# Affective Democratic Friction: Promise and Predicament

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Drawing primarily from the work of Susan Sánchez-Casal and Amie A. Macdonald, the author reaffirms the epistemic function of identities for restructuring intellectual authority in higher education. In recognition of the imbalanced power relationship between the dominant group and marginalized group in classroom settings, the author further proposes affective democratic friction (ADF) as a pedagogical process that integrates all classroom participants' cognitive and affective learning in order to evaluate testimonial evidence and redistribute epistemic authority.

In spite of the changing demography of the United States, the collegiate desegregation movement in the last five decades has not changed the fact that students of color remained underrepresented in most higher education institutions.[1] In the face of persistent collegiate segregation, I commend the author's efforts to enrich dialogue concerning restructuring intellectual authority in the predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Specifically, my examination of the promise and predicament of the author's advocacy of ADF will be situated in teacher education institutions that more or less endeavor to meet "diversity" — a requisite accreditation standard in the professionalization of educators.[2]

Notably, most teacher education programs in PWIs still attract predominantly white female teacher candidates. On the one hand, the underrepresented ethnic minority students and faculty appear to create a culturally inclusive learning community *for* the predominant white teacher candidates in the PWIs.[3] On the other hand, instead of facilitating dynamic intercultural interactions, the accreditation standards of teacher education continue to focus on exposing teacher candidates to diverse cultures at the cognitive level. As a result, the accreditation process does not necessarily translate into restructuring intellectual authority in teacher education institutions.[4]

In view of the limitations of current teacher education in PWIs, it is critical to inquire into whether ADF can provide untapped resources for facilitating multicultural teacher education reforms. In essence, the author's proposed ADF appears to center on the construction of a democratic learning community in which all participants can share and negotiate how their varied social positions shape their individual and collective evaluation of testimonies by marginalized groups. Overall, ADF seems to aim at promoting epistemic justice in the academy and beyond. To attain this goal, it might be helpful to attend to some unsettled issues surrounding constructing a democratic learning community in higher education institutions.

First, the attempt to restructure intellectual authority in higher education institutions ironically reflects institutional authority in the "credential society," in which these institutions play a key role in sorting and training students to work in corporations and other institutions. Implementing ADF in classrooms means that it is mandatory for all participants to join the community. It follows that the success

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of ADF could reinforce and even solidify the institutional authority exercised by faculty. In particular, the "growth"-oriented professional disposition assessments to which teacher education institutions constantly subject teacher candidates amount to institutional surveillance. Hence, the incorporation of mandatory and disciplinary ADF in classrooms may not be a truly democratic pedagogical process. The intriguing juxtaposition of white students' dominant social position and their vulnerable positionality in the classrooms could simultaneously hinder and support ADF. In the same vein, privileging marginalized students in the classroom would also result in a disparity between their subaltern social statuses and surrealistic privileged positionality in the academy. Hence, effective implementation of ADF must take into consideration the risks and merits of the impact of ADF on all participants.

Second, ADF theoretically could incorporate varied forms of testimonies by the marginalized groups. In other words, teacher educators could deliberately select counterhegemonic testimonies that are well-recognized and have been included in expanded academic canons. Such an elevated "celebrity" status of testimonies by marginalized groups could easily eclipse the marginality of the testimonies. Teacher educators could also invite marginalized groups to serve as guest speakers so as to facilitate socially dominant students' experiential learning about "alternative" and counterhegemonic voices. While such decontextualized marginal testimonies could raise students' awareness of the hidden reality in their living world, the instrumentalization of marginalized voices does not necessarily entail a recognition of marginalized groups' individual and collective agency. Instead, it could reinforce the socially dominant students' stereotypes of the marginalized groups.

Additionally, teacher educators could invite or welcome marginalized students to provide their counterhegemonic testimonies in the classrooms. Privileging such marginalized voices more or less signifies teacher educators' discretional institutional authority when marginalized students (in)voluntarily accept the invitation to share their life stories. Undoubtedly, the testimonies by marginalized students could spontaneously occur and provide white students with culturally enriched dialogue. However, privileging spontaneous marginalized testimonies could render the inclusion of marginalized voices as "imminent" learning resources for the dominant groups. As a result, sharing testimonies could be an undue burden imposed on marginalized students when it is not certain that marginalized students' engagement in providing educational testimonies could benefit the marginalized students' professional development.

Above all, spontaneous testimony by marginalized students as teachable moments could be beyond the teacher educators' pedagogical deliberation. Can we assume that all teacher educators are capable of restructuring intellectual authority in order to make the best of the spontaneous marginalized students' testimonies? How should teacher educators identify and grasp marginalized students' spontaneous testimonies as "teachable moments"? In recognition of teacher educators' fallibility, it is critical to attend to the potential risks embedded in ADF.

Third, it might be imprudent to assume that all testimonies by students from marginalized groups are pedagogically valuable. As a matter of fact, it should be



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noted that testimonies by students from marginalized groups could reflect a colonized worldview and reinforce the hegemonic worldview. Should teacher educators censor such testimonies and dismiss the marginality of the marginalized groups? In line with ADF, socially dominant white students and socially marginalized students could engage in collaborative inquiries to validate testimonial knowledge by underrepresented marginalized groups. Moreover, as teacher candidates' identities do not determine their epistemic virtues or shape their worldview, the presumably democratic and inclusive learning community might be culturally or ideologically homogenous. It follows that the socially marginalized students' spontaneous testimonies could be in sync with socially dominant views, and ADF could then justify and reinforce hegemonic worldviews in the classrooms. Are teacher educators then responsible for providing countertestimonies? On what grounds? How?

My rather preliminary examination of ADF does not intend to cast doubt on the credibility and viability of ADF. Rather, my exploration of the complexity and ambiguities surrounding the theorization and implementation of ADF is intended to draw attention to human fallibility and underline the need to promote epistemic humility. It is my hope that ADF grounded in the recognition of human fallibility and embodiment of epistemic humility will contribute to building trusting relationships that can facilitate collaborative inquiries into social justice in a culturally diverse society.

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