in believing that a doctoral thesis is not the proper venue for tracing the full and intimate evolution of my gendered and sexual self, even if the purpose of such a disclosure is to help demonstrate how who I am impacts the choices, perspectives, and convictions that underlie my work. Finally, classifying myself
as a gender or sexual “deviant” right from the start might irrevocably lead those who most strongly hold assumptions about what constitutes “normal” gender and sexuality to discount my arguments. While outlining your positionality can increase the transparency of a project, revealing too much too soon can also seriously undermine its political effectiveness.

Given my concerns about statements of positionality, I will reveal as much about myself as I feel I can in any document over whose dissemination I ultimately have no control. This is a public document that may be read by my father, my brother, my future students, my future employers, and anyone else who takes an interest in it. These are populations with whom I interact in very different ways and to very different ends. They are not populations to whom I disclose identical dimensions of myself. As a result, I invite my readers to assess the merits of my arguments from their own ever-shifting social locations, imagining that I could be coming from any number of my own. I also invite those that require more detail about my social location in order to engage seriously with my research to contact me so that we may begin a more dynamic process of mutual self-disclosure.

I am a philosopher of education. To others, my being a philosopher may mean that I prize a cold-hearted rationality above all else. To me, it means that I take prudential, emotional, and rational reasons to be essential to determining whether people’s beliefs are supported by good reasons. With respect to this research, it means that I will draw on philosophical argument and analysis, conversations with others, personal experience, and self-reflection to construct and support my position. I am also a sexual health and social justice educator. To others, this label may mean that I am an
unapproachable ideal or a self-righteous, arrogant know-it-all who thinks she is less prejudiced than others. To me, it means that I understand gender and sexual prejudice to be a problem, so am working to reduce them both in myself and in others. This rationally and emotionally grounded conviction is what motivates and drives both this research and my continued self-exploration. I am also a straight woman. To others, this designation may mean that I can have only a limited understanding of the sources and manifestations of gender and sexual prejudice. To me, it means that I fell in love with a wonderful man, with whom I enjoy a monogamous relationship and a good deal of unsolicited and unwarranted heterosexual privilege. Nonetheless, I believe that the complicated history that underlies my sexuality affords me a reasonably good, but always growing, understanding of the construction, perception, and judgement of gender and sexual normalcy. I am white, but I am also Jewish. While being Jewish lends me some sense of the complexities involved in being an ethnic or racial outsider, the fact that I can choose where and when to reveal my outsider status makes being Jewish very different than being a member of a visible minority. As a result, I wonder about the extent to which I can and do understand the multifaceted ways in which racial, gender, and sexual prejudices intertwine. In order to counter my limited direct personal experience in this area, when using the Drag Continuum I look to my co-investigators to help flesh out these problematics. As my experiences round out theirs, theirs round out mine.

Beyond that, I am an able-bodied yoga practitioner and a “pancreatically challenged” Type 1 diabetic. I am shy person who relishes a participating in thoughtful, vigorous debate. I am a female with little maternal instinct and every intention of remaining childless. There are many other seemingly contradictory aspects of me that
shape my worldview, social standing, and this very research, only some of which I am conscious enough to enumerate. Still, of all of the factors that construct my relational positionality, the shifting and conflicting meanings that others attach to my history are just as important, variable, and unpredictable as my own.

Terminology

Social Justice

Before moving on to an exploration of some common sources of prejudice, the barriers against prejudice reduction that these sources of prejudice can create, and some possible resources for prejudice reduction, I offer some clarification about my use of language. Throughout this project, I use the term social justice to refer neither to a specific set of desired social relations, nor to a particular method of achieving a specific set of desired social relations, but as a yardstick against which the persistence, intensity, and pervasiveness of prejudice and discrimination can be measured. I tie my use of social justice to prejudiced thinking, beliefs, emotions, and their resulting discriminatory behaviours, because these root causes of social injustice must first be addressed before any conception of social justice can genuinely be achieved. As a result, in this project I do not engage in a detailed argument about whether social justice involves striving for social equality or social equity, for conceptions of sameness or conceptions of fairness. Nor do I engage with questions of what these conceptions of social justice might look like in practice. I also do not engage with questions of whether other conceptions of justice - for example, contributory or restorative justice - might provide more suitable guiding practices, principles, or goals than does social justice. Instead, in this project I
limit my discussion of social justice to a discussion of the formation, maintenance, and possible reduction of prejudiced thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours, recognizing that the complete elimination of prejudice - and the actual achievement of any conception of social justice - is a gargantuan, if not impossible, task.

It is also important to mention that this thesis primarily addresses social change on the level of the individual. While I agree with Fraser (1997) and McLaren (2003) that structural change is essential to the lasting and widespread reduction of prejudice and discrimination, it is individuals who are responsible for initiating institutional evolution. Ongoing organizational systems are not self-altering, or at least not reliably and purposefully so. The debate about whether social justice researchers should focus their attentions on the individual or the institutional is as impossible to resolve as is the enduring "chicken and egg" conundrum. Moreover, once their mutually sustaining dialectic is established, it does not matter which came first. What really matters is that they are dialectically and irrevocably intertwined.

For the purposes of this project, I have chosen to limit my exploration to a localized focus on the social and personal forces that shape individuals' own thinking, beliefs, emotions, behaviours, and conceptions of self. In doing so, I take a small-scale, viral approach to social justice: for every person who begins to interpret her world differently, there is a chance that she will further the process, helping others to do the same, eventually culminating in the critical mass and cultural will necessary to support institutional change. I have chosen this focus for two reasons. First, many people - myself included - are daunted by the Quixotian prospect of endeavouring to directly effect systemic social change. Second, as I outline above, the lessening of prejudice is but one,
fairly idealized goal of this thesis. Given the scope of my additional conceptual and practical objectives, the further inclusion of a careful examination of the ways that prejudice operates structurally is unrealistic. Undoubtedly, future elaborations of this research would benefit from such an exploration.

Educators and Learners

In discussing educational attempts at social justice, I often refer separately to (social justice) educators and learners. In making this distinction, my intention is not to set up an immovable hierarchy where educators are positioned as expert knowledge-bearers and learners are positioned as ignorant pupils to be enlightened by omniscient educators. The views or reasoning of educators are not, in themselves, more authoritative or definitive than those presented by learners. The grounds that they provide for their thinking, beliefs, emotions, behaviours, and self-concepts must be subject to the same relevant standards and degrees of self-assessment and group analysis that those of learners are. In their roles as participants in analytical exchange, educators and learners have very similar responsibilities and should strive to fulfill very similar standards.

"Educators" are different from "learners," only because their relative experience makes them more likely to have better developed their understanding of the subject matter. In other words, social justice educators are educators - i.e., qualified to initially introduce and facilitate an investigation of prejudice - because their familiarity with its dynamics should better prepare them to identify and mitigate the roadblocks common to social justice projects. However, educators may not be significantly better than learners at ridding themselves of prejudice. The modes of thinking, background logics, and
dispositions of everyone from novice learners to experienced educators can always be improved through continued dialogue and self-exploration. Still, even in those cases where educators have significantly reduced their own prejudices, they must be careful not to appear as though they think that they are more moral than others. If social justice educators are perceived as pompous or arrogant, any emotional resistance that learners may already have to their presence or project is likely only to be intensified. Not only are social justice educators still also and always learners, they must be perceived as such.

Of course, in traditional school settings where the educator/classroom teacher is usually in the position of evaluating the learners/students, it may be unrealistic to cast them as genuine co-investigators. Particularly when students are in elementary school, and have often yet to develop significantly their capacity to think critically and their confidence to challenge adults, it is unreasonable to expect them to become full and equal participants in classroom dialogue. Still, much can be done to diminish many students’ justifiable fear of overtly disagreeing with their teachers. From the very beginning of term, teachers can begin to cultivate open, respectful dialogue where everyone is encouraged to learn, explore, question, argue with, and even deny each other’s position, without either attacking the other person or taking their comments personally. To encourage this type of climate, teachers might model the following practices and attitudes and support them in others: having a willingness to share and investigate their own reactions, questions and viewpoints with their students; listening carefully to and thinking seriously about even the most provocative positions of their students; responding fairly to students with whom they profoundly disagree; making an effort to express their own views without being belligerent or insulting; and having an openness to having their own
views challenged (in a respectful manner) and the willingness to sincerely consider these challenges. Without this type of groundwork, learners cannot be expected to engage charitably with the thinking, beliefs, and emotions of other learners or to reflect honestly on their own. Nor can students be expected to disagree overtly with the teacher whose responsibility it is to evaluate them.

However, social justice educators are often not classroom teachers charged with evaluating the students with whom they work. Very often, social justice educators are brought in as guest lecturers to run workshops in schools, community centers, religious organizations, or professional development seminars. Sometimes they are part of established outreach programs like the Gay and Lesbian Educators of BC (GALE BC).  

Sometimes, they are K-12 teachers or university professors who make time to facilitate seminars outside of their usual teaching and research responsibilities. While social justice educators may be professionally trained and paid for their work, very often they are not. They can be community workers, religious representatives, family members, or just about anyone who wants to work towards reducing prejudice, because of their concern about its prevalence and effects.

While the goals of social justice educators are facilitated when the settings in which they work have pre-existing climates of respectful open dialogue, skilled educators can often help to develop such an environment. Particularly when their presence is perceived as a welcome escape from the routine and good-will results, their co-investigators are more likely to agree to proceed with the discussion or activity without intentionally or maliciously sabotaging it, even as they recognize that other participants

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2 For more information on GALE's social justice programming, see their website at [http://www.galebc.org/main.htm](http://www.galebc.org/main.htm).
may have very different belief systems from their own. While the group’s intellectual and emotional maturity will affect the character and depth of their discussions, this basic ground rule can be striven towards by groups of any age.

Rationality and Good Reasons

In advocating strong critical thinking as an ethically defensible and realistic method of reducing prejudice, I am not suggesting that all thinking should strive to be rational. For example, daydreaming and the creation of poetry are not primarily reason-based activities. Nonetheless, during the course of this investigation, when I refer to “thinking” and its improvement, I am referring to purposeful thinking: the subset of thinking that is concerned with deciding what to believe and how to act. I do not understand rational, purposeful thinkers to be in total control of their thoughts or destinies, mechanistically weeding out their emotional impulses and omnipotently deciding which of their experiences will impact them to which degree and to what effects. I am simply advocating the use of self-reflection and the principles and standards of good reasoning to help people develop better grounds for their beliefs and behaviours.

While I will elaborate on what these elements of strong critical thinking look like in Chapters 4 and 6, I want to underline that “good reasons” for assertions or actions needn’t be based wholly in reason, they need only be reasonable. In other words, they should “make sense” given their context. Emotional reasons may provide excellent justification for what people believe or do. For example, many people would accept that a gut desire to be with family in times of crisis is a sufficiently good reason to travel to be with them. While it is often difficult to achieve consensus on which reasons “make
sense," when many people from diverse backgrounds and with varied perspectives accept a reason as a “good” one, it is more likely to be such. In the pure sciences, academic consensus is sometimes demonstrated by subsequent discoveries to have been categorically incorrect. For example, we now know that the sun does not rotate around the earth. However, particularly when a relatively straightforward observable truth is not the standard of evidence to which reasons can appeal, widespread consensus on the empirical, rational, moral, prudential, or emotional justifications of a position is often the best standard available for assessing “good reasons.”

Being reasonable also does not require simple, clear-cut answers that preclude multiple levels of meaning. In fact, there is rarely, if ever, one definitively “best” reason. Rather, there usually are many competing and sometimes conflicting reasons supporting the very same belief or behaviour. There are also many different types of reasons, all of which have their own standards for what counts as a “good reason.” My reason for putting coins in a parking meter may be prudential: if I do not, I may receive a fine. My reason for believing that a steaming cup of water is hot may be empirical: in all of my previous experiences with steaming water, it has turned out to be hot. My reason for not shouting “fire” in a crowded movie theatre, if there is no fire, may be moral: I don’t want people to be hurt in their rush for the exit. The difficulties of deciding which rationale and accompanying standards are most relevant and most justified are also complicated by shifting contextual details like setting or the diverse viewpoints of the people involved. However, in striving to provide each other with good reasons, we all need not - and often do not - agree that one is unquestionably superior.
It is also important to note that purposeful thinking is often neither linear nor unambiguous. In fact, the seemingly unsolvable and exasperating is often the most intellectually interesting and emotionally fruitful, eventually yielding the greatest discoveries and best reasons. The clarity for which good reasoning strives is the ability to explain thinking, beliefs, emotions, or behaviours to self or others in a clear, readily understandable way. While clear, purposeful thinking may accessibly describe an emerging solution to a formerly perplexing problem, it may also simply state that both the problem and a solution remain a mystery.

The challenge to provide others with reasons that they will also accept as good is fraught with difficulties. Particularly in the context of discussing prejudice and its reduction, consensus on the fitting assessment and quality of reasons is often elusive. While some of my claims can be tested empirically in future research, many of them must simply strive for widespread agreement about what is likely or probable. While I will not belabour this point throughout the course of this document, I claim simply to be making arguments about what we have good (moral, emotional, prudential, or empirical) reason to believe. As is the case with much conceptual research, many of these arguments can never be definitively verified.

*The Language Common to Critical Thinking Literature*

At times, the ideas expressed in critical thinking literature are done so in a language that might be disturbing to those with a background primarily in post-structural or performance theory. For example, the rhetoric of critical thinking is fraught with references to the “monitoring” of thought processes. This term may seem to support a
culture of surveillance and subjection. However, when used by philosophers of education, it is meant to suggest that people should explore their own habitual modes of thinking and ways of reacting, so as to become better aware of them and the dynamics that create them. Similarly, in advocating that people endeavour to “improve” their thinking, it may appear that I am suggesting there is only one “right” way to think or only one “right” view to hold. Rather, I am suggesting that people strive to examine their judgments, background logics, dispositions, and behaviours with increasing honesty to help ensure that they are based in better evidence and sounder inferences. The sometimes sharp differences in how particular concepts are theorized is but one of the tensions that must be navigated in bringing together Paul and Butler’s academic disciplines and intellectual traditions. Moreover, the heightened degree to which the language of power is analyzed in post-structuralism only amplifies this friction.

In an attempt to rid potentially troublesome terms of connotations that their original authors are unlikely to have intended, I sometimes simply rename them. For example, I refer to Paul’s *Master Thinkers* as *Ideal Thinkers*. Paul introduces the term in a series of articles in which he outlines the stages through which people progress as they develop as critical thinkers (Elder & Paul, 1996a; Elder & Paul, 1996b; Paul & Elder, 1997). The six stages are as follows: the Unreflective Thinker; the Challenged Thinker; the Beginning Thinker; the Practicing Thinker; the Advanced Thinker; and finally, the Master Thinker. These articles make clear that Paul does not intend his name for this most highly developed stage of critical thinking to invoke any of the colonialist, exploitative, confrontational, or masculinist connotations that some may associate with it. Paul’s Master Thinker is merely someone who has ideally, expertly, or “masterfully”
developed her critical thinking knowledges, competencies, and dispositions. Nonetheless, particularly since *mastery* (either of self or of others) is perceived as a dangerous concept in post-structural and performance theory - the very theories that I try to weave together with Paul's - I have chosen to avoid the term *Master Thinker* all together.

While the term *Master Thinker* is not central to Paul's discussion of strong critical thinking, some potentially provocative language is much more so. Paul's conception of *undisciplined thinking* is a case in point. To some, it is likely to connote Big Brother-like, externally imposed controls. However, Paul and I use it to refer to two interrelated sources of prejudice: (1) rational capacities that have yet to be developed, and (2) rational competencies that have been unduly swayed by ego, emotion, or prior unwarranted beliefs, thereby buttressing them against counter evidence or argument. I have chosen not to eliminate or replace language that is central either to Paul's work or to critical thinking literature more generally. I recognize that this decision may grate on some readers. Further, I have surely overlooked some of the potentially troubling language of critical thinking and social justice research. Still, I ask readers to remain open-minded, remembering that my intentions are neither to exploit nor to manipulate.

*Prejudice, Heterosexism, and Homophobia*

This project is centrally concerned with prejudiced thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours. For brevity's sake, I will use the term *prejudice* as shorthand for these interconnected sources and manifestations of social injustice. I have chosen not to single out these different dimensions of prejudice with distinct language for each, because I want to underline that no one element is likely to be lessened if addressed in isolation. It
may be useful in some contexts to distinguish prejudiced behaviour with the term *discrimination*, but how people think, feel, and act are mutually supporting and sustaining. As prejudiced thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours are all different expressions of the same root problem, I refer to them under the umbrella of *prejudice*.

Two of the central forms of prejudice that I will address below are homophobia and heterosexism. While these gender and sexual prejudices may be associated primarily with gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, transgendered people are also their frequent targets. There is much debate about who is and isn’t — or who should and shouldn’t — be included in the umbrella term *transgender*. I use the term to refer to anyone whose dress, behaviour, speech, body, or self-concept does not conform to pervasive conceptions of gender or sexual normalcy, including masculinity, femininity, maleness, and femaleness. My use of the term is not meant to specify a particular sexual orientation; transgendered people may have any sexual orientation. However, I include transgendered people in my discussion of gender and sexual prejudice, as transgendered people often deviate from gender and sexual norms even more profoundly than GLB people. As a result, there is good reason to believe that the dynamics and ill-effects of heterosexism and homophobia impact GLBT people comparably. In fact, anyone whose performance of gender or sexuality diverges from the patterns of dress, behaviour, or speech that are most pervasive (either in mainstream North America or in the more localized communities in which they may find themselves) can be the target of gender and sexual prejudice. As such, straight but effeminate men and butchy women are also likely to encounter some form of it in most places in North America.
While I use the phrases *gender and sexual prejudice* and *heterosexism and homophobia* fairly interchangeably, I also explicitly refer to both heterosexism and homophobia, since these terms each highlight different aspects and root causes of gender and sexual prejudice. Whereas homophobia is a negative prejudice that devalues homosexuals and homosexuality without good reason, heterosexism is a positive prejudice that elevates heterossexuals and heterosexuality without good reason.³ My repeated, joint use of the terms *heterosexism* and *homophobia* is meant to underline that gender and sexual prejudice involves not only the unfair disadvantaging of some sexualities, but also the unfair advantaging of one particular sexuality. Both homophobia and heterosexism warrant discussion, as they are different, yet inextricably linked, components and causes of gender and sexual prejudice.

In particular, my use of the term *homophobia* is meant to highlight the part of gender and sexual prejudice that is based primarily in “an irrational fear of, or aversion to, homosexuals or homosexuality” (Banks, 2003, p. 4). As such, homophobia includes a wide range of visceral responses, as well as the thinking, beliefs, and behaviours that both support and follow from them: for example, the disgust that some people experience when seeing, hearing, or thinking about same-sex sexual contact; the fear that some people experience when contemplating either that they might be homosexual or that others might think them to be homosexual; or the unwarranted but not entirely uncommon anxiety that most, if not all, homosexuals are disease-spreading, actively recruiting, morally suspect sexual predators. The term *homophobia* underlines that people who deviate from gender and sexual norms are perceived as a serious threat, not only

³ I discuss the relationship between positive and negative prejudice in greater detail in Chapter 3.
against standards of normalcy and decency, but also against the individuals who fear them. I argue that this emotional hook of homophobia – i.e., the extent to which it is intertwined with people’s deeply embedded, firmly held, yet only partially cognizant conceptions of self - is part of what gives gender and sexual prejudice its tremendous force and persistence. Moreover, I maintain that genuine self knowledge is so important to the meaningful and lasting reduction of personal gender and sexual prejudice, precisely because of the extreme emotional resistance and defensiveness characteristic of this deep, visceral link between homophobia and identity.

As suggested above, however, a discussion of homophobia does not, by itself, sufficiently elaborate the concept of gender and sexual prejudice; an additional discussion of heterosexism is important to highlight some of the other central features of prejudice based primarily in expectations of gender and sexual normalcy. As Banks (2003) points out, heterosexism is “a belief system that values heterosexuality as superior to and/or more natural than homosexuality, and/or assumes that people are inherently heterosexual” (p. 4). As such, the term heterosexism refers primarily not only to people’s explicit convictions and implicit assumptions about gender and sexual normalcy, but also to the thinking, emotions, and behaviours that both support and follow from these background logics. The term heterosexism draws attention to the subtle ways that heterosexuality is both present and privileged in daily North American life. It also draws attention to the fact that most people recognize neither this privileging nor the myriad of ways that heterosexuality - encompassing far more than overt, physical (hetero)sexual acts - permeates every aspect of North American society. Unlike the term homophobia,
the term heterosexism is a constant reminder that heterosexuality is the gold standard against which all other sexual identities and performances are judged and punished.

As such, I use the term heterosexism to repeatedly return the focus of my research on gender and sexual prejudice to heterosexual normalcy. The term homophobia correctly names a pervasive but unwarranted aversion to homosexuals and other so-called gender and sexual deviants. It also draws attention to those people who are most harmed by this ill-founded resistance and its unjust lived consequences. Problematically, however, homophobia does not name the people, groups, and institutions in which homophobia is typically most deeply ingrained and that also have the most vested, if at times oblivious, interest in the perpetuation of gender and sexual prejudice. Just as "research into race and racism has shifted recently from problematizing non-whiteness to problematizing whiteness" (Atkinson, 2002, p. 122), it is important that research into gender and sexuality raises questions about the privileges and privileging of heterosexuality, instead of merely focusing on the disadvantages and disadvantaging of the non-heterosexual. By continually referring to both heterosexism and homophobia in my discussion of gender and sexual prejudice, I mean to draw attention to the insidious, covert dynamic by which a ubiquitous heterosexuality is normalized as natural, thereby further normalizing and justifying homophobia and its emotionally embedded core. The thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours of heterosexism and homophobia can be disengaged neither from each other nor from gender and sexual prejudice.

Finally, just as I jointly refer to heterosexism and homophobia throughout this project, I also jointly discuss prejudices based primarily in expectations of gender normalcy and sexual normalcy, referring to them always as gender and sexual prejudice.
I do so, because prejudice based primarily in people’s conceptions of normal sexual orientation are inextricably linked to people’s conceptions both of normal, bifurcated masculinity and femininity and of normal, bifurcated maleness and femaleness. The assumption that properly gendered people will sexually desire people of the opposite sex is always, already inherent in North America’s pervasive conceptions of masculinity and femininity. In other words, the traditional mapping of masculinity and femininity onto male and female bodies includes in it the assumption that properly masculine males will be sexually attracted to properly feminine females, and vice versa. As a result, to be homosexual is, by definition, to have failed to perform gender properly. This intimate link between expectations of gender and sexual normalcy - between the performance and interpretation of gendered and sexed dress, behaviour, speech, and bodies - is the reason that I discuss gender and sexual prejudice jointly. Ultimately, I argue that gender and sexual prejudice is both constituted and supported by heterosexist and homophobic thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours: these are themselves both constituted and supported by systems of formal and informal rewards for conformity and punishments for non-compliance with pervasive – and, as I argue in Chapter 2, performatively produced - conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy. I begin my presentation of this argument in the chapter that follows.
CHAPTER 2: PERFORMATIVITY AS A SOURCE OF PREJUDICE

I open my exploration of some common sources of prejudice formation and maintenance by examining the ways in which performance and performativity can influence the formation of social practice and belief. There is currently much academic, artistic, and political interest in performance and performativity. The numerous and seemingly ever-expanding fields in which these terms and practices are receiving much attention include, but are by no means limited to: cultural studies, anthropology, theatre studies, literary studies, folklore, education, geography, linguistics, queer studies, performing arts, performance art, and, of course, the relatively new and rapidly evolving area of performance studies. While there are certainly some points of contact among different conceptions of performance and performativity - both among and within these, and other, divergent fields - there is also much variability in how these terms are defined and employed. In fact, one could argue that the terms performance and performativity have become so broadly interdisciplinary and so variously conceptualized as to have become almost meaningless. Geraldine Harris’ (1999) assessment of the field of performance art applies equally to more general conceptualizations of performance and performativity: “the complexity, variety, popularity and ubiquity of such activities” make them extremely difficult to pin down (p. 30).

In this thesis, I engage with only a small section of the landscape of performance and performativity. While my conception of performance has gradually evolved in response to my engagement with many diverse and diffuse sources, my conception of performativity builds largely upon Butler’s conception. I choose to focus on Butler’s work on performativity, not only because it offers many important resources for my own,
but also because, as Harris (1999) notes, it “has come to dominate this field of inquiry” (p. 57). Consequently, at present, it would border on academic irresponsibility to examine any linguistic, social, or bodily conception of performativity without including an examination of Butler’s highly influential articulation, and rearticulation, of the term. In making this assertion, I am not claiming that everyone interested in performativity - myself included - agrees with Butler’s elaboration of performativity, either wholly or even in part. For example, the implications of her conception for identity, subject formation, the physical body, and agency have sparked much heated debate. Moreover, her extremely dense, jargon-filled - and, as some assert, intentionally obfuscating - writing style have been widely criticized. Nonetheless, Butler’s evolving conception of performativity has catalyzed much of the term’s recent proliferation and it is rare to find a current work on the topic that does not in some way refer to Butler. For this reason, and for others that will become clear below, I use Butler’s conception of performativity as a point of departure in elaborating my own.

In this chapter, I argue that the performative process is a common social, bodily, and linguistic source of prejudice formation and maintenance. To make this argument, I first situate and present my own understanding and use of performance, a concept that is central to my analysis of gender and sexual prejudice in Chapters 5 and 6. Contra Butler, I argue that performance and performativity are closely linked. Then, I present, contextualize, and critique Butler’s conception of performativity, focusing on her arguments about the factors that contribute to and undermine the force of performativity to manufacture and constrain social practice and belief. I argue that performativity

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4 See Nussbaum’s The Professor of Parody (1999) for a cogent and accessible critique of Butler that is representative of all of these concerns.
performances generate and reinforce pervasive conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy, normalcies that can produce and sustain heterosexist and homophobic thinking, belief, emotion, and behaviour. I also argue that while performativity’s force can be tremendous, there are good reasons to maintain that it does not fully determine social practice and belief. As a result, performativity’s part in forming and preserving prejudice can be countered.

**Performance**

Simply put, I use *performance* to refer to people’s everyday patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech. Below, I elaborate more fully on what I intend this definition to convey, but it is fair to say that my conception of performance has gradually and somewhat organically evolved out of my engagement with its use in many diverse and diffuse contexts. Its origins are so varied that it would probably be impossible for me to identify or detail them with any satisfying specificity. The evolution of my current use of *performance* shares in the type of “topographical shift” that State (1996) describes in his exploration of the proliferation of the term’s multiple meanings and uses. He calls this process of interconnected yet diverging evolution the *Pelican Effect*, whereby the mother-word feeds its errant offspring with its own blood (its prior meanings)” (State, 1996, p.4). While I intend my conceptualization of performance to represent only a small portion of its history and diversity, it is unavoidably related and connected to a much larger set of meanings.

In *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*, Jon McKenzie (2001) provides a careful examination of some influential and mutually-influencing conceptions
of performance. While the depth of his analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth touching on McKenzie's elaboration of performance, as it underscores some of the myriad different yet interrelated understandings of performance that both deliberately and unintentionally underlie my own. McKenzie presents three broad categories of performance: organizational, cultural, and technological. According to McKenzie, organizational performance is primarily concerned with the measurement and evaluation of efficiency, productivity, competency, innovation, and the accomplishment of institutional goals. Its rewards include salary increases, special recognition, and promotions; its punishments include organizational transfers, retraining, demotions, or outright dismissal. In this field it is: "Perform - or else: be fired, redeployed, institutionally marginalized" (McKenzie, 2001, p. 7). McKenzie's organizational performance underscores that any type of performance – including people's everyday patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech – is judged by others according to explicit and tacit standards. Further, while performances that adequately fulfill communal and institutional standards bring reward, those that fail to adequately fulfill them bring punishment.

McKenzie's cultural performance corresponds roughly to the evolving field of Performance Studies. It is primarily concerned with the efficacy "of social norms,...an ensemble of activities with the potential to uphold social arrangements, or, alternatively, to change people and societies" (McKenzie, 2001, p. 30). McKenzie argues that those in the field of cultural performance typically intend to use or theorize performance in order to transform oppressive social norms. In other words, increasing social justice is the reward for efficacious cultural performance. Thus, McKenzie (2001) suggests that in this
field it is: “Perform - or else: be socially normalized” (p. 9). McKenzie’s cultural performance underscores that people perform, are judged, and are rewarded or punished according to standards imposed in potentially every domain of their daily lives. Moreover, in its reference to social justice, it makes explicit that there is often - if not always - a moral component both to the evaluation of performance and to the standards of normalcy and excellence according to which performances are consistently - if not incessantly - evaluated, rewarded, and punished.

Finally, McKenzie’s technological performance is concerned with the design, testing, and evaluation of the effectiveness of any tool that facilitates human endeavours. Most typically, however, this standard of “high performance” is applied to the technology of computers, electronics, telecommunications, and the military. In this field it is: “Perform – or else: you’re obsolete, liable to be defunded, junkpiled, or dumped into foreign markets” (McKenzie, 2001, p. 12). The human equivalent of which is: “Perform - or else: you’re outmoded, undereducated, in other words, you are a dummy!” (McKenzie, 2001, p. 12). Technological performance underscores that standards of performance and their accompanying rewards and punishments - including those relevant to people’s everyday patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech - evolve over time. I would add that they also vary across and within linguistic, cultural, religious, racial, sexual, geographic, and other communities. The standards for a performance’s adequate fulfillment of

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5 My use of performance would flip this articulation of “Perform – or else” on its head. I argue that most people engage in everyday social or cultural performance without a meaningful analysis of it. When dress, behaviour, and speech are uncritically adopted in this way, people’s performances are typically driven by their desire for the social acceptance that comes as a reward for having been normalized. As a result, I would rearticulate McKenzie’s command as: Perform - or else: be socially ostracized.
communal and institutional normalcy and excellence are continually shifting and context specific.

Just a cursory look at the three fields and types of performance that McKenzie examines underscores the ways in which – to build on States’ metaphor – the different meanings of performance bleed into one another. This Pelican Effect underscores that the definition of performance I offer above is neither as simple nor as straightforward as I initially proclaimed: people’s everyday patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech are tied to variable norms and standards, shifting moral assessments, and complex systems of reward and punishment. As I further elaborate below, they are also strongly linked to the historicity and citationality of the performative process. While McKenzie focuses on organizational, cultural, and technological performance, he is wise to remind his readers that there are many other influential and mutually influencing types and fields of performance. He is also wise to impress upon his readers the breakneck pace at which the current interest in the term performance is growing. “To get some sense of this rapid extension: between 1861 and 1944, only some 127 dissertations were written pertaining to the subject of performance. Since then, there have been over 100,000. There has been, in short, an explosion of performance research in the past half-century” (McKenzie, 2001, p. 13). As this explosion suggests, my own conception of performance is likely the descendent of others too numerous and diverse for me to articulate, or even recognize, their relation to or influence on my own.

While there are clearly numerous ways of conceptualizing performance, the concerns most prominent in McKenzie’s cultural performance most closely align with my own. Here, it is helpful to return to States’ (1996) analysis of performance for the not
uncommon, but still useful, distinction that he provides. He differentiates two principal groups of theorists and activists whose conceptions and uses of performance parallel McKenzie's understanding of cultural performance: there are those who "are professionally uninvolved in the arts and [are] concerned with social performance at the largely unintentional level" and there are those who "are concerned professionally with deliberate artistic performance" (States, 1996, p. 3). The former group tends to use performance as a metaphor to describe a broad range of cultural and social activities that take place in the course of everyday living. The latter group tends to use performance in one or both of the following ways: to refer to traditional, plot driven, "legitimate" theatrical performances - for example, the performances of theatre, dance, ballet, and opera - or to refer to less predictably structured, post-modern performance art that typically intends to confront sensibilities and disrupt established meaning. While the conceptions of performance prevalent among these two loosely constituted groups do tend to be different, there is much cross-conversation and cross-pollination between the researchers, activists, and performers that constitute them. Thus, while my concern with people's everyday patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech places me in the former group, I presently use Harris' (1999) description of the traditional theatrical performance broadly common to the latter as a counterpoint for the continued elaboration of my own understanding and use of performance as a concept.

Unlike the traditional theatrical performance that Harris describes, the social performances with which I am concerned are not typically marked off in any special way from daily living. That is, they are not usually set apart from the "realities" or constraints of people's everyday lives by some form of artifice, like a formal stage, a designated
time, or a marked location. As a result, neither the patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech with which I am concerned, nor the normative assessments and consequences that tend to accompany them, typically invoke the temporary suspension of disbelief that often is associated with theatrical performance. In other words, there is usually no real or imagined buffer or disconnect between social performance, as I conceive it, and people’s guiding belief systems or customary affective and behavioural responses. Butler (1990b) explains this difference between theatrical and social performance in this way:

In the theatre, one can say, ‘this is just an act,’ and de-realize the act, make acting quite distinct from what is real. Because of this distinction, one can maintain one’s sense of reality in the face of this temporary challenge to our existing ontological assumptions about gender arrangements; the various conventions which announce that ‘this is only a play’ allow strict lines to be drawn between the performance and life. (p. 278)

By contrast, not only are the performances with which I am concerned embedded in the practices, contexts, and background logics of daily living, they constitute everyday life. My claim that patterns of performance are constitutive is a claim that they are “constructions without which we would not be able to think, to live, to make sense at all, those which have acquired for us a kind of necessity” (Butler, 1993a, p. xi). Particularly when people’s everyday patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech are performed according to communal expectations, not only do they simply fade into the background of living, but they also create and comprise the very contexts that, although largely unnoticed, make the continued performance of everyday living possible.

Of course, in referring to people’s daily patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech as performance, I do, in a sense, mean to set them apart from everyday living. In this thesis, I am ultimately concerned with investigating and countering heterosexism and homophobia. As a result, I am centrally concerned both with people’s performances of
gender and sexuality and with the interpretations and consequences of those performances. I argue that gender and sexual performances are so much a part of people's quotidian existence that they typically go unnoticed as performance. My use of the language of performance is intended to mark everyday patterns of gendered and sexed dress, behaviour, and speech apart from the common assumption that they are manifestations of the essential or biological truths of people's natural, interior genders and sexualities. I also use performance more broadly to underline that widespread expectations of other normalcies - for example, racial, religious, or economic - should not be assumed to stem from unchanging moral truths or necessities.

This move is intended to invoke one of the two modes of framing that States presents in his discussion of Schechner, one of the founders of modern performance studies. Building on Schechner (1985), States (1996) remarks that "there are two kinds of framing: (1) when a performance generates its own frame self-consciously, as in traditional theatre, and (2) when the frame is imposed from the outside by an agency of some kind" (p.16). In referring to people's daily dress, behaviour, and speech as performances, I am primarily invoking this second type of framing. My desire to impose the frame of performance on the lived experience of gender and sexuality hints at my eventual argument that pervasive conceptions of gender, sexual, and other normalcies are performatively constructed through a process of repetition that simultaneously conceals the very process and fact of its contingent construction. Of course, this complicated claim

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6 In fact, the performance of gender and sexuality provides the model from which my larger conception of performance is derived.
7 The Drag Continuum that I introduce in Chapter 5 does allow for an examination of the characteristics and effects of gender and sexual performances set apart by the first type of framing. However, investigating performances that are marked by any of the usual conventions of the theatre is not the central purpose of either the Drag Continuum or this thesis.
jumps ahead too quickly. For now, I merely point out that my conception of social performance at the largely unintentional level is unlike the conventional conceptions of theatrical performance that Harris describes in that it does not frame patterns of dress, behaviour, or speech as different or removed from the contexts, practices, and belief systems of everyday life. Nevertheless, my use of the language of performance is meant to frame the dress, behaviour, and speech of normal gender and sexuality as contingent, staged, and, in this sense, theatrical.

The interdependent triangle formed by the audience, the performer, and the performance suggests further parallels between my conception of social or cultural performance and Harris’ theatrical performance. As in typical theatrical performance, the meanings and effects of social performance are constructed jointly through the interaction of those who perceive it and those who engage in it. Currently, performers are rarely, if ever, understood as possessing the unfettered power to bring about the precise meanings or effects that they intend.⁸ As Stone (1991) points out: “No amount of conscious purpose or planning – no amount of scripting – can ensure a complete ‘carrying out’” of the performance or performer’s intentions (p. 302). The meaning and effects of performers’ performances are subject to many influences, including the expectations and belief systems of the spectators who receive and assign meaning to

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⁸ Even with this caveat, Butler would likely take issue with my use of the term “performers.” While my conceptualization of performers is not meant to conote the type of sovereign, humanist subject that Butler strongly and repeatedly criticizes, and while there are certainly tensions in Butler’s own work around the degree and type of agency available to subjects, my conception of the subject allows for a stronger conception of agency than does Butler’s. These differences would likely lead us to different conclusions about the very possibility of there being subjects or agents that could fairly be called “performers.” I will discuss these differences in Butler’s and my conceptions of subjecthood and agency in far greater detail below.
them. In fact, the audience of a social performance is not only its interpreter but also its judge. As argued above, an audience’s perception of a social performance often leads to an immediate assignment of moral value. Even if it does not, those who perceive and interpret performances often take away from them some information or experience that, when incorporated into existing belief systems, is likely to at least partly ground future moral judgments. Either way, because audiences receive, interpret, evaluate, reward, and punish social performance, they play an important role in determining its meanings and effects.

However, like performers, audiences lack the authority to singularly, definitively, or wholly rationally decide the meanings and effects of performances. In pluralistic countries like Canada, many, if not most, audiences will be quite diverse. Thus, while I often refer to those who perceive a performance as an audience - i.e., as a grammatically singular entity - audiences are frequently heterogeneous in their backgrounds, perspectives, and assessments of performance. Moreover, there are many factors that not only influence how an individual spectator interprets a given performance, but that also mitigate a spectator’s standing as interpreter and judge. These factors include the following: spectators’ prior experiences and the belief systems, dispositions, and modes of thinking that are shaped by them; spectators’ understandings of the explicit, implicit, and potentially conflicting intentions of the performer; the staging, setting, and location of the performance, i.e., its context and frame; and, as my discussion of performativity

As I explain below, performers and audiences are not always distinct groups. That is, a performer may be a member of her own audience. In fact, when a performer is alone, she is the entirety of her audience, her sole spectator.

See Chapter 3 for a deeper exploration of this dynamic.
will soon make clear, the history embedded in and cited by every performance. These and other factors interplay to influence not only how an audience receives, interprets, and judges a performance, but also the extent to which the meanings and effects of a performance can be decided, or even calculated, by an audience. While it is important not to overstate the role of the audience in influencing the final meanings and effects of a performance, the audience, together with the performer(s), actively participate in the construction of both theatrical and social performance.

However, unlike typical theatrical performance, in social performance neither the audience nor the performer is usually consciously aware of their active participation in the performance. Spectators of social performance are often substantially unaware of themselves as interpreters and judges, because, as mentioned above, social performance is not generally marked as performance. As a result, there is typically neither a self-consciously generated nor an externally imposed frame to alert, remind, or help spectators to become conscious of the active part that they continually play in constructing the meanings and effects of everyday patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech.

Likewise, a performer may not be aware that an audience is receiving, interpreting, and judging her performance. She may not even be consciously sending a message to an audience. Nonetheless, as long as meaning and value is being assigned to a person's dress, behaviour, or speech, she is still a performer. In other words, whenever people engage in some form of meaningful communication, they participate in performances as performers, even though their dispatch may be neither deliberate nor self-reflexive. Moreover, there are few, if any, instances in which people are not at least
accidental performers. Even when a person is alone during her most private moments, her
dress, behaviour, and speech are still likely, to some extent, to constitute a performance
in which she is both performer and audience. To the extent that people have unwittingly,
but virtually unavoidably, incorporated communal expectations, standards, and
judgments into their own belief systems and self-concepts, performers become their own
audiences. In other words, to the extent that people experience and impose these
normative demands on themselves, they are forever performers whose dress, behaviour,
and speech are perceived, interpreted, and judged by an audience of at least one. Thus,
while the joint participation of performers and audiences in shaping the meanings and
effects of performance links social and theatrical performance, the frequency with which
performers and audiences are not consciously aware of their participation sets apart social
and theatrical performance.

That performers and audiences may neither understand nor recognize their
participation in social performance highlights the essential nature of social performance:
it both occurs and is interpreted at a largely unintentional level. People’s everyday
patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech go largely unnoticed as performance, because
they are so pervasive, so integral to people’s daily existence. Nonetheless, performances
are continually evaluated, rewarded, and punished by both performers and audiences
according to how well they fulfill standards of normalcy. Particularly in the realm of
gender and sexual performance, people’s dress, behaviour, and speech are typically
deeply, but also unintentionally and unknowingly, tied to variable norms and standards,
shifting moral assessments, and complex systems of reward and punishment.

11I explore this dynamic of subjectivization in far greater detail towards the end of this chapter.
Still, a fundamental question remains: how exactly are the patterns of people’s everyday dress, behaviour, and speech tied to heterosexism, homophobia, or other forms of prejudice? I will now turn to examining how social performance plays a part in creating and perpetuating the conceptions of normalcy in which prejudiced thinking, belief, emotion, and behaviour are, in part, based. To do this, I turn to my elaboration of the concept of performativity. Just like the term *performance*, the recent history of *performativity* has been marked by massive proliferation, cross-pollination, and cross-purposes. As Parker & Sedgwick (1995) remark in the introduction to *Performativity and Performance*: “while philosophy and theatre now share ‘performative’ as a common lexical item, the term has hardly come to mean ‘the same thing’ for each” (p. 2). In what follows I will address Butler’s linguistic, social, and bodily conception of performativity: where it comes from; what it is; what its relation is to performance, on what its force depends; and how I am interested in using it. I will ultimately argue that the frequent and consistent repetition that is so integral to the performative process is what gives performances of gender and sexuality the force to construct and maintain the pervasive conceptions of normalcy and accompanying systems of reward and punishment in which heterosexism, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice are, in part, based.

### Performativity

*Austin’s Elaboration*

While Butler asserts that “mine is not a loyal use of Austin” (Bell, 1999c, p. 164), her conceptualization of performativity is nonetheless indebted to Austin’s introduction of the term in speech act theory. His elaboration of the term in a series of Harvard
lectures (1955), later published as the book *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), is largely responsible for igniting today's wide-ranging debates about speech act theory. At the very least, Austin's conception of performativity is a jumping off point not only for Butler's use of the term, but also for some of the theorists to whom Butler more openly admits her direct indebtedness (Bell, 1999c). I will therefore situate Butler's conception of performativity in relation to Austin's, despite the ways in which she differentiates her conceptualization from his.

Austin (1962) defines performatives as utterances in which "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of the action – it is not normally thought of as just saying something" (p. 6-7). In other words, performatives are not merely descriptive or prescriptive declarations; the words themselves have an effect or accomplish a goal. While this formulation of words as deeds might be initially difficult to grasp, Austin (1962) gives many examples to help flesh out his assertion that, with performatives, "to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances)...is to do it" (p. 6). When a bride and groom say "I do" at a marriage ceremony convened according to standard

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12 In outlining his conception of performative utterances, Austin (1962) provisionally distinguishes them from constatives, i.e., statements that either truly or falsely describe a state of affairs or set of facts. Austin's intention in positing this distinction is ultimately to blur it; his objective is to demonstrate that constatives involve assessment and judgment, just as performatives do. As Fish (1989) remarks: "at the conclusion of *How to Do Things with Words*, the supposedly normative class of constatives is shown to be a member of the supposedly exceptional class of performatives" (p. 57). While Austin ultimately argues that no sharp or definitive distinction can be drawn between performatives and constatives, there are two reasons why my investigation of performatives does not include any further discussion of their relationship to constatives. First, regardless of how Austin initially framed his exploration of performative utterances, subsequent stand-alone theorizations of performativity have taken on lives almost entirely of their own. Second, Austin's muddying of his initial distinction between performatives and constatives is meant primarily to undermine the privileged relationship often thought to exist between constatives and reality. That is, it is meant to challenge the misconception that constatives transparently represent unchanging truths and certainties. While Austin's argument may demonstrate that few, if any, statements are purely descriptive, it does not further demonstrate that some statements are, in the appropriate circumstances, not purely performative. As I am interested both in this potential for words - and other types of performance - to effect deeds and in the subsequent theorizations of performativity that do not pursue its relationship to constatives, there is no compelling reason for me to pursue further discussions of constatives here.
legal and religious convention, they are married (p. 5). When someone says “I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow,” and the bet is accepted, a wager is made (p.5). At a ship-naming ceremony, when someone with the proper authority announces: “I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth,” the ship is so named; it becomes known as the Queen Elizabeth (p. 5).

It is essential in all of these examples, as well as to any successful performative speech act, that the utterance be accompanied by the appropriate circumstances. The mere uttering of words is not sufficient for them to function as deeds. As Austin (1962) states: “Speaking generally, it is always necessary that the circumstances in which the words are uttered should in some way, or ways, be appropriate, and it is very commonly necessary that either the speaker himself or other persons should also perform certain other actions” (p. 8; italics in original). In other words, for a performative utterance to successfully accomplish an act, it must follow whatever linguistic, behavioural, and social conventions or procedures have been previously established as necessary for performing that act. As is outlined both in the preceding citation and in Austin’s discussion of the necessary conditions for a successful – i.e., an effective or efficacious - performative speech act, these conventions relate to and place conditions not only on the utterer, but also on both the utteree(s) and the overall context of the utterance.

Curiously, Austin has been accused by many of positing a fantastical sovereign actor whose power to make word into deed originates exclusively and decisively from the speaker himself\(^\text{13}\). The following is a representative charge: “The subject as sovereign is presumed in the Austinian account of performativity….The one who speaks the

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\(^{13}\) For examples of such critiques, see Butler (1997a); Derrida (1988); McNay (1999); Lloyd (1999); Parker & Sedgwick (1995); Allen (1998).
performative effectively is understood to operate according to uncontested power” (Butler, 1997a, p. 48-9).\(^{14}\) I contend that a careful reading of Austin demonstrates that this accusation is at best uncharitable and at worst erroneous. Austin’s (1962) Doctrine of the Infelicities - i.e., the myriad ways in which performatives can fail, go wrong, or, in his own words, be *infelicitous* or *unhappy* - places many limits on the power of Austin’s speaker to singularly and deterministically effect through her speech the deed that she intends. In other words, the long list of necessary conditions that Austin provides in order for a performative to be successful or *happy* suggests that it is not straightforwardly the case that Austin’s performative speaker has the unfettered originary power to transform word into deed. While I do not have the space to fully flesh out my argument here, Austin’s discussion of both appropriate circumstances and the Doctrine of the Infelicities suggests that the common interpretation of the Austinian subject as sovereign grossly overestimates the extent to which it need be so interpreted.

Also the subject of considerable debate is the distinction that Austin (1962) draws between speech acts that are “issued in ordinary circumstances” (p. 22) and speech acts that take place in theatrical contexts.\(^{15}\) Austin believes them to be different types of speech and he maintains that his discussion of performative utterances applies only to the former. I will not present or substantially engage with this debate about whether a meaningful distinction should be made between ordinary and theatrical speech acts. I will merely mention that while I am interested primarily in the performatives of daily social

\(^{14}\) Butler’s suggestion here that Austin posits a wholly sovereign subject is particularly curious given that, elsewhere, she seems to recognize some of the constraints and obligations that Austin imposes on the performative utterance and utterer. For example, she remarks: “the question of mechanical breakdown or ‘misfire’ and the unpredictability of speech is precisely what Austin repeatedly emphasizes when he focuses on the various ways in which a speech act can go wrong” (Butler, 1997a, p. 19).

\(^{15}\) See, for example, Derrida (1988), Fish (1989), or Parker & Sedgwick (1995).
interactions, for my purposes, it is not useful to draw too sharp a distinction between the theatrical and the everyday. My focus is on people's daily lives, because the sheer amount of time people spend going about their daily business makes the daily integral to the formation, maintenance, and content of thinking, belief, disposition, and behaviour. Of course, theatre – or, for that matter, any cultural or aesthetic production, including television, movies, music videos, and the internet – is a part of people's daily lives. As such, for my purposes, the performatives of theatre are, perhaps, a kind of subset of the performatives of everyday social interactions. While I argue above that there is good reason to believe that, with theatrical or aesthetic performance, there is often a type of disconnect between the spectators and their guiding belief systems and customary affective and behavioural responses, there is also good reason to believe that spectators' guiding belief systems and customary affective and behavioural responses do not remain unaffected by the theatrical or aesthetic. In other words, while people may react differently to what is otherwise the same performance or performative, on the basis of whether they perceive it in a theatrical or an ordinary context, people still do react to and can be influenced by theatrical or aesthetic performance. Ultimately, I am concerned with the potential of such influences to construct and maintain gender, sexual, and other prejudice. Thus, because repeated patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech can have profound influences on people's daily thinking, dispositions, and conceptions of self, no matter in which context they occur, I draw no sharp distinction between theatrical and ordinary performatives.

My interest in common influences on people's thinking, beliefs, dispositions, and conceptions of self also leads me to a conception of performative performance that is
both more broad than Austin’s and differently focused. Whereas Austin’s performative utterances are concerned with the meaning and effects of speech, my conception of performative performances includes not only speech, but also dress and behaviour. Austin is interested in performatives as utterances that function as actions – where saying is doing. For example, uttering “I do” in the appropriate circumstances brings about the act of marriage – the very act that is figured in the utterance and intended by the utteree. By contrast, I am more interested in performatives as social performances that not only function as actions, but that also create normative ideals. I am interested in repeated patterns of everyday dress, behaviour, and speech that not only bring about obvious or anticipated effects, but also generate the conceptions of normalcy by which those effects are evaluated, rewarded, and punished. To suggest that the performance of gender and sexuality is performative is to propose that when people dress, act, or speak in accordance with pervasive conceptions of gender or sexual normalcy, they are doing more than simply acting as “men” or “women.” It is also to suggest that people’s performances actually construct and reinforce the very conceptions of masculinity and femininity by which their compliance with normalcy is judged and consequenced. Thus, my conception of performativity departs from Austin’s, primarily because of its concern with the diverse forms of communication that construct and maintain the boundaries of socially acceptable performance and belief.

Before turning to Butler’s conception of performativity, I should note that while my understanding of performativity and performance intimately links these two concepts, Butler has made explicit moves to distance her articulations of performativity and performance since the publication of Gender Trouble (1990a). Butler uncoupled these
concepts in response to the frequent, but erroneous, assumption that she intended her elaboration of gender performativity to suggest that people freely and autonomously perform their gender and sexuality. In Butler's words: "The misapprehension about gender performativity is this: that gender is a choice, or that gender is a role, or that gender is a construction that one puts on, as one puts on clothes in the morning" (Butler, 1993a, p. 21). People interpreted Butler's discussion of gender performativity to imply that the performer of gender exists prior to and is unconstrained by past performances of gender, and thus can willfully decide what kind of gender she will construct. On the contrary, however, Butler's conception of performativity refers to "a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense can not be taken as the fabrication of the performer's 'will' or 'choice'" (Butler, 1993a, p. 234). Butler's explicit disentanglement of performativity and performance is meant to underline that gender should not be understood as an isolated performance by a decontextualized, wholly autonomous agent who can singularly and definitively choose and bring about the effects she intends.

Contra Butler, I reinstate a strong connection between performance and performativity for three principal reasons. First, for me, any performance is a piece of a larger pattern of consistently performed dress, behaviour, or speech. That is, I understand all performance, by definition, to be performative. Second, I would suggest that social performance is an interesting and important area of research, precisely because of its performative force, i.e., its potential to manufacture and constrain both social practice and belief through its relatively frequent and consistent repetition. Like Phelan (1998), I argue that "performance and performativity are braided together by virtue of iteration"
Lastly, joining performativity to the dress, behaviour, and speech of performance helps to give content to the conceptions of normalcy that performativity creates and sustains. While conceptions of normalcy vary across time and place, concrete details of particular performances play an important role in fleshing out what performative normalcy actually looks like in specific contexts.

Given both Butler’s move to distance performativity from performance and my own use of performance as a shorthand for performative performances, some might suggest that I use the term *performatives* instead of *performances*. There are four reasons I have chosen to use performance over performative. First, Austin uses the term *performative* as a shorthand for his performative utterance, which is, for the most part, a grammatical or linguistic concept. As outlined above, I use the term performance far more widely to include, along with speech, other forms of meaningful communication, i.e., dress and behaviour – that influence thinking, belief, and disposition. Second, the term *performative* seems unnecessarily abstract. While philosophers and theorists from other disciplines may be accustomed to wading through complex conceptual language, practice-oriented social justice educators tend not to be. As a result, there is good reason to believe that my work has a better chance of being used by people working and learning in applied settings if I limit my use of jargon. I use the relatively friendly *performance* over *performative*, because it is central to the conceptual tool that I present in Chapters 5 and 6, a tool that is designed to help social justice educators facilitate the improvement of reason, the deepening of self-knowledge, and the reduction of gender and sexual prejudice. Third, my use of *performance* is meant to underline the contingency of what has come to count as acceptable gender and sexual performance by drawing on the
theatrical or staged connotations of the term. Lastly, my use of *performance* over *performativ* is intended to embed connotations of measurement and excellence within my discussion of pervasive conceptions and performances of normalcy. Achieving normalcy requires that others judge a performance to fulfill sufficiently the standards of normalcy. Butler makes this point in describing the drag balls depicted in the film *Paris is Burning*, but it holds for all performances of gender, sexuality, and other social normalcies. As she asserts: “‘Realness’ is not exactly a category in which one competes; it is a standard that is used to judge any given performance within the established categories. And yet what determines the effect of realness is the ability to compel belief, to produce the naturalized effect” (Butler, 1993a, p. 129). Those who perform their gender and sexuality well are rewarded for meeting or exceeding the standards or expectations of gender and sexual normalcy that have been previously established through performative patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech; those who do not master normal displays of gender and sexuality are punished for it. Thus, the final reason that I choose to refer to displays of gender and sexuality as performances rather than performatives is to emphasize the links between normalcy and the adequate fulfillment of the conventional standards that have been performatively established for a given performance. Ultimately, considerations of breadth, accessibility, contingency, and the adequate fulfillment of standards all underscore my choice to use *performance* rather than *performativ*. With these clarifications out of the way, I return to my presentation and critique of Butler’s conception of performativity.
Butler’s Elaboration

As my conception of performativity builds on Butler’s, it should be no surprise that her elaboration of the term diverges from Austin’s in the same ways that mine does: Butler’s performativity is both differently focused than Austin’s and wider in scope. Butler’s focus is on normative social or cultural performatives.16 Her first extended elaboration of her conception of performativity came in Gender Trouble (1990a), where she focused on the performativity of gender, sex, and sexuality. Since then, Butler has engaged with an increasing, but profoundly interconnected, range of normative social performatives, expanding her elaboration of performativity in an attempt to “rethink social regulation in terms which include vectors of power such as gender and race” (Butler, 1993a, p. 182).

The scope of Butler’s conception of performativity also includes modes of communication beyond the verbal utterance. Granted, some of Butler’s more recent work has focused more narrowly on performative speech. For example, in Excitable Speech (1997a) she explores how speech act theory is commonly employed in legal contexts not only to prosecute hate speech and pornography, but also to define them. Further, Butler now commonly uses Althusser’s conception of interpellation to illustrate how linguistic speech acts performatively constitute subjects with social standing.17 Nonetheless, Butler

16 Butler has been critiqued by many for trying to jettison any moral foundation from her work, and then implicitly relying on a moral foundation in her articulation of performativity. (See, for example, Allen (1998) and Nussbaum (1999).) While I will not engage with this debate, I call Butler’s a normative conception of performativity because she clearly wants, and wants others, to use her conception of performativity to challenge and correct social injustices. As she states: “That hateful, racist, misogynist, homophobic speech should be vehemently countered seems incontrovertibly right” (Butler, 1997a. p.50).

17 Below, I elaborate both on Butler’s use of Althusser’s interpellation and on her arguments about performativity’s role in inaugurating the subject.
also describes the performative process more broadly: as involving “bodily gestures, movements, and enactments” (1990b, p. 270) or “actions, gestures, and speech” (1997b, p. 144). Moreover, even when limiting her articulation of performatives to linguistic speech acts, Butler is careful to point out, contra Austin, that such performatives require neither spoken words, nor actual speakers. As she states: “The interpellative name may arrive without a speaker—on bureaucratic forms, the census, adoption papers, employment applications” (Butler, 1997a, p. 34). Because of these differences in scope and emphasis, and because of further differences on which I elaborate below, I argue that while Austin’s influential conceptualization of performativity certainly underlies Butler’s articulation of the term, it should be understood as only a jumping off point for her work.

While Butler has offered many rearticulations of her conception of performativity, it is clear that she understands it to be “a reiteration of a norm or set of norms” (Butler, 1993a, p. 12) that is both “powerful and insidious” (Butler, 1997a, p. 160). The following description of performativity is one of the more concise yet robust ones that Butler offers throughout her work: “performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate ‘act,’ but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effect that it names” (Butler, 1993a, p. 2). In other words, performatives are social rituals that, through their frequent and consistent repetition, actually create the cultural ideals they purport merely to describe or reflect. They are those patterns of social interaction and communication that produce and maintain the conceptions of normalcy that constrain and regulate all future patterns of social practice.
and belief. As Butler (1997a) remarks: "ideation is produced in the course of this ritualized repetition of convention" (p. 25).

The dynamics of Butler’s argument are perhaps more easily grasped when spelled out in concrete terms. A performative understanding of gender and sex suggests that pervasive North American understandings of the performative category “woman” are created and perpetuated in part by North American females who fairly consistently dress and behave as “women.” That is, when North American women wear high heels and push-up bras, or have sexual relations and relationships with men, they have a part in actually producing the gendered and sexed assumption that normal, socially desirable women not only have shapely legs and large breasts, but are also heterosexual. While femininity and heterosexuality are often thought to be manifestations of the inherent, genetically or anatomically interior gendered nature of biological females, to understand gender, sex, and sexuality performatively is to understand these concepts as contingently produced and maintained through frequent and consistent repetitions that, in time, evolve into unquestioned norms. As Nussbaum (1999) remarks:

Butler’s point is presumably this: when we act and speak in a gendered way, we are not simply reporting on something that is already fixed in the world, we are actively constituting it, replicating it, and reinforcing it. By behaving as if there were male and female ‘natures,’ we co-create the fiction that these natures exist. They are never apart from our deeds; we are always making them be there. (p. 41)

Of course, no one specific female is individually responsible for her communities’ gendered expectations of what it is to be a woman. It is the incremental and accumulative

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18 In deference to Butler’s desire to distance performativity from performance, when discussing her conception of performativity, I use the term practice where I might otherwise use performance.
effects of innumerable repetitions of convention that shape a community’s beliefs about
what constitutes appropriate displays of gender, sex, and sexuality. Pop culture, media
representation, academic research, informal discussion, as well as many other diverse and
diffuse performances of femininity and masculinity all profoundly influence pervasive
conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy. Further, conceptions of sexual, gender, and
other normalcies clearly vary across diverse North American communities: race,
ethnicity, income level, age, and religion being only some of their complicating factors.
Nonetheless, when females conform to the most pervasive, but still performatively
produced, conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy, they have a part in perpetuating
the ubiquity and force of heterosexual femininity. Similarly, when females who comply
with pervasive conceptions of femininity are referred to as girls or women, this address
does not merely describe them as girls or women: it also plays a part both in making
them into girls and women and in manufacturing the very conceptions of gender
normalcy by which they are “girled” or “womened.” In Butler’s (1993a) words, “Within
speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that
which it names” (p. 13).

The Force of Successful Performatives

For the purposes of my project, Butler’s most important contribution to the
theorization of performativity may well be her robust explanation of the force of
performatives: the factors that contribute to their successes; the factors that contribute to
their failures; and the effects that their successes and failures are likely to have on the
formation of thought, belief, feeling, behaviour, conceptions of self, and social standing.
Understanding the potential force of performatives to manufacture and constrain social practice and belief is important to understanding their potential to create and sustain the prejudiced practices and beliefs of heterosexism, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice. In what follows, I elaborate on Butler’s and my own understanding of the factors that can contribute to and undermine the force or success of the performative process to manufacture and constrain social practice and belief.

Butler offers Derrida’s conception of *citationality* - and its close conceptual cousins: *iterability* and *historicity* - as one of the main sources of the force of performatives. To say that a performative is citational is to maintain that it is an – albeit imperfect – “repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices” (Butler, 1997a, p. 51). Both Butler and Derrida argue that performatives are efficacious, precisely because they are not isolated occurrences; they are reiterations of other practices that have come before them. As such, performatives are instilled with the authoritative force of the conventions with which they comply. To underline that the iterability or citationality of performatives is the key to their force, Butler repeatedly returns to a paragraph from Derrida (1988), only part of which I reproduce here: “Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a ‘coded’ or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as conforming with an iterable model, if it were not identifiable in some way as a ‘citation’?” (Butler, 1993a, p. 13; Butler, 1993b, p. 18; and Butler, 1997a, p. 51).

Because performatives are citations, they have “a historicity, what might be understood as the history which has become internal to a name, has come to constitute
the contemporary meaning of a name: the sedimentation of its usages as they have become part of the very name, a sedimentation, a repetition that congeals, that gives the name its force" (Butler, 1997a, p. 36). In other words, it is only because individual performatives repeat, draw on, and have embedded in them the accumulated meanings of past patterns of performatives that they profoundly impact social practice and its interpretation. For example, a seated woman's demure crossing of her legs may seem an isolated expression of her inherent gender. However, this seated woman will probably only think that - as a woman - she should cross her legs, and will then only have her leg-crossing be interpreted as a demure expression of her femininity, to the extent that this social practice has constructed and accumulated this gendered meaning over time. In other words, not only does the historicity of gender partly manufacture the idea of gender, but it is also what gives the idea of gender the force to constrain both contemporary conceptions of gender normalcy and the gendered practices that are associated with them. By building on Derrida’s reformulation of Austin’s concept of performativity, and highlighting Derrida’s conceptions of citationality and historicity, Butler attempts to shift the departure point for analyzing and understanding performatives from the singular (Austinian) performative utterance to the chain of utterances and practices that both precede and follow it.19 Performatives – be they Austin’s spoken words, Butler’s social performatives, or my performative performances – are successful or efficacious only to the extent that their frequent and relatively consistent repetition, via Derrida’s citationality, merely makes explicit the emphasis on convention already tacitly embedded in Austin’s performative. As argued above, this emphasis on the importance of convention and the appropriate circumstances is frequently overlooked or discounted by contemporary theorists.

19 However, I would suggest that Butler’s foregrounding of frequent and relatively consistent repetition, via Derrida’s citationality, merely makes explicit the emphasis on convention already tacitly embedded in Austin’s performative. As argued above, this emphasis on the importance of convention and the appropriate circumstances is frequently overlooked or discounted by contemporary theorists.
consistent reiteration creates and incorporates both the authority of convention and a complex of accrued meaning.

Butler further argues that the performative process is often so successful in manufacturing and constraining social practice and belief, because the frequent and consistent repetition of performatives conceals the very citationality and historicity by which they are constructed and through which they derive their force. As Butler (1997a) states: “a performative ‘works’ to the extent that it draws on and covers over the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized.” (p. 51; italics in original). In other words, performatives gain their force, because the performative dynamic itself makes particular instances of social practice appear unconnected to the chain of other performatives on which their success depends. People typically recognize neither the performative dynamic nor its force, precisely because the performative dynamic makes social ritual and the pervasive conceptions of normalcy that it creates appear to originate in the very “truths” that performativity continually constructs as natural and inevitable. In Butler’s words: “If the ‘cause’ of desire, gesture, and act can be localized with the ‘self’ of the actor, then the political regulations and disciplinary practices which produce that ostensibly coherent gender are effectively displaced from view” (Butler, 1990a, p. 136). Because people usually recognize neither the conventional authority nor the accumulated meanings embedded in performatives, they also typically recognize neither their own nor others’ part in perpetuating the very performative norms that they reiterate. As Butler remarks: “The one who speaks according to the norms that govern speakability is not necessarily following a rule in a conscious way” (Butler, 1997a, p. 134). 20

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20 This point is taken up again in Chapter 4, where I will argue that there is good reason to believe that heterosexism, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice can be reduced by helping people first to
ubiquity of performatives usually impedes people from being consciously aware of them, of the citational and historical dynamic that creates and sustains them, and of the conceptions of normalcy that they create, performatives gain greater force to constrain and regulate social interaction and thought.

The very conceptions of normalcy that are produced through performative practice underlie another reason that performatives are often so successful in manufacturing and constraining social practice and belief. Normalcy is a moral concept: it is not merely a simple description of someone or something that conforms to a norm; it is an assignment of social acceptability to both the conforming practice and the conforming person.21 Whereas the more value-neutral term normality usually simply denotes that which is most typical or most frequently occurring, “normalcy” intimately connects commonality and compliance with desirable goals or goodness. Likewise, people who radically depart from social norms are often saddled with the disparaging label “deviant,” instead being more neutrally described as having deviated from what is customary. In North America, one of the more pervasive, and thus widely valued, conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy is heterosexual femininity, especially in its white, monied, able-bodied form. By contrast, the effeminate, gay, or transgendered male, especially if he is non-white, poor, or disabled, is considered by many to be a deviant: his less common iteration of gender, sexuality, or both rendering him morally suspect. While there is nothing inherently praiseworthy or blameworthy about conformity

recognize the performative process and then to engage in strong critical thinking about the extent to which its influence on their own thinking and dispositions is warranted.

21 While Butler does not explicitly discuss normalcy as a moral concept, she does discuss the normative force of performativity to define the limits of social acceptability. My aim here is to flesh out some of the reasoning implicit in that discussion.
to or deviation from that which has become expected by virtue of its fairly frequent and consistent repetition, people's desire for the social acceptability that comes through the bestowal of normalcy can be a strong incentive not only to act in accordance with pervasive conceptions of normalcy, but also to use conceptions of normalcy as the grounds for moral judgments. Because pervasive conceptions of performatively produced normalcy can place limits on social practice and belief, the force of performativity is derived in part from the very conceptions of normalcy that performativity creates and sustains.

Another reason why the performative process is so successful in manufacturing and constraining social practice and belief is that, because performativity is a moral concept, a complex system of rewards and punishments accompanies it.²² Performatives both threaten and deliver reward and punishment to those who, respectively, conform to and deviate from the conceptions of normalcy that performative repetition creates. As Butler (1990a) remarks, "we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right" (p. 140). As a result, performative practices should be understood as "a ritual reiterated under and through constraint" (Butler, 1993a, p.95). The half-joking but half-sincere exclamation "I would rather die than do or be that!" (Butler, 1993a, p. 243) suggests the weightiness and force of the sanctions that accompany performative demands.

²² My argument here may draw more attention than Butler would to the systems of reward and punishment that accompany performatives. At times, her elaboration of the force of performatives places more emphasis on psychoanalytic concepts - like melancholia, conscience, guilt, and incest taboos - than on externally imposed controls. For example, she states: "where one would expect that conscience would wax and wane according to the strength of externally imposed prohibitions, it appears that its strength has more to do with marshalling aggression in the service of refusing to acknowledge a loss that has already taken place" (Butler, 1997b, p. 183). Nonetheless, since I do not share Butler's appreciation of psychoanalytic theory, I have chosen to de-emphasize her arguments about the contributions to theories of performativity that psychoanalysis can make, highlighting instead her arguments about reward and punishment.
Like the rewards and punishments I describe above in my discussion of performance, the rewards and punishments that accompany performativity are many and varied. Some are formally and institutionally entrenched; others are informally endorsed and dispensed. Formal rewards may include legal rights and protections, gainful employment, and workplace promotions; formal punishments may include arrest, institutional commitment, or religious excommunication. Informal rewards may include safe passage down a street, an invitation to a community or family celebration, or a courteous response from a sales person; informal punishments often include some form of bullying, such as: subtle exclusions, dirty looks, name-calling, taunting, and physical abuse. Because of “the normative force of performativity – its power to establish what qualifies as ‘being’” (Butler, 1993a, p. 188), the most fundamental reward for complying with performative expectations of normalcy is probably the social recognition that comes through social acceptability. By contrast, the ultimate punishments for deviating too substantially from performative expectations are social ostracism, political disenfranchisement, and even utter abjection. As Butler (1997b) states: “if one fails to reinstate the norm ‘in the right way,’ one becomes subject to further sanction, one feels the prevailing conditions of existence threatened” (p. 28-9).

Rewards and punishments are effective in promoting conformity to pervasive norms, and thus the force of performatives, for at least two reasons. First, they are a form of behavioural manipulation that creates a “situation of duress” (Butler, 1990a, p. 139). People’s active desire to achieve future rewards and avoid future punishment can lead them to change their practices, regardless of whether or not they believe the rewards or punishments that they seek to achieve or avoid are justified. Second, “the psychic
operation of the norm offers a more insidious route for regulatory power than explicit coercion” (Butler, 1997b, p. 21). In other words, reward and punishment can function at the level of core belief and emotional commitment to shape people’s own conceptions of normalcy and identity. When patterns of praise or admonition are sufficiently widespread, people can come to believe they are justified, even when incorporating these beliefs into their value systems is neither in their best interests, nor supported by good reasons. The shame that many closeted gays and lesbians describe is evidence of this type of counterproductive and otherwise unwarranted incorporation of community or family conceptions of sexual normalcy. Both through this type of deep psychic and cognitive incorporation and through behavioural manipulation, the rewards and punishments that accompany normative performatives manufacture and constrain social practice and belief.

While I appreciate Butler’s discussion of the systems of reward and punishment that in part give performatives their force, I suggest that Butler’s (1993b) detailed elaboration of the “social constraints, taboos, prohibitions, [and] threats of punishment [that] operate in the ritualized repetition of norms” (p. 21) comes at the expense of a sufficient elaboration of the rewards that accompany performatives. Butler does pay considerable attention to what is arguably the ultimate reward for conforming to the norms that performatively constructed
and normatively valued conceptions of gender and sexuality enjoy countless formal and informal rewards, including: the legal and religious right to marry; bereavement leave; pension benefits; an easier path to child guardianship and adoption; the freedom to hold a romantic partner’s hand in public without fear of verbal or physical attack; and compliments, praise, warm smiles, and other subtle gestures that demonstrate acceptance. These rewards serve as positive reinforcements that encourage not only the continued behavioural compliance with pervasive conceptions of normalcy, but also a deep psychic, cognitive, and emotional commitment to those conceptions. Because they cause pleasure, not pain, the extent of the coercive pull of rewards may not be as readily recognized.

Still, the incentives that rewards provide are substantial. As such, a detailed examination of the range of possible rewards for conformity to pervasive norms should be included in theories purporting to explain the formation and maintenance of social practice and belief. This critique aside, Butler’s discussion of reward and punishment can make an important contribution to any account of the frequently generative and regulative force of performatives.

Another reason that performatives are so successful in manufacturing and constraining social practice and belief is that their effects are profoundly bodily. Not only does performativity impact belief and behaviour, but it also impacts the physical self. Performatives can affect the body both through people’s attempts to comply with performatively produced conceptions of normalcy and through the rewards and punishments that accompany practices or people judged to be either sufficiently or insufficiently normal. As Butler (1997a) remarks:

consider the way in which the history of having been called an injurious name is embodied, how the words enter the limbs, craft the gesture, bend the
...slurs live and thrive in the flesh of the addressee...these slurs accumulate over time, dissimulating their history, taking on the semblance of the natural....In such bodily productions resides the sedimented history of the performative. (p. 159)

Butler’s claim here is not merely that people act with their bodies to create, comply with, and sustain performatively produced conceptions of normalcy. Rather, her claim is that, once created, these conceptions of normalcy mark the body in a very physical way, changing the physical body that strives to act in compliance with conceptions of normalcy. “The body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time” (Butler, 1990b, p. 274). For example, the increasingly muscular bodies of male body builders, or the “average” guy in the weight room, can be understood as both a physical sedimentation and a reinforcement of the norms of masculinity. When sufficiently pervasive, performatively produced physical bodies, such as those of muscular men, only strengthen people’s conviction in the naturalness, goodness, and inevitability of the norms those bodies seem to express. The physical body is so compelling, precisely because it is so tangible, so concrete, and thus so seemingly straightforward, factual, and unquestionable. The profound and often subtle bodily impact of performatives thus contributes to their capacity to manufacture and constrain thinking, belief, emotion, behaviour, and conceptions of self.

The final reason that performatives are so successful in manufacturing and constraining social ritual and belief is that the performative process constructs not only conceptions of normalcy, but also - according to Butler - subjects themselves. Butler makes this argument by building on Foucault’s conception of subjection or subjectivization (assujetissement). “Subjection is, literally, the making of a subject, the principle of regulation according to which the subject is formulated or produced.”
Both Foucault's and Butler's subject only comes into being as a result of the performative forces that act upon her, calling her into being. In other words, there is no subject, no "I," that exists prior to or independent of performatively constructed conceptions of - for example, gender, sexual, and racial - normalcy; to be a subject is to be already gendered, sexed, sexualized, and raced.

According to Butler, social norms are incorporated into the subject as she is created; they are not internalized into an already existing psyche or subject (Butler, 1997b, p. 19). Who the subject comes to be, as well as how the subject continues to evolve, is limited by the norms through which she comes into being and on which her continued existence depends. Thus, the process of subjectivization is both generative and prohibitive: it simultaneously manufactures and constrains the subject.

Butler turns to Althusser's conception of interpellation as a way to demonstrate more concretely what she means by the claim that the subject is constituted through and within performative conceptions of normalcy.

In the famous scene of interpellation that Althusser provides, the policeman hails the passerby with 'hey you there' and the one who recognizes himself and turns around (nearly everyone) to answer the call does not, strictly speaking, preexist the call. The act of recognition becomes the act of constitution: the address animates the subject into existence (Butler, 1997a, p. 25).

The interpellative call functions just as performative practices do: to simultaneously generate and regulate the subject. From the moment that "the doctor... receives the child and pronounces - 'It's a girl'" (Butler, 1997a, p. 49), the force of the interpellative demand begins to act on the child, constructing her from the start as a gendered subject.

Not only does being called a girl influence both who the subject understands herself to be

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23 For Foucault, the subject is masculine.
and how others perceive and position her, but it also reinforces the conception of heterosexual femininity by which she is girled. The interpellative call reinforces pervasive conceptions of gender normalcy not only by reiterating what it is to be a girl, but also by reiterating the demand that subjects be constructed and interpreted according to two distinct genders. Seen in this light, the interpellative demand is a constative that functions as a performative: while it purports to merely describe the subject, it actually works to form both the subject and the conceptions of normalcy by which the subject is formed. "The mark of interpellation is not descriptive, but inaugurative. It seeks to introduce a reality rather than report on an existing one" (Butler, 1997a, p. 33). Just like the performative practices of which interpellations may be seen as a subset, interpellative demands gain their force through their citationality and historicity: from the authoritative conventions of normalcy that they create and repeatedly invoke, as well as from the accumulated meanings embedded in them. "The interpellation echoes past interpellations, and binds the speaker, as if they are spoken in unison across time" (Butler, 1993b, p. 18).

When seen in this context, Butler's claims about performativity's incredible force come into clearer focus. I explained above how social practice and belief can be strongly influenced by the conceptions of normalcy created through consistent and self-concealing social ritual, by the systems of reward and punishment that accompany these morally-valued conceptions, and by the bodily impact of performatives. However, Butler's arguments about performative subjection or subjectivization suggest that the constraining and regulating force of performatives may be radically foundational. According to Butler, performative practices and interpellative demands are not only the means through which subjects make sense of the world and themselves, they are also the very means by which
subjects are brought into the world and on which their continued existence depends. As Butler (1993b) states: “The discursive condition of social recognition *precedes* and *conditions* the formation of the subject: recognition is not conferred on a subject, but forms that subject” (p. 18; italics in original).

Because performativity is the condition under and through which subjects are formed, it places limits on both the content of people’s beliefs and the possibilities that they can imagine. “To reduce the psychic working of gender to the literal performance of gender would be a mistake” (Butler, 1997b, p. 144). The psychic and cognitive workings of performatives regulate thought in at least two ways. First, because performatives help to construct people’s core sense of who they are and how they relate to the world, they function as foreclosures, i.e., as the “preemptive operation of a norm” (Butler, 1997a, p. 138). Performatives function so foundationally that they often severely restrict – and, according to Butler, can even radically erase (Butler, 1993a, p. 8) - people’s ability not only to critically reflect on the performatives incorporated into their own existence as subjects, but also to imagine a world without those performatives. It is, for example, difficult for most people to imagine themselves or others apart from their gendered existences. It is also difficult for those who have been fully convinced by pervasive conceptions of sexual normalcy to conceive of homosexuals as physically, mentally, and spiritually healthy human beings. Being subjected through and within the performatives can seriously impede, and possibly prevent, a sincere engagement with difference. Subjection functions just as do sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell: the very modes through which human beings experience the world, come to understand it, and come to understand themselves, make it difficult or even impossible for them to conceive
of other ways of experiencing and understanding the world and the self that they have come to know and trust. Because the norms and practices by which subjects are formed become part of who they understand themselves to be, “the subject cannot reflect on the entire process of its formation” (Butler, 1993a, p. 113). Thus, performatives place limits on what people can think and imagine, because “as foreclosure, the sanction works not to prohibit existing desire but to produce certain kinds of objects and to bar others from the field of social production” (Butler, 1997b, p. 25).

Performatives additionally place restrictions on what people can think and imagine, “because [subjects] have a certain inevitable attachment to [their] existence” (Butler, 1997b, p. 104). Butler’s tongue-in-cheek comment highlights that most people have a passionate, if understandable, desire to maintain their subjecthood – a desire that there is good reason to believe can function to further regulate social practice and belief. People’s subjecthood is never secure: “a subject only remains a subject through a reiteration or rearticulation of itself as a subject” (Butler, 1997b, p. 99). As the performative process “is never fully complete” (Butler, 1997a, p.136), neither is the performative formation of Butler’s subject. Not only are subjects subtly, but continually, remade through the very performative process that brings them into being in the first place, but they can also lose their status as a subject if they fail to conform to performatively produced conceptions of normalcy. Be it conscious or unconscious, people’s fear of losing their social being can prevent them from questioning the norms by which their social standing and sense of self are achieved and protected. As Butler (1997b) asserts: “One can not criticize too far the very terms by which one’s own existence is secured” (p. 129). Because they generate and perpetuate the existence of the
subject, performatives gain the force to regulate social practice and belief; "the construction of the human is a differential operation that produces the more or less 'human,' the inhuman, and the humanly unthinkable" (Butler, 1993a, p. 8).

While it is clear that Butler understands subjectivization to generate and powerfully constrain the formation of the subject, and thus also the formation of social practice and belief, it is not entirely clear who or what Butler understands the subject to be. Sometimes it seems she is referring to what I would call identity, self-concept, or sense of self, sometimes to what I would call social standing, and sometimes to both. Most often, Butler's use of the term subject seems to refer to a person's social standing, i.e., others' sense of who a person is, the extent to which she conforms to pervasive conceptions of normalcy, and as such, what her place or position in the world is. For example, Butler describes the subject as provisionally gaining "social recognition" (Butler, 1990a, p. 77), "social existence" (Butler, 1997b, p. 112), "social positionality" (Butler, 1997a, p. 33), and "status as a social being" (Butler, 1997b, p. 119). Her subject is someone who conforms to social norms: "to be 'bad' is not yet to be a subject" (Butler, 1997b, p. 119). From these types of descriptions, Butler's subject seems to be someone with some degree of social standing, someone others acknowledge, understand, and perhaps accord some measure of respect, because of her incorporation of and conformity to performatively produced conceptions of normalcy.

Further supporting the explication of the subject as a person with social standing is the contrast that Butler (1993a) draws between social subjects and the socially abject:

The exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed...requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings...The abject designates here precisely those 'unlivable' and 'uninhabitable' zones of social life which
are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of subject. (p. 3)

People without a subject’s social standing lack social visibility. While they clearly do not literally disappear, others do not treat them as human beings with inherent value or rights as persons. In fact, with abject beings, “it is their very humanness that comes into question” (Butler, 1993a, p. 8). For example, others may insult them to their face, spit at them, assault them, or walk right by them without acknowledging their existence. Even when others do acknowledge their presence and hear what they have to say, people who are not full subjects are usually not taken seriously: their views are frequently discounted or dismissed without being given the open-minded consideration that those of full subjects are accorded. The abject are society’s deviants: people judged to have strayed too far from the boundaries of normalcy. “To move outside of the domain of speakability is to risk one’s status as a subject” (Butler, 1997a, p. 133). Butler’s discussion of abject beings, as well as her frequent elaboration of subjects as human beings with a social existence or social standing suggest that she uses subject primarily to refer to how people are perceived and positioned by others.

However, Butler’s use of subject sometimes also seems to refer to people’s own profound sense of who they are and how they relate to the world, what I would refer to as identity, self-concept, or sense of self. In fact, Butler occasionally uses identity in just this way, describing it as “the intelligible assertion of an ‘I’” (1990a, p.145). Just as a subject has no social existence prior to or independent of the performative dynamic, “there is no self that is prior to the convergence [of discursive injunctions] or who maintains ‘integrity’ prior to its entrance into this conflicted cultural field” (Butler, 1990a, p.145). Just as the social standing of the subject is performatively manufactured
and must be persistently reiterated to be maintained, identity is a “practice” or “effect...that is...produced or generated” (Butler, 1990a, p.145) and then becomes “a compelling illusion, an object of belief” (Butler, 1990b, p. 271). Confusing matters further is that Butler’s use of the terms subject and identity are not only practically indistinguishable from social status, but are also sometimes nearly indistinguishable from each other: “when the subject is said to be constituted, that means simply that the subject is a consequence of certain rule-governed discourses that govern the intelligible invocation of identity” (Butler, 1990a, p.145). Just like the social standing of her subject, the identity of Butler’s subject is created and recreated through the constitutive force of language and social convention, and thus is actually a fragmented fiction that merely functions as a coherent truth.

It may be that Butler’s tendency to conflate the identity and social standing of the subject stems from a reluctance to use the actual term identity: a term that is used frequently to refer to exactly the type of natural, pre-existing, and stable core sense of self that Butler is trying to debunk. In fact, she makes increasingly fewer references to identity in her later work. However, to accept Butler’s claim that there is no “I” prior to or outside of the performative process - as I do - does not require accepting that a subject with a particular identity, substance, or sense of internal self does not eventually come into being. I accept Butler’s claim that people’s identities are generated through performativity, because performatively produced conceptions of normalcy - like gender and sexuality - ubiquitously impact every aspect of people’s lives. As a result, there is good reason to believe that people’s cognitive and emotional understanding of who they are, as well as what their place is in their performatively produced worlds, is formed and
reformed in relation to performative normalcies. Even people who disavow pervasive conceptions of normalcy must still react to and attempt to distinguish themselves from them, and thus their identities are also fundamentally bound up in performative normalcies. Still, I argue that people do, over time, develop some relatively independent sense of self. To claim that people develop identities is not to claim that people’s identities are inborn, predetermined, or fixed. Rather, it is to claim that people do develop some sense of who they are (continually) becoming, what their (shifting) relationships to and in the world are, and to what extent they can enter into the very process that forever confers on them the social status of (evolving) subject. Even Butler (1990b) herself admits that “a constructed identity [is] a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and perform in the mode of belief” (p. 271). Deeply embedded and passionate convictions about the self - convictions that ultimately impact people’s constructions and interpretations of themselves and their worlds - do emerge from the performative process.

In fact, it may be that the gradual emergence of the self partly results from the variability in social standing that subjects experience. Particularly in pluralistic societies, like those found in North America, subjects are concurrently and continually constituted along many interconnected axes – for example, race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality – and within many different, but interconnected and overlapping, communities – for example, family, peer, religious, cultural, geographical, and political. Because pervasive conceptions of normalcy, reward, and punishment often vary among and within these communities, different aspects of people’s identities may be simultaneously affirmed or denied depending on the social context in which they find themselves.
Further, a subject’s sense of self may be variably impacted as a result of many other factors, including: how widespread her communities’ influences are; how institutionally embedded her communities’ conceptions of normalcy, reward, and punishment are; and, how emotionally connected to her communities she is. As subjects begin to accumulate different experiences of social recognition, misrecognition, and abjection, they are more likely to conclude that no one social existence can accurately reflect or fully determine the whole of who they experience themselves to be. As a result, I suggest that a subject’s differentiated experience of social standing may contribute to the subject’s experience of an identity that is relatively independent of both social standing and performativity.

To claim that a core sense of self gradually emerges from performativity is not to claim that subjects can completely step outside of or disregard the performative process by which they are originally formed and continually reformed. However, it is to claim that people’s identities may develop substantively enough to motivate and enable them to cultivate and employ the resources necessary for analyzing self and society. Through this type of strong critical thinking, people may come to recognize the performative process on which the emergence and continued existence of identity depends. They may also develop an awareness of the influence that performativity has on pervasive conceptions of normalcy, the social standing of subjects, and their own thinking, beliefs, emotions, behaviours, and conceptions of self. As a result, the self that gradually emerges from

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24 Interestingly, Butler sometimes acknowledges this important distinction between identity and social standing. For example: “Indeed, one may well imagine oneself in ways that are quite contrary of how one is socially constituted; one may, as it were, meet that socially constituted self by surprise, with alarm or pleasure, even with shock” (Butler, 1997a, p. 31).

25 I explore the concept and force of strong critical thinking in far greater detail in Chapters 4-6.
performativity can enable social subjects to purposefully resist and partially reduce its continued force on their continually evolving identities. Moreover, a somewhat independent sense of self can also motivate the subject to try to alter both her own social standing and the social standing of others. In fact, altering the social standing of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) people is the goal of social justice educators who endeavour to lessen gender and sexual prejudice. Heterosexism and homophobia - i.e., those systems of formal and informal rewards and punishments for conformity to or non-compliance with performatively produced conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy - both result from and reinforce other people's positioning of GLBT people as gender and sexual deviants.

Identity and social standing should not be indistinguishably subsumed under the domain of the subject, because their distinctiveness makes possible the development of strong critical thinking and human agency, both of which are important resources not only for lessening performativity's capacity to regulate social practice and belief, but also for working purposefully towards social justice. If the identity and social standing of the subject were identical, then subjects would uncritically accept and experience as true the social standing that others confer on them. Butler's failure to clearly distinguish between the identity and social standing of the subject is one indication that she underestimates the force of human agency, i.e., the potential for human beings to consciously and self-consciously analyze and intervene in the performative process that forms both them and their worlds.

However, Butler does want to argue that some kind of agency can develop within the performative dynamic. In the remainder of this chapter, I will present and critique
Butler's arguments as to why the incredible force of performativity does not fully determine the social rituals, conceptions of normalcy, and subjects that it manufactures and constrains. According to Butler, social practice and belief are foundationally generated by the performative conceptions of normalcy that are created through consistent and self-concealing social ritual, by the systems of reward and punishment that accompany these morally-valued conceptions, by the bodily impact of performatives, and by performative subjectivization; but they are not wholly decided by them, because of the potential for performative failure. For Butler, performative failure makes human agency possible.

*Performative failures and the possibility of agency*

So far, I have only discussed the generative and disciplinary impact of Butler's conceptualization of performativity. However, just as there are factors that give performatives their constitutive force, there are also factors that undermine the power of performatives to regulate social practice and belief. As Austin points out in his initial conceptualization of performativity, and as Butler elaborates in her own articulation of the term, not all performatives are happy or successful. In other words, performatives are subject to failure; they don't always work. As Butler remarks in her discussion of interpellative demands: "this performative effort of naming, can only *attempt* to bring its addressee into being: there is always the risk of a certain *misrecognition*....The one who is hailed may fail to hear, misread the call, turn the other way, answer to another name, insist on not being addressed in that way" (Butler, 1997a, p. 95; italics in original). Sometimes, "the discourse through which one is constituted fails to hit its mark" (Bell,
1999c, p. 164). As a result, to suggest that people are compelled to repeat norms in order to become subjects with social standing is not to suggest that people are definitively, eternally determined by these norms. Performativity does not preclude agency; it merely places limits on it. As Butler (1997a) states: “The vulnerability to the Other constituted by that prior address is never overcome in the assumption of agency (one reason ‘agency’ is not the same as ‘mastery’)” (p. 26).

The degree of agency allowed by Butler’s conception of performativity, as well as my use of it, is important to this project, because it bears directly on the question of whether people can resist, minimize, or escape the influence of performativity on their thinking, belief, emotions, behaviours, conceptions of self, and social standing. Questions of agency and performative failure are fundamental to the question of whether people can reduce prejudiced belief and behaviour by intervening in the performative process that produces and maintains them. Below, I will explore Butler’s conception of agency, as well as her explanation of how and why performatives fail, in order to demonstrate how performative failures open up the possibility for agency. I will then build on the potential for agency opened up by performative failures to elaborate a more robust and efficacious conception of agency than Butler’s work supports. Contra Butler, I argue that a meaningful conception of human agency must include self-awareness, self-assessment, independent thinking, and intentional decision-making, as well as purposeful and plausibly efficacious behaviour.

Butler’s articulation of the type and degree of agency for which her conception of performativity allows has shifted over time, gradually allowing for an increasingly
powerful - but still performatively constituted and bound - subject. While Butler’s conception of agency is far from transparent, it is clear that she wants to argue that “the constitutive constraint [of performative subjectivization] does not foreclose the possibility of agency” (Butler, 1993a, p. 15). In fact, according to Butler, subjectivization is actually a precondition for agency. As she states: “the very possibility of naming requires that one first be named” (Butler, 1997a, p. 29). The subjection of subjects is thus two-pronged: people are subjected to the constraints of performative conceptions of normalcy, and through their submission to and compliance with these constraints, they are activated as subjects with agency. In other words, the linguistic existence, social visibility, and collective acceptance of subjected subjects enables them to act within and impact the performative constraints to which - and by which - they are subjected. Although agency and subjection are typically understood as oppositional concepts, subjectivization produces agency through subjection. As Butler (1997a) remarks, “the subject constituted through the address of the Other becomes then a subject capable of addressing others” (p. 26).

However, because the subject is always vulnerable to the performative process through which it originally comes into being and on which its continued existence depends, “the address that inaugurates the possibility of agency, in a single stroke, forecloses the possibility of radical autonomy” (Butler, 1997a, p. 26). The impossibility of radical autonomy can be fleshed out in at least two ways, with at least two implications for how agency is conceptualized. First, because the force of social practice originates in its citationality, and not in the individual who cites the performative ritual,

agency does not refer to an individual’s power to singularly and definitively control the meaning or effects of either her own or other’s social practice. Second, because personal identity and social standing are performatively manufactured and constrained, neither subject nor agency can escape the constraints of the performative process. In other words, because the subject herself is forever constituted by the parameters established by performative practices and the conceptions of normalcy that they create, so too is the subject’s agency. Performativity sets the scene in which a subject’s bounded agency can be exercised. Because no subject “lives in some free zone of its own making” (Butler, 1997b, p. 17), agency is a “practice immanent to power and not a relation of external opposition to power” (Butler, 1993a, p. 15).

Because the failure of performatives makes possible the agency of Butler’s subject, I will continue to flesh out her conception of agency by outlining the reasons that performatives do not fully determine the production of normalcy and normal subjects. Perhaps the most basic reason that performatives are subject to failure is built right into Butler’s elaboration of performativity and its force: as elaborated above, the existence and force both of performatives and of the conceptions of normalcy that they create can be traced to their citationality. As Butler (1993a) states: “Since the law must be repeated to remain an authoritative law, the law perpetually re institutes the possibility of its own failure” (p. 108). In other words, the frequent and consistent repetition on which performatives depend “establishes a domain of risk” (Butler, 1997b, pp. 28-9). While subjects may be compelled to reiterate social norms through their performative practices, there is always a risk that their reiterations will deviate somewhat from these norms.27

27 In fact, as I elaborate below, the exact repetition of social norms is a practical impossibility.
When incongruous practices walk the fine line between being distinctive and deviant, they can throw social norms into question. So, for example, if enough females perform “woman” differently than expected - by altering their dress, behaviour, or speech – the conceptions of normal heterosexual femininity by which females are pervasively judged, rewarded, and punished may begin to shift over time. Of course, as Allen points out, and as Butler would concur, “a citation is only an occasion to subvert a norm; it is no guarantee that the norm will be subverted” (Allen, 1998, p. 462; italics in original).

Nonetheless, the same citational dynamic that makes performatives efficacious through its construction and reinforcement of pervasive conceptions of normalcy is the means through which those normalcies may be reconfigured. Thus, the agency of the subject is made possible, because “the ideal that is mirrored depends on that very mirroring to be sustained as an ideal (Butler, 1993a, p. 14).

Performatives are also subject to failure, because the conceptions of normalcy that performatives produce and sustain are “inapproximable ideal[s]” (Butler, 1993b, p. 26). Gender, sexuality, and other social norms can never be fully satisfied for at least two reasons. First, as ideals, they represent a type of perfection that is impossible to repeat successfully with any kind of regularity. Even when subjects try to conform exactly to performative demands, they are bound to fall short of these unattainable ideals.

Performative norms are further inapproximable, because they are not internally consistent. “The injunction to be a given gender produces necessary failures, a variety of incoherent configurations that in their multiplicity exceed and defy the injunction by

28 I will elaborate on what this fine line between distinctiveness and deviance might look like in my discussion of Radical Queens and Irigaray’s mimesis in Chapter 5.
which they are generated” (Butler, 1990a, p. 145; italics in original). In other words, because it is impossible to comply simultaneously with the conflicting demands that are embedded in performatively produced conceptions of normalcy, these normative ideals can never be fully satisfied. For example, in North America substantially different patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech are often required “to be a good mother, to be a heterosexually desirable object, [and] to be a fit worker” (Butler, 1990a, p. 145).

Moreover, the practices demanded concurrently by normal femininity and masculinity can vary incompatibly not only across social roles, but also across communities. The impossibility of complying with all of the parameters of normalcy at once, as well as the impossibility of flawlessly fulfilling the standards of normalcy with any degree of consistency, makes wholly satisfying conceptions of normalcy a practical impossibility. Because performative ideals are inapproximable, their continual repetition is bound to be inexact. When the force of performativity to regulate social practice and belief is interrupted, the agency of the subject is made possible.

Performatives are further subject to failure, because of the unpredictable and uncontrollable nature of the body. While performatives derive their force in part from their tendency to manufacture and constrain physical bodies, “bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled” (Butler, 1993a, p. 2). Bodily compliance may break down at the level of a performer’s appearance or behaviour, an audience’s interpretation of the performer’s appearance or behaviour, or a performance’s real-world effects. There may also be a disconnect between body language and any oral

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29 It is possible that there are some cultures or communities where performative standards for normalcy do not contain conflicting demands. Where performative ideals are internally consistent, they could potentially all be satisfied simultaneously, and would not be considered “inapproximable” in this sense.
speech that accompanies it. As Butler (1997a) remarks: “The simultaneity of the production and delivery of the expression communicates not merely what is said, but the bearing of the body as the rhetorical instrument of expression” (p. 152). Further, the subject’s body may deviate not only from the purposes figured in the performative demands that generate and regulate it, but also from the purposes of the subject herself. As Butler (1997a) remarks: “The bodily effects of speech exceed the intentions of the speaker” (p. 141). Because both the body and the social meanings attached to it are rarely seamless, performatives fully determine neither social subjects nor the pervasive conceptions of normalcy that constitute them. As a result, the body, along with inapproximable ideals and frequent repetition, has a part in bringing about the failure of performativity that makes agency possible.

I concur with Butler that the potential for failure embedded in the performative process opens the door for the agency of the subject. Because the regulatory force of performatively produced norms, identities, and subject positions can only be provisionally secured and is never fully exhaustive, it is reasonable to suggest that subjects have the potential to think, feel, and act differently than pervasive conceptions of normalcy would seem to demand. However, after this preliminary agreement with Butler, my understanding of agency parts ways. While Butler’s articulation of performative failures does explain why performatives fail to wholly determine social subjects and the conceptions of normalcy by which they are produced, it does not demonstrate that some conscious decision or purposeful action of the subject is, at least in part, responsible for causing performatives to fail. Since Butler does not demonstrate that the breakdown of performativity emerges, at least in part, from the formation and execution of the subject’s
volition, this seemingly spontaneous or accidental breakdown cannot be taken as
evidence of the subject's agency. As Nelson (1999) suggests, for change to be taken as
evidence of agency, it must be shown to result from something more than a "random
discursive slippage" (p. 347). Agency requires that the intentions of the subject play a
part in shifting either performative practices or the conceptions of normalcy that those
practices produce. In suggesting that intentions are important to agency, I am not trying
to reinstitute a sovereign, omnipotent, wholly rational agent. While an individual's
intentions may influence the outcomes of social ritual, they do not determine them.
People's intentions may also be highly conflicted and not fully, or even moderately,
conscious. Nonetheless, people do set out to accomplish particular objectives through
their dress, behaviour, and speech. It is this sense of intentionality that is important to
agency. Gender and sexual practices that inadvertently deviate from social norms might
demonstrate the force of chance or coincidence, they might also demonstrate that
performatives are subject to failure, but they do not demonstrate the force of human
agency. Since it seems that agency, as Butler articulates it, need be neither conscious nor
deliberate, I question the extent to which it Butler's agency is agency at all.

In fact, it seems that for Butler the subject's intentions are fairly inconsequential
to agency. Instead, Butler's agency is more about the materialization of effects,
specifically those effects that are different from what performativity would seem to
compel. Butler describes agency as "a set of effects that exceed the animating intentions
of the call" (Butler, 1997a, p. 163) or "the assumption of a purpose unintended by power,
one that could not have been derived logically or historically" (Butler, 1997b, p. 15;
italics in original). According to Butler, agency is demonstrated when social practices or
pervasive conceptions of normalcy deviate from the consequences that performative rituals and interpellative demands are intended to produce.

Because, for Butler, agency is the emergence of meanings and effects that are uncharacteristic of performativity, her conception of agency does not account for many of the elements that I would argue are most fundamental to meaningful agency. For example, Butler does not account for how people come to do the following: recognize and understand the performative process that manufactures and constrains social practice and belief; cultivate the desire and drive to intervene in that process; better anticipate the effects of performative practices and conceptions of normalcy; and cultivate and improve their own likelihood of developing efficacious strategies for deliberately altering performative meanings and effects. Most importantly for my project, Butler also does not account for how people come to cultivate sufficient self-awareness to identify and lessen the influence of performativity on their own identities, belief systems, modes of thinking, emotions, and behaviours. While Butler does want to claim that, once constituted through performative processes and interpellative demands, subjects do come to have some kind of agency, she does not sufficiently explain how agents come to have the features most central to agency: the self-awareness and self-assessment of reflexivity; the independent thinking, decision-making, and volition of intentionality; and, the plausible efficacy of purposeful execution.

The very fact that people can and do critique social and linguistic conventions suggests that people are capable of critically reflecting on the social practices and beliefs that constitute them. In fact, Butler’s very academic career is a testament to the fact that people can look back on and analyze the performative process by which identity, social
standing, and pervasive conceptions of normalcy are generated. In her preface to *Bodies that Matter* (1993a), Butler writes that after her theorization of performativity in *Gender Trouble* (1990a) many people asked her: “What about the materiality of the body, Judy” (ix). I might flip that inquiry around, asking: “What about the mind, Judith? What about the subject’s capacity to engage in self-reflexive, self-corrective thinking that continually strives to better fulfill the relevant standards of good reasoning?” Or, as Nelson asks of Butler: “Why are notions of intentionality/reflexivity/purposeful action immediately suspect and otherized as capitulating to the transparent and masterful subject?” (Nelson, 1999, p. 336). Butler is so concerned with discrediting conceptualizations of a wholly autonomous, pre-discursive subject that her conception of agency focuses excessively on the force and failure of performatives, and is thereby eviscerated.

However, as Nelson (1999) argues, “we could…conceive of a conscious, thinking subject without necessarily invoking the autonomous subject….Subjects can be constituted through hegemonic discourses of gender, race, and sexuality while remaining reflexive of, and (potentially) intervening in, that process” (p. 341). Through direct instruction, modeling, mentoring, and constructive practice, people can develop the resources to analyze both themselves and the performative process that constitutes them. As I argue in Chapters 4-6, when people develop the knowledges, competencies, and dispositions of strong critical thinkers, and their reasoning, judgment, and self-knowledge improves, they are better positioned to recognize, assess, resist, and intervene in the performative formation and maintenance of the social performance and belief that can ground prejudice. However, before I discuss the nature of strong critical thinking and its potential to lessen some of the common barriers to prejudice reduction, I will examine
two other common sources of prejudice formation and maintenance in Chapter 3: undisciplined thinking and egocentrism.
CHAPTER 3: UNDISCIPLINED THINKING AND EGOCENTRISM AS SOURCES OF PREJUDICE

Chapter 2 opened my exploration of some common sources of prejudice formation and maintenance with an examination of performative performance. It examined Butler’s conception of performativity to account for the force of relatively consistent social performance to manufacture and constrain people’s thinking, beliefs, behaviours, conceptions of self, and social standing. In this chapter, I will continue my exploration of some common sources of prejudice formation and maintenance by examining Paul’s work on prejudice, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism. I will begin by investigating Paul’s claims that people’s inherent undisciplined thinking and egocentrism exert tremendous, but unwarranted, force on: (1) the content and relationship of people’s belief systems; (2) the manner in which people form their beliefs; and (3) the cognitive, affective, and behavioural tendencies that people possess. In other words, I examine Paul’s claims that people’s innately undeveloped rational capacities, misdirected rational competencies, and inborn self-interest are foundationally responsible for the development of the irrational and egocentric background logics, modes of thinking, and dispositions that permit the formation and maintenance of prejudiced beliefs and behaviours. While Paul in no way dismisses the role of social processes in the formation of belief and behaviour, he does place a stronger emphasis than Butler would on the role

30 Although Paul began his project in strong critical thinking in the 1970s, he has worked closely with the educational psychologist Linda Elder since the mid-1990s. Currently, they head the Center for Critical Thinking at Sonoma State University: he as its Director of Research and Professional Development and she as its Executive Director. They also jointly author most of their current work on critical thinking. However, to acknowledge Paul’s pioneering work in strong critical thinking and for brevity’s sake, I refer to “Paul” when speaking about his, and now their, general body of work. Of course, I also document their particular contributions through the use of careful footnoting.
of the individual - specifically, the individual’s inherent human tendencies - in generating and reinforcing them. Because Paul’s analysis of belief and behaviour starts from an examination of the individual or the self, while Butler’s analysis starts from an examination of social processes, when taken together, they offer a rich account of some common sources of prejudice.

In this chapter, I argue that while it is not clear whether undisciplined thinking and egocentrism are inherent or learned, there is good reason to believe that they are common sources of the formation and maintenance of prejudice. To make this argument, I will present and critique Paul’s arguments about the nature of these concepts and their likely influence on people’s modes of thinking, background logics, passions, volitions, character traits, behaviours, and conceptions of self. I will then examine Paul’s claims about the ways in which people commonly misconceptualize prejudice, arguing that people’s underestimation of the pervasiveness, interconnectedness, and breadth of prejudice helps to explain its force and persistence. When prejudice is defined either as an exception or too narrowly, it become increasingly difficult to dislodge. I conclude this chapter by bringing together Paul’s insights on the nature, sources, and forces of prejudice with Butler’s insights on performativity. I argue that prejudiced thinking, beliefs, dispositions, and behaviours are partly created and maintained by the interplay of performativity, egocentrism, and undisciplined thinking, as well as by the barriers to good thinking and self-knowledge that they commonly erect. Finally, I will broach the main argument of Chapter 4 by briefly returning to the claim I introduced in Chapter 2: there is good reason to believe that strong critical thinking can serve as an effective

31 In fact, as Butler argues that there is no subject prior to entering into the performative process, she would likely cringe at Paul’s suggestion that undisciplined thinking and egocentrism are innate.
resource for reducing the prejudiced modes of thought, background logics, dispositions, and behaviours that performativity, egocentrism, and undisciplined thinking help to produce and maintain.

Paul’s Account of the Sources of Prejudice

According to Paul (1993a), a prejudice is “a judgment, belief, opinion, point of view – favorable or unfavorable - formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it” (p. 482). In other words, a person is said to hold a prejudiced belief when that person has not open-mindedly considered the merit of that belief for herself. It is not the truth or falsity of a belief which determines whether or not it is a prejudice. Rather, prejudice is determined by the unquestioning or uncritical manner in which a person holds a belief (Paul, 1993a, p. 244). For this reason, Paul frequently refers to prejudices as either irrational preferences or prejudgments.

According to this understanding of prejudice, undisciplined thinking and egocentrism are centrally responsible for the development and persistence of people’s prejudiced beliefs, emotions, and behaviours. Throughout his work, Paul uses the phrase undisciplined thinking primarily to refer to purposeful thinking that is marred either by undeveloped or underdeveloped rational capacities or by misdirected rational competencies. In other words, people demonstrate undisciplined thinking either when they have yet to (sufficiently) develop their ability to intentionally and systematically justify their beliefs and behaviours with good reasons or when they use their reason towards ends other than the improvement of their own and others’ reasoning. The
un(der)developed rational capacities and misdirected rational competencies of Paul’s undisciplined thinking contribute to prejudiced belief formation by impeding purposeful thinking that fulfills the minimum standards of good reasoning. Moreover, while the foundational causes of undisciplined thinking are weaknesses in the competency or consistency of a person’s reasoning, Paul also argues that egocentrism often exacerbates the existing weaknesses in people’s ability and tendency to reason well, as it simultaneously impedes the development of their genuine self-awareness and self-understanding. In other words, people’s self-interested drives, desires, emotional responses, and behaviours can amplify the deleterious effects that un(der)developed rational capacities and misdirected rational competencies tend to have on the quality of people’s reasoning and the extent of their self-knowledge. Thus, when coupled with the influence of egocentrism, undisciplined thinking is not only a source, but also a result, of prejudice formation and maintenance. I now turn to addressing these possible sources of prejudice, by examining and critiquing Paul’s arguments about the nature, development, impact, and interplay of un(der)developed rational capacities, misdirected rational competencies, and egocentrism.

Undeveloped Rational Capacities

In order for people to consistently and deliberately reason well, justifying their beliefs and behaviours with good reasons – i.e., with explanations that adequately fulfill the standards of good reasoning - people must learn to develop their rational capacities. Although the capacity for rational, systematic, moral thought is often referred to as one of

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32 For a full discussion both of the standards relevant to determining the quality of a person’s reasoning and of what constitutes good reasons, see Chapter 4.
the defining features of human beings, the capacity for such thought is just that – a
capacity. It does not spring forth fully formed the moment that children are born. Nor
does it automatically develop as the physical body matures. While there is much research
in child psychology to support Piaget’s (1969) view that physical maturation is a
prerequisite for complex reasoning, there is good reason to assert that this necessary
condition is not also a sufficient one. If physical maturation alone resulted in the
development of the competencies and dispositions that support people’s ability to think
critically, nearly all adults would naturally develop into at least reasonably proficient
critical thinkers. However, many adults do not.

An analogy with the development of the skeleto-muscular system reinforces the
argument that without helpful instruction and constructive practice a person’s potential
for reasoned thought is likely to remain but a capacity. With even a limited standard of
care, a young child’s bones will harden and her muscles will strengthen so that she will
be able eventually to support her own weight. Barring disease, disability, or neglect,
human beings generally develop to a point where they can sit up and walk around by
themselves. However, not all humans will develop the extreme flexibility, balance,
strength, and coordination of an elite gymnast. While a genetic predisposition to develop
these qualities certainly helps, a person’s athletic potential is typically only realized
through intense, prolonged, guided practice. Moreover, this is not the practice of simple,
mechanical repetition. It is a mindful practice alert to problems or errors, striving to
determine how to better meet the highest standards of excellent gymnastic performance.

The same is true of people’s inherent potential for disciplined critical thinking. It
is possible that some people are genetically predisposed to become great thinkers.
However, without explicit instruction and continued constructive practice, most people’s inherent capacity for reasoned thought will develop only minimally. Analogous with the basic ability to walk, most people are able to generally navigate their daily lives, even if they often do so fairly inconsistently or without much deliberate intent. Paul would probably call people at this very basic stage of rational development Unreflective Thinkers (Elder & Paul, 1996a). These are people who are largely unaware of how their thinking is structured, how their thinking causes problems in their daily lives, and perhaps most importantly, how they might assess and improve their thinking (Elder & Paul, 1996a).

For people to develop into what Paul calls Master Thinkers (Elder & Paul, 1996a), but what I call Ideal Thinkers, they must be supportively challenged to discover and correct the problems in their own thinking (Paul & Elder, 1997). They must also be strongly self-motivated to mindfully and consistently pursue this arduous process. As Paul argues, the development of the skills and dispositions required to be a self-correcting, standards-based, deeply integrated, and intuitive critical thinker is a lifelong project, occurring gradually and only with extended, self-reflexive practice (Elder & Paul, 1996a; Elder & Paul, 1996b; Paul & Elder, 1997). Just as very few people receive the instruction and possess the perseverance necessary to maximize their athletic potential, very few people receive the guidance and possess the resolve necessary to richly nurture their thinking potential. Because humans possess only a capacity for critical thought, and not an inherent, fully developed ability to engage in it, Paul reasonably argues that the innately undeveloped or underdeveloped rational capacities of
undisciplined thinking lead many people to develop prejudices or irrational prejjudgments.

In fact, Paul makes the even stronger claim that humans are naturally, normally and universally predisposed to prejudiced belief formation (1993a, p. 230). He bases this claim not only on people’s inherently undeveloped critical thinking ability, but also in what he sees as people’s inherent egocentrism (1993a, p. 236). While there is good reason to believe that people are not born with developed rational capacities, the claim that people’s dispositions are innately self-serving – and, thus, that the rational competencies that many eventually develop are typically myopic and misdirected - is not as well-supported. Even when all of the best empirical evidence available is considered, nature-nurture debates about complex human processes are rarely, if ever, definitively settled. Moreover, for the purposes of this project, I am not really concerned whether undisciplined thinking and egocentrism are learned or innate. I am far more concerned with these two questions: what are the likely effects of undisciplined thinking and egocentrism on belief, disposition, and behaviour?; and, to what extent can these effects be countered or reduced? In other words, regardless of the original sources of undeveloped or underdeveloped rational capacities, misdirected rational competencies, and egocentrism, I am primarily concerned with whether there is good reason to believe that they are common, but combatable, sources of prejudice formation and maintenance. As the nature-nurture debate is not central to my project, and as my weighing in on this debate would do little, if anything, to further it, I will neither support nor dispute Paul’s

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33 It is important to note that Paul’s discussion of humanity’s natural tendency towards prejudice, irrationality, and egocentrism is framed as a neutral statement of fact or general observation of the human condition, and not as a moral accusation.
claim about people’s inherent tendencies. I do, however, for the reasons that I explicate in the course of this chapter, accept Paul’s claim that undisciplined thinking and egocentrism are common sources of prejudice.

**Egocentrism**

Paul (1993a) defines *egocentrism* in this way: "each of us, to the extent that we are egocentric, spontaneously think along lines that serve to justify our fears, desires, and vested interests" (p. 212). As conceptualized by Paul (1993a), egocentrism may refer not only to the isolated interests of an individual, but also to the extended interests of the communities with which that person identifies (p. 256). As such, it is intimately intertwined with ethnocentrism or sociocentrism. “As people are socialized, egocentricity partly evolves into sociocentricity. Egocentric tendencies extend to their groups....People find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group” (http://www.criticalthinking.org/K12/k12class/strat/2.html, Sept 4, 2003).

Egocentric self-interest is both a reflection of people’s dispositions and a force that acts on them. While I will elaborate on my conception of human dispositions in far greater detail in Chapter 4, I note here that dispositions are composed of at least three theoretically distinct, but highly interdependent, affective, behavioural, and cognitive elements: passions, volitions, and character traits. People with egocentric passions tend to have disproportionate or misplaced emotional responses to those circumstances that do not serve their personal or communal well-being. They are likely to react to ideas or behaviours that threaten their core beliefs about themselves, their communities, and the larger world both in visceral, deeply felt, bodily ways and with defensive, ego-preserving
rationalizations. When combined with egocentric volitions, egocentric passions also tend
to manifest as the (sometimes intense) desire and drive to actively pursue principally self-
interested ends. Finally, people with egocentric character traits tend both to hold ideas
and to value behaviours, institutions, and people that preserve and promote their self-
interest. For example, they may suffer from what Paul calls egocentric infallibility - i.e.,
"the natural tendency to think that our beliefs are true because we believe them" - or from
egocentric blindness - i.e., "the natural tendency not to notice facts or evidence which
contradict our favored beliefs or values" (http://www.criticalthinking.org/University/
Egotendencies.htm - Feb 15, 2004). As a result, there is good reason to be suspicious of
the justifications that people with egocentric character traits give for the ends that they
pursue. They may, for example, profess that their passions and volitions are chiefly
motivated by a sense of duty or a caring impulse to comply with moral principles like
justice and due concern for others. Nonetheless, sometimes unbeknownst to themselves,
those with egocentric character traits are typically genuinely only committed to primarily
self-serving ideas, behaviours, institutions, and other people. Taken together, the
passions, volitions, and intellectual character traits of which egocentric dispositions are
composed influence people’s desires, emotional responses, drives, actual behaviours,
identities, and genuine values.

Because people’s drives, desires, identities, and values are intimately intertwined
both with the content and relationship of their beliefs and with the manner in which they
form those beliefs, egocentric self-interest tends also to reflect and influence the roots
and products of many people’s thinking. Unlike fair-minded thinking, with its obligation
to place personal or communal self-interest in a larger moral context, considering
assumptions and consequences from multiple perspectives, egocentric thinking is primarily directed towards helping people to get what they want. Because egocentric thinking places personal or communal well-being firmly in the center of the interpretation of fact and experience, it is highly adaptive, if not morally admirable. In fact, the sheer functionality of egocentrism is one of the reasons why Paul argues prejudices are so difficult to dislodge (1993a, p. 245).

Misdirected Rational Competencies

When a highly functional tendency to pursue individual or communal self-interest is coupled with the undeveloped or underdeveloped rational capacities of “subconscious, automatic, and irrational” thought (Paul, 1993a, p. 185), people become extremely susceptible to misdirected reasoning and prejudiced belief formation. As Paul observes, unreflective thinking and egocentrism can be expected to colour perception, making people more likely to interpret their worlds in ways that facilitate the gratification of their own desires (1993a, p. 245). They also make people more likely to hijack whatever rational skills they have developed, be those skills fairly limited or quite sophisticated, in order to justify and maximize the pursuit of self-serving ends (1993a, p. 182). Even when the logic of a person’s reasoning is sound, egocentrism can cause the deep-seated starting points of reasoning, and thus the intellectual products of reasoning, to be flawed or unjust (1993a, p. 254). Egocentrism is, thus, the link between the undeveloped or underdeveloped rational capacities and the misdirected rational competencies of undisciplined thinking. When egocentric people do begin to cultivate their capacity to reason well, it can be expected that their self-interest will misdirect their developing
rational competencies away from the improvement of their reasoning and towards their primarily self-serving ends.

Paul cautions that this type of undisciplined thinking - where egocentrism misdirects rational competencies - can all too easily develop into a type of sophistry. As described by Paul, sophists typically use whatever critical thinking concepts and techniques they possess to rationalize and maintain their perspectives and prejudices (1982, p.3). Their goal is neither to better understand another's point of view nor to improve their own thinking, but rather to defend their established belief systems. While Paul's sophists are typically unaware that they are using their rational competencies in this manner, their machinations are at times consciously aggressive and malicious, singularly intended to advance their own interests while putting others on the defensive (1993a, p. 263). Either way, sophists lack the dispositions necessary to make the best use of their existing critical thinking knowledges and competencies; they use these knowledges and competencies neither to improve the quality of their reasoning nor to mitigate their egocentrism.

Following the American sociologist Wright Mills (1962), Paul (1987) also cautions against developing a falsely open-minded, sophisticated belief (p.138). Sophisticated believers may appear to have overcome their egocentrism, because they do explore opposing viewpoints. However, their temporary reversal of perspective is superficial, insincere, and still solely intended to improve their refutation of another's position (Paul, 1987, p. 183). While intellectually creative, sophisticated believers possess very few of the genuine dispositions of Ideal Thinkers. For example, they remain...
unconcerned with intellectual honesty or integrity, seeking merely to advance their own points of view, not to better them.\textsuperscript{34}

Of course, Paul would probably suggest that most people never even develop their reasoning sufficiently to qualify as either sophists or sophisticated believers (Paul & Elder, 1997, p. 35). Still fewer develop the finely tuned skills and added, integrated dispositions of Mills’ (1987) critical believers (p. 138). Like Paul’s Master Thinkers, these are people who learn from criticism, genuinely enter into opposing points of views, and endeavour to recognize then revise the weaknesses in their thinking (Paul & Elder, 1997). Critical believers possess the integrated knowledges, competencies, and dispositions necessary for the self-analysis, self-correction, quality reasoning, and good judgment of strong critical thinking. Despite people’s potential to evolve into critical believers, Paul maintains that most remain prejudiced - or in Mills’ language - vulgar believers: unaware of the extent to which their thought processes are governed not by good reasoning but by egocentrism (Paul & Elder, 1997). When people lack the self-knowledge to recognize, assess, and correct the force of undeveloped or underdeveloped rational capacities, misdirected rational competencies, and self-serving dispositions on their background logics, modes of thinking, and behaviours, they become more susceptible to forming close-mindedly biased beliefs. As a result, there is good reason to believe that undisciplined thinking and egocentrism are common sources of the formation and maintenance of prejudiced belief and behaviour.

\textsuperscript{34} I explore the concepts of intellectual integrity and honesty in more depth in Chapter 4 when I discuss the importance of intellectual character traits and strong critical thinking dispositions to the development of strong critical thinkers.
Common Misconceptualizations of Prejudice

*Prejudice Defined as Exceptions*

Paul's work on prejudice suggests that belief and behaviour are produced and constrained not only by the force of egocentrism and undisciplined thinking, but also by the ways in which prejudice is commonly misconceptualized. I will now examine Paul's arguments about the ways in which people mistakenly define prejudice either as exceptions or too narrowly, suggesting that such misconceptualizations help to explain why prejudices are often extremely difficult to dislodge. Once created through the force of undisciplined thinking, egocentrism, and performativity, prejudice gains its own force from people's frequent underestimation of its pervasiveness, interconnectedness, and breadth.

According to Paul (1993a), prejudices are commonly but mistakenly understood as exceptions, i.e., as regrettable but atypical deviations from a generally rational, moral, and well-intentioned human nature (p. 229). However, Paul (1993a) argues that prejudiced belief formation is not at all exceptional, because people's inherent egocentrism functions as a self-deceptive lens that exploits reason's natural tendency to be underdeveloped (p. 230). Regardless of whether prejudice is an expression of human nature, human nurture, or both, its sheer pervasiveness and banality suggests that Paul is correct in his assertion that prejudice is more the rule than the exception. When people underestimate the commonness of self-interested and undisciplined thinking, as well as the ordinariness of prejudice, prejudice becomes even more difficult to prevent and dislodge.
The force of prejudices is further reinforced by the other way that people commonly but mistakenly understand prejudices to be exceptions. Paul (1993a) maintains that prejudices are often conceptualized as discrete entities, disconnected from habitual thought patterns and belief systems (p. 229). When people underestimate the extent to which beliefs are intertwined, they are likely to see prejudices as morally problematic but localized or aberrant beliefs that are unconnected to larger belief systems. However, Paul rightly argues that there is a profound interdependence between a person’s prejudiced and other beliefs. As he asserts: “Prejudices...are not isolatable things-in-themselves, not mental or affective atoms....Just as a permanent underground stock of a plant continually produces and sustains the stems and leaves, so a deep-seated substratum of beliefs and drives continually creates and sustains prejudices and other irrationalities” (Paul, 1993a, p. 230).

This substratum of beliefs not only supports and validates existing egocentric ends, it also shapes people’s future assumptions, conclusions, and global worldviews. At times, Paul refers to this substratum as *background thought* or *background logic*, terms that I use throughout this project. These are “logical connections not lying on the surface of reasoning, but prior to it, underlying it, or implied by it. In the background of all thinking are foundational concepts, assumptions, values, purposes, experiences, implications, and consequences – all embedded in lines of thought radiating outward in every direction” (Paul, 1993a, p. 283). In other words, background logics refer to the content and relationships of people’s deeply embedded belief systems. Paul rightly argues that background thought so profoundly affects the formation of belief, because no element of thought or perception, be it prejudiced or well-justified, exists in isolation.
Further, the force of people's prior, overarching belief systems and conceptual understandings is magnified, because people are largely unaware of what they are (Paul, 1993a, 284).

Background logics and the prejudices they support are so difficult to change, precisely because of their omnipresent, but largely covert, interconnectedness. When people encounter new experiences or information, they have two basic options for making them intelligible or meaningful: either they can assimilate the new evidence into their current background logic or they can change those overarching systems to accord with the new evidence. Most often, people quite mechanically interpret singular new experiences or pieces of information to fit their prior assumptions and perspectives. Following this path is far less complicated and far less threatening to personal identity than is deliberately altering an entire lifetime of networked background beliefs. As a result, people are predisposed quite unsuspectingly to interpret the world in ways that accord with their prior, largely consistent and coherent commitments (Paul, 1993a, p. 245). Because prejudices are not exceptions that can be easily separated from background thought and personal identity, people's deeply embedded and highly interconnected core beliefs about the world and about themselves reinforce prejudice by colouring perception and swaying reason, just as do most people's equally unexceptional undisciplined thinking and egocentric desires.

It is important to note that Paul is not arguing against interpreting the world from a given perspective. He freely admits that everyone has biases (Paul, 1993a, p. 459). However, a problem arises when biases escalate into prejudices, bringing "blindness or irrational resistance to weaknesses within one's own point of view or to the strength or
insight within a point of view one opposes" (Paul, 1993a, 459). This is essentially the problem of open-mindedness alluded to above and discussed extensively by William Hare (1985). Unfortunately, it is not difficult for a person's bias or point of view to escalate into prejudices that are extremely difficult to dislodge: because of undisciplined thought; because of the influence of egocentrism; because people's belief systems are so deeply interdependent; because prejudices are not exceptions.

**Prejudice Defined Too Narrowly**

Not only does misconceptualizing prejudices as exceptions contribute to their force and persistence, so too does misconceptualizing prejudices too narrowly. According to Paul, there are three facets to this common error in understanding, all of which have important implications for the stability and strength of prejudice. First, prejudiced emotions, thoughts, and actions are often thought to be directed solely against people or groups (Paul, 1993a, p. 237). For example, people often understand racial prejudice as a prejudice against people of particular skin colours and ethnic prejudice as a prejudice against people with particular customs or styles of dress (Paul, 1993a, p. 237). However, Paul points out that prejudice can be directed not only towards specific people or groups, but also towards more general belief systems and ideologies. He rightly argues that our conceptualizations of prejudice must be expansive enough to acknowledge that prejudice often exists ideologically, on national, economic, professional, religious and other levels (Paul, 1993a, 241).

Paul's suggestions that conceptualizations of prejudice must be made more expansive has important implications for my arguments about the nature of heterosexism
and homophobia in Chapters 5 & 6. While homophobia and heterosexism are often thought simply to be prejudices against or for particular groups of people, I would argue that they are so difficult to dislodge, precisely because they are both simultaneously ideological prejudices. Homophobia is not just a prejudice against people who are sexually attracted most strongly to people of the same sex. Importantly, homophobes also often bristle against the very idea that such attraction is natural or morally permissible. Similarly, heterosexism not only favours people who are sexually attracted primarily to members of the opposite sex. Heterosexists also consciously or unconsciously hold the belief that heterosexual relationships are superior to all others: whether that be for moral, reproductive, or other reasons. The force of gender, sexual, and other prejudices is amplified, precisely because they intersect with and are supported by many other diverse systems of belief. In order to effectively lessen prejudice, people must understand and attempt to counter it in all its expansive, multi-layered, interdependent complexity. To understand prejudice as directed only towards people or groups is to understand it too narrowly.

According to Paul, people also problematically conceptualize prejudice too narrowly – and thus, I argue, the force of prejudice is strengthened - when they focus exclusively on its negative forms and fail to recognize its positive manifestations (Paul, 1993a, p. 236). Prejudice comes in at least two forms: negative prejudice against a group (usually those of others) and positive prejudice for a group (usually your own). Positive and negative prejudices are intimately linked. As Paul (1993a) points out that “a positive prejudice usually accompanies a negative prejudice, for in being in favour of particular groups we more or less automatically oppose those groups in conflict with them.” (p.
When people overlook or minimize the dangers of positive prejudices, the hold of prejudice on belief and behaviour is reinforced.

To some, Paul's emphasis on the dangers of positive prejudices and their nearly unavoidable link to negative prejudices may seem overly strong. It can certainly be argued that people might rationally prefer and be proud, for example, of their country or religion, without also thinking that other countries or religions are distasteful or immoral. I like being a Jewish Canadian. I also do not believe that my pride in either my nationality or my religious and ethnic affiliation is morally blameworthy.

However, it is important to remember that positive prejudice, as Paul defines it, is not at all a rational preference in favour of something. As Paul (1993a) points out, a rational preference is supported by good reasons and evidence (p. 242). It requires an open-minded consideration of the case against it and good reasons for ultimately opposing those conflicting views or affiliations (Paul, 1993a, p. 242). Alternatively, prejudiced preferences are based in an irrational close-mindedness, both towards the shortcomings of any favoured viewpoints, interests, actions, and institutions, and towards the virtues of nearly everything else. They predispose people to unknowingly stack the deck, protecting their own position from unsettling criticism. People with prejudiced preferences might, for example, unwittingly apply their critical thinking abilities quite selectively, comparing their own best attributes with others' worst (Paul, 1993a, 257). In short, prejudiced preferences predispose people to seek to confirm their prejudgments.

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35 As explained in the introduction, this common connection between positive and negative prejudices is one of the reasons that I maintain the importance of overtly distinguishing between heterosexism and homophobia, problematizing both.
In this light, as long as my preference for being a Jewish Canadian is a well-founded and open-minded one, as well as being unaccompanied by an unfounded bias against other nationalities, religions, or ethnicities, then I am correct in asserting that my pride is not morally blameworthy. I can choose to observe (some of) the practices of Judaism, experiencing them and the guiding principles of (Reform) Judaism to enrich my life, while also condemning Israel’s part in escalating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Similarly, heterosexuals should only be said to be positively prejudiced heterosexists, if they close-mindedly assume that all others ought to share their personal attraction to the opposite sex and then homophobicly deride and punish those who do not. It is only when a preference for something is irrational or unconsidered that it is likely to easily and uncritically slip into an aversion against another, and vice versa. Once fleshed out in this way, positive prejudices do seem likely to be strongly and directly correlated with negative ones. As a result, not only do positive prejudices seem likely to impede the dislodging of all forms of prejudice, but conceptualizations of prejudice that only focus on its negative forms do seem overly narrow.

The last noteworthy way in which, Paul (1993a) argues, prejudice is typically defined too narrowly, and thus its force is strengthened, is in a restricted focus on socially unpopular beliefs (p. 236). It is relatively easy to name and oppose attitudes and behaviours that are widely unaccepted. Such finger-pointing garners all sorts of widespread moral and material rewards. However, it is far more difficult to contradict or combat relatively popular prejudices, be they positive or negative, because such responses often meet widespread resistance or overt penalties.
This dynamic is exemplified by the extreme reluctance of Americans to question their government’s decision to invade Afghanistan after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Positive national prejudice spiked so extremely during that period that absurdly powerful sanctions were employed against any sentiment, action, or person labeled “unpatriotic.” For example, social commentator Bill Maher’s television show, Politically Incorrect, was cancelled following the uproar that resulted from his public critique of the American government. Shortly after 9/11, he suggested that the method of attack used by the suicide bombers was less cowardly than the relatively long-distance methods of the U.S. military response. “‘We have been the cowards, lobbing cruise missiles from 2,000 miles away,’ Maher said on that Sept. 17, 2001 show. ‘That’s cowardly. Staying in the airplane when it hits the building, say what you want about it, it’s not cowardly.’”

(http://www.theweeklynews.org/Archive_TWN/030116/030116_lavender_tube.htm, August 12, 2003). The ensuing widespread failure to seriously contemplate the substance of Maher’s remarks demonstrated a pervasive unwillingness to consider that popular beliefs might also be prejudiced beliefs. Further, the cancellation of Maher’s talk-show is evidence both of the vital importance of identifying socially popular prejudices and of the extreme difficulty of challenging them.

It is often unclear whether heterosexism and homophobia qualify as popular or unpopular prejudices in Canada. Recent provincial court decisions and drafted federal legislation are paving the way for the legalization of same-sex marriages. They suggest that increasing numbers of people are not prepared to tolerate discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. So perhaps homophobia and heterosexism are becoming socially unpopular prejudices. Still, the outcry against legalizing same-sex marriages at street
protests, on radio talk programs, and in the Letters Sections of Canadian newspapers also suggests that there are many who remain outraged by such moves towards inclusion. While there is no one definitive Canadian position, it is pretty safe to say that there are many Canadian communities where homophobia and heterosexism remain socially popular beliefs. Paul’s insistence that conceptions of prejudice be expanded to also include socially popular prejudgments underlines that it is when prejudices are most embedded and accepted within communities that they are most easily overlooked, most difficult to dislodge, and most in need of the attention of social justice educators.

Even more difficult than naming and opposing the widespread prejudices of others is identifying and eliminating personal prejudices. Serious exploration of personal prejudices is onerous and uncommon, because admitting to holding them has the potential to be deeply threatening to ego and identity. As Paul (1987) remarks: “For the purposes of self-protection, we assume our view to be moral and objective” (p. 131). In fact, some people’s most profound sense of who they are and how they relate to/in the world are so deeply troubled by the possibility that they might personally hold prejudices that these people are almost incapable of even considering that possibility. Because most people, quite understandably if egocentrically, like to think of themselves as moral, there is good reason to believe it is difficult for most to accept that their thoughts and behaviours might be unwarranted or unjust in any way. As Paul (1993a) states, “[prejudiced] beliefs often constitute the bulwark of our personal and cultural identity, and we often find it psychologically painful to think we might be wrong, especially regarding fundamentals” (p. 257-8).
The threat to identity is amplified, because, over time, people's core beliefs about themselves can become almost inextricably enmeshed with their deeply held, mutually supporting core beliefs about the world. "Our basic ways of knowing are inseparable from our basic ways of being. How we think reflects who we are" (Paul, 1993a, p. 323). As people's mutually supporting core identities and convictions grow to be laden with egocentric desires and emotional investment, they hinder honest self-examination and encourage people to ignore the faults in their own thinking. As a result, Paul argues, if the foundations for critical thinking are not laid early on, people "literally become dependent on [their belief structures] - intellectually and emotionally - and cannot later, without trauma, subject them to serious critical scrutiny" (Paul, 1993a, 192).

Unfortunately, this dynamic is particularly true of the evolution and maintenance of heterosexism and homophobia. The extreme disgust, fury, and violence that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people sometimes encounter suggests that there is good reason to believe that heterosexist and homophobic prejudgments are particularly deeply rooted in irrational emotional response and conceptions of self.

Identifying and eliminating personal prejudice is made even more difficult when an individual's beliefs closely parallel the beliefs and prejudices of the communities with which they identify. As Paul (1993a) cautions, "the inner voice of conscience is often nothing more than the internalized voice of social authority" (p. 245). As argued in Chapter 2, pervasive and sophisticated, yet often subtle, patterns of social performance and systems of reward and punishment lead people to incorporate and comply with

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36 Paul's argument here is similar to Butler's argument about the force of subjectivization to manufacture and constrain social practice and belief. However, Butler would maintain that this merging of identity and belief does not gradually evolve over time; for her, the incorporation of pervasive conceptions of normalcy is the precondition for the formation of the subject.
pervasive conceptions of normalcy. When personal and communal belief system overlap substantially, there is little potential for disagreement to highlight alternate points of view and encourage a critical examination of self and community. For this reason, personal prejudice, along with Paul’s suggestion of socially popular prejudice, should be highlighted in the expanded notion of prejudice for which Paul argues. When understandings of prejudice focus too narrowly on socially unpopular beliefs, prejudice becomes even more difficult to counteract or prevent.

If people recognize that prejudice is not directed solely against people or groups, that it may be positive as well as negative, that it includes socially popular and personal prejudgments as well as socially unpopular ones, that it is deeply interconnected with people’s wider background logics, and that it may be more the rule than the exception, it can be expected that people will be better positioned to resist the force of already established prejudices on their future practice and belief. Understanding the dynamics of prejudice well enough to provide a reasonably accurate conceptualization of them is an important part of countering the self-perpetuating force and persistence of prejudice. While it is important that people recognize the force of undisciplined thinking, egocentrism, and performativity to manufacture and constrain people’s background logics, modes of thinking, and dispositions, it is also important to recognize that prejudice gains its own force from people’s frequent underestimation of its pervasiveness, interconnectedness, and breadth.

37 Paul would, no doubt, be in agreement with this assertion as it is entirely within the spirit of his arguments about undisciplined thinking and egocentrism. I only draw explicit attention to personal prejudice here, because Paul does not address it in his discussion of the need to expand common conceptions of prejudice.
Ultimately, Paul's discussion of prejudice - both some common misconceptualizations of it and some common sources of it - helps to elucidate the dynamics by which prejudices are formed and maintained. When combined with Butler's work on performativity, Paul's work on undisciplined thinking and egocentrism offers a rich explanation of some of the factors that manufacture and constrain prejudiced belief and behaviour. Together, their work suggests that all belief, and therefore also prejudiced belief, is generated and sustained though a multi-sourced, dialectical process. The content and relationship of people's beliefs about themselves and the world, the manner in which those beliefs are formed, as well as the cognitive, affective, and behavioural tendencies that people possess, are foundationally influenced by performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism. In turn, people's unwarranted background logics, irrational modes of thinking, and subjectivated, self-interested dispositions enhance their susceptibility to - and, thus, the force of - performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism. In tandem, Butler and Paul's work suggest that prejudiced beliefs, behaviours, and institutions are created and maintained by the interplay of these common sources of prejudice and the barriers to prejudice reduction that they create.

Butler and Paul's analysis of the sources and forces of prejudice further suggest that strong critical thinking can be an important resource for prejudice reduction programs. For critical thinking to reduce people's own deep-seated prejudices, it would have to focus on increasing self-knowledge. It would have to turn the lens of people's critical inquiry back onto themselves, so that they could begin to recognize and gradually correct where their own thinking, beliefs, emotions, behaviours, and conceptions of self have been unduly influenced by performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism.
For critical thinking to reduce prejudice, it would have to be conceptualized so as to allow for a conception of the subject where the subject is constituted through performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism, but still capable of being conscious of, and potentially intervening in, them. The conception of critical thinking would need to provide people with the resources to develop some sense of who they are (continually) becoming, what their (shifting) relationships to and in the world are, and to what extent they can enter into the very process that forever confers on them the social status of (evolving) subject. It would need to enable and encourage subjects to purposefully resist and partially reduce the continued force of performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism on their continually evolving identities. It also would need to encourage people to act on their good judgments about what to think and how to perform. Only with this type of conception of critical thinking will people develop not only the resources important to lessening the force of performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism to regulate their own practice and belief, but also the resources important to working purposefully towards social justice at the societal level. Ultimately, for critical thinking to reduce prejudice, it would need to cultivate a highly self-reflexive, self-aware, self-correcting human agency, where people have the potential to consciously and self-consciously analyze and intervene in the processes that form both them and their worlds. Only when people’s own belief formation and behaviours are consciously guided by self-knowledge, well-founded convictions, moral principles, and good reasoning will they be equipped to resist the distorting influence of widespread patterns of performance, underdeveloped or misdirected reason, and emotional self-interest. In Chapter 4, I will argue that Paul’s conception of strong critical
thinking can provide people with just these kinds of resources for improving self-
knowledge, reasoning, and judgment, and in the process, possibly also for lessening
heterosexism, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice. As Paul (1993a) suggests: “As
individuals change, as their mode of thinking shifts from one that encourages prejudiced
thought formation to one antithetical to it, society’s folkways and mores will themselves
shift” (p. 264).
CHAPTER 4: STRONG CRITICAL THINKING AS A RESOURCE FOR PREJUDICE REDUCTION

The opening chapters of this project explored some common sources of prejudice. Chapter 2 examined Butler’s conception of performativity to account for the force of relatively consistent social performances to manufacture and constrain people’s thinking, beliefs, behaviours, conceptions of self, and social standing. Chapter 3 considered Paul’s account of the roles that undisciplined, egocentric modes of thinking and common misconceptualizations of prejudice can play in creating and reinforcing prejudiced belief, emotion, and behaviour. In this chapter, I will examine strong critical thinking: Paul’s proposed solution to the problem of prejudiced belief, belief formation, and behaviour. Paul advocates that people cultivate the three dimensions of strong critical thinking to reduce the likelihood that their undisciplined thinking or egocentrism will lead to unwarranted background logics and prejudiced modes of belief formation. I advocate the cultivation of these strong critical thinking knowledges, competencies, and dispositions as a means to reduce prejudice originating not only in these sources, but also in the normative and disciplinary force of the performative process.38

Strong critical thinking can reduce prejudiced belief formation not only by improving the processes and products of reasoning, but also by promoting an active, reflective, self-disciplined engagement with self and the world. This critical engagement

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38 Paul would probably agree with my assertion that strong critical thinking is also well-suited to lessening prejudice arising from the performative process. He argues that strong critical thinking is well-suited to reducing modes of thinking that permit irrational belief formation, wherever that belief formation begins. I draw separate, explicit attention to prejudice commencing in performatively constructed conceptions of normalcy, mostly because Paul’s focus is on the influence of undisciplined thinking and egocentrism on belief formation, not on the social influence of widespread patterns of performance and the normative communal expectations that they create.
enables and encourages resistance to the extreme normative and disciplinary force of the performative process. By providing people with a way to identify and assess social performance and its force to manufacture and constrain personal and communal assumptions about what constitutes normal or acceptable dress, behaviour, and speech, strong critical thinking enables people to deliberately influence that construction. Thus, strong critical thinking can promote social justice both by improving the quality of people’s own thinking and by equipping them to alter the very social forces through which social injustice is constructed and maintained.

Although the ultimate focus of this project is the promotion of social justice with respect to gender and sexuality, in this chapter, the scope of my discussion is broader. Below, I investigate the potential of strong critical thinking to alter the very modes of thought that allow prejudiced beliefs, behaviours, and institutions to exist. I argue that the integrated knowledges, competencies, and dispositions of Paul’s strong critical thinkers can help to counter performatively influenced, undisciplined, egocentric thinking, thus reducing the likelihood that it will distort perception, sway reason, and ground prejudiced belief formation. In other words, there is good reason to believe that well-developed strong critical thinkers are less likely to be unduly influenced by pervasive but poorly justified conceptions of normalcy, undeveloped or underdeveloped rational capacities, misdirected rational competencies, self-interested drives and desires, disproportionate or misplaced emotional responses, and defensive ego-identifications, as well as the unwarranted background logics and prejudiced modes of thinking that result from them. In order to make the argument that strong critical thinkers are less likely to be swayed both by the common sources of prejudice explored in Chapters 2 & 3 and by the common
barriers to prejudice reduction that these sources create, in this chapter I investigate the
nature and relationship of the knowledges, competencies, and dispositions that Paul
argues are essential to the development of strong critical thinking.\(^{39}\) However, before
investigating the three dimensions of strong critical thinking, I will begin with a brief
look both at the intellectual context of strong critical thinking and at one of the
definitions of it offered by Paul.\(^{40}\)

**Strong Critical Thinking**

*The Intellectual Context*

Research on critical thinking shares much of the complexity, variety, popularity,
and ubiquity that is common to research on performance and performativity: the term
critical thinking is a buzzword that is so variously conceptualized and so broadly
interdisciplinary that its meaning in any given context is extremely difficult to pin down.
The term is so ubiquitous, and its accompanying literature so appealing to many, in part
because many people believe that the intention to indoctrinate others is morally
blameworthy. People who have been indoctrinated have been made so close-minded that
they are essentially incapable of examining and revising their own thoughts. In other

\(^{39}\) In order to better elucidate these dimensions of strong critical thinking, I will explore them
somewhat atomistically. However, they are deeply interdependent. If any one of them is seriously lacking
in a burgeoning critical thinker, the others will be unable to flourish and genuine strong critical thinking
will not develop. In the most highly developed Ideal Thinkers, critical thinking knowledges, competencies,
and dispositions are profoundly interwoven.

\(^{40}\) Over the course of Paul’s intellectual career, he has defined his conception of strong critical
thinking in numerous different ways. With the exception of a multi-paragraph elaboration that has appeared
in various publications, Paul does not seem particularly attached to any one specific definition. As he
comments, “since critical thinking can be defined in a number of different ways consistent with each other,
we should not put a lot of weight on any one definition. Definitions are at best scaffolding for the mind”
[http://www.criticalthinking.org/University/questions.html](http://www.criticalthinking.org/University/questions.html) - October 10, 2003). The definition of strong
critical thinking that I offer below is meant in the same spirit: as a starting point from which to build a more
comprehensive picture both of Paul’s conception of strong critical thinking and of the manner in which I
intend to use his conception.
words, they come to hold their beliefs in ways that do not allow for reflection, assessment, or modification. The attempt to prevent people from becoming capable of making up their own minds, or changing them in the future, runs counter the moral principle of respect for persons. If the capacities to think purposefully and self-critically are defining features of human beings, then no one should try to prevent their development. The belief that it is morally desirable to educate people in such a way that they remain willing and able to make open-minded decisions about what to think and how to act, as well as to assess and amend those decisions, is one of the factors that has contributed to the repeated theorizing of critical thinking and abundant conceptualizations of it that are available.

Feminists, critical theorists, communitarians, and postcolonial theorists have criticized some conceptions of critical thinking for privileging a conception of humanity that values hegemonic character traits and epistemologies. For example, Harding’s (1993) work on strong objectivity outlines the perils of trying to cultivate a disembodied, decontextualized, and value-free objectivity. Belenky (1997) highlights that abstract thought is not the only way that people come to know and understand the world. Listening, experiencing, reflecting on emotional responses, and cultivating connections to others can all enhance our ability to construct knowledge. Ayim (1991) expresses concerns that some iterations of critical thinking may encourage an adversarial, “masculine” communication style. The work of Martin (1992), Courtenay-Hall (1999), and Thayer-Bacon (2000) are also representative of the critiques that have been leveled against overly rationalist, atomistic conceptions of critical thinking both from within the field and from without.
Of the many different conceptions of critical thinking, I am most attracted to Paul’s articulation of the term, not only it does not suffer the types of shortcomings outlined above, but also because it foregrounds the importance of self-knowledge. As argued in the Introduction, self-knowledge is essential to reducing personal prejudice. Like Sandra Harding’s (1993) conception of strong objectivity, Paul’s strong critical thinking requires that the investigator’s assumptions, conclusions, motivations, and methods of investigation be inspected as closely as the investigator’s intended object of study. Strong critical thinkers turn the lens of inquiry back onto themselves, so that they can begin to recognize and gradually correct their own most undisciplined thinking and egocentric biases. Introspective critical thinkers would also search out and learn to question the influence of the performative process on the content and relationship of their beliefs about themselves and the world, on the manner in which they form those beliefs, and on the dispositions that both result from and further intensify those beliefs. In other words, the self-knowledge that results from a strong critical thinker’s self-examination brings an awareness and understanding of their own background logics, their own habitual modes of thinking, and their own cognitive, affective, and behavioural tendencies. It, thus, makes it possible for strong critical thinkers to begin to unravel the complex webs of belief, thinking, self-interest, and social performance that may colour their perception, sway their reason, and ground their arguments and actions. In Paul’s own words: “Teaching critical thinking in the strong sense is teaching it so that students explicate, understand, and critique their own deepest prejudices, biases, and misconceptions, thereby allowing students to discover and contest their own egocentric and sociocentric tendencies” (Paul, 1987, p. 140).
However, as I will elaborate below, Paul’s strong critical thinkers must do more than simply possess an integrated set of knowledges, competencies, and dispositions that allow them to carefully and consistently examine information, argument, experience, emotion, and - most importantly - self. They must also be committed to accepting and acting on the consequences that follow from their reasoning, even if those consequences turn out not to be in their own best interest (Elder, 1999, p. 31). For Paul, right and good thinking can not be separated from right and good behaviour; fully developed strong critical thinkers are also critical actors. They work to counter expectations, behaviours, or institutions that they determine to be unwarranted or unjust.

Paul (1982) contrasts the strong critical thinking he advocates with other common but “weak” conceptions of critical thinking. As articulated by Paul, weak critical thinkers tend towards the sophistic or sophisticated reasoning described in Chapter 3. They typically acquire the basic vocabulary and rhetorical skill associated with critical thinking, but their dispositions remain egocentric, limited by an inability to genuinely move outside of their personal frame of reference (Paul, 1993a, p. 206). Rather than intentionally and consistently accounting for the perspectives and interests of diverse groups of people, weak critical thinking skillfully serves only the perspectives and interests of self and community (Paul, 1993a, p. 137-8). As such, the skills of weak critical thinkers remain atomistic, developing without relation to character (Paul, 1993a, p. 182). They function as though simply tacked on to the thinker’s overarching worldview, instead of being more appropriately directed by and integrated with the thinker’s progressively less self-centered disposition. As a result, the weak critical
thinking against which Paul cautions is likely to only marginally improve the quality of a thinker’s reasoning.

As described by Paul (1982), the skills of weak critical thinkers are problematically atomistic in a further significant way: in their relation to the thinker’s other beliefs (p.3). Like those people described in Chapter 3, who understand prejudices as exceptions, those who understand critical thinking weakly underestimate both the force of background logic and the interdependence of its elements. They focus on the development of discrete skills to be employed in the examination of discrete pieces of information or isolated arguments, instead of paying fitting attention to the argument networks that support people’s entangled, global worldviews (Paul, 1982, p. 3). Because weak critical thinking, as conceptualized by Paul, neglects the influence of prior beliefs and egocentrism on reasoning, it often bolsters prejudiced beliefs and behaviours instead of challenging them. By contrast, Paul’s strong critical thinking foregrounds the development of the dispositions necessary to guide and integrate the knowledges and competencies that make possible a genuine examination and revision of people’s own worldviews and identities (Paul, 1993a, p. 321).

A Definition

So far, my references to Paul’s conception of strong critical thinking have been somewhat vague. I now turn to the task of explicitly defining it. Throughout the course of his work, Paul has offered many consistent, yet fairly different, extended elaborations of his vision of critical thinking. I believe this elaboration to be one of his most concise yet
Our working definition is as follows: Critical thinking is the ability and disposition to improve one’s thinking by systematically subjecting it to rigorous self-assessment” (Elder & Paul, 1996a, p. 34). Below, I will discuss in more detail the nature and relationship of the “ability and disposition” to which Paul refers. These are the knowledges, competencies, and dispositions to which I have already made frequent mention throughout this chapter. However, first I will highlight a few other important implications that follow from the above definition.

Because the endeavour to better one’s thinking is “systematic,” it is neither random nor haphazard. As Bailin and colleagues (1999b) point out, critical thinking is purposive thinking directed towards coming to a decision about what to believe or do (p. 287). Paul agrees, stating: “All thinking pursues a purpose. We do not think unless we have something we are trying to accomplish, some aim in view, or something we want” (Elder & Paul, 2001b, p. 40). Because critical thinking has a specific goal to efficiently and capably pursue, it does not rely on or occur by chance. It follows a systematic – that is, a reasonable, intentional, fairly comprehensive, and standards-based - plan for forming good judgments (Elder & Paul, 1996b, p. 35).

Also, the endeavour to systematically better one’s thinking must be subjected to “rigorous self-assessment.” Strong critical thinkers do not shirk the intellectually and psychologically arduous task before them. They consistently monitor, rethink, and revise their own undisciplined modes of thought and background logics, as well as the

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41 I remind the reader that the following definition of strong critical thinking is not offered as a comprehensive picture of Paul’s conception of strong critical thinking. Rather, it is offered as a starting point from which to build a more comprehensive picture.
egocentric drives, emotions, and self-concepts that may exacerbate them. To increase the rigour of their self-assessment, critical thinkers do their best to assess the quality of their reasoning. As I discuss in detail below, they look to standards and principles of good reasoning to determine both how well they are reasoning and how they might better their reasoning. As Paul notes, “critical thinking is self-improvement (in thinking) through standards (that assess thinking)” (Paul, 1993a, p. 91). Ultimately, critical thinkers implement standards-based, systematic, and systemic plans for evaluating and transforming the structure and content of their thinking and their dispositions, while simultaneously monitoring and improving the very plans that are guiding their efforts.

As the above definition suggests, in order to implement such a plan, critical thinkers must have the “ability and disposition” to do so. According to Paul, people can be said to have the ability to improve their thinking when they have some skill both in monitoring the elements of their own thinking and in altering those elements to better accord with intellectual standards of reasoning (Elder & Paul, 1994, p.34). Further, people can be said to have the disposition to improve their thinking when they have the volition, rational passion, and intellectual character traits that enable and encourage them to use their skills to that end (Paul, 1987, p.142).

While this initial explication of the definition offered above begins to paint a picture of Paul’s conception of strong critical thinking, much more is required to support the argument that strong critical thinking can reduce prejudiced thinking, belief, emotion, and behaviour. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to fleshing out the nature,
relationship, and likely consequences of the abilities and dispositions of strong critical thinkers. First, I argue that Paul’s elaboration of critical thinking in terms of skills and abilities is most fairly understood as an elaboration of critical thinking in terms of interdependent knowledges and competencies. Next, I investigate the nature of Paul’s critical thinking dispositions and their necessary relationship to knowledges and competencies in the genuine strong critical thinker. I will finish this chapter by summarizing why integrated strong critical thinking knowledges, competencies, and dispositions can help to counter the influence of the performative process, underdeveloped rational capacities, misdirected rational competencies, and egocentrism on the formation of thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours.

Skills and Abilities Conceptualized as Integrated Knowledges and Competencies

Throughout this chapter, I have at times followed Paul’s example of conceptualizing strong critical thinking, at least in part, in terms of skills and abilities. However, Bailin and colleagues charge that there are important dangers in understanding critical thinking in terms of skills (1999a, 1999b) and abilities (1999a). Of the criticisms leveled against Paul’s conception of strong critical thinking, I believe this one has the potential to carry the most weight. As a result, while I argue that Paul’s strong critical thinking does not ultimately exhibit the shortcomings that Bailin and colleagues suggest commonly accompany skills and abilities conceptualizations of critical thinking, I use my response to Bailin et. al’s critique in order to elucidate my claim that Paul’s skills and abilities are best understood as knowledges and competencies. I will now present Bailin and colleagues critique, followed by my response to it.
Bailin and colleagues (1999a) criticize the "strong tendency among educators to divide educational goals or objectives into three distinct kinds: knowledge, skills (i.e. abilities), and attitudes (i.e. values), and to assign critical thinking to the category of skills" (p. 270). Their primary concern with this division is that it commonly leads to an understanding of critical thinking as a skill that is both generic and discrete. Skills are generic when "critical thinking is seen to involve generic operations that can be learned in themselves, apart from any particular knowledge domains, and then transferred or applied in different contexts" (Bailin, 1999a, p. 271). In other words, this conceptualization problematically separates thinking from a context-specific understanding of the background knowledges, concepts, principles, and standards necessary to make good judgments (Bailin, 1999a, p. 272). It also does not acknowledge the importance of marrying critical thinking skills with critical thinking dispositions: having the ability to think critically will not improve the quality of a person's reasoning unless that person is simultaneously motivated to employ that ability to that end (Bailin, 1999a).

Critical thinking skills are discrete when they are conceptualized as isolated processes, procedures, or practices, separated from the idea of intellectual standards (Bailin, 1999a, p. 273). Problematically, this conceptualization of critical thinking as skills does not consider the extent to which thinking fulfills relevant standards for good reasoning. Unlike the absolute all-or-nothingness of fulfilling criteria, standards may be fulfilled to a greater or lesser degree. A person may purposely improve the quality of her thinking, so that she at least minimally fulfills the relevant standards for good reasoning and critical thinking, but still reason rather poorly. For example, Mona may intentionally
make her thinking more precise. She may remark that not only is Norman tall, but he is
taller than Todd. While adding the qualifier that Norman is taller than Todd does improve
the precision of Mona's statement, it is still not specific enough for others to determine
precisely how tall Norman is, particularly if they do not already know how tall Todd is.
As a result, although Mona can be said to be thinking critically, deliberately improving
the precision, and thus the quality, of her thinking, she is still not reasoning all that well.
Even when a person's thinking sufficiently satisfies the relevant standards of reasoning,
so that it can be said to qualify at least minimally as critical thinking, there is still the
question of how well that critical thinking satisfies those standards, and thus how
excellent or how poor that critical thinking is.

The notion that people can fulfill standards of reasoning to different degrees of
adequacy is an important part of any elaboration of critical thinking, because it underlines
that simply learning to think critically is not enough to "capture what most people have in
mind when they claim that critical thinking is an important goal of education" (Bailin et
al., 1999b, p. 286). Common understandings of critical thinking require that critical
thinkers learn not just to reason, but to reason well, sensitively taking into account all (or
most) of the relevant conceptual and contextual considerations. As Bailin and colleagues
comment, "what drives increased competence in thinking is greater mastery of the
standards for judging an appropriate tack to take in a particular context" (Bailin et al.,
1999a, p. 279). Conceptualizing critical thinking as skills, discrete from the concept of
intellectual standards, accounts for neither the possible gradations in people's critical
thinking competencies, nor the sense that people should strive continually to better their
competency in fulfilling the intellectual standards of good reasoning and critical thinking.
Ultimately, Bailin and colleagues are wary of people misconceptualizing critical thinking in terms of discrete or generic skills and abilities, because learning skills out of context, unaccompanied by the appropriate dispositions, and without relation to relevant standards, is not likely to improve reasoning and judgment.43

While Bailin and colleagues rightly assert that Paul speaks of critical thinking as involving skills and abilities, his use of the term has evolved over time. To present Paul’s best case, and to build my own case that Paul’s critical thinking skills and abilities should best be understood as knowledges and competencies, I will focus here on his more recent elaborations of critical thinking as skill and ability.44 However, from my discussion of Paul to this point, it should be clear that Paul has always understood the development of genuine critical thinking skills to be strongly correlated with, and even dependent upon, a simultaneous development of character. As Paul (1993) states, “We must develop and refine our intellectual skills as we develop and refine our intellectual character, to embed the skills in our character and shape our character through the skills” (p. 244). Moreover, even in his earliest writings, Paul frequently uses skill fairly unproblematically to denote a proficiency or competency. For some time, therefore, Paul’s use of the term has addressed at least Bailin and colleagues’ concerns about the relationship between skills and dispositions. His current conception of critical thinking should more than adequately

43 It is important to note that Bailin and colleagues have few significant concerns with the use of the terms “skill” or “ability” to connote competency or proficiency. In this “relatively benign” achievement sense, “a skilled reasoner is one who is able to reason well and to meet the relevant criteria for good reasoning (Bailin et al., 1999a, p.270).

44 To be fair to Bailin and colleagues, one must remember that his clearest statement of the relationship between critical thinking and skills (Paul & Elder, 2003) was published four years after the Bailin and colleagues critique.
address their concerns about the relationship of critical thinking skills to context and relevant standards.

Since at least 1994, when Paul and Linda Elder began their joint authorship of a regular piece on critical thinking for the *Journal of Developmental Education*, Paul’s language has undergone something of a transition. Instead of referring to critical thinking skills, he now typically highlights two concepts: *elements of thought* and *standards of reasoning*. Even without immediately fleshing out Paul’s use of these concepts, their names suggest a shift of which Bailin and colleagues would approve.

It is true, however, that Paul does sometimes still refer to the “skills, abilities and dispositions” essential to critical thinking (Paul & Elder, 2003, p. 36). So how exactly does Paul currently use these terms? Paul’s most recent elaboration of the relationship between critical thinking and skill is as follows: “when students can analyze and assess reasoning, they have the skills essential to the educated person” (ibid; emphasis added). The key to understanding Paul’s elaboration of the relationship between critical thinking and skills is, therefore, to flesh out what he means by “analyzing and assessing reason.”

Paul makes clear that in order to “analyze reason,” one must learn to search out, articulate, and question what he calls the elements of thought or elements of reasoning (Paul & Elder, 2003). These are “those essential dimensions of reasoning present whenever and wherever reasoning occurs” (Paul & Elder, 1994, p. 32). They include the purpose, goal or end in view; the question at hand; the point of view or frame of reference being taken; the empirical dimension of reasoning, i.e., the “experience, data, information, evidence, or raw material” in which reasoning is based; the conceptual dimensions of reasoning, “include[ing] the theories, principles, axioms, or rules implicit
in our reasoning”; the assumptions taken for granted; the implications and consequences that follow; and, the inferences that can made (Paul & Elder, 1994, p. 32). To analyze reason, Paul’s critical thinkers must be knowledgeable both about the content and relationship of their own and other’s thinking and about the elements of thought that may influence that thinking for better or for worse. In other words, they must have the conceptual, contextual, and self knowledges of strong critical thinkers. They must have an awareness and understanding of the meaning, significance, and relationship of background logics, habitual modes of thinking, and dispositions, including the manner in which they can be influenced by performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism. Strong critical thinkers must also be able to competently and consistently apply their conceptual, contextual, and self knowledges to and in specific situations. In other words, they must be sufficiently proficient at identifying and understanding the elements of both their own and other’s reasoning in order to improve their reasoning about what to believe and how to perform.

In order to develop the skills to improve reason, Paul’s strong critical thinkers must learn not only to analyze reason, but also to assess it. Paul makes clear that to “assess reasoning,” people must additionally become knowledgeable about the meaning, significance, and relationship among the relevant standards of reasoning. Not only must critical thinkers learn to appreciate the value of these standards - i.e. their role in helping people to improve their reasoning - they must learn to competently measure the elements of their own and others’ thinking against them (Paul & Elder, 1994, p. 32). When critical thinkers understand and employ standards of reasoning as a yardstick for measuring the quality of their own reasoning, they are better able to discover the extent to which it is
distorted by performativity, undisciplined thinking, egocentrism, and their prior background logics.

Like Bailin and colleagues, Paul argues that intellectual standards allow for an evaluation of how well a person reasons (Paul & Elder, 1994). He clearly takes critical thinking to be "a matter of degree" rather than an all or nothing affair (Paul & Elder, 1993a, p. 184). Paul would, therefore, whole-heartedly agree with Bailin and colleagues’ claim that critical thinking is a normative concept, “i.e. that critical thinking is in some sense good thinking” (Paul & Elder, 1999b, p.287), and that people can fulfill the relevant standards for critical thinking to greater or lesser degrees of adequacy. In fact, as mentioned in the Introduction, Paul and Elder have written a series of articles detailing the types of improvements in both thinking and character that people are likely to make as they improve their critical thinking competencies, knowledges, and dispositions (Elder & Paul, 1996a; Elder & Paul, 1996b; Paul & Elder, 1997).

As Paul argues, the quality of reasoning displayed by critical thinkers can vary both by person and by context. In other words, some people cultivate the necessary knowledges, competencies, and dispositions more fully and across more domains than do others. For example, while some people remain spotty, weak Unreflective Thinkers, others develop into highly consistent, integrated Ideal Thinkers. Further, the very same person can be a proficient critical thinker in some areas or circumstances and quite inexpert in others. As Paul cautions, “critical thinking of any kind is never universal in any individual” (http://www.criticalthinking.org/University/univclass/Defining.html - April 28/2003). 45 All people have their own insights, blind spots, and tendencies towards

45 However, while not even the most highly developed critical thinkers are likely to think well in all contexts, Paul maintains that people who can sufficiently fulfill standards of reasoning in only very
self-delusion. However, as people begin to develop their knowledges of and competencies with the elements and standards of reasoning, there is good reason to believe that they are developing - to use Paul’s language - the skills and abilities to assess, analyze, and improve the quality of their thinking.

Ultimately, there are two basic reasons for my argument that Paul’s occasional use of the terms *skill* and *ability* is insufficient to suggest that he does not adequately account for the relationship between skills and standards. First, Paul currently emphasizes the importance of having the skill and ability to measure elements of thought against standards of reasoning. That is, he argues that critical thinkers must develop the skill and ability to competently and consistently employ their critical thinking knowledges to better fulfill the standards of reasoning and continually improve their reasoning. Second, he emphasizes that the quality of people’s reasoning and critical thinking varies by person and by context, but that all should strive to increase that quality. Although Paul does sometimes use the language of skills and abilities, his conception of strong critical thinking is fundamentally concerned with the degree to which people are capable of applying their critical thinking knowledges to at least adequately fulfill standards of reasoning, thereby improving the quality of their critical thinking. Therefore, Paul’s strong critical thinking does not exhibit at least two of the shortcomings that Bailin and colleagues suggest commonly accompany *skills and abilities* conceptualizations of critical thinking: misconceptualizing skills and abilities localized situations do not qualify as genuine critical thinkers: “We exclude from our concept of the critical thinker one who thinks well in only one dimension” (Elder & Paul, 1996a, p. 34). Paul’s conception of strong critical thinkers is comprehensive: it refers to the integrated knowledges, competencies, and dispositions of the whole person. If a person does not consistently and competently apply the knowledge essential to critical thinking to some degree of adequacy, she is probably seriously deficient in at least one of the dimensions essential to critical thinking.
without relation to relevant standards and without relation to the appropriate
accompanying dispositions.

So what of Bailin and colleagues’ remaining concern that when critical thinking is
conceptualized in terms of skills, it runs the risk of not sufficiently addressing the
relationship between critical thinking skills and their contextual application? Though
Paul does not claim that all standards of reasoning can be transferred from one domain to
another, it is true that he does suggest that some are universal. Some standards of
reasoning are universal, because they are “grounded in the necessary conditions for
effective language use…The most fundamental of these standards include clarity,
accuracy, and precision, as well as relevance, depth and breadth” (Elder & Paul, 1995a,
p.36). To this list, Paul has also added logic, i.e. whether the elements of our thought “are
mutually supporting and make sense in combination” (http://www.criticalthinking.org/
University/unistan.html - September, 19, 2003). The fundamental questions therefore
become: (1) can standards of reasoning be universal?; and (2) if there can be universal
standards of reasoning, is a knowledge of their meaning, significance, and relationship
sufficient to ensure their sensitive, contextual, and competent application?

Because the elements of thinking are constant - i.e., they are present whenever
thinking occurs - it does make sense to claim that there are some standards for evaluating
them that are constant as well. For example, we can universally ask: is the purpose of the
reasoning being offered clear or readily intelligible?; is the evidence being offered
relevant to and sufficient for settling the question or problem at hand?; or, is the point of
view represented sufficiently broad to account for all (or most) of the relevant
perspectives and arguments? While Paul is clear that not every element important to the
assessment of critical thinking can simply be transferred from one domain to another, the
standards of good reasoning that Paul offers as universal do seem to transfer. As Paul
(1993b) points out, his universal intellectual standards are simply part of the logic of
logic (p. 31). Because they conform to the basic logic of making sound inferences, Paul
fairly argues that his standards apply to all purposeful thinking, regardless of the subject
domain in which it takes place (Elder & Paul, 1995a, p. 36). As Paul (1993b) observes,
"it would be unintelligible to say 'I want to reason well but I am indifferent as to whether
or not my reasoning is clear, precise, accurate, relevant, logical, consistent, based on
appropriate evidence and reasons'" (p. 37). 46

Of course, while a critical thinker's conceptual understanding of and appreciation
for the meaning, significance, and relationship of universal standards may transfer across
domains, it is fair to claim that people who possess only a conceptual knowledge of
universal standards will be unlikely to competently apply that knowledge in context-
specific situations. There is good reason to believe that the competent application of
universal standards designed to assess and improve the quality of reasoning also requires
an understanding of and appreciation for the conceptual and contextual knowledges of
the domain in which the universal standards are being applied.

Of course, Bailin and colleagues would likely suggest that herein lies the rub.
They talk about the importance of having an operational knowledge of the relevant
standards of good thinking (Bailin et al., 1999b, pp. 291-3). They suggest that it is
meaningless to assert that a critical thinker can be knowledgeable about some element of
critical thinking, if a critical thinker can not also determine how to use her knowledge

46 In this connection, it is relevant to note that Bailin and colleagues appear also to hold that there
exist some more general principles and standards of good argumentation and inquiry (1999a, p. 281).
competently in specific contexts. The “abstractness [of the principles of critical thinking] gives them a vagueness that makes it necessary for the critical thinker to exercise judgment in interpreting them and determining what they require in any particular case” (Bailin et al., 1999b, p. 292). As Bailin and colleagues (1999a) point out, “interpreting a graph is a very different sort of enterprise from interpreting a play” (p. 272). Regardless of what else the interpretation of a graph or a play might require, they each require that the thinker possess some knowledge of some very different, context-specific sets of concepts, standards, principles, and background information: “It makes little sense, then, to think in terms of generic skills, which are simply applied or transferred to different domains of knowledge” (Bailin et al., 1999a, p. 272).

While this argument may seem to present a serious challenge to Paul’s claim that there are universal, transferable standards of reason – and, thus, at least some universal, transferable elements or skills of strong critical thinking - I do not believe that Paul would or should be troubled by Bailin and colleagues’ argument. Nor am I, for that matter. Paul agrees that, for thinking to be critical, it must be “responsive to variable subject matter” (Paul & Elder, 1993b, p. 22). He discusses how universal standards relate to the conceptual and contextual knowledges of particular disciplines or domains. Paul also outlines the particular logics of different academic disciplines and the importance for people to learn to think according to the logic of the discipline in which they are working. For example, he offers extended discussions of how best to learn to think - and to teach others to learn to think - historically (Paul & Elder, 1999b), biologically (Paul & Elder, 1996), and geographically (Paul & Elder, 1996). Thinking according to the logic of a discipline requires becoming familiar and proficient with its own standards, concepts,
questions, and relevant background information. In other words, it requires being knowledgeable about how the elements of thought and standards of reasoning are taken up within that discipline. Paul maintains that people can not competently apply their conceptual knowledges of universal standards within particular contexts, unless their conceptual knowledges are accompanied by a knowledge of and sensitivity to context.

Nevertheless, there is good reason to believe that consistent, competent, context sensitive reasoning does rely on some awareness of and appreciation for universal - and in a sense, transferable - standards. Paul’s universal standards of reasoning are relevant to and can serve as guidelines for what counts as good thinking in any discipline. As my above citation from Paul suggests, it would be non-sensical to claim that unclear or inconsistent thinking could qualify as good reasoning in any context. Moreover, the warranted conviction that all competent purposeful thinking satisfies the same types of standards can even help to improve the quality of people’s reasoning. It can help to keep on people’s radars the importance of continually measuring the elements of their thought against standards of reasoning. In other words, a conceptual knowledge of Paul’s universal standards can orient people both to notice the different elements of thought and to care about whether these elements adequately fulfill the standards of reasoning. In Paul’s own words, “Awareness of these elements does not guarantee resolution of a moral issue, but it does enable reasoners to focus more particularly on possible problem areas, and, most importantly, gain insight into how and why their own reasoning may be biased” (Paul & Elder, 1993a, 253). Perhaps somewhat ironically, therefore, being knowledgeable about universal standards may even make people more likely to search out the additional context-specific background information and conceptual
understandings that Bailin and colleagues emphasize are necessary to competently applying universal standards.

Ultimately, Paul’s claim that there are universal standards of reasoning should not be interpreted as a claim that there are universal, directly transferable critical thinking skills. As I have been arguing, Paul’s skills and abilities are most fairly understood as including both knowledges and competencies. Of these knowledges and competencies, only people’s knowledges of universal standards - i.e., their appreciation of the meaning, relationship, and value of universal standards of reasoning - transfers from context to context. Regardless of the logic of the particular domain in which a person is attempting to think critically, it can be expected that she will retain her prior knowledge of the importance of standards to all reasoning. She is also likely to retain her knowledge of at least some of the standards that she must purposefully and adequately fulfill in order to reason well. However, unlike people’s conceptual knowledges of universal standards, their competency in adequately applying their knowledge of universal standards does not directly transfer. As Paul argues, critical thinking competency requires context-specific knowledges and competencies, explicit instruction, appropriate modeling, systemic planning, constructive practice, and rigorous self-assessment. It requires developing an understanding of how the logic of logic is incorporated into the logics of particular disciplines. Only then can critical thinkers learn to use universal intellectual standards competently within the boundaries and histories of particular domains. Thus, when fleshed out in this way, I hope it is clear that only one of the two necessary components of Paul’s strong critical thinking skills is in some sense universal. While knowledge of

47 I discuss these aspects of learning to think critically in Chapter 6.
universal standards may transfer, the competencies and additional knowledges necessary for critical thinking skill do not. Paul's conceptualization of strong critical thinking as a skill should not be understood to suggest that critical thinking skills can be developed or transferred without sensitivity to contextual specificities and knowledges.

Ultimately, because Paul's conceptualization of critical thinking as involving skills does not isolate skills from contextual application, standards of adequate reasoning, or disposition, it should be understood as neither generic nor discrete in the ways that concern Bailin and colleagues.\(^48\) When Paul talks about acquiring the skills of critical thinking, he is really talking about developing the knowledges and competencies necessary to assess and correct the elements of reason according to the standards of reasoning. In other words, the skills and abilities of Paul's strong critical thinkers consist of the knowledges and competencies that people must develop in order to purposefully monitor and improve their own thinking. The necessary knowledges bring an awareness and understanding of the meaning, significance, and relationship of the elements most likely to positively influence the quality of reasoning. These conceptual, contextual, and self knowledges include: knowledge of personal background logics, habitual modes of thought, and dispositions, including the extent to which they have been influenced by performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism; as well as knowledge of the universal and contextual standards, principles, concepts, and background informations relevant to reasoning well.\(^49\) Essentially, to learn the skills and abilities of critical

\(^{48}\) Part of my rationale for using the language of "knowledges and competencies," instead of the language of "skills and abilities," is to reduce the likelihood that people will confuse Paul's use of skills with the other more problematic uses outlined by Bailin and colleagues.

\(^{49}\) It is relevant to observe that when Paul's description of critical thinking skills, abilities, and dispositions is fleshed out in its totality, it touches on all of the "intellectual resources" that Bailin and colleagues use to characterize critical thinking (1999b). These resources include "background knowledge,
thinking is to gradually improve the quality of reasoning and judgment, becoming progressively more competent at applying the mounting conceptual, contextual, and self knowledges of the critical thinker in specific situations.

**Dispositions**

However, Paul reasonably argues that the development of strong critical thinking knowledges and competencies could not occur without a simultaneous development of critical thinking dispositions.\(^5\) Critical thinking dispositions not only enable people to realize that their thinking could be meaningfully improved, but they also motivate people to work towards that improvement by cultivating the desire, drive, and ability to value the pursuit of critical thinking knowledges and competencies. Critical thinking dispositions also strengthen people’s tendency to use their emergent knowledges and competencies consistently. This additional tendency is crucial, as the mere possession of some degree of critical thinking knowledge and competency is not sufficient to improve reasoning. These dimensions of critical thinking will only result in the better fulfillment of standards of reasoning, if they are purposefully and consistently used to that end. Critical thinking dispositions help critical thinkers put their knowledges and competencies to use, and moreover, to consistent good use. They prevent egocentrism from commandeering operational knowledge of the standards of good thinking, knowledge of key critical concepts, heuristics, and habits of mind” (Bailin et al., 1999b, p, 290). While I will not elaborate further on what each of Bailin and colleagues’ intellectual resources entails, as their terminology suggests, there is a large degree of overlap between their elaboration of critical thinking and Paul’s. Further, both Paul’s elaboration of abilities and Bailin and colleagues’ elaboration of intellectual resources build on Ennis’ (1987) conceptualization of critical thinking.

\(^5\) Paul’s elaboration of critical thinking dispositions is quite similar to Harvey Siegel’s (1988) elaboration of critical spirit, which follows Passmore (1967): the type of attitude or character that must accompany critical thinking skills in order to cultivate genuine critical thinking. Ennis’ (1987) discussion also underlies both Paul and Siegel’s.
existing competencies and knowledges to justify and reinforce prejudice; they are what is fundamentally lacking in weak, sophistic, or sophisticated thinkers. In sum, critical thinking dispositions improve reasoning by enabling and encouraging the cultivation, integration, and use of critical thinking knowledges and competencies.

Along with encouraging improved reasoning, critical thinking dispositions also promote improved behaviour. They motivate people to act in accordance with their beliefs. As Harvey Siegel (1988) puts it, “the critical thinker is appropriately moved by reasons; she acts in accordance with the force of relevant reasons. Thus, the critical thinker is, importantly, a rational actor” (p. 41; italics in original). Likewise, one of the central questions that Ideal Thinkers would use to assess and improve their thinking is: “Am I living my basic values?” (Elder & Paul, 1996b, p. 35). Critical thinking dispositions enable and inspire the consistent, authentic integration of belief, emotion, and behaviour that is integral to Paul’s conception of strong critical thinking. As a result, it is Paul’s nuanced elaboration of this cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimension of critical thinking that is most likely to make his conceptualization of strong critical thinking particularly appealing to social justice educators seeking to reduce deeply rooted heterosexism and homophobia. I will now turn to a detailed discussion of the nature of critical thinking dispositions and their relationship both to each other and to critical thinking knowledges and competencies.

Throughout the body of Paul’s work, he discusses three theoretically distinct, but highly interdependent, behavioural, affective, and cognitive components of critical thinking dispositions: volitions, rational passions, and intellectual character traits. Volition, rational passion, and intellectual traits are both the means of developing critical
thinking dispositions and the result of that development (Paul, 1993a, p. 255). That is, each component both reflects and further influences people’s overall dispositions. While perhaps conceptually distinct, volition, rational passion, and intellectual traits are likely impossible to distinguish in practice. They feed into and off of each other. No one element is prior to the others. No one element is likely to develop substantially without the concomitant development of the others. No one element is likely to consistently and pervasively alter a person’s general disposition without the others. Thus, it may seem pointless to discuss volition, rational passion, and intellectual character traits separately. Still, I will investigate them fairly distinctly in order to clarify the types of contributions that each makes to the development of critical thinking dispositions and the improvement of reason. I begin my exploration of these three elements of strong critical thinking dispositions by elaborating on the role of volition as I illustrate the extent to which all the elements of critical thinking dispositions are interconnected.

Interconnections and Volitions. Together, the different components of people’s critical thinking dispositions help them take what might well be the most basic step towards becoming Ideal Thinkers: “recogniz[ing] the tendencies they have to form irrational beliefs” (Paul, 1987, p. 130). Because people’s undisciplined thinking and egocentrism are often so deep-seated, highly functional, and entangled with identity and background logic, it is typically very challenging for people to accept, or even perceive, that they hold prejudiced beliefs. As a result, for people to come to the realization that

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51 In fact, Paul argues that the intellectual character trait associated with this realization, intellectual humility, is necessarily the first trait that critical thinkers begin to develop as they begin to improve their thinking (Elder & Paul, 1996b, p. 34).
their thinking is in need of any significant improvement, they typically must develop at least some measure of the intellectual character trait of intellectual humility. The trait of intellectual humility consists of “having a consciousness of the limits of one’s knowledge, including sensitivity to circumstances in which one’s native egocentrism is likely to function self-deceptively and sensitivity to bias, prejudice and limitations of one’s viewpoint” (Elder & Paul, 1998a, p. 34). It allows people to discover, monitor, and begin to work through the problems in their thinking.

However, people are unlikely to develop any degree of intellectual humility, if they do not have the concomitant rational passion and volition to do so. Rational passions are likely to aid in the development of this intellectual character trait, because before people become receptive to recognizing their own irrational beliefs, they often first become troubled by the societal existence or effects of such beliefs. However, even when people become passionately distressed by the general existence and lived consequences of irrational beliefs and behaviours, they must do more than genuinely care about prejudice in order to develop intellectual humility. They must also have the will to consider and explore their own relationship to prejudice.

This additional, but absolutely essential, drive is where volition comes in. As Elder (1997) notes, volition is “the mind’s engine, which revs up and moves us forward towards some action or slams on the breaks so we can avoid some behaviour” (p. 40). A properly cultivated will motivates people to act on the other elements of their critical thinking dispositions: rational passions and intellectual character traits. It also catalyzes

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52 Below, I will elaborate far more thoroughly on the nature and role of rational passions in the development of critical thinking dispositions, competencies, and knowledges. I briefly discuss rational passions here only to demonstrate the profound interrelationship among the three elements of critical thinking dispositions.
the continued pursuit of these elements of disposition, along with the continued pursuit of
critical thinking knowledges and competencies. Finally, volition, will, or drive is also a
precondition for the consistent, authentic integration of belief, emotion, and behaviour
that is an essential component of Ideal Thinking. Intellectual character traits and
rationally directed passions culminate in the manifested volition to act as good judgment
seems to demand.

Significantly, social justice educators are typically concerned with helping others
cultivate the tendency to consistently act as their good judgment seems to demand.
Neither the burgeoning realization nor the long-standing conviction that homophobia and
heterosexism are morally problematic is of little practical use, if it is not also paired with
strategic, regular behaviour to counter gender and sexual prejudice and discrimination.
Unfortunately, however, people frequently admit to and bemoan this type of failure to do
what they believe they ought to do, explaining it as a manifestation of their lack of will
power. Whether or not a lack of will, by itself, adequately explains people’s persistent
failure to act on their beliefs and values, there is good reason to believe that it probably
does play at least a part in many circumstances. As a result, the cultivation of volition
as a part of the cultivation of critical thinking dispositions and persons is of the utmost

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53 A deficiency in people’s rational passions and intellectual character traits probably also plays a
role in people’s failure to act on their beliefs and values. Also relevant is whether this failure partially
results from people’s less than genuine belief in the values that they express, i.e., a less than genuine belief
in what people say they ought to do. In fact, Paul explores this gap when he juxtaposes manifest logic and
background logic: the part of people’s thinking that they express and the actual logical connections that lie
beneath and support what they express (Paul, 1993a, p. 283). Manifest logic is only the tip of the iceberg,
while background logic is the gargantuan mass of ice that lies beneath the surface of the water. When the
two logics differ, background logic is likely to be the more accurate reflection of a person’s genuine and
deep-seated beliefs and values. The potential gap between manifest and background logic suggests that
people’s seeming lack of will power may instead, or also, stem from a sincere unawareness or
straightforward denial of what their true, deep commitments are.
importance both to the improvement of thinking, belief, emotion, and behaviour and to the aims of social justice educators.

*Rational Passions.* The importance of cultivating rational passions as part of the dispositions of critical thinkers should also not be underestimated. Paul (1987) rightly argues that often “a false dichotomy is set up between reason and passion, and we are forced to choose between the two as incompatible options” (p. 141). However, passion, emotion, or feeling is not in itself an impediment to good thinking. As Paul suggests, only when passions reinforce undisciplined thinking or egocentric frames of reference do they become problematic (Paul, 1987, p.142). I would add that passions are also problematic when they help to mask the unconscious influence of performativity on people’s background logics and behaviours. However, as Paul argues, when properly nurtured, passion becomes one of the necessary driving forces behind the use of critical thinking competencies and knowledges to improve reasoning (Paul, 1987, p, 142). As Paul (1987) notes: “We must care about something to do something about it. Emotions, feelings, and passions are at the root of all behaviour” (p. 142).

In fact, the role that caring plays in the development of morality is an area of much research in philosophy of education and child psychology. As this body of research persuasively argues, people’s desire to prevent unjust, unwarranted, or irrational beliefs and behaviours need not evolve out of a solely intellectual or disembodied duty to pursue justice. It can also be rooted in a caring, emotional impulse. Likewise, a deeply

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54 Ann Diller (1996), Carol Gilligan (1982), and Nell Noddings (1984), for example, are three leading researchers in the cultivation and ethics of caring.

55 Of course, a caring disposition and an intellectual commitment to the principle of justice are not mutually exclusive. Just like rational passions and intellectual character traits, they often work together to
felt concern for the well-being and experiences of others may serve as a catalyst for people to work towards lessening their mindless susceptibility to the force of performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism to distort their good judgment and behaviour.

A craving for the intense, bodily excitement that philosophical inquiry can stir may also provide a strong incentive for people to strive to improve their thinking. All too often, this possible benefit of the rational passions is overlooked. For some, critical thinking and philosophical inquiry produce a much welcomed, deeply physical experience. When intellectually productive, group deliberations and personal epiphanies can cause the most wonderful, profoundly bodily sensations: wildly pumping heart; tingling, dancing fingers; animated, flushing skin. It is this very type of passionate, physical engagement that I tend to experience during my most constructive dialogues. In fact, the physical delight of the rational passions is part of what inspired me to undertake my doctoral studies. When people endeavour to separate the cultivation of reason from rational passions, they miss out on what can be a very powerful, bodily incentive to practice thinking critically.

Furthermore, it does no good to demonize passion as a threat to reason and improved judgment. Trying to cultivate reason to the exclusion of passion is an impossible task. As Paul (1987) points out, “emotions and reason are always inseparably wedded together” (p.142). Most belief structures are reinforced in some way by emotional responses. For example, the profound disgust or aversion that homophobes may experience when they witness two men kissing would only serve to reinforce their motivate behaviour.
conviction that there is something wrong with homosexuals, homosexuality, or both. Similarly, belief structures underlie virtually all of people's emotional responses. For example, the erroneous belief that same-sex sexual relations cause diseases like AIDS could easily reinforce homophobic fear or hatred. Very often, intellect and affect are both mutually-supporting and jointly supportive of people's background logics, modes of thinking, and dispositions.

As Paul argues, emotions are people's bodily, visceral responses both to their circumstances and to the meaning that they attach to those circumstances. He points out:

> Critical thinkers realize that their feelings are their response (but not the only possible, or even necessarily the most reasonable response) to a situation. They know their feelings would be different if they had a different understanding or interpretation of the situation. They recognize that thoughts and feelings, far from being different kinds of "things," are two aspects of their responses. [http://www.criticalthinking.org/K12/k12class/strat/4.html Sept 19, 2003]

What might be called "rational feelings" are fitting and proportionate to an accurate, global assessment of the circumstance. Conversely, what might be called "irrational feelings" are incongruous with or disproportionate to the circumstance. They are often based in factual misinformation, narrow-mindedness, or other failures to fulfill the standards of reasoning. Of course, as with most attempts at categorization, it would be difficult to definitively categorize an emotional response as either wholly in one category or wholly in another, i.e., as either wholly rational or wholly irrational. Still, for people to develop as critical thinkers, they "must come to terms not only with how they feel about issues, ...but also with the rationality or irrationality of those feelings" (Paul, 1993a, p. 209).
In fact, as developing critical thinkers become more aware of when their emotional responses are somehow misdirected or disproportionate to the circumstance, they can use the arousal of irrational passion as a guide to where more self-analysis and self-assessment is warranted. In doing so, critical thinkers can develop a greater degree of what Elder calls emotional intelligence: “a measure of the degree to which a person successfully (or unsuccessfully) applies sound judgment and reasoning to situations in the process of determining an emotional or feeling response to those situations” (Elder, 1997, p. 40). When coupled with the passionate, caring, and even bodily desire to improve reasoning, this type of emotional intelligence forms an important building block of the rational passions, of the dispositions central to critical thinking, and of the cultivation of actual critical thinkers.

*Intellectual Character Traits.* The remaining element essential to the development of critical thinking dispositions is a set of integrated intellectual character traits. This element forms the core of many elaborations of the dispositions of critical thinkers. Called habits of mind by Bailin and colleagues (1999b), intellectual character traits are those attitudes or dispositions that help people to progressively recognize the importance and value of critical thinking knowledges, competencies, and dispositions. In other words, they help people to appreciate both why good judgment and right action are worth pursuing and why learning to consistently and competently assess and refine the elements of thinking according to standards of reasoning is vital to that pursuit. As a result, the intellectual virtues provide a substantial portion of the cognitive motivation for undertaking the arduous task of becoming a strong critical thinker. As Elder (1997)
points out, "we can not ignore the fact that students are motivated towards that which they think is important to them" (p. 41).

There is no one definitive, exhaustive set of relevant intellectual character traits. Most elaborations of critical thinking dispositions, including Paul's, simply discuss the types of traits that should be considered valuable or foundational to the improvement of thinking. While the terminology used in these elaborations is often different, their substance does tend to overlap. This overlap occurs for at least two reasons. First, intellectual character traits are neither discrete nor atomistic. Like the three components of critical thinking dispositions, intellectual character traits are themselves highly interdependent, feeding off of and into one another. Every trait inherently refers beyond itself to another. Even as critical thinking theorists choose which particular traits to highlight, their choices implicitly beg the addition of others not overtly discussed. There is also much overlap among different elaborations of intellectual character traits, because while the details of different conceptualizations of critical thinking can vary greatly, their broad brushstrokes are often quite similar. Intellectual character traits are commonly conceptualized as a means towards and manifestation of the same general goal: well-rounded, consistent, highly developed critical thinkers.

So what intellectual character traits do Paul's strong critical thinkers tend to possess? As mentioned above, from the very early stages, developing critical thinkers tend to exhibit some degree of intellectual humility, i.e., an insight into the shortcomings of their own reasoning. Also particularly important during the initial movement towards the improvement of critical thinking is an intellectual confidence in reason: "a trait which provides the impetus to take up the challenge and begin the process of active
development as critical thinkers despite limited understanding of what it means to do high-quality reasoning” (Elder & Paul, 1996b, p. 34). Even in its infancy, this inclination is different from a blind faith in reason. Although a thinker developing an intellectual confidence in reason probably still has neither a clear plan for improving her reasoning nor a clear picture of what Ideal Thinking actually looks like, she is beginning to recognize and respect both the value of good reasoning and the force of reasons. Strongly related to the trait of intellectual confidence in reason is the trait of intellectual perseverance. This element of character inclines critical thinkers to wrestle with serious problems in their thinking. It also provides them with the impetus to gradually develop a realistic and systematic plan to improve their thinking as they also work to develop new fundamental habits of thought (Elder & Paul, 1996b, p.34).

Strong critical thinkers also display the intellectual courage to open-mindedly face and fairly assess the perspectives of others, even those towards which they have strong negative emotions (Elder & Paul, 1998a, p. 34). Their intellectual courage also enables critical thinkers to seriously consider and honestly criticize their own favoured background logics (Elder & Paul, 1998a). Intellectual integrity helps critical thinkers maintain their intellectual courage; it helps them to perceive when they are holding their own elements of thought to less stringent intellectual standards than those they apply to others. When critical thinkers have intellectual integrity, they recognize both this type of inconsistency and the inconsistency created when their behaviours contradict their beliefs (Elder & Paul, 1998a).

Finally, but not exhaustively, critical thinkers are intellectually empathetic. They recognize the importance of identifying their own egocentric tendencies so that they can
“imaginatively put [themselves] in the place of others” (Elder & Paul, 1998a, p. 34). This genuine, creative reversal of perspectives enables a serious consideration and deeper understanding of the merits of another’s perspective. It is also a key catalyst for critical thinkers to become more aware of their own biases. As critical thinkers come to better understand and appreciate the merits of the different background logics of others, they are more likely to discover that they too have their own unique, localized, imperfect logics. People’s sincere acceptance that others may have good reason not to share their particular perspectives is then likely only to strengthen a critical thinker’s intellectual humility. The development of intellectual character traits is dialectical and reciprocal.

While I briefly outline here some of the intellectual character traits valuable to Paul’s strong critical thinkers, I will demonstrate in more detail in Chapter 6 how they enable and encourage the pursuit of well-founded beliefs and good judgment. There, I will discuss how the Drag Continuum presented in Chapter 5 can cultivate intellectual character traits with the goals of stimulating strong critical thinking about gender and sexuality. For now, it is at least important to reiterate that the increasing strength and interconnection of intellectual character traits not only reflects the increasing maturation of the critical thinker, but also helps to nurture that maturation further. People only become Ideal Thinkers when and because “naturally inherent and deeply integrated…are all of the essential intellectual characteristics” (Elder & Paul, 1996b, p. 35).

Some authors emphasize that intellectual character traits, and the dispositions they engender, do not culminate in any type of habitual or reflexive inclination to think critically.56 Accordingly, there may be some objections to Paul’s description of

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intellectual characteristics as becoming “naturally inherent.” For example, Bailin and colleagues note, “a critical thinker’s tendency to fulfill the standards and principles of good thinking cannot be mindless or simply the result of habituation” (Bailin et al., 1999b, p. 294). I agree with Bailin and colleagues when they argue against any mindless or strictly mechanical predisposition to value specific intellectual standards or principles of good thinking (ibid). When specific principles or standards are unthinkingly obeyed, they are unlikely to be applied with much sensitivity to the background logics of particular circumstances. As a result, there is good reason to believe that this type of mindlessness will fatally undermine the relevancy and adequacy of reasoning. Moreover, a mindless inclination to reference and revere specific principles and standards is likely to interfere with the thoughtful reflection and careful critique that living traditions of inquiry require. Principles and standards of good reasoning must be subject to repeated refinement if they are to continue to evolve for the better. For many reasons, the dispositions of critical thinkers should not, and can not, be mindless.

However, I suggest that mindlessness and habituation are not necessarily the same thing. I further suggest that there is a place for some degree of habituation in the development of intellectual character traits and critical thinking dispositions. When people are mindlessly inclined towards a task, they go about that task mechanically and unthinkingly, without intention or conscious deliberation. In contrast, when people are habitually inclined towards a task, they may begin that task as a result of a habitual or conditioned reflex, but they do not necessarily complete that task in the same mindless manner. A line of reasoning can be sparked by an habitual response, but still morph into a consciously critical assessment.
This type of distinction between mindlessness and habituation supports Paul’s description of critical thinking knowledges and competencies as “intrinsic ultimately to the character” of the highly developed critical thinker (Paul, 1993a, p.182). Paul argues that “master thinkers intuitively assess their thinking for clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, logicalness, and so forth” (Elder & Paul, 1996a, p. 35). In other words, the tendency for the most highly developed critical thinkers to check the elements of their thought against standards of reasoning is so deeply integrated into their dispositions as to become habitual, instinctive, and intrinsic to who they are. However, just because Ideal Thinkers can begin to question their thinking out of habit, it does not follow that their further assessment of their thinking must be mindless. Even when sparked by habituation, the actual substantial self-assessment of highly developed critical thinkers can still be abundantly mindful, thoughtful, and rightly called critical.

My own experience illustrates this distinction. While my own thinking is certainly far from perfected, there are times when I have extreme difficulty deactivating my habit of investigating the elements of my own and others’ thought. This difficulty persists even though there are times when I wish I could just simply turn off my tendency to measure reasoning against standards of adequacy. For example, a first dinner with your spouse’s prospective employer is probably not a wise time to politely question the prospective employer about her core beliefs. Similarly, a reasonable challenge to the deeply ingrained but irrational assumptions of an elderly aunt may not be worth the pain and confusion it would cause her, particularly if experience suggests she is extremely unlikely to revise her thinking or alter her behaviour. In situations such as these, when it would not be appropriate to express basic questions about the adequacy of another’s reasoning, I do my
best to ignore them. Regardless, basic critical questions often spontaneously pop into my head. Sometimes, I find myself wondering what background logics might have lead someone to make a particular claim or argument. At other times, I discover myself mid-thought, noticing how entirely different from my own someone else’s understanding of a situation, concept, or argument is. I may not vocalize my curiosity about our differences in these circumstances. I may even do my very best not to mentally pursue the line of criticism that springs forth uninvited, but begs to be followed. Still, my impulse to query often engages without my consciously inducing it. Thus, it might be fair to argue that I have developed something of a habit or reflex to think critically: before I know it, I have at least begun down the path of internally questioning and critiquing other people’s reasoning, even though I sometimes would actively prefer not to do so.

I suggest that there is often more habit involved in at least the initial stages of reasoning than is traditionally recognized. For the most part, well-developed critical thinkers do not pause and consciously decide to embark on an investigation of their own or other’s thinking. Rather, they often begin a preliminary investigation before having formed any explicit intention to do so. In Paul’s own words, critical thinking “means developing a questioning inner voice that strengthens our character, by routinely asking...questions” (Elder & Paul, 1998a, p. 35). Granted, fleshing out and answering these questions does require the mindfulness that Bailin and colleagues and others argue is essential for thinking to be considered critical. However, the impulse to begin questioning may well develop into a quite habitual and “pervasive way of being” (Elder

57 I do wonder if Bailin and colleagues would assent to this assertion, given the seemingly odd tension in their work: they argue that critical thinking dispositions do not result from habituation, but they also use the term “habits of mind” to describe what might otherwise be called intellectual character traits or critical thinking dispositions.
& Paul, 1998a, p. 35). There is good reason to believe that a person’s habitual disposition
to question how well the elements of her thought fulfill standards of reasoning should be
taken as evidence of the integration of her volitions, rational passions, and intellectual
character traits. In fact, I argue that some degree of habituation is both the result of and a
prerequisite for the development of critical thinking dispositions and persons.

As intellectual character traits develop and are integrated with rational passions
and volitions, they all work together to enable and encourage the continued development
and good use both of each other and of the other dimensions of strong critical thinking.
People with intellectual character traits at least minimally recognize the purpose and
value of critical thinking knowledges, competencies, and dispositions, and thus are fairly
consistently or habitually motivated to pursue them. People with rationally directed
passions have a felt, emotional, and even bodily desire to acquire the knowledges,
competencies, and dispositions of strong critical thinking. Finally, people with the
volitions of strong critical thinkers have the drive to actively cultivate the competency
and consistency with which strong critical thinkers apply their mounting knowledges in
particular situations in order to decide what to believe and how to perform. In other
words, the three components of critical thinking dispositions work together to enable and
encourage people to do the following: cultivate their undeveloped or underdeveloped
rational capacities; correct their misdirected rational competencies; minimize their
egocentric desires, drives, emotional responses, self-concepts, background logics, and
modes of thinking; and, counter the undue influences of performative performance.

As critical thinking dispositions begin to replace egocentric ones, self-interested
drives, desires, and values, disproportionate or misplaced emotional responses, and
defensive ego-identifications begin to lose their force to colour perception, cloud or hijack reason, and both produce and maintain unwarranted background logics and prejudiced modes of thinking. In turn, the content and relationship of people’s existing belief systems and their manners of belief formation begin to lose their force to further distort perception and undermine reason. As people’s thinking begins to improve, they becomes less susceptible to the force of performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism to manufacture and regulate beliefs, emotions, behaviours, conceptions of self, and social standing. By providing people with the resources to purposefully, competently, and consistently improve their reasoning, judgment, and self-knowledge, the combined knowledges, competencies, and dispositions of strong critical thinkers can reduce the likelihood of prejudiced belief, belief formation, and behaviour.

Strong Critical Thinking Knowledges, Competencies, and Dispositions: Countering Common Sources of Prejudice

While I have been arguing throughout that strong critical thinking enables and encourages the reduction of prejudiced thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours, I have yet to map out precisely why its integrated knowledges, competencies, and dispositions are well-suited to this objective. Strong critical thinking and its resources can be expected to counter the formation and maintenance of prejudice in at least two ways: (1) by lessening some common, direct sources of prejudice by targeting the force of performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism to manufacture and constrain belief, emotion, and behaviour, and (2) by lessening some common barriers to prejudice reduction by targeting the force of the unwarranted background logics and prejudiced
modes of thinking that are produced and constrained by performativity, undisciplined
tinking, and egocentrism. I will conclude this chapter by looking more closely at the
sources of prejudice and barriers to prejudice reduction the knowledges, competencies,
and dispositions of strong critical thinkers are each most likely to counter.

The conceptual, contextual, and self knowledges of strong critical thinkers can
each provide different resources for countering the sources of prejudiced belief, emotion,
and behaviour. Self-knowledge provides people with an understanding of how who they
are might either negatively influence their thinking or create barriers to improving their
thinking. In other words, people with increasing self-knowledge become increasingly
capable of making honest assessments of the state of their own conceptual and contextual
knowledges, their own competencies, and their own dispositions. This type of self-
awareness is a prerequisite for people to discover and reduce the extent to which their
thinking and dispositions have been influenced by performativity, undisciplined thinking,
and egocentrism, as well as the background logics and modes of thinking that result from
them. When people can not identify a problem or its source, they can not hope to
purposefully correct it.

When people with increasing degrees of self-knowledge about their critical
thinking competencies develop an understanding of how well they employ their
conceptual and contextual knowledges in different domains, they are primarily better
positioned to honestly identify and correct their undisciplined thinking. They can more
accurately assess how capable they are of monitoring the elements of their thinking and
adjusting those elements to better fulfill the standards of reasoning. They will also have
an enhanced awareness both of the extent to which their rational capacities are
underdeveloped and of the extent to which their rational competencies are misdirected. Once people begin to notice the state of their critical thinking competencies, they are more likely to notice in what types of situations and in what ways their competencies could be improved. For example, people’s self-knowledge of their critical thinking competencies can help them to assess to what extent they decide for themselves, on the basis of good evidence and sound judgment, whether people’s dress, behaviour, and speech, and the expectations of normalcy they create, should have a moral value assigned to them. Moreover, once this type of assessment is made, people become better positioned to resist and reduce those influences. As critical thinking competencies begin to replace inherently undeveloped rational capacities or misdirected rational capacities both the content and relationship of people’s beliefs and the manner in which they form those beliefs can be expected to become less subject to one of the primary sources of prejudice: undisciplined thinking. Instead, people’s background logics and modes of thought are likely to become increasingly guided by good reasoning and just principles. In this way, people’s self-knowledge of their critical thinking competencies also opens the door for them to determine the extent to which their background logics and modes of thinking have been influenced by performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism.

When people develop some measure of self-knowledge about their critical thinking dispositions, they become better able to recognize, and thus potentially lessen, their tendencies towards egocentric defensiveness and unwarranted rationalization. They become better able to assess their own tendencies towards self-interested drives and desires, disproportionate or misplaced emotional responses, and defensive ego-
identifications. People’s growing self-knowledge of their dispositions allows them to more honestly answer questions about their cognitive, affective, and behavioural volitions, passions, identities, and values. Questions designed primarily to assess people’s volitions might include: what do I pursue?; what do I want?; is there a gap between what I tend to pursue and what I believe I want?; and do I find myself trying to impose my will on others? Questions designed primarily to assess the development of people’s rational passions might include: are my emotional responses proportionate and appropriate to the context?; are others offended by my emotional responses?; do my emotions enhance my capacity to reason well?; and do I care about whether I improve my reasoning? Questions designed primarily to assess the development of people’s intellectual character traits and conceptions of self might include: who am I?; what values and commitments guide my beliefs, emotions, and behaviours?; and do I open-mindedly consider the perspectives and criticisms of others? People who have only just begun to develop their self-knowledge of their critical thinking dispositions would probably not be capable of answering these types of questions with much insight. However, as people’s self-understanding gradually increases, so would their awareness of their own self-interested inclinations both to single-mindedly pursue what they want and to close-mindedly protect what they believe about, and value in, both themselves and the world. People’s self-knowledge of which components of their dispositions remain substantially egocentric is necessary for people to become oriented towards reducing the role of egocentrism in the construction and maintenance of prejudice.

Once people begin to notice their egocentrism, they can begin to work towards transforming their egocentric dispositions into critical thinking dispositions. The primary
role of critical thinking dispositions in reducing prejudice should be fairly self-evident: it
directly targets the influence of egocentric volitions, passions, values, and identities on
thinking and disposition. Rationally directed volitions and passions, along with
intellectual character traits, also help to directly counter undisciplined thinking: not only
by helping people see the value in cultivating their inherent rational capacities, but also
by motivating people to pursue and make consistent, good use of their rational
competencies. Because critical thinking dispositions make the attempt to improve the
process and products of reasoning second nature, they also indirectly help to counter the
influence of performativity, unwarranted background logics, and prejudiced modes of
thinking.

Importantly, the dispositions of critical thinkers also give them the affective
desire, the behavioural drive, and the cognitive commitment to fulfill ethical obligations
at the expense of self-interest. As a result, critical thinking passions, volitions, and
intellectual character traits further help to counter prejudice by encouraging people to act
on their increasingly well-founded beliefs and judgments. Prejudice at communal and
institutional levels is unlikely to be reduced if only the thinking, beliefs, and emotions of
individuals are challenged; people must also act on their newfound commitments and
good intentions. The behaviour of individuals, particularly when individuals act together
with other like-minded people, is important to countering prejudice formation and
maintenance on societal levels in two ways. First, it is people who must act within
institutions, lobbying to change their structures and purposes. Second, people can act
strategically to disrupt the performative process that constructs and perpetuates
prejudiced behaviour and belief. As explored in Chapter 2, particularly when prejudices
are socially popular, behaviours that differ from communal expectations have the potential to challenge and change those expectations. The integrated volitions, rational passions, and intellectual character traits of critical thinkers can be expected to strongly encourage them to act consistently on their well-substantiated convictions. Thus, in countering egocentrism, critical thinking dispositions, as well as people's self-knowledge of them, not only reduce prejudice by directly countering its primary cognitive and affective sources, they also reduce prejudice by countering it at its behavioural sources.

Lastly, when people increase their self-knowledge of their conceptual and contextual knowledges, they acquire the foundational, intellectual resources required to resist the influence of common sources of prejudice. People with self-knowledge of their other critical thinking knowledges become increasingly aware of how deeply they understand and appreciate the meaning, significance, and relationship of the theoretical and situational underpinnings of critical thinking. People's conceptual knowledges bring them an understanding and awareness of most of the concepts central to developing as strong critical thinkers. It would be nearly impossible to provide a complete list of these concepts, but they include many of the concepts I have defined throughout, for example: elements of thought, standards of reasoning, background logics, modes of thinking, undisciplined thinking, egocentrism, volitions, rational passions, and intellectual character traits. Additionally, although not a concept central to Paul's strong critical thinking, I would suggest that people who are trying to develop as strong critical thinkers should also be introduced to the concept of performativity. As I argue throughout, widespread patterns of performance, and the pervasive systems of normalcy, reward, and punishment that they create, can greatly influence thinking and disposition. Helping
people to develop an awareness of what the performative process is, and how it is thought to function, would go a long towards helping them to identify its influence on their own thinking and disposition. Combined, there is good reason to believe that these kinds of conceptual knowledges help to prepare people to directly target prejudice at one of its primary sources: undisciplined thinking. In providing people with an awareness and understanding of some concepts central to critical thinking, these knowledges lay the groundwork for the transformation of undisciplined thinking into critical thinking that adequately fulfills the standards of reasoning. They also provide people with the some of the cognitive foundations necessary to monitor and reduce the influence of performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism on background logics and modes of thinking. When people’s conceptual knowledges are supplemented by their self-knowledge of how well developed their own conceptual knowledges are, they have a strong base from which to reduce their prejudiced belief, emotions, and behaviours.

People’s contextual knowledges provide them with an understanding and awareness of the logics of particular disciplines and situations. They allow people to understand and determine which concepts, standards, rules of evidence, and background information are relevant to a specific context. For example, people with the relevant contextual knowledges are better positioned to determine what background information is needed to solve a particular dilemma, and, conversely, what information is irrelevant. This type of knowledge also prepares people to determine how the elements of thinking, the standards of reasoning, and the other concepts central to all critical thinking are taken up in the particular circumstance, community, or domain. For example, people with the relevant contextual knowledge would have some understanding of how the universal
standards of reasoning function within the boundaries established by their context. Like conceptual knowledges, contextual knowledges provide many of the cognitive resources for turning undisciplined thinking into critical thinking that well-surpasses the minimum standards of reasoning. Because contextual knowledges require that people embark on careful, detail-oriented investigations, their richness can also help people to develop an awareness of the influence that performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism have on their background logics and modes of thinking. When people’s contextual knowledges are supplemented both by conceptual knowledges and by their self-awareness of the state of their knowledges, they provide the foundations from which people can develop as critical thinkers who consistently and competently reduce the influence on their thinking and disposition of the sources of prejudice belief, emotion, and behaviour.

In sum, strong critical thinking knowledges, competencies and dispositions provide people with the resources to counter the influence of performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism on their background logics, modes of thinking and dispositions. They also provide people with the resources to limit their unwarranted background logics and prejudiced modes of thinking from heightening their vulnerability to the undue influence of performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism. Without these resources, the content and relationship of people’s deeply embedded belief systems, as well as the manner in which they form those beliefs, would only increase people’s susceptibility to - and therefore the influence on thinking and disposition of – the common sources of prejudice that I discuss here.
In an effort to demonstrate which sources of prejudice each dimension of critical thinking is most suited to reducing, I have discussed the knowledges, competencies, and dispositions of strong critical thinkers fairly atomistically. However, I remind the reader that they are profoundly and necessarily interconnected. Paul describes critical thinking as "a mode of mental integration, as a synthesized complex of dispositions, values, and skills" (Paul, 1993a, p. 321). While conceptually separable, the dimensions of strong critical thinking are impossible to separate in practice. None of the dimensions of strong critical thinking can develop significantly without the concomitant development of the others. Further, none of the dimensions of strong critical thinking can markedly reduce any of the sources of prejudice formation or perpetuation that I discuss without the others. Only when people possess integrated critical thinking knowledges, competencies, and dispositions are they likely to consistently and competently work to reduce the influences on their thinking and dispositions that distort their perception, sway their reason, and ground their prejudiced, irrational beliefs.

Of the many conceptions of critical thinking elaborated in the literature, Paul's conception is, thus, particularly well-suited to the task of prejudice reduction. While all conceptions of critical thinking are concerned with the improvement of reasoning, judgment, and belief, only Paul's strong critical thinking foregrounds the importance of self-knowledge, self-assessment, and self-improvement. The knowledges, competencies, and dispositions of strong critical thinkers are meant, above all, to enable and encourage people to transform the manner in which they form their own beliefs, and thus, to transform the content and relationship of their own background logics. Strong critical thinking squarely targets the extent to which people's own modes of thought, and thus,
the beliefs and behaviours that result from them, are unduly influenced by common sources of prejudice. By increasing their critical thinking dispositions, thus lessening their egocentric ones, critical thinkers lessen the likelihood that egocentrism will either exacerbate innately undeveloped rational capacities or hijack misdirected rational competencies. By increasing their critical thinking knowledges and competencies, critical thinkers lessen the likelihood that undisciplined thinking will be the origin of prejudice belief formation. As a result, the knowledges, competencies, and dispositions of strong critical thinkers help people to create less prejudiced modes of thinking and better founded background logics. By improving reasoning, strong critical thinking can also provide people with the resources to recognize and query the influence of the normative and disciplinary force of the performative process. Thus, social justice educators should consider including instruction in strong critical thinking as part of any program designed to reduce prejudiced beliefs, behaviours, and institutions.

In Chapter 5, I will present a conceptual tool I have developed to help social justice educators encourage just this type of strong critical thinking about gender and sexuality. Then, in Chapter 6, I will demonstrate how this conceptual tool can help to intervene in the dynamics that create and maintain personal, communal, societal, and institutional heterosexism and homophobia. I argue that the types of learning environments, communities, and dialogues to which the Drag Continuum is likely to provide access are well-suited to improving reasoning about gender and sexual normalcy, thereby potentially reducing gender and sexual prejudice.
CHAPTER 5: PRESENTING THE CONTINUUM OF (SUBVERSIVE) DRAG PERFORMANCE AS A RESOURCE FOR PREJUDICE REDUCTION

In Chapters 2 & 3, I argued that there is good reason to believe that performativity, undisciplined thinking, egocentrism, and the unwarranted background logics and prejudiced modes of thinking that result from them, are common sources of prejudiced belief, emotion, and behaviour. In Chapter 4, I argued that there is also good reason to believe that the influence of these probable sources of prejudice on people’s thinking and dispositions can be reduced by the integrated knowledges, competencies, and dispositions essential to strong critical thinking. Accordingly, I conclude that, social justice educators striving to reduce prejudice should try to cultivate, both in themselves and in others, the knowledges, competencies, and dispositions necessary for strong critical thinking. I will now begin to focus on the particular problem of reducing gender and sexual prejudice, arguing that social justice educators wishing to reduce homophobia and heterosexism should teach people to engage in strong critical thinking about gender, sexuality, and normalcy.

There are, of course, many possible strategies for cultivating the strong critical thinking that can facilitate the improvement of reason, the deepening of self-knowledge, and the reduction of gender and sexual prejudice. In this chapter, I present one possible strategy for accomplishing these ends: a conceptual tool that I have developed, called the Continuum of (Subversive) Drag Performance. I designed the Drag Continuum to be a

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highly flexible and relatively unthreatening means of stimulating the development of strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy. It does so by encouraging people to consider which types of gendered and sexed performances are valued as normal, which types are derided as deviant, and what material effects result from these assessments. Not only does the continuum encourage people to identify the moral judgments commonly made about dress, behaviour, and speech, it also encourages people to analyze the grounds on which those judgments are made. The Drag Continuum asks people to consider whether there are good reasons to reward or punish displays of gender and sexuality according to whether or not they conform to widespread expectations of normalcy. In sum, the Continuum of (Subversive) Drag Performance offers social justice educators a conceptual tool and associated pedagogical practices to help both themselves and others to critically investigate the extent to which their personal, communal, and societal conceptions of gender, sexuality, and normalcy contribute to heterosexist and homophobic beliefs, behaviours, and institutional structures.

In what follows, I introduce the Drag Continuum by briefly connecting it to its theoretical underpinnings: Butler’s conception of performativity and Paul’s conception of strong critical thinking. I will then describe and illustrate the six ranges of performance that fall along the continuum, which I have named Radical, Stealth, Commercial, Passing, Mainstream, and Privileged. Finally, I will explain three nuances of performance and its interpretation that have strong implications for how dress, behaviour, and speech are understood, evaluated, and categorized along the Drag Continuum.

The focus of this current chapter is limited to explaining why the Drag Continuum is well-suited to helping people better understand the dynamics that create
and maintain personal, communal, societal, and institutional heterosexism and homophobia. In the following chapter, I will demonstrate how this conceptual tool can help to alter those dynamics, thereby reducing gender and sexual prejudices. The Drag Continuum can help people intervene in the dialectic of gender and sexual prejudice formation, by helping them to cultivate the knowledges, competencies, and dispositions necessary to recognize and reduce the influence on their thinking and dispositions of the interplay among performativity, undisciplined thinking, egocentrism, unwarranted background logics and irrational modes of thinking.

Theoretical Underpinnings of the Continuum of (Subversive) Drag Performance:
Butler’s Performativity and Paul’s Strong Critical Thinking

As outlined in Chapter 2, a performative understanding of the construction and regulation of thinking, belief, emotion, behaviour, and subjecthood looks to widespread patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech to explain different communities’ expectations of normalcy and goodness. Clothing, action, and language are performative when practiced frequently and consistently, thereby creating cultural ideals that virtually compel compliance. Although these ideals actually originate in the fairly uniform repetition of patterns of dress, behavior, and speech, ongoing individual, communal, and institutional conformity to them makes them appear “natural” and “essential.” Through this spiraling, performative process, communities’ pervasive ideals of gender, sexuality, and the other facets of identity are constructed and valued as normal.

These moral-laden conceptions are then further reinforced by complex ideological, behavioural, and institutional systems of reward and punishment. I argue that
heterosexism and homophobia are two such systems, both formally and informally rewarding conformity to performatively constructed ideals of gender and sexuality and punishing non-compliance with them. Typically, those who conform to the conceptions of gender and sexuality most pervasive in North America - for example, the (especially white, monied) feminine, heterosexual female - are valued as normal, and thus benefit from familial, communal, societal, institutional, economic, and other rewards. Typically, those who deviate from the same pervasive conceptions of gender and sexuality - for example, the (especially non-white, poor) effeminate, gay, or transgendered male - are derided as deviant, and thus suffer a myriad of sanctions. Very real, material consequences result from performatively constructed moral valuations.

One reason that I am so attracted to Butler’s conception of performativity is that, built right into it, is the potential to alter both oppressive conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy and their unjust material consequences. That is, because the performative construction and maintenance of meaning relies on frequent and consistent performance, there is good reason to believe that an incongruous act can throw meaning into question. So, for example, although familial, communal, and societal expectations of “manhood” are extremely difficult to disobey, if enough males perform “man” differently than expected, what it means to be a man, along with the gendered, sexed, and sexualized assumptions that support that meaning, may begin to shift. The very performative dynamic that constructs and maintains gender and sexuality as seemingly coherent, innate, and morally-loaded can also be harnessed to reconfigure those conceptions.

The Continuum of (Subversive) Drag Performance builds on Butler’s idea that gender and sexual normalcy is fairly arbitrary, i.e., socially constructed through a
performative process. Through the Drag Continuum, I argue that every iteration of gender and sexuality is to some degree a performance, because every iteration is perceived by an audience. Even when a person is most removed from the physical gaze of others - for example, when a person is alone in a room of her own - she must still answer to her own, in part socially-constructed, gaze. In other words, even in people’s most private moments, they are most likely to still feel the performative gaze of others to the extent that they have unwittingly, but all but unavoidably, internalized it. Because every display of gender and sexuality is under surveillance, every display of dress, behaviour, and speech is a performance. Moreover, because every performance is not only perceived by an audience, but also, as it currently stands, judged by that audience according to whether it conforms to or deviates from their expectations, every display of gender and sexuality is a value-laden performance.

Building further on Butler’s ideas, I argue through the Drag Continuum that the habitual sexed and gendered performances of women and men should be placed along a continuum of drag performance, because they are no more “natural” or “essential” than the performances of those commonly understood as drag queens. Commonly, widespread gender and sexual displays are posited as normal, authentic, or true reflections of women and men’s inner selves; conversely, the dress, behaviour, and speech of drag queens are thought to be kinds of artificial, fantastical role-plays or dress-up. However, I argue that since gender and sexuality are performatively constructed, and therefore fairly arbitrary and socially determined, no particular type of gender or sexual performance should be conceptualized as fundamental or unaffected; all performance is drag.
Lastly, I springboard from Butler to argue that since all gendered and sexed performances are drag, there are no inherent moral grounds for rewarding or punishing any particular performance of gender and sexuality. In other words, while current conceptions and performances of gender and sexuality are typically value-laden, no particular iteration of gender or sexuality is necessarily most deserving of a particular moral valuation, or at least deserving of the moral valuations now pervasive in North America. A gender or sexual performance’s conformity to or deviation from fairly arbitrary cultural expectations does not, in itself, offer good grounds for people to reward, punish, or make moral judgments about that performance.

Ultimately, the Drag Continuum draws on Butler’s work in that it invites people to step, at least temporarily, into a performative mindset, despite their potential reservations. It asks people to accept provisionally that their conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy are constructed and maintained by the frequent and consistent repetition of dress, behaviour, and speech. It invites people to consider that “deviant” repetitions might have the potential to shift conceptions of gender and sexuality, as well as the moral valuations and material effects that result from them. It asks people to grant that every iteration of gender and sexuality is to some degree a performance, and moreover, a somewhat arbitrary drag performance. It asks people not only to withhold from making moral judgments about the normalcy of gender and sexual performances, but also to allow conditionally that there is nothing inherently praiseworthy or blameworthy about conformity to a norm. Moreover, the Drag Continuum invites people to consider instead the possibility that dress, behavior, and speech should only be condemned, if, and to the extent that, they contribute to prejudice and social injustice. It also raises the possibility
that people ought to attempt to intervene when the gender or sexual performances of others are punished or rewarded for arbitrary reasons.

The Drag Continuum asks that people go along with this list of underlying commitments at least temporarily, so that they can more open-mindedly and critically assess their personal, communal, and societal conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy. This request may seem like too much. However, the extent to which these claims must be accepted before people engage with the continuum is dependent on the manner in which the continuum and these claims are introduced. The more contextual and example-based the introduction, the less its theoretical underpinnings need to be granted provisionally at the outset. In Chapter 6, I will discuss three different ways of introducing the continuum. A progressively more introspective approach can encourage people to question the ill-founded but pervasive grounds upon which they and others may judge, reward, and punish performances of gender and sexuality, thus minimizing the barriers to prejudice reduction that they would cause.

The Drag Continuum also builds on the insights and resources provided by Paul’s conception of strong critical thinking, since it is designed to help people turn the lens of their investigations back onto themselves. It builds on Paul’s fundamental insight that honest self-examination and self-understanding is a prerequisite for people to improve their reasoning and reduce their prejudices. When people have a poor understanding of themselves and their thinking, they are unlikely to admit to, or even recognize, the prejudices that they hold. Consequently, those with negligible self-knowledge are typically unable to monitor and work through their prejudices. In other words, it is exceedingly difficult for people who have little or no self-awareness about their
dispositions, their background logics, or their habitual modes of thinking to develop or embark on a purposeful and systematic plan to change them for the better. The Drag Continuum is designed to increase people’s knowledge about themselves: about the content and relationship of their beliefs about gender, sexuality, and normalcy; about the manner in which they form those beliefs; and, about the dispositions that both result from and further intensify those beliefs. This increased self-knowledge makes it possible for people both to improve the quality of their reasoning about gender and sexual normalcy and to lessen their heterosexism and homophobia. In keeping with Paul’s insights about the importance of self-knowledge, I propose that social justice educators try using this conceptual tool, not only to help others explore personal, communal, societal, and institutional resistance to diverse gender and sexual identities and behaviours, but also to help themselves do the same.

The Drag Continuum builds not only on Paul’s fundamental insight about the importance of self-knowledge, but also on the strong critical thinking resources he offers. The continuum is designed not only to help people cultivate their self-knowledge, but also to help them build the conceptual and contextual knowledges, the competencies, and the dispositions necessary to engage in strong critical thinking about gender, sexuality, and normalcy. Thus, use of the continuum can encourage people to learn not only to recognize, but also to reduce, the extent to which their own thinking about and dispositions towards gender and sexual normalcy have been problematically influenced by performativity, undisciplined thinking, egocentrism, and the unwarranted background logics and prejudiced modes of thinking that often result from them. The potential for strong critical thinking to counter some common sources and expressions of prejudice,
while also lessening many of the common barriers to prejudice reduction that these sources erect, makes Paul's theory of strong critical thinking so appealing to me.

Similarly, I hope that the potential for the Continuum of (Subversive) Drag Performance to counter some common sources, expressions, and barriers of gender and sexual prejudice will make it appealing to social justice educators concerned primarily with heterosexism and homophobia.

**The Conceptual Tool: The Continuum of (Subversive) Drag Performance**

Before I outline and illustrate the different ranges of drag performance represented in the Continuum of (Subversive) Drag Performance, some brief clarifications about its central terms and intentions are necessary. For many individuals, the term *drag performance* conjures up attire-based images that highlight the visual, adorned body. On some level, there is an expectation of being able to see who is “in drag,” by visually examining clothing, make-up, or any other of a number of gender signifiers. Indeed, examining how we present ourselves visually and, more importantly, how others interpret those representations, is an essential part of any analysis of performance. However, to fully understand the scope and implications of drag performance as I discuss it, people’s speech and actions must also be considered. In *Excitable Speech*, Butler (1997a) discusses the power of language and speech to shape conceptions of gender, sexuality, and race, as well as their general understandings of reality. In an effort to more fully investigate the multiple dimensions of performance, the
Drag Continuum attempts to account for the relative emancipatory potential and flamboyance of the sartorial, behavioral, and linguistic dimensions of drag.

In advocating that people explore the production of gender and sexuality through an analysis of drag performance, I am not proposing that social justice educators, or anyone else, abandon most of the “artificial” norms that serve as the contours of their lives. It would not be practical for most people to revise their dress, behaviour, or speech by engaging in flamboyant drag performances. At the very least, such performances are not likely to help people find or keep a job. I am more concerned that social justice educators, and the people with whom they interact, learn to evaluate the sources, moral valuations, and material effects of both their own and others’ performances. Only once culturally literate in this way might anyone hope to successfully fight homophobia, heterosexism, and the unwarranted background logics, prejudiced modes of thinking, emotional responses, and patterns of performance that support them.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, there are six different ranges along the Drag Continuum: Radical, Stealth, Commercial, Passing, Mainstream, and Privileged. Below, I discuss each range or form of drag performance in terms of two factors. The first factor is its emancipatory potential; that is, its likelihood of countering - by challenging and possibly altering - prejudiced thinking, beliefs, emotions, behaviours, and institutional structures. The second factor is its degree of flamboyance; that is, the extent to which it falls outside of the norms of the majority of its audience. I justify the placement of the ranges or types of drag performance on the basis of their emancipatory potential - proceeding from those with the most potential to those with the least - and not

59 I define my use of “emancipatory potential” and “flamboyance” below.
on the degree to which the dress, behavior, or speech in question differs from the expected. As a social justice educator, I consider a strategy's likelihood of reducing prejudice to be more important than its potential to surprise, amuse, or enrage, although the two effects are not entirely separate.  

For each range of the Drag Continuum, I will describe the prototypical performances of the drag queen that represents it. I use the term “queen,” the self-chosen nomenclature of drag performers as they are commonly understood, as a nod to the tradition of drag performance without which I could not have developed this project. However, although I typically use feminine grammar to refer to the different iterations of drag performance, drag performers themselves may be male, female, or transgendered. In fact, they may self-identify their gender in any way that suits them, even if that means choosing not to self-identify at all. Anyone can be a drag queen.

**Radical Queen**

On one end of the drag continuum is the Radical Queen. Her performances are both emancipatory and flamboyant. This type of drag intentionally and explicitly caricatures pervasive conceptions of normal or appropriate gender and sexuality: “Drag queens are a mockery of ‘normal’ men as much as of women….Drag queens play up the absurd, ambiguous and contradictory in our lives” (Ibañez-Carrasco, 1995b, p. 11). The

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60 The term “subversive” is bracketed in the Drag Continuum’s full name, because the emancipatory potential of different performances of gender and sexuality varies. While some performances are likely to subversively challenge oppressive conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy, others are likely to be not at all subversive, merely reinforcing those conceptions and their unjust material consequences.

61 I am indebted to Francisco Ibañez-Carrasco for a conversation we had on November, 11, 1997 in Vancouver, Canada. At the time, he was a doctoral student at Simon Fraser University and a regular performer of drag as it is commonly understood. His ideas about drag performance helped me to expand my conception of it, and thus, were fundamental to the development of the Drag Continuum.
Radical Queen throws seemingly coherent meaning into question by displacing gendered, sexed, and sexualized patterns of dress, behavior, and speech from their naturalized contexts. In doing so, she threatens the status quo.

What makes Radically flamboyant performances emancipatory is that they are not flawless. Flawless imitation increases the risk of reinforcing existing prejudices, as well as the social injustices that they create, instead of challenging them. Luce Irigaray's conception of mimesis/mimicry develops this idea. For a woman to enact Irigaray's mimicry, she must "resubmit herself [to the terms of the dominant discourse]...so as to make 'visible,' by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible" (Irigaray, 1977/1985, p. 76). To effectively mimic an established discourse, and thus potentially alter it, people must not be wholly reabsorbed by that discourse. They must imitate it, but differently.

Similarly, in order for a drag performance to be emancipatory, it cannot be a perfect repetition of its gendered or sexed "foundation." As Marjorie Garber (1992) remarks, "the radical drag queen...wants the discontinuity of hairy chest or moustache to clash with a revealingly cut dress" (p. 49). Irony is the element that piques curiosity, engages reflection, and promotes strong critical thinking.

So the edge is when you see someone who is not perfect, who shouldn’t be doing that. A fat man dressed as Madonna. Because that shouldn’t be happening. It’s not offensive, but it makes you uncomfortable. And that’s the parodic edge, the sarcastic edge of drag that I think can be used. Anything that makes the audience uncomfortable and elicits or provokes some response in terms of saying “Why is this bothering me”? (F. Ibañez-Carrasco, personal communication, November 11, 1997)

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62 While I maintain that both women and men have the potential to effectively mimic the dominant discourse, a strict application of Irigaray’s conception would limit its use to women.
Because the Radical Queen’s attire is so often visually flamboyant, it is important to underline that it is possible for only the behavior or speech of the Radical Queen to be outrageously transgressive. For example, an acquaintance I’ll call John once commented that a woman across the room from us would be quite beautiful if not for her tiny breasts. Appalled at John’s reduction of this woman’s appearance and humanity to her potential to sexually arouse him, I replied, “Oh, but you haven’t seen her thighs. They’re luscious – the kind you’d really like to get between.” By Radically mimicking John’s performance, I made explicit the sexist and heterosexist assumptions behind his comment in a way that John understood. Such an over-the-top response risked simply offending him, but that is a danger inherent to all parodic repetition. While I would not claim that my response eliminated or even immediately reduced John’s prejudices, my breach of normal social interaction did manage to make him more aware of them. In this case, parodic speech alone opened the door to future possible change, thus serving as an effective educational tool.

Radical Queens who combine the visually, behaviorally, and verbally flamboyant aspects of drag are perhaps the most likely to subvert established meaning, because they challenge norms on many levels simultaneously. For example, lesbian or gay commitment ceremonies\[^{63}\] that take up an ironic tone can successfully reveal the artifice of both conventional heterosexual weddings and the institution of marriage itself. As Butler (1990a) explains,

> The replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual origin. Thus, gay is to straight not as copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to

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\[^{63}\] As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the legal right to marry is currently being extended to same-sex couples in some North American jurisdictions. In these jurisdictions, state-sanctioned marriage can be another way to challenge pervasive expectations of heterosexual normalcy.
The parodic repetition of “the original,” ...reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the idea of the natural and the original. (p. 31; italics in original)

Of course, the institution of marriage, and expectation that normal women will desire it, can also be challenged from within a heterosexual frame. For Monica Lueg’s 30th birthday, she decided to parody the conventional wedding ceremony, choosing to marry, not a groom, but herself. “This wedding send-up [had] all the traditional ideals accounted for” (Gratham, 1998, p. 46). However, none of these ideals was accounted for traditionally. The ceremony took place on the beach, not far from where many traditional Vancouver weddings are commonly held. Thirty - yes thirty - bridesmaids walked down the sandy aisle, most of them wearing:

old bridesmaids gowns from weddings past, just as the bride requested. They are hideous. Really hideous. All shiny and ruffled and bustled....One maid, upon whom the irony is not lost, is wearing a dress she forced one of her bridesmaids to wear at her own first wedding. (Gratham, 1998, p. 46)

The bride was barefoot, strutting down the aisle in a wedding veil, but also in a belly-button revealing tank top, short pink skirt, and sunglasses. At the end of her strut, she was awarded a plastic, purple ring. After the mock ceremony and some satirical speeches, the bride tossed a Barbie instead of a bouquet. It was her dog who caught this coveted prize, and then decided to take it for a swim. In the words of the bride herself, “I wanted to celebrate being a single, independent, mature woman, so I came up with the idea of marrying myself” (Gratham, 1998, p. 45). Lueg’s performance confirms Butler’s assertion that “the repetition of heterosexual constructs within sexual cultures both gay and straight may well be the inevitable site of the denaturalization and mobilization of gender categories” (Butler, 1990a, p. 31, emphasis added). As long as the Radical
Queen’s flamboyant imitation of the “original” is not flawless, it has the potential to undermine the original’s otherwise taken-for-granted status.

_Stealth Queen_

Whereas flamboyant Radical drag can initiate change by challenging people’s assumptions about the world, performances that conform to broader social expectations can also be effective political tools. Although not at all flamboyant, the performances of the Stealth Queen are ripe with emancipatory potential. The Stealth Queen is so named, because others may not even notice her presence/performance until she has achieved her goal. The Stealth Queen enters and appears to accept the very systems she is trying to change, adopting their customary codes of normal dress, behaviour, and speech. Using the tools of the relatively powerful, she reduces gender and sexual prejudices and their unjust material consequences from within. This type of drag is often in evidence when marginalized groups and their advocates lobby political bodies and fundraise effectively. Stealth Queens construct funding proposals for lesbian community centers or health programs according to official guidelines. They network effectively and call traditional press conferences. When marginalized groups and their advocates control their image and the media in this way, they Stealthily become subversive.

Svend Robinson, the former New Democratic Party federal Member of Parliament for Burnaby-Douglas, epitomized the Stealth Queen.\(^64\) As his website notes:

\(^64\) Since my first writing of this thesis, Svend Robinson has taken a medical leave and stepped down from his position as the federal New Democrat candidate for Burnaby-Douglas (http://action.web.ca/home/svend/en_alerts.shtml?x=56904&AA_EX_Session=914ebba48140b5b5ac56fb1a978c8be2 - Accessed June 9, 2004).
“He was the first openly gay MP, having come out publicly in the spring of 1988, and has received many honours for his work for equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people” (http://www.svendrobinson.ca/bio/ - Oct 25, 2003). Robinson was Stealthy not only because he worked within the formal political system to counter institutional homophobia and heterosexism, but also because he did so while being openly gay. In other words, he was a Stealth Queen, not only because he worked within the system in order to change it, but also because he served as a role model both for those inspired to do the same and for others who might be reluctant to publicly admit their homosexuality. While lacking in flamboyance, Robinson’s performances had much emancipatory potential.

Former talk-show host and comedian Rosie O’Donnell was also a Stealth Queen, regardless of whether or not she originally set out to be one. For six years, she hosted an extremely popular daytime talk-show. The Rosie O’Donnell Show was so popular, and O’Donnell so well liked, that she won the television Emmy award for best talk-show host a number of times (http://www.eonline.com/Facts/People/Bio/0,128,25993,00.html; Oct 25, 2003). Her widespread popularity at the time also spawned a monthly magazine called Rosie. Known as the “Queen of Nice,” talk-show Rosie was not generally flamboyant; she did not typically stray beyond the boundaries of what people take for granted as being normal dress, behaviour, or speech. However, in the final year of her talk-show, Rosie did something with much emancipatory potential: she publicly admitted to being a lesbian (http://www.eonline.com/News/Items/0,1,9656,00.html - Oct 25, 2003). People who were big fans of Rosie, but also homophobic or heterosexist, may have been prompted to reconsider their beliefs about gender and sexual normalcy by the
disjuncture that Rosie’s coming out likely created within their belief systems. That is, the highly popular Rosie’s public revelation of her “deviant” sexuality may have Stealthily broadened some people’s conceptions of what or who lesbians are, potentially reducing those people’s gender and sexual prejudice.65

Fictional representations, and the people who create them, can also be Stealth Queens. Timothy Findley, for example, is a popular – and, as it happens, openly gay - author of fiction who routinely and quite Stealthily advocates for those with marginalized genders and sexualities through his sympathetic, gay-positive story-telling. The fictional character Will Truman, from the popular primetime television show Will & Grace, might well also Stealthily reduce people’s fear or hatred of gay men. As described by the show’s NBC website, “Will is a successful Manhattan lawyer -- likable, handsome and charming” (http://www.nbc.com/Will_&_Grace/about/index.html - October 25, 2003). Although Will is gay, in most episodes his gender and sexual performances are not at all flamboyant, especially when contrasted with his ever-present, stereotypically gay friend, Jack. Will’s sexuality may – in theory - not conform to the norm, but his gendered dress, behaviour, and speech almost always do. As one analysis of the show points out, “Will is a successful, hard working, urban, lawyer. He is like every other member of American society and even an idealized version of someone who is living the American dream….He blends in flawlessly with the heterosexual world, inoffensive and hidden” (http://www.u.arizona.edu/~mzehr/lgbtmedia/willgrace.html - Oct 25, 2003). Moreover,  

65 Ever since Rosie voluntarily stepped down from her show to spend more time with her children, she has been much maligned in the media. Whether these assaults on her character are the result of her coming out is impossible to know. Nonetheless, the reversal in Rosie’s portrayal in the media underlines the tenuous, shifting nature of performance, its interpretation, and thus its classification along the Drag Continuum.
Will’s “relationships are rarely depicted directly in the series, only referenced” in a way that “makes him close to asexual” (ibid). While some critique the character of Will for being inauthentically gay and his storylines for being cowardly, Will is a Stealth Queen, precisely because his portrayal is so unthreatening. His potential to begin making homosexuality and homosexuals more palatable to those with gender and sexual prejudices is what gives his performances the emancipatory potential to Stealthily reduce those prejudices.

Ultimately, the attire, behavior, and speech of the Stealth Queen are not commonly read as drag, because his or her gender and sexual performances are not flamboyant. Since they blend so effectively into existing norms of dress, behaviour, and speech, Stealth Queens are usually only identifiable through the subversive effects of their carefully staged performances. Along a continuum of subversion, the emancipatory image manipulation of the Stealth Queen falls between the Radical Queen and the next range: the Commercial Queen.

**Commercial Queen**

The performance of the Commercial Queen flickers between flamboyance and non-flamboyance. As a result, it has limited, but not non-existent, emancipatory potential. The goal of the Commercial Queen is to adopt, as exactly as possible, the dress, behaviour, and speech of a community with which she does not typically identify or with which she would not typically be associated. For example, males who perform in commercial, lip-synching drag shows strive to achieve perfection in their visual, behavioral, and verbal gender imitations of women. However, with this type of drag, the
audience is “in” on the performance. That is, those who perceive Commercial drag are aware that a deliberate masquerade, a deliberate deviation from what would be considered normal for that person, is underway. However, because the Commercial masquerade is so complete, people’s conscious awareness of it as an intentional taking up of a role slips from their minds. In other words, the Commercial Queen so flawlessly repeats her adopted patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech that her audience simply forgets that she has intentionally adopted a role with which she does not identify or with which she would not typically be associated. The perfection of Commercial performance renders it almost entirely forgettable.

As a result, the Commercial performance simultaneously has and lacks both flamboyance and emancipatory potential. It is flamboyant in that it does fall outside the boundaries of what would be considered normal dress, behaviour, or speech for the performer. However, because the audience forgets the deliberate masquerade during the course of the performance, the performance’s realized, ongoing flamboyance is seriously undermined. As a Commercial drag performance loses its flamboyance, it also loses most of its emancipatory potential. When people stop recognizing dress, behaviour, or speech as a deliberate deviation from their conceptions of normalcy, Commercial drag loses its potential to challenge and alter those conceptions.

However, there is always some emancipatory potential embedded in this type of performance: the possibility always remains that the audience may regain its prior awareness of the masquerade. This type of remembering is likely to undermine the flawlessness of the performance, thus restoring its flamboyance. The disjuncture likely to be created between people’s conceptions of normal performance and the suddenly
remembered “abnormal,” but near perfect, performance of the Commercial Queen preserves a small amount of Commercial drag’s emancipatory potential to challenge norms and reduce prejudice. Still, because the repetition of Commercial Queens is typically so flawless and forgotten, it is not likely to prompt a thoughtful analysis of gender, sexuality, or normalcy.

Of all the ranges of performance along the Drag Continuum, the dynamics of Commercial drag are the most complicated and its outcomes are the most unstable. In an effort to make Commercial Drag more intelligible, I will give a number of varied examples of it, beginning with the near flawless, lip-synching drag show depicted in the popular Australian movie The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (1994). With this type of drag, the audience should be very aware of the deliberate masquerade; not only have they typically paid to see the show, but the artifice of the stage itself also underlines that a performance that falls outside the usual boundaries of the normal is taking place. Still, when the music, dancing, and sheer fun of the show are added to the virtual perfection of the commercial, lip-synching drag queen’s performance, the audience members’ prior mindfulness of the deliberate masquerade can recede into the far reaches of their minds. When audience members get caught up in the near flawless entertainment, and forget that the performer is intentionally taking up a role that would otherwise be considered flamboyant, it is unlikely that their conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy will be challenged or altered by the performance. Still, the potential always remains that the audience will regain their conscious awareness of the intended masquerade. Thus, the seed of the Commercial performance’s emancipatory potential is maintained.
The same dynamic unfolds when heterosexual actors play gay characters or when out, homosexual actors play heterosexual roles. *Will & Grace* again serves as an effective illustration. Whereas the fictional character Will is likely a Stealth Queen, Eric McCormack’s portrayal of the fictional character Will is probably Commercial drag. Many fans of the show are aware that McCormack, the actor who plays Will, has “outed” himself as straight. If viewers kept this awareness at the forefront of their minds, the tension created between McCormack’s self-proclaimed heterosexuality and Will’s homosexuality might preserve the flamboyance and emancipatory potential of McCormack’s performance as Will. However, because of the virtual perfection of McCormack’s performance of Will’s homosexuality, viewers are likely to lose themselves in the comedy of *Will & Grace*. In these circumstances, McCormack becomes Will, so that his performance no longer falls outside the boundaries of what is expected of a self-identified straight man. In losing its flamboyance, the emancipatory potential of McCormack’s performance as Will, i.e., its potential to challenge and alter conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy, is undermined.

Finally, a self-identified “tomboy” who marries in a storybook North American wedding ceremony is potentially a Commercial Queen on her wedding day. As she walks down the aisle, the guests may marvel at the pretty, feminine bride in her dreamy white dress. However, if her guests know the bride at all, they will be aware that her bridal performance does not represent her usual gender identity or ideals. Still, the guests - and even the bride herself - may get wrapped up in the seeming perfection of the wedding fairytale, momentarily forgetting both the flamboyance of the bride’s masquerade and the chasm between the masquerade and the bride’s habitual subjecthood. Alternatively,
guests who normally discount or do not understand the tomboy’s more consistent daily performance and self-concept may simply understand her to be showing (finally!) her feminine side. In either of these instances, much of the emancipatory potential of the bridal performance is lost. However, there is always the possibility that the guests’ awareness of how the bride typically self-identifies will re-emerge into the foreground of their thinking. The potential for this regained consciousness to be juxtaposed with the bride’s wedding day performance preserves the performance’s potential to be emancipatory. Some emancipatory potential, however limited or remote, always remains latent in Commercial drag.

Still, the extreme dilution of the Commercial Queen’s emancipatory potential is highlighted by the Radical performances of people like Quentin Crisp (1908-1999). Motivated by a desire to engage others in an analysis of gender codes, Crisp refused to become forgettable or invisible. He was famous for open homosexuality and witty, caustic quips about the conventional. He dressed in a way he described as “effeminate” which was “signified for him by a deliberately disconcerting mélange of stylistic tropes (hair, makeup, jewelry, walk, gesture)” (Garber, 1992, p. 140). The Radical Crisp’s dress, behaviour, and speech were all about overtly readable gendered or sexed discontinuity. Through their absurdity, his performances preserved their full potential to pique strong critical thinking and counter prejudice. Crisp had no interest in what I describe as Commercial drag, where, using Irigaray’s mimesis terminology, performers enter into the discourse so completely that they are reabsorbed by it. The more forgettable, and thus less identifiable and readable, the performance of Commercial Queens become, the more they resemble Passing Queens.
Passing Queen

 Whereas the performance of the Commercial Queen, if finally remembered, is likely to become emancipatory and counter norms, the performance of the Passing Queen, if discovered, is likely to bring sanctions and reinforce norms. A pre-existing and widely understood concept, when people “pass,” they disappear into pervasive gender and sexual expectations in order to escape prejudice and discrimination. The “normalcy” of this type of drag makes it the antithesis of flamboyance. Whereas the masquerade of the Commercial Queen is almost always forgotten, the masquerade of the Passing Queen is almost always undetected. In contrast with Commercial audiences, Passing audiences have no prior awareness that the performer is deliberately deviating from how she typically identifies, or with what she would otherwise be associated. In fact, it is usually extremely dangerous for Passing Queens when those who perceive their dress, behaviour, or speech become cognizant of the intentional masquerade, as there is no (theatrical) frame to help spectators separate the performance from their habitual belief systems. As Butler (1990b) remarks:

 gender performances in non-theatrical contexts are governed by more clearly punitive and regulatory social conventions. Indeed, the site of a transvestite onstage can compel pleasure and applause while the sight of the same transvestite on the seat next to us on the bus can compel fear, rage, and even violence….On the street or the bus, the act becomes dangerous, if it does, precisely because there are no theatrical conventions to delimit the purely imaginary character of the act, indeed, on the street or the bus, there is no presumption that the act is distinct from a reality; the disquieting effect of the act is that there are no conventions that facilitate making this separation. (p. 278)

When Passing performances are discovered, Passing Queens are likely to be punished far more severely than discovered Commercial Queens would be. Moreover, they are likely
to be punished with even more severe versions of the heterosexist and homophobic sanctions that, in their attempt to pass, they initially set out to avoid. Finally, in serving as a powerful example of what happens to people who “trick” others into believing they are “normal,” Passing Queens who are discovered often unwittingly strengthen mass compliance with gender and sexual norms, thus reinforcing their performative stability and disciplinary force.

The dress, behaviour, and speech of the Passing Queen lack emancipatory potential not only because her discovery and resulting punishment may encourage others to better comply with pervasive conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy, but also because her own Passing performances comply with these conceptions as well. While the emancipatory Stealth Queen, like the Passing Queen, aims to disappear into and be accepted by the status quo, the Passing Queen does so without the goal of later subverting it. Ibañez-Carrasco (1997) points to this type of drag when describing the performances of some gay men:

We demurely speak about “partners”; we want, among other things, to exercise our right to adopt children, get legally married, obtain same sex benefits, and participate in the culture of violence of the military. We know how to “pass” as decent and normal men. (p. 11)

Examples of Passing abound. For a time in Falls City, Nebraska, Teena Renae Brandon passed as the young man Brandon Teena. He had a girlfriend. By most accounts, he was also generally well-liked and thought to be charismatic.

 Brandon Teena's life was depicted in the Oscar winning movie Boys Don't Cry (1999).
female, he self-identified as male. However, as is typical when Passing Queens are discovered, Brandon Teena was punished severely for his near flawless performance and successful deception of others: he was murdered. His fate serves as a powerful warning to others to live and accept their biological “destiny,” or at least neither to hide their “freakishness” from others nor to attempt to escape the sanctions that they “deserve.” Brandon’s discovered Passing and his ensuing murder strongly reinforce pervasive conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy.

The deceased actor Rock Hudson is another prototypical example of the Passing Queen. Hudson passed as straight for his entire acting career. Moreover, he built his career by playing the dashing, romantic, virile — and, it should go without saying — heterosexual love-interest. Hudson was the epitome of Hollywood’s leading man, both his on-screen and off-screen personas being the stereotype of male heterosexuality. Born Leroy Harold Scherer, Jr., even Hudson’s chosen stage name - Rock - was meant to project (heterosexual) manly manliness. Particularly given the timeframe of Hudson’s acting career, which peaked during the 1950s and 1960s, homophobia and heterosexism would have most likely prevented any gay actor from developing a successful film career, especially as a leading man. Regardless of what other personal reasons Hudson had for not publicly admitting his homosexuality, he had to pass as straight to avoid the career-limiting sanctions that would have accompanied such an admission. Atypically, however, severe sanctions did not accompany the widespread discovery of his prior Passing. This exceptional response likely occurred for two reasons. First, by the time Hudson was outed, the vehemence of widespread gender and sexual prejudice was starting to decrease. Second, Hudson was being celebrated for bringing public sympathy
to the plight of AIDS victims by being the first celebrity to publicly admit to having the disease.

Adolescent girls who stop raising their hands in class to better conform to gender expectations, as well as young boys who reluctantly stop playing with their favorite doll in order to do the same, are also performing to pass. Passing Queens are so placed along the Drag Continuum for two primary reasons: (1) their masquerade grows out of their desire to avoid gender or sexual oppression; and (2) should their audience discover their masquerade, the punishment that usually accompanies that discovery is likely to be severe. Quite ironically, Passing Queens’ performances, both undetected and discovered, typically serve to reinforce the very same prejudiced thinking, beliefs, emotional responses, behaviours, institutions, and sanctions from which they are trying to escape.

Mainstream Queen

Moving even further away from emancipatory drag is the Mainstream Queen, who manipulates her image and the media with the intention and effect of buttressing existing conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy. Like the Stealth and Passing Queens, she attempts to limit her flamboyance by adopting the accepted codes of behavior, dress, and speech of the communities within which she circulates. However, unlike the Stealth and Passing Queens, the Mainstream Queen strategizes in this way with the goal of maintaining the status quo. As her performances are highly unlikely to challenge and alter prejudice, they typically lack emancipatory potential.

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67 The intention of the Mainstream Queen to reinforce pervasive conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy need not be malicious or premeditated. However, when people close their eyes to the unjust effects of their beliefs and behaviours, their culpability in reinforcing those effects can not be overlooked.
The media products of advertising agencies and the entertainment industry are usually Mainstream. In featuring the most pervasive forms of gendered, sexed, sexualized, classed, and racialized patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech - for example, conventionally handsome, white, heterosexuals engaging in expensive hobbies or well-paid careers - they reinforce the seemingly natural alignment among these characteristics. Most politicians are also Mainstream Queens who try to hide the political machinations and spin doctoring behind their public appearances. Some professional male athletes, sporting both their uniforms and their injuries, are rewarded money and fame for strengthening the connections between the ideals of masculinity, strength, and violence. Military men and women in their State-sanctioned uniforms are also often Mainstream Queens. As Helaine Posner (1995) remarks, “in the military, the attitude and attire adopted by the elite provide a protective camouflage while simultaneously exerting a considerable degree of intimidation” (p. 24).

However, the most frequent and consistent performance of Mainstream drag in North America is the mass compliance with pervasive conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy. Most females dress, behave, and speak like “women;” most males dress, behave, and speak like “men.” While the norms of femininity and masculinity vary across many North American communities, the ubiquitous repetition of “approved” gender codes tends to limit those that are widely socially acceptable. As Steven Cohan (1995) comments:
“Masculinity” does not refer to a male nature but instead imitates a dominant regulatory fiction authorizing the continued representation of certain types of gender performances for men (like the breadwinner), marginalizing others (like the momma’s boy), and forbidding still others (like the homosexual). (p. 57)

Cohan’s comments underline that behaving like a proper, normal man typically includes being sexually attracted to women. The same dynamic is true for females. In order to behave properly as women, females must be sexually attracted to men, or at least titillate men through their attraction to other women – butch dykes just won’t do. Sexual normalcy is very much a part of gender normalcy; gender normalcy is very much a part of sexual normalcy. As the Mainstream dress, behavior, and speech typical of the majority is the most frequently repeated, normalized, and concealed form of drag there is, I offer no further examples of it. While neither flamboyant nor emancipatory, the Mainstream Queen’s performances are ubiquitous.

Privileged Queen

The drag of the Privileged Queen has the least emancipatory potential of the ranges along the continuum. Privileged Queens are usually those with relative privilege who perform with the intention and effect of reinforcing the conceptions of normalcy from which they derive their privilege. Their visual, behavioral, and verbal performances are highly flamboyant; they are so outside the boundaries of normalcy, so over-the-top, that it is nearly impossible to take them seriously. Because Privileged performances are such outrageous spectacles, representing gender and sexuality so absurdly, they typically are not read as normal. Regardless, they still very successfully make pervasive
conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy, along with the systems of reward and punishment that accompany them, seem natural and morally correct.

For the “average” Mainstream, heterosexual female, to become a bride is often to become a Privileged Queen, at least temporarily. The customary trappings of Western weddings - veils, trains, bridesmaids, ushers, flower girls, ring bearers, extravagant cakes, decadent flowers, professional photographers and videographers, and on and on - are highly flamboyant and artificial. Yet, every time this elaborate, excessive scene is performed, the socially constructed ideals that it represents - not the least of which are heterosexuality, marriage, and wealth - are strengthened and normalized.

Male bodybuilders are also fine examples of the Privileged Queen. Through drugs, extreme diets, and hours spent weight lifting, bodybuilders begin to embody the strength and musculature that gender codes construct as the natural male physique. Even while male bodybuilders are viewed as part freak, they reinforce gender expectations by writing an exaggerated masculinity on their physical bodies. Like all Privileged Queens, their performances are exceedingly flamboyant and almost utterly lacking in emancipatory potential.

As the pervasiveness and influence of pop culture increases, so too do the performances of Privileged Queens. At movie premieres and awards shows, exorbitantly paid actors parade down red carpets. As the cameras flash and film, their interviewers question them about who designed their gowns and garb, instead of asking about the movie that brought them to the event. Television shows like Extreme Makeover show the literal physical reconstruction of men and women as they undergo, convalesce, and

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68 The professional female bodybuilder, however, should be understood as Radical, because her extreme adoption of the muscular “masculine” body crosses gender expectations.
emerge from multiple, simultaneous cosmetic surgeries. So-called health magazines run exposés on the latest Hollywood fad diets, detailing how long it took each starlet to get back to her pre-baby shape. Style magazines feature spreads on the best bathing suits for the buxom beauty. Shelter magazines take readers on tours of the exotic locales and palatial homes of the rich and famous. The category of “supermodel” is created, because mere, ordinary beauty and fashion models didn’t already sufficiently fulfill absurdly unattainable beauty ideals. Pamela Anderson, the Playboy Bunnies, and their enormous breasts, party it up at Hugh Hefner’s mansion. Jennifer Lopez and Beyoncé Knowles make a big, round booty the new erogenous zone and ideal. The highly-muscled Fabio woos wind-swept women on the cover of Harlequin romance novels. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson save the world from sure destruction in yet another jam-packed action adventure. At Wrestlemania events, raging testosterone spills over from the ring to the crowd, as the wrestlers scream and body-slam each other, and the scantily clad female diversions put themselves on display between rounds. Ultra-violent video games, porn on the internet, unsolicited promises of penis enlargement cluttering email in-boxes - there is no shortage of Privileged performances from which to draw.

Each one of these Privileged performances, while clearly atypical or abnormal, reinforces commonplace conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy, as well as the dress, behaviour, and speech that follow from them. More and more routinely, women have breast and butt implants surgically inserted into their bodies, while having unwanted fat sucked out. They spend millions, if not billions, of dollars annually on make-up, diet aids, and gym memberships that promise to make them look younger and sexier, better
able to attract and keep their man. More and more, men are doing the same, more overtly manipulating their bodies to better fulfill increasingly demanding gender and sexual expectations. Their practices and products include: pectoral, butt, and hair implants; liposuction; Viagra; back and chest waxing; and, masculinely-packaged lotions, potions, creams, and concoctions. It is now also not uncommon for even adolescent boys to take steroids and insulin to help them pump up at the gym. When contrasted with the outrageous spectacles of the Privileged Queen, these increasingly everyday patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech become more likely to be perceived as natural, normal, and Mainstream. In this way, the over-the-top flamboyance of Privileged Queens strongly reinforces pervasive conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy. Because Privileged performances are the least likely of all the ranges of drag performance to challenge or alter prejudice, they have the least amount of emancipatory potential.

This discussion of the Privileged Queen concludes my elaboration of the different ranges along the Continuum of (Subversive) Drag Performance. Through explanation and example, I have tried to clarify what distinguishes each type of drag performance. However, before I conclude this chapter, I will elaborate on three nuances of performance and its interpretation that have strong implications for how dress, behaviour, and speech are understood, evaluated, and categorized along the Drag Continuum.

**Nuances of Performance and its Interpretation**

Performances and their interpretations are unstable. In other words, the characteristics and effects of specific performances can be reasonably interpreted in many different ways. As a result, it is nearly impossible to definitively determine where
along the Drag Continuum a particular performance should fall. The instability of performance and its interpretation can be traced to a number of factors. First, even when carefully examined, different types of performance can present in suspiciously similar fashions. For example, Radical and Privileged Queens can be difficult to differentiate, because of their shared flamboyance. Both performances tend to be somewhat shocking, in that they fall outside the boundaries of the normal. Similarly, the normalcy of Stealth and Mainstream Queens makes them appear quite alike. They are both likely to go unnoticed, because their performances comply with the expected. The shared flamboyance or normalcy of specific performances can make them difficult to tell apart, especially before their effects can be ascertained. Because these primary characteristics of the different ranges of performance are often shared, it can be difficult to definitively distinguish one type of drag performance from another.

Performances can also be unstable, and thus difficult to categorize, because what constitutes a flamboyant or emancipatory performance often varies across temporal, cultural, geographic, and other communities. When performances are simultaneously interpreted from many different standpoints, they may be seen to reinscribe one prejudice, and its accompanying system of rewards and punishments, while undermining another. For example, from the perspective of so-called progressive North Americans, the highly visible presence of leather dykes during Gay Pride parades may seem Radically flamboyant and emancipatory. However, others within the lesbian community may view their Privileged presence as an overly narrow representation of the diversity of the lesbian community. The background logics through which different people interpret
specific performances are likely to cause variability in how dress, behavior, and speech are categorized.

Not only can different people reasonably categorize the same performance in different ranges, but one person may reasonably determine that the same performance falls, simultaneously, into multiple ranges. Because of the performative process, where divergent, parodic repetition can shift meaning over time, conceptions of normalcy are in constant flux. While what counts as normal or flamboyant is being gradually but sloppily redrawn, even a singular gender or sexual performance interpreted from a singular standpoint can be reasonably determined to have multiple, and even contradictory, effects. The highly-ranked female tennis player, Serena Williams, may serve as a case in point. Her chiseled musculature, speed, agility, and sheer will Radically confront conventional images of a docile femininity. However, in doing so, her appearance, behaviour, and speech also reinscribe a new Mainstream feminine ideal that is just as difficult for most to achieve and maintain. As such, Serena’s performance as a tennis player can be seen to have multiple, contradictory effects. It could, thus, reasonably be classified, concurrently, in multiple ranges along the Drag Continuum.

Also complicating the interpretation of performance is the fact that new, relatively firm and decisive ideals do eventually emerge from the slow, sloppy remapping of normalcy and deviance. As new ideals emerge, they shift how dress, behaviour, and speech are subsequently evaluated and classified. While once shocking, it is no longer Radical for North American women to wear pants. Similarly, on April 30, 1997, it may

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69 I focus on Serena, and not on her similarly gifted sister, Venus, because Serena’s performances tend to be far more flamboyant than Venus’. As a result, the contradictions produced by them tend to be more prominent.
have been Radical for Ellen Degeneres to come out as a lesbian on her television show *Ellen*, becoming the first non-heterosexual lead character in primetime. However, in 2002, with the gradual rise of sympathetic gay and lesbian characters on television, NBC’s *Will & Grace* likely no longer seems Radically emancipatory to many communities. “So the borderline again shifts; as outsiders become insiders, a new inside, a new code, is designed for use” (Garber, 1992, p. 159). Because performance and its interpretation are unstable, because the many forms of drag and the lines between them overlap, blur, and shift, there can be neither strict divisions between the different ranges along the Drag Continuum nor absolutely definitive classifications of particular drag performances.

Not only are performances unstable, so are those who perform them. In other words, no person is consistently one type of drag queen. As people’s moods, purposes, identities, and circumstances shift, so too do their corresponding styles of dress, behaviour, and speech, and thus also their positioning along the Drag Continuum. This shifting is the second nuance of performance and its interpretations with importance for how dress, behaviour, and speech are understood, evaluated, and categorized along the Drag Continuum. As Arlene Stein notes: “There is no longer a clear one-to-one correspondence between fashion and identity. For many, clothes are transient, interchangeable; you can dress as a femme one day and a butch the next” (as quoted by Garber, 1992, p. 149). Also, even people motivated to carefully monitor and manipulate the political impact of their dress, behaviour, and speech often find the vigilance this requires too exhausting to constantly maintain. As a result, while they may most frequently be Stealth or Radical Queens, they may also sometimes be entirely...
Mainstream. These types of variances in people’s moods, purposes, identities, and circumstances are likely to place them in entirely different drag ranges from day to day, and even from moment to moment.

Again, Serena Williams may serve as another powerful illustration, exemplifying this type of regular movement among the different ranges along the Drag Continuum. She has many public personas, including: highly ranked female tennis player; fashion designer and innovator; loving sister; and cultural icon. Sometimes, Serena performs as a strong, athletic, kick-butt woman who might be either a Stealth or a Radical Queen. Sometimes, she is a Mainstream or Privileged Queen, strutting her stuff in designer couture at fashion shows and Hollywood A-list award ceremonies. On any given day, how Serena performs, and how her performances are read, depends largely on two factors: (1) the elements of her mood, purposes, and complex identity that she reveals through her dress, behaviour, and speech, and (2) the particulars of the highly diverse contexts in which she presents herself. On many more levels than I have time to describe here, Serena Williams crosses, confounds, and sometimes even shatters boundaries. Her performances exemplify the ways in which performance and its interpretations can slip, slide, and sometimes remain paradoxical.

The final nuance of performance and its interpretations is this: even the most marginalized and disenfranchised communities have the moral responsibility to continually re-examine those expectations of gender and sexuality that become pervasively normalized within their own community. Conceptions of gender and sexuality can be “pervasive” not only when they are broadly socially accepted, but also when they are largely shared by members of fairly localized groups. Even relatively
small or marginalized communities - i.e., ones that habitually suffer the sanctions that result from prejudiced thinking, beliefs, emotions, behaviours, and institutional structures - may have their own generally accepted conceptions of normalcy that may exert great disciplinary force on their own community members. Widespread societal beliefs and practices typically require scrutiny to rid them of gender and sexual prejudice, but so too do the beliefs and practices common throughout relatively localized communities. Just like more mainstream communities, marginalized communities are rarely free of poorly supported assumptions and their resulting injustices.

The dangers of exempting any community from self-assessment is highlighted by recent debates in identity politics. Pat Califia, a postmodern theorist, author of sexually-explicit fiction, and self-described troublemaker, has “frequently been accused of contaminating lesbian culture and sexuality with evil things like casual sex, porn, or S/M that were supposed to be relegated to the breeders and fags” (Califia, 1997, p. 87). She cautions that marginalized communities must avoid “get[ting] bogged down by internecine warfare over what the parameters of...identity should be, who gets to enforce the parameters, and what should happen to those who disobey” (Califia, 1997, p. 104). Do transgendered people - or their genitals – determine which public washrooms they may use? Does a gay man who sometimes has sex with women still “qualify” as gay? What about the lesbian who “looks” straight, wearing jewelry and makeup with no parodic intent? Can men be “real” feminists? Just as they do when broadly pervasive, rigid expectations of gender and sexual normalcy can contribute to prejudice and discrimination when widespread in traditionally marginalized communities. Thus, using either the Drag Continuum or other means, even the most disenfranchised communities
should continually re-examine their different - but still potentially normalized - ideals, in
order to determine how those ideals influence their community's interpretation and
valuation of performance.

Ultimately, in suggesting at the outset of this chapter that there are different
ranges of drag performance and that every display of gender and sexuality falls into one
of those ranges, I am not claiming that the categorization of particular displays of gender
and sexuality is either straightforward or absolute. Because any performance can be
reasonably interpreted in many different ways, where along the Drag Continuum any
performance falls is almost always open to debate. However, the ultimate objective of the
Drag Continuum is not to determine definitively where within it different gender and
sexual performances are best positioned. The specifics of how dress, behaviour, and
speech are categorized are quite secondary to stimulating discussion and strong critical
thinking about gender, sexuality, and normalcy. The Continuum is, first and foremost, a
means of improving reasoning about gender and sexual normalcy in the hope of lessening
homophobia and heterosexism.

Thus, the more contentious the debate about where a particular performance is
positioned along the continuum, the better. The more performances are unstable and their
interpretations controversial, the more their categorization requires a systematic
investigation of and dialogue about gender and sexual norms, as well as the systems of
reward and punishment that accompany them. It is this type of careful examination that
can facilitate the development of the conceptual and contextual knowledges necessary for
strong critical thinking about heterosexism and homophobia. It is also what can spur
people to seriously consider their own ideas about gender and sexual normalcy, and thus
to develop some of the self-knowledge they require to engage in strong critical thinking on the subject. By encouraging people to focus on whether particular performances are normal or flamboyant, possess abundant or negligible emancipatory potential, bring great reward or severe sanction, a serious engagement with the Continuum of (Subversive) Drag Performance can begin to stimulate not only generally improved reasoning about gender and sexual normalcy, but also the direct development of some of the resources necessary for strong critical thinking about it. In the next chapter, I will examine precisely why the Drag Continuum is well-suited to improving reasoning about gender and sexual normalcy, thereby potentially lessening gender and sexual prejudice. I argue that the types of learning environments, communities, and dialogues to which the Drag Continuum is likely to provide access are well-suited to stimulating strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy.
I have argued that becoming aware of the influence of performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism on the formation of thinking, belief, emotion, behaviour, and conceptions of self can be expected to lessen the formation and maintenance of prejudice. Consequently, educators striving to reduce social injustice should endeavour to develop their own and others’ resources for countering these mutually reinforcing common sources of prejudice. One way for educators to do so is to help people acquire strong critical thinking knowledges, competencies, and dispositions. These attainments can enable and encourage an improvement in the quality and consistency of people’s reasoning. Further, they can also encourage both educators and learners to examine and, where appropriate, alter their corresponding cognitive, affective, and behavioural tendencies. As a result, those striving to diminish heterosexism and homophobia should attempt to encourage strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy in themselves and others.

My hope is that The Continuum of (Subversive) Drag Performance outlined in the last chapter can help social justice educators do just that. I will argue below that the Drag Continuum is an ethically defensible and realistic means of achieving this objective, because it can be used by educators to create opportunities for people to counter their barriers against, and develop their resources for, strong critical thinking about gender and

70 The Drag Continuum is conceived as one component of a broader program designed to encourage the wide-ranging good reasoning of genuine strong critical thinkers. However, even a serious engagement with the continuum and the questions it is designed to raise cannot be expected to provide people sufficient information, experience, self-awareness, or motivation to reliably and capably apply their growing insights to other contexts.
sexual normalcy. The learning environments to which the Drag Continuum provides access have the potential to be relatively flexible, unconstrained by common conceptions of normalcy, humour-filled, and located within communities of inquiry that provide opportunities for constructive practice. As a result, any ensuing group deliberation has the potential to be responsive to the unique needs of particular learners, relatively unthreatening, dialogical, dialectical, imaginative, empathetic, supportive, and productive. I will now explain both how the continuum provides access to learning environments and conversations that exhibit these characteristics and why they can be expected to stimulate strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy, thereby potentially reducing heterosexism and homophobia.

However, before I move onto this account, I want to underline that I am not particularly concerned about what some may consider a key limitation of my project: even a meaningful engagement with the continuum is unlikely to result in an immediate, significant, or lasting reduction of personal, societal, or institutional homophobia or heterosexism. It is true that the ideal objective of the continuum is to lessen prejudiced thinking, beliefs, emotions, behaviours, and institutions, as well as the background logics, modes of thinking, and dispositions that ground them. However, as argued throughout, the endeavour to change these deeply embedded, profoundly enmeshed barriers to prejudice reduction and the manifestations of prejudice in which they result must - by its very nature – be gradual and long-term. No strategy for changing people’s thinking, belief systems, or cognitive, affective, and behavioural tendencies is likely to result in immediate, significant, and lasting success - the Drag Continuum included.
Moreover, no prejudice reduction strategy is likely to achieve any degree of success without significant additional support. At a minimum, reducing people's prejudice is facilitated when they have strong, felt, ongoing connections to communities that encourage the kind of strong critical thinking that leads to well-founded beliefs, good judgments, and ethical behaviours. Being immersed in these types of communities allows people to interact with and learn from others who model the resources for prejudice reduction offered by strong critical thinking. Learners' emotional connections to such communities also increase the likelihood of successful prejudice reduction by making learners more likely to care about and strive towards improving their own strong critical thinking resources.

The reduction of prejudice through the cultivation of strong critical thinking knowledges, competencies, and dispositions is also facilitated when learners have opportunities to practice overcoming their own barriers to prejudice reduction. Below, I will elaborate on the important role played by constructive practice in the reduction of homophobia and heterosexism. For now, I simply note that it involves repeated and diverse opportunities to observe, be guided towards, and engage in belief formation and behaviour with respect to gender and sexual normalcy that increasingly fulfills the standards of good reasoning. If the Drag Continuum is employed in a vacuum - for example, in an isolated weekend workshop, a solitary conference seminar, or a one-time classroom activity – it is not likely to achieve its ideal goal of lessening gender and sexual prejudice. Any social justice strategy that hopes to be effective should be accompanied by ongoing and varied opportunities for constructive practice and the long-term, widespread involvement of a supportive, connected community.
However, since social justice educators can typically do little to ensure the type of long-term and widespread community involvement and constructive practice that highly successful prejudice reductions programs can be expected to require, my pragmatic hope for the Drag Continuum is that it will simply enable people to become more aware of and concerned about the sources, contents, relationships, and effects of their thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours with respect to gender and sexual normalcy. Engaging people in a discussion about expectations of gender and sexual normalcy makes it more likely that homophobia and heterosexism - along with the influence of performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism - will appear as problems on their radars. Paul's comment about the foundational role that awareness plays in enabling change warrants repeating here: "Awareness...does not guarantee resolution of a moral issue, but it does enable reasoners to focus more particularly on possible problem areas, and, most importantly, gain insight into how and why their own reasoning may be biased" (Paul, 1993a, p. 253). I advocate the use of the Drag Continuum not as a cure-all. I advocate its use to help orient people to the problems in their own and others' thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours with respect to gender, sexuality, and normalcy. This type of self-knowledge is a good step towards the ultimate ideal of meaningful prejudice reduction. This clarification complete, I will turn to explaining why the Drag Continuum is a realistic and ethically defensible means of cultivating strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy.
Flexible Learning Environments

The first reason that the Drag Continuum is so well-suited to cultivating strong critical thinking about gender, sexuality, and normalcy is that its design allows for a highly flexible educational strategy and context for learning. Like many other learning resources, the continuum can be approached from many different angles. As a result, social justice educators can introduce it from whatever starting point is most appropriate for their particular co-investigators. There are three most likely points of departure for discussions of gender, sexuality, and normalcy that are based on the continuum: one that is fairly theoretical; one that is contextual, but still quite impersonal; and, one that is both applied and introspective. While the potential to approach prejudice reduction theoretically, contextually, or introspectively is neither unique to the continuum nor essentially tied to it, this adaptability can be expected to make it more widely effective.

When approaching the continuum via theory with what I call the *conceptual-incremental approach*, social justice educators can explain, discuss, and then build upon the continuum’s conceptual foundations. For example, they might use Butler’s conception of performativity to initiate a relatively abstract investigation of the complex systems of performance, reward, and punishment that strongly influence the construction and perpetuation of widespread conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy. The Drag Continuum can also be introduced in a more contextual yet still fairly impersonal way both to explore societal beliefs about gender, sexuality, and normalcy and to investigate the behaviours that typically result from these beliefs. Using this *contextual-impersonal approach*, educators might begin by raising concrete examples of dress, behaviour, and speech. They might then solicit learners’ impressions of how others might respond to,
value, or categorize these performances along the Drag Continuum. Finally, the Drag Continuum can be introduced on quite an intimate level in order to directly encourage the type of reflective, self-correcting investigation of personal thinking, belief, emotion, and behaviour that genuine strong critical thinking requires. This applied-introspective approach would ask co-investigators to explicitly examine both their own assumptions about gender and sexual normalcy and their own reactions to “compliant” and “deviant” performance. Because the continuum can be introduced in a number of diverse ways, social justice educators can choose whichever departure point best suits the personalities, aptitudes, ages, educational levels, and goals of their particular group of learners.71

Social justice educators attempting to provide their learners opportunities to gradually overcome their egocentrism can introduce the continuum at its most theoretical starting point, and only gradually shift their learner’s use of it to its most personal mode. This conceptual-incremental approach is designed to have two primary benefits. First, it can make use of people’s egocentric or self-interested tendency to be enthusiastic about that which they perceive to be personally relevant. In other words, this approach attempts to engage learners’ interest by departing from concepts – for example, gender, sexuality, reward, and punishment - in which learners are likely to feel that they have a personal stake. In this way, it capitalizes on learners’ existing self-interested drives and desires, in order to introduce concepts that are foundational to investigating the sources, manifestations, and effects of heterosexism and homophobia. Importantly, however, this approach does not introduce these concepts in ways that people are likely to perceive as

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71 These condensed descriptions of likely departure points for discussions of the continuum are introduced briefly here, in order to discuss the flexibility in educational strategy that the Drag Continuum can allow educators to create. A more detailed discussion of the characteristics of these approaches will follow.
excessively threatening to their personal identities or core commitments. Because its conceptual starting point does not initially require workshop participants to directly contemplate or reveal to others how they understand gender and sexuality in relation to their own identities, this approach to the continuum is likely avoid provoking in them either debilitating fear and anxiety or ego-preserving but ill-founded rationalizations. It, thus, can help co-investigators to sidestep their egocentric defensiveness and self-delusions as the foundations are laid for an incremental progression towards self-examination.

When I have used this approach in teacher education seminars, I have sometimes started off by asking the students to talk about the language of “performance” in educational settings. Many of them have been happy to engage in this discussion, as they have perceived it to be relevant to their current studies and future professional lives. Their contributions have lead us to examine: (1) the theatricality of teaching, i.e., how being a teacher is like being on a stage with student, parent, and administrator eyes forever watching; (2) the evaluation of teaching, i.e., how the quality of a person’s teaching and the progress of student learning must meet or exceed established standards; and (3) the role-play of teaching, i.e., how teachers must dress, act, and speak according to others’ expectations both inside and outside the classroom. From there, we have talked both about whether there are good reasons for these preconceptions and requirements and about what effects they have on teaching, learning, teachers, and students. When possible, I have also asked questions to shift the dialogue to widespread expectations of normal gender and sexual performance and the consequences that often follow from them. In response, the student-teachers have usually fleshed out the multiple meanings of
performance by drawing from their experiences in their programs and lives. They have not typically become defensive in their language, tone, or body posture, because this type of conceptual-incremental approach does not require them to delve too deeply into a moral analysis of their own performance as teachers and gendered beings. Some degree of self-reflection may be unavoidable during these exchanges, but the passing of judgment by self or others is neither required nor promoted. As my experience suggests, this approach has the potential to gradually lessen the egocentric barriers that otherwise make the critical self-examination of foundational and profoundly ego-identified concepts – like gender, sexuality, and normalcy - nearly impossible.

People do not - and can not - simply leave behind their prior modes of thinking, prior background logics, prior cognitive, affective, and behavioural tendencies, or the experiences in which these elements of thought and aspects of self are all based. As a result, educators are well-advised to create a learning environment that incorporates and builds from their learners’ pre-existing knowledges, competencies, and dispositions. Educators may find, for example, that their learners lack the resources to identify their own prejudices, but are able to identify the gender and sexual prejudices of others. As Paul notes, “People can often recognize when someone else is egocentric. Most of us can identify the sociocentricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we ourselves are thinking egocentrically or sociocentrically, it seems right to us (at least at the time)” (http://www.criticalthinking.org/K12/k12class/strat/2.html - Sept 4/2003). As discussed previously, genuine self-knowledge is extremely difficult to cultivate, because our core beliefs about ourselves and the world are often well-protected by defensiveness,
rationalization, or outright self-delusion. Further, we often lack the competency, desire, drive, or intellectual commitment to engage in honest self-assessment.

When group members seem to be hiding their prejudiced thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours from themselves, but are still adept at naming those of others, workshop facilitators might introduce the continuum through a contextual-impersonal approach. This strategy could start investigations of gender and sexual normalcy from the concrete, societal examples of gender and sexual performance and interpretation that co-investigators can already identify. When I have used this approach in teacher education seminars, I have begun by asking for pop-culture examples of "normal" and "abnormal" gendered or sexed dress, behaviour, and speech. During these brainstorming sessions, a wide variety of examples have been offered, with pretty over-the-top performances usually represented strongly. The "normal" list has included the exaggeratedly heterosexual masculinity and femininity of Hugh Heffner and Penelope Cruz, while the "abnormal" list has included Dr. Frank N. Furter, the self-proclaimed transsexual transvestite of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, and the clownishly made-up Mimi of *The Drew Carey Show*. Once these lists are on the blackboard or overhead, I have asked the prospective teachers to discuss which features make each of these performances normal or abnormal and what the origins of normalcy are. From there, I have usually briefly introduced the six ranges of the continuum, focusing on their relative flamboyance and emancipatory potential. I have often then used this framework to solicit more pop-culture examples of gender and sexual performance, to begin or continue a discussion of reward and punishment, and to further complicate our examination of gender and sexual normalcy. When there is time, I try eventually to shift our dialogue to a progressively
more introspective focus, asking the prospective teachers to describe and analyze the performances of gender and sexuality that their students and other teachers have displayed during their practica. Fortunately, there is often much disagreement about the categorization and interpretation of the examples of performance that are offered, creating an ideal opportunity for us all to discuss the reasons that underlie them. While consensus sometimes emerges, the real purpose of the Drag Continuum is to act as a catalyst for the cultivation of (strong) critical thinking.

This type of initially non-introspective introduction of the continuum allows co-investigators to initially practice investigating the sources, manifestations, and effects of pervasive conceptions of gender, sexuality and normalcy, without the added explicit obligation and complication of directly examining themselves. While they may find that some questions about their own commitments may irrepressibly arise during these investigations, this approach initially permits people to avoid making decisions about the moral value of their beliefs, attitudes, and by extension, selves. Just like the conceptual-incremental approach, the contextual-impersonal approach is intended primarily to better prepare people to face the far greater challenge of investigating their own heterosexism and homophobia. Together, they can be expected to help co-investigators to build, apply, and refine the conceptual and contextual knowledges and competencies that form the foundation of self-knowledge.

These approaches are also well-suited to helping co-investigators actively cultivate the dispositions that motivate the pursuit of self-knowledge. In teacher-education classrooms, I have observed students becoming quite animated in their attempts to search pop-culture for examples of gender and sexual performance. This
enthusiasm often manifests physically as, for example, flushed cheeks, quickened speech, pounding hearts or sweaty palms. Because conceptual and contextual examination can be largely non-introspective, and thus relatively non-threatening, participants are more likely to interpret these physical responses as excitement rather than agitation. By sparking bodily experiences that people are likely to interpret as enjoyable, these approaches can stir their desire and drive to engage in continued vigorous debate with the hope of producing similar pleasurable effects.

Furthermore, by providing co-investigators with the opportunity both to observe others being swayed by the force of good reasons and to experience that force for themselves, these approaches provide them the opportunity to cultivate their appreciation for having good reasons for their beliefs and actions. As outlined in Chapter 4, the awakening of this intellectual character trait makes it more likely that learners will also develop others, and thus, increase their volition to investigate not only the heterosexism and homophobia of others, but also their own gender and sexual prejudices. By providing contexts suited to developing the rational passions, volitions, and intellectual character traits that enable and encourage people to turn the lens of their investigations back onto themselves, the Drag Continuum, thus, creates opportunities for learners to develop the self-knowledge that they may lack.

The above examples illustrates how the inherent adaptability of the continuum allows educators to introduce it - and thus begin an examination of sexuality, gender, and normalcy - in the ways most fitting to their co-investigators’ prior knowledges, competencies, and dispositions. This flexibility in educational strategy creates opportunities for educators and learners to simultaneously capitalize on, bypass, and then
lessen their individual barriers against prejudice reduction. It also helps co-investigators to build from the resources they already possess and actively cultivate those that they do not yet possess. For these reasons, I argue that the Drag Continuum can provide people the opportunity to develop gradually the desire, drive, and competency to consistently revise their deeply embedded and profoundly enmeshed prejudiced modes of thinking, background logics, emotions, practices, and conceptions of self.

**Learning Environments Removed from Pervasive Conceptions of Normalcy**

The Drag Continuum also provides a context well-suited to cultivating strong critical thinking about gender and sexuality, by providing co-investigators a framework for understanding and evaluating gender and sexuality that does not depend on common considerations of normalcy. As argued in Chapter 2, in North America, where moral value is commonly assigned to pervasive patterns of gender and sexual performance, people often become accustomed to making moral judgments on the basis of their own and others’ conformity to or noncompliance with pervasive conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy. By contrast, if the Drag Continuum assigns moral value to any element of gender or sexual performance, it leans towards assigning merit to a performance’s emancipatory potential, not to its normalcy. By actively encouraging an alternative conceptualization of gender, sexuality, and normalcy, the continuum helps to create a learning environment where people need not fear that their views or selves will be denigrated as deviant for departing from convention. In helping learners to free their dialogues, their imaginations, and even their self-concepts from the constraints of normalcy, the Drag Continuum gives them permission to seriously question the moral
grounds on which people are commonly assessed. Thus, the moral valuations that underlie the continuum can help to provide a relatively non-threatening and creative context for people to analyze and assess their institutional, communal, familial, and eventually even their personal conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy.

There is, of course, the danger that those who most stridently identify as “normal” will be quite threatened by the prospect of even temporarily letting go of the perceived safety that it provides them. To better attend to this real possibility, I have typically introduced the Drag Continuum as a combined game, exercise in imagination, and bounded classroom activity. I have tried to keep my language light, making no explicit references to prejudice reduction or social justice. This framing has seemed to help those who might otherwise be enormously defensive about our ensuing dialogue to perceive it as something set apart from their habitual understandings of the world and themselves. In something of a paradox, invoking this type of buffer or disconnect can encourage participants towards increased self-reflection by establishing some form of artifice to help invoke a temporary suspension of disbelief and resistance. As discussed above, for the Drag Continuum to be effective, its implementation must account for the particular barriers of the co-investigators involved.

By creating relatively unthreatening opportunities for learners to imaginatively and empathetically enter into the inner logic of perspectives other than their own, the moral framework of the Drag Continuum can help learners to lessen their egocentric character traits. Most notably, the reversibility of perspectives encouraged by the continuum is well-suited to lessening egocentric myopia and egocentric infallibility. Paul uses these terms, respectively, to describe “the natural tendency to think absolutistically
within an overly narrow point of view” and “the natural tendency to think that our beliefs are true because we believe them” (http://www.criticalthinking.org/University/Egotendencies.htm - April 28/2003). These manifestations of people’s egocentric dispositions tend to be closely related. When people believe that their perceptions of the world are categorically true, infallible perceptions of Reality, they tend to be unable or unwilling to interpret information and experience from standpoints other than their own. As argued above, by freeing learners from common conceptions of normalcy, the Drag Continuum can create a relatively congenial context more likely to enable and encourage them to conceptualize gender and sexuality from alternative points of view. If people, at least temporarily, but also genuinely and imaginatively, enter into an understanding of gender and sexuality as performative, they may come to realize that there are many reasonable ways of understanding and valuing other people’s displays of gender and sexuality. As such, the Drag Continuum can help to loosen people’s deep, egocentric, and often unwarranted attachments to their own interpretative frameworks.

My argument here is similar to one that Vokey makes in his analysis of John Crossan’s (1988) work on parables. Parables are “narratives structured to confound our expectations by reversing whatever binary opposition we understand to be fundamental to human experience,” (Vokey, 2003, p. 4; italics in original). Following Crossan, Vokey suggests that by inverting people’s mutually exclusive, yet mutually sustaining, belief systems, parables can serve to “relativize them – to reveal their limits as human constructions” (Vokey, 2003, p. 4). In asking learners to temporarily conceptualize gender and sexuality without reference to the pervasive moral binary of normalcy and deviance, the Drag Continuum is intended to relativize, and thus weaken, these pervasive
conceptions of normal and deviant gender and sexuality. To return to Vokey’s phrasing: not only can “interpretive frameworks...that confound habitual ‘good guy, bad guy’ characterizations...undermine our smug self-assurance in our construction of good and evil,” but they “can undermine ideologies and their corresponding biases, ideally opening minds and hearts to fresh perspectives” (Vokey, 2003, p. 7). The moral framework of the Drag Continuum is intended to produce exactly these effects, counteracting learners’ egocentric myopia and egocentric sense of infallibility.

By encouraging co-investigators to adopt, at least temporarily, a different perspective than their habitual one, the Drag Continuum provides them an opportunity not only to lessen their existing egocentric character traits, but also to actively develop some of the intellectual character traits important to strong critical thinking. When genuinely and imaginatively entering into an understanding of gender and sexuality as performative, learners begin to exhibit - and are likely to further develop - intellectual empathy, i.e., the ability to reverse perspectives both honestly and creatively in order to come to a deeper understanding of the merits of another viewpoint. When they begin to acknowledge the value of alternative perspectives, they are more likely also to begin to exhibit and further develop their own intellectual humility, i.e., the awareness that their own thinking may be fallible. This intellectual humility can then help to develop the intellectual courage to more open-mindedly face and fairly assess their own favoured background logics, modes of thinking, and dispositions.

I have witnessed and experienced this kind of development when presenting the Drag Continuum in teacher education seminars. For example, during the course of one student’s grappling with the idea that pervasive conceptions of normal gender and
sexuality are arbitrarily created and maintained through mass compliance, she began to question her prior belief that marriage and common-law relationships offered the best possible structure for social organization and perpetuation. I too have been prompted to revisit my assumptions by my co-investigators’ descriptions of their lives and convictions. The bullying that one male student endured while growing up has convinced me that I was wrong to have previously discounted the role that height plays in the fulfillment of pervasive North American expectations of masculinity. By encouraging educators and learners to imaginatively and empathetically enter into the inner logic of perspectives not their own, the moral framework of the Drag Continuum offers learners the opportunity to cultivate their intellectual resources for, and lessen their egocentric barriers against, strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy.

Finally, the moral framework of the Drag Continuum can potentially reduce heterosexism and homophobia by increasing the likelihood both that learners will act to counter pervasive gender and sexual prejudice and that their interventions will be effective. In creating a context where learners are encouraged, at least temporarily, to conceptualize gender and sexuality without reference to common considerations of normalcy, the Drag Continuum creates the possibility that they will maintain this type of alternative conceptualization, even when they return to their daily lives. As Lipman (2003) suggests: “To ask the question is to compel people to think differently about the world” (p. 87). The moral framework of the Drag Continuum creates the possibility that - even when returning to and interacting in their wider communities – people will foreground concerns for social justice over concerns for normalcy, assuming that they even continue to make any moral judgments about dress, behaviour, and speech. If they
do maintain this type of alternate moral standpoint, they will be more likely to perceive their prior - yet still probably pervasive - conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy as unjustified and unjust. In these circumstances, they will be better motivated to work to change both these pervasive conceptions and the systems of reward and punishment that result from them.

The moral framework that underlies the Drag Continuum can also help to make participants' interventions in heterosexism and homophobia more effective by helping them to cultivate more nimble and nuanced responses to prejudice. When we have a deeper and more complex understanding of its sources, manifestations, and effects, we increase our chances of developing ethical and effective responses to it. In this way, the Drag Continuum can help educators and learners to assemble richer, more diverse toolboxes for fighting social injustices. By exposing people to an alternate way of conceptualizing gender and sexuality, the Drag Continuum provides them the opportunity to cultivate both the cultural literacy important to more effectively opposing familial, communal, and institutional heterosexism and homophobia and the motivation to actually do so.

**Humour-Filled Learning Environments**

The Drag Continuum also provides a context well-suited to cultivating strong critical thinking, because its frequent references to humorous or entertaining gender and sexual performances can help to further create a relatively unthreatening learning environment. For example, in one teacher education class, a student suggested that the loud yet likable character that Roseanne Barr portrayed in her popular 1980s television
show was a Radical Queen. This gender analysis led to much laughter, as the group recounted their favourite *Roseanne* episodes and explored the occasionally unconventional relationship that Roseanne and her on-screen husband shared. As discussed in Chapter 3, it is often psychologically painful for people to think that their fundamental beliefs or dispositions might be unwarranted or prejudiced. Similarly, it is psychologically comforting for people to be convinced that they possess definitive, accurate answers to life’s complexities. The comic potential of the Drag Continuum can help educators to accommodate the strong emotional and visceral resistance their learners may experience when asked to scrutinize their own deep-seated and unquestioned modes of thinking. Particularly when people have strongly egocentric dispositions, laughter can far more effectively break through to well-protected core convictions than can rational argument. Of course, factors like age, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and personal sense of humour will all impact what different people find to be comedic. Regardless, this complexity does not alter the subversive potential of humour.

Workshop facilitators using the Drag Continuum can capitalize on the emancipatory potential of laughter and humour to bypass and penetrate egocentric dispositions when they introduce it via the contextual-impersonal approach. As previously illustrated, this approach typically begins with concrete examples of dress, behaviour, and speech. As a result, it has the potential to conjure up images that are either entertaining in themselves or entertaining through their reference to other images or narratives. The character Archie Bunker, from the 1970s television show *All in the Family* illustrates well both a possible concrete, comical departure point for the contextual-impersonal approach and the emancipatory potential of humorous
performance. Archie Bunker’s explicit and over-the-top homophobia, sexism, racism, and xenophobia made people laugh, and still sometimes do. This laughter stems in part from people’s disbelief that he would so directly and unashamedly reveal his bigotry, even if he - or sometimes even we - might privately believe what he says. Because Archie Bunker is such an extreme - and extremely humorous - caricature of more subtle and pervasive forms of prejudice, his flamboyant performances create opportunities for people not only to more clearly identify their own prejudices, but also to begin to perceive them as morally problematic. As a result, Bunker’s performances have the potential to do much more than entertain; they have the potential to invoke humour in Radically emancipatory ways. When educators make use of this type of comical and entertaining illustration of the continuum, any laughter and enjoyment it inspires can help to break through learners’ egocentric defenses, building a relatively non-threatening context for investigating gender and sexual normalcy.

The humour and parodic absurdity referenced by the Drag Continuum can also facilitate the increasingly introspective examination of gender and sexual normalcy by helping to stir and harness learners’ rational passions. It is not unusual for people to have strong, but somewhat confusing, emotional responses to parodic Radical flamboyance. The uncomfortable chuckles and brazen guffaws that some emit while watching Archie Bunker - reactions that are often neither entirely expected nor fully understood - typify this kind of reaction. When people become curious about the seeming incongruity between their uncomfortable or irrepressible laughter and the performance that has provoked it, their rational passions are becoming engaged. When this desire to understand the reasons for their laughter develops into the active drive to investigate
those reasons, learners’ burgeoning rational passions can propel them to investigate the initial parodic performance, its cultural context, and even possibly the relationships among the performance, its context, and their own thinking, beliefs, emotions, behaviours, and conceptions of self. In this way, the rational passions that can be provoked by learners’ visceral reactions to humour can help them to transform their egocentric dispositions into strong critical thinking dispositions. Thus, the sarcasm and outright fun of some flamboyant forms of drag performance create opportunities for learners to cultivate their dispositional resources for strong critical thinking and the reduction of personal prejudice not only by helping them to break through their egocentric defenses, but also by sparking and harnessing their rational passions.

Supportive, Productive Communities of Inquiry

The Drag Continuum further has the potential to reduce heterosexism and homophobia, because it provides learners a community with whom to engage in strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy. As Bailin and colleagues (1999b) point out, “critical thinking very often takes place in the context of persons’ thinking things through together by means of discussion or dialogue” (p. 289). While the continuum could, theoretically, be used alone, by one individual, it is intended to be employed by educators to stimulate discussion within groups. Of course, not just any association of people or type of discussion will create a context well-suited for the development of strong critical thinking. Members of genuine learning communities must be committed to and capable of contributing constructively to group deliberation by reasoning and responding to each other in mutually supportive ways. For example, as
Bailin and colleagues point out, constructive contributions to group deliberation help to further the purpose of the discussion, clarify problems, and maintain an environment that facilitates the friendly, open-minded participation of all involved (Bailin et al., 1999b). In other words, if supportive deliberation is also to be intellectually productive, it must both strive to improve people’s capacity to provide good reasons, and succeed in doing so.

Lipman (1991; 2003) devotes considerable attention to the communities and dialogues likely to encourage this type of supportive and productive context for reasoning, calling them communities of inquiry. As he points out, while being supportive of others does require a non-adversarial stance, it does not require agreement: “the opinions of others need to be respected, but they do not have to be mimicked” (Lipman, 2003, p. 97). Below, I use Lipman’s conception of communities of inquiry to outline some of the features likely to cultivate and maintain this type of respectful yet constructive group deliberation. I also explain why the Drag Continuum – in eliciting many of the features of Lipman’s communities of inquiry – has the potential to catalyze the formation of supportive, productive group deliberation that is likely to promote strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy.

Inclusiveness is one of the principles fundamental to cultivating the supportive and productive dialogue of Lipman’s communities of inquiry. Lipman’s inclusiveness requires that all are equal members within the community and that no person or

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72 Lipman develops his conception of communities of inquiry in the first (1991) and second (2003) editions of Thinking in Education. While Lipman’s research focuses on the cultivation of critical thinking in children, his conception of communities of inquiry provides important insights for the development of critical thinkers of any age. While the degree to which critical thinking can be developed in people of different ages remains open to question, all but the very young can start to be taught the importance of giving good reasons through modeling.
The Drag Continuum is designed to fulfill this requirement by neither excluding nor unduly privileging any person or perspective on gender, sexuality, and normalcy within the communities that it catalyzes. There is no one "right" way to understand these concepts. Moreover, both educators and learners should have very similar roles and responsibilities as participants in analytical exchange. As discussed above, the grounds that each provide for their thinking, beliefs, emotions, behaviours, and self-concepts should be subject to the same relevant standards and degrees of self-assessment and group investigation. Each will most likely have their own prejudices that they have yet to overcome and will have much to learn from others in the group. An educator's proposed classifications of particular gender or sexual performances along the Drag Continuum should not, in themselves, be understood as more authoritative or definitive than the classifications proposed by learners. Any interpretation or categorization of dress, behaviour, and speech should be evaluated by all of the members of communities of inquiry. Because everyone's reasoning should be open to respectful questioning, the group deliberations stimulated by the Drag Continuum have the potential to be supportive, productive, and inclusive, with educators and learners as equal members and with no person or perspective, in itself, privileged.

The Drag Continuum further has the potential to catalyze the formation of supportive and productive communities of inquiry by functioning as a reading. This element of a community of inquiry, as defined by Lipman, is the stimulus of inclusive group deliberation. Lipman's reading is "a procedure or incident that can be counted on

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73 Lipman's requirement of inclusiveness is similar to the principles of non-repression and non-discrimination that Amy Gutmann (1999) outlines in *Democratic Education*. 
to provoke the quest for meaning – something controversial perhaps, or something already rich in meanings that must be sought out and uncovered, and held up for consideration” (Lipman, 2003, p. 97-8). The theoretical underpinnings of the continuum, the contextual illustrations that accompanies it, and the eventual introspective self-assessment that it seeks to produce can all function as readings to “induc[e] members of the class to be reflective” (Lipman, 2003, p. 97). For example, an exploration of the understanding of gender and sexual normalcy as performative can offer a type of problem for the community of inquiry to solve. While a definitive answer about whether performativity best explains the construction and maintenance of community expectations is neither required nor possible, the alternative interpretive framework that it provides is likely to be sufficiently rich and unusual to pique a serious consideration of its merits. By creating “some doubt that all is well, some recognition that one’s situation contains troubling difficulties and is somehow problematic” (Lipman, 2003, p. 94), the theoretical underpinning of the continuum can draw people together into constructive group deliberation.

Specific, contextual iterations of gender and sexual performance also can function as readings to bring together and connect a community of inquiry. Lipman’s (2003) reading “draw[s] participation out of students the way an interesting book won’t allow students to put it down” (p. 95). As described above, the fun of searching pop culture for examples of dress, behaviour, and speech - in order to analyze and then categorize them along the Drag Continuum - can very successfully engage learners’ interest. Even while some learners will undoubtedly not participate verbally in this searching and assessment, my experience suggests that the illustration of the continuum tends to be sufficiently
absorbing to stimulate active listening in most. The broad involvement and camaraderie that can be inspired by the fun and controversy of the Drag Continuum can help to solidify learners into productive, supportive communities of inquiry. Thus, by providing an inclusive and engaging reading, the Drag Continuum has the potential to catalyze the formation of contexts for learning that can improve reasoning and potentially reduce prejudice.

The Drag Continuum further elicits the features fundamental both to Lipman's communities of inquiry and to the improvement of purposeful thinking by encouraging collaborative reasoning. As Lipman emphasizes, communities of inquiry can significantly improve thinking by "a magnification of the efficiency of the learning process" (Lipman, 2003, p. 93). When people deliberate in groups, the individual members of the group can pool their resources, dispersing the difficulty of reasoning through a problem. Lipman (2003) calls this type of collective reasoning shared cognition or distributed thinking "in which each participant contributes to the single thinking process" (p. 139). Distributed thinking occurs when the individual members of communities of inquiry each supply little pieces of the reasoning puzzle. For example, when "one person raises a question, another objects to an underlying assumption, still another offers a counterinsistance" (Lipman, 2003, p. 95). Because the Drag Continuum can function as an inclusive and engaging reading, it has the potential to create these types of opportunities for learners to piggy-back on the strong critical thinking knowledges, competencies, and dispositions of their co-investigators, effectively skirting some of their own barriers to strong critical thinking. In this way, the communities of inquiry that the Drag Continuum is well-suited to bringing together can help learners to
improve each other’s thinking about gender and sexual normalcy, thus potentially reducing homophobia and heterosexism.

The distributed thinking of communities of inquiry can increase the efficiency and quality of reasoning not only through piggy-backed reasoning, but also through perspectival reasoning. As Lipman argues, because each person contributes to distributed thinking “from a different point of view,” the shared cognition of “communit[ies] of inquiry provide a perspectival context for shared inquiry” (Lipman, 2003, p. 157). There is good reason to believe that the presence of diverse viewpoints can improve group deliberation, particularly when these multiple perspectives are represented within the types of inclusive and supportive communities of inquiry that the Drag Continuum is designed to stimulate. The joint purposes, burgeoning connections, and ongoing dialogues of communities of inquiry increase the likelihood that co-investigators will care both about each other and about each other’s different points of view. As a result, these co-investigators are more likely to seriously consider each other’s divergent perspectives, instead of merely disregarding the perspectival context they provide as irrelevant or too dangerous to seriously consider.

Because both the cognitive and affective connections and the perspectival context provided by communities of inquiry are likely to actively encourage their members to think and feel from standpoints not their own, they are likely to improve reasoning in a number of ways. First, genuinely entering into the modes of thinking and background logics of others helps to encourage the development of intellectual empathy. As discussed in Chapter 4, this intellectual character trait helps learners to better appreciate the merits of each others’ standpoints. Consequently, it also can help learners to realize
that the reasons other people give in support of their own standpoints may be better justified than the reasons that support learners’ own worldviews. This ability and commitment to imaginatively and genuinely reverse perspectives with others helps to improve reasoning both by making people more likely to be swayed by the good reasons of others and by encouraging people to revise the grounds of their own background logics for the better.

Genuinely entering into the modes of thinking and background logics of others can help improve reasoning not only because intellectual empathy is an important resource for strong critical thinking about gender and sexuality, but also because it actively prevents the development of the vulgar or sophisticated thinking described in Chapter 3. As Paul observes, “If critical thinking is taught simply as atomic skills separate from the empathic practice of entering into points of view that students are fearful of or hostile toward, they will simply find additional means of rationalizing prejudices and preconceptions, or convincing people that their point of view is the correct one” (http://www.criticalthinking.org/University/gloss/s.html - August 27, 2003). When people immerse themselves in another’s perspective, they are more likely to better understand the thinking, beliefs, and emotions that support it. However, an increased understanding of a perspective from which people feel they must defend themselves can simply better equip them to attack that position or unduly prop up their own. As a result, for reversals of perspective to more reliably improve co-investigator’s own reasoning, it helps if they are motivated both by an active desire to do so and by their caring connections with each other. The collaborative and perspective-rich communities of inquiry to which the Drag Continuum is designed to provide access are well-suited to
encouraging this kind of sympathetic and imaginative connection to and engagement with others. As a result, the reversals of perspective that take place within these communities can be expected to cultivate strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy.

These sincere reversals of perspective can also improve reasoning by helping participants cultivate their self-knowledge. Paul refers to this type of reasoning - where co-investigators discuss, compare, and exchange perspectives in order to better understand the other's point of view - as dialogical.74 Dialogical reasoning creates opportunities for people to cultivate their self-knowledge for at least two reasons. First, in order to genuinely enter into the inner logic of alternative points of view, people must momentarily step outside of their own. As Paul (1987) notes, when people step outside of their habitual frames of reference, those frames often become more clearly illuminated (p. 135). In other words, when we gain some distance from our own modes of thinking and background logics, these elements of our thought often become easier to for us to identify, understand, and assess.

Dialogical reasoning also creates opportunities for people to cultivate their self-knowledge, because it requires that they present their perspectives to others. For learners to clearly present their modes of thinking and background logics to others, they must learn to organize, express, and defend their own points of view. As Paul notes, this exercise typically helps people to become clearer about what they believe, how they feel, and why (Paul, 1987). By helping participants to identify, articulate, and justify to others their own positions and dispositions, the dialogical reversals of perspective that the Drag

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74 While there are many possible ways both to define dialogical and dialectical communication and to elaborate the relationship between them, in this project I follow Paul's example.
Continuum is well-suited to cultivating can help them to develop self-knowledge, better equipping them to engage in strong critical thinking.

The likely development of strong critical thinking is further enhanced, because the potentially empathetic, dialogical reasoning of the Drag Continuum's communities of inquiry should also strive to be dialectical. Dialectical reasoning can improve reasoning by creating opportunities for learners to overcome their egocentric defensiveness. Paul (1993a) defines dialectical reasoning as "dialogical thinking (thinking within more than one perspective) conducted to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view" (p. 463). In other words, whereas dialogical thinking is directed primarily towards comparing and exchanging perspectives, dialectical thinking is additionally directed towards open-mindedly evaluating the merits of the exchanged perspectives. When learners realize that every community member's background logics and modes of thinking are, and should be, subject to analysis and assessment, they are less likely to experience the analysis and assessment of their own belief systems and methods of belief formation as personal attacks from which they must defend themselves. Dialectical questioning can help learners to lessen their egocentric defensiveness, because it helps them to understand collaborative "challenging as...just one more cognitive procedure that the participants need to perform in the course of their inquiries" (Lipman, 2003, p. 97).

As dialectical reasoning becomes less threatening to learners, it can also help them to cultivate further their intellectual character traits. In supportive, productive communities of inquiry, learners are unlikely to encounter mean-spirited questioning motivated by a malicious or self-serving desire to find or reveal fault in others. On the
contrary, learners are far more likely to encounter relevant, fair, well-intentioned questioning that is motivated jointly by their co-investigators’ genuine curiosity about others’ reasons for holding their beliefs and by their co-investigators’ related desire to develop better grounds for their own beliefs and behaviours. These dialectical exchanges create opportunities for learners to come to recognize the value of assessing and improving their own reasoning. As Paul (1993a) notes, dialectical reasoning can help people to recognize "the importance of giving reasons to support their views without getting their egos involved in what they are saying," (p. 458). This recognition lays the groundwork for the development of intellectual humility, perseverance, courage, and integrity – intellectual character traits that are fundamental to developing as strong critical thinkers.

The extent to which the development of strong critical thinking about gender and sexuality can be facilitated by being immersed in the types of respectful, constructive communities of inquiry that Lipman describes should not be underestimated. The supportive, inclusive, empathetic group deliberations to which these communities can provide access are well-suited to cultivating the strong, felt community connections that, as argued at the outset of this chapter, are so important to deep and sustained long-term change. Admittedly, the community connections to which the Drag Continuum provides access are likely to be temporary. Still, they are a start. Co-investigators’ desires to be accepted and praised can powerfully motivate sincere efforts to develop the resources for strong critical thinking that their communities value and demonstrate.

Ultimately, the Drag Continuum is well-suited to cultivating supportive, productive communities of inquiry, because it is designed to stimulate shared cognition
in engaging and inclusive contexts for learning. When functioning as a reading, the continuum can stimulate the piggy-backed, perspectival, dialogical, and dialectical reasoning that is so important to the development of strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy. Not only do the supportive and productive communities of inquiry fostered by the Drag Continuum directly encourage in their members many resources for strong critical thinking, but they also provide their members the models, focused instruction, and emotional encouragement that are also important to improved reasoning, self-knowledge, and prejudice reduction.

Constructive Practice

Of course, for communities of inquiry to provide opportunities to improve reasoning and judgment, they must do more than provide access to a collaborative, dialectical context for learning. Whether catalyzed by the Drag Continuum or by other means, they must also provide learners the opportunity to engage in the type of practice that the development of strong critical thinking requires. Strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy is only likely to be improved when people have repeated and varied opportunities to observe, be mentored towards, and engage in reasoning that consistently aims to better fulfill relevant standards of reasoning. Because the Drag Continuum is designed to provide these opportunities to groups of learners, it can help to make communities that might otherwise remain merely supportive and empathic into full-fledged, productive communities of inquiry. I will now elaborate on my conception of constructive practice, which builds directly on Bailin and colleagues’ (1999a)
conception of quality practice, explaining its important role in cultivating communities of inquiry. I will also explain why the Drag Continuum can be expected to provide opportunities for constructive practice. My claim here is not the Drag Continuum is unique in providing co-investigators these opportunities, only that it is an ethically defensible and realistic means of doing so.

As Paul states, “one learns critical thinking by doing critical thinking” (Elder and Paul, 1994, p. 34; emphasis in original). That is, to gradually develop into good critical thinkers, people must practice thinking critically. Of course, as Bailin and colleagues (1999a) point out, not just any type of practice will do (p. 281). The mere mindless repetition of pre-existing undisciplined thinking or egocentric habits will not bring about an improvement in reasoning. Instead, the wrong kinds of practice - if they affect thinking at all - are more likely to simply reinforce prior bad habits and modes of thinking, cultivating vulgar or sophisticated, but not critical, thinkers. As Bailin and colleagues (1999a) underline, “in order to become a (more) critical thinker one must understand what constitutes quality reasoning, and have the commitments relevant to employing and seeking quality reasoning” (p. 281). That is, constructive practice that improves reasoning and judgment requires that people adequately and continually develop their conceptual and contextual knowledges. At the very least, it requires that we understand and appreciate the meaning, significance, and relationship of the two concepts most central to the constructive practice of strong critical thinking in any domain, namely elements of thought and standards of reasoning. Constructive practice also requires that

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75 I substitute the term “quality” for “constructive,” as Bailin and colleagues’ use of “quality” is primarily meant to highlight that not all forms of practice will improve purposeful thinking. Repeatedly performing bad habits only reinforces them.
we develop the disposition to practice applying our conceptual and contextual knowledges with increasing competency.

The avenues of investigation opened up by the Drag Continuum offer such opportunities to practice reasoning well. While I have not explicitly embedded Paul's elements of thought and standards of reasoning into the continuum, and their investigation is not essential to the exploration of the continuum or the questions it raises, educators can use the Drag Continuum as a springboard for introducing these concepts. Without an understanding of the meaning, significance, and relationship of the elements of thinking and the standards of reasoning, people are not likely to be able to develop systematic plans for improving their reasoning about gender and sexual normalcy.

A theoretical approach to the Drag Continuum opens the door for introducing and clarifying both these concepts and the concepts that are specific to strong critical thinking about heterosexism and homophobia. Educators using the conceptual-incremental approach might, for example, ask their co-investigators to consider how definitions of gender, sexuality, and normalcy vary and shift within and across different temporal, cultural, religious, academic, linguistic, and geographic communities. As differences are identified, group members could then begin to consider how well-justified each conception is. To this end, facilitators might begin with direct instruction into the meaning, significance, and relationship of the concepts of *elements of thought* and *standards of reasoning*. They might then help learners to develop their competency in applying these concepts by embarking with them on an examination of the elements of thought that underlie the identified conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy, in order to measure them against the relevant standards of reasoning. In the course of these
discussions, educators might also introduce the theoretical foundations of the continuum. They could explain the concept of performativity, and then explore with their co-investigators whether there are good grounds for believing that gender and sexuality are commonly influenced by widespread patterns of performance and the communal rewards, punishments, and expectations of normalcy that they create. The quality of strong critical thinking practice will be increased even further, if the identified differences among conceptions of gender, sexuality, and normalcy can be used to unearth - and potentially call into question – co-investigators’ own understandings of these concepts. Thus, either through an investigation of its performative underpinnings or through a more focused conceptual clarification of gender, sexuality, and normalcy, a theoretical approach to the Drag Continuum creates opportunities for people to increase their conceptual and contextual knowledges and competencies, thus increasing their potential to engage in the constructive practice that is so integral to learning how to reason well with respect to gender and sexual normalcy.

The Drag Continuum can also help participants engage in constructive practice by providing them opportunities to observe and engage in repeated, varied, context-specific thinking that aims at improving reasoning. Workshop facilitators can springboard from the Drag Continuum to model what good reasoning about gender and sexual normalcy looks like, contrasting it with thinking that demonstrates little understanding of the standards for reasoning well. For example, they might show their co-investigators how to check the elements of thinking against relevant standards of reasoning by examining the not uncommon assumption that all - or at least most - homosexuals are HIV-positive.

Together, facilitators and participants might investigate the extent to which the
background information that supports this assumption meets the intellectual standard of accuracy. To this end, they might review both the current epidemiological data about rates of HIV infection and the known modes of HIV transmission, demonstrating that the best available background information suggests there to be no good reason to assume a necessary link between homosexuality and HIV. From there, facilitators could underline the ongoing effort required to improve reasoning by modeling how the revision of even one factually inaccurate belief can profoundly impact a whole system of beliefs. To this end, they might review with participants some other assumptions about homosexuals that often either follow from or underlie the belief that all homosexuals are HIV-positive. They could demonstrate how uncoupling the link between homosexuality and HIV should call into question the following beliefs: (1) homosexuals should not be permitted near children, and (2) homosexuals are (irresponsibly) promiscuous. By demonstrating how they develop and make use of their conceptual and contextual knowledges in their attempts to form increasingly competent judgments about gender, sexuality, and normalcy, facilitators can mentor in their co-investigators reasoning that increasingly fulfills standards of adequacy.

Of course, for learners to fully engage in constructive practice that improves reason, they must have the opportunity to observe the development and use not only of strong critical thinking knowledges and competencies, but also of strong critical thinking dispositions. It is important for facilitators to model rational passions, volitions, and intellectual character traits, so participants can both see what they look like in practice and witness that the protracted experience of developing strong critical thinking dispositions is often somewhat taxing. To let participants know that they are not alone in
their struggles to reason well, facilitators could share with them their own frustrations with and tendencies towards inconsistency and egocentrism. Such revelations should help to reassure and encourage them to persevere in developing their own strong critical thinking dispositions. As educators reveal their own struggles with inconsistency and egocentrism, it is also important for them to demonstrate their continued commitment to improving their strong critical thinking knowledges, competencies, and dispositions. This type of simultaneous display of honest vulnerability, intellectual perseverance, and intellectual integrity should help strengthen participants’ rational passions and volitions, helping to inspire in them the desire and drive to persevere in their own efforts to develop their own strong critical thinking competency and consistency.

To further demonstrate and reinforce the importance of intellectual character traits to the improvement of reasoning, educators should also model intellectual humility and intellectual empathy by seeking out and seriously considering the perspectives of learners. They should solicit their co-investigators’ classifications of particular gender or sexual performances, admitting when these alternate classifications of dress, behaviour, and speech along the Drag Continuum might be better justified than their own. If educators facilitate the group discussion well, they can also help participants to realize the crucial role that each member of a community of inquiry plays in improving the reasoning of the others, which may help to further strengthen the bonds that bring them together into communities of inquiry. By providing participants examples of what strong critical thinking looks like in context-specific situations, educators can help to provide their co-investigators a loose blueprint for how to practice applying their own mounting
conceptual and contextual understandings with increasing competency and consistency, as well as the desire, drive, and intellectual commitment to do so.

Of course, observing others in the process of reasoning well is not, in itself, sufficient for constructive practice. Learners must also have multiple, varied, context-specific opportunities to practice applying their own mounting knowledges. As Paul cautions about moral principles, a subset of the conceptual and contextual knowledges important to strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy: “moral principles do not apply themselves, they require a thinking mind to assess facts and interpret situations” (Paul, 1993a, p. 303). In other words, having knowledge of general guidelines about what people ought - and ought not - to do is only useful if people learn to exercise good judgment in their application of those guidelines in concrete situations. Similarly, a full set of conceptual and contextual knowledges is only useful - i.e., these knowledges will only help learners to engage in constructive practice that improves reasoning, self-knowledge, and judgment - if learners have the opportunity to practice employing them in real and imagined detail-rich situations.

When used as intended, the Drag Continuum can provide myriads of opportunities to engage in the context-specific application of strong critical thinking knowledges, competencies, and dispositions. As underlined above, there are few, if any, unquestionably right or wrong answers to the dilemmas presented by the continuum. There are only those that are arguably better or worse, those that people have good reason to believe more or less adequately fulfill relevant standards of reasoning. Because the continuum does not provide final or decisive answers, educators can use it to invite their co-investigators to justify their proposed conceptualizations or categorizations of dress,
behaviour, and speech and to evaluate those of others. It is this ongoing endeavour to provide others with good reasons that provides opportunities to practice improving reasoning and judgment.

The importance of providing such opportunities within supportive, productive environments should not be underestimated. However, as cautioned at the beginning of this chapter, ongoing and far-reaching communities of inquiry are often difficult to achieve and maintain. Strategies for reducing heterosexism and homophobia are typically employed in relatively short-lived or narrow educational settings, creating communities and contexts that are equally transient and localized. Still, even a brief experience of belonging to a supportive, productive community of inquiry will better encourage the development of strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy than would a total lack of group involvement or deliberation. As the above illustrations demonstrate, the Drag Continuum can provide these types of repeated and varied opportunities to observe, be mentored towards, and engage in reasoning that consistently aims to better fulfill relevant standards of reasoning.

**Moving Towards the Applied-Introspective Approach**

I will conclude this chapter by returning to my elaboration of the three most likely departure points for discussions of the continuum, gender, sexuality, and normalcy: the conceptual-incremental approach, the contextual-impersonal approach, and the applied-introspective approach. While the conceptual and contextual approaches have been discussed at some length, no concrete details have as yet been offered for the applied-introspective approach. This strategy has been left for last, because it should typically be
introduced only after co-investigators have engaged with the others. It makes good sense
to elaborate on the applied-introspective approach only after participants are relatively
comfortable and proficient with the conceptual underpinnings, practical illustrations, and
wider debates of the continuum, because this most intimate and potentially threatening
approach is the one most likely to provoke strong resistance. Moreover, this final
approach is primarily directed towards increasing self-knowledge. As discussed
previously, the self-exploration required for the cultivation of self-knowledge is greatly
enhanced by a foundation of the more basic knowledges, competencies, and dispositions
that the first two approaches to the continuum are primarily directed towards cultivating.

I now turn first to elaborating on the applied-introspective approach and then to
highlighting some final strategic considerations for educators intending to use the Drag
Continuum to stimulate strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy.

The applied-introspective approach to the Drag Continuum is the only one
designed to encourage directly the type of reflective, self-correcting examination of
personal thinking, belief, emotion, and behaviour that genuine strong critical thinking
requires. As such, it is the approach in which educational strategies that begin from any
other departure point should aim to culminate. As mentioned at the outset of this chapter,
the applied-introspective approach begins with an explicit inquiry into people’s own
thinking and beliefs about gender and sexual normalcy. It also asks them to investigate
their own corresponding emotions, behaviours, and conceptions of self. There are many
possible ways of encouraging this type of direct, introspective self-assessment, all of
which can make use of a mixture of large group discussion, small group work, and some
form of solitary self-reflection.
Learners can be eased into self-reflection by asking them to focus on their prior concrete experiences through a strategy similar to the *Intellectual Journal* that Paul (2000b) recommends to encourage strong critical thinking (p. 41). For example, they could be asked to write about or discuss an emotionally significant conformity to or deviation from gender or sexual normalcy that they have either witnessed or performed. They could begin by describing the relative flamboyance of the performance: whether and how the dress, behaviour, or speech conformed to or deviated from pervasive expectations. Either alone or in small groups, co-investigators could then examine both the factors that lead to the conformity or deviation and its consequences. To be maximally useful, they might consider: the rewards or punishments that accompanied the performance; their own cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses to those rewards and punishments and to the performance itself; and the emancipatory potential of the performance, i.e. the extent to which it challenged - and may even have changed - the conceptions from which it deviated. Finally, the group might assess the experience, considering what impact it might have on them into the future. What did it teach them about gender, sexuality, normalcy, and themselves? Might they do or perceive anything differently if they encounter a similar situation in the future? By helping learners to focus on and possibly share their prior concrete experiences of emotionally significant gender and sexual performances, this type of activity can help them to build both their self-knowledge and other resources for strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy.

Educators might also ask them to focus on past contexts in which they can recognize that their egocentric dispositions have strongly influenced their cognitions,
emotions, or behaviours. This strategy builds on the *Get in Touch with Your Emotions* and the *Deal With Your Egocentrism* strategies that Elder (2000) recommends to help people develop into strong critical thinkers (p. 38-9). In order to uncover their particular tendencies towards egocentrism, co-investigators could search out circumstances in which they have displayed an automatic, but unwarranted, bias in favor of themselves. To this end, they could try to remember when they have displayed disproportionate or misplaced emotional responses, perhaps becoming irritable over circumstances that others would - or did - consider relatively insignificant. Once co-investigators have identified some concrete manifestations of their own egocentrism, they can proceed to examine the modes of thinking, background logics, and dispositions that are likely to have led to their thoughts, feelings, or actions in the given circumstances. Their thoughts, feelings, and actions could also be compared with their professed values, commitments, and self-concepts. Finally, they might consider how they could reframe the experience - and future similar ones - so that they could think and feel differently about it, and thus potentially respond differently to it. By helping learners to focus on their prior manifestations of egocentrism in this way, educators can further encourage them to build both their self-knowledge and their other resources for strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy.

The applied-introspective approach can also serve to develop people’s self-knowledge by soliciting reflection on the implications of both the theoretical underpinnings of the Drag Continuum and the Drag Continuum itself, in relation to their own ideas about gender, sexuality, and normalcy. There are many ways to build these links, some of which I will now propose. Co-investigators might directly discuss
whether, how, and why performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism have
influenced their own modes of thinking, background logics, and dispositions. They might
also consider whether, how, and why their future moral judgments of gender or sexual
performance might be influenced by the idea that the moral value commonly attached to
pervasive, performatively constructed conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy is both
arbitrary and poorly justified. Turning to questions raised by the Drag Continuum itself,
co-investigators could try to assess and categorize the relative flamboyance and
emancipatory potential of their own typical gender and sexual performances, considering
whether it would be either desirable or feasible for them to revise their dress, behaviour,
or speech in some or all of their daily interactions. Alternatively, the groups could be
invited to deliberate about whether, how, and why their engagement with the continuum
might affect their future responses to heterosexist or homophobic behaviours, people, or
policies. If co-investigators agree that they would want to respond differently to gender
and sexual prejudice in the future, a brainstorm about what their future responses might
look like would be useful. This exercise could involve an assessment where they are most
likely to encounter heterosexism and homophobia, as well as how they might best
intervene in the sources, manifestations, and effects of the gender and sexual prejudice
that they are most likely to encounter. Co-investigators could then role-play these
possible strategies for intervention. They might even agree to reassemble after having
implemented these interventions in their daily lives and wider communities in order to
debrief and refine their strategies. By helping learners in these ways to springboard from
the questions raised both by the Drag Continuum and by its theoretical framework,
educators can help learners to develop not only their self-knowledge, but also their other resources for strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy.

Finally, educators can use the applied-introspective approach to help learners develop their self-knowledge by asking them to consider directly the extent to which they have developed their strong critical thinking knowledges, competencies, and dispositions. Only by identifying the state of their resources for strong critical thinking can learners endeavour to shore up their weaknesses and reinforce their strengths. Again, there are many possible ways of proceeding. To assess their knowledges and competencies, co-investigators might engage in a dialogue about their expectations of gender and sexual normalcy and then ask themselves or each other the following: how am I forming my beliefs, i.e., what are my modes of thinking?; how well am I reasoning?; how well do I understand the concepts of elements of thought and standards of reasoning?; and, how well are my elements of thought fulfilling these standards? To assess their cognitive, affective, and, behavioural tendencies, learners might consider some of the disposition-testing questions presented in Chapter 4: (1) To assess their volitions: what do I pursue? (do I pursue the acceptance of others by sacrificing what is important to me, for example by hiding my sexual orientation from others?); what do I want? (do I want to live barefoot, pregnant and in the kitchen, because my husband and family expect me to?); is there a gap between what I tend to pursue and what I believe I want?; and do I find myself trying to impose my will on others? (are my religious beliefs motivating my attempts to stop my lesbian daughter from marrying her partner?); (2) To assess their rational passions: are my despairing emotional responses to my son’s desire to dress up in tutus proportionate and appropriate to the context?; are others often offended or surprised
by my heterosexual rage at being propositioned by someone of the same sex?; do my emotions enhance my capacity to reason well about gender and sexual normlacy?; and do I care about whether I improve my reasoning in this respect?; (3) To assess their intellectual character traits and conceptions of self: what is my gendered or sexed identity?; what values and commitments guide my thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours about gender and sexuality?; and do I open-mindedly consider the perspectives and criticisms of others in this regard? By encouraging the direct examination of the development of strong critical thinking knowledges, competencies, and dispositions in this way, educators can help learners to build their self-knowledge and these other resources for strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy.

Ultimately, the primary strength of the applied-introspective approach is that it helps people to develop their self-knowledge, turning the lens of their investigations back onto themselves, transforming critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy into strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy. As a result, no matter from which departure point educators choose to introduce the Drag Continuum, they should work towards concluding with the direct self-assessment that the applied-introspective approach encourages. The opportunities for honest self-examination and increased self-knowledge provided by this final approach increase the likelihood both that the quality of people’s reasoning and judgments about gender and sexual normalcy will improve and that their heterosexist and homophobic thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours will lessen.

Whereas the applied-introspective approach is likely primarily to strengthen self-knowledge, the conceptual-incremental approach is likely primarily to strengthen
conceptual knowledges and competencies. The theoretical analysis and conceptual clarification that this approach is designed to encourage are likely initially to favour the development of learners' understanding of the meaning, significance, and relationship of the concepts important to strong critical thinking. However, because the conceptual-incremental approach is not likely to encourage a deep contextual examination of particular gender and sexual performances, it is also unlikely to encourage strongly the development of contextual knowledges or competencies. Further, because this approach does not encourage students to undertake a serious examination of the self, it is unlikely to significantly strengthen their drive, desire, or capacity to engage in the reflective analysis that is essential to the development of self-knowledge and strong critical thinking.

Alternately, the concrete-impersonal approach to the continuum is likely primarily to strengthen contextual knowledges and competencies, because it creates opportunities to engage with mounting conceptual knowledges in progressively more tangible ways. This approach focuses on the characteristics and possible effects of real or imagined gender and sexual performances. It provides learners repeated, mentored opportunities to interpret and categorize along the continuum specific, detail-rich examples of dress, behaviour, and speech. As a result, this approach can provide the opportunity for learners to become more competent at identifying and assessing how pervasive understandings of gender and sexual normalcy, as well as the rewards and punishments that often accompany them, play out in concrete, lived situations. Importantly, however, because the contextual-impersonal approach focuses on helping learners to identify the sources, manifestations, and effects of unwarranted beliefs, belief
formation, emotional responses, and behaviours in society at large, it is not likely, by itself, to prepare learners to recognize and reduce their own prejudice.

Nevertheless, particularly when it is combined with the conceptual-incremental approach, the contextual-impersonal approach has the potential not only to strengthen contextual knowledges and competencies, but also to increase people’s drive and desire to better develop their conceptual knowledges. My background in philosophy has impressed upon me that many people experience “philosophy” or “theory” as profoundly boring, dry, or irrelevant to their daily lives. However, by focusing on concrete iterations of dress, behaviour, and speech, the contextual-impersonal approach to the continuum can help people to perceive their eventual introduction to the concepts central to strong critical thinking as more entertaining and meaningful. When educators couch the conceptual knowledge-bases essential to strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy in the fun context of searching both pop culture and people’s own creative imaginations for real and invented drag performances, there is good reason to believe that this engaging pursuit can help to make the necessary theoretical concepts seem more accessible and useable to learners who might otherwise be disinterested in them. When combined with the conceptual-incremental approach in this way, the contextual-impersonal approach to the Drag Continuum can help to strengthen learners’ passion, volition, and intellectual commitment to better develop their conceptual knowledges and competencies.

A combined approach can not only help to make the conceptual knowledges important to strong critical thinking seem more important to learners, it can also help to make the problem of gender and sexual prejudice seem more important to them. Some
people do seem to be genuinely unaware of the homophobia and heterosexism that surrounds them, while others are aware of such thinking, speech, behaviours, and policies, but do not perceive them to be morally problematic. A combined conceptual-incremental and contextual-impersonal approach is well-suited to alerting the former to the existence of gender and sexual prejudice and to convincing the latter of its injustice. For example, educators working with teacher education students could use this combined approach to underline the existence and injustice of heterosexism and homophobia by embedding discussions of these prejudices in the daily, lived contexts that school and classroom settings provide. To this end, workshop facilitators could begin by encouraging the group to examine school-based archetypes of gender and sexual performance. These archetypes could include, for example: the techno-geek, the techno-chic, the jock, the skater, the punk, the brain, the fag, the dyke, the slut, or the stud. Because such concrete examples of gender and sexual performance and its interpretation can be drawn from teacher education students’ own experiences in school contexts - either as students or as teachers – prospective teachers are likely to perceive the resulting discussions as relevant and important. Once their interest is engaged, they can be encouraged to discuss the rewards and punishments that typically accompany each gender and sexual archetype: what they look like, how they affect their students’ capacity to learn, and finally, why gendered and sexed dress, behaviour, and speech are rewarded and punished at all. While participants consider the concrete manifestations, tangible effects, and possible sources of gender and sexual prejudice, the facilitator can begin to integrate into the discussion an explicit consideration of the Drag Continuum, the concepts central to strong critical thinking, and the moral dilemmas created by gender
and sexual prejudice. Ultimately, this kind of combined approach can be used to lessen two common barriers to strong critical thinking about heterosexism and homophobia: people’s fear of or disinterest in what they perceive to be complicated and useless theory and their unawareness or lack of concern of injustices that do not directly affect them. In helping people to overcome these barriers, a combined contextual-impersonal and conceptual-incremental approach to the continuum can cultivate a disposition to develop the conceptual and contextual knowledges and competencies essential to strong critical thinking about gender and sexuality.

Ultimately, an incremental movement towards self-assessment is probably the most effective way to make use of the continuum to stimulate strong critical thinking about gender, sexuality, and normalcy. Except in the few instances where learners are already highly self-aware and experienced strong critical thinkers, an immediate introduction to the applied-introspective approach is only likely to reinforce existing dispositional barriers against strong critical thinking. As a result, only once learners become comfortable analyzing the mechanisms by which sexuality and gender are normalized in society at large should they be eased into applying those same analytical lenses to areas closer to home: their cultural communities, their families, and finally, themselves. Fortunately, because the educational strategies permitted by the Drag Continuum are highly flexible, if educators find that their chosen approach, or combination of approaches, is not well-suited to the particular personalities, resources, and barriers most prevalent in their current community of inquiry, it is possible to change direction midstream.
As argued throughout this chapter, the flexible learning environments to which the Drag Continuum provides access is but one of the reasons why it is well-suited to cultivating strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy and to potentially reducing heterosexism and homophobia. The Drag Continuum also provides learners access to contexts that are relatively unconstrained by common conceptions of normalcy, use humour to overcome defensiveness, and are located within supportive and productive communities of inquiry that provide opportunities for the constructive practice of strong critical thinking about gender and sexual normalcy. Because they are responsive to the unique needs of particular learners and relatively non-threatening, these contexts can enable and encourage learners to empathetically, imaginatively, dialogically, and dialectically investigate the sources, manifestations, and effects of gender and sexual prejudice. In helping them to recognize the profound influence on thinking, belief, emotion, and behaviour that performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism can exert, the Drag Continuum creates opportunities to identify how these potential influences may be impacting participants’ own background logics, modes of thinking, and dispositions. The Drag Continuum helps overcome barriers to prejudice reduction, not only by helping learners to identify them, but also by helping learners to reshape them through the direct cultivation of strong critical thinking. Ultimately, the Drag Continuum can serve to improve reasoning and judgment about gender, sexuality, and normalcy, thus also potentially reducing heterosexism and homophobia.
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Throughout this project, I have made numerous arguments about prejudice formation, maintenance, and reduction, including: (1) performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism are common sources of prejudice formation and maintenance; (2) these common sources of prejudice often further entrench prejudice both by hindering the development of self-knowledge and by encouraging the development of unwarranted beliefs, belief systems, and emotional reactions, in effect combining to create additional barriers against prejudice reduction; (3) the knowledges, competencies and dispositions essential to Paul’s conception of strong critical thinking provide resources well-suited to prejudices rooted in these dynamics, as it helps people to develop their self-knowledge, improve their reasoning, and modify their dispositions; (4) an educational tool designed to enable and encourage strong critical thinking about gender and sexuality can be expected to provide an ethical and realistic resource for reducing heterosexism and homophobia.

The Continuum of (Subversive) Drag Performance that I presented herein grows out of this line of reasoning. Its six ranges are designed to facilitate the analysis of pervasive conceptions of gender and sexual normalcy and the wide-spread patterns of performance in which they are based. They also support workshop facilitators and participants in creating communities of inquiry that are relatively flexible, unconstrained by common conceptions of normalcy, humour-filled, and ripe with opportunities for the constructive practice of strong critical thinking. As a result, any ensuing group deliberation has the potential to be responsive to the unique needs of particular learners, relatively unthreatening, dialogical, dialectical, imaginative, empathetic, supportive, and
productive. These features can be expected to help learners turn the lens of their investigations into gender and sexuality back onto themselves, thereby stimulating strong critical thinking and potentially lessening heterosexism and homophobia.

While the iteration of the Drag Continuum I presented here focuses on prejudices related primarily to gender and sexuality, the Drag Continuum can be adapted to address other prejudices involving different identity categories, such as race, class, age, and religion. By adapting the continuum to stimulate strong critical thinking about pervasive expectations of other normalcies and the wide-spread patterns of performance that produce and maintain them, the Drag Continuum can help people to improve their thinking about race, class, age, and religion and challenge them to let go of their often long-held and deeply engrained prejudices.

Exactly what such adaptations of the Drag Continuum would look like is a potential area for future research. They might begin with discussion of how normal gender and sexual performances vary in different racial, economic, religious, or other communities, and expand to examine what patterns of dress, behaviour, and speech are accepted as normal or derided as deviant in these varied racial, economic, or religious contexts. From there, dialogue could move on to consider the effects of and grounds for these varied performances and the communal expectations that grow out of them. As for issues related to gender and sexuality, to satisfy the requirements of strong critical thinking about race, class, age, or religion, these discussions would have to culminate in individuals examining their own thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours with respect to race, class, age, or religion. These kinds of potential adaptations suggest that the Drag
Continuum could provide an ethical and realistic resource for diverse communities of social justice educators.

The Drag Continuum is but one example of how the resources offered by strong critical thinking can be used in educational contexts to reduce prejudice. While I present one possible strategy for cultivating strong critical thinking about gender, sexuality, and other identity categories, a range of educational tools or strategies can be used to stimulate the knowledges, competencies, and dispositions important to the reduction of heterosexism, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice. Diverse strategies for prejudice reduction based in the resources offered by strong critical thinking can valuably supplement the existing strategies of diverse communities of social justice educators, since a focus on deepening self-knowledge is particularly well-suited to addressing the profound, deep-seated embedding of prejudice in the diverse aspects of the self.

Ultimately, this project has important implications both for those working towards social justice in the areas of gender and sexuality and for those seeking to counter other types of prejudice, because it presents a concrete application of how the multiple resources offered by strong critical thinking can be used to counter people's own gender and sexual prejudice and because it includes a detailed explication of the actual resources for prejudice reduction that strong critical thinking offers.

Beyond the immediate and potential resources for prejudice reduction offered by strong critical thinking and the Drag Continuum, this project has more general conceptual implications for social justice educators and others concerned with the formation, maintenance, and reduction of prejudice. Even though formal empirical tests of my arguments about strong critical thinking and the Drag Continuum need to conducted to
prove their efficacy, this project contributes to debates about the dynamics that might reasonably be thought to contribute to and counter prejudice.

In focusing on the roles that performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism play in the formation and maintenance of prejudice, this project contributes to social justice research in a number of ways. First, in bringing together concepts that are usually employed quite independently by identity theorists and philosophers of education, it demonstrates some of the ways in which the research coming out of these distinct academic disciplines and intellectual traditions can enrich each other and, in doing so, potentially also advance social justice education. Further, in examining some of the ways in which people develop their habitual performances, modes of thinking, background logics, dispositions, and conceptions of self, it draws particular attention to the central role that emotionally entangled, but poorly justified, core convictions and social practice play in creating and perpetuating prejudice. Relatedly, it also highlights the importance of self-knowledge to the reduction of personal prejudice. Only when we begin to develop a genuine, well-rounded awareness and understanding of the behaviours, thinking, beliefs, and dispositions that foundationally shape our identities can we begin to intervene meaningfully in these forces and their effects. Thus, even if the resources for prejudice reduction presented here proved to be less effective than my informal experience suggests they can be, because this project examines some common sources of prejudiced thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours, it has the potential to increase understanding of the dynamics that form and maintain prejudice, thereby increasing the likelihood of developing other successful strategies for prejudice reduction.
As explained in Chapter 6, while prejudice reduction is the ideal goal of this project, this work has more pragmatic goals as well. The endeavour to reduce prejudice and change deeply embedded, profoundly enmeshed barriers to prejudice reduction must - by its very nature – be incremental and long-term. No strategy or principles for changing people’s thinking, belief systems, or cognitive, affective, and behavioural tendencies is likely to result in immediate, significant, and lasting success - the Drag Continuum and strong critical thinking included. Moreover, no prejudice reduction strategy is likely to achieve any degree of success without significant, ongoing support systems. Effective social justice strategies typically require the long-term, widespread involvement of individuals, communities, and institutions.

However, since social justice educators can currently do little to ensure this type of long-term, widespread involvement, my pragmatic hope for this project is that it will simply enable people to become more aware of and concerned about the sources, contents, relationships, and effects of their thinking, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours. I hope more people will begin to notice the undue influence of performativity, undisciplined thinking, and egocentrism on the formation of their own thinking, beliefs, dispositions, and conceptions of self. All the better if people also begin to see this influence as a problem and then to care about reducing it and their own resulting prejudices. Paul’s comment about the foundational role that awareness plays in enabling change warrants repeating here: “Awareness…does not guarantee resolution of a moral issue, but it does enable reasoners to focus more particularly on possible problem areas, and, most importantly, gain insight into how and why their own reasoning may be biased” (Paul, 1993a, p. 253). This project does not claim to present a cure-all, but is one
piece of a much larger puzzle: the puzzle of how to better understand the dynamics that can combine to create and sustain prejudice, in order to better decide which avenues for prejudice reduction are most worth exploring.

I am hopeful that research into the formation, maintenance, and reduction of prejudice will continue to become increasingly nuanced and effective. Some of this future research could build from the research questions to which this thesis gives rise, but which are beyond the scope of the current investigation. These potential avenues for future research include a study of the implementation and effectiveness of the Drag Continuum in varied practical settings and with varied target populations, for example with groups of teachers, factory workers, clergy, or children and young adults at different levels of schooling. Such a study would entail a context-specific exploration of what normal gender and sexual performance look like in different ethnic, religious, sexual, workplace, economic, social, and other communities. It would also entail an assessment of the particular barriers against prejudice reduction that tend to develop within these specific communities. The continuum could then be refined in response to the character, direction, and results of these conversations. Also, richly developed teaching guides and population-specific lesson plans could be developed to aid social justice educators who wish to make use of the Drag Continuum in their work. But these and other avenues for future research are projects for another time.
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