St. Cloud State University
theRepository at St. Cloud State

6-2017

An Analysis of Academic Social Justice Programs at Five Midwestern Universities

Joshua A. Morey
St. Cloud State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/socresp_etds

Part of the Other Sociology Commons

An Analysis of Academic Social Justice Programs at Five Midwestern Universities

by

Joshua Morey

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science

In Social Responsibility

May, 2017

Thesis Committee:
Stephen Philion, Chairperson
Sudarshana Bordoloi
Edward Greaves

Abstract

Students entering postsecondary academic social justice programs are told they will gain the tools to become potent agents of social change. However, given the relative novelty of social justice as an academic field, there remains a lack of clarity about what exactly social justice encompasses. What principles of inquiry, theory, and practice unify social justice as an academic field? Is there a consistent, coherent conceptualization of social justice and social change agency among social justice faculty? Are there social-historical conditions that foster the development of social justice programs in universities? These questions guided this research project.

The evidence, based on analyses of social justice faculty syllabi, publications, reading lists, and interviews, suggests that academic social justice programs are rooted in a postmodern worldview that emphasizes fragmentation, identity, and solipsism. Furthermore, the development of academic social justice programs appears to be rooted in an adaptation by universities (or departments within universities) to neoliberal adjustments to the world economy by using social justice programs to capture market shares of students. The postmodern direction taken by faculty allows for subversive language and posturing without seriously disrupting the core antagonisms of capitalism.

Acknowledgements

Nothing about this project, neither the reading, research, nor writing, would be possible without the resilience of my mother, the patience and intellectual guidance of Stephen Philion, and the enduring love and longsuffering of Amanda (whose intelligence, wit, and heart guided the better parts of this project-and the better parts of my life!), Ivo (whose generosity of spirit reveals the better parts of humanity), and Ezra (whose joyful exuberance rejuvenates our entire family).

"You don't believe nothin'!" roared the white man's preacher.
"Oh yes I do," said Hezekiah,
"I believe that a man should be beholden to his neighbor
Without the reward of Heaven or the fear of hell fire."

"Well, there's a lot of good ways for a man to be wicked!"

Joseph Simon Newman

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter I: Introduction

Reason for Study

I have been committed to social change movements since I was a young teenager. My family struggled economically and experienced periodic homelessness, and since my youth it has been my lifelong endeavor to understand inequalities, why they exist, how they sustain themselves, how they began, and how they will end. It was thus with great curiosity and cautious excitement that I matriculated in the MS in Social Responsibility program at St. Cloud State University, hoping to experience rigorous instruction in social change theory and practice under the tutelage of faculty committed to serious study and action.

I have, however, routinely struggled to explain my MS program to others. When my family and friends, mostly working class and many possessing radical sensibilities, ask me about the Social Responsibility program, they often have two basic questions: What does "social responsibility" mean, and how does this academic program confront social irresponsibility any better than anything else? My relatives and friends see schools, no matter how radical the posture, as embedded in a larger system that means to reproduce itself, and as the first in my family to go to college (indeed the first to graduate from high school on my father's side) they approach what I say with appropriate skepticism. Consequently, when I talk about social injustice and irresponsibility, they want to know, with furrowed brow, exactly what I mean: Original sin, secret societies, nefarious multinational corporations, all the –isms, people in black helicopters, the boss?

The point inadvertently made by friends and family is that Social Responsibility does not harbor a set of unified, consistent conceptualizations, questions, and

methodologies like other sciences. If I were studying Biology, Economics, or History, there would be no need to fumble for words to describe my field; my family and friends, regardless of education or training, usually understand what it means to study such things, even so far as being aware of some of the theoretical debates therein. Such fields have specific ranges of study employing clear methods of inquiry and debate; Social Responsibility, on the other hand, currently yields no such luxuries. After searching for words to describe my program, I usually surrender to confusion (whether mine or others') and explain that "it's basically Sociology", a statement which, based on the findings of this project, I have come to accept is inaccurate. People, however, are familiar with Sociology, they have an idea of what and how it studies, while Social Responsibility needs clarification which I often fail to adequately provide. This project, therefore, is an effort to take seriously and sociologically answer the question posed by my family and friends: "What *is* a Social Responsibility program?"

A Master's Degree to Change the World

The MS in Social Responsibility at St. Cloud State University, like social justice counterparts in other universities, offers students an interdisciplinary background in theories, manifestations, and remedies of social injustice and irresponsibility. These programs distinguish themselves from more traditional sciences by an emphasis on agency; those who complete the program are equipped to engage in responsible social change, i.e. Social Responsibility is not merely an academic program but a social project with goals and strategies.

The program's coursework attempts to wrestle with fundamental questions of inequality. It encourages students to study matters such as racism, sexism, classism,

ableism, sexuality, and environment, stressing an interconnectedness of oppressions and their lack of hierarchy in significance. Students and faculty have organized speaker and video series that address such matters in an effort to bring their messages of anti-oppression to the campus and St. Cloud, MN communities. Students are routinely asked in several program courses to develop strategies to confront the social injustices and irresponsibilities they have studied through their coursework and the program often facilitates opportunities to put their ideas into practice. The program attempts to help students find internships and careers with a social justice focus and offers a graduation pledge (not mandatory) to "take into account the social, ecological and cultural consequences of any job opportunity I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work[1]."

Overview of Research Project

Given the gravity of the tasks this and similar academic programs assign to their students, it seems reasonable to sociologically investigate the theory and practice emerging from such programs and assess their efficacy. This project therefore attempts to understand the development, manifestations, and effects of social justice programs within the social relationships, structures, and institutions of which they are a part. Furthermore, as a sociological examination of university social justice programs, their goals and strategies, and how they theorize causation and remedy of social injustice, the project identifies the theoretical foundations that inform their analyses of social injustice. Finally, this project attempts to explore the potential consequences of the strategies these programs employ with the understanding that these outcomes are situated within,

---

[1] http://www.stcloudstate.edu/SocialResponsibility/careers/default.asp

influenced by, and in relationship with a larger historical context.

Five academic social justice programs from Midwestern universities were analyzed; included in this analysis are an emphasis within a major, a minor, a major, a department that offers and major and a minor, and a graduate program. Interviews were conducted with at least one faculty member from each program. Faculty interviews contributed to a more thorough comprehension of each program's history and conceptualizations of matters of injustice, inequality, and interventions.

To organize education around social justice indicates that there is an expectation that these programs will create agents for social change and, consequently, the programs are themselves social change agents. This project, however, indicates that there are often significant, meaningful gaps between intended and actual outcomes of social justice programs which lend themselves to "sociological analysis since the very process of formal organization ordinarily involves an explicit statement of purpose and procedure (Merton, 1936, p. 896)." This project reveals that the lineages of theory that inform social justice programs foster conclusions and consequences that are problematic, even contradictory, to the priorities expressed by such programs.

While there is yet no generalized field of social justice theory, some consistencies and continuities are observable. The theories promoted and/or produced in social justice programs often find their inspiration in postmodernism, deconstruction, identity politics, and multiculturalism; economic or material analyses of social injustices are often secondary, toothless critiques of neoliberalism and globalization or simply absent. For example, the SCSU Social Responsibility website's career page assures students of the

"growing pressure for businesses to become more socially responsible[2]." The page offers a link to Responsible Wealth, a network of wealthy business people (top 5% of income and wealth) concerned about social justice. Juxtaposing the organization with abolitionists, labor movements, and the civil rights movements, Responsible Wealth encourages the wealthy to "use their resources and privilege to advance a movement for economic and social justice[3]." The program's website assures that graduates will be the necessary custodians to marshal this corporate transformation.

Although social justice programs are organized to facilitate students' understanding of the interconnectedness of oppressions, this project suggests that there exists a dearth of theory to adequately explain the relationships between oppressions. Oppressions are instead moralized, their interconnectedness is expected to be confessed rather than explained, and, in the end, despite the radical discourse, sacrifices, and hard work undertaken by several faculty and students, we are merely left with a hope that the injustices will be kinder and gentler rather than superseded. This project endeavors to understand how and why, despite pronouncements to the contrary, social justice programs serve to perpetuate the injustices they mean to confront.

---

[2] http://www.stcloudstate.edu/SocialResponsibility/careers/business.asp
[3] http://www.faireconomy.org/issues/responsible_wealth

Chapter II: Trends in Theory

Introduction of Theory

The Trends in Theory section is an effort to identify some of the theoretical lineages that inform SJ program conceptualizations of social justice and social change agency. The literatures reviewed in this section have been selected for three primary, sometimes overlapping reasons: SJ faculties frequently assign or recommend the literature; the literature has been authored by SJ faculty; and/or the literature directly addresses itself to matters of social justice identified by SJ faculty. The section demonstrates that matters of social justice, while almost universally understood to be important for an equitable society, are often deeply contested at the theoretical, practical, and strategic levels. For example, every author in the following section might argue that poverty warrants urgent attention; however, differences exist regarding theoretical understandings of poverty, what it is, why it happens, and how it should be addressed. This assemblage of literatures would ideally explain how SJ programs and faculty understand the world (if not uniformly) and how these understandings are cause and consequence of spirited, ongoing debate.

Julie Andrzejewski, co-initiator of the MS in Social Responsibility program at St. Cloud State University, summarizes the potential possessed by academic SJ programs in an article advocating the adoption of Social Justice, Peace, and Environmental Education standards (SJPEE). She argues that, other than the media, educational institutions are "the other primary source of ideas and information for the populace. They can be tools for critical thinking, social and environmental justice, and active citizenship (Andrzejewski, 2005, 9)." Despite the impediments of "conservative forces", Andrzejewski recognizes a

growing movement for "creative spaces for questioning; investigating; researching; and teaching new paradigms, inclusionary theories, perspectives, and knowledge bases (p. 9)." This multiplicity of "knowledge and thought from many intellectual traditions, ways of knowing, and social movements (p. 10)" is regarded as the form of agency for social change. Movements for social justice, peace, and environment contend with "giant corporations", "corporate elites", and "powerful right-wing corporate forces" and demand recognitions of a range of perspectives that includes "race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, national origin, religion, age, physical appearance, species, human rights, global peace, citizenship, democracy, biodiversity, and ecological sustainability (p. 10)." Citing the authority of educational theorist Ernest Boyer (who served on the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations), Andrzejewski and John Alessio assert the primacy of the educational institution as change agent: "a view of scholarly service—one that both applies and contributes to human knowledge—is particularly needed in a world in which huge, almost intractable problems call for the skills and insights only the academy can provide (as cited in Andrzejewski & Alessio, 2005, p. 306)[4]."

This chapter attempts to identify trends in theory, such as those expressed above, that served constitutive functions in the ways SJ faculty and programs understand and teach the world. Such trends, some of which are evidenced by Andrzejewski's statements, include: the emergence of politics of recognition and identity; the emergence

---

[4] Boyer's emphasis of the academy is used in the context of an argument in support of education programs that teach students "to actually practice new behaviors (like not telling or laughing at racist jokes, or educating others about the impact of racist jokes, etc.) (Andrzejewski & Alessio, 2005, p. 306)." The results section will demonstrate how Andrzejewski's micro-scale, interpersonal behavior conceptualizations of social justice and social change agency are shared among many social justice faculty.

of lifestyle and consumption politics; the emergence postmodernism; the rejection (or, at least, distrust) of class analysis and politics; and the privileging of education as the primary location of resistance against the various forms of oppression identified by the programs. These trends are in many ways deeply connected, blend into one another, inform each other, and represent a historically unique trajectory of political intervention, consequently meriting the attention of this study. Furthermore, each of these trends exists in a relationship with the social and political realities of society; the social, political, and economic trends of the past four decades have been characterized by divestment from public goods and services in favor of unmitigated, unrestrained markets, particularly for labor. These trends in political economy, often referred to as "neoliberalism" or "austerity" in the literature and faculty interviews, serve as backdrop for the tapestry of social theory that has emerged from social justice programs, so it seems fitting to begin a discussion of theory there.

The Neoliberal Setting

Defining Neoliberalism

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed a sharp increase in government tax revenue as a proportion of total national income (particularly while capitalism was in crisis during the Great Depression and World War Two), rising from less than 10% of national income in 1910 to nearly 30% of national income by 1950; this revenue was spent on an array of goods, services, and wealth transfers that were meant to broadly provide economic stability (Piketty, 2014, pp. 474-481). The "right" to stability was not merely passively assumed by the state but rather won through persistent pressure from those who would benefit from the stability. The conditions for claiming such rights from

the state were summarized by Panitch and Gindin (2012); by the time Roosevelt was

inaugurated in 1933:

> Manufacturing production had been cut in half, domestic investment had fallen by 90%, 5,000 banks had gone out of business, farm incomes had fallen by four-fifths, and 25% of the US labor force was unemployed. In the crucial auto industry...only half of the 450,000 workers employed in 1929 were still at work. State and city governments, still carrying the primary responsibility for the distribution of public services and benefits...were completely overwhelmed by demands for "relief." (p. 54)

Such demands for relief were becoming increasingly organized by more radical

influences and Roosevelt believed that the United States must reform and concede to

popular pressure if it was to avoid the militant turbulence that was gripping Europe (p.

55). Against this backdrop, Roosevelt enacted a sweeping array of federal regulations and

investments in public works designed to address the conditions outlined above,

embracing the Keynesian position that federal spending, even deficit spending, would

boost consumption and demand. Between 1930 and 1980, the policies of state

intervention were vastly successful at reducing inequality by several measures in the

United States (Piketty, 2014, pp. 291-294), but by 1980 the gains in economic stability

began to unravel.

According to geographer David Harvey, neoliberalism was the ruling class's

response to the stagnation of corporate profits during the late 1960's and early 1970's

(Harvey, 2005, pp. 19-26). One could hypothesize several manners by which the wealthy

(globally) attempted to restore profitability, but the outcomes of the past 40 years of

policy - characterized by deregulation of financial markets, environmental protections,

and worker rights to safety, health, and organization; withdrawing material support from

public institutions, services, and goods; and returning to market fundamentalism driven

by inter-worker competition and diminishing public assistance programs - have been

clear. Since the onset of the neoliberal era, the top 10% of income earners have

appropriated approximately 75% of all gains in income, and the top 1% have

appropriated approximately 60% of all income gains (Piketty, 2014, p. 295) (to say

nothing of capital gains, which are even more unevenly distributed and frequently

concealed). Worker productivity and wages, appearing intimately linked between World

War Two and 1970, have since divorced[5], thus amounting to a direct transfer of wealth

from those who work to those who manage or own[6].
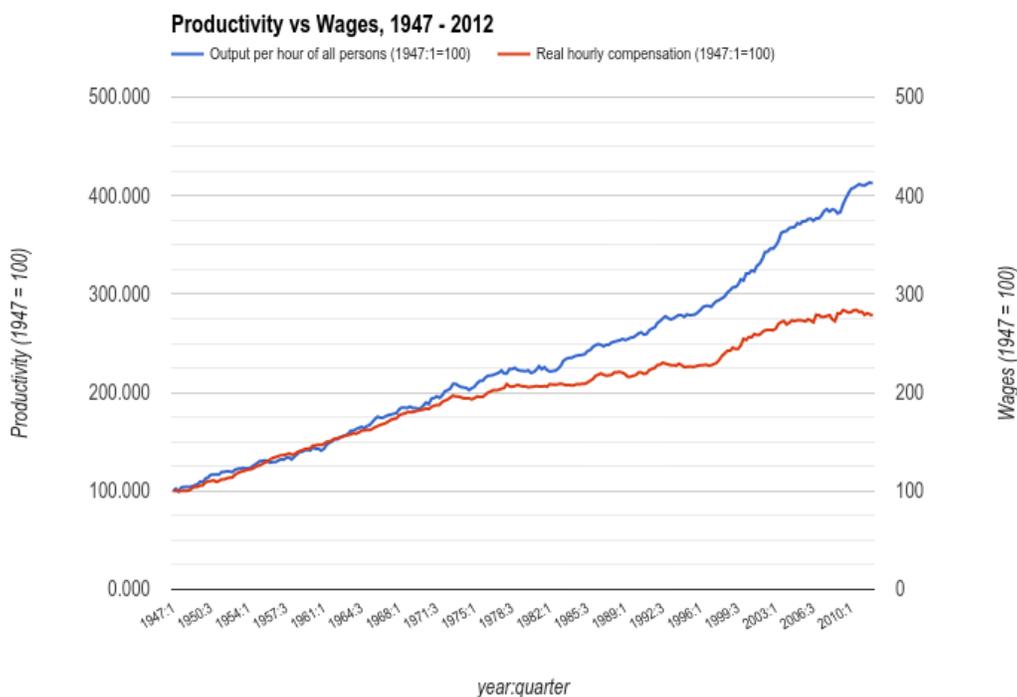
Figure 2.1. Productivity and wages. Notice the schism emerging during the 1970s.

---

[5] Data are available at http://www.bls.gov/lpc/.

[6] Piketty also argues that the significant consequence of falling tax rates on extremely high incomes is not the loss of government revenue but rather that high tax rates on high incomes discouraged exorbitant salaries for upper managers, e.g. a 90% tax rate on income over $5 million would inhibit a firm from offering salaries of more than $5 million because the income earner would take home only ten cents per dollar earned beyond $5 million, thus allowing revenue to be distributed among lower level workers.

Furthermore, Bureau of Labor Statistics data indicate that the percentage of output spent on labor costs has trended downward during the same period of time that the gulf between productivity and wages widened; labor's share of productivity has fallen over the past four decades while business owners' share has risen. Neoliberalism and the cut-throat fidelity to market principles it engenders has delivered on its promise; workers, left with a cynical covenant that the wealth appropriated from them will "trickle [back] down", have nothing to show for increased productivity except increasing inequality, swelling debt, and an array of talking heads justifying (or finding scapegoats for) their discontent.

Share of output employers spend on labor costs (wages, benefits), 1947 - 2010 (data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics)
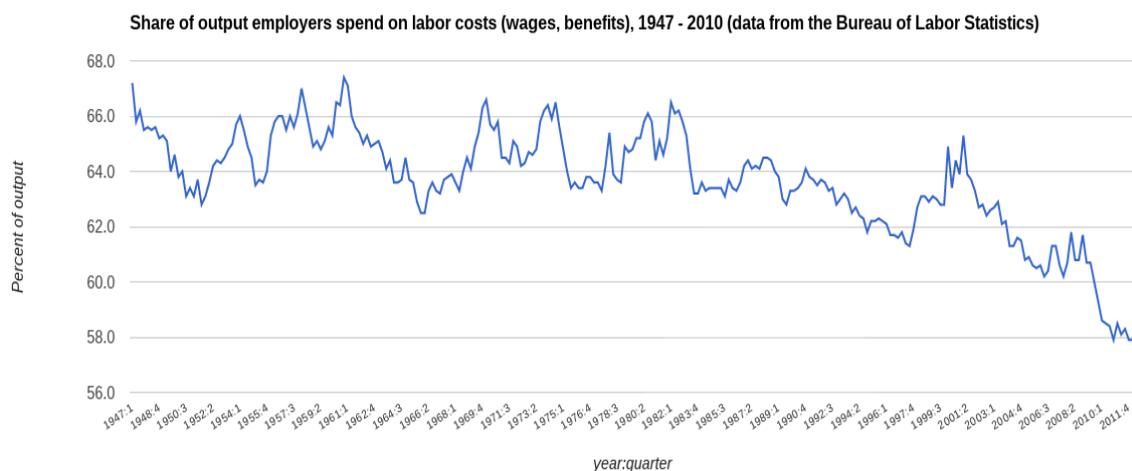
Figure 2.2. Labor's Share of Output. Notice the declining trend since the 1970s.

A New Kind of Individualism

Accompanying the decomposition of policies, regulations, and programs that helped people in tangible, material ways (such as housing, food, education, and health-care) - programs that socialized some of the costs and benefits of society[7] - has been the

---

[7] Imperfectly, of course - such policies and programs, e.g. social work, have also been responsible for the

growth of ideological trends that emphasize the atomization of people, that sever the bonds between person and society, that divorce people from the organizations and institutions (such as unions, governments, and schools) that fostered a sense of mutuality. Such trends could fall under the umbrella of postmodern social theory, which stresses the hyper-subjectivity of people and their role in creating their own narrative and meaning, regardless of the social-historical reality that conditions their lives. It is a coherent relationship – as the programs that socialized some of the costs and benefits of society were defunded and people were increasingly subjected to the irrationality and unpredictability of capitalist markets, the solipsistic backbone of postmodern theory ideologically reinforced the neoliberal assault against public programs and the state by explaining that there is nothing to understand about the universe (if such a thing truly exists) but ourselves (and even that's debatable!), no coherent meta-narrative of human experience, and no grand political project except to assert, and demand recognition of, one's own identity.

The Politics of Recognition and Identity

The politics of recognition, broadly conceived, situate oppressive social relationships in failures to acknowledge, understand, and appreciate differences between identities, among which contested histories have resulted in the formation of hierarchical relationships. The foundation of recognition and identity is experience – how the individual navigates through the dimensions of who he or she is and how identity is asserted and shared with larger communities of similarly and differently identified

---

surveillance and discipline of the poor, people of color, and women; however, the neoliberal restructuring of public services (e.g. the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996) have strengthened state surveillance and discipline while weakening tangible, material assistances the state provided.

individuals. Identities are themselves negotiated between members such that there are often gray areas between identities and contested levels of belonging; these contestations have encouraged the development of *Intersectionality*, a theoretical approach[8] to accounting for the multiple layers of identity between and within people.

Intersectionality Debates

Kathy Davis, a sociologist of science, attempted to describe the appeal of Intersectionality harbored by academic and feminist audiences and explain "how a specific theory or theoretical perspective can persuade an (academic) audience to view some aspect of the world in a certain way (Davis, 2011, p. 44)." Drawing on prior research that insinuated that "successful theories thrive on ambiguity and incompleteness", Davis asserted that the "inherently hazy and mystifyingly open-ended (p. 44)" nature of Intersectionality is its strength. It attempts to understand feminism's "most central normative concern (p. 45)" – its inclusions and exclusions – through the multiple layers of identity within the power frameworks that structure our lives, not by settling such debates but rather by being sufficiently vague, and therefore inclusive, to invite diverse perspectives and arguments. According to Davis, Intersectionality's "methodologies [are] compatible with the poststructuralist project of deconstructing categories, unmasking universalism, and exploring the dynamic of contradictory workings of power (48)." Davis argues that these tendencies draw feminist theory away from esoteric academic debate into the concrete daily relationships women experience.

---

[8] Some Intersectionality theorists hesitate to label it a theory. For example, in the article cited above, Davis posed Intersectionality not as "full-fledged 'theory'" but rather as a fluid concept employed in a diverse range of feminist debate and inquiry. Since Intersectionality seems to the author to possess sufficient coherence in describing (whether accurately or not) the principles and ideas of something (whether its theorists want it to or not), it seems appropriate to label it a theory for the purpose of this paper.

Delia Aguilar challenged Davis's conclusions about Intersectionality, arguing that Intersectionality's ambiguity is "symptomatic of … the dismal state of feminism (Aguilar, 2012, para. 2)" and contributes to feminism's inaccessibility and de-radicalization as it languishes in increasingly corporatized universities. Aguilar asserted that there has been a lack of organized resistance to the neoliberal ideologies that dominate the academy and that "the changes we see in feminism simply mirror those in the academy that are themselves reflections of the ongoing transformations in the larger society (para. 2)." The idea of Intersectionality, however, has its roots in revolutionary, anticapitalist struggle, but with the growth of neoliberalism and the disintegration of social movements, the view that "a meaningful exposition of [the intersection of race, gender, and class] demands an understanding of capitalist operations was soon to be swept away (para. 7)."

Arguing that Marxist analysis is capable of adequately theorizing gender and race, sociologist Martha Gimenez similarly critiques Intersectionality and the race, gender, class "trilogy". Gimenez argues that Intersectionality risks oversimplifying or essentializing the race, gender, and class categories it attempts to deconstruct; each category is populated by people occupying different categories and different strata within categories, people who have complex, sometimes contradictory interests and relationships within and outside their categories (Gimenez, 2001, p. 24). Instead, Gimenez argues that Marxist class analysis offers researchers tools to understand (or at least appreciate) the nuances of the complex relationships between and among classes, races, and genders. Rather than being neatly contained, structurally determined fixtures of being, Gimenez argues that identities are dialectical products of negotiation between

individuals, groups, and institutions - "a political process that raises questions about the possibility that what once were 'resistance identities,' when linked to social movements, might in time become 'legitimating identities,' when harnessed by the state to narrow legal and political boundaries that rule out other forms of political self-understanding (p. 25)." Furthermore, Gimenez is critical of Intersectionality theory's inability or unwillingness to identify political and economic processes and institutions that structure and exploit identities, noting that theorists such as Patricia Hill Collins seem to rely on the explanatory power of subjective experience; while Gimenez appreciates the necessity to learn from all identities, she asserts that experience is a dialectical "unity of opposites; it is, at the same time, unique, personal, insightful, and revealing and, at the same time, thoroughly social, partial, mystifying, itself the product of historical forces about which individuals may know little or nothing about (p. 28)." For Gimenez and many other Marxists, it is in pursuit of understanding *and changing* these "historical forces" that Marxism possesses reliable methodologies.

Identity and Position

The influence of recognition, intersection, and identity on SJ programs is evidenced by the encouragement (sometimes requirement) of students by professors and advisors to carefully consider their *positionality* – where individuals belong in the intersections of various spectra of identity – when undertaking research and offer position statements as declarations of the oppressions and privileges through which their research is filtered[9]. Indigenous New Zealand researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith posits that the entire edifice of science is corrupt with intentions to colonize material, body, and mind,

---

[9] Positionality is also discussed in the Results section.

and the resultant knowledge relegates the colonized to "otherness". According to Smith, research is code for constructing indigenous people into a problem (Smith, 2002, 92). Smith assertively argues that there is little or no place for one who occupies positions within various networks of privilege to constructively participate in a struggle against oppression. The imperial frame of reference is difficult to forsake, even when progressive researchers would like to do so; even if they manage to position themselves well within the communities they intend to research they are still afforded the imperialist power of legitimacy within the imperial academic community (p. 176). While that privileged position may be navigated with benevolent intentions for emancipatory research, the imperialist mind assumes a set of privileges and expectations invisible to the academic (but not to those exploited/colonized) that constructs, consciously or not, service in the interest of the imperialist. Emancipation should thus be a reality defined only by those who would emancipate themselves (p. 186), an argument that seems to resonate with Freirean pedagogy or Marxist politics except for a twist; one is not emancipated from objectively defined exploitative relationships but from subjectively defined experiences of prejudice, gaze, and oppression in favor of sovereign, *localized* identities.

Identity and Place: Localism and Community

The virtues of the politics of the local – a variant of identity politics – have been vigorously advanced by Indian physicist and eco-feminist Vandana Shiva, who has been widely cited and assigned by faculty associated with Social Justice Programs. Her work on the production and diffusion of knowledge, particularly the manner by which indigenous knowledge and ways of life are undermined or destroyed by a global economy, has deeply affected many professors interviewed for this project. Shiva is

credited with championing ecological, feminist, and food security issues in an era of global capitalism, helping develop grassroots opposition in India to Coca-Cola and World Bank efforts to privatize water. Shiva has eloquently described a "war against diversity (Shiva, 1997, p. 101)" where she has drawn parallels between the homogenization of natural and human diversity, each a consequence of Eurocentric violence.

According to Shiva, the Eurocentric destruction visited upon the world's ecosystems and peoples is attributable to the confluence of capitalism and patriarchy: "I see an economy centered on capital as an economy centered on patriarchy…the only way to build hope is through the Earth (Massucco, 2008)," and resistance necessitates acknowledgment that the Earth is mother. Shiva emphasizes gender because women "are the canary of the eco-crisis (Navarro-Tejero, 2006, p. 12)" due to their more organic connections to resources as water bearers, firewood collectors, and farmers. Shiva asserts that the Trade Related Property Rights Agreements (TRIPs) of the World Trade Organization (WTO)[10] liquidates indigenous female knowledge, employing it in the service of establishing new patents which are then owned by corporations (Shiva, 2001, p. 12). Corporations then introduce production strategies based on the appropriated knowledge to the same areas where the knowledge had once occurred indigenously and consequently transform the way of life that had traditionally occurred there. Furthermore, if materials based on patented information (such as genetic codes from genetically modified crops of, for example, wheat, corn, or wild rice) drift into areas not under the control of the corporation, the corporation may pursue legal action against those who

---

[10] TRIPs is an agreement arranged by the WTO governing Intellectual Property Rights, defined by the WTO as the creations of the human mind -
http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/trips_e.htm#WhatAre

(knowingly or not) consume those materials. While many critiques of intellectual property rights have been offered, Shiva laments that WTO-regulated intellectual property rights are acts of theft specifically directed against women, wresting away their privileged knowledge of biodiversity, stewardship, and healing and destroying their distinctly sustainable and feminine relationship to the earth in the interest of European capitalist masculinity, thus framing her argument against capitalism in terms of protecting essentialized identities. The tangibility of small scale ecology motivates Shiva's argument against globalization in preference for localized politics. For example, Shiva asserted that if a community believes that letting a river flow or building a dam is good, it should have the self-determination to do as it pleases (Massucco, 2008). Channeling Adam Smith, where cooperation or competition exists, Shiva expected that it should be between sovereign communities of identity, each possessing equal power. Indeed, such arrangements - contracts between ostensibly equal negotiators - are the core units of the capitalist relations Shiva means to critique.

Community is a prominent premise for the development of a just society according to several contemporary social justice theorists. Perhaps most notable among them is Bell Hooks, one of the most widely read and frequently assigned authors writing about matters of social justice (her books were required reading in two of the four core social responsibility courses). Her accessible writing style, willingness to share challenging personal experiences, and sheer productivity have inspired many of the faculty interviewed for this project.

The fundamental struggle according to Hooks is for a world where all have access to "economic self-sufficiency" and are liberated from the barriers of "white-supremacist-

capitalist- patriarchy". The factors that Hooks attributes to the dehumanized condition of the oppressed and poor include the "devaluation of traditional religious beliefs", "obsession with consumption", mass media (Hooks, 2000, pp. 44-45), violence, greed, and drugs (p. 67). Hooks proposes that a significant strategy in social change is for young people to develop a "core identity, belief system, or a place within a beloved community" lest they attempt to satisfy their emptiness with rage, where "only death, self-mutilation, or the slaughter of their peers appeases (p. 87)."

While the core of her analysis, that people are oppressed by a system of capitalist-white supremacist-patriarchy, offers promising starting points and segues for deeper analysis, her characterization of oppressed peoples – working class, people of color, young people – resembles that offered by conservatives by engaging in personal level critique of character and morals, what some have labeled "respectability politics". Regardless of whether these claims are accurate, Hooks dismisses the possibility for debate by stating that "All of us who have lived or live in poor communities know… (p. 67)." The "community" implied in "all of us who…" illustrates a pitfall in a politics of position and identity; it is "an attempt to validate one's position or self by alleging privileged connection to the well-spring of authenticity" writes Adolph Reed, Jr, that serves to "preempt or curtail dissent by invoking the authority of that unassailable, primordial source of legitimacy (Reed, 2001, p. 11)." Evocations of community are adeptly manipulated to shield authors from critique or debate, such that when Bell Hooks wrote that "all of us who have lived or live in poor communities know…" the reader is meant to understand that if she does not know, she must not possess the requisite life experience to understand and should accept the author's implied legitimacy.

Citing her positional authority as an academic, Hooks argues that the outcome of academic discourse that links "struggles outside of the academy with ways of knowing within the academy (Hooks, 2003, p. 46)" is pluralism, which she defines as a commitment to engage with diversity; all can acknowledge diversity, but pluralism acknowledges the *value* in diversity, which Hooks sees as the principal challenge to domination. The test of belonging to the community, particularly a community of diversity and resistance, is lifestyle politics, which can be summarized as the deliberate consumption of commodities that conform to a predetermined configuration of values and/or priorities; Hooks accordingly argues that the first act of solidarity with the poor is to "live simply", that material does not count for the entirety of one's character, and that a spiritual, Biblically inspired ascetic resistance must be practiced (p. 43). To establish a more just world, Hooks advocates that wealthy progressives should target investments in poor communities, as it is "the task of those who hold greater privilege to create practical strategies, some of which become clearer when we allow ourselves to fully empathize, to give as we would want to be given to (Hooks, 2000, p. 48)."

Paulo Freire: Pedagogy of a Radical or Identitarian?

Like the works of Bell Hooks, Paulo Freire's *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is commonly referenced and frequently assigned in SJ courses (required reading in two of the four core social responsibility courses and, like Hooks, frequently mentioned during faculty interviews). Freire was a Brazilian educator whose work through the second half of the 20th century inspired movements and educators throughout the world; however, despite widespread recognition of his contributions to liberation struggles, it has been argued that an ahistorical understanding of Freire's development as a theorist debilitates

the revolutionary potential in Freire's theories (Holst, 2006).

Freire's goal was to establish a framework for an equitable, humanizing system of education that transforms capitalism through the propagation of literacy. Freire conceptualized a dialectical relationship between people and their social reality, where people live in the contradictory tensions between self and society, past and present, between the social and structural challenges people experience and the transformative potential they possess, as both the inheritors of an oppressive history and the creators of future emancipated history (Freire, 1998, pp. 481-2). Capitalism reduces men and women to things, oppressed and oppressor alike dehumanized by oppression and incapable of entering into a revolutionary process "as objects in order later to become human beings because of internalized, oppressive system of knowledge (Freire, 2000, p. 68)".

Among the core methodologies Freire developed was his position that knowledge (and thus the agency of the oppressed) is not bestowed by beneficent educators ("banking" style of education where knowledge is deposited) but is rather catalyzed and facilitated by educators via a process of "co-intentional learning" where teacher *and* student engage in a process of learning and emancipation together. Good educators "fight alongside the people for the recovery of the people's stolen humanity… [Our] role is to liberate, and be liberated, with the people (Freire, 2006, pp. 94-95)." Freire stressed the role of dialogue in this process, whereby dehumanizing and learning experiences of learner and educator are shared so that an authentic knowledge of social reality might be created. Freire emphasized that the dialectical relationships between learners and their social realities must be critically engaged by teacher and student if education is to be meaningful. Educators, regardless of intention, harbor an "implicit concept of

man...whether recognized or not (Freire, 1998, p. 481)" that will, if left unexamined,

serve to reinforce the oppressions experienced by learners.

John Holst argues that the radicalism in Freire's work is often underappreciated

by those who teach Freirean pedagogy. Freire wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* while

living in Chile, exiled from his native Brazil, working on a literacy campaign for landless

workers that he believed would "integrate the peasantry into the general process of rural

modernization and to organize the peasantry into cooperatives and unions (Holst, 2006, p.

247)." Informed by the struggles of landless workers and Marxist humanism, *Pedagogy*

of the Oppressed signaled a theoretical growth beyond his liberal developmentalist

politics (p. 245); while organizing with workers and agitating for social changes, he had

been reading Marx and other Marxists and dialectically synthesizing theory and practice

into the methodology[11] *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* described (p. 257).

Despite his growth towards a more Marxist class-oriented analysis (p. 260), Freire

sometimes describes the oppressed as a vague puppet-master from whom a stolen

humanity[12] must be recovered by an oppressed mass whose "passive … submerged state

of consciousness (Freire, 2006, pp. 94-95)" is filled with "banking" style education;

filtered through secondary sources that neutralized his radicalism (Holst, 2006, p. 244) in

works such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Freire's oppressor

risks becoming a specter of Western Imperialism. Through the lens of identity politics,

landless worker and indigenous peoples' struggles are resistances to Western Imperialism

---

[11] It is noteworthy that the methodology for intervention described in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is macro, meso, and micro in scope.

[12] According to Holst (2006, p. 260), Freire later suspected that his conceptualizations of *conscientization* were "naive", lacking class analysis.

that must be left alone in their authenticity, free from Western intrusions, consequently

missing opportunities for building solidarity between global struggles and dismissing the

possibility that *The Oppressed* Freire wrote about might include some of the university

students reading his text.

Identity Debates and Criticism

      The identity-diversity-lifestyle oriented models of social justice is, according to

literary theorist Walter Benn Michaels, wholly compatible with neoliberalism (Michaels,

2011). Michaels argues that the challenge posed by diversity and multiculturalism is not

against an unequal distribution of wealth but rather for a more pristine capitalist market;

racism "interferes with the efficiency of the market" by limiting the equitable application

of and opportunity for contracts (Michaels, 2006, p. 63). Michaels summarizes that a

"society free not only of racism but of sexism and of heterosexism is a neoliberal utopia

where all the irrelevant grounds for inequality (your identity) have been eliminated and

whatever inequalities are left are therefore legitimated (p. 75)."

      Indeed, even political orientations have become interpreted as identities, softening

the ground for debate, rendering political differences to be understood as "differences in

identity rather than ideology, as differences in who we are rather than what we believe (p.

144)". The terms of debate are no longer deciphering who is right but rather who is alike

or different and different political ideologies (like different classes) have become cultures

and should be accorded the same respect as any other identity. Framing class as an

identity obfuscates the fundamental truth about class, that it *is* inequality – some are poor,

work for others, have little control over the fruits of their labors, have little control over

their opportunities, while others are wealthy, appropriate the work of others, have many

opportunities to pursue interests and leisure – and that this inequality is the fundamental functional feature of capitalism regardless of the identities and lifestyles of those who occupy different classes. Adolph Reed, Jr. offers sobering perspective regarding the consequences of identity and lifestyle politics:

> Freedom to choose one's own lifestyle slides easily into freedom to purchase the accoutrements of a merchandised lifestyle: freedom to express an identity becomes freedom to purchase commodities to symbolize an identity (Reed, 2001, p. 135).

Reed suggests that lifestyle politics, like identity politics (which he, along with many other critics of identity politics, acknowledges has several reasonable challenges and expectations), are compatible with commodity market saturation and the consequent erosion of serious challenges to capitalism, which he identifies as the fundamental cause of inequality. Not only is it perfectly feasible to appropriate surplus while living simply, it is advisable under capitalism; the money one might otherwise spend "hedonistically" can be used to streamline production and develop new products and markets. Indeed, this kind of austere relationship between consumption, investment, and production, with Biblical inspiration, was elaborated by Max Weber as the origin of capitalism. Leaving aside whether he was correct to argue that the "protestant ethic" spawned capitalism, he convincingly made the case that such logic and patterns of consumption have the unintended consequences of being especially conducive to modern capitalist creation and appropriation of wealth (Weber, 1930). Using Weber's example, Robert K. Merton (1936) demonstrates how basic values can guide action to yield unexpected and unexamined consequences; indeed, some may believe it entirely unnecessary to examine the consequences of actions if they are based in perceived righteousness, for the commitment to the act of righteousness is, for them, enough.

The emphasis of lifestyle and consumption politics is also evident in global environmental movements, often with similar philosophical underpinnings and unintended consequences. Social and Political theorist Greg Albo contends that the common theme throughout the various ecological movements is "the primacy of localism as the central strategic focus (Albo, 2006, p. 340)," but this emergence, particularly among nongovernmental organizations, reinforces the market ideologies that underlie the ecologically unsustainable production and distribution practices they mean to challenge[13]. Albo acknowledges that the neoliberal restructuring of capitalism accelerates the displacement of rural communities and swells the population of slum communities; however, the focus on localism fosters a compatible "inter-local competition to reduce wages and environmental regulation (p. 339)." Albo explains that markets are

> foundationally decentralized and place-based regulators of human activity in that the behavior of sellers and buyers is regulated by the prices they individually accept. To some degree, markets are the ideal 'think globally, act locally' solution in that prices are transmitted across space to equilibrate all markets, information flowing from local markets to aggregate markets and back again (p. 342).

Scarcity, then, would be regulated by market-determined prices; furthermore, international boundaries are already adjusted (in terms of actual location and of permeability to human, capital, or financial migrations) to manipulate labor markets and fragment working class solidarity, and a localist political agenda might offer more support than resistance to these neoliberal trends (pp. 357-358). Localism seems to present an argument that, at its base, is consonant with the ideologies of free market champions such as Friedman or Hayek. As anthropologist Kathleen Ann Pickering

---

[13] Timothy Brennan describes an organizational vacuum that has buttressed such processes – see Brennan, 2006, pp. 33-34.

noticed during extensive qualitative research in Lakota communities, localized "human capital development programs" and microenterprises often do more for investors than for the communities they ostensibly help (Pickering, 2000, pp. 125-127). Such localized community development projects and foundations "routinely promote community 'leaders' whose appeal rests almost entirely on clever deployment of a rhetoric driven" by such keywords as "community," "grassroots," "the people", and "empowerment", whose "substantive programs typically reduce to bootstrap economic development, victim-blaming, corporate-sponsorship stuff (Reed, 2001, p. 117)."

Reconciliations?

Through a series of essays published during the late 1990's, Nancy Fraser attempted to reconcile tensions between distribution and recognition models of social change. Arguing that each had unique validity while simultaneously asserting that each must be understood in relation to capitalism, she has received much criticism for supposedly minimizing the politics of recognition. Fraser warned that oversimplified arguments for recognition can create problems of *displacement*, whereby class politics are dislodged in favor of recognition, or *reification*, whereby group identities take on a more concrete rather than fluid conceptualization that encourages "separatism, intolerance and chauvinism, patriarchalism and authoritarianism (Fraser, 2000, p. 108)." However, she was also careful to acknowledge that recognition represents "genuinely emancipatory responses to serious injustices that cannot be remedied by redistribution alone…Properly conceived, struggles for recognition can aid the redistribution of power and wealth and can promote interaction and cooperation across gulfs of difference (p. 109)." The key factor for Fraser regarding recognition is to not "to sever its links with

political economy" and to examine "its relation to economic class (p. 120)."

Fraser drew the criticism of Sharon Gewritz who argued that Fraser's recognition-distribution scheme was contradictory. Using the example of a "problem" student who is disadvantaged with regard to both recognition and distribution, Gewirtz suggested that the redistributive remedies to his situation necessarily categorize, which militates against purposes of recognition (Gewirtz, 2006, pp. 77-78); in other words, the student is necessarily deemed "needy" or "a problem" when they receive some form of wealth redistribution. The argument, however, is made from an institutionally entrenched perspective that fails to consider the larger social and economic (distributive) context in which the problem student needs services. The matter may also be seen from the possibility of the student *demanding* services as a process of *asserting* recognition and linking those demands to his historical class location (the student in Gewirtz's example was "mixed race" from a low-income home in an economically depressed town [p. 70]). The irony of this example is that Gewirtz was critical of Fraser for embracing a "reductionist and economist notion of class culture (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002, p. 506)" despite her indications that she prefers the more complex interpretations of class espoused by theorists such as E. P. Thompson, who consistently argued against oversimplified models of determination and asserted the agency of class in its own making (Thompson, 1963).

Connie North extends Gewirtz's critique further, arguing that the Fraser's distributive model requires the elimination of group differences (North, 2006). North worries about how the unique experiences of individuals with complex histories of experience with "oppression, domination, and privilege" will affect social justice

education, contending that such people struggle to interact with each other (North, 2006, p. 527). North resolves this conflict with a communicative framework that highlights fluidity, subjectivity, and incompleteness where the process itself is the objective. Such an approach, accentuating the individual's experience and role in explaining "oppression, domination, and privilege", runs the risk of generating confusion regarding the *social* origins and resolutions of these experiences. As Philion and Mhando argue, an approach that rejects "hierarchies of any sort [renders it] impossible to establish hierarchies of responsibility (Philion & Mhando, 2006, p. 109)." Furthermore, North recommends that people loosen their "investments in unproductive orthodoxies and ultimate truths when seeking to rectify" the "inevitability of contradictions in social life", contradictions which people may even desire (North, 2006, p. 526).

What Gewirtz and North appear to be arguing is not that Fraser unfairly subverted culture politics to class politics but rather that she unfairly theorized cultural and class politics with equal urgency. As Philion (who, like Adolph Reed, Jr., has spent decades teaching and organizing) clarifies, a Marxist or class critique of recognition politics does not signal an aversion to the legitimacy of claims for recognition, nor for the objectives of the movements these claims stimulate; indeed, many Marxists have been deeply committed to these very same movements (Philion, 1998, p. 92). Rather, the Marxist contribution has been to theorize political economy and attempt to build solidarity where possible in response to the totalizing order of capitalism, if such a thing exists.

Postmodernism and the Retreat from Class

The trends in theory reviewed thus far indicate a development of a sense of fragmentation in the way theorists perceive social activity. Lifestyle politics, localism,

community, identity – each of these trends finds its substance in a sense that knowing,

even perceiving, beyond the small scale is becoming, has become, or always has been

impossible. They suggest that there is no longer, or never has been, the possibility of a

collective social project for human liberation. There is no longer, or never has been, a

"grand narrative" that tells of a coherently unfolding and developing history, that allows

for a sense of collective struggle against a broadly encompassing coherent set of social

forces (such as capitalism). There is no subject of history (the working class, for

example) because there is no certain object of history (capitalism). These ambiguous

trends have been, if somewhat imperfectly, encompassed by the label of Postmodernism.

Postmodernism According to Postmodernists

Postmodernism has been difficult to define, even (or especially) for

postmodernists (or those who reject the label but embrace its distinctions from

modernism/modernity). Ihab Issan, a postmodern literary theorist (maybe, he might say),

attempts to define postmodernism not with a straightforward set of principles,

assumptions, and arguments, but rather via its contrasts with principles, assumptions, and

arguments that are associated with modernism; examples include (modernist vs

postmodernist): form vs antiform; purpose vs play; design vs chance; hierarchy vs

anarchy; creation/totalization vs decreation/deconstruction; synthesis vs antithesis (note

that modernism and postmodernism are not conceived as antithetical to each other);

signified vs signifier; readerly vs writerly; narrative vs anti-narrative; master code vs

idiolect; symptom vs desire; type vs mutant; paranoia vs schizophrenia; origin/cause vs

difference-differance/trace; metaphysics vs irony; determinancy vs indeterminancy; and

transcendence vs immanence (Hassan, 1993, pp. 280-281). These qualities (as

ambiguous as they may be) he summarizes as "indetermanence", a portmanteau

neologism combining "indeterminancy" and "immanence" (see final two contrasts)

which he identifies as core (independent, not antithetical or dialectical) elements of

postmodernism (p. 281). Modernism's will to define and arrange mystifies, totalizes, and

orders the world according to legitimizing power structures; thus, postmodernism is a

rebellion against such ordering, a philosophical and theoretical entropy, "a vast will to

unmaking...the entire realm of discourse in the West (p. 282)." Hassan locates agency for

postmodern thought and intervention in the university, in "the psychopolitics, if not the

psychopathology, of academic life (p. 275)".

Jean-Francois Lyotard similarly understands postmodernism to be connected with

tensions related to modes of knowledge, particularly as knowledges are legitimized (or

not) by universities; postmodernism "is the condition of knowledge in the most highly

developed societies (Lyotard, 1993, p. 71)," a condition that is fundamentally

characterized by "incredulity towards metanarratives", an outcome of scientific progress,

and where the university serves as the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation (p. 72).

The "functors" of the "narrative function" have been lost to the incomprehensibility of

communication: the "society of the future is [located at the intersection of] a pragmatics

of language particles," a heterogeneous array of "language games [that] only give rise to

institutions in patches-local determinism (p. 72)." Lyotard argues that science,

universities, and even social movements ultimately serve to legitimize and optimize "the

system's performance-efficiency (p. 72)"; many who wouldn't describe themselves as

postmodernists might likewise criticize science, universities, and social movements

(several examples throughout this literature review), but postmodernists (or at least those

included in this review) dismiss the metanarrative of 'history' and they seek no salvation.

Postmodern knowledge, in contrast to science and in defiance of metanarrative, "refines

our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable.

Its principle is...the inventor's paralogy (p. 73)."

Jean Baudrillard, whose work inspired the writers of the Matrix trilogy,

emphasized the principle of paralogy - or, in his terms, simulacra - in the postmodern

condition. Simulacra are copies for which there are no originals, "the generation by

models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal (Baudrillard, 1993, p. 343)."

Baudrillard clarifies that simulacra are not imitations, duplications, or parodies; instead,

they substitute "signs of the real for the real itself...never again will the real have to be

produced...A hyperreal henceforth sheltered from the imaginary, and from any distinction

between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of

models and the simulated generation of difference (pp. 343-344)." Baudrillard justifies

this conclusion by posing that one cannot distinguish between simulation and real

because simulation (by definition) produces qualities of the real[14], thus arriving at what is

perhaps postmodernism's most radical conclusion, that simulation raises the specter that

"truth, reference and objective causes have ceased to exist (p. 344)."

Cause and consequence

If one must accept that there is no reality, and if one cannot trust the epistemic

validity of anything but one's self (if even that), the logical location of resistance is the

self – what the self says, does, eats, consumes. Such trends harbor some degree of

---

[14] Baudrillard uses an example of a person who simulates an illness - since the symptoms can be produced by a person who may not be ill, the distinction between ill and not-ill loses meaning, and therefore medicine loses its meaning.

attractiveness – in discarding the notion of legitimacy, or at least locating legitimacy in

the smallest units of human existence (community, identity, self), each person, identity,

or community can ostensibly seize agency to speak, act, and be deliberately, which may

seem thoroughly (if deceptively) empowering if you have been living in society's

margins. It is perhaps as cultural theorist Fredric Jameson explained in the introduction to

his seminal effort to describe Postmodernism, an attempt to "think the present historically

in an age that has forgotten how to think historically (Jameson, 1991, p. ix)", insinuating

that Postmodernism's perseverations on representation and simulacra are understandable

given the dizzying magnitude and pace of commodity market rejuvenation. The hyper-

subjectivity of postmodernism, its celebration of difference, rejection of grand narratives,

and comfort (even pleasure) with contradictions and destabilized meaning affords to it

convenient complementarity with capitalism. Social and pedagogical theorist Seehwa

Cho contends that there is a risk that cultural politics, which she believes is closely linked

with postmodernism, may override a struggle for (re)distributive justice in pursuit of a

struggle for recognition, which will serve at best to modernize capitalism rather than

overthrow it (Cho, 2006, p. 126-128). Cho elaborates:

> This is why postmodernism and cultural politics do not sit well with people in the [global] South, where the brutalities of economic, rather than cultural, capitalism are still formidable forces…Culturalism sounds more like a luxury for many people around the globe whose livelihoods (not identities, not desires, not images) are threatened by global capitalism. If cultural studies and cultural politics do not adequately address the gritty material reality of global capitalism, they could fall into merely a hollow intellectual exercise. (Cho, 2010, p. 190).

Social theorist Aijaz Ahmad situates this "postmodern turn" in a retreat of intellectuals

from the traditional class politics of the 20th century (Ahmad, 1997). Beginning with the

economic downturn of the 1970's and resultant destruction of the welfare state, we see an

emergence of a politics of destabilization, partial truth, and rejection of grand narratives, which effectively amounts to a rejection of history, a collective subject of history (class), and object of history (capitalism). Disconnected from the realities of increasing inequality, intellectuals carved an academic niche in which they tried to:

> domesticate, in institutional ways, the very forms of political dissent which those movements had sought to foreground, to displace an activist culture with a textual culture, to combat the more uncompromising critiques of existing cultures…with a new mystique of leftish professionalism, and to reformulate in a postmodernist direction questions which had previously been associated with a broadly Marxist politics… (Ahmad, 1992, p. 1).

In other words, the postmodern turn was a way for intellectuals to speak radically and keep their jobs (not entirely unreasonable) during the neoliberal Reagan-Thatcher backlash against the welfare state, while the 'knowledge' produced from this privileged location is recycled back and forth between competing academic camps in a sort of philosophical sport. Ahmad identifies three signs that radicals have been "assimilated into main currents of bourgeois culture itself, [including] nationalism, essentialism, and the currently fashionable theories of the fragmentation and/or death of the Subject: the politics of discrete exclusivities and localisms on the one hand, or on the other … the very *end* of the social, the *impossibility* of stable subject positions, hence the *death* of politics as such (p. 65 - emphasis original)." Given the conditions of academic work over the past 30 years, it is an understandable accommodation; this structure of undead politics preserves some form of opposition while using the language and tools of the system they intend to resist. Ahmad claims that it is not a creation of left academics but of the right itself - the terms of debate are framed by the right and identity, lifestyle, and postmodernism are adaptations undertaken by the academic left for self-preservation and the space they have carved for themselves yields little room for theoretical development

(pp. 65-66). "Humanities intellectuals," Timothy Brennan similarly contends, "believe they speak freely, even subversively, while speaking a language that has been carefully created for them; or rather, one that they have helped create, but that is refined in media and government channels (Brennan, 2006, p. 36)."

Analyzing cultural politics in the academic context, Brennan argued that the left (i.e. those concerned with matters of social justice beyond the provisions of the unadulterated market) allowed for an organizational vacuum that the right (those concerned with economic liberalism even if at the expense of their cultural prerogatives[15]) quickly filled, marshaling assaults against the remnants of left-leaning academics, worker protections, and collective projects (Brennan, 2006, p. 151). Survivors of the assault who would preserve a measure of safety and security beyond the market created a theoretical niche which acquiesces nicely with the right's theoretical framework – an apolitical anarchy (p. 159). Given the right's mythology of the individual, the neoliberal turn, the postmodern retreat into solipsism, and the prosecution of radicalism, social justice education provided some degree of shelter and legitimacy through bureaucratization (or a bureaucratic legitimacy) for left professors, their radicalisms becoming tamed through acquiescence that, when expressed in solipsistic postmodern language, still carried a veil of radicalism without threatening real capitalist relations and thus not jeopardizing their careers. Professors could now, if powerlessly, entrench themselves in their programs, maintain a livelihood, and salvage some part of their consciences. Gains may be made, but only in postmodern terms, at postmodern

---

[15] Brennan cites the example of famed conservative, anti-choice political strategist Patrick Buchanan's support of George W. Bush for president despite Bush's record of support for access to abortion.

levels; language, localisms, free trade, all of which fit nicely in the fold of the market and do nothing to shake the foundations of oppression. The location of existence (and thus resistance, if it is to be pursued) is personal and subjective. Ambitions beyond such subjectivity, such as universal emancipation, risk imposition of one privileged identity over another, lesser privileged identity (Smith, 2002). The educated, ironic self emerges as the principal agent of social change – a self self-consciously choosing choices, deliberately consuming a lifestyle, being an identity that is safely incorporated into the sphere of commodity markets. This radical de-universalization follows in the wake of capitalism, the most aggressive universalizing force the world has known.

Individual vs. Collective, Entropy vs. Solidarity

Ellen Meiksins Wood traces a departure from historical materialist class-based interpretations of social change to esoteric, academic-based politics, characterized by a disavowal of the relationships between economy and politics and an embrace of ideological transformation rooted in "a plurality of popular democratic struggles (Wood, 1998, p. 4)." In the preface of the 1998 edition of *The Retreat from Class*, Wood explains:

> There is an unbroken continuity between early post-Marxism and today's postmodernism—with, among other things, their common emphasis on 'discourse' and 'difference', or on the fragmentary nature of reality and human identity (p. xii).

Wood carefully illustrates a trajectory of theory in the works of post-Marxists (such as French intellectual Louis Althusser) that has led to a variety of social movements that have subverted class politics to the postmodern politics of language, recognition, and lifestyle. Ellen Meiksins Wood asserted that "the decisive detachment of politics from class was achieved by making ideology and 'discourse' – themselves conceived as

autonomous from class – the principal historical determinants (p. 47)." Addressing the

pervasive pessimism harbored for the working class and socialism, Wood counters that

nobody except the working class can objectively possess the possibility of erecting a

classless society without exploitation. Wood asks whether this 'retreat from class' "is the

ideological representation of a specific social interest in its own right (p. 188)", a

question that has helped guide much of the research for this project.

Philion (1998) traces a similar lineage of theory beginning with the post-WWII

critical theory of the Frankfurt School, which included theorists such as Theodor Adorno,

Max Horkheimer, and Jurgen Habermas. The Frankfurt School was clearly influenced by

Marxist theory but had come to distrust one of Marxism's central arguments – the

centrality of class in social change. Jurgen Habermas unambiguously claims that "the

designated executor of a future socialist revolution, the proletariat as proletariat, has been

dissolved (Habermas, 1972, p. 196)." The alternative mode of resistance according to the

Frankfurt School was, as summarized by Philion, "determined not so much by material

conditions as by [disaffected and marginalized peoples'] capacity to see through the

limits of the rationality of 'capitalist abundance' and to fight that logic despite their

vested interests in the reproduction of the system (Philion, 1998, p. 81)."

Philion's summary of Frankfurt School's pessimistic prescience is particularly

illustrative of the current academic approaches to social change – the executor of

revolution has become the educated pessimist while the welfare-state, charged with

managing "crises of legitimation", is the object of resistance. This dismissal of the state

as a legitimate location of claims-making, perhaps symptom of the "defeated

consciousness of Western postmodern society (Cho, 2006, p. 132)", has troubling

implications. "Beneath radical-sounding rhetoric," Adolph Reed, Jr. contends, "the shibboleths of academic cultural studies and the presumptions of identity politics come together to celebrate alienation by labeling it 'resistance' (Reed, 2001, p. 168)." Reed recognizes this as a dangerous proposition for progressive politics; the supposed subversive-ness of alienation can, at best, do nothing more than "call for permanent product revolution. This morning's authenticity is in the boutique this afternoon and the … mall tomorrow (p. 170)." It is indicative of a politics that has dismissed the state and, as a matter of principle, any sort of collective organizing.

Reconciliations?

Bryan Palmer offers an account of how masses of the people have found and created space for struggle that reconciles themes of recognition and distribution. *Cultures of Darkness* (2000) details transgressions and oppositions (witchcraft, piracy, Jacobinism, labor organizing, sex, etc.) to the totalizing daylight of capitalism committed under the veil of darkness, "an actual place and space in which the ubiquitous contestations of everyday life were fought out on a terrain that afforded slightly more opportunity for engagement by the oppressed and the exploited (Palmer, 2000, p. 454)." Palmer recognizes a potential harbored by postmodernist analysis of identity and 'discourse' to expand understanding of 'marginalized others'; however, such analyses, with the postmodernist rejection of universality, can offer no more than fragmentary sophistry, unintelligible without the singular story of capital. Palmer unequivocally asserts his heresy contra postmodernist and discourse theory: "That despair and those dreams…are situated within the rise and transformation of global capitalism, the determining feature of human experience in the modern world (p. 456)." Only by

acknowledging capital and class can any potential for social transformation be realized, for "Social transformation, initiated in part in the dark cultures of the night, can proceed to its logical conclusion only through the movements and mobilizations that, building on difference, actually break it down and bring together the forced fragmentations of capitalism's tyrannical, eminently pluralistic, order (p. 457)."

Clearly there is space in historical materialist theory to welcome theorization regarding marginalization without postmodernism's need to dismiss the validity of economics and meta-narrative. The discomfort of contemporary academic theory, informed by postmodernism and identity politics, with historical materialism and Marx is perhaps due to the gravity with which Marxists conceptualize social transformation, not as ideological abstraction staged by isolated players performing fragmentary scripts, but as a concrete, objective priority with identifiable agents responsible for its development - us. Social change theory has lost the inclusive edge originally expressed by Rosa Luxemburg and reiterated by Guglielmo Carchedi, that theory ought to be the production of working people reflecting on their situations[16]:

> …for this dialectical complementarity [between theory and practice] to emerge, a proper organization is needed, one which struggles continuously to give all its members the opportunity to engage in practical activity and to reflect on, i.e. to theorize, it (Carchedi, 1987, p. 23).

---

[16] A methodology for which is described in Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

Chapter III: Methods

Methodology

The primary purpose of this investigation is to understand the development of

academic social justice programs, ground their development in history, and test their

theoretical claims. Each social justice program investigated in this project offers analyses

of what they often describe as systems of oppression (sexism, racism, classism,

homophobia, etc.). As universities entertain the notion that they are catalysts for

meaningful social change, it seems reasonable to inquire into the changes they propose

and how they intend to catalyze such changes. Integral to such an investigation is an

exploration of purported goals and means of such programs, how they contrast with

actual outcomes, and how to account for the contrasts where they exist. As explicated by

Max Weber:

> The question of the appropriateness of the means for achieving a given end is
> undoubtedly accessible to scientific analysis. Inasmuch as we are able to
> determine … which means for the achievement of a proposed end are appropriate
> or inappropriate, we can in this way estimate the chances of attaining a certain
> end by certain available means. In this way we can indirectly criticize the setting
> of the end itself as practically meaningful (on the basis of the existing historical
> situation) … (Weber, 1949, p. 125).

SJ courses stress that academic work is political work and that research, teaching, and

learning are done through institutional and personal filters and harbor unavoidable

political consequences. Therefore, SJ students are taught to consider for whom or what

they conduct research. This principle is articulated by Joe Feagin (a former president of

the American Sociological Association who has offered distinguished scholarship on

racism and sexism) and Hernan Vera in a text used in a core course for the Social

Responsibility graduate program at St. Cloud State University; the authors pose the

question for whom and what we conduct sociological research and offer their own answer – "Sociology to make a better world, and sociology for those who struggle for their emancipation and liberation from social misery (Feagin and Vera, 2001, p. 241)."

There are many questions that arise from such a statement, the most basic of which depend on the conceptualizations harbored by the authors regarding terms such as "better world", "struggle", "emancipation", and "social misery". Across all ideological spectra, it is safe to assume that most, if not all, people hope for a better world without struggle against social misery, thus we are faced with a simple imperative to ask those who present such theories regarding social research about what exactly they mean by such terms. What does this better world look like? What makes the current world not as good? What do struggle and emancipation look like? Struggle against what? Emancipation from what? What does social misery look like and, perhaps most important of all, why does social misery exist?

As the literature review demonstrated, the postmodern and discourse oriented theory and practice that emerged through the 1980's and early 1990's appeared to be the epistemological basis for answering such questions. This strand of theory and practice has experienced a maturation in the late 1990's and early 2000's through bureaucratization in the university, solidifying entrenchment in the capitalist world economy and generating a commodity-form of social change through a marketable skill set regulated by the university. Academic social justice programs presume to promote intervention in an unjust world, but "What happens," asks communication and cultural theorist Francis Mulhern, "when an oppositional tendency becomes a budget-holding discipline, offering credentials, careers, and research funds (Mulhern, 1997, p. 46)?"

While studying the bureaucratic structure of educational institutions, Max Weber posited that curricula are not based on a fundamental quest for knowledge "but the desire for restricting the supply for these positions and their monopolization by the owners of educational certificates (Weber, 1946, p. 241)." This project attempts to investigate what one gains or possesses upon completion of a social justice program and understand what the earner of the "certificate" is obligated or entitled to do.

Data Collection

Overview

To explore how social justice programs theorize social justice/injustice and the potential they harbor for social change, this research project engaged a variety of manners of qualitative information collection. Data was gathered from faculty and students participating in social justice programs through content analysis of publications and course syllabi, while intensive interviews were conducted with faculty to afford the opportunity to directly ask questions regarding theory, agency, and conceptualizations to render a portrait of what is taught, why, how, and to what presumed effect. Furthermore, the theoretical lineages that inspire what is taught, why, how, and to what presumed effect were analyzed and contrasted with alternative theories regarding social change; in this manner, it is believed that a picture will emerge regarding efficacy for social change harbored by university social justice programs. Every attempt has been made to protect the identity of all interviewees.

Units of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the theory produced and/or offered to students, as collected from faculty through interviews and content analyses of publications and course syllabi.

Theory is the substance that nurtures the interventions social justice programs project upon the world – theory reveals conceptualizations, practices, and understandings of the world as such theorists comprehend it. I place these theoretical developments within a historical context to identify the specific conditions that contribute to their development to understand how academic theory reacts to the world – scholars, like anybody else, must strive to preserve and reproduce themselves within an historical situation.

Sampling

Sampling occurred on a purposive basis on multiple levels; universities offering social justice oriented curricula were selected for study, and faculty within those universities who were most responsible for each SJ program's creation or maintenance (such as coordinators, chairs, advisors, and/or instructors for required/core courses) were selected for detailed information gathering (interviews, course syllabi analysis, and review of published works). Five social justice oriented programs from Midwestern universities were selected, two from public universities and three from private universities, each having a different level of incorporation into an academic program, including an emphasis within a major, a minor, two programs that offer a major and a minor, and a graduate program. The specific history of each program was examined; how they are similar or different was investigated.

Data gathering occurred during summer 2008 through spring 2009. Interviews were requested with 17 past and present professors affiliated with SJ programs, nine of whom agreed to be interviewed (at least one from each of the programs selected for analysis). Of the 17, six had published material available for analysis, and of those six, three had declined interviews; therefore, information was gathered from 12 faculty

altogether (six from interviews only, three from published material only, and three who had published material and agreed to be interviewed).

Interviews

A broad range of qualitative questions regarding theory, practice, and institutional concerns were explored with faculty, but all were asked the following:

· What is social justice/responsibility?

· What is social *in*justice/*ir*responsibility? What causes social injustices and inequalities? Who and/or what is responsible for social injustices? What are significant events/trends that contribute to the development of social injustice?

· How is social injustice confronted? What are the remedies? Who/what has agency to change social injustice, to establish social justice/responsibility?

· How does this social justice program contribute to social change? How should one research matters of social injustice? What should one research if one intends to understand social injustice?

· Who/what contributes to your theorization of social justice/injustice? Who/what contributes to your theorization of the origin and end of social injustice?

As I endeavored to create an understanding of the theoretical arguments of social justice programs, data gathering needed to be thorough and a degree of covertness needed to be maintained; my theoretical or political orientations might differ significantly from those harbored by many social justice faculty members but the author maintained a neutral demeanor during the interviews to encourage responses that are as open, honest, and revealing as possible.

Interpretive Considerations

The Hegelian tradition of immanent critique, honed and employed by figures such as Karl Marx in his critique of capitalism, deeply influenced the research process for this project. As a student within a social justice program, the author of this project was exposed to professors wed to conventions of discourse, identity, and postmodernism; immanent critique, on the other hand is a process of examining institutions within their own frameworks, orthodoxies, and sets of assumptions, using the subject of critique as its own foundation for analysis. To put it another way, immanent critique is a methodological framework to analyze reality from within (historically situated in) reality itself. As summarized by David Harvey:

> Upon "entering" the theory, orthodoxy's premises and assertions are registered and certain strategic contradictions located. These contradictions are then developed according to their own logic, and at some point in this process of internal expansion, the one-sided proclamations of orthodoxy collapse as material instances and their contradictions are allowed to develop 'naturally' [and then immanent critique] uses the truth inherent in that moment to bring down the entire edifice (Harvey, 1990, pp. 5-6).

However, the negation of the orthodoxy can become a new orthodoxy itself (as succinctly demonstrated by Harvey in the article cited above regarding the Frankfurt School and 'critical theory'). Such a process, therefore, must be grounded in material reality, in the economic actualities of the historical situation from which the subject of critique emerges. Finally, and consequently, such a process must include adequate theorization regarding the relationships between material reality and knowledge formation; thus this project also embraces the dialectical class analysis tools offered by Carchedi (1984).

Dialectical class analysis offers an approach distinct from other research methods because it considers phenomena "in relation of existential interdependence (Carchedi,

1984, p. 79)" rather than as isolated variables (such as is the case in traditional psychological and sociological research where variables are rigorously segregated and organized according to presumed independence and dependence and manipulated to demonstrate the relative strength of their influence on each other). It treats phenomena in realized and potential states and considers the conditions for transformation from one state to another. Working beyond only harmonious and/or antagonistic relations in which the "reproduction of one instance is the condition of reproduction (p. 75)" of another, dialectical class analysis also considers relations that are contradictory, in which the "reproduction of one instance is the condition of supersession of the other (p. 75)."

Knowledge, according to Carchedi, is not a reflection or replica of phenomena but rather a production created by active agents; i.e. reality is in constant transformation through the daily labors and activities of living agents working within historically specific means determined by a society's production relations. Information gathered for this project was therefore analyzed dialectically and, via immanent critique, measured against "the internal consistency of the desired end (Weber, 1949, p. 126)."

Chapter IV: Findings and Interpretation

Rationale

"Social Justice is a description of a society in which oppression doesn't exist and a movement to end oppression in a society in which oppression exists," explained a faculty member of a SJ program. This research project was primarily designed to answer two basic questions about such a statement. The first basic question is a matter of conceptualization; since academic SJ programs are organized to address perceived injustices and oppression, and since they express missions and purposes focused on resolving these injustices and oppressions, this project seeks to understand and analyze the programs' and faculty members' understanding of injustice and justice. Of particular concern were professors' analyses of why injustices exist, what causes the injustices they recognize, and what they believe the just world would be; it is not enough to say, for example, that racism is a manifestation of injustice – faculty were asked to explain why racism (or any of the other injustices they highlighted) exists, for what purposes, and what a world without racism would be like. The second basic question pertains to agency. As mentioned previously, SJ programs are political as much as academic projects, they position themselves as social movements that have been created with purposes beyond the scholarly pursuit of *understanding* the world; they have been designed with an activist pursuit of *changing* the world (or, at least designed with the suggestion of such a pursuit). This project thus sought to analyze how SJ programs theorize the world's transition from injustice to justice and tease out the tensions between understanding the world vs. changing the world that SJ programs experience. In other words, taking the previous example of racism, professors were asked to explain how they

believe the world overcomes racism (or any of the other injustices they highlighted), who's responsible for that transformation, what roadblocks might exist, and how their understanding of racism informs their approach to challenging racism.

Organization of Findings

The organization of this section follows the structure of the interviews. The first section pertains to faculty and program interpretations of injustice and justice; the section was broken into subcategories according to whether the responses indicated a personal or social responsibility for injustice. The second section pertains to the second primary question of agency; again, the section was divided into subcategories according to whether the responses indicated personal or social responsibility (or possibility) for social change. As responses were organized, patterns and tensions in the data emerged. Respondents did not share a consistent perception of the manifestations and causes of injustice or the manners by which they will be resolved, and the resulting tensions were analyzed. Tensions between recognition and distribution models will also be analyzed, particularly in cases where respondents report approaching injustice according to one model but follow-up questions reveal that such an approach is heavily informed by the other model. Where relevant, faculty publications, program literature, and student projects have been included as representative outcomes of the academic programs.

Interpretations of Justice and Injustice

Injustices were generally interpreted according to two basic domains of action – personal and social. Examples of personal actions included lifestyle and consumption politics, greed, immorality, the exercise of privilege and power, and individual racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. (as two of the respondents said, "all the –isms"); examples of

social forms included institutional oppression, colonialism, media, public policy, and economic or corporate policy. Although injustice was typically considered "multidimensional" with a variety of social or systemic manifestations, a theme of individual responsibility for injustice dominated the interviews, even where social domains for action and responsibility were being discussed.

Defining Social Injustice

Many SJ faculty experienced difficulty trying to explain social injustice. The coordinator for one of the SJ programs reframed questions requesting definitions and explanations of injustice in terms of departure from what he imagined to be an ideal society, and that this vision "has something to do with equality, order, autonomy, and human solidarity." This "ought-society" then was the standard against which societies need to be compared and injustices are indicated in the contrasts between the "ought-society" and the actual society. The coordinator of another SJ program described social injustice as "the structures that violate human dignity, oppress and discriminate, misuse the environment, and racial injustice." When asked which structures commit these violations, the respondent was unable to answer except to state "social policy, which each of us is responsible for, is key" and that graduates from the program must "ask whether a policy supports dignity and common good."

When pressed to define the origins and causes of social injustices, many of the respondents expressed frustration with social movements that addressed symptoms of social injustice rather than the "root causes". It was believed that such movements only indirectly challenge the "exercises of social injustice" and have little promise for substantive change. "If people are hungry," explains the coordinator of one of the SJ

programs, "food shelves are not the answer." The root causes of social injustice, therefore, while often having social expressions and consequences, were generally attributed to personal actions and irresponsibilities. One respondent attributed social injustice to "actions and policies…, overconsumption, maldistribution, misuse of global resources, misuse of living beings – human, animal, and plant," explaining that "we all contribute to imperialism and destruction every day." The manner by which we are contributing to social injustice, then, has the form of the commodity – social injustice is something we purchase through the global market, and this conceptualization of injustice and agency as lifestyle and consumption politics was observed throughout the interviews.

Issues of power also figured prominently in faculty comprehensions of injustice. The source of injustice, according to one respondent from a large public university, is "people who want more power. Power over others. We are all responsible for social injustices especially if we do nothing." Again, this interviewee emphasized the personal role each individual has in the persistence and pervasiveness of injustice. Although she insisted that "social justice is about distributive justice", the "structures at the center" of the misappropriation of resources include "all the –isms – racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, et cetera." Consequently, the cause of distributive injustice is misrecognition, for which, she argues, each person bears individual responsibility. Indeed, where faculty would venture social (as opposed to personal) distribution-oriented claims of injustice, they would often explain the causes of such claims according to individual behavior. One faculty member relayed a very telling explanation: "I see root causes as greed which gets translated into imperialism in all its forms (colonialism, neocolonialism, economic globalization as the most recent) …" Economic forms such as

capitalism, she argued citing the authority of Vandana Shiva, are forms and manifestations of greed which "does not care about the consequences of the actions to amass profits." Hence a personal characteristic – greed – is the impetus for the unjust social exchanges of capitalism. The professor's analysis harbors the suggestion that greed can be understood as an intrinsic personal, if not human, characteristic. The analysis overlooks or denies the reward systems inherent in capitalism for greed; without a drive for accumulation, which some might call greed, firms and shareholders will lag and fail.

Another respondent found it difficult to believe that humans were inherently unjust, but "as long as some benefit and they have power, the cycle endures despite the sacrifice of their humanity and spiritual wellness for their economic privilege." This economic privilege, however, was not simply a matter of distribution; economic privilege was, again, a symptom of the root causes of "the –isms" – misrecognition – despite the respondent's frustration with identity politics and desire for students to "research the World Bank, imperialism, and neoliberalism." Another SJ faculty concluded that the "dual challenge of social movements is to address the immediate symptoms – hunger, shelter, violence, et cetera, while maintaining focus on root causes – racism, sexism, poverty, hegemony – which are systemic and structural." Like the previous respondents, each of these respondents emphasized *personal* responsibility, exercised in lifestyle and consumption (which represented power), for social forms and expressions of injustice.

Morality figured strongly in the responses from some (not all) faculty from religious institutions. "Injustice is rooted in sin and selfishness; it is a part of human nature" responded a program director. The inherent self-centeredness of humans leads to

"short-term focus on personal gain, and people with the highest ambitions to satisfy self-interests are naturally drawn to policy and business fields where they acquire the means to commit injustices to others." Despite the deeper engagements with social movements among the catholic institutions, their analyses of injustice nevertheless resembled to individual-oriented interpretations espoused by the SJ programs in public universities.

Where socially oriented explanations of injustice were discussed in detail, the respondents generally targeted public policy, media, and neoliberalism. "The origins of the conflicts that need to be changed are often found in the origins of the country in which the problems occur" explains one interviewee, using the inclusion of black people as 3/5 of one human in the constitution as an example of how economic exploitation is legitimized through public policy. Another respondent from the same program was persistently vague when attempting to discuss injustice, settling on describing injustice as a matter of "legal rights, based in norms and mores, which limit access to goods and the means to acquire them," and social order "because humans gravitate towards patterns and organization." Social order and its conditions are the ideal to which present society is contrasted, and the differences between the two are manifestations of injustice. Although the respondent believed that "law tends to hold things back" graduates from the program frequently pursue careers in law "as a means of pushing society forward" to the ideally ordered society.

The media, when addressed, were generally understood as either mind-numbing distractions from attention to inequality or active agents in the cultivation of inequality. One respondent strongly emphasized the role of media in construction of the conditions of injustice and recommended that "an understanding of the corporate control of the

media and information is essential" for anybody who wants to understand why social injustice exists. Another respondent asserted that "the media control and create perceptions of problems to create tolerance and ambivalence." These statements are supported by an assumption that people are generally passive consumers of information and have little will or ability to critically analyze, much less create, information. The assumption is implied forcefully by a respondent who is disappointed with and critical of poor people in the United States because they have been remiss to address their oppression. In an argument deeply resembling that of Bell Hooks as outlined in the literature review, the respondent lamented that "poor people abroad have been more active in confronting their oppressions." She reasoned that "there is a very strong domestic system of hegemony, and we all consent to the media images which immobilize them [poor people in the United States]." Poor people, at least those in the U. S., have allowed themselves to be possessed, by virtue of the media, by a never-ending cycle of reckless consumption that dooms their agency to change their conditions.

Very few descriptions of injustice were directly related to economic conditions. According to one respondent, the construction of subjectivity and identity has fostered the conditions of neoliberalism since "egalitarianism [implied in neoliberal market contracts] requires inferiority in order to justify the inequality" that results from neoliberalism. Thus the distributive aspect of injustice is again explained in terms of recognition. "Class or capitalism as it is practiced in the United States," explained another respondent, "is at the center of the systemic, structural problems." He then expressed contempt that "fighting over race, religion, gender, and identity – we miss the point that they're all oppressed by a class system, a common enemy." The interviewee

quickly retreated, however, suggesting that "capitalism in general is merely a philosophy that has different manners of practice," and while American neoliberal capitalism oppresses and creates divisions, another form or practice of capitalism might not.

Writing in 2000, Nancy Fraser had already noticed and described the development of two trends in the politics of recognition that were displacing politics of redistribution. The first understands misrecognition as related to "cultural depreciation" where the "roots of injustice are located in demeaning representations, but these are not seen as socially grounded" but rather rooted in "free-floating discourses" that "strip misrecognition of its social-structural underpinnings and equate it with distorted identity (Fraser, 2000, pp. 110-111)." The other current in identity politics acknowledges that misrecognition is often linked to maldistribution, but attributes maldistribution to problematic recognition. "For them," clarifies Nancy Fraser, "economic inequalities are simple expressions of cultural hierarchies (p. 111)." The faculty data are consistent with Fraser's observation; when economic or distributive factors were acknowledged as relevant to social justice, they were consistently assigned a secondary status to recognition.

SJ faculty frequently encouraged their students to consider their "positionality" as it pertains to social injustice. Positionality refers to a confession of the location one has in the hierarchy of social privilege, particularly regarding research. It is a fundamental element of critical thought, argues John Alessio, that "researchers and teachers should make revealing and studying the consequences of values an integral part of all their work (Alessio, 1996, p. 79)" – a trend which Alessio anticipates will merge critical thought and multiculturalism. Alessio's argument stems from a distrust of the Enlightenment

conception of science as a means to facilitate universal emancipation of humankind; sciences, as currently practiced, "appear to be strapping Western (and westernized) people to a treadmill of unbridled cumulative destructive production and practices (p. 79)." Noteworthy is the absence of capitalism from this analysis, as "cumulative destructive production" is nearly a suitable description of its structural imperative to accumulate. Instead, Alessio blames science in general for the specific effects capitalism has had on it.

One's "position statement" (required for any research project undertaken in several SJ courses) might be, for example, a white, heterosexual male with a learning disability from a working class family or an Indian, bisexual female immigrant from a middle class Indian family. The ostensible purpose of such statements, according to SJ faculty, is to reveal and reflect on the lenses through which researchers interpret their subject and the biases they might harbor due to their locations in social hierarchies. The resulting cognitive dissonance will engage the willing learner to "think most critically about those 'truths' about which we are most fervently convinced, particularly in relation to dimensions of identity that privilege us (Gorski, 2010, p. 55)." In practice, researchers with several positions of privilege may be regarded with skepticism and doubt due to the skewing their perspectives and interpretations due to the multiple lenses of privilege through which they comprehend their research questions, observations, and analyses (Smith, 2002, p. 176).

The importance of positionality was emphasized by several SJ faculty members. One faculty member explained that she used positionality to encourage "students to critique the place they're in so they can interrupt processes of oppression in institutions

and trends." Another believed that the "essence of social irresponsibility" was the aspirations to power among the well-educated. It was asserted that reflecting on positionality was at the heart of social change, particularly among the well-educated, who would then be less likely to abuse their privileged access to power. "Academics and intellectuals," the respondent affirmed, "who have education without the wisdom of reflecting on positionality have no sense of the good or damage one can do" and contribute to the "demeaning categorization and otherization of people." The respondent suggested that the problem with western education is the separation of ethics and education and that "conceptual thinking should come with social responsibility." This ignorance then leads, with every crisis that emerges, to victim-blaming and blind patriotism because there is an inability to "accurately assess and diagnose the situation." Implied in the perspectives of both respondents is a sense that education and knowledge are the principal causes of and solutions for injustice. Only through an enlightened knowledge fostered by the university can agency for just social change be actualized. As will be demonstrated in the following section, privileging the university in social change agency is standard among most SJ program faculty.

Interpretations of Social Change Agency

SJ faculty frequently discussed disappointment with community and campus organizations that focused on peripheral issues of justice at the expense of "root causes" which "address the origins and the actions and policies which continue to create the problem." The peripheral issues were often distributive in nature (such as poverty, homelessness, food, and employment), and as demonstrated in the previous section, the root causes of distributive problems were related to misrecognition. This pattern also

dominated faculty theorizations of social change.

Faculty often leveled critiques of nongovernmental organizations, expressing frustration with the service-learning components of SJ programs because they felt such requirements pushed students in unproductive, even counterproductive, directions. These SJ faculty members were searching for a sense of meaningful agency, of substantive intervention in an unjust world. Nonprofits were perceived to have created a self-perpetuating cycle of defining a problem, legitimizing it to a community of people who would financially support it, and then cornering the market for fulfilling that need. While the critique is adroitly (if somewhat superficially) developed, the spirit of the critique was unfortunately not extended further to include the institutions for which SJ faculty work. Furthermore, the principle indication that nonprofits have limited potential for social change was not necessarily their bureaucratic approach to creating dependence, or their role in manipulating activism, but rather the continued persistence and pervasiveness of social injustices. "They have too narrow of a focus," explained an interviewee, "if there are that many nonprofits out there and nothing has changed, something's not right!" At best, nonprofits were described as Band-Aids that:

> address crises and are important but will not stop or prevent the recurrence of the original problem. Yes, it is great that Habitat for Humanity builds houses for homeless people but they cannot keep up with the need which continues to be created. So, yes, it is good to help individuals with food shelves, etc, but again, they will not stop poverty and hunger.

 The alternative form of agency commonly supposed by SJ faculty to harbor the greatest potential for social change was the university-educated individual; as one respondent unambiguously affirmed, "The solution begins with education."

The Principal Social Change Agent

As discussed in the injustice section, the principle causes of social injustice are believed to be rooted in individual behaviors. Naturally, it follows that the principle agency for social change is, according to SJ programs, possessed by the individual, and SJ programs are structured to satisfy that brand of intervention (it is, after all, the individual who purchases an education from the university). The homepages of the various programs often consistently utilize a "social justice jargon" that sounds promising but, upon closer examination, reveals little about what the programs actually do. One program website advertises that the "required courses examine the value conflicts that drive social justice efforts" while the mission statement of another stated that the program offers students "the opportunity to both theorize about the meanings of social justice and to practice 'doing' social justice advocacy in community organizations." Faculty were asked to clarify statements such as these to better understand how exactly their programs were contributing to social change.

"All humans have a role to play" optimistically clarified a program coordinator, "and the power to engage *is* a social justice project." Students are tasked with the purpose of discovering how each contributes to social injustice and social change, and SJ programs serve as their guides. One professor uses "a lot of art – not art but community action which is creativity and art that is taken back to the community for reflection." The philosophy behind this practice is that the things people create are embedded with cultural meaning, and the critique offered by "the community" allows students to witness how they "position themselves in the visual realm in relation to the marginalized community." Students, in theory, will have a more tangible reference to their

positionality, which is important because "they need to have a framework for understanding and talking about things in their lives." When asked what students should do with what they learned through these experiences, the respondent replied that she was not sure except that "you should do what *you* can do," accentuating "you" to emphasize that each person must discover a personal strategy. She expressed dismay with the pervasiveness of liberalism and was unsure which alternative should be pursued.

"Students come away with the sense that they are convinced that they have to be engaged with the world, that they are beholden to human beings," explains a program coordinator, "they come away with an awareness of the ways people hurt each other and their responsibility to intervene." It is noteworthy that the program coordinator used the word "convinced" as if the program were marketing a specific set of strategy to students. The ideal outcome is a student who has a "self-critical sense…of the long-run…with a good sense of the personal – how he or she can personally affect social justice through his or her work." Work in this context is meant as a vocation or employment – in other words, the ideal outcome is a student who finds a job that she can feel good about, that "makes a difference." Such jobs are often ironically found in the same institutions critiqued by SJ program faculty, namely nonprofits and the government. The internal, personal nature of social injustice and social change advocated most forcefully by SJ faculty easily lends itself to this contradiction; students are first led to believe each individual internally possesses agency for social change, and this framework is then transferred to each individual institution through the transformed student. In other words, institutional change can be affected by the internal presence of a sense of justice through even one person. Law, corporations, and government, while disparaged, can be infused

with a sense of social justice by graduates. As one faculty member explains, "We want people to be able to diagnose situations, to be able to hire and fire ethically, to be able to treat people with dignity…even the rich can become good citizens." And as more social justice graduates become rich, the vision of Bell Hooks, as detailed in the literature review, of a progressive rich class that will invest in poor communities will be realized.

The coordinator of another program agrees, suggesting that social change "begins with personal change" and then infects the family, social group, organization, and then society. She warned that "we must consider realistically somebody's sphere of influence – we can't change the world, but [members of our professional organization] must discern who they have access to in order to facilitate change." Indicated in these comments is a passive sense of nihilism, that the problems of our age are too difficult, and the best one can hope for is a good job that affords a clean conscience.

While each of the programs maintained a systemic approach to understanding social justice, these systems were understood as constituting individuals. "A more just world reduces inequality and gaps in income," explained one of the respondents, "and social groups and legal systems are the means to social change." However, this analysis, while appearing oriented towards distribution and social structure, was fundamentally related to individual recognition and agency. When asked how social and legal systems change, she focused on the importance of the individual in taking responsibility for igniting change.

Identity politics are often invoked to describe how agency can transfer from one individual, possessing a sense of social justice, to another who does not possess such a sense. Students are asked to "consider how they can interrupt process of oppression in

institutions and trends" and such a process necessarily begins with reflection on one's position. The more privileged identities one possesses, the more that student needs to allow those with less privilege define and manage the meanings and strategies of social justice, "because there are certain things those with privilege simply cannot know about those without privilege." Universities, through programs that "allow for the inclusion of values in academic work," are the proprietors of this knowledge, the matrix through which one's personal experience with marginalization is given meaning to another who has the privilege of not knowing that experience (although it is assumed that one can never fully know marginalization without experiencing it). In a system that treats race, gender, class, sexuality, etc. with equal leverage in claims-making but compels reliance on the university for "skills and insights only the academy can provide (Ernst Boyer, as cited in Andrzejewski & Alessio, 2005, p. 306)", the claims-makers are removed from their own agency. It is the ultimate *anti*-identity politics in that the emancipatory revolution is bestowed upon the differentiated masses from above through enlightened "change agents".

Social Justice Education "begins with personal experiences," writes Kara Good, a graduate of St. Cloud State University's MS in Social Responsibility program, "and then moves toward fostering a critical perspective and action directed toward social change…Social Justice is a form of civic engagement that confronts those problematic behaviors and institutions that exist in our society (Good, 2005, p. 12)." Good's analysis, like that described in many culminating projects for SJ programs, shares the micro-level, subjective site of resistance outlined throughout the literature review and commonly expressed in interviews. She holds a mirror to herself and others to illustrate the

"oppressive natures of social injustices and how one's actions and behaviors contribute to reinforcing that social injustice (p. 12)." Another student's culminating project was a detailed study of the availability of socially responsible jobs (Kraipowich, 2001). It was determined that social justice was a growing field that demanded "employees with that have knowledge about the 'root' causes of social and economic problems and can make connections to multiple issues (Kraipowich, 2001, p. 60)."

When one respondent was asked what informs her theorization of social change agency, she remarked that she relied on "life experience"; the brevity of her comment seemed to communicate certainty. When asked what students can research to understand social change agency, she stated matter-of-factly that "it depends on who is doing [the research] and for what purpose…I don't know – it depends on your interests, time, community involvement, ethics, understanding of history, etc." In other words, their life experience, their position, will determine how they approach social justice, and this approach will be just as valid as any other, provided it processes through the usual catechism of position-critique. Another program coordinator (for whom religious identity was important) explained that "whatever one's identity is it is important to distinguish yourself so people know who you are." "Cultural breadth" thus becomes a standard component of SJ programs, with the expectation that students learn how various identities have been marginalized, how they are responsible for such marginalization, and what they can do to intervene in processes of marginalization. Students are thus exhorted in one program to develop a plan for personal action that includes, among other things, suggestions to "educate others about racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic, xenophobic, etc. comments, jokes, actions", and "join an activist group, organize your own group, start a

consciousness-raising group, raise money for social change, etc."

To be sure, several faculty members hope SJ programs also nurture a commitment to activism outside the realm of regular employment. "Social Justice Education should be encouraged to be connected to actual struggles in society" posited an interviewee. The concern was that SJ programs could get weighed down in heavy theorization with little real-world applicability. "Universities are privileged places where it is safe and easy to do social justice work" cautioned another respondent who expressed irritation that "professors are academics and scholars rather than activists," and that they are unwilling to take risks. On the other hand, the respondent was also critical of professors who used scholarship as their only means of activism, suggesting that "professors and students need to connect with people and look beyond the university at those in the trenches" and guard against the hyper-intellectualism. "But we don't want raving radicals either" advised another faculty member, fearing that "social justice education can create very angry people. Teachers must develop ways to deal with that." He remained optimistic, however, indicating that "students' sense of personal responsibility is very large – they think 'hey, I'll do something about this!' and they go back to their communities and bring their educations back with them, and they get on hiring and firing committees and they don't discriminate. They have more inclusive, more respectful attitudes to other cultures and they react to poor jokes."

Despite their self-consciousness regarding their status as university professors, many respondents ascribed a privileged role to the university for catalyzing social change. "Teachers save or kill people" one professor boldly declared, "Education is the primary means of intervention in the world – the structure of education needs to be

changed, pre-K all the way through the PhD." When asked to elaborate, the respondent explained that "Kids can't 'freedom dream' – I have all my students dream up an economic system, which is a small exercise in freedom dreaming, and kids don't get to create their fields of interest, to freedom dream."

The commitment to activism was taken to an extreme by an SJ program director who confessed that "I don't know how this program contributes to social change," adding that it "offers students the opportunity to learn about social movements and how to do activism." This statement is indicative of a larger trend described as activistism, an anti-intellectual strain of personal politics that "emphasizes practicality, achievability, and implementation over all else"; consequently, "theory dedicated to understanding deep structures with an eye toward changing them necessarily gets shunted aside (Featherstone, Henwood, & Parenti, 2004)." The authors note that this trend of activism for activism's sake coincides with a retreat from Marxist and materialist analyses of social injustices. Indeed, as discussed earlier in the chapter, several faculty members had difficulty (even slight reservation) explaining their interpretations of social injustice and social change agency.

It appears that despite the radical posturing, university SJ programs are designed to offer little more than a kinder, gentler version of the status quo for students while creating space within the bureaucratic structures of universities for themselves. Even the more radical suppositions and inclinations among faculty are suppressed, either internally or within the bureaucracy, to maintain order. As social psychologist Ervin Goffman (1959) explained, to give interaction coherence, 'actors' agree upon a "definition of the situation", a mutually understood framework for interpreting events (actors may compete

to establish preference for definitions that they find most favorable). Tension may arise

if the credibility of a given definition of the situation is in jeopardy, but actors may "save

face" and preserve the definition regardless of its credibility if they continue to find it to

their benefit.   Thus, SJ faculty may, despite the rhetoric and banners proclaiming

substantive social change, acquiesce to pressure, settle for contradiction, and excuse

hypocrisy to preserve the bureaucratic peace in their programs as long as it continues to

sustain them.

Commonalities, Divergences, and Peculiarities

There were very few significantly noticeable distinctions between programs.

Each program arose during the 1990's in response to similar imperatives – faculty

searching for space to build social justice, "academics with ethics" one professor

summarized, into university curricula. Each program began as a series of courses that

developed into a minor, major, and/or graduate program under pressure from constituent

professors. Some, such as the graduate program, were resisted by "right-wing

professors", while others experienced little resistance; the development of another was

greatly facilitated by a large endowment to the university specifically targeting social

justice education.

The most noticeable distinction from an organizational standpoint was between

the Catholic universities and the others. Each Catholic university was responding to a

unique imperative that may have influenced each program to develop differently from the

others. One program developed as a response to the 1983 letter on nuclear proliferation

published by Catholic bishops. The bishop of St. Paul was deeply involved in the effort

and in 1985 he asked the president of one of St. Paul's Catholic universities what he

would do about the letter. The president appointed a committee to develop an academic program that started in 1987; the program began as a small offering of courses and by 1991 students began demanding the program be expanded into a major. One student was allowed to experiment with the program as an individualized major, and as more students formally asked to do the same, the program was granted unanimous approval as a major within the following year.

A concise set of core principles – Catholic Social Teaching – informs both programs. "Catholic Social Teaching is…a set of guidelines for social ethics – everybody has a right to food, clothing, shelter, and everybody has a responsibility to ensure that all have such rights fulfilled" explained a program coordinator. While religious-inspired interpretations of injustice and agency often focus on one's individual struggle with morality, divinity, and sin, the presence of a set of principles that organize theory and practice seems to have created a framework that offers a consistency and continuity for theorizing social injustice while affording more opportunities for students of these programs to participate in social justice movements. Students in the Catholic programs are afforded several opportunities to travel abroad to Palestine, locations where liberation theology is practiced, or to domestic sites of agitation such as The School of the Americas. Where Catholic SJ programs emphasize working with "people in the margins" (it is a requirement for the program), they seem to be able to produce several examples of students actually doing so. Rather than interning at a local nonprofit or writing "a cultural biography of a thing" that is then critiqued by "the community", students in the catholic SJ programs work alongside organized campaigns for tangible, material change. That said, the outcomes are similar to those of the other programs;

"graduates enter fields of law, education, religion, politics, business, research, policy, NGO's, and the UN." Moreover, despite the efforts to connect with substantive social movements, the frame of critique and agency remains at the individual, moral level – social justice and change must be deliberated between an individual and God.

The other catholic SJ program developed as a result of the confluence of four organizing principles: the 1996 revision of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, which highlighted social justice and social change as key principles to the profession of social work; the International Declaration of Ethical Principles of Social Work published by the International Federation of Social Workers, which declared social justice as a key principle of social work based on the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Curriculum Policy Statement of the Council of Social Work Education which directed Social work programs to integrate social justice into social work curricula; and Catholic Social Teaching, the Catholic Church's statement of social ethics. These documents and imperatives inspired the creation of the program's ten principles for social justice, which included the key principles of Catholic Social Teaching: Human Dignity, Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers, Community and the Common Good, Solidarity, Rights and Responsibilities, Stewardship, Priority for the Poor and Vulnerable, Governance and Subsidiarity, Participation, and Promotion of Peace. Certainly social work and organized religion have had ambiguous effects on people, families, and social movements throughout history, and the long-term effects of infusing social justice into social work curricula via religious documents may not change that ambiguity. Although the profession of social work continues to provide a surveillance and correction service for society's dominant interests (regulated by the state

and administered by counties on one hand or administered by philanthropic foundations beholden to their benefactors' interests and administered by nonprofits – beholden to sponsoring foundations – on the other), the connection of social justice standards that include both distributive and recognition principles into the guidelines of an entire profession is a vigorous attempt to express a comprehensive, universal social justice framework. However, even the most progressive elements of social work are paternalistic, embracing the rationalization of empowerment, whereby the beneficent professional holds the client's (or in contemporary market language, customer's) hand through a series of bureaucratically ordained experiments to manipulate the client to the desired effect.

Another SJ program affiliated with a school of Social Work was included in the study but, according to the program coordinator, adapts most of its framework from the National Association of Social Workers. According to the program website, it attempts to blend theorization with practice. The program has a strong service-learning component whereby students receive their training in "practice"; all four recommended core courses (of which students are required to take three) require 30 hours of service to a social justice organization. The program's two educators stress Freirean critical pedagogy that inspires "dialogic classrooms where students find spaces of possibility (department website)" and learn to recognize the struggles of oppressed peoples throughout the world.

Each interview opened with a sense of excitement and optimism, and nearly all concluded with a sense of pessimism and hopelessness. "There is very little hope of convincing those with power that they are destroying society," complained one

respondent who worried that various identity groups were now being pitted against each other with working class whites serving as the buffer between poles of power. Incidentally, class-based politics figured little in most discussions with SJ faculty, receiving treatment as an identity among many others or being unequivocally dismissed. During one interview, the respondent reacted disapprovingly to the mention of Friedrich Engels – the respondent was unaware of why the name had been brought up as he interrupted the question when the name was spoken. He declared his discomfort with Marxist and class-based approaches to understanding the world, believing that the tradition of Marxism "has been wildly dismissive of working people, and class politics have always been extremely violent, corrupt, and condescending." The respondent contrasted this image of class politics with Dorothy Day's supposition that "history moves quietly, constructively, and personally, not dialectically."

One respondent was uniquely more conciliatory toward Marxism. After nearly one hour of exchange, the interviewee appeared to relax his guard and he offered a more nuanced analysis of the tensions between social change and the conservative nature of the university. "Nothing we say is possible without Marxism," he asserted, adding that "everything we have in the department is the result of social struggles – departments and universities should not forget where they came from." When asked how social justice movements moved to the university, he postulated that they "ended up in the university because we couldn't get it in the street. Perhaps it was a retreat – perhaps a tactical retreat...There seems to be a wait and see phase…but this is a social phenomenon and the battle is not over. Compromises have been made but they are not irreversible because social justice programs have opened space to speak, talk, analyze, and reflect." He was

concerned that movements had become more academic and less active, detached from actual struggle; "We lost idealism and willingness for big action." The discussion focused on the restructuring of universities by the Reagan and Thatcher administrations and how freedom of speech for faculty was modified to control tenure and productivity, all of which affect quality of work and create tremendous insecurity about post or position. "They manage to control the university," the respondent summarized, "and the rest of us learn to live with the capitalist idea of a university where the educational value is measured by the priority of profit."

His example is particularly telling. He critiques the influence of postmodernism in the university, which moved the revolution from the social to the internal, psychoanalytic realm and "leads logically to identity politics, which still plagues us – anything deconstruction said could have been said better with Marxism." However, when asked to develop the critique further, he tempered his reverence for Marxism by reminding that he has "no problem with legal wealth, ethical and legal wealth – I don't worship it – It's just money, matter." Like many other SJ faculty, the respondent redirected his interpretation of social change toward recognition, asserting that "students should be able to learn how to identify with any others as brothers and sisters, to learn how to move beyond boundaries" to establish greater economic opportunity for all. He affirmed his belief that tensions between program budgets and marketing, academics, and activism can be balanced, concluding that "my culture has blended with the department."

Chapter V: Summary and Conclusions

This project attempted to analyze how academic Social Justice programs theorize social injustice, social justice, and social change. The project theorized the potential harbored by such programs to effectively combat the injustices they recognize given their conceptualizations and understandings of injustice and change, and the project evaluated the effects of bureaucracy, budget, and academic entrenchment on SJ programs. The project assessed whether there existed commonalities and divergences among programs and how trends in social and political thought affected them. To satisfy these goals, nine faculty members from five academic social justice programs were intensively interviewed, faculty and program literature and theoretical perspectives were analyzed, and philosophical lineages of the programs were investigated.

Major Findings

Social Justice programs are by no means easily pigeonholed, but evidence from this project suggests that there are certain shared features. All faculty interviewed, and all literature reviewed, indicate a reliance on personal, subjective, and recognition orientations for interpreting injustice; furthermore, social justice is consistently regarded, in literature and interviews, as a matter of individual choice and lifestyle politics. The parameters of this approach confine agency to a sort of finger pointing that, as explained by Philion and Mhando, "cannot discern between a working class white college students at a public university who enjoys this or that element of white privilege and a Bill Gates" whose sphere of influence includes politicians and financiers who directly affect the conditions of millions of poor people and people of color (Philion & Mhando, 2006, p. 109). This denial of history, legitimized by postmodern theory, has the possibility of

producing little or no substantive challenge to the injustices SJ programs intend to overcome. Social justice programs ostensibly qualify graduates for privileged roles in the transformation of an unjust world, but this brand of subversion appears to have become a marketing catchphrase for academic programs whose faculty are subject to the "perils of a professionalism that lusts after place, reputation, and recognition, all of which are conceived within a mercantilist world view of finite spoils to be hoarded within the boundaries of a particular field (Palmer, 1990, p. 50)".

Social justice, as mediated through academic programs, is neither social nor, in many respects, just. SJ as theorized by universities is not unlike the liberal argument of Hayek *against* social justice in their mutual fetishization of the individual. Although SJ programs advertise a devotion to structural systems of oppression through program websites, there was little tangible theorization dedicated directly to the social relationships fundamental to the present moment in history. Capitalism was not mentioned by six of the nine faculty members, and by two it was mentioned only peripherally, secondary to systems of recognition and overcome not through fundamental change but by assuming a different form whereby all people had equal opportunity to participate. Only one faculty member attributed significance to capitalism, hypothesizing that academic SJ programs are a tactical retreat from direct confrontation. This retreat is a personal retreat, for there remain many who continue to be engaged in direct struggle with capitalism – and these people are studied rather than joined. For example, some professors and students have expressed frustration that none of the SJ faculty at their institution supported immigrant rights demonstrations, the auto workers at the Ford plant in St. Paul, or the University of Minnesota clerical workers strike of 2007 – movements

for tangible, material meaning to those involved while also deeply intertwined with matters of recognition.

Additionally, both Hayek and SJ faculty share a deep distrust of the state. None of the professors expressed any interest in using the state as a location of resistance, perceiving it more as an oppressive regime of power than a location of claims-making where collective interests might be expressed and served. While it is reasonable to distrust the state *as it presently exists*, it is not reasonable to assume that the surveillance and police functions of the state are the only utility states can provide. Certainly the interests of capital are served by a limited (or dismissed) state, and it is precisely these tendencies to discount potentials harbored in collectively organizing and dismiss the specific histories of institutions that renders the politics of academic social justice ineffective. If this project bears any potential for generalization, then it appears that a truly oppositional, emancipatory organizational strategy equipped to meet the challenges of capitalism cannot be provided through the university; SJ theories accommodate capitalism, its organizational strategies (university education) are beholden to the capitalist interests of the university, and neither the theory that informs SJ programs nor the faculty that transmits theory generally acknowledge the overarching reality of capitalism or the strategic revolutionary potential of class.

The alternative most often recommended by SJ programs – the individual aware of the personal being political, the individual who conscientiously consumes – serves to further, not challenge, the interests of capital, and likewise serves to sustain the interests of the SJ programs. SJ programs advertise an enlightened graduate able to readily understand the complex problems of the world and deliver a range of solutions through

whatever bureaucratic apparatus in which the graduate finds employment. As concern for social justice grew entrenched in the academic bureaucracy, there was little else SJ programs could be expected to do – they must, as one interviewee said, "learn how to live with the capitalist idea of university where the educational value is measured by the priority of profit."

These trends in theory did not emerge in a vacuum. The social, economic, and political trends of the past four decades, characterized by delegitimization of public institutions and the state and heavy emphasis on individual participation in markets, individual consumption, and individual responsibility, have laid the foundation upon which the radical solipsisms represented by postmodernism and identity could be built. The related hostility towards intellectualism and public universities has made the retreat of radical professors (whether hiding behind esoteric jargon or acquiescing to political pressure) seems reasonable if one wishes to preserve his or her job. Integral to the interpretation of the data produced by this project is a comprehension that the theories and practices of academics in SJ programs are necessarily the products of their class location, such that what they produce can be seen as active agency in efforts to improve their living conditions. This project contends that SJ programs are a corresponding development of capitalism (that is, called into existence by capitalism, regardless of the antagonisms in the relationship), that they are reproduced by reproducing the system they ostensibly critique by creating knowledge in the interest of capitalist class. Indeed, given the political-economic developments of the past two generations, how could there not be an emergence of a range of theories so centered in individual experience?

Possibilities for Future Research

This project raised many more questions than it answered. The sample size, both of university programs and of faculty, was low and specific to one region of the United States. Expanding the study to include many more universities and faculty would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between social movements, theory, and the university. Furthermore, one difference noted in the results relates to the greater amount of activity among students and faculty at the Catholic institutions compared to the others. The observation may be explained by the possibility that the Catholic institutions were more willing to discuss or more excited about their participation in movements, they were truly more involved in movements, or the observation is merely a coincidence related to the small sample size. Future study may suggest deeper implications of that relationship (and whether it truly exists). It may also be beneficial to research the different manifestations of SJ programs internationally and how they figure into regional struggles for equity (whether based in recognition, distribution, or both, and how they theorize these relationships).

A hint of defensiveness was occasionally evident during faculty interviews. Faculty may have been possessive about their programs or theories and unwilling to subject themselves to scrutiny. Future research in this area may require additional degrees of covertness to increase faculty disclosure. Eight faculty members declined interviews after repeated attempts to establish friendly dialogue; occasionally faculty would agree to interviews only to repeatedly postpone until finally canceling.

Final Thoughts

There is a certain irony in social justice literature that, as the theories upon which social justice programs rely develop, theorists appear to lose focus on the *social* elements of the justice they mean to establish. While no single range of theory is entitled to anybody's allegiances, to neglect capitalism, regardless of whether one's political priorities are distributive or related to recognition, can only render interpretations and analyses of distribution or recognition deficient. Carol Stabile carefully attempts to clarify a materialist perspective that effectively summarizes how Marxism has directly, unflinchingly attempted to advocate a recognition agenda within its own historical agenda. She writes that "by situating both forms within the material context and historical framework in which they occur, we can highlight the variable discriminatory mechanisms that are central to capitalism as a system (Stabile, 1997, pp. 142-143)." A materialist framework would equip one to theorize about the diversity of oppressions experienced by people, as opposed to theorizing solely from the perspective of one's identity as might be suggested by the more extreme adherents of identity politics. This framework would then situate oppressions within a historical and economic context, thus tangibly rendering their background and possibilities.

Despite the similarities with postmodern theory, SJ faculty hardly seem conversant regarding postmodern theorists. Many faculty members were particularly fond of Bell Hooks who has described herself as a postmodernist, but most (not all) were unfamiliar with the works of postmodernists such as Lyotard, Lacan, Baudrillard, etc. Nevertheless, like the postmodernists, SJ faculty have abandoned the "metanarratives" of history, science, and universal emancipation and discredited the institutions that bind

people together. To do so renders a task like that encouraged by Thomas Piketty in his seminal *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2014) - to instate a global tax on wealth and a confiscatory tax on very high incomes - nearly impossible (as moderate as it is given the full range of potential interventions); the amount of organization, risk, and cooperation required for such a task might appear alien to people who dismiss the legitimacy of the state as a location of claims-making, who emphasize hyper-subjectivity and consequently (whether intentional or not) dismiss the potential for, even the concept of, solidarity.

To contemporary theory, the market is a given, a location of – rather than a reason for – struggle, and it is one's participation in the market that cultivates justice. Befitting the internal, personal nature of injustice and change agency, this sort of passive nihilism, the foundation of which rests on the assumption that nothing is truly knowable except the self (and even this is regarded with occasional suspicion), becomes license to retreat to two antithetical but complementary extremes, either a hyper-intellectualism whereby the academic thinks really hard to avoid risk, or hyper-anti-intellectualism whereby activists act radically but are unsure why they are acting. In either case, thinking or acting without theorizing the complementary relationship between thought and action cannot wholly serve either end.

References

Aguilar, D. (2012, April 12). Tracing the Roots of Intersectionality. Retrieved from
   http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2012/aguilar120412.html

Ahmad, A (1992). *In theory: classes, nations, literatures*. London: Verso

Ahmad, A. (1997). Postcolonial Theory and the 'Post-' Condition. In L. Panitch, (Ed).
   (1997). *Ruthless criticism of all that exists: Socialist register 1997*. London:
   Merlin Press.

Albo, G. (2006). The Limits of Eco-Localism: Scale, Strategy, Socialism. In L. Panitch,
   (Ed). (2007). *Coming to terms with nature: Socialist register 2007*. London:
   Merlin Press.

Alessio, J. C. (1996). Curriculum Transformation through Critique. *Transformations,
   7*(2), 79.

Andrzejewski, J. (2005). The Social Justice, Peace, and Environmental Education
   Standards Project. *Multicultural Perspectives, 7*(1), 8–16

Andrzejewski, J and Alessio, J. (2005). Moving the Mountain: Social Justice Education at
   the University. In M. Ouellett (Ed.), *Teaching inclusively: Resources for course,
   department, and institutional change in higher education* (pp. 297-310).
   Stillwater, OK: New Forums Press.

Baudrillard, J. (1993). The Precession of Simulacra. In J. Natoli & L. Hutcheon (Eds.), *A
   postmodern reader* (pp. 342-375). New York, NY: State University of New York
   Press. (Original work published 1983).

Brennan, T. (2006). *Wars of position: The cultural politics of left and right*. New York:
   Columbia.

Carchedi, G. (1987). *Class analysis and social research.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd

Cho, S. (2006). On Language of Possibility: Revisiting Critical Pedagogy. In C. A. Rossatto, R. L. Allen, and M. Pruyn, (Eds) (2006). *Reinventing critical pedagogy: widening the circle of anti-oppression*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield

Cho, S. (2010). Why Culture?: A political economy of cultural politics. In Z. Leonardo, (Ed). (2010). *Handbook of cultural politics in education.* Rotterdam: Sense

Davis, K. (2011). Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful. In H. Lutz, M. T. Herrera Vivar, and L. Supik, (Eds) (2011). *Framing intersectionality: Debates on a multi-faceted concept in gender studies* (pp. 43-54). Farnham: Ashgate.

Feagin, J. R., & Vera, H. (2001). *Liberation sociology.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Featherstone, L., Henwood, D., & Parenti, C. (2004). Action Will Be Taken: Left Anti-intellectualism and its Discontents. Retrieved from http://www.leftbusinessobserver.com/Action.html

Fraser, N. (2000). Rethinking Recognition. *New Left Review 3,* May-June 2000, 107-120

Freire, P. (1998). The Adult Literacy Process as Cultural Action for Freedom. *Harvard Educational Review, 68*(4), 480-498.

Freire, P. (2006). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum Press

Gewirtz, S. (2006). Towards a Contextualized Analysis of Social Justice in Education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 38*(1), 69-81.

Gewirtz, S., & Cribb, A. (2002). Plural conceptions of social justice: Implications for policy sociology. *Journal of Education Policy, 17*(5), 499-509.

Gimenez, M. (2001). Marxism and Class, Gender and Race: Rethinking the Trilogy. *Race, Gender and Class, 8*(2), pp. 23-33

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life.* New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.

Good, K. (2005). A New Paradigm for Service-Learning: Social Justice (Unpublished master's thesis). St. Cloud State University.

Gorski, P. (2010). Cognitive dissonance as a strategy in social justice teaching. *Multicultural Education, 17*(1), 54-57.

Habermas, J. (1972). *Theory and practice*. Boston: Beacon Press

Harvey, D. (1990). Introduction. *Sociological Perspectives, 33*(1), 1–10.

Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Hassan, I. (1993). Toward a Concept of Postmodernism. In J. Natoli & L. Hutcheon (Eds.), *A postmodern reader* (pp. 273-286). New York, NY: State University of New York Press. (Original work published 1987)

Holst, J. (2006). Paulo Freire in Chile, 1964-1969: Pedagogy of the Oppressed in Its Sociopolitical Economic Context. *Harvard Educational Review, 76*(2), 243-270.

Hooks, B. (2000). *Where we stand: Class matters*. New York: Routledge.

Hooks, B. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*. New York: Routledge.

Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism.* Durham: Duke University Press

Kraipowich, J. (2001). Socially Responsible Jobs: An Evaluation of Social Responsible Websites in the Non-Profit Sector (Unpublished Master's Thesis). St. Cloud State University.

Lyotard, J. (1993). Excerpts from The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge. In J. Natoli & L. Hutcheon (Eds.), *A postmodern reader* (pp. 71-90). New York, NY: State University of New York Press. (Original work published 1979)

Massucco, W. (2008). The Earth is Female: Interview with Vandana Shiva. Retrieved from https://www.scribd.com/doc/40066173/The-Earth-is-Female-Vandana-Shiva

Merton, R. K. (1936). The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action. *American Sociological Review, 1*(6), 894–904.

Michaels, W. B. (2006) *The trouble with diversity: How we learned to love identity and ignore inequality*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Michaels, W. B. (2011, January). Let Them Eat Diversity. *Jacobin, 1*(1). Retrieved from https://www.jacobinmag.com/2011/01/let-them-eat-diversity/

Mulhern, F. (1997). The Politics of Cultural Studies. In E. M. Wood and J B. Foster (Eds), *In defense of history.* New York: Monthly Review Press.

National Association of Social Workers. (2008). Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers. http://www.naswdc.org/pubs/code/code.asp Accessed 3/5/2015.

Navarro-Tejero, A. (2006). Placing Women and Ecology at the Heart of Modern Development Discourse: Vandana Shiva Interviewed by Antonia Navarro-Tejero. *Atenea*, *26*(1), 9-15.

North, C. E. (2006). More Than Words? Delving into the Substantive Meaning(s) of "Social Justice" in Education. *Review of Educational Research, 76*(4), 507-535.

Palmer, B. D. (1990). *Descent into discourse: The reification of language and the writing of social history.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Palmer, B. D. (2000). *Cultures of darkness: Night travels in the histories of transgression*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Panitch, L., & Gindin, S., (2012). *The making of global capitalism: The political economy of American empire*. London: Verso.

Philion, S. (1998). Bridging the Gap between New Social Movement Theory and Class. *Rethinking Marxism, 10*(4), 79-104.

Philion, S., & Mhando, L. (2006). From Smorgasbord Pedagogy to Critical Pedagogy: Rethinking How We Teach About Race. In P. Kaufman (Ed.), *Critical pedagogy in the classroom* (pp. 108-120). Washington: American Sociological Association.

Piketty, T. (2014). *Capital in the twenty-first century.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Pickering, K. A. (2000). *Lakota culture, world economy*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Reed, A. (2001). *Class Notes: Posing as politics and other thoughts on the American scene.* New York: The New Press.

Shiva, V. (1997). *Biopiracy: The plunder of nature and knowledge.* Boston, MA: South End Press.

Shiva, V. (2001). Special Report: Golden Rice and Neem: Biopatents and the Appropriation of Women's Environmental Knowledge. *Women's Studies Quarterly, 29*(1/2), 12-23

Smith, L.T. (2002). *Decolonizing methodologies*. Dunedin: University of Otago Press.

Stabile, C. (1997). Postmodernism, Feminism, and Marx: Notes from the Abyss. In E. M. Wood and J. B. Foster (Eds), *In defense of history*. New York: Monthly Review Press

Thompson, E.P. (1963). *The making of the English working class*. New York: Vintage

Weber, M. (1930). *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. New York: Routledge

Weber, M. (1946). *From Max Weber: Essays in sociology.* H. Gerth & C. W. Mills (Eds). New York: Oxford University Press.

Weber, M. (1949). *The methodology of the social sciences*. (E. A. Shils & H. A. Finch, Trans.). Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.

Wood, E. (1998). *The retreat from class.* London: Verso