Can Allies Achieve Standpoints?

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ABSTRACT: This paper argues that allies can achieve standpoints. A standpoint is an epistemically privileged position borne from critical consciousness from which one can engage in epistemically justified criticism of social reality (and presumably to act in accord then with such criticisms). The members of oppressed groups are more likely to achieve standpoints because they are more likely to develop firsthand moral knowledge of their oppression and, relatedly, develop critical consciousness. But that does not mean that they attain a standpoint by virtue of their social location *qua* social location. Rather, it is something cultivated over time. What's more, I respond to a recent account of allyship by Holly Lawford-Smith and William Tuckwell and put forward a revised account on which allies must, among other things, talk with and listen to members of their allied-with group. As Jennifer Lackey has recently argued, this sense of talking with and listening to others is a specialized sense in which the cultivation of coconstructed narratives and secondhand moral knowledge is a real possibility. As a result, then, allies are more likely than other privileged individuals to develop secondhand knowledge pertaining to oppression. Because I also argue that allies must be critically conscious, this means that allies can achieve a standpoint. However, just as with the oppressed, it is not automatically granted to them.

KEYWORDS: Allyship; Standpoint Epistemology; Secondhand Knowledge; Resistance

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1. Introduction

Standpoint epistemologists have chiefly been concerned with the epistemic advantages of the oppressed and the epistemic disadvantages of the non-oppressed when it comes to knowing about and understanding the workings of social marginalization.[1] This focus has produced a number of important insights into the workings of oppression and what it takes to resist oppression.[2] The question which animates this paper is

[1] I will use the terms 'oppression' and 'marginalization' (and their cognates) interchangeably.

[2] Such as Mills (2007) on white ignorance, M. Fricker (2009) on testimonial and hermeneutic injustices, Medina (2013) on active ignorance and unknowing, Davis (2018) on epistemic forms of appropriation, and Dotson (2011, 2014) on epistemic violence and epistemic oppression, to name a few.

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a different one though. I ask: Can people who are not marginalized attain the knowledge that marginalized people in possession of a standpoint have attained? To be more specific, I am interested in a subset of non-marginalized individuals; namely, allies. What's more, I argue in support of an affirmative answer.

To some, this may be an uncomfortable question. After all, a lot of what it takes to effectively resist oppression is to elevate the voices of the oppressed by allowing them to produce epistemic and hermeneutic resources that make sense of their oppression – not to mention the additional task of changing their material conditions. And so the question of whether non-marginalized individuals (even if they are allies) could be the epistemic peers of the oppressed could strike a strange tone. I confess that this is a deep worry of mine. That said, it is important to recognize that resisting oppression and liberating the oppressed from it is an effort that places requirements on everyone. Thus, in explicating the conditions under which (some) non-marginalized people may become the epistemic peers of the oppressed, I by no means aim to demote the voices of the oppressed but instead to show would-be allies just what is demanded of them.

In order to see why allies can achieve standpoints, we must get clear on why the oppressed can achieve such an epistemically privileged status and who counts as an ally. Thus, the structure of the paper proceeds as follows: In section 2, I present the central theses of standpoint epistemology to motivate their defense of the view that members of oppressed groups can attain an epistemically privileged position from which they can (justifiably) criticize social reality. In section 3, I respond to a recent account of allyship by Holly Lawford-Smith and William Tuckwell and – after objecting that they neglect important epistemic requirements for allyship – put forward a revised account on which allies must, among other things, talk with and listen to members of their allied-with group. In section 4, I use the idea that allies talk with and listen to members of their allied-with group to show that they can achieve secondhand moral knowledge which is identical in content to the firsthand moral knowledge of the oppressed. Further, because allies are also necessarily critically conscious, I submit that we as theorists do not have good reason to deny that they can hold a standpoint. In sec-

tion 5, I conclude by showing how the account of allyship I offer addresses questions in the epistemology of resistance and epistemic reparations literature.

2. The epistemic advantages of the oppressed

Standpoint epistemologists are generally committed to three theses related to oppression. First, they are committed to the thesis that non-epistemic elements such as "one's social identity and material conditions of one's life" shape what one is in a position to know or not know (Toole 2024, p. 411) — call this the *situated knowledge thesis* (SKT).[3]

Second, standpoint epistemologists are committed to the thesis that "[s]ocially marginalized people, by virtue of their social location, *tend* to have a superior epistemic position than non-oppressed people when it comes to knowing things about the workings of social marginalization that concern them" (Dror 2022, p. 624, original emphasis) — call this the *inversion thesis* (IT).[4] Importantly, these epistemic advantages allow the subject to engage in justified criticisms of existing social structures. These perspectives are called 'standpoints'.

It is worth briefly tending to the question of what this epistemic advantage amounts to before moving on. Authors tends to conceive of this in different ways.[5] For the purposes of this paper (though not without controversy), I am going to bracket this question and take it for granted that what we are talking about is possessing specific (moral) knowledge whose content regards one's oppression, that is, the oppression of some group to which one belongs. It is worth flagging here, though, I will have more to say later about the form of this knowledge.

Moving along, the final thesis to which standpoint epistemologists are committed is that the standpoint from which one can make justified criticism of social structures

[3]Cf. Grasswick 2018; Haraway 1988; Milanovich 2025; Wylie 2003.

[4]Dror (2022) and Wylie (2003), for example, call this the inversion thesis while Ashton (2019) calls this the 'epistemic advantage thesis'. Note that I have stated the *weak inversion thesis*, though one could opt for the *strong inversion thesis* which Dror (2022, p. 628) summarizes thus: "Socially marginalized people, by virtue of their social location *qua* social location, have a superior epistemic position than non-oppressed people when it comes to knowing things about the workings of social marginalization that concern them."

[5]Dror (ibid.), for instance, reads Kukla (2006) and Alcoff (1999) as arguing for the weak inversion thesis but on the basis of knowledge-how rather than knowledge-that.

is one that must be achieved through consciousness-raising — call this the *achievement thesis* (AT).[6] Once again, I am going to largely bracket the question of exactly what to mean by the term and just take the following blanket definition for granted: an event of 'consciousness-raising' is one which attunes the subject to oppression (in a broad sense that also includes epistemic oppression) of some social group.[7]

The reason, as best I can tell, that standpoint epistemologists posit the existence of the standpoint is to provide an explanation of how we can get from a social reality rampant with oppression to one in which the oppressed are liberated. The standpoint, then, is what allows the oppressed to offer justified criticism of social structures. To be sure, "a standpoint is a political analysis of a (set of) social location(s)" (Milanovich 2025, p. 7, original emphasis). By IT, the oppressed subject in possession of a standpoint holds knowledge and/or cognitive dispositions that the oppressed subject without a standpoint (or the privileged subject) does not.

Because the individual who has achieved a standpoint can see social reality as it is, they are enabled to take action in a way that others are not. To unpack this, let us consider the connection between knowledge and action. According to John Hawthorne and Jason Stanley (2008), for instance, knowledge that p provides a reason for acting.[8] If this (or something like it is true), then "[w]here one's choice is p-dependent, it is appropriate to treat the proposition that p as a reason for acting iff you know that p" (ibid., p. 578).[9] For our purposes, this means that insofar as those possessing a standpoint know things that others do not, they can (properly) act in ways that others cannot.[10] One reason this is important is because, as I mentioned earlier, it is thought by most (perhaps even all) standpoint epistemologists that the oppressed person with a standpoint is able to critique society in ways that others are not. What's more, insofar as something like Hawthorne and Stanley's principle is true, they will have reason to

[6] Haraway (1997, p. 47) points out that a standpoint is the "fruit of the practice of oppositional and differential consciousness."

[7] For a more thorough overview and discussion of consciousness-raising, see Celikates and Flynn 2023.

[8] They formulate the Action-Knowledge Principle as: "Treat the proposition that p as a reason for acting only if you know that p" (Hawthorne and Stanley 2008, p. 577).

[9] This is the Reason-Knowledge Principle.

[10] In this respect standpoints are not unlike other epistemic achievements (Toole 2024).

take politically resistant action in ways that others may not.

3. Who counts as an ally?

3.1. The deferential model of allyship

As I said at the outset, I want to think about who other than the oppressed individual has a chance to know about oppressive conditions and, therefore, who is in a position to participate in liberation. It strikes me that the first person on our list is the so-called 'ally'.

Holly Lawford-Smith and William Tuckwell (2024) have recently offered an explicit treatment of the concept of allyship.[11] Broadly, an ally is a privileged person who takes actions which seek to improve the social/political position of the ostensibly allied-with group. Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell (ibid., p. 6) offer the following more precise formulation:

> **Allyship 1**
> An individual I is an ally to a marginalized group G iff:
>
> 1. I is privileged on the same axis on which G is oppressed;[12] and
> 2. I takes resistant actions that are authorized by G and a product of appropriate deference to G, in order to improve the position of G.

Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell argument for condition 1 is very intuitive. Paradigmatic cases of allyship are cases in which someone who does not possess a social identity constitutive of some oppressed group. For instance, the case opening their paper is that of the Black Power salute at the 1968 Summer Olympic Games. Here, a Peter Norman – a white man – joined two Black men – Tommie Smith and John Carlos – in raising their fists in the Black Power salute as a symbolic protest of poverty and lynchings facing Black Americans at the time. To the extent that we are comfortable calling him an ally, it is essential to our verdict about Peter Norman that he was a *white* man

[11] Allyship has not been widely discussed within the literature. However, Almassi (2015), Blankschaen (2016), Fried (2019), McKinnon (2017), and Sullivan-Clarke (2020) offer insights into various aspects of allyship as will be seen throughout the remainder of the paper. Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell (2024) are the only ones that I am aware of to offer an account of allyship.

[12] See Young 1990 on axes of oppression.

who joined two *Black* men in their protest.[13] Had he been a Black man, he would not be an ally but, rather, another victim of oppression engaging in symbolic protest. Though Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell do not make the further point that if Norman had been of any other racial identity (that is, neither Black nor white) the same would still hold. After all, axes of oppression are about the specific conditions of oppression that one faces and it is not the case that any race faces oppressive circumstances identical to those of Black Americans.

Regarding condition 2, the story gets more complicated. I think that it goes without saying that allies are people who take action in order to improve the position of the ostensibly allied-with group. But what action must be taken and how do allies determine this? To answer this question, Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell consider the recent work of Ferracioli and Terlazzo on feminist actions. For Ferracioli and Terlazzo (2026), the phrase 'feminist liberalism' is *prima facie* redundant since liberalism entails a commitment to the equality of all persons. So, to make the phrase meaningful we have to figure out what being a feminist liberal requires that being a liberal does not. Thus, they define a feminist as "someone who (i) has sincere feminist beliefs and values, and (ii) is disposed for that reason to perform feminist actions, even when doing so is costly" (Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell 2024, p. 5). Given this, they suggest thinking about 'feminist actions' in terms of "actions that actively resist or undermine sexist norms and expectations" (ibid., p. 5). Though I will not go into the full details, Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell argue that we should not talk of dispositions and thus arrive at the following generalization: "the idea is that to be an ally you must (i) sincerely believe in the importance of advancing the justice-based interests of an oppressed group and (ii) *for that reason* take actions that aim at furthering those interests" (ibid., p. 7, original emphasis).

Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell (ibid., p. 6) interestingly argue that the resistant actions taken by the ally must be authorized by the allied-with group and "a product of

[13] I use qualifying language here because Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell think that one-off instances of resistant action qualify the agent as an ally (see Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell 2024, p. 8). Though I cannot offer a fuller defense here, I am skeptical that one action can make someone an ally.

appropriate deference." Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell conceive of authorization by a group in two ways: *default authorization* and *explicit authorization*. An ally is *defaultly authorized* by G to φ if φ is an act of amplifying or disseminating "what has already been explained, said, demanded, etc. by [G]" (Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell 2024, p. 11). She is *explicitly authorized* by G to φ if some member(s) of G tell(s) her to φ. In stating these forms of authorization, Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell aim to be provide a clear picture of how one becomes an ally: one must first put oneself in a position to attain some form of authorization and then one can act in the requisite manner.

The point about deference is related. Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell are responding to Avery Kolers (2014, p. 426) who argues that "To be in solidarity [...] requires a provisional willingness to act against one's best judgment, including prudential, epistemic, and even moral judgment." Though Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell submit that this may be true of solidarity it is not true of allyship. Indeed, they write: "If a hearer puts her perceptions to one side even when she has overwhelming evidence that what she is hearing is inaccurate, she has made an epistemic mistake, one that can damage the interests of the oppressed group" (Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell 2024, p. 15). To build an alternative view, Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell rely on an approach to epistemic partiality in friendship developed by Sanford C. Goldberg.[14] To Goldberg (2019), having a value produces a practical reason to act in ways promoting that value and not act in ways demoting that value. Though I will not reconstruct it here, Goldberg's argument is that in friendship, we have value-reflecting reasons to act in particular ways but they do not conflict with epistemic standards like believing in accordance with one's evidence.[15] To Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell, the important thing that the notion of value-reflecting reasons allows us to say is that because allies value the relevant interests of the allied-with group, they have value-reflecting reasons "to act in those ways that promote justice and to avoid doing those things that demote justice" (Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell 2024, p. 16). Given this, Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell

[14]See Mason 2023 for an overview of the epistemic partiality literature including alternative approaches.

[15]See esp. Goldberg 2019, pp. 2227–2234.

argue, there will be times in which allies should be more inclined to exhibit serious scrutiny rather than defer. To be sure, Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell contend, the contexts in which we might say deference is necessary are cases where forming a false belief, failing to listen to someone who is telling the truth, or taking the wrong course of action are high. But these are not cases in which we would say a good friend would simply defer because "[a] friend who simply defers can provide comfort, but cannot help her friend to see when she is making a mistake" (Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell 2024, p. 17). Likewise, a good ally does not defer in these cases where making an epistemic mistake is high-cost. Rather, they challenge members of the allied-with group precisely because they have value-reflecting reasons do pursue the true on the matter.

3.2. The coconstructional model of allyship

Having reconstructed Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell's view, I think there is a lot to admire about it. That said, the issue I want to consider regarding this characterization of allyship pertains to group authorization and appropriate deference. Though it may very well be the case that in some instances the course of action that the ally takes is one which they have (either defaultly or explicitly) been authorized to take and which requires their deference to some member of the allied-with group, this excludes the importance of *secondhand knowledge* and its role in perspective-sharing and narrative coconstruction.[16] This is a point raised by Jennifer Lackey in her book *The Right to Be Known*. In alignment with IT, Lackey (2026, ch. 3) notes that there are contexts in which it is epistemically disadvantageous to have firsthand moral knowledge. However, she does not follow many in both the standpoint epistemology literature and the moral knowledge literature by suggesting that this means those in the epistemically disadvantageous position need to defer to those in better epistemic positions. Rather, both parties can come together to engage in epistemically generative dialogue and allow both to walk away with moral knowledge. In the case of the agent in an epistem-

[16] As best I can tell, the locution 'secondhand knowledge' is coined by Lackey (2011). But as we will see it is a species of the genus testimonial knowledge which has been studied for many years; see E. Fricker 1987 for an early (reductionist) account or Leonard 2023 for a recent overview.

ically disadvantageous position, they can attain secondhand moral knowledge.

Although Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell do discuss the importance of allies being people who listen to the oppressed, they do not fully treat the consequences of this requirement. The remainder of this paper is meant to do just this. First, in the remainder of this section I will revise their criteria for allyship in order to center epistemic characteristics that we should expect allies to have. Then in the next section I show that a result of my preferred conception of allyship is that allies have a route to standpoint achievement.

Given these concerns, I will now defend the following definition of allyship:

> **Allyship 2**
> An individual I is an ally to a marginalized group G iff:
>
> 1. I is privileged on the same axis on which G is oppressed;
> 2. I has critical consciousness with respect to the oppression of G;
> 3. I talks with and listens to some members of G;
> 4. I takes resistant actions, motivated/initiated/caused by conditions 2–3, in order to improve the position of G.

As I said before, we need to get clear on the epistemic position that allies are in and how this relates to the actions they take. This is precisely what conditions 2–4 aim to get at. Let us take each in turn. First, condition 2. Recall that in section 2, I defined consciousness-raising as the assent of the subject to the fact of the oppression of some social group. In some sense, this is not all that different from a key part of Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell's analysis where they suggest that "[t]he good ally values the justice-based interests of their allied-with group, and thus has value-reflecting reasons to act in those ways that promote justice and to avoid doing those things that demote justice" (Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell 2024, p. 16). Given my understanding of critical consciousness, what I want to say is that we need to get specific on the reasons why allies value the interests of the groups. The way I've defined it, critical consciousness is a truth-conducive feat of cognition. That is, one is critical consciousness (of the oppression of some group) when they come to *know* that some group is oppressed.[17]

[17]The suggestion that critical consciousness is a requirement for allyship is not without precedent.

That said, I do not know this knowledge is enough to entitle one to act in the requisite ways. As Bryan Stevenson says, "justice requires getting proximate" (qtd. in Lackey 2026, p. 153).

To address the question of proximity and authorization, let us consider condition 3. In **Allyship 1**, Lawford-Smith and Tuckwell require a rather limited sense of 'listening to' that amounts to deference in some way. When the ally's action φ is defaultly authorized, they are simply acting as a medium through which what has already been explained or said by members of G may pass. And when an ally is explicitly authorized to φ, something similar can be said. The deference going on here is about practical reasons. But recall also that the ally is also (appropriately) deferring to members of G regarding evidence about their situation. I think there is a real question of whether or not we are comfortable with our theory looking like this, but I will bracket this for now. Instead, I will focus on the fact that this feels all too specific. As Lackey points out, when we are talking about moral situations, it is a false dilemma to think that we may only develop our own firsthand knowledge or defer to those with firsthand knowledge. Rather, there are epistemically generative means available to use of developing secondhand moral knowledge. Further, I do not see why the Lackeyian conception of listening would exclude either appropriate deference or both senses of authorization. As Lackey describes it, listening is part of a broader reparative project of 'talking, listening, and learning' with those who have been epistemically wronged. This process is an epistemically generative one that takes place during interpersonal exchanges. Thus, 'talking' amounts to testifying to another about one's experiences in a way that one sees. It is important to recognize that speakers engaging in this sense of talking have "agential authority with respect to [their] own mental states when [they] are the agents of the very experiences in question" (ibid., p. 141). And by listening Lackey does not simply meaning something like hearing; rather her conception of listening has entails certain responsibilities on the part of the listener. Indeed, she notes that "when

Graham et al. (2023) argue that a precondition for an ally being trustworthy to the allied-with group is her awareness of social systems and her place within them — especially how she benefits from them and members of the allied-with group do not.

listeners fail to have an appropriate response of any kind, the stories that speakers tell, and even what they understand or know themselves, can be significantly impacted" (Lackey 2026, p. 142). As a result, listeners must be delivering both *generic* and *specific* responses. The former are responses that would be appropriate in a wide range of interpersonal exchanges. The latter are responses – like looking sad or gasping in horror – that are closely connected to the content of the particular narrative of the speaker. When speakers talk in this way and listeners listen in this way, the stories that define our lives can be co-constructed and secondhand knowledge can be generated. That said, I think that it might also be the case that the ally could become either defaultly or explicitly authorized since either of these will occur via testimonial mechanisms.

4. A standpoint for allies

The arguments in the previous section served to position us to have a conception of allyship that better specifies its epistemic requirements. Hopefully, I have also motivated a conception that makes it clear what is generally required to become an ally. Now, I want to spell out some important implications of the preceding arguments. Namely, I am going to argue in this section that, contrary to the orthodoxy in standpoint epistemology, allies *can* possess standpoints.

As I understand it, an oppressed person is said to have achieved a standpoint when they have cultivated certain moral knowledge by critical consciousness. That is, their awareness of their oppression disposes them to gather additional evidence and draw further inferences. Further, this awareness combined with these dispositions allows the oppressed person to resist their oppression.

Given how I have characterized a standpoint and the requirements for allyship, it's hard not to see why allies would be able to attain a standpoint. Because allies possess critical consciousness and talk with and listen to members of the allied-with group, they are in a position to gain secondhand knowledge of the oppressed person's first-hand experience. When they have such knowledge, they will be in an analogous epistemic position as the oppressed person with a standpoint. In the latter case, the agent

holds knowledge of their oppression (critical consciousness) in addition to further knowledge about their experiences and, as a result, is disposed to gather additional evidence and draw further inferences. In the former case, the agent possess the same knowledge but in a different form. To the extent that any knowledge disposes one to gain additional evidence and draw inferences, then we should expect that this occurs in the former case as well. What's more, when they gain secondhand knowledge of additional wrongs suffered by the oppressed, then they will hold a secondhand form of the oppressed person's firsthand experience. In full, then, I submit that the difference between the oppressed person with a standpoint and the ally who gains secondhand moral knowledge pertaining to the oppression of the allied-with group.

This leaves us – theorists – with two options. Because of the aforementioned difference, the epistemic positions of the ally and the oppressed are either both standpoints or only the latter is. This is the *identity dilemma*: either possessing a marginalized identity is necessary for standpoint achievement or it is not. I am going to argue in support of taking the second horn.

Because I conceive of critical consciousness as an epistemic feat which supports the further (still epistemic) feat of achieving a standpoint, it is not totally obvious why having a marginalized social identity would bear on standpoint achievement. At a first glance, one would be inclined to say that the oppressed must have some sort of epistemically salient properties that the privileged do not. However, this would be to support a thesis stronger than IT as I have stated it. What's more, Lidal Dror (2022) rightly observes that this thesis is difficult to support. Consider the following example:[18]

> MARY'S ROOM APPLIED[19]
>
> Consider two social scientists: a Black woman called Chloe and her white colleague, Jane. For Jane's part, she is an exceptional student and passionate activist. She knows just about anything one would want to know about the history and present conditions of Black Americans: she's an expert on slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, Mass Incarceration, and so on. She has read autobiographies, stories, and personal letters with emotional accounts of the suffering of Black Americans in ad-

[18] Dror's example is meant to parallel the 'Mary's room' thought experiment developed by Jackson (1982).

[19] Paraphrased from Dror 2022, pp. 628–9.

> dition to talking with and listening to particular Black people in interpersonal exchanges. Further, she is an activist in numerous organizations to better the lives of Black Americans.
>
> Chloe, Jane's colleague, is a Black woman who is Jane's equal as a student, social scientist, and activist. She has the same epistemic standing as Jane abstracting away from whatever differences come from their social location *qua* social location.

Just as Dror argues, we can recognize that Jane in MARY'S ROOM APPLIED "does not know important things about how it feels to be oppressed as a (particular) Black person" and so "concede that Chloe and Black people generally have this epistemic advantage over her" without endorse the claim that "Jane must thereby be epistemically disadvantaged when it comes to *understanding the operations of racism within the United States*" (Dror 2022, p. 629, original emphasis). Thus, I agree with Dror when he writes that "it does not seem plausible that *merely* changing Jane's social location, and keeping all else the same, would improve Jane's epistemic prowess or position vis-à-vis the relevant workings of social marginalization" (ibid., p. 629, original emphasis).

The purpose of utilizing this thought experiment is to motivate the intuition that non-marginalized people can possess a standpoint. Jane and Chloe have equivalent epistemic standing: they are both experts in the historical and present plights of Black Americans. Further, they both have (moral) knowledge of the wrongs committed. Chloe's knowledge may be (but need not be) firsthand while Jane's will necessarily be secondhand. Nevertheless, they seem to differ along one line: Chloe has qualia of Black oppression and Jane does not. But recall again that Dror argued that "the qualia of being oppressed does not *generally* give better epistemic support to claims about the workings of social marginalization" (ibid., p. 629, original emphasis). Thus, I see no reason to say that Jane cannot possess a standpoint.

I don't want to lose sight of what is at stake in making this claim. Just as I said in section 2, one thing that a standpoint does is enable its possessor to engage in epistemically justified and superior criticism of social reality (and presumably to act in accord then with such criticisms). Thus, if what I have just argued is right, then Jane and Chloe can both engage in such criticism. As part of their criticism, they may each gen-

erate proposed plans to improve the position of Black people in America. But suppose that their plans conflict. We have now reached a problem about peer disagreement. I do not intend here to offer a full treatment of how to navigate this problem; after all, epistemologists of peer disagreement are still trying to figure that out. Instead, I want to recognize the idiosyncratic considerations that will appear in considering peer disagreement where the peers are an oppressed person and an ally where both have a standpoint. Because this is a peer disagreement problem, the sort of analysis we'd need to resolve the problem would be a careful one of each of the peers epistemic credentials and their epistemic standing. As a result, Chloe's qualia of being oppressed are unlikely to be related to our assessment of her epistemic standing. However, this is going to depend on exactly what plan Chloe has in mind. While it is true that qualia of being oppressed to not give one better epistemic support for claims about the workings of social marginalization, it may be true that they will play some role in the formation of her plan to improve the position of Black people in America. Indeed, if the nature of her conflict with Jane revolves around this point – that Chloe has qualia and Jane does not – then we may be inclined to say that Chloe is epistemic privileged in a way that Jane is not. Note, though, that this does not invalidate the claim that Jane has a standpoint. It is, instead, a further claim that despite their standpoints there is still room for disagreement. And when this arises, we will need to resort to the same sort of tools and analyses we'd expect for any case of peer disagreement.

5. Conclusion

The question that opened this paper was whether or not non-marginalized individuals can achieve the knowledge had by oppressed people with standpoints. What's more, I questioned the further claim that non-marginalized people can achieve standpoints. To answer these, I first considered why standpoint epistemologists think the oppressed can achieve standpoints. Since it is not the case the the oppressed are granted standpoints because of their social location *qua* social location nor because of the qualia of being oppressed that they possess, there are not in principle reasons to think that (1)

the knowledge entailed by a standpoint or (2) the status of possessing a standpoint are unattainable by non-marginalized people.

From here, I clarified what I think qualifies someone as an ally to a specific marginalized group. Crudely, an ally is a privileged person with critically consciousness who talks with and listens to the oppressed in addition to taking resistant actions that aim to improve the position of the oppressed. Requiring that allies talk with and listen to the oppressed means that they will be in a position to (though need not necessarily) develop secondhand moral knowledge pertaining to the oppression in question. This is important because – in addition to being critically conscious – it would mean that allies can satisfy the general criteria for standpoint achievement. Indeed, I argued that we should not be afraid to draw this inference.

I want to make a brief remark about epistemic reparations. Following the introduction of the term by Jennifer Lackey (2022),[20] social epistemologists have been more interested in what sort of actions could and should take place to restore the epistemic status of victims of epistemic wrongs.[21] Because I have drawn from Lackey's account of 'talking, listening, and learning' and made it a necessary condition for allyship, allies are engaged in at least one form of epistemic reparations. Indeed, talking and listening can be epistemically beneficial for listeners *but also for speakers*. Narrating the events of one's life can "[change] the way the teller (and listener) subsequently understands the event" (Pasupathi, Fivush, and Hernandez-Martinez 2016, p. 49). And so, talking can be epistemically generative for speakers. Thus, it can serve as an act of epistemic reparations.[22]

Lastly, a word about epistemic resistance. José Medina (2013) has shown that resisting oppression demands the use of epistemic and communicative skills such as resistant imagination. Indeed, I understand Medina's 'epistemic friction' to be generated by the incorporation of multiple perspectives via networks of solidarity into the production of both individual and collective knowledge. It is hard to see how allies,

[20] See also Lackey 2026.

[21] See Mitova 2026 for recent treatments of epistemic reparations.

[22] I am skipping over many of the details. For a more thorough account of why and how 'talking, listening, and learning' constitutes an act of epistemic reparations, see Lackey 2026, ch. 3.

on my proposal, could not have a role to play in this. It may be the case that firsthand knowledge or even qualia are necessary for some roles in resistance, but this does not mean that non-marginalized people have no role to play.

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