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As with virtually every aspect of U.S. society, higher education has been strongly impacted and influenced by neoliberalism. As such higher education faculty concerned about social justice and its attending themes face unique challenges as they navigate the college and university landscape. This study makes the claim that higher education educators should incorporate social justice concerns and initiatives in their pedagogy. It grounds this claim in a range of significant and enduring epistemological and philosophical ideas. The study also explores a range of scholarship regarding what it means to teach critically, to teach with issues of social justice in view. It also reviews important, overlapping themes present in the histories of K-12 education and higher education. The study also covers scholarship regarding the foothold neoliberalism has in higher education. In addition, the study directly engages, through interviews and observations, higher education faculty who are committed to social justice concerns and initiatives. Implications of the interview and observation data are discussed. The study ends with suggestions for higher education and for future research.

Keywords: higher education, social justice, neoliberalism, teaching, critical pedagogy

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

IN THE AGE OF NEOLIBERALISM

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The genesis of my study interest lies in two sets of experiences that occurred 25 years apart from one another. In the fall of 1986 I began my freshman year at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. One of my first classes was a "large lecture" religion class with about 300 students in Hamilton Hall, one of the large lecture auditoriums on campus. The focus of the course was the Old Testament. I remember sitting in that huge auditorium waiting for the first class to start feeling lost and scared. When the professor arrived it only got worse. He told the crowded auditorium something to the effect, 'leave your Sunday School religion at the door, for the rest of the semester I'm your god'. Well he turned out to be a distant and uninterested god. About halfway through the semester I got up the nerve to go by his office and ask him a question about something regarding the text we were reading. Even though it was during his official office hours, he seemed slightly peeved at my arrival and determined to get me out of his office as quickly as possible so he could get back to whatever he was doing. Looking back on it, given the pressure to 'publish or perish', particularly in large research universities such as the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, he probably was under pressure with things that had nothing or at least very little to do with being an outstanding teacher to his students. When I left his office I determined if I ever became a college professor I would do things differently, radically different. Even then, at 18 years

young, I felt my professor missed a real opportunity to make a positive impact on a young person's life. In many ways this experience set the stage for a career change I would have 25 years later when I left the banking profession to go to graduate school to begin the process of becoming a college professor with a view of making a profound, substantial, and lasting difference in the lives of college students.

In addition to this experience, several years ago I watched two documentaries regarding the state of education in the U.S. that had a profound effect on me: *Waiting for Superman* and *Precious Knowledge*. It is fair to say that these documentaries come from different sides of the political aisle. This signals a pattern that has been with me for my entire adult life. I am genuinely interested in hearing competing perspectives and hearing voices that come from divergent spaces. I think such a standpoint is essential to critical thinking. I recognize that all documentaries are subservient to the interests and agenda of their creators and are therefore susceptible to partial truths and hyperbole. Nevertheless, I came away from these films impressed by their content in the main and wanting to make a difference in the larger field of education. These films along with my personal experience in the college classroom are the catalyst for wanting to become a great teacher in the service of students.

Over the last six years I have had the privilege to teach college students in both community college and four year university contexts. During this time I've developed a pedagogy that seeks to honor the *entire* student. A pedagogy that approaches students holistically seeking to strengthen and empower not only their intellectual lives but also their physical, emotional and spiritual lives where appropriate. Given the injustice and

brokenness in the world, my pedagogy has necessitated a commitment and prioritization of *social justice* concerns and ideals. While the term 'social justice' can be (and is) broadly understood and resists a singular, all-encompassing definition (Rizvi, 1998), I want to at least contextualize the term as it relates to this study. When I speak of social justice, I am speaking of "both a process and a goal" committed to bringing about "full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs" (Bell, 1997, p. 3). Educators who are concerned about social justice layer social justice on their classrooms and incorporate it in their pedagogy. In chapter two of this study I will give a robust description of what it means to educate from the standpoint of social justice.

As I indicated, my life of teaching at the college level began with concerns for equality, empowerment, and equity already etched in my thinking. It would be fair to say that such perspectives were part of my personal philosophy, at least on some level, prior to university teaching. Nevertheless, attempting to exemplify social justice concerns and ideals in the college and university classroom has not always been easy. In fact I have wrestled often with just how it should look. This study will seek to explore how educators committed to social justice ideals navigate the university space and negotiate their roles as university professors and ultimately as important contributors to larger society.

Statement of the Problem

The focus of this study is Higher Education in the United States. I'm concerned about the historical and current state of Higher Education and its relationship to social

justice issues and concerns. As critical and crucial stakeholders in society, are institutions of higher learning committed to being catalysts for social change and transformation? Are universities and colleges principally motivated by a mission to be sites of critical reflection, democracy and enfranchisement for all students? Are they places "where democratic subjects can be shaped, democratic relations can be experienced, and anti-democratic forms of power can be identified and critically engaged" (Giroux, 2007, p. 210)? Are issues and concerns regarding social justice understood as central and important to university administrators and professors? Moreover, are these questions even valid? Who says higher education should be concerned about social justice? By what authority are such claims made? There are a number of organizations, policy institutions, and think tanks in the U.S. that are directly opposed to the use and advocacy of social justice principles in the classroom. They believe there is a concerted indoctrination of leftist politics at work and nothing more. From Fox News to the Leadership Institute's Campus Reform Project to the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal, just a few miles from my undergraduate university, and many others, there are a number of institutions arguing against the notion that the classroom should be a place where social justice is for-fronted. They argue that the classroom should have nothing to do with political struggle, empowerment, and realized equity. In fact they see a struggle for justice as something that if it is relevant at all, it is mutually exclusive from education and has no relevance to classroom curriculum (Schalin, 2016). The reality of such voices in our national discourse underscore the need

to give strong philosophical *grounding* to the exhortations of educators calling for the prioritization of social justice ideals in their classrooms.

In addition, we need to ground our claims regarding the necessity of an educational experience that incorporates meaningful episodes of democracy, empowerment, and equity because of the relentless tendency of neoliberalism to co-opt any and everything that would seek to challenge it. Neoliberalism is an ideological standpoint that has a pervasive hold on many aspects of U.S. society including education (Case & Ngo, 2017, Jovanovic, 2017, Poulos, 2017, Atasay, 2015, Apple, 2013, Robertson, 2008, Giroux & Giroux, 2006, McLaren, 2005). Neoliberalism, simply stated, prioritizes and centralizes money as the final determinant of any matter. The economy, manifested and executed as a 'free market' has the single greatest influence in society and culture. "Neoliberal ideology views the "free market" as the solution to all problems" (Lucal, 2015, p. 5). Neoliberalism's power and influence on society (and education in particular) is so pronounced that some see it as a type of religion.

> I say religion here, because neoliberalism - a vision that sees every sector of society as subject to the logics of commodification, marketization, competition, and cost benefit analysis - seems to be immune to empirical arguments, especially, but not only, in education (Apple, 2013, p. 6).

In chapter three I will unpack the hold neoliberalism has in our society and how it has exerted significant influence in our colleges and universities. For now, I just want to underscore that neoliberal ideology is the air hegemonic society breaths and as such it wants to either consume or co-opt anything that would seek to challenge it or be a viable alternative to it. Without a strong root system undergirding the value claims pressing for

social justice reform in our educational spaces, social justice education is susceptible to morphing into an 'enterprise' ripe for cooptation by neoliberal and capitalistic forces. To some extent this is already happening. Atasay (2015) argues that "conceptions of 'diversity' and 'equity' in U.S. education have become amenable to global neoliberal economic educational discourses that rest on competitive global market demands" (p. 171). He goes on to say that "the approach and knowledge about and for democracy and social justice education, particularly in prominent multicultural education scholarship and practice, is increasingly commodified and risks being embedded in market rationalities" (Atasay, 2015, p. 171). Giving a robust philosophical grounding to social justice claims regarding education will help insulate social justice efforts from being 'neatly packaged' and put in service to a hegemonic society dominated by neoliberalism.

In my experience an often glossed over reality in higher education settings that center the importance of social justice in their pedagogical approaches is the connection these approaches must make with *modernist* thinking or at least an important feature of modernist thinking, namely, *the willingness to make binding value judgements*. Social justice discourse/rhetoric carries the heavy freight of 'shoulds' and 'oughts'. It is discourse/rhetoric that is filled with directives for human behavior, directives that have moral underpinnings. Hence, it is discourse/rhetoric that sees itself as being imbued with *moral authority*. One must ask what is the legitimacy of this moral authority. Or at least, what epistemological or philosophical perspectives, that have some degree of collective ascription in society, undergird such directives and claims. Part of this study is dedicated to the identification and elaboration of some of these epistemological and philosophical

perspectives in order to give intellectual weight to the need for educators to employ social justice initiatives and ideals in their total work, that is, what they do in the classroom, with administration, in their scholarship, and in their communities.

Within the current climate of neoliberalism, I fear that it's possible that the valorization of higher education has been narrowed and recast to the point that institutions of higher learning are no longer a meaningful stakeholder in society designed to pervasively enfranchise and renew. Instead of speaking truth to power to a society dominated by neoliberal, crony-capitalistic ideology, colleges and universities are susceptible to being institutions that are merely bought and paid for players in an economic game designed to reify hegemonic power and elitism. This concern is particularly heightened when considering the humanities and social sciences where course offerings and even whole departments are diminished or in decline (Jaschik, 2017). In addition, the influence of scholarship of the humanities and social sciences, and its possible economic benefit, is more long-term and incremental. Not to mention, such economic benefit is harder to quantify. Benneworth and Jongbloed (2010) contend that the value of higher education "is framed by the rise of the hegemonic discourse of academic capitalism, increasing the emphasis of private benefit over public, and viewing academics as capitalists in the public sector" (p. 568). They further argue,

> Compared to 'hard' sciences, humanities and social sciences' (HASS) social benefits and services are more diffuse and less easily enumerated and capitalized (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010, p. 568).

Such perspective has led to a strong devaluing of the humanities and social sciences by many universities. The implications for higher education of this devaluing are varied and pervasive. This study will unpack some of these implications. With higher education increasingly subjected to consumerism and commodification, is there any place for *thinking* just for *thinking's* sake? What kind of climate are we fostering in higher education if a college degree has simply become a means to an end? Where the journey or pathway is almost insignificant and what counts is simply the end result of a piece of paper, a ticket, that is, a diploma, that seems more and more almost singularly designed to get the holder a job in order to make money. While it is a good thing to get a job and make money to sustain oneself (and perhaps others), when the job has very little to do with the journey to acquire it, or when college is simply reducible to a utilitarian mechanism to enable one to acquire capital, what has become of the college experience and the state of higher education? Where has the notion of thinking and 'critical thinking' gone? And if it doesn't reside at the college campus, where does it?

The commodification of higher education has made the acquisition of a college degree an enterprise that primarily focuses on getting the proper tasks done, and done as quickly as possible. Again, the finish line, the diploma, is everything. The intellectual journey is almost incidental. On my way to teach every day I pass by a billboard that says, "Bachelors in 2.5 years". How is there any time for thinking and critical reflection in such a scheme? There isn't. Hannah Arendt reminds us that "thinking's chief characteristic is that it interrupts all doing, all ordinary activities no matter what they happen to be" (Arendt, 1971, p. 423). Thinking, real thinking, the type of thinking that

promotes sustained contemplation and critical reflection takes time. It has value for what it is in the moment. It is not merely a means to something else. It is a means unto itself. It has ontological dividends for the person. It can provide a recalibration of the soul. A re-engagement with the self. As Hudak (2010) reminds us, Arendt

> argues that thinking is done in solitude (the two-in-one), and that when engaged in thinking one withdraws from the world to re-engage with oneself in conversation, reflection, and solitude (p. 297).

Such a standpoint is not a push for a resurgence of monasticism or forgets we are living in the 21st century. Indeed some of the most current and cutting-edge iterations of formal schooling, schools that are in the vanguard of technological innovation, have created private spaces specifically designed for the individual student to think, reflect, and internalize his/her learning (Davis & Kappler-Hewitt, 2013). I'm merely emphasizing that a "Bachelors in 2.5 years" undermines our institutions of higher learning as places of rigorous thinking and serious contemplation and reduces them to neoliberal assembly lines designed to hurry up and get you to what's next. Which in all too many cases is just a cog in someone else's 'means of production', but that's a paper for another time.

Given the influence of neoliberalism on higher education, one has to ask: How does such a climate impact professors committed to pedagogical values and practices that resist the commodification of the educative process and promote thinking and learning as virtues and ends unto themselves. Where the fruits of education, although real and perceptible, cannot be easily assimilated into a university's balance sheet and P&L statement. To deflect any accusation that I'm merely engaging in convenient theoretical

discussion devoid of specific, 'real world' facts in order to merely push a narrative, consider this: In the 2016-2017 school year the **average** salary of the Department Chairs of the *business schools* of two state universities in North Carolina was $184,397. The **median** salary was $180,401. Three of the Department Chairs exceeded $200,000 in their annual income with the highest salary being $218,656. By contrast, the **average** salary of the Department Chairs in the *communications departments* (a typical social science discipline) at the two state universities in question was $95,096 for the same year. The **median** was also $95,096 for the same year. The highest salary was $100,400. This is essentially a **100%** difference. [The preceding data is made public by, and was extrapolated from, the North Carolina State Government's Office of the State Controller's database on Public Salaries of North Carolina which includes University of North Carolina System employees]. As one can see, the salary discrepancies, which to some extent reflect the universities' value of the disciplines, are draconian.

Need for the Study

To say it plainly, the previous 'statement of the problem' underscores the 'need for the study'. It seems to me the *identity and soul* of the university is at stake. As indicated earlier, for many students (and no doubt many parents) college has been reduced to a singular focus. When I ask my students why they came to college, the answer is almost always some form of "to get a job to make money". Embedded in such a response is the notion that college is understood to be merely a means to an end; a utilitarian device designed to get you to somewhere else. A bridge to get you to what you really want: a j-o-b and the almighty dollar. As indicated earlier, while I believe college ought to be a

time that moves one forward in vocational aspirations that will ultimately have a positive impact on becoming financially self-reliant, the growing notion among many students that college is ***only*** important and useful if it can get you a high paying job is strongly disturbing. Moreover, what about the students who simply haven't mastered the 'hidden curriculum' of college and university life that rewards those who embrace and perpetuate a college experience characterized by acute self-interest, competition, and meritocracy, dominated by a supreme and over-riding goal of monetary and economic benefit? What are we to make of them? Those students whose presence may simply serve to reify hegemonic separatism and power, who find themselves in this position because of their inability to play the college/university game due to their lack of cultural capital in the social field of higher education (Bourdieu, 1989) and because of the absence of professors committed to social justice concerns who are able to nullify the effects of cultural capital deficit. These students are disproportionately susceptible to being left behind under a rubric that says college is about one thing, getting a high paying job. Not to mention that even some students from privileged constituencies find this goal elusive.

The need for this study is partly rooted in the belief that the university needs to be prized in and of itself. It needs to be a place worthy of a type of detachment from the world where a range of ideas can be considered, interrogated, and embraced. A place where the pursuit of ideas and the gaining of understanding provide the context for individual liberation and empowerment that both conditions how we understand and contextualize our callings and vocations and also renews and transforms local culture, larger society, and indeed the entire world. I submit that college cannot just be about a

certificate to gain a job interview or skill development to ensure one can find a place in a capitalist and globalized society while being blind to the massive ethical, social, and even spiritual implications that gird the human race. In keeping with a prophetic statement of 50 years ago, I'm with Dewey when he said,

> a truly liberal, and liberating, education would today refuse to isolate vocational training on any of its levels from a continuous education in the social, moral, and scientific context within which wisely administered callings and professions must function (Dewey, 1968, p. 146).

I believe the university must be a standard bearer of the highest ideals of the concept, notion, and vision of education that is free from the trappings of neoliberalism. Higher education should be a conduit of personal emancipation, liberation, and freedom through the critical investigation and engagement of ideas to the end of becoming and being a predominant stakeholder and leading force of societal renewal. A stakeholder that prioritizes the reification and expansion of social justice concerns and ideals such as equality, access, agency, and equity for all people in all places. This study seeks to identify how the modern university is contextualized within U.S. society with a view to offering insight as to how the university can be changed, recalibrated, and transformed in order to become a stronger agent and beacon of democracy to the broader culture and society.

Higher education is not static; it is fluid. It is constantly evolving or devolving depending on one's point of view. In the West generally and in the United States specifically, there is a continual tug of war between society and higher education, between who is influencing who. As such there is a sustained need for educators to

reflect upon and give fresh analysis to the state of higher education. While some of the scholarship for this study will come from international sources and contexts, most of what will be investigated and analyzed will come from research specifically concerned with higher education in the United Sates. The United States is understood to be an 'open' society. As such colleges and universities in the United States are much more apt to wield more autonomous, unscripted, organic influence than universities operating in 'closed' societies where oppressive governments foster police-state environments that effectively handicap or outright mute free expression and free inquiry. This study is interested in how, in what ways, and to what extent universities in the U.S. influence their students, communities, and the larger society. This study is interested in the challenges and impediments that neoliberalism affords institutions of higher education with a view to what educators committed to social justice ideals are doing about it.

Within the United States colleges and universities, at least in theory, have opportunity to analyze, critique, and interrogate larger society. They have opportunity to place moral demands upon larger society and call it to account. Many higher education educators, as well as whole departments, within a range of colleges and universities, operate within a framework of social justice ideals and as such regularly make value claims upon society. A survey of the scholarship concerning higher education reveals there is a need to give philosophical and epistemological grounding to the plethora of value claims that are often made by higher education. This study will not only make value claims regarding the state and direction needed regarding higher education, but, as articulated earlier, it will support those claims with some philosophical footing.

'Affirmati Non Neganti Incumbit Probatio', he who asserts must then prove. This study is needed because there is a need in the current scholarship for studies that give strong philosophical and epistemological support to educators issuing clarion calls for social justice.

I recognize that postmodernism affords and promotes the notion there is more than one 'right answer'. Contemporary scholars are often wary of essentialism and its singular notions of truth and authenticity. While I respect and understand such cautions, educators (particularly those who traffic in the various sub disciplines of critical theory) who are committed to social justice ideals must necessarily embrace, at least to some extent, the belief that there are many ways that one should NOT educate and that education, at its core, is an endeavor committed to societal and world renewal. A renewal, if it is to be an *actual* renewal, must be meaningfully defined and understood. The obvious implication being the world is not ok as it is and needs to be fundamentally changed. Such a perspective necessitates strong value claims embedded with moral import. I submit for that moral import to have any weight, to have any real pressure upon the conscience of society, it must be grounded in things deeper, larger and more substantial than mere opinion disconnected from larger bodies of truth and knowledge. It must be rooted in a wider stream of perspective and thought that must at least speak to humanity at the ontological level if not the metaphysical.

In addition to a philosophical grounding of the value claims made by pedagogical approaches to higher education that center social justice reform and ideas, there is a need to understand how professors committed to social justice operate in and navigate higher

education spaces. This study does not merely highlight and underscore the need for social justice education, education committed to authentic episodes of democracy, individual empowerment, and realized equity; it also investigates and analyzes very specific ideas, behaviors, teaching practices, and activities of various professors committed to a social justice framework in their pedagogy. As such it directly engages, observes, and analyzes the ideas and teaching practices of current professors teaching in three different social science disciplines in two different institutions of higher education, one private and one public. As with most disciplines or fields of study, in the field of education there is a continual need for fresh, up-to-date scholarship that goes beyond historical assessment, textual analysis, and policy review and locates itself in both the classroom and in direct dialogue with educators. This study meets that need and provides important insight in the arena of higher education and the field of education in general.

Conceptual Framework

This study is situated in *critical pedagogy* and *critical theory* within the larger research paradigm of *qualitative inquiry*. This study will incorporate specific behaviors and ideas from six professors who are active within the setting, context, and field of higher education. As such it will borrow loosely from certain elements of *grounded theory*. Grounded theory is concerned with "the actual production of meanings and concepts used by social actors in real settings" (Gephart, 2004, p. 357). Grounded theory seeks to "address the interpretive realities of actors in social settings…" and "is most suited to efforts to understand the process by which actors construct meaning out of intersubjective experience" (Suddaby, 2006, p. 634). Grounded theory specifically and

qualitative inquiry in general are concerned with how social actors interact with a particular social setting and then re-conceptualize the space in keeping with their constructions of meaning and reality (Isabella, 1990). Grounded theory and qualitative inquiry are concerned with allowing data to dictate theory versus allowing theory to dictate how data should be interpreted (Glaser, 2010, Suddaby, 2006). Such a perspective will govern the analysis of the data collected for this study. I should note that a full iteration and implementation of grounded theory is understood to be a robust, turn-key methodology and model for doing social science research. It involves an evolving constant comparison of data over time that allows for early data to affect and influence how future data is to be coded, categorized, and interpreted (Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Glaser 1965). Consequently, the data set and timeframe for this study is too small and too narrow to be considered as a grounded theory study. Therefore this study is not labeled or designated as a grounded theory study proper and should not be viewed or understood completely in this light. Nevertheless, as indicated earlier, some of the hallmarks of grounded theory are relevant to my approach and analysis of the data collected for this study and the conclusions and implications that can be drawn from it.

Qualitative research recognizes the world and reality are not fixed or reducible to a singular interpretation and that meaning is ultimately socially constructed by individuals as they engage and interact with the world (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative inquiry is interested in how various constructions and interpretations of reality merge and change over time. Qualitative researchers seek to learn "how individuals experience and interact with their social world, the meaning it has for them" and "how the social and

political aspects of the situation shape the reality; that is, how larger contextual factors affect the ways in which individuals construct reality" (Merriam, 2002, p. 4). This study is centered directly in qualitative inquiry as it seeks to understand the experiences of professors as they navigate the social field of higher education while maintaining their commitments to social justice. This study will highlight the ways in which certain professors construct reality and make meaning in their classrooms with a view of their students (and themselves) making an impact in their local communities and beyond.

Critical theory is preeminently interested in *power* and how power is exercised, that is, how it is invested or divested, in the context of the social construction of reality and meaning making by individuals and groups. It is vitally concerned with how power is used and wielded by hegemonic groups in service to their specific agenda and goals recognizing that such uses of power are most often at the expense and deficit of groups outside the dominant strata. Critical theory is interested in the dislocation and dislodging of power from hegemonic groups, institutions, and organizations with the intention of redistributing power to minoritized groups who are plagued by marginalization and disenfranchisement. By the use of the term, minoritized, I mean a social group that has been actively devalued in society. Where there has been a negative representation of the group in society by hegemonic forces and where there has been a restriction of resources and opportunity by those aligned with hegemonic interests. I use

> the term minoritized in order to capture the active dynamics that create the lower status in society, and also to signal that a group's status is not necessarily related to how many or few of them there are in the population at large (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 5).

These groups are of particular interest and concern for critical theorists. "Critical theory research critiques historical and structural conditions of oppression and seeks transformation of those conditions" (Glesne, 2011, p. 9). Such perspectives are at the heart of all social justice work including college and university teaching that seeks to foreground social justice concerns.

Critical pedagogy brings critical theory into the realm of education. Critical pedagogy is particularly interested in the ways in which power is manifested, exercised, and used within the context of education. When it comes to education and schooling, critical pedagogy wants to know who benefits and why and who is diminished and why. And then it goes a step further and seeks to enfranchise those constituencies that have been diminished. As such, critical pedagogy is vitally concerned about social justice and education consequently being a context for the expansion of equality, agency, and equity for ALL constituencies. Critical pedagogy ask the question: what or to whom is education in service to? Critical pedagogy brings the notion of activism to the educational space. Critical pedagogy is an

> educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action (Giroux, 2010, p. 15).

Critical pedagogy makes the claim,

> education is fundamental to democracy and no democratic society can survive without a formative culture shaped by pedagogical practices capable of creating the conditions for producing citizens who are critical, self-reflective, knowledgeable, and willing to make moral judgments and act in a socially responsible way (Giroux, 2011,p.3).

My approach to the study of Higher Education and the place and prioritization of social justice issues and concerns begins with a *claim* that will be substantiated and then unfolds along *two research questions*. First, the claim I am making is simply that social justice concerns need to be central to every educator's pedagogy; that being intentional about social justice issues and ideals should be in the DNA of everyone who takes up the profound stewardship and calling of 'teacher'. This study is concerned about higher education in the United States. In the United States, to varying degrees, there is a history of significant oppression, marginalization, and disenfranchisement of a range of groups, from Native Indians, to Blacks, to Latino/as, to women, and others. This study makes the strong claim that social justice concerns should be central to higher education because of the legacy of injustice that directly impacts a range of constituencies and permeates our collective culture and society. Social justice concerns should be central to the pedagogy of college and university professors and instructors and to the mission and core values of colleges and universities. Both professor and university should each be standard bearers, beacons, examples, and influencers of the highest ideals of democracy, equality, and equity. Colleges and universities are critical stakeholders in society and should be sites of empowerment for the marginalized and disenfranchised to the end of ultimately

renewing and transforming society and the world. Professors, as both public intellectuals and as teachers of the next generation, should be in the vanguard of societal change through teaching and mentoring their students to think critically, by bridging the divide between the academy and the community through social justice praxis, and by being lights of moral and/or spiritual renewal to society at large.

I make this claim(s) through the prism of *cultural foundations*. Cultural foundations is an interdisciplinary approach of the analysis of education through the varied, yet complimentary, lenses of history, philosophy, and sociology with specific attention given to issues of power, privilege, equity, and agency. Through the lenses of history, philosophy, and sociology and against the backdrop of issues of power, privilege, equity, and agency I will substantiate why social justice concerns should be central to professors and universities.

Second, my study will ask and answer the following research questions:

RQ1: In what way(s) does the current state and climate of higher education in the U.S. resist and impede the prioritization and implementation of social justice concerns and initiatives within the college and university space?

RQ2: How do professors concerned with the prioritization and implementation of social justice concerns and initiatives successfully navigate the college and university space while maintaining their explicit identification with social justice concerns and initiatives?

I will approach these questions from three (3) levels of analysis: *macro*, *meso*, and *micro*. My *macro* analysis investigates the university's relationship to society. What is

the role of the university in society? In what ways do professors affect society at large? How do they directly engage society? When it comes to the university and society, who holds the locus of power and influence, the university or society? In other words do universities influence the nature and direction of society or does society influence the nature and direction of universities? In what ways have dominant ideologies, pastimes, and attitudes in society, such as neoliberalism, sports, and meritocracy (among others), affected universities? Are universities meaningful stakeholders in society effective at troubling and recalibrating the dominant status quo OR have universities been effectively co-opted by the dominant status quo and brought into service to hegemonic interests and concerns?

My *meso* analysis investigates the relationship between the professor and her relationship to university administration. Do professors committed to social justice concerns have the ear of their administrations? Do professors who identify with social justice concerns and considerations take action to be change-agents within their colleges and universities at the possible expense of their personal career growth? Do professors committed to social justice concerns have the backing and support of their administrations?

This study also analyzes higher education at the *micro* level, at the point of the classroom. From this standpoint I am interested in the professor's specific relationship to his/her students. In what ways are social justice concerns and considerations brought to bear in the classroom? Is critical thinking emphasized? Is hegemony resisted? Are professors creating spaces for students that replace disenfranchisement with

enfranchisement, fill deficit with equity, and provide pathways to lasting empowerment? Are these things even possible within the current environment of higher education and if so how do professors deliver their specific pedagogy to their students in ways that keep social justice concerns and considerations in view?

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are things that are somewhat out of the control of the researcher. Things or perspectives that if wholly absent or totally untrue would jeopardize the study. An assumption of this study is that my respondents are telling the truth. This assumption is acceptable largely because there is no obvious reason to think the respondents would lie. There is no immediately understood benefit to not being truthful. Another assumption of this study is that the data from my interviews and observations of professors who prioritize social justice concerns and ideals in their pedagogy is at least somewhat consistent among all professors who self-identify that social justice concerns and ideals are important to their pedagogy. This assumption is made notwithstanding the small sample size of the respondents and the narrow geographical location of the participating schools of the study. This assumption is acceptable because of the well-known unity and solidarity that professors who are appreciative of social justice share with one another. While professors are not identical to one another and don't cease to be individuals, shared beliefs, commitments, and goals regarding social justice (and not necessarily other matters) are common among those who prioritize social justice concerns as part of their work and life.

Limitations

Limitations are possible weaknesses in a study that are outside of the researcher's control. A limitation of this study is the issue of self-reporting. Self-reporting in qualitative research studies has been shown, at times, to be hampered by deficits in memory, by insufficient time to recall information, and by the respondent's desire to give an expected answer, particularly in one-on-one interview situations (Harris & Brown, 2010; Marton & Pong, 2005; Brewer, Hallman, Fielder, & Kipen, 2004). Notwithstanding this limitation, scholars who acknowledge these concerns regarding self-reporting also contend that

> despite the weaknesses of both questionnaires and interviews, these are important means of obtaining direct responses from participants about their understandings, conceptions, beliefs, and attitudes; hence, these methods cannot and should not be discarded (Harris & Brown, 2010, p. 2).

Another possible limitation related to the issue of self-reporting is the notion that professors who are being observed do their best work when being observed. The thought is that anyone, including professors in higher education, under a scheduled observation may prepare and perform better than they might otherwise would without the pressure of the observation. Nevertheless, such a possible phenomenon does not derail me because I believe while there might be a heightened sense of preparing and performing well, what I will ultimately observe will be true to the spirit of how and what the professors routinely do. As one who has been observed while teaching in the university, I have this confidence. Not to mention that it is also understood that sometimes people who are under the pressure of an observation actually perform *worse* than they normally do.

Anxiety gets the best of all of us at times. Therefore I see this concern balancing itself out.

Delimitations

Delimitations are basic parameters the researcher imposes on the study. A delimitation of this study is the sample of respondents; the size and their institutions. Another delimitation of this study is that I am making a claim without allowing space for disagreement or debate. The claim being that all professors, or anyone who takes up the mantle and stewardship of teaching, should be mindful of social justice concerns and considerations. Such a claim obviously could be challenged. One could argue that being a professor has nothing to do with being concerned with social justice concerns or considerations. In fact some have. Nevertheless, I believe such a perspective to be so patently false that I'm not giving space to discuss and debate it. But I recognize there is a place for this competing perspective to be considered and interrogated in other studies.

A final delimitation is that I have not sought out the perspectives of students on this topic. An interesting study could be made by engaging students from minoritized communities regarding their experience in college and university classrooms that prioritize social justice perspectives and concerns. Students' perspectives on equality, agency, democracy, and empowerment relative to their situated classroom experience in classrooms helmed by professors who incorporate social justice in their pedagogy would be interesting information to have and review. Such a study would be ideal for future research in this area.

Preview of the Study

Chapter I

Chapter one introduces the study. It discusses how I came to be interested in the topic. It gives a statement of the problem to be investigated and describes the circumstances and conditions that make the study necessary. Chapter one also describes the conceptual framework of the study. It introduces the central claim and articulates and formalizes two research questions. Chapter one also discusses certain assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. Chapter one closes with a preview of the study.

Chapter II

Chapter two addresses the central claim of the study, namely that college and university professors should prioritize social justice concerns and ideals in their scholarship and pedagogy. It also begins the literature review. As such, this chapter covers scholarship that gives the necessary epistemological grounding for the central claim and its necessary philosophical and sociological underpinnings. This scholarship also provides insight into how human beings make and find meaning and understand their individual place and contribution to the world.

In addition, this chapter covers literature regarding what it means to teach critically. It provides a review of the literature that speaks to what it means to teach with the issues of social justice (issues of democracy, equality, equity, and agency) emphasized in the classroom. As such, this chapter also covers important scholarship related to critical pedagogy.

Chapter III

Chapter three covers the remaining literature review. It covers an abbreviated look at the histories of K-12 education and higher education. This chapter focuses on two important themes that are present in the development of K-12 education and higher education. The bulk of this chapter is concerned about the recent and current state of higher education. This chapter reviews a range of scholarship designed to give an accurate picture of the recent history of higher education and higher education today. As such it gives specific attention to neoliberalism and its far-reaching influence in society and its almost unrivaled hold on higher education. It will also take a brief look at how social class has molded the university space. Finally, this chapter will survey episodes of pushback and resistance to neoliberalism and anti-democratic events and trends that have taken place at our colleges and universities.

Chapter IV

Chapter four explains the methodology of the study. Chapter four focuses on my observations and interviews of faculty who prioritize social justice concerns in their pedagogy and scholarship from two different institutions of higher education. Chapter four dives into the collected data of the study. It highlights extensive specific content excerpted from the interviews and observations of the study and identifies a number of themes I derive from the data.

Chapter V

Chapter five provides a review of the study. It also provides a discussion of the themes from the data in relation to the research questions and the macro, meso, and micro analysis of the study. It incorporates some of my perceptions and perspectives surrounding the interviews and observations. Chapter five discusses various implications for higher education and for what it means to teach with social justices concerns in view. Chapter five identifies certain implications that can be extrapolated from the data. Chapter five ends with some of my specific suggestions for higher education as well as my suggestions for future research.

Appendix

The appendix contains interview questions. It gives a sample set of many of the initial questions I asked of the professors I interviewed.

The study concludes with a complete list of references. The references and all in text citations comply with the latest edition of the APA Guidelines. With the introduction and impetus for the study established and the plan and pathway of the study laid out, we now move to chapter two and the rationale supporting the study's central claim.

CHAPTER II

EPISTEMOLOGICAL GROUNDING AND TEACHING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE VIA A CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Epistemological Grounding

Aristotle linked a desire for knowledge with human ontology. He stated, "All men by nature desire to know" (Aristotle, 350 B.C.E., Book 1, Part 1). The study of the 'desire to know' is epistemology. Succinctly put, epistemology is "the study of knowledge and justified belief" (Steup, 2017). The notion of 'justified' belief is important when we consider that epistemology is also understood as the study of *how* it is we know what we know. Embedded within the study of *how* it is we know what we know is the understanding that beliefs are never held in abject isolation from *reasons* to believe (or act) in a certain way (regardless if one can articulate the reasons adequately or if the reasons are logically defensible). As stated earlier, a key component of this study is to give sound exposition as to *why* educators in higher education *should* be committed to social justice ideals and concerns. In the spirit of the discipline of cultural foundations, this study highlights explicit foundational philosophical and sociological perspectives and ideas that provide reasons, that is, justification, for higher education educators to teach with social justice concerns squarely in view. As stated earlier, cultural foundations is an interdisciplinary approach to analyzing education through the varied, yet complimentary, lenses of philosophy, sociology, and history, with particular emphasis placed on issues of power, privilege, equity, and agency rooted in critical theory and critical pedagogy. This

study will draw on certain large and enduring ideas in philosophy and sociology as examples of support for the contention that social justice concerns should be part of the pedagogy of professors in higher education.

For many educators, teaching for social justice is not a moral imperative. In fact for many people, issues related to social justice are not dominant, or even natural, to their moral framework (Haidt & Graham, 2007). Such realities underscore the need to give strong epistemological footing to the moral claims made by educators who are concerned about social justice. Again, epistemology is the study of how it is we know what we know. Specifically to this study, how does an educator know, or what leads and an educator to believe, that he or she *should,* even *must,* adopt social justice concerns in his or her pedagogy. I submit in order to come to this belief with the expectation that others should follow, there must be something compelling the educator, driving her or him, that rises above individual whim and opinion. There must be significant, foundational ideas and perspectives that undergird the claims regarding the necessity of social justice perspectives in higher education that *justify* the claims for the claims to have any real weight or to be binding to any meaningful degree. Such claims are more effective when rooted in large, enduring ideas and perspectives that resonate with more than a few and have been tested and interrogated over time. Such claims are benefited and strengthened when grounded in ideas that speak to the ontology of humanity, the nature of what it means for human beings to *be* in the world. Moreover, such claims, for them to have an optimum impact, must find their genesis in ideas that touch the metaphysical, that is, first things; ideas that are associated with ultimate meaning and purpose. It is ideas of this

kind that can move the masses to action. That can be substantial enough to build a life around. Which is really what a serious commitment to social justice is all about.

Philosophical and Sociological Support

When it comes to the issue of why we educate, or why we teach, for many teachers the simple and almost complete answer lies with the course subject. My students routinely tell me that their almost total experience in the university classroom is reduced simply to a PowerPoint presentation explaining the course material. If the course subject is axiomatic geometry for instance, the singular reason to teach axiomatic geometry is to explicate axiomatic systems, logic and proof, incidence geometries, absolute geometries, Euclidean geometry, and introductory non-Euclidean geometry in order to inculcate the minds of students with this area of mathematics. In other words, for many teachers, the almost sole focus of the classroom experience is the prescribed subject material. This study affirms that an integral part of a geometry instructor's responsibilities is directly associated with the subject of geometry. This should be self-evident. And this applies to all course subjects. In fact when the course subject is regulated to a seemingly peripheral issue, a host of problems and concerns ensue (Arum & Roska, 2011; Poplin & Rivera, 2005). Conscientious educators will see to it that the specific course subject is thoroughly taught, robustly engaged, and significantly understood.

With that said, I contend this will most effectively happen in the context and against the backdrop of being sensitive to larger social justice concerns and considerations. I also contend that larger, more fundamental human concerns regarding

the total life of the student are at work in the classroom whether educators take time to acknowledge or highlight these concerns or not. A commitment to a pedagogy sensitive to social justice ideals will bring these larger human concerns to life in the classroom and the university. Along these lines, three related underlying considerations of why higher education educators should incorporate social justice concerns and ideals in their pedagogy are the concepts of *subjectification, emancipation,* and *judgement*.

Subjectification, Emancipation, and Judgement

In addition to the subject material being more effectively understood, the prioritization of social justice concerns and considerations in the university classroom space will pave the way for the larger human concerns of subjectification, emancipation, and judgement. I combine these terms in a singular heading due to their associative meanings and complimentary relationship to one another. I will unpack these terms in relationship to human ontology and the educative process. Their relationship to human ontology, that is, what it means to *be* a person in the world, which is to say, what it means for ALL people, regardless of any demographic marker or designation, to *be* in the world, underscores the need for higher education educators to incorporate concerns for equality, voice, agency, and equity in their pedagogy.

Subjectification is the recognition and realization of one's contributive uniqueness (as understood in the context of being irreplaceable) in and to the world (Biesta, 2010). It is important that I pause here for a moment. What we must see is that subjectification is NOT the *becoming* of something or the *transitioning* to something. It is simply the *recognition* and *realization* of *what is already present and available*. Nevertheless, this

recognition and realization is critical. It makes all the difference. I will highlight this further when we get to the concept of emancipation.

Subjectification is when a person becomes self-aware, fully cognizant, that she or he has arrived on the scene of the world with something to offer and add to the world, something that was not here before. The individual comes to see him/herself as irreplaceable, someone who has something indispensable and important to offer the world. When a person experiences subjectification she comes to understand that her very presence and existence in the world adds to and expands the very definition of what it means to be human. As Biesta (2010) contends regarding subjectification and education, "The idea of 'coming into presence' articulates an educational interest in human subjectivity and subjectification but does so without a template, i.e., without a predefined idea about what it means to be and exist as a human being" (pp. 80-81). As Bingham and Biesta (2010) underscore, subjectification is "a way of being that had no place and no part in the existing order of things. Subjectification is therefore a *supplement* to the existing order because it adds something to this order…" (p. 33, their emphasis). Can we not see the massive implications of this for education and schooling? Back to our example. It is important to learn axiomatic geometry, yes, but why? Why should we learn axiomatic geometry? Indeed why should we learn anything, if what we learn and the conditions and process by which we learn it, do not ultimately affect and touch fundamental ontological concerns intrinsic to what it means to be a human being in the world - to move, to act, to renew and transform the world for the betterment of all.

We should also bear in mind that subjectification is not socialization forged in the context of humanism (Biesta, 2010), where one merely and automatically identifies with already established definitions of what it means to be human. Rather, it is the realized presence of a newcomer expressing organic, original utterances in time and space that carry with them "the power to 'decompose and recompose' a particular distribution of the sensible" (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 140), in effect reconfiguring the existing order of things by their very expression. Hence, subjectification draws out the power latent in the individual which enables him or her to resist, disrupt, and reconfigure hegemonic society where needed. Such a phenomenon is critical to higher education. Our classroom spaces are often sites for the reproduction and reinforcement of the traditions, expectations, and norms of hegemonic society, indiscriminate of whether those traditions, expectations, and norms are beneficial to ALL people in society. This leaves some students marginalized and disenfranchised, unable to optimize their learning opportunities and maximize their learning outcomes (Weis et al., 2011; Lea & Sims, 2008; Delpit, 2006; Dua & Lawrence, 2000; Giroux & Penna, 1979). Professors mindful of social justice concerns and considerations will be proactive in attempting to create conditions in the classroom that will foster opportunities for subjectification. Subjectification frees and empowers the student to find and utilize his voice, create his own agency, and better navigate his educational experience. When we consider that most of the students who experience higher education in the United States do so between the ages of 18 to 22, we can see the critical importance of subjectification. In the U.S. in particular and the West in general, the age range of 18 to 22 generally represents a person's transition to adulthood. For

better or worse, the college/university acts as a type of crucible, a place of formation, for students transitioning to adulthood. In order for subjectification to be at its highest probability in the college and university space for all students, professors will need to employ pedagogical behaviors that align with social justice priorities and ideals. Pedagogical behaviors that create democracy, establish equity, promote equality, expand agency, and give room to voice. The ontological phenomenon of subjectification, critical to human flourishing, underscores *why* educators in higher education *should* teach with social justice concerns in view. I should also note that when educators are mindful of the possibility and possibilities of subjectification for their students, they themselves will undergo a type of transformation.

As a teacher I want to foster conditions in my classroom that promote subjectification in my students. I can't *cause* subjectification in my students. There is no pedagogical method that will *guarantee* subjectification will take place in my students. But I can create a classroom environment that will ensure that every voice has an opportunity to be expressed and received. I can create and model a democratic ethic. I can encourage and give room for divergent ideas to be considered (among my students and within my curriculum) in order to promote critical and independent thinking thereby constructing an atmosphere where subjectification is more likely. I agree with Biesta "that any education worthy of its name should *always* contribute to processes of subjectification that allow those educated to become more autonomous and independent in their thinking and acting" (Biesta, 2010, p. 21, his emphasis).

The concept of subjectification is closely aligned with the concept of *emancipation*. My discussion regarding emancipation will be contextualized to the process and realm of education and drawn from the work of Jacques Ranciere. Within the context of education, emancipation and subjectification are entwined. Just as with subjectification, a person realizes his emancipation when he sees his own independence and subjectivity and begins to disrupt the hegemonic status quo by forging new paths of being, new paths of 'saying and doing' in the world. Bingham and Biesta (2010) state,

> Emancipation rather entails a 'rupture in the order of things' - a rupture, moreover, that makes the appearance of subjectivity possible or, to be more precise, a rupture that is the appearance of subjectivity. In this way emancipation can be understood as a process of subjectification (pp. 32-33).

An important aspect of Ranciere's understanding of emancipation is his claim that when a child is born into the world he or she is already political, that is, he or she already possesses all that is necessary to disrupt hegemonic society and reconfigure the status quo. Which is synonymous with saying the child already possesses all that he or she needs to become emancipated. As Bingham and Biesta (2010) assert,

> Thus, while Ranciere's figure of the child might seem at first glance to repeat the time honored tradition in educational thought of offering a figure of the child who is to be brought, by means of education and by means of psychological advances in education, into the realm of the political; instead, this child is already political even as she is acquiring her first language. That is, she is political even before she goes to school to become autonomous and emancipated (p. 57).

The implications of Ranciere's perspective regarding the political nature of the child are profound. Again, one implication is that no one *makes* someone emancipated. To say it

another way, emancipation is not something that is *conferred*. Rather, emancipation, if it is to ever come about, will arise organically from the individual herself. Why? Because she is a political being from birth and hence already possesses the necessary tools (from birth) to achieve emancipation. From the moment the child takes her first breath, she possess political standing. Her speech, resident within herself, is established and ready to be expressed. The logos within her manifests and bespeaks of her political nature. Ranciere (1999) asserts,

> the supremely political destiny of man is attested by a *sign*, the possession of the logos,that is, of speech, which *expresses* (his emphasis)…On this rests not the exclusivity of a bent for politics, politicity, but a politicity of a superior kind, which is achieved in the family and the city-gate (p. 2).

Ranciere is taking pains to underscore that the child's innate ability to formulate speech and language, the very mechanism and facility that has the power to disrupt the status quo and reconfigure existing reality, concurrently establishes the political nature of the child.

> The figure of the child inserting herself into language – the figure of the child who speaks – is in fact no different than the figure of the person who engages in what Ranciere calls politics. We are not trying to make a comparison here. We are asserting an equivalence (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 57).

Ranciere's understanding of the use of speech by the child is parsed along two streams of thought: identification and subjectification (Bingham & Biesta, 2010). While, "speaking as identification is therefore not necessarily without political significance", it is "the latter kind of speech - speaking as subjectification - that seems to have the power to 'decompose and recompose' a particular distribution of the sensible and that, in this sense,

can count as speech with political 'effects'" (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 140). This speech, speaking as subjectification, is already the possession of the child/student and she doesn't need a teacher to explain to her how to speak or what her speech means.

> The difference is between the teacher who overwrites the speech of her students, who sees it as her task to explain to students what their speech actually means, and the teacher who reminds her students that they can *already* speak (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 154).

At precisely this point a concern for social justice means everything. The child/student needs a teacher who rejects the hegemonic status quo that honors hegemonic voices over others and does so via a rubric that says that one's background, ethnicity, class, pigmentation, etc., determine the quality of one's idea and perspective. She needs a teacher who will judge the idea and perspective on its own merits. Even further, she needs a teacher who is open to the possibility that her diverse background may *add* to her understanding and insight of the idea in question. She needs a teacher to reject any belief, reinforced by hegemonic society, that convinces her she is unable to speak on her own. She needs a teacher that understands she is a political being and a teacher that "refuses her students the satisfaction of admitting that they are incapable of speaking" (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 154). Professors in higher education who are committed to social justice ideals foster classroom environments which promote the expression of individual voice by all students thereby paving the way for natural, organic realizations of individual emancipation.

Another important implication of Ranciere's contention that the child is a defacto political being centers upon the concept of *equality*. Ranciere (1999) states,

> Politics occurs because, or when, the natural order of the shepherd kings, the warlords, or property owners is interrupted by a freedom that crops up and makes real the ultimate equality on which any social order rests (p. 16).

From Ranciere's (1999) standpoint, equality is central to politics. In fact he contends that politics' "sole principle" is "equality" (Ranciere, 1999, p. 31). He goes on to underscore, "Nothing is political in itself for the political only happens by means of a principle that does not belong to it: equality" (Ranciere, 1999, p. 33).

To my mind, the relationship equality has to politics is part of the beauty and seduction of Ranciere's argument. It is a commonly held belief that politics are necessary to bring about equality. Such a perspective is intuitive. In fact haven't we seen throughout history an expansion of equality through political means? Nevertheless, from a conceptual and philosophical standpoint, Ranciere reverses the relationship and argues ultimately that because all people are in fact equal, politics can happen.

> Politics only occurs when these mechanisms are stopped in their tracks by the effect of a presupposition that is totally foreign to them yet without which none of them could ultimately function: the presupposition of the equality of anyone and everyone, or the paradoxical effectiveness of the sheer contingency of any order (Ranciere, 1999, p. 17).

The reality of the political nature of the child sets the stage for the child's relationship to equality. In defense of every child's intrinsic equality, Ranciere offers an elaborate apologetic regarding the equality of intelligence of all people (Ranciere, 1991). This study is not designed to unpack the intricacies of Ranciere's argument on this point. My only concern is where such a perspective leads Ranciere which is to the powerful contention that all human beings are in fact intrinsically equal from birth and how that

reality must be the basis of how we approach everyone, and moreover, how we view and understand the concept and process of emancipation.

According to Ranciere (1991), any system that starts with the belief that some men and women are not equal and are therefore in need of emancipation by those who are equal, is doomed to re-inscribe the very inequality it hopes to erase. To be emancipated, to be freed as it were, by someone is to forever be in their debt and therefore true emancipation is jeopardized. There will always be clear demarcations between those who are the emancipat*ors* and those who are the emancipat*ed*. Inequality still reigns. What then is the answer?

> The way out of this predicament is to bring equality into the here and now and act on the basis of the assumption of the equality of all human beings or, as Ranciere specifies in the *Ignorant Schoolmaster*, the equality of intelligence of all human beings (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 45).

We must realize we have a choice between two distinct axioms: inequality and equality (Bingham & Biesta, 2010). We imagine that inequality and equality are on a continuum, two points on different ends of the same path. According to Ranciere, this is false. Inequality and equality are two entirely different, mutually exclusive paths. Two paradigms that are of an entirely different species. They are separate axioms "that have nothing in common" (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 5). The way to defeat inequality is to reject its apparent presence, to never step on its path. To choose a different path entirely from the start; the path that begins, continues, and ends with the singular notion that we are all intrinsically equal. This path, this paradigm of equality, rejects the notion that someone can emancipate someone else. One is not *led* into emancipation by someone

else. Authentic “emancipation takes place when an intelligence obeys only itself” (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 137) because emancipation, for it to be authentically present and realized, must start with the "assumption - the principal of the equality of all human beings, the assumption that there is no hierarchy of intellectual capacity" (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 155). Consequently, emancipation should be less understood as a movement from a position of deficit to a position of equity and more understood as a rupture and intervention into hegemony organically derived from a beginning, foundational, already possessed political state of equality.

> It is not a shift in the membership from a minority group to a majority group. Emancipation rather entails a 'rupture in the order of things' - a rupture, moreover, that makes the appearance of subjectivity possible or, to be more precise, a rupture that is the appearance of subjectivity. In this way emancipation can be understood as a process of subjectification (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, people. 32-33).

Emancipation (and its twin subjectification), when authentically realized and manifested by the expression of speech, is highly political. Given Ranciere's contention that the child is a political being, emancipation, via the use of speech, is an expression of the latent political nature within the child. The speech from the emancipated subject (who by definition has achieved subjectification) is laden with democratic, political power to alter the status quo.

> Subjectification is about the appearance - the 'coming into presence' - of a way of being that had no place and no part in the existing order of things…Subjectification is therefore highly political as it intervenes in and reconfigures the existing order of things, the existing division or distribution of the sensible (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 33).

Hence, the emancipated person, through his presence and speech has the power to disrupt and recalibrate the existing order, thereby altering "the ways of *doing*, of *being* and of *saying* that define the perceptible organization of the community" (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 33, their emphasis). In a very literal sense, the one who is emancipated engages society from the standpoint of absolute equality. He brings the standpoint of equality wherever he goes. "To be emancipated means to act on the basis of the assumption of equality" (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 46). Those who possess such a standing and standpoint, by their presence and speech, can alter the course of societies and worlds.

As already emphasized, the possibility of emancipation (and its attending considerations) has significant ramifications as to how higher education educators should approach their classrooms. First, college and university professors should see their students as defacto equal to one another. I recognize that the vast majority of college and university professors in the U.S. would say their students are equal to one another. I also recognize that such a perspective may be more lip service than reality, but more importantly, even when such a perspective is not empty rhetoric, it does not automatically follow that college and university professors will be highly intentional in making sure their pedagogical behaviors are sensitive and consistent with the belief that all their students are equal to one another and equal to themselves as professors. College and university professors who prioritize social justice ideals will be apt to condition their pedagogical practices by the reality that all their students, no matter their backgrounds, are intrinsically equal. Moreover, when certain students are lagging in the realized benefit of their intrinsic equality, professors committed to social justice will

accommodate their pedagogical behavior accordingly. In addition, their work outside the classroom, both within the bureaucracy of the school and in the larger community, will be motivated by a desire to reduce deficit and injustice in disenfranchised people and groups, in other words to make manifest the equality that is.

Second, while college and university professors cannot *cause* emancipation within their students, they can make emancipation more likely by being conscientious in modeling behavior that pushes against any hegemonic norms that promote exclusion and the withholding of power from minoritized people. They can be intentional in creating classroom environments open to democratic expression and interruption, thereby making their classroom spaces more apt to be places where students can experience emancipation. The ontological phenomenon of emancipation, critical to human flourishing, underscores *why* educators in higher education *should* teach with social justice concerns in view.

Before I leave the discussion of subjectification and emancipation and take up judgment, I must acknowledge a moderate departure I have with Ranciere and those (such as Gert Biesta and Charles Bingham) who build upon his work. Those familiar with Ranciere's work on education will recognize that I have already 'pushed the envelope' with an aspect of Ranciere's thought by being explicit in stating that professors concerned with a social justice pedagogy can create conditions in their classrooms that will foster the possibility of subjectification and emancipation within their students. Indeed as I continue in this chapter I will get even more specific as to how professors concerned about social justice can specifically engage their students with a view towards

subjectification and emancipation. What I must point out is that Ranciere and his surrogates are strongly critical of any educator who believes she or he can directly aid her or his students in achieving subjectification/emancipation. In fact, critical pedagogy, and central figures within critical pedagogy, such as Paulo Freire, have been indicted by those who see emancipatory education as a form of explanatory teaching that ultimately serves to reify inequality (Bingham & Biesta, 2010). Such critics believe that for subjectification/emancipation to take place, teachers can only *demand* and *verify* that an eruption or manifestation of intelligence has presented itself revealing that subjectification/emancipation has taken place. Moreover, the professor cannot be seen or understood as a superior intelligence who enlightens, lest this disrupt the student's pathway to subjectification/emancipation. Bingham and Biesta (2010) explain,

> The educator is still there, but not as an explicator, not as a superior intelligence, but as a will, as someone who demands the effort from the student and verifies that an effort has been made (p. 138).

The teacher is to demand and verify. He is to do this by demanding speech from his students. "The emancipatory schoolmaster demands speech, that is to say, the manifestation of an intelligence that wasn't aware of itself or had given up" (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 142). Ultimately, the primary role of educators is to remind their students "that they can see and think for themselves and are not dependent upon others who claim that they can see and think for them" (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 138).

While I strongly resonate with Ranciere in the main (as I have demonstrated), I do think that he and others who have leveraged his work (such as Biesta and Bingham)

commit two errors when it comes to critical pedagogy and critical pedagogues. First, they undervalue the importance of critical pedagogues being keen to hegemonic power and the multiplicity of ways it manifests in society against the backdrop of a student population largely ignorant of such realities. There is not a 1:1 correspondence between teacher and student in this regard. Acknowledging this fact and acting accordingly also does not (of necessity) prohibit or inhibit students from thinking for themselves. Second, these critics overstate how much credit critical pedagogues give themselves when it comes to the hoped for emancipation of their students. Most critical pedagogues do not see themselves as saviors or intellectual masters and are genuinely about co-creating knowledge with their students and recognize if emancipation is ever going to happen it will be largely because of the organic efforts of the student. In fact, when Freire discussed his students' emancipation or liberation or transformation or *conscientizacao*, he did so from the standpoint of the necessity of the student's direct responsibility in bringing this state of consciousness about. Freire stated explicitly that any authentic transformation of the oppressed student could *not* come solely from the efforts of the educator. The educator could *not* do this *for* the student. Rather the oppressed student in dialogue with the emancipated teacher is able to come to her liberation. Freire (2005) states, "Accordingly, while no one liberates himself by his own efforts alone, neither is he liberated by others" (p. 66). Freire (2005) goes on to say,

> The correct method…in the task of liberation…lies in dialogue. The conviction of the oppressed that they must fight for their liberation is not a gift bestowed by the revolutionary leadership, but the result of their own *conscientizacao*…It is necessary, that is, unless one intends to carry out the transformation *for* the oppressed rather than *with* them. It is my belief that only the latter form of transformation is valid. The object in presenting these considerations is to defend the eminently pedagogical character of the revolution (p. 67, his emphasis).

To drive the point home further, Freire viewed it as anathema to allow for any co-dependency to exist between the liberated and the liberators. He was expressly against the reification of inequality between the emancipator and the emancipated and strongly warned against it lest the emancipator become the oppressor. Freire (2005) states,

> Political action of the side of the oppressed must be pedagogical action in the authenticsense of the word, and, therefore, action *with* the oppressed. Those who work for liberation must not take advantage of the emotional dependence of the oppressed - dependence that is the fruit of the concrete situation of domination which surrounds them and which engendered their unauthentic view of the world. Using their dependence to create still greater dependence is an oppressor tactic (his emphasis) (p. 66).

I submit that the tension between assisting someone in their emancipation and the need to 'get out of the way' so it can happen organically is real and professors who espouse the importance of social justice in their pedagogy are continually trying to walk the line between not becoming a savior to their students while also being very specific as to how their students can identify any hegemonic tyranny acting as a stifling governor of their subjectification/emancipation. I close this comment on my moderate departure from Ranciere on this particular point by reminding the reader there is scholarship that tries to specifically reconcile the thoughts of Ranciere and Freire because of the very thing I am acknowledging here (Galloway, 2012).

To continue our discussion, in addition to subjectification and emancipation, professors who build their classroom spaces with the super-structure of social justice concerns and ideals are also able to create conditions that are more susceptible to the realization of what Hannah Arendt calls *judgement*. Judgment, for Arendt, is a necessary disposition or capacity that students must develop if they hope to transition to effective social actors engaged in the "task of renewing a common world" (Smith, 2001, p. 69). Judgment, simply put, is the political actor's ability "to engage in 'representative thinking,'" to put him/herself in the "minds of other men" in order "to take on an 'enlarged mentality,' which allows them to form opinions and decide future courses of action" for the good of society and the world (Smith, 2001, p. 68). As Hudak (2010) underscores,

> Further, as Arendt details, from thinking - the intercourse with ourselves - we make judgments, and from judgments we form convictions, and with convictions we enter the public arena to debate, deliberate, and otherwise engage the experiment of democracy (p. 297).

Frankly, the exercise of judgment would not be possible if the would-be social actor felt he/she were unequal to those around him/her, trapped in an inferior and subordinate position of intelligence lacking confidence to understand. Such a disposition would extinguish any hope of social action leading to the renewal of the common world before it even began. Professors committed to social justice concerns and ideals have the personal worldview impetus to create classroom spaces that allow for the free-flow of ideas and beliefs. Ideas and beliefs from all voices, including and particularly, divergent voices opposed to the hegemonic status quo.

Embedded in Arendt's concept of judgement is the goal of seeing the world through several different viewpoints and from there taking action to make the world a better place for everyone (Smith, 2001). If a person is going to be seriously committed to seeing the world through several different viewpoints, he or she is going to have to have social justice concerns as part of his or her worldview, as part of his or her paradigm as to how he or she sees the world. This is a person committed to democratic ideals. One who eschews ethnocentrism and is open to a diverse set of opinions and ideas. One who assesses a range of perspective and thinks critically. This must be the perspective of the teacher and the students to follow if we ever hope to see our colleges and universities be genuine sites of societal transformation.

Arendt thought education's primary purpose was to transition students to a place where they could become social actors capable of exercising judgement and renewing the world. Arendt placed on educators "the responsibility for both, for life and development of the child and for continuance of the world" (Arendt, 1968, p. 182). Similar to the form and effect of subjectification and emancipation, forged in the crucible of the educative process, Arendt saw education as a crucial space to cultivate the young to exercise judgement and become social actors capable of bringing about authentic democratic renewal. Gordon (2001), commenting on Arendt's understanding of education, states "education should be aimed at preparing the young to a life of action, to a life of involvement in and transformation of the world" (p. 53). Arendt's elaborate understanding of the concept of natality, coupled with the extreme importance she placed on the role of education in the life of the young, foreshadows that education and

schooling should be about much more than just the explication of curriculum, that is, of explaining subject material.

At this juncture I should note that I am aware that Arendt gives a strong argument in *The Crises of Education*, that education and politics should be separate activities. I am also aware, in my discussions of subjectification and emancipation, that I have indicated that education classrooms can be spaces where the genesis of authentic political activity can take place. It is not within the scope of this work to reconcile fully this tension. I would say, however, that it is not absolutely clear that Arendt viewed the phenomenon of judgement as something that can *only* begin to take shape outside the jurisdiction of schooling and education. Moreover, it is evident that in the 42 years since Arendt's passing, our national public school system has become more "public". Increased and broader tax payer funding along with increased and broader accessibility to public schools by more and more diversified groups across a wider spectrum of race and class has strengthened education's place in the public sphere. In addition, modern public education in the United States is explicitly regulated and conditioned by Federal, State, and City (Local) governance and policy. Recent protests by teachers in my home state of North Carolina at the state Capitol building in Raleigh over education policies and funding allocations underscores the intersection education has with politics and the public sector (Campbell, 2016). Such realities put me in agreement with certain scholars who problematize aspects of Arendt's thinking in *The Crises of Education* (yet still borrow heavily from her significant insight) and place the issue of judgement in the domain of

education (but not exclusively) and argue for schools to be understood as public spaces (Wilson, 2005; Smith 2001). As Smith (2001) argues,

> I contend that cultivating judgment is an appropriate and necessary educational task,particularly in light of Arendt's vision of participatory democratic politics. Good judgement is vital for the sorts of civic engagement and political deliberation that Arendt viewed as integral to democratic public life (p. 68).

Notwithstanding the nuances that cascade from the involved and intricate terrain of Arendt's concept of the public, and exactly how we should consider sites of schooling in society, we *do know* that Arendt saw education as a fundamental place of preparation for the young to transition to conscientious social actors capable and ready to renew the world. Arendt (1993) states,

> Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from the ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their handstheir chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to preparethem in advance for the task of renewing a common world (p. 196).

When we consider that Arendt viewed one's ability 'to engage in representative thinking', to 'take on an enlarged mentality', and to put oneself in the 'minds of other men' as being critical to attaining judgment, we can see why a commitment to social justice perspectives is vital to higher education educators. Educators committed to social justice priorities are more likely to ensure that a range of diversifying opinions and ideas are expressed in their classrooms. Such a pedagogical approach has the possibility, even the

likelihood, of leading to greater acquisitions of judgment by students as they engage critically with a broad range of ideas, particularly ideas that may challenge conventional hegemonic norms. The ontological phenomenon of judgment, critical to human flourishing, underscores *why* educators in higher education *should* teach with social justice concerns in view.

'Responsibility for the Other'

Another large, philosophical perspective with pervasive application to society that supports the contention that college and university professors should be mindful of social justice concerns and considerations in their pedagogy is Emmanuel Levinas' concept of 'responsibility for the Other'. According to Levinas (1985), it is a 'responsibility for the Other' that links me, connects me, to my fellow human beings. Levinas (1985) contends simply, yet profoundly, "The tie with the other is knotted **only** as *responsibility*" (p. 97). Thus responsibility is *the link* between me and the Other. Being responsible for the Other in Levinasian terms is to be open to the need of the Other and ready to respond without hesitation or qualification (Bauman, 1993).

Todd (2003) emphasizes what Levinas "has to offer to an ethical orientation for social justice education", by underscoring that "Levinas' work speaks profoundly to the inevitable responsibility each one of us has to the other we meet" (p.2). While I contend that Levinas has things to say to higher education in the U.S., I also understand that the intrinsic nature of Levinas' understanding of ethics and his insight regarding our responsibility to the Other, rebuts and cancels before it starts any attempt to *formalize* and *systemize* Levinas' thought into a program or model of education (Egea-Kuehne, 2011).

As Todd (2011) acknowledges elsewhere, "From the vantage of education, his [Levinas'] philosophical writings are impossibly out of joint with any attempt to systemize an ethical approach to education" (p. 170). So when it comes to Levinas and education, two things are true at once: first, his work should not and indeed *cannot* (if understood properly) be forced into or modified into a formal educational program, and second, his work *does* speak to how we may understand aspects of how teachers can inform their pedagogical philosophy and behavior.

Levinas' understanding of the significance of the Other is revelatory. From Levinas' perspective the presence and need of the Other elicits a type of command, beckoning me to give myself fully to the Other, captive to the Other until the need is fulfilled. "'I am for the other' means I give myself to the Other as hostage" (Bauman, 1993, p. 74). My responsibility for the other, my incumbent response to the command of the other, if I choose to accept it, puts me in a position of a hostage, captive to the bidding and need of the Other, where my response to the Other is a simple, yet profound, 'here I am'. As Joldersma (2011) pointedly states, "To this command continually put forth only a 'here I am' can answer" (p. 50). According to Levinas (1985), the manifestation of this responsibility for the other in time and space, in the course of life, is prompted by the appearing and presence of the 'face'. The 'face' in Levinasian thought symbolizes the Other. As Levinas (1985) underscores, "in proximity with the Other - his face, the expressive in the Other (and the whole human body is in this sense more or less a face), were what ordains me to serve him. The face orders and ordains me" (p. 97). The designation of the term 'face' to represent the Other does not imply personal recognition

of the Other (Standish, 2011) but does indicate specific individuals with specific needs distinct from a mere collective of 'Others'.

Levinas contextualized this concept with those who are genuinely 'Other' to us, that is, those who are not already predisposed to us in some fashion, where connections of reciprocity and mutual benefit are already established and ongoing. Levinas is speaking about those who are strangers to us, outsiders, distant and unacquainted with our personal lives and phenomenological (day to day) experience. Ergo, heretofore, they have not been introduced to our consciousness, that is, they have not been people (phenomena) who have been part of our direct experience.

The mere presence and reality of the Other is all that is sufficient and necessary to elicit my response to be responsible for the Other. To reiterate, my responsibility for the Other according to Levinas (1985) exists prior to any connection to the Other. This is a responsibility that is not codependent on ontological realities rooted in human beings *being with* one another. Responsibility in Levinasian terms is *before* ontology. That is *before* being. Standish (2011) underscores, "Levinas wants to overturn the primacy of ontology, and he wants to do this by showing that fundamental to our being, indeed prior to our *being*, is our responsibility to the other" (p. 59).

Once we submit to ontology as the basis for our responsibility for one another, we must then be bound to the various codes, rules, traditions, laws, courtesies, reciprocities, and expectations that govern how we live together and comport ourselves with one another in society. A submission to ontology will place the responsibility for the Other in the realm of contracts, stipulations, requirements, obligations, and repayment thereby

stripping it of its intrinsic moral character. Therefore, my responsibility for the Other exists before and separate from any conditions that would arise because of my interaction, engagement, and connection with the Other, that might lead to me making a commitment to the Other and then cause me to take action based on that commitment. Levinas (1991) states,

> The responsibility for the other cannot have begun in my commitment, in my decision. The unlimited responsibility in which I find myself comes from the other side of my freedom, from a prior to every meaning…prior to or beyond essence (p. 10).

It is if Levinas is offering us a pre-ethics to ethics, a purer ethics, untainted by conditions and requirements. Van Manen (2000) explains,

> What makes Levinas' insights so unique is that he is the only philosopher who offers us an ethics of caring responsibility that is not founded in ethics. That is why he calls it pure ethics. In a sense this is a not yet ethics…He shows us that with the encounter of the other in this face, we experience the purely ethical before we have involved ourselves in general ethics (p. 321).

As emphasized already, Levinas' concept of 'responsibility for the Other' has universal undertones. It is a perspective, if adopted, that has sweeping application to every person one may come in contact with *before* any relationship is established. This is fundamental. The disposition and posture of being 'responsible for the Other' is present in situations of direct encounter with the Other as Other. For educators who are compelled by Levinas' exhortation, this is the foundational posture, the beginning of the ethical commitment, to the unmet strangers destined to become their students. Each semester, on the first day of class, this encounter happens. Twenty to twenty-five

strangers, would be students, arrive at my class, that is, at the time and place of our first face to face, direct encounter, present before me, in need of my care and attention. This intersection, this collision of our persons, is an ethical moment, in fact, *the* ethical moment, that will set the trajectory of my care and response to their need. Van Manen (2000) states,

> Levinas has shown that it is only in the direct and unmediated encounter with the other that we can gain a glimpse of the meaning of the ethical impulse that he describes as the human responsiveness to the appeal of the other who needs my care(p. 319).

For higher education professors, embracing Levinas' maxim to be responsible for the Other positions them to be ready to exemplify robust social justice and fully developed democratic ideals at the very start, the very genesis of their individual relationships with their students *before* class guidelines, policies, expectations, demographic familiarity or unfamiliarity, performance activities and assessments, etc., take hold, influence, and establish either reciprocal expressions of general ethics and/or the reification of hegemonic power between the professor and the student. Such a disposition has a way of buffering, negating, diminishing, or even mortifying (if needed) professors' attitudes (tacit or overt, unknown and known) of prejudice towards either minoritized communities OR privileged communities, whichever is applicable. Todd (2003) contends that our obligation to be responsible for the Other

> grows out of the…very fiber of social justice education itself. For it is precisely in the context of the educational struggle for more just social relations - where an encounter with difference, or otherness, is the *sine qua non* of pedagogical practice - than an elaboration of ethics as a relation to otherness becomes integral to its very project (p. 3).

In closing this section I want to offer some personal disclosure. I am making the case that accepting and embracing the charge to be 'responsible for the 'Other', gives professors some philosophical footing and moral grounding to be mindful of the social justice concerns and considerations affecting their students. I say this partly because it has certainly affected me in this way. It reinforces my belief that I should take seriously the range of needs my students have. That I should approach each student holistically and without qualification. That I should see this as a moral duty. Regardless of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, or any other factor I should conscientiously seek the best interests of all my students all the time. My being intentional about approaching my students from Levinas' perspective has had a way of subverting my ego and pulling me out of myself. It has served to disrupt some of my self-centeredness and self-absorption, enabling me to realize more fully my humanity and unique subjectification. Levinas (1985) states,

> My responsibility is un-transferable, no one could replace me. In fact, it is a matter of saying the very identity of the human I is starting from responsibility, that is, starting from this position or deposition of the sovereign I in self-consciousness, a deposition which is precisely its responsibility for the Other. Responsibility is what is incumbent on me exclusively, and what, *humanly* (his emphasis), I cannot refuse. This charge is a supreme dignity of the unique. I am I in the sole measure that I am responsible, a non-interchangeable I (pp. 100-101).

Humanity - Ways of Being and Cultural Power

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has provided significant insight into how human beings live in the world as they are simultaneously molded by the specific context of their everyday lives. Bourdieu is supremely interested in elucidating the relationship between culture and power (Levinson, 2011). As such, his work often speaks directly to cultural foundations, that is, an analysis of education that highlights power - how it is siloed, manifested, exercised, and reified. Some of Bourdieu's ideas and theoretical lines of thought give insight as to why higher education educators should prioritize social justice concerns in their pedagogies (Crozier, Reay, Clayton, Colliander, & Grinstead, 2008; Mills, 2008; Naidoo, 2004; Deer, 2003; Thomas, 2002; Robbins, 1993). Bourdieu's framing and elaboration of the concepts of *habitus, field, doxa, symbolic violence, misrecognition, and cultural capital* are particularly noteworthy and instructive.

Habitus is "the deeply habituated ways of thinking and acting, the 'schemes of perception' that guide people's conduct" (Levinson, 2011, p. 120). Habitus recognizes that our perceptions, thoughts, and actions are rooted in and conditioned by the collective history of our experiences in and with the world.

> Habitus is both a system of schemes of production of practices and a system of perception and appreciation of practices. And, in both these dimensions, its operation expresses the social position in which it was elaborated (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 19).

In other words, habitus contextualizes and crystalizes how we see and understand ourselves in the world, as well as how we see and understand others in the world. "Habitus thus implies 'a sense of one's place' but also 'a sense of the place of others'"

(Bourdieu, 1989, p. 19). Educators who are cognizant of the reality and workings of habitus are better equipped to understand their student's incoming perspectives and behavior. They are also better equipped to create and relate curriculum to the specific ways their students see themselves in the world and in the social system (field) of college and university life.

It is important to remember that habitus is not formed in a vacuum. It is formed through our direct experiences in and with the world. To put it another way, habitus is formed through our direct engagement and participation in the multiplicity of social fields that constitute society. Bourdieu contends that social life is comprised of various social *fields* within which people pursue their interests, hopes, hobbies, intellectual growth, work, spiritual formation, artistic desires, and whatever else comprises their social lives (Levinson, 2011). There are a plethora of social fields in which people live out their lives. Fields such as the economic field, the political field, the education field, the religious field, the artistic field, the familial field, the team sports field, and a host of others that encompass our life experience. Throughout his work, Bourdieu provides "innumerable examples" of social fields (Noble, 2013, p. 352). While these fields have a distinctive quality and possess a relative autonomy, they are also overlapping, interconnected, and often interdependent (Levinson, 2011). A central feature of a social field is that it is *relational*, which underscores one's involvement in a social field is lived out in the context of others (Noble, 2013). "A field, in his [Bourdieu's] framework, is a social space in which particular groups of social actors, positioned within the field, struggle over particular kinds of stakes, drawing on particular kinds of resources" (Noble,

2013, p. 352). Our lives are built upon and ultimately consist of the manifold, accumulated experiences we derive from our involvement in the social fields we intersect and occupy.

It is important to understand that the fields we find ourselves in may or may not be of our choosing or liking. It is often remarked, 'we don't pick our families'. In a sense this is true. We are born into a familial field that is not of our choosing. Yet, such a remark is not wholly true. We often pick our spouses (as they in turn pick us). Yet, we may find ourselves one day at a divorce support group at the local Episcopalian church participating in another of the myriad of social fields that condition our lives.

Fields should not be thought of as merely a natural collection of the attitudes, beliefs, and ideas of the people who occupy them. The feel, the atmosphere, of any given social field is not reducible to an ecumenical collection of everyone's thoughts and perspectives. All social fields are dominated by a certain ideological perspective that establishes rules and regulations, official and unofficial, to govern the field and impose expectations on those who enter it (Bourdieu, 1979). A social field,

> is a social space of institutions and forces with its own forms of cultural and social capital: 'a set of objective power relations imposed on all who enter this field, relations which are not reducible to the intentions of individual agents or even to direct interactions between agents' (Noble, 2013, p. 351).

Moreover, the habitus of any given social field runs deeper than the apparent, easily observed cultural norms of the social field, including the education field.

> Institutional habitus should be understood as more than the culture of the educational institution; it refers to relational issues and priorities, which are deeply embedded, and sub-consciously informing practice (Thomas, 2002, p. 431).

Bourdieu's discernment regarding social fields is particularly beneficial to educators and how they should comprehend their students' involvement with institutions of higher education. For students who appreciate and relate (even if they are not immediately self-aware) to the dominant ideology driving the policies, customs, and norms of the social field of higher education, their engagement with college and university life seems familiar, natural, "normal". From a phenomenological standpoint, they have a positive *orientation* to the field. As their consciousness apprehends the myriad of phenomena resident in college and university life, they feel comfortable, at home, like they belong. The feeling of belonging, being at home, is a by-product of being rightly oriented to the dominant culture structuring the field (Ahmed, 2006). When individuals do not have a positive orientation to a particular field, when they are outside of the dominant culture structuring the field, they feel lost, disoriented, alien to the norms, practices, and other phenomena present in the field. Such a reality is precisely why professors and instructors should be mindful of social justice concerns in their classrooms. Professors and instructors committed to democratic classroom spaces who are intentional in giving equal platform to students of diversity recognize the validity of differing socio-cultural locations (class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age) informing the field of higher education (Crozier et al., 2008).

Bourdieu viewed the education field as the primary social system through which social class order was established and maintained (Thomas, 2002). Members of minoritized groups are susceptible to being lost and disconnected in typical higher education spaces and classes where those aligned with hegemonic interests have ordered and structured the totality of the higher education field. The person's doxa is disconnected and ill equipped to process, understand, and navigate the field.

By the term *doxa*, Bourdieu is describing "the way the natural and social world is typically construed as self-evident. The condition of the doxa under which most of us live, most of the time, sets the limits of the thinkable and the sayable" (Levinson, 2011, p. 123). Doxa indicates what people have come to accept as true about the world. The resignation that 'this is just the way things are' (regardless of whether the situation or thing in question is *really* the way things are). Doxa represents the "many things people accept without knowing" (Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1992, p. 114). The notion of doxa is somewhat similar to Antonio Gramsci concept of *common sense*. Gramsci defined common sense as the "incoherent set of generally held assumptions and beliefs" common to people…"the beliefs, ideas, and worldview they have inherited…passed on through schools, family, culture, the economy, politics, and more" (Gross, 2011, p. 52). An important feature of doxa (and to some extent Gramsci's common sense) is the willingness of a person to hold on to certain ideas and beliefs, to accept a certain understanding or reading of the world, without verification, and often to their own personal detriment. As such, doxa sets the stage for Bourdieu's concept of *symbolic violence*. Symbolic violence "is the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with

his or her complicity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 167). This violence is *symbolic* and it is done to a *social* agent pointing to the hurt done to a person in a social context who has been the recipient of oppressive action through means and mechanisms that appear to be legitimate, unbiased, and appropriate. The person is complicit, that is, he or she accepts the hurt, resigned to the belief that it probably should be the way it is or if it shouldn't there is nothing that can be done about it.

A historical example of this is separate water fountains for Whites and Blacks under the guise of better hygienic conditions for both races. A black woman standing in her line may reason that it 'probably makes sense it should be this way'. The inertia of her everyday life driven by hegemonic forces outside of her control coupled with the complicity of multitudes around her conditions her to grasp a rationale for the separate water fountains that serves to make her oppression more palatable. A more subtle, modern example of this is school curriculum and performance evaluations that are delivered to students as "objective" representations of "universal" knowledge when in fact they are arbitrary and narrow representations of knowledge created by and for members of hegemonic society. A nine year old black boy living with a single parent in the projects of a small town may conclude that his 'brain just doesn't work' because he can't seem to quite follow his 3rd grade teacher and the assignments she gives which seem distant and inaccessible to his life experience. As such he begins to see himself as stupid and unable to do well in school. Such self-labeling leads to despondency, a sense of futility, and the conclusion there is no need to try. By the time he reaches the 7th grade he has all but given up. At this juncture, he may have a teacher who cares and tries

hard to teach and reach him, believing he can succeed. Or he may have a teacher who writes him off as lazy and uninterested and marvels at why he doesn't take advantage of the "equal" opportunities before him. Or worse, he may have a teacher who believes 'he's black and poor, so of course he's not smart'. Regardless, the hegemonic conditions operating in the (education) field confound his habitus and doxa and leave him marginalized and ultimately disenfranchised. The result of this kind of situation and the example before it produces what Bourdieu terms "*misrecognition*, the kind of *false consciousness* produced by the structuring of privilege in different social fields" where "inequality is produced and legitimated" (Levinson, 2011, p. 121).

The final concept I want to address regarding Bourdieu's scholarship is the concept of *cultural capital*. Cultural capital is one of three types of capital (along with economic capital and social capital) which Bourdieu views as analogous to power that can be used to gain access to certain fields and bolster one's ability to navigate successfully within those fields (Bourdieu, 1989). The more one operates successfully within a field the more cultural capital or symbolic credit one acquires. "Cultural capital is a kind of symbolic credit that one acquires through learning to enact and embody the desired signs of social standing within a social field" (Levinson, 2011, p. 121). Those with the highest amounts of cultural capital within a field receive the greatest amounts of currency and legitimacy enabling them to influence, even dictate, the norms, policies, and expectations, ergo the 'ways of being' within the field (Levinson, 2011). Those with no cultural capital receive no such standing and are essentially marginalized and ultimately

disenfranchised until they begin to learn and apply the 'rules of the game' of the particular field they find themselves in.

Bourdieu's analysis of cultural capital is particularly instructive for higher education professors and instructors. Being cognizant of Bourdieu's framing of cultural capital can enable college and university educators to act as agents of renewal and transformation rather than merely reinforcing and reproducing educational advantages and outcomes for the status quo at the expense of the marginalized (Mills, 2008). Bourdieu's scholarship gives support to Kumasi's (2011) contention that schools "have become precious commodities that are being competed for and protected by individuals who have the most social, economic, and cultural capital" (p. 197). This is neoliberalism at work. Bourdieu's work is a strong reminder that it is short-sighted and purblind to think that all students arrive at school with an equal chance to succeed. In order to be effective in recognizing and compensating for the often pronounced difference in cultural capital that college students possess, professors will need to embrace a pedagogical mindset that is informed by social justice concerns and ideals. Such a mindset, among other things, is culturally responsive and culturally relevant. Such a mindset by professors in higher education can condition classroom spaces to be sites of empowerment and social change. Culturally responsive professors often see "education" as a site of "liberation for oppressed student groups" and an opportunity "to give students a means to understand and act on personal and social issues" (Codrington, 2014, p. 1021). "The primary goal of culturally relevant teaching is to empower students to examine critically the society in which they live and to work for social change" (Ladson-Billings,

1992, p. 312). Bourdieu reminds educators that "To change the world, one has to change the ways of world-making, that is, the vision of the world and the practical operations by which groups are produced and reproduced" (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23).

As we end this section on Bourdieu I want to reiterate that his work speaks profoundly to how we should educate. We have seen how understanding "the theoretical constructs of Bourdieu and their contribution to understanding the reproduction of social and cultural inequities in schooling" (Mills, 2008, p. 79), and their direct connection to issues of social justice, gives sociological and philosophical weight to the contention that professors and instructors in higher education need to be occupied with social justice concerns and ideals.

Thus far I have emphasized the need and grounded the claim that higher education educators should prioritize social justice concerns in their pedagogy. Well, just what does it look like for professors to teach in such a way that social justice concerns are foregrounded in their pedagogy? How does it look practically? What are the 'nuts and bolts' of such teaching? What perspectives do they emphasize? And what effect does a concern for social justice have on educators outside of the classroom? It's time we uncrate some of the scholarship on what it means to teach for social justice and get explicit and specific in regards to what educators committed to social justice are doing inside and outside the classroom.

Teaching for Social Justice and the Outworking of a Critical Pedagogy

As stated in chapter one, social justice is "both a process and a goal" committed to bringing about "full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually

shaped to meet their needs" (Bell, 1997, p. 3). Central to social justice is a robust understanding of *equality*. Equality not just in opportunity but in conditions, resources, and outcomes (Lynch & Baker, 2005). Educators committed to social justice recognize there is a direct connection between the manifestation of equality in education and the manifestation of equality in the larger society. "We suggest that equality in education can only be achieved if we recognize the deeply integrated relationship that exists between education and the economic, political, socio-cultural and affective systems in society" (Lynch & Baker, 2005). Professors committed to social justice are concerned with organizational and institutional change. They are committed to

> recognizing and eradicating all forms of oppression and differential treatment extant in the practices and policies of institutions, as well as a fealty to participatory democracy as the means of this action (Murrell, 2006, p. 81).

A commitment to the eradication of oppression in society leads social justice minded educators to engage in *praxis* outside of the classroom. Paulo Freire defined *praxis* as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 2000, p.51). *Praxis* can be understood as activism - action outside the classroom rooted in ideas taught in the classroom. This *praxis* is often done through dialogue and debate. Dialogue and debate at times must be confrontational to remain authentic (Heath et al., 2006). A commitment to social justice leads educators to engage in participatory democracy by speaking truth to power, by taking stands against the encroachment of neoliberalism and the increasing corporatization of our schools, colleges, and universities (Jovanovic, 2017; Poulos, 2017; Prest, 2013; Giroux, 2007; Chapman; 2004). A critical

component of genuine dialogue is giving voice to those whose voices have been muted. Genuine dialogue carries the feature of advocacy on behalf of the marginalized and disenfranchised in order to bring about a just outcome. In this respect, dialogue is prescriptive (not merely descriptive) and bound to the concept of *praxis* (Stewart & Zediker, 2000). To engage in *praxis*, by definition, is to take action – the heart and soul of social change actors. Stewart and Zediker (2000) assert that effective "dialogue is clearly *praxis*" and designed "to realize some morally worthwhile good" (p. 229). Professors who value social justice in their pedagogy seek to

> create educational environments that empower historically marginalized people, that challenge inequitable social arrangements and institutions, and that offer strategies and visions for creating a more just world (Hytten & Bettez, 2011, p. 8).

In keeping with the hoped for subjectification, emancipation, and judgement of our student populations to the end of renewing and transforming our world, Maxine Greene (1997) states,

> Teachers may well be among the few in a position to kindle the light that might illuminate the spaces of discourse and events in which young newcomers have some day to find their ways…It is a matter of awakening and empowering today's young people to name, to reflect, to imagine, and to act with more and more concrete responsibility in an increasingly multifarious world (p.6, 8).

When it comes to practical instruction in the classroom, professors who forefront social justice in their pedagogy often promote mind/body connection, conduct artful facilitation that encourages critical thinking, share class control with their students, engage in open and explicit

discussion regarding power, privilege, and oppression, and engage in personal reflection (Hytten & Bettez, 2011). It is also important to understand that professors who are mindful of social justice concerns may prioritize a range of theoretical perspectives in their pedagogy including perspectives and ideas rooted in progressive, conservative, and religious framings of truth and knowledge (Spencer, 2015; Teel, 2014; Anderson, 2006).

> Working in chorus with the goals of other educational theory bases, social justice education encourages students to take an active role in their own education and supports teachers in creating empowering, democratic, and critical educational environments (Hackman, 2005, p.103).

Educators who adopt a social justice orientation in their pedagogy often draw on a range of discourses siloed in critical theory such as critical pedagogy, feminism, multiculturalism, democratic education, poststructuralism, queer theory, cultural studies, globalization, postcolonialism, and critical race theory (Hytten & Bettez, 2011).

College and university professors committed to social justice concerns will either explicitly or implicitly champion the ideals and praxis of *critical pedagogy*. As stated in chapter one, critical pedagogy is an "educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action" (Giroux, 2010, p. 15). Critical pedagogy underscores that education is crucial to the maintenance of democracy because education rightly exercised and executed helps form a citizenry capable of critical thinking, self-reflection, and socially conscious moral action (Giroux, 2011; Shapiro, 2010; Giroux, 2007; Hackman, 2005). Critical pedagogue

Svi Shapiro (2010) demonstrates such an effort in the classroom. In respect to the Iraq War he states,

> But above all, what was most important was the need to encourage a spirit of undeterred questioning among students and others…It meant teaching that patriotism did not mean blind support for those who lead a nation. As I tried to make clear in these classes, the history of U.S. military involvements in many countries took place, too often, on the basis of lies, misinformation, and deception. I suggested to my students that wars that could not be justified morally or politically were frequently being waged in our name. I emphasized that more than ever citizens of our country needed to develop the capacity and courage to contest where our leaders urged us to go. This is the responsibility and right of a citizenship in a democracy (pp. 157-158).

Critical pedagogy is vitally concerned with power, particularly its divestment from hegemonic institutions and its redistribution to the masses. Professors who engage their students through a critical pedagogical framework understand their classrooms to be sites of liberation and freedom designed to foster and promote social change (Brennan, 2008; Hackman, 2005; Greene, 1997; Freire, 1973).

> Education for liberation…is concerned, as a social praxis, with helping to free human beings from the oppression which strangles them in their objective reality. It is thus a form of education which can only be put into practice systematically when society is radically transformed (Freire, 1973, p. 4).

Critical pedagogy is concerned with deconstructing our educational spaces and rebuilding them to provide room for beliefs, ideas, and concerns that lie outside hegemonic culture. As McLaren, Martin, Farahmandpur, and Nathalia (2004) underscore, critical pedagogy calls for the "pursuit of educational practices beyond white, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class and heterosexual educational norms" and is intentional in elevating "subjugated

knowledges of women, minority groups, and indigenous groups" (p. 138). In keeping with this theme, when discussing course content, Hackman (2005) argues

> factual information must not merely reproduce dominant, hegemonic ideologies but instead represent a range of ideas and information that go beyond those usually presented in mainstream media or educational materials (pp. 104-105).

Such a commitment will entail critiquing larger societal perspectives that many consider and assume to be an obvious, accepted, and preferred way of organizing and comporting society and many of the social spheres that comprise it, such as capitalism and education (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2006; Giroux, 2001; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2001; Shapiro, 1990).

Critical pedagogy's concern for giving a platform to divergent voices and divergent forms of knowledge, signals its genuine interest in providing an educational experience that honors a co-creation of knowledge between professor and student. Freire (2001) states,

> At the same time, in the context of true learning, the learners will be engaged in a continuous transformation through which they become authentic subjects of the construction and reconstruction of what is being taught, side by side with the teacher,who is equally subject to the same process (p.33).

As we will see more explicitly in chapter three, in the context of higher education, neoliberalism positions the student as a consumer; one who consumes the product being produced by her professors and university. Critical pedagogy disrupts this paradigm by positioning the student as a co-producer of learning and knowledge. Professor and student together "are viewed as being engaged in a cooperative enterprise focused on the

production, dissemination and application of knowledge" (McCulloch, 2009, p. 171). Extensive research from John Hattie's massive compendium of evidence-based research to improve learning outcomes demonstrates that student learning is most significant when students are personally invested in curriculum choices, have learning activities that place them in the role of teacher, and when they receive feedback from their teachers indicating their teacher learned something from their teaching (Hattie, 2009).

> Such sharing of the work of conceptualizing and enacting approaches to learning requires new notions of power that in turn mean greater ability to act and thus a greater sense of responsibility (Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felten, 2011, p. 134).

A greater sense of responsibility and a greater sense of personal investment in the education process increases affective learning (the desire and motivation to learn) and deepens understanding in the subject matter (Bain & Zimmerman, 2009; Cook-Sather, 2008; & hooks, 1994).

Professors in higher education who emphasize social justice concerns and employ a critical pedagogical approach to their teaching take pains to diffuse power between themselves and their students. They acknowledge they are in the educational experience *with* their students and are growing and benefiting from the process as well. Nevertheless, while critical pedagogues eschew authoritarianism they do not give up *all* authority in the classroom. While being strident against any form of tyranny, they recognize there is a proper place for the manifestation of authority both in the classroom and in the world. Freire (2001) states,

> I am a teacher who stands up for what is right against what is indecent, who is in favor of freedom against authoritarianism, who is a supporter of authority against freedom with no limits, and who is a defender of democracy against the dictatorship of right or left (Freire, 2001, p. 94).

Educators committed to social justice and critical pedagogy still recognize they have a stronger insight into the subject at hand and the hegemonic ideologies contextualizing the education experience than their students do. They also understand they have a certain level of accountability and fiduciary responsibility to their students, university administration, and society at large. While educators committed to social justice and critical pedagogy are intentional about a meaningful allocation of power in the classroom, they also understand their expertise is real, vital, and necessary for the proper comportment of the classroom environment (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000).

In closing this section, Hackman (2005) offers five essential features of social justice education; fundamental perspectives and practices that are part and parcel to a critical pedagogy. These include: 1) content mastery, 2) critical thinking and the analysis of oppression, 3) action and social change, 4) personal reflection, and 5) awareness of multicultural group dynamics (Hackman, 2005). I have already discussed several things related to these perspectives but I would like to speak further about two of Hackman's features: *content mastery* and *personal reflection*.

At times educators committed to social justice ideals have been accused of failing to teach the necessary subject material of courses integral to core curriculum programs, ostensibly adopting an attitude that ideology and politics trump subject material (Hamilton, 2017). However, what is consistent with a concern for social justice

education is a concern to be a teacher who becomes an expert in the course material she is responsible for and expecting the same from her students. Educators concerned about social justice concerns and ideals recognize that a thorough and deep understanding of course subject material is important if one hopes to make an optimum impact upon the world.

Finally, personal reflection is an important part of the life of any educator committed to social justice. In fact one of the courses I teach at my university is to undergraduate students who hope to be teachers. The course is designed to help them consider the social justice concerns of their future student populations. An official part of the mission of the course is self-reflection. Concerns over democracy, equality, equity, agency, fairness, and justice forces educators to be self-aware and gut check there own prejudices and deficiencies. This also leads educators to model critical reflection to their students enabling a classroom setting conducive to serious self-reflection and assessment. Hackman (2005) relates,

> But, as I began to reflect critically on my own behavior, I could no longer tolerate the fact that I was not challenging my own racism and ableism while expecting men to do so regarding sexism. Teachers and students alike can avoid this pitfall by engaging in constant self-reflection as it applies both to their subordinate and dominant identities. An analysis of power is one way for teachers and students to begin this aspect of self-reflection and to move closer toward the creation of a socially just classroom (p. 108).

Conclusion

In closing this chapter, we have seen several diverse lines of thought anchored in noteworthy philosophical and sociological areas of knowledge that provide a sound

superstructure for the claim that professors and instructors in higher education should be conscientious in incorporating social justice ideals and concerns in their pedagogy. As a way of review, we have looked at how education spaces can be sites of subjectification, emancipation, and judgment, and how educators committed to these larger concerns of human ontology must be sensitive to social justice concerns and the related human and societal standpoints that emanate from them if they hope to see their students equipped to renew and transform the world. In this regard, we highlighted the work Jacques Ranciere and Hannah Arendt. We also looked at Emmanuel Levinas and his classic maxim and exhortation to be 'responsible for the Other' and the massive implications this perspective has for not only how we relate to the stranger we meet on the street but also the strangers who arrive to our classes as students. Finally we looked at Pierre Bourdieu and his concepts of habitus, field, doxa, symbolic violence, misrecognition, and cultural capital. We saw how these concepts speak to how people are conditioned by family, culture, and society. We also saw how these concepts unpack the ways in which people understand and engage the world at large and the local worlds they occupy. These concepts help educators to see their students' place in society and their relationship to hegemonically established norms, rules, traditions, and ways of being. In addition they help educators committed to social justice concerns better navigate the ways in which they can make their classrooms sites of empowerment for all students regardless of demographic location.

In addition to the epistemological support undergirding the claim that educators in higher education should prioritize social justice issues and concerns, we also reviewed

various hallmarks of social justice education and critical pedagogy. We highlighted a range of specific principles and behaviors that are germane to the work of social justice educators and critical pedagogues. We also identified key characteristics that permeate the classroom experience for both teacher and student when concerns for social justice and a commitment to critical pedagogy are central to the educative process. As we leave this chapter we move to the literature that covers important aspects of the history of K-12 education, the history of higher education, and related themes between them. In addition we will cover pertinent scholarship pertaining to the current state of higher education and the climate of neoliberalism that threatens to subsume and dominate it.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL AND RELATED THEMES OF K-12 EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION, THE IMPACT OF NEOLIBERALISM ON THE CURRENT STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, AND A SURVEY OF RESISTANCE AND PUSHBACK AT OUR NATION'S CAMPUSES

One of the primary concerns of this study is to understand the current atmosphere and landscape of higher education. I want to understand the forces at work conditioning and influencing our college and university spaces. Indeed, one of the research questions driving this study is "In what way(s) does the current state and climate of higher education in the U.S. resist and impede the prioritization and implementation of social justice concerns and initiatives within the college and university space"? Such a question compels us to deal with a key driver of American society: neoliberalism. We must understand the ways in which neoliberalism is at work in higher education if we hope to properly contextualize how educators mindful of social justice concerns navigate the university space.

This chapter covers the remaining literature review and will unfold along the following trajectory. First, we will take an abbreviated look at the histories of K-12 education and higher education by focusing on two important themes that are present in the development of K-12 education and higher education. This is necessary because in order to come to an educated assessment of the current state of higher education it is

important to understand how we got here. Next, we will look at a range of scholarship designed to give us an accurate picture of the recent and current state and condition of higher education. As such we will give specific attention to neoliberalism and its far-reaching influence in society and its deep penetration and almost unrivaled hold on higher education. In addition we will briefly highlight the reality of social class and its impact on our universities. Finally, this chapter surveys episodes of pushback and resistance to neoliberalism and anti-democratic events and trends that have taken place on our college and university campuses.

Historical and Related Themes

While often thought of and treated as separate, distinct, and almost mutually exclusive of one another, K-12 education and higher education have key similarities in their respective histories (Spring, 2011; Thelin, 2011) and possess a strongly interdependent relationship (Roska, 2016; Harris & Hunt, 2014; Conley & Gaston, 2013; Jones, 2009; Whipp & Scanlan, 2009). Since the majority of students who fill U.S. colleges and universities arrive there through the conduit and conditioning of U.S. public K-12 education, part of this analysis will highlight key connections between the histories of K-12 education and higher education. I will do this by elevating and unpacking two major themes present in the development of both K-12 education and higher education, namely, a) the deculturalization and assimilation of non-hegemonic groups by and into hegemonic society and b) the strong influence of capitalism and the business sector in the governance and expected outcomes of education and schooling.

Theme One: Deculturalization and Assimilation

Both K-12 education and higher education were created by (and for) the dominant, hegemonic strata of society. In both K-12 education and higher education, schools served as sites of ideological reification and proliferation for the dominant group in society (Spring, 2011; Thelin, 2011). For some context, colonization of what is now the United States took place from 1607 up to the start of the Revolutionary War in April of 1775. Colonization itself, apart from education and schooling, had a massive negative impact on the indigenous Native Indian population. The arrival of the colonists and the imposition of their will upon the Native Indians began the erasure and almost total elimination of Native Indian culture. The colonists brought with them several things that began the erosion of Native Indian society including disease, the English language, the Protestant Christian religion, the family unit as the basis of society, the absolute belief in cultural superiority, and the desire to recreate societies that were recognizably European (Spring, 2016; Spring, 2011; Wagoner & Urban, 2008; Patterson & Runge, 2002).

As far as we know, the Native Indians were a genuinely autochthonous people to what is now the United States. To almost erase them from their homeland seems a sacrilege to me. For some time I have been gripped by the plight of Native Indians during colonization and the subsequent centuries of oppression culminating in the practical annihilation of their various nations and sub-cultures. Central to such a massive deculturalization process has been the tool (weapon?) of *education*, insidiously and deftly employed by the 'white man' for the ostensible benefit, yet almost total demise, of the Native Indian population (Glenn, 2012, Glenn, 2011; Spring, 2011; Cobb, 2000). As the

colonists established themselves in the "New World" they believed education was a necessary instrument to guard against the "barbarism" of the indigenous Native Indian population. As Glenn (2012) contends, "from the very beginnings, the expressed purpose of colonial education had been to preserve society against barbarism" (p. 16). Education was a primary conduit to "civilize the Cherokee and other native peoples" (Glenn, 2012, p. 124). Colonial education was characterized by a concern to teach people to read in order to understand God's law as prescribed by an iteration of the Protestant Christian religion. Beginning in the 1640s, throughout the colonies, laws were enacted that were designed to link education, civil duty, and Christian piety (Spring, 2011). An example of these laws was the Massachusetts Law of 1642.

> The purpose of teaching reading and writing was to ensure not only that individuals read the Bible and religious tracts, but also that they become good workers and obeyed the laws of the community. These educational goals were explicitly given in the earliest colonial law regarding education, the Massachusetts Law of 1642 (Spring, 2011, p. 16-17).

Five years later, the 'Old Deluder Satan Law' was enacted signaling a strengthening of the resolve to tie education to Christian piety. As Native Indian people and lands came under the rule and jurisdiction of the colonists, education with its emphasis on both civil comportment and religion proved to be a major means of displacing key aspects of Native Indian culture. Deculturalization and assimilation was well under way.

A key tactic of the colonists was to start educating Native Indian youth at a very early age. The colonists believed they could use the schooling of Native Indian youth to transform Native Indian culture from *within* (Spring, 2011; Szasz, 1988). By

indoctrinating Native Indian youth with European, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant Christian values, customs, and traditions through schooling, the colonists hoped to ultimately push the adult Indian population towards cultural assimilation.

> The colonial schoolmasters to the Indians viewed their efforts as honest attempts to change Indian youth, hoping that Indian schooling would redirect the lives of those who held the future of their people in their hands. Schoolmasters reasoned that if these youth could be taught to read and write, to cipher, to comprehend the Bible, and to change their ways accordingly, they might teach their people to do likewise (Szasz, 1988, p. 4).

This tactic on behalf of the colonizers is a stark reminder of the significant stewardship teachers have regarding the education of the young.

During the period of colonization enslaved blacks began to arrive to North America with the bulk of them arriving between 1720 and 1780. Black slaves were "free" labor and essential to the ever expanding plantation system driving the newly forming economy (Beckert & Rockman, 2016; Spring, 2011). Slavery has a way of destroying and decimating almost every aspect of a people. While slave populations held on (desperately) to whatever traditions, customs, and cultural expressions they could, such an environment was obviously deleterious to any cultural thriving or continuity. From the early 1700s to the climax of the insurrectionary movement in 1835, most slaveholders believed it was prudent to give their slaves a basic education with the view it would make them more industrious (Woodson, 2004).

> Brought from the African wilds to constitute the laboring class of a pioneering society in the new world, the heathen slaves had to be trained to meet the needs of their environment. It required little argument to convince intelligent masters that slaves who had some conception of modern civilization and understood the language of their owners would be more valuable than rude men with whom one could not communicate (Woodson, 2004, p. 3).

While we have seen throughout our analysis how education can be used to effectively disempower a people, it is also the case that when learning and knowledge actually take root in a person that person further desires to exercise their personal agency. This correlates to an elevated desire for freedom, freedom in both mind and body. This proved to be the case in the slave populations of the antebellum south. As slaves became educated they began to assert themselves in ways that were unexpected to their slave holders. They began to push harder for their freedom. This led to a change of direction regarding education of slaves and laws were passed in the early-mid 1800s forbidding the education of slaves (Woodson, 2004). The elimination of education was seen as an effective tool to quell and dampen desires for freedom. There is a lot we can learn about education and its power from this singular historical reality. While some slave holders disobeyed these laws and continued to educate their slaves, the majority of slave owners in the 1830s halted the education of their slaves, deeming that the education of their slaves made them hunger for liberty which led to acts of insurrection and violence to escape their slavery. During this period most slaveholders replaced education with stronger uses of force and violence to better control their slaves (Woodson, 2004).

Between the early 1600s and the start of the Revolutionary War in 1775 there were only limited efforts towards organized schooling such as dame schools and charity

schools. It wasn't until after the Revolutionary War that the notion of education and schooling as something that should be pervasive and a fundamental part of everyday society for children of all ages began to take hold. "Educational developments after the Revolutionary War set the stage for the formation of the common or, as it is now called, public school" (Spring, 2011, p. 47). Central to this effort was Noah Webster. After the Revolutionary War, the promotion of patriotism became central in unifying the newly formed United States. Education was a major means in this effort. Webster saw the value of tying patriotism to the ideals of Protestant Anglo-American culture and using the schools to disseminate those ideals (Spring, 2011).

> Most post-Revolutionary leaders rejected the idea of a multicultural society and advocated the creation of a unified American culture formed around Protestant Anglo-Saxon traditions (Spring, 2011, p. 50).

Schools became a major site for the methodical promotion and cultivation of Protestant Anglo-Saxon values and the determined and systematic deculturalization of any people group that was at variance or unaligned with such ideals. Cobb (2000) underscores that central to the deculturalization process of the Native American population was education, insidiously and deftly employed by the 'white man'. Cobb (2000) argues that education was of some immediate benefit to certain tribes but ultimately proved to be critical to the undoing of Native American culture.

Moving past the period of colonization and into the 1800s, a strong contributor to the deculturalization of the Native Indians was the Indian Boarding School movement. The movement constituted the removal of Native Indian children from their parents and

clans in order to place them in boarding schools; schools that would not only educate them but become their permanent residence. It wasn't until the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1978(!) that Native American parents gained the legal right to deny the removal of their children from their homes to be sent to off-reservation schools ("History and Culture," n.d.). In an insidious irony the pathway to deculturalize the Native Indians with a view to ultimate assimilation was to take young Native Indian children away from their parents and clans and ship them off, sometimes 100s of miles away, to boarding schools. Separate to assimilate. This way the Native Indian children could be subjected to a robust process of deculturalization while not tainting or corrupting white children/students. Draconian separation was the necessary prerequisite before any assimilation.

A spotlight on the Carlisle Indian School of Carlisle, Pennsylvania underscores the extreme separation and deculturalization of Native Indian children during the Indian Boarding School movement. Barbara Landis (1996), writing as the Carlisle Indian School biographer for the Cumberland County Historical Society, states the founder of Carlisle Indian School, Richard Henry Pratt, took great pains to permanently separate the Indian children at the school from their parents, even creating a program that hired the children out to local farmers and craftsmen as cheap labor during the summers. Pratt, according to Landis (1996), was preeminently concerned with acculturating the Indian students to white culture. He did this via a plethora of means ranging from heavy discipline, which included marching between classes, to forbidding the children to speak in their native tongue, to the change of their dress, to the change of their name, to the

systematic teaching of self-repression, and to the cutting of hair, which caused great sorrow among the children often producing "much wailing and lamenting which lasted into the night" (Landis, 1996, para. 20).

When it comes to higher education, we see a similar pattern of hegemonic elites establishing colleges and universities for the express purpose of maintaining power in society and promoting European, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant Christian values, customs, and traditions. Eighteen colleges were established by the colonists between 1636 (Harvard) and the start of the Revolutionary War in 1775 (Hampden-Sydney). A key part of the mission of these colleges was to educate Native Indians. Large donor funds were established where monies could be given to the "support of programs designed to provide a Christian education to those they considered to be savages" (Thelin, 2011, p. 15). The fundamental beliefs that Native Indians were savages and had to be civilized and that civilization required Christian conversion drove the efforts of colonial colleges' and their attempts at educating the Native Indian population (Lomawaima, 1999).

When it comes to Blacks, colonial colleges had no interest in educating blacks. "There is no record of colonial commitment to the collegiate education of black students, whether in the regular course of study or at special affiliated schools" (Thelin, 2011, p. 30). In fact it wasn't until almost 20 years after the Revolutionary War that the first black person attended an American college or university. His name was John Chavis. Chavis, a Presbyterian minister, attended what is now Washington and Lee University in 1799 ("Key Events", n.d., para. 1).

It should be noted that certain liberal colonists and abolitionists (particularly preachers and missionaries) created schools and programs that provided higher education to free Blacks (Freedmen). Many liberal colonists believed and hoped that as Blacks became educated they would leave the United States permanently and move to West Africa.

> The more liberal colonizationists endeavored to furnish free persons of color the facilities for higher education with the hope that their enlightenment would make them so discontented with this country that they would immigrate to Liberia. Most southern colonizationists accepted this plan but felt that those permanently attached to this country should be kept in ignorance; for if they were enlightened, they would either be freed or exterminated (Woodson, 2004, p. 100).

Many religious groups were an active and essential part of the abolitionist movement. While these groups, no doubt, had the best of intentions (ones that were genuinely noble given the egregious circumstances of the historical context), in keeping with our theme, they often "perceived Blacks as hapless victims of a corrupt and immoral system that inculcated values antithetical to 'civilization' and viewed as their God-given task to both 'civilize' and 'educate' the freedmen" (Allen & Jewell, 2002, p. 243). They determined that a key way to combat the effects of slavery was to educate freed Blacks; the net of which was strongly positive and beneficial to Blacks.

> Many religious groups were active in the abolition movement and endeavored to continue their benevolence by addressing the poor state of literacy among freed African Americans. White Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and other religious groups invested significant time and money into the establishment of schools for the training of African American teachers and preachers throughout the South (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009, p. 394).

At the end of the Civil War in May of 1865 and the subsequent passing of the 13th amendment in December of 1865 to formally abolish slavery, there were only 28 of the four million newly freed slaves who had college degrees from American colleges (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Notwithstanding stifling and racist black code laws that were immediately put in place by many states and the reality that Jim Crow was coming in the mid 1890s, the period just after the Civil War and the 13th amendment to the turn of the century saw the fruits of important legislation (such as the Morrill Land Grant Act and the second Morrill Act) specifically benefit Blacks in terms of higher education including the formation of 71 Black state-supported colleges and institutions (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). While the advent of HBCUs has been problematized by certain scholars as being merely the machinations of white supremacy designed to keep Blacks from attending white land-grant colleges (Roebuck & Murty, 1993), it nevertheless cannot be denied that a sea change was started relative to American society as thousands of Blacks become college graduates by the turn of the century and began to experience for the first time (as a people in the U.S.) forward movement in U.S. society (Anderson, 1988).

As we have seen, the process of deculturalization and assimilation is a major theme in the histories of K-12 education and higher education. Next we will turn our attention to the influence of capitalism and business upon K-12 education and higher education.

Theme Two: Influence of Capitalism and Business

The second and final theme I want to highlight that K-12 education and higher education have in common is the significant influence capitalism and business have had

on the governance of schools and the educational goals and outcomes of schooling. In the mid to late 1800s high school in the United States went from being considered optional to being viewed as essential for all young people (Spring, 2011). Naturally this grew the ranks of the number of people attending what at that time was known as the common school. Partly to accommodate the growing number of students and partly to establish schooling as an institution critical to the changing economy, educational leaders began a national effort to organize schools in a manner consistent with business and industry. "Education changed during this period [late 1800s to early 1900s] to meet the needs of the corporate model of the school and the new economic role of schooling" (Spring, 2011, p. 160).

As we transition from the late 1800s to the early 1900s our educational system doubles down on its adherence to business and corporate principles (Callahan, 1962). Such a phenomenon still exists today (Buras, 2011; Washburn, 2006; Giroux, 2002; Harvey, 1998) and is not just a U.S. practice and concern (O'Brien & Down, 2002). The growth of capitalism fueled by the Second Industrial Revolution (also known as the Technological Revolution) at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century brought the 'corporate man' into his own. A practical effect of this dynamic was the exponential rise in the number of school boards across the nation populated by business leaders in local communities as well as a shift in the psyche of the typical school administrator from "the scholarly role of educational philosopher and curriculum leader" to "that of school administrator as businessperson" (Spring, 2011, p. 274). In the early decades of the 20th century, the United States went through a phenomenon dubbed as the

'high school movement' (Goldin & Katz, 2008). The early decades of the 20th century saw exponential year over year growth in the number of teenagers taking part in formal schooling. Children who would have been working in manufacturing in factories decades before, now were being pushed to formal schooling as child labor laws in the early 20th century became more widespread and enforced. Children began to move out of the factory and into the school. The growth of students entering formal schooling in their teens in the early 20th century put the U.S. way ahead of all other Western nations in this regard (Goldin & Katz, 2008). It was determined that the most efficient way to handle the exponential growth was to mimic business and corporate managerial processes. In tandem with the ever growing student population was a commitment to understand and comport education through a business and corporate model. Such a model included the prioritization of scientific measures, principles, and standards to guide curriculum choices and assess performance. Callahan (1962) remarks that the subject of scientific management in education "was given national recognition at the 1913 convention of the Department of Superintendence when the main topic of discussion was 'Improving School Systems by Scientific Management" (p. 23). He goes to say "There were scores of articles, books, and reports during the next decade on economy in education, efficiency in education, standardization in education, and the like" (Callahan, 1962, p. 23).

Higher education was still a fledgling enterprise late into the 19th century. However, as with grammar schools and high schools, the Second Industrial Revolution, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, helped fuel an explosion in colleges and universities. The growth of colleges and universities during

this timeframe was so substantial that the era has been called the era of 'university-builders' (Thelin, 2011). University presidents were men who were proven in business and politics who brought with them expertise from those sectors to help establish and manage the universities. Just as with K-12 education, 'scientific management' principles captivated university administrations and dictated how universities were set-up and run. As universities begin to take off in the early 1900s they were seen as a new frontier for big business. "The risks and rivalries that defined American business competition of the era were replicated on the American campus" (Thelin, 2011, p. 111). Corporate and business practices within the university brought with them the internal freight of competition and performance measures. Such a perspective remains with us today and problematizes how we approach knowledge and knowledge formation by displacing and replacing the concept that knowledge is valuable in and of itself with a belief that the value of any given knowledge base is reduced to competition over limited resources and the satisfaction of powerful, hegemonic stakeholders. Universities are accountable to a "diverse constituency of business, professional, and political interests. As higher education institutions engage in exchanges with all of these groups, they need to demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources" (Meyer, 2002, p. 539).

By adopting corporate philosophy and business practices in the early 1900s, the nation's universities set the stage for economic interests and concerns to unduly influence higher education's trajectory and ultimate place in society. Economic pressure, through various inroads into the university, effectively became (and remains) a threat to academic freedom. I am not contending there is zero academic freedom in our universities. But I

do think that economic pressure in various forms has structured the academy in how it pursues and promotes certain knowledge bases over others to the extent that pure academic freedom is under assault. "Threats to academic freedom" are from

> government micro-management of universities, from commercial sponsors of university research, from managerialism/corporatism within university governance, from political correctness on the campus, from alumni-donors and the funders (Palfreyman, 2007, p. 19).

While these threats have not eliminated academic freedom in my view, educators would be wise to pay attention to these concerns and monitor the current higher education landscape in order to stay apprised to any damage being done to the academy in this regard (Palfreyman, 2007). With such a perspective in view, we now move to a consideration of the current state of higher education and the effect of neoliberalism on the academy.

Higher Education: The Influence of Neoliberalism and Episodes of Resistance

Influence of Neoliberalism

As we begin this section I want to ask a series of questions designed to give insight into how I believe we should think about the academy with the view that as this section unfolds (as well as the following chapters) we will see some of the fundamental ways higher education needs to be transformed. My first question is simply, can our colleges and universities be authentically viewed as legitimate public trusts and social goods or have our colleges and universities been largely co-opted by corporate and special interests. This question is born out of the belief that our colleges and universities are fundamental to the civic health of our society. My concern is "not only the meaning

and purpose of higher education, but also civil society, politics, and the fate of democracy itself" (Giroux, 2015, para. 4). Such a concern underscores the belief that the fate of our society (at large) is at least somewhat intertwined with the fate of our institutions of higher learning. Giroux (2011) further contends that

> education is fundamental to democracy and that no democratic society can survive without a formative culture shaped by pedagogical practices capable of creating the conditions for producing citizens who are critical, self-reflective, knowledgeable, and willing to make moral judgments and act in a socially responsible way (p.3).

To continue, do our public universities have a full orbed commitment to a range of academic disciplines and knowledge bases that impact the whole person from every background or are they merely subservient to disciplines and areas of knowledge that "pay well", that are prime for government funding and large corporate investments? Are university professors able to push back against university administration where needed and "criticize the workings of [their] institutions" and "question…those who hold institutional power" in order to promote authentic democracy within the university (Evans & Greenwood, 2015, p. 10)? And finally, are our colleges and universities places where robust contemplation, self-reflection, and thinking are desired and cultivated, or have our institutions of higher education been reduced to merely a utilitarian next-step to get a job, a necessary hassle in the elusive pursuit of the dollar?

As we consider the above questions (and others) and as we try to ascertain the current state of higher education in the U.S., we are immediately confronted with the ubiquitous presence and influence of *neoliberalism*. Neoliberalism is a slippery term. In

certain quarters of society the term has become so broadly defined and overused its meaning has become somewhat derivative, that is, a flawed copy and shadow of its original meaning and implications. In other quarters of society, even much of society I would contend, the term is either unknown or wrongly conflated with political liberalism. Consequently, neoliberalism is in need of robust definition and explication.

Generally speaking neoliberalism promotes ideological stances and discourse that promote the privatization and deregulation of all of society (industries, institutions, fields, and sectors) from government or collective powers (Hohle, 2012). Formal politics are central to many societies but particularly those in the West. In the political arena, the two leading historical figures of neoliberalism are President Ronald Reagan of the United States and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom. Neoliberalism positions money as central to everything and elevates economic markets as the filter to not only judge but to dictate the direction of society. "Neoliberal ideology views the "free market" as the solution to all problems" (Lucal, 2015, p. 5). The "free market" is believed to be an unemotional, unbiased, fair arbiter of society only concerned with a natural market movement of supply and demand, unfettered competition, and equal and pervasive opportunity. Unequal outcomes are viewed as expected, legitimate, and merely an organic, natural result of an objective, neutral market responding to the uneven abilities, talents, and efforts of the range of human beings comprising the market. Hursh (2011) contends,

> under neoliberalism, economic inequality does not result from unequal social structures that privilege the already advantaged but, instead, from differences in individual choices and efforts. Inequality, therefore, is deserved and should not be a concern of government (p. 35).

Competition, consumerism, self-centeredness, self-protection, and self-interest are not only hallmarks of neoliberalism but are virtues (Lucal, 2015). Neoliberalism promotes individualism and sees humanity as principally comprising of individual human beings independently fighting for survival and striving for the hallowed ground of ultimate self-reliance.

> Under neoliberalism, people are to be reconceptualized less as socially connected citizens of a nation state or morally situated members of a culture and more as self-interested competitors, self-actualized entrepreneurs and rational consumers in a dynamic and ever-changing global marketplace (Ward, 2014, p. 12).

Neoliberalism is able to co-op and champion a range of discourse and terminology associated with democracy such as democracy itself, fairness, responsibility, empowerment, equal opportunity, and excellence, in order to reify capitalistic principles for the benefit of hegemonic powers and to the exclusion and disservice of non-hegemonic groups and constituencies (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Wright, 2012; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2001). Such a phenomenon has been seen in the context of higher education (Gonzales & Nunez, 2014; Monzo, 2014) as well as more overt neoliberal discourse which explicitly ties the mission and goals of institutions of higher education to market impulses and demands (Ayers, 2005). As Poulos (2017) has articulated with a notable degree of urgency,

> The academy is under fire. Qualitative inquiry is under fire. Neoliberal political and economic philosophies and management practices threaten academic freedom, open inquiry, and funding of higher education in favor of 'market-driven' approaches and efficiency models (p. 307).

Not only within the institutions of higher education do we see discourse that promotes a neoliberal agenda, but national discourse driven by the highest echelons of power position higher education as directly tied to the fate and future of capitalism. Regarding how the Clinton administration articulated its vision of the role of community colleges, Ayers (2005) states,

> As this statement makes clear, Clinton is directing the community college with continuously realigning its programming to the impulses of the market. In this way, the community college abandons its commitment to community-based programming through democratic processes and instead becomes a servant to unfettered, free-market capitalism (p. 537).

A similar vision for community colleges was promoted by the Bush (George W.) administration. In his 2004 State of the Union address, President Bush made clear his support for community colleges by underscoring that community colleges are charged with "train[ing] workers for the industries that are creating the most jobs" (State of the Union, 2004). In this way, higher education is positioned as a reactive sector dependent and driven by capitalism and the economy for the creation of its curriculum and its ultimate contribution to society. Notably, the Bush administration spearheaded important initiatives for community colleges that interestingly (and tellingly) were managed *not* by the Department of Education, but by the Department of Labor (Ayers, 2005).

Saunders (2015) contends that

> over the last thirty years, colleges and universities in the United States have increasingly embraced an economic rationality in virtually all educational processes, leading to the neoliberalization of postsecondary education throughout the country (p. 391).

Such a claim and others like it are not hollow. Years ago I had a conversation with the chair of the business school of a well-known state university in my home state about money that a large regional bank (BB&T) had given the school in exchange for the promotion of ideas and research rooted in Ayn Randian objectivism and libertarianism. Interestingly (and independently), Jovanovic (2017) has expressed concern with this very action. As the department chair and I spoke, it became clear that this kind of corporate involvement was necessary for his department to both thrive financially and compete for students. Given this example and the hundreds, thousands of other similar examples across the landscape of higher education, we must ask ourselves: what does this level of inter-dependence, if not co-dependence, with outside (are we sure?) corporate interests say about the integrity of our pursuit of knowledge in the academy and the academy's contribution of knowledge to society?

The presence and influence of neoliberalism on higher education is so pronounced that not only is it germane to most Western iterations of higher education, it also a growing force in many non-Western institutions of higher learning (Gyamera & Burke, 2015). Under the direction of a neoliberal agenda and paradigm, colleges and universities have come to focus on revenue generation and job training, positioning students as customers and human capital and faculty as entrepreneurs whose research is

valued to the extent that it generates revenue (Heaney, 2015; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Levin, 2005; McLaren, 2005). Positioning and seeing students as human capital reduces our college and university spaces to little more than utilitarian sites for the reification of the idea that the ultimate value of both humans and education are inextricably tied to economic viability. As Holborow (2012) underscores,

> Human capital encapsulates this binding together of knowledge and expertise with their function and value in the economy. Knowledge is reclassified as an economic category and human endeavor linked to productivity: the greater its outcomes, the greater its value (p. 101).

In a very real sense we are witnessing "the transformation of educational values into business values" (Tuchman, 2009, p. 7). Along this track, success in education becomes about the

> numbers of jobs created, dollars of wealth accumulated -- while any non-market measures of success -- decreasing social inequality, vibrant intellectual creativity, long-term environmental sustainability or broad-based human fulfillment -- drop out as insignificant (Kleinman, Feinstein, & Downey, 2013, p. 2387).

As illustrated in Chapter One, there is a significant chasm between the salaries of business school faculty and the salaries of humanities and social sciences faculty. This is directly related to the pressure of neoliberalism and the relentless need to generate revenue and profit for the university. One could argue that it is not unreasonable that departments which generate more dollars for the university would have more dollars to spend on faculty and other resources. However, neoliberalism moves past what is merely reasonable and inordinately skews everything by and towards an economic model at

whatever cost (pardon the pun). Such a reality is on flagrant display when we consider college athletics. The exorbitant salaries, particularly of Division 1 football and basketball coaches, are well known with total compensation into the multiple millions per year. These compensation packages are fully intertwined with corporate endorsements of the team and coaches. It is counter-intuitive for many that college coaches get paid huge sums of money from shoe companies that are supplying shoes to their unpaid college players, nevertheless it is the case (Kish, 2013). Earlier when I mentioned that neoliberalism will push everything by and towards an economic model at whatever cost I was not being hyperbolic. One merely has to turn on the news to see universities selling their academic souls in order to ensure being able to compete at the highest level athletically. The willingness of colleges and universities to jeopardize and sacrifice their academic identity upon the alter of sports revenue is stark. In recent months we have seen scandal break-out at several major universities ranging from abject, sordid criminal behavior (including cash exchanges for commitments to play and the services of prostitutes) to looking the other way as athletes benefited from proxy cheating schemes and fraudulent courses (Hiltzik, 2017). Recent examples include the University of Louisville, Baylor University, the University of Southern California, the University of Arizona, Syracuse University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and The Ohio State University among several others. Concerning the scandal regarding Coach Urban Meyer and Ohio State's football program, renowned sports writer and commentator, Tony Kornheiser, stated, "So what this comes down to, the answer to all

your questions is money. Ohio State needs football. They have a great football coach. The university has sold itself to that football team" (Kornheiser & Howard, 2018).

It is not enough, however, to just highlight what universities are willing to do in their athletic departments for the dollar, it is also telling what they are *not* willing to do in their academic departments. What do I mean? What I mean is that we never see athletes skipping practice and lying about completing workouts so they can do an extra project in the biology department. We never see the sociology department setting up sex parties to recruit prospective students to their major. Of course these things should not happen but it is telling, relative to what the university values, that these types of things never happen in academic departments but are normative, or at minimum, no longer surprising, in athletic departments. Again, it's about money. Now I'm not naïve to the fact that universities at times might push the envelope of propriety in order to recruit a world class scientist or an internationally known poet to their faculty. And it is certainly the case that at times hard science departments and the scientists who work in them have significant conflicts of interests because of their ties to business and industry (Bok, 2004). Nevertheless, such occurrences are less rampant (or at least seem to be) and are certainly an entirely different species of a thing because of their lack of direct involvement with the student population.

Given neoliberalism's incessant push to determine worth exclusively through the rubric of monetary value, is it any wonder there has been a precipitous drop in enrollment in the humanities over the last forty years (Hearn & Belasco, 2015; Anderson, 2002, *Mixed Trends,* 2005). While there is some data that suggest enrollment began to stabilize

five to ten years ago (Connor & Ching, 2010) there is no doubt the humanities (and social sciences) as a whole have suffered significantly over that same period in terms of institutional commitment and resources (Meranze, 2015).

> But it is clear that there is a resource and institutional crises. For several years now, American colleges and universities have been closing humanities departments and cutting back on the number of humanities faculty (Meranze, 2015, p. 1312).

Thomas and Hartley (2010) argue that key components of "higher education's democratic imperative" are to "teach democratic skills, establish deliberative spaces for public problem solving, and model democracy" (p. 99-100). Eliminating humanities departments and reducing social science course offerings to stay in step with increasing pressure to educate in reference to and in service to economic market demands undermines higher education's highest calling, which is to prioritize the expansion of democratic agency for all students, thereby expanding democracy in society for all constituencies. As we see "governments in many countries shifting funding away from the social sciences and the humanities towards those fields and disciplines that are supposed to be of more immediate and more tangible use" (Biesta, 2010, p. 1) we must recognize that higher education in many respects has been reduced to a mere *commodity*. The "commodification of education, the idea that education is a product that can be bought and sold" reinforces the notion that

> the value of education should first and foremost be measured in economic terms, both in regard to the economic return for individuals and the contribution of the educational system as a whole to the nation's gross domestic product (Biesta, 2010, p. 1).

A by-product of this commodification of higher education is that university departments are often reduced to competing with one another for students. They need to fill the seats in their classrooms to justify their course offerings and ultimately the continuation of their departments. How tuition dollars are allocated is paramount. Such a dynamic often results in drawing hard lines between departments and a resistance to the cross-pollination of majors and therefore ideas. Specialization is the rage. Such a perspective can create an atmosphere that is a disservice to professors and students alike. Allan Bloom in his seminal work, *The Closing of the American Mind*, lays out in vivid imagery the myriad of cascading concerns that flow from this issue. The following passage underscores the damage done to both professors and students when university departments are commodified and are comported as competing spaces of specialization desperately in need of student bodies and student tuition dollars. I should note that I recognize that Bloom's work is 20 years old and that there has been some movement towards interdisciplinary education in the last two decades. Nevertheless, I believe Bloom's concerns still have some validity and remain germane and insightful to our current situation. He states,

> Each department or great division of the university makes a pitch for itself, and each offers a course of study that will make the student an initiate. But how to choose among them? How do they relate to one another? The fact is that they do not address one another. They are competing and contradictory, without being aware of it. The problem of the whole is urgently indicated by the very existence of the specialties, but it is never systematically posed…Most professors are specialists, concerned only with their own fields, interested in the advancement of those fields in their own terms…They have been entirely emancipated from the old structure of the university, which at least helped to indicate that they are incomplete, only parts of an unexamined and undiscovered whole. So the student must navigate among a collection of carnival barkers, each trying to lure him into a particular sideshow. This undecided student is an embarrassment to most universities, because he seems to be saying, 'I am a whole human being. Help me to form myself in my wholeness and let me develop my real potential,' and he is the one to whom they have nothing to say (Bloom, 1987, p. 339).

Related to the previous concern, as universities concentrate on revenue growth through grant generation via private, corporate, and government funding there is increased pressure among faculty to earn their keep and prioritize research that will generate dollars for their departments. Such an atmosphere diminishes the stewardship and art of *teaching*, regulating it to at best a secondary concern and at worst a frustrating chore and nuisance that takes precious time away from the all-important mandate to 'publish or perish' (Nalbone, 2011; Malachowski, 2010; Salehi, 2007). A study done among faculty of over 100 colleges and universities in Texas revealed that the majority of faculty believed that growth in their academic careers including the receiving of tenure was virtually impossible without prioritizing research and publishing (Salehi, 2007). Over 30% of faculty in the study admitted that the pressure to publish reduced the quality of teaching *throughout their departments* (Salehi, 2007). It is likely there were other faculty who felt the same but didn't think it wise to admit it. While I believe research and contributions to scholarship are fundamental to a university's charge, steering research

down pathways almost exclusively geared towards maximum economic benefit to the university, while simultaneously devaluing teaching (an exercise more directly associated with student engagement), impedes the university's ability to be a critical stakeholder for democracy and societal renewal.

The commodification of higher education has had the effect of turning course offerings into pre-packaged products designed to deliver a narrow set of acceptable pre-determined outcomes. Students are positioned as consumers and as such they need a uniform product. It is a growing phenomenon at many universities that certain courses have a standard syllabus for all sections (regardless of the instructor) and identical assignments for all sections (regardless of the instructor). I teach courses like this. Less and less, particularly at the undergraduate level, professors have flexibility and latitude to craft their classes to be sites of organic critical thinking that engages the subject material in innovative and creative ways in keeping with the specific, diverse set of students they have in a particular class. Moreover, it is harder to have eruptions and episodes of democracy and social justice when classes are so tightly managed and managed ultimately from administrators outside the classroom. Winfrey (2016) reminds us that "most colleges and universities in this country are organized by hierarchies of power and control" (p. 131). Such a dynamic makes it difficult to have classes where professors and students can have "a pedagogy for liberation, where dialogue and critical reflection empower adults to become change agents rather than passive participants in disenfranchising practices" (Winfrey, 2016, p. 131). Along similar lines, O'Byrne and Bond (2014) argue that higher education in general has become so steeped in

"managerialism" and "commodification" that "an intellectual discourse needs to be repositioned and reinstated in higher education" (p. 571). Notwithstanding my previous comments, I should note that department heads and departmental committees who are tasked with creating a singular, uniform syllabus for courses with numerous sections are doing so under pressure from regulatory accrediting bodies. No doubt many of these committees are trying their best to be mindful of the diverse population of students in their classes and the need for genuine critical thinking.

From my standpoint the commodification of higher education has helped create an almost singular expectation for a strong percentage of students, namely the view that the course is a product designed to deliver a good grade to move the student down the path to a good job that brings significant money. I'm no longer surprised (and I used to be astounded) when a student tells me "I have to get an 'A', just so you know". Now, I still tell them, "Those who work really hard are the ones who get an 'A', just so you know", but I have come to see that students have been conditioned to view class as merely a means to an end. Many students have the mindset that they are paying for a result, a very specific outcome, and that they are 'owed' this outcome if they do a certain set of behaviors that they think justify getting an 'A'. In the spirit of our managerial comportment of our classrooms, particularly at the undergraduate level, I find a lot of students clamoring for exact, detailed rubrics for everything so they can ensure they check off the necessary boxes to get an 'A'. Whether they actually learned something, or if they actually demonstrated deep, organic engagement with the pertinent ideas, or if

they truly exhibited multi-layered, critical thinking is irrelevant. My experience with undergraduates is not too far from Hubbell's (2015) perspective. Hubbell (2015) states,

> Unfortunately, 'creeping consumerism' has inched into the academic side, namely in grade inflation; student evaluations, which weigh heavily in faculty retention and promotion; the tendency by students to regard syllabi as contracts; and the expectation among many students that their instructors should provide study guides to their courses. All of these developments further commodify the student experience of higher education.(82).

Before I sound too hard on students, I must say that students who act like consumers are merely responding to the neoliberal conditions of higher education. Emphasis on the 'privatization' of higher education (even in public universities) and the template of free-market capitalism to calibrate the entire college and university experience combined with rising tuition and book costs reinforce that one is buying a product, one that you are privileged to purchase. If you come to my university you will notice Starbucks, Subway, and Chick-fil-A in our dining areas, Barnes and Noble in (as) our bookstore, our posh new campus housing, and our $90 million state-of-the-art recreation center. Notwithstanding scholarship that positions higher education as a public good designed to accrue benefits to larger society (Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt, 2005; Lewis & Hearn, 2003), the notion that higher education is a *bona fide* public trust, a *genuine* collective good, designed to be an arena for the robust exchange of divergent ideas that transform lives and renew society, can seem naïve, even mythical. Burnett and Collins (2010) observe, "Public higher education is currently experiencing a decline in financial support from state governments, an acceleration of enrollment growth, and a shift from a transformational to a transactional student relationship" (p. 192). Before I

move on I must add that I *do* think it's *possible* to have a 90 million state-of-the-art recreation center and be an institution that prioritizes a robust exchange of divergent ideas. I'm not a complete cynic. I also recognize students want elaborate, up-to-date recreation centers and it matters what students want to some extent. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the exorbitant expenditures that colleges and universities lay out towards branding efforts that have nothing to do with the quality of education or academic experience reflects, in part, a concerning submission to neoliberal pressures.

When we look at the mounting financial aid and federal loan debt waiting for our student populations when they get out of college (Cornelius & Frank, 2015; Arena, 2013), perhaps it is reasonable students have come to see education as a merely a commodity and expensive one at that. The 1947 President's Commission on Higher Education known as the Truman Commission, quoted by Gilbert and Heller (2013) states,

> The democratic community cannot tolerate a society based upon education for the well-to-do alone. If college opportunities are restricted to those in higher income brackets, the way is open to the creation and perpetuation of a class society which has no place in the American way of life (419).

While certainly there is greater access to college by lower socio-economic classes today than there was in 1947, the reality of high college costs being funded by individual debt instruments has a way of creating negative class conditions the Truman Commission hoped to remedy and avoid.

The previous concern points to a larger macro issue plaguing our institutions of higher education, namely disenfranchisement along *class* lines. Not only is there much work to be done along racial and ethnic lines, *social class* tension and division are

prominent in U.S. society. Education has not escaped this concern. Yes, the U.S. has a large middle class compared to many other societies. But this only serves to illustrate the paucity of class harmony in other societies versus highlight any noteworthy class harmony in U.S. society. In the U.S., both K-12 education and higher education remain crucibles for the continuation and reification of class division for many students. Archer, Hutchings, and Ross (2003) contend that education plays a significant role in the reproduction of middle and upper class *privileges* as well as the reproduction of lower and working class *disadvantages*. Part of their argument rest on the perspective that conditions in the families of lower and working class students are not conducive to typical learning opportunities and outcomes in K-12 education environments thereby ill preparing those students for the best opportunities in higher education (Archer et al., 2003). Such a dynamic short-circuits social justice educators' attempts to create conditions of enfranchisement when some of the very students who need their efforts never make it to the university to begin with. Consequently higher education can serve as a perpetuation of class entrenchment versus a meaningful place of empowerment geared towards upward social mobility for all. To this point McLaren and Farahmandpur (2001) remind us that too often

> class is reduced to an effect rather than understood as a cause and in which a hierarchy of oppression is (usually unwittingly) constituted as a controlling paradigm that frequently leaves the exploitative power of capitalist social relations largely unaddressed (p. 136).

Even a cursory look at our higher education landscape illustrates that a pronounced percentage of individuals who are part of the working class and/or lower

economic classes will either not go to college, or if they do, will gravitate to a community college or trade school in order to acquire a specialized skill and certification towards the singular goal of securing meaningful employment. Social class status directly correlates with an individual's likelihood in obtaining a broad-based liberal arts education that prioritizes critical thinking across a range of knowledge bases and epistemologies. If we eschew a neoliberal paradigm of the economy (ergo modern capitalism) and refuse to view the economy as a neutral, self-sustaining natural entity and instead see it as an elaborate social relation structured by excessive accumulation, exploitation, and class warfare (ergo a Marxist paradigm) we can see how higher education can fall prey to student populations that, for the most part, represent the status quo regarding class distinctions. In this way, higher education itself becomes an exemplar of class division. That is, society is divided between those who go to a four year college/university and those who don't. Such a dynamic not only exists in our society but it also carries significant class implications, spoken and unspoken. Educators who are mindful of social justice must not allow important issues regarding race and gender crowd out a concern for the tremendous disenfranchisement brought about by class inequities (McLaren, 2005).

Now it's true, arguably more than ever in the history of higher education in the U.S., that our classrooms have students who occupy various locations across the economic spectrum. Yet, it still remains there are those, because of class inequities, who are left out of the opportunity and process of a four year college/university education and it is also true that the richest students can use their money (or Mom and Dad's) to stack

university opportunities in their favor. In point of fact, the richest students can (and do) *buy*, in many respects, their way into the most prestigious colleges and universities (Aisch, Buchanan, Cox, & Quealy, 2017). Professors committed to social justice ideals can help push society to make public higher education more assessable to more people and less contingent on social class standing. Moreover they can teach in such a way as to emphasize a range of educational goals, many of which will have nothing to do with job attainment for the sole focus of economic comfort and accumulation.

A final concern I want to highlight regarding neoliberalism is that it seems that everything is susceptible to being influenced by neoliberalism. Nothing is wholly impervious or completely insulated from its effects. Not even social justice education, one of the primary correctives and cures to the ills and effects of neoliberalism. The power and reach of neoliberalism is such that even social justice education itself is subject to co-optation by neoliberalism and the possibility of being rendered impotent in producing any authentic and lasting societal transformation (Atasay, 2015; Singh, Kenway, and Apple, 2005). Social justice education cannot allow itself to be merely an extension of the "social welfare agenda of neoliberal reforms" (Atasay, 2015, p. 172). It also cannot allow itself to be treated like a single food item on a large buffet: just one of many possible choices that education eaters can take or leave depending on their particular mood. No, (to continue or metaphor), social justice education is better understood not as an individual item on a large buffet but as *the entire buffet case* that all the menu items are placed in. All education menu items/choices should be conditioned and contextualized by social justice principles and concerns.

Another feature of social justice education that can help protect it from co-optation by neoliberal forces is *praxis* or activism. If social justice education is contained merely to the classroom, one can legitimately question whether any authentic societal transformation is occurring. I have met more than a few graduate students who felt very satisfied with themselves when it came to their perceived social justice credentials. Because they took classes about social justice and because they were progressive when it came to their personal politics, they felt they had arrived when it came issues of social justice. In my own life in order to protect myself from such a perspective, I decided to give some time to individuals caught up in the bogged down bureaucracy of social services and assist them in moving from the cycle of the day and night homeless shelters into public housing. I tried to make an attempt (albeit a minor one) in putting my social justice ideas into *action* (*praxis*) by making a direct impact on one of the social systems (social services) in my local community on behalf of other people (some of which are now friends). In an effort to distance myself from a flawed, class reifying savior mentality, I focused my efforts on the social services bureaucracy, at times connecting with the case worker involved to move things along more quickly, instead of putting my efforts strictly towards a financial solution that can, at times, create a feeling of class division.

In addition, social justice *praxis* or activism is more resistant to co-optation by neoliberalism than the mere dissemination of social justice ideas. This is not to forget however that teaching for social justice can be understood as a soft form of social justice praxis bearing in mind the concerns for co-optation previously articulated.

As we move towards the end of this chapter, I want to draw our attention to several interruptions of democracy that have occurred at our colleges and universities. These episodes of praxis have been concerted efforts to push back against a range of injustices.

Episodes of Resistance

I do not want to leave this chapter without reminding of us of the many instances of democratic praxis and protests that have taken place on our university campuses over the last half century. While neoliberalism has been a formidable force, and while our colleges and universities have been places where hegemonic interests have been cultivated and reified (as this investigation has demonstrated), I should also note that over the last 50 years there have been notable instances of resistance at our colleges and universities that signal that a full understanding of higher education requires us to recognize that two things are true at once; namely, that higher education can serve and reinforce hegemonic interests while at the same time be sites of genuine push-back against hegemonic interests.

I want to briefly profile ten episodes of protests and democratic action that took place at US colleges and universities from 1962 to 2017. To be sure I will not be covering every instance of democratic action on college campuses since 1962. Naturally there are instances of protests and advocacy by students and faculty that don't make national or even regional news. The ten I am going to mention caught the national consciousness and more than substantiate the important place our institutions of higher

learning have had in raising awareness and provoking change for various social issues and concerns.

In 1962, James Meredith enrolled at the University of Mississippi. Meredith was the first African-American to enroll at the university. His enrollment was the impetus for massive rioting at the campus that left two dead, hundreds wounded, and many arrested ("James Meredith at Ole Miss," 2010). Because of the level of violence and almost daily harassment of Meredith, U.S. Marshals, under order from President Kennedy, provided Meredith with 24/7 protection during his entire time at the University of Mississippi ("The U.S. Marshals and the Integration," n.d.). By his mere presence at the university, Meredith was the embodiment of social change.

In 1964 civil rights groups gathered at the University of Cincinnati to picket a speech by Alabama Governor, George Wallace. Wallace was notorious for his bigoted perspectives. He famously said in his first inauguration as Governor (he served 3 terms as Governor of Alabama), "segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever" ("1963 George Wallace," n.d.). The protests against Wallace at the University of Cincinnati were by students and faculty alike. Some carried signs stating "Negroes Are Americans Too!" ("A History of Free Speech," 2017). They helped galvanize resistance to a man who had become the embodiment of racism and hate. Repeated student and faculty resistance towards Wallace helped contribute to his four unsuccessful runs for the Presidency.

In 1964, Mario Savio helped ignite the Berkeley Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley. As with many schools across the country, hegemonic

forces at the university had put a ban on student political activity. This led to massive sit-ins in resistance that led to 800 students being arrested (Gonzales, 2014). Interestingly, there was a tremendous *unified* effort by students to overturn the ban on student political activity regardless of political affiliation or identification. Student organizations from the Young Socialists to the Young Republicans banded together to force the hand of the university to reinstate the right for students to engage in political activity on campus (Gonzales, 2014). Eventually, university administration capitulated to the students' demands. The sit-ins at the University of California, Berkeley made national news and the political fire eventually spread to other campuses as students won back their right to engage in political activity on their university campuses.

On October 16th, 1965, hundreds of students marched down Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, MA protesting U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. This effort represented a multi-university effort with students coming from Boston University, MIT, and Harvard ("Notable Protests," n.d.).

In April of 1968 there were major student protests at Columbia University. There were two protest rallies that coalesced over a period of several days (Adler, 2008). One was a protest over a university gym that was earmarked to be segregated. The other protest concerned Columbia's ties to a think tank involved with weapons research for the Vietnam War. These protests were driven by the student group, Students for a Democratic Society. Students occupied five school buildings that effectively shut down the school.

> On April 30, police moved in and cleared the buildings, arresting 712 students. More than 100 students, four faculty members and a dozen police were injured in the fracas. Students called a strike, and the campus shut down for the rest of the semester (Adler, 2008, para. 5).

In this instance students and faculty were addressing both a local concern of segregation and discrimination and a national/international concern of using violence and war as a mechanism and means of foreign policy.

In late April and early May, 1970, major protests were held against the Vietnam War at Kent State University. The protests were so pronounced the National Guard was called in to quell the demonstrators. In the process, a student, Jeffrey Miller, was shot and killed by a National Guardsman. A photo was taken of Miller's body with Mary Ann Vecchio, a 14 year old runaway, kneeling over him and screaming. The photo, taken by student, John Filo, won a Pulitzer Prize and reached iconic status. It became a rallying cry to end the Vietnam War and the inspiration for Neil Young's song "Ohio" ("Kent State Shootings," n.d.).

In April of 1985, the University of California at Berkeley was rife with anti-apartheid sentiment. There were repeated demonstrations. Many demonstrators were arraigned and about 20 were blocked off by police in an alley and detained behind a gate in an attempt by police to inhibit the demonstrations ("A History of Free Speech," 2017). While repeated protests on a range of topics has made Berkeley a haven for social change efforts, it should be noted that the anti-apartheid efforts by students and faculty in the mid 1980s were largely resisted by university administration (Masover, 2014).

In 2003, Students at New York University protested the impending war in Iraq by lying down in the university library in the pattern of a peace symbol. Hundreds of students took part. Afterward the students set out on an anti-war protest march from Washington Square to Union Square Park where they joined other demonstrators ("New York University students", 2003).

In 2015, at Yale University, students take part in the "March of Resilience". This march was in the wake of several racially charged incidents including allegations of racial discrimination at one of the university's fraternity houses ("A History of Free Speech," 2017). Just a few days later at Yale in connection with the "March of Resilience," more than 1000 students, professors, and various administrative staff hosted a series of talks to discuss race and diversity. Placards and bulletin boards were erected showcasing messages such as "STAND WITH YOUR SISTERS OF COLOR. NOW, HERE, ALWAYS, EVERYWHERE". By doing so, Yale became part of a wave of protests at various U.S. colleges and universities concerned about the treatment of minority students ("Yale students march against," 2015).

In January of 2017, hundreds of students gathered at Columbia University to protest President Donald Trump's immigration policies. The students were particularly galvanized over President Trump's executive order that banned travelers to the U.S. from seven predominately Muslim countries ("Protests at Columbia University," 2017).

As the preceding attests, our universities have been significant sites of protest and resistance. Such a reality against the backdrop of the influence of neoliberalism on our

nation's campuses signals that the university is a contested space. Such a dynamic both restricts and affords college educators to be instruments of social change and renewal.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have reviewed two major themes resident in both K-12 education and higher education, namely *deculturalization and assimilation* and the *influence of capitalism and business*. We have also discussed the current state of higher education giving particular attention to the ubiquitous presence and pressure of *neoliberalism*. Finally, we looked at how our universities have been places of resistance and push-back against various hegemonic interests that were/are in service to a neoliberal agenda. This study hopes to add to the scholarship that seeks to displace a neoliberal transactional expression of higher education with a transformational one. While I believe part of the role of colleges and universities is to prepare students in ways that will serve their vocational aspirations and interests, I also believe that universities must equip students to be critically minded, socially conscious, and globally aware in order to be agents of transformation and renewal for society. As crucial societal stakeholders, I believe colleges and universities have a responsibility to educate students

> to contest workplace inequalities, imagine democratically organized forms of work, and identify and challenge those injustices that contradict and undercut the most fundamental principles of freedom, equality, and respect for all people who constitute the global public sphere (Giroux, 2007, p. 104).

Hopefully this chapter has illuminated some of the ways in which neoliberalism threatens these ideals. I also hope that it reminds us of the promise of our colleges and universities as contested spaces, spaces where episodes of democratic praxis challenge the status quo

of neoliberalism. In keeping with this theme, in chapter four we move to a discussion regarding how higher education educators, who prioritize social justice concerns and ideals, navigate and negotiate their university spaces. Having practical, first person, real world accounts of specific thoughts and practices of social justice minded educators will give us insight into what is being done and what yet may be done to move higher education towards a stronger and more pervasive force for societal renewal.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY DATA FROM INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS

Thus far we have analyzed some of the epistemological and philosophical foundations as to why college and university professors should prioritize social justice concerns in their work as higher education educators. We have also reviewed some of the scholarship that delineates what it means to teach critically, that is, to teach with the issues of equality, equity, and agency squarely in view in the context of the interrogation of hegemonic ideas and assumptions. We have also looked at some of the history of K-12 education and higher education. And finally, perhaps most crucially, we have looked at the ubiquitous nature of neoliberalism and its draconian impact on higher education. This leads us to the natural and all important concern of how do higher education educators committed to social justice priorities understand and navigate the college and university space. This chapter gets to the heart of this concern and unpacks the specific ideas and experiences of various professors currently in the field.

The methodology of this study comprised of interviewing six respondents/professors from two institutions of higher education in the Southeastern United States: three professors from a medium to large state university and three professors from a small private college with a religious foundation. In addition there were three observations of professors conducted, two from the state university (two different professors) and one from the private college. The professors consisted of men

and women, whites and non-whites, tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenured, and represented three different fields of study: Education, Communication Studies, and Political Science.

In keeping with qualitative research methods, the professors were selected through *purposeful selection* and *snowball sampling*.

> In qualitative research, the typical way of selecting settings and individuals is neither probability sampling nor convenience sampling. It falls into a third category, which I call purposeful selection. This is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately (Maxwell, 2005, p. 88).

The people selected in purposeful selection are "people who are uniquely able to be informative because they are expert in an area" (Weiss, 1994, p.17).

> Snowball sampling yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest. Snowball sampling is well suited to studying social networks, subcultures, or people who have certain attributes in common (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p.114).

"A snowball sample starts when the researcher locates someone who is willing to serve the dual role of an interview subject and a guide to potential new subjects" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p.114). The professors in this study were specifically chosen because of their overt and known commitment to social justice concerns and ideals.

The interviews lasted approximately an hour and 30 minutes. A sampling of the interview questions are contained in the appendix. Each observation lasted approximately an hour and 15 minutes. The interviews were conducted in the individual offices of the professors and the observations were done in their classrooms during a

typical class period. My presence was acknowledged to the students by the professor at the beginning of each class observation; otherwise I did not engage the class.

I have given the professors fictitious names in order to make the reading of the chapter less cumbersome and more fluid. Restricted biographical sketches of the professors are as follows (the specific academic fields are left out in keeping with anonymity concerns):

- Katerina: A white woman. Distinct Central European heritage. State University. Extensive teaching experience. Extensive research experience.
- Victoria: A white woman. Private College. Extensive teaching experience. Limited research experience.
- Sofia: A Hispanic woman. Private College. Extensive teaching experience. Limited research experience.
- Lauren: A white woman. State University. Extensive teaching experience. Limited to moderate research experience.
- Kevin: A black man. State University. Moderate teaching experience. Moderate to extensive research experience.
- Jennifer: A white woman. Private College. Moderate teaching experience. Limited research experience.

The goal of the interviews and observations was to see how college and university professors who prioritize social justice concerns and ideals view the state of higher education and navigate the college and university space. My approach in this chapter will be to discuss several themes that I have identified from the collected data of the

interviews and observations. This chapter will focus on specific content from the observations and interviews with little commentary from me. My primary concern is to 'let the professors speak' in order to get a strong, first-hand account of how professors committed to social justice understand the role of the university in society, negotiate the college and university space, comport their pedagogical ideas and perspectives, and engage their students. As such I have parsed the data into several themes which will comprise the content of the chapter.

Theme 1: Epistemological Foundations: A Blend of Personal Experience and Large Ideas

Epistemology is the study of how it is we know what we know. One of the interests of this study is laying out an epistemological and philosophical foundation(s) for educating for social justice. Such a concern is important for many reasons but particularly because social justice discourse is embedded with the notion of what one 'should' and 'ought' to do. It is ironically 'modernist' in this respect (although this is rarely admitted). It gives directives that *everyone* is *supposed* to believe and follow, that is, directives (and beliefs) that are purported as universally morally binding. As Jennifer put it, "professors have a moral duty to be involved in social justice". Given this, I am keenly interested in how the professors in the study came to the belief, the settled disposition and commitment, that they *should* prioritize social justice in their pedagogy and scholarship. I'm interested in knowing *how* and *in what* they *grounded* such a perspective.

While some of the professors mentioned large, enduring ideas and perspectives that have influenced and fueled their social justice concerns, many of the foundational

reasons that have pushed them towards educating for social justice are rooted in their personal experience. The data seems to indicate about a 65/35 split between personal experience and larger philosophical perspectives that are the foundation from which their concerns for social justice originate. In this section I will review the data that demonstrates both personal experiences and larger ideas as the genesis and impetus of the social justice priorities of the professors. In specific response to the question, 'In trying to understand why is social justice important to you and your pedagogy, could you please elaborate on any undergirding ideas or perspectives, any worldview or philosophical commitments, that have lead you to incorporate social justice concerns and ideals in your teaching?', Katerina stated,

> From a very young age, I noticed that some people did not get treated the same as others and that bothered me. At a personal level, I tried to talk to the kids in school who were shunned. I always saw good in everyone and couldn't figure out why some kids were considered less desirable. Then, I started volunteering with groups to raise money for children, for people with disabilities, and for those without 'stuff'. My parents were big on giving away money and stuff, too, which I saw and learned something from…I also read a lot. I read newspapers and books and at about age 11, I started reading about the Black experience in America and was troubled by the unfairness they experienced.

Kevin stated plainly that his impetus for teaching social justice is rooted in his personal experience and upbringing and his direct experience of being 'given much'. He said,

> For me it comes from a place, it's twofold, I think it is rooted in my personal experiences and upbringing, and I think the other piece is a responsibility for a collective, coming from philosophy, and in more layman's terms, 'to who much is given, much is required', and for me I feel that I have been privileged to be where I am now and I have a responsibility to help others (Kevin).

In terms of the impact of larger ideas on one's views of social justice, three professors acknowledged that they shared Hannah Arendt's perspective that education is critical to 'renewing the common world' (Katerina, Jennifer, Sofia). Content from the professors regarding the renewing of society through education will be specifically addressed later in the chapter. Sofia pointed to the influence of larger economic models and certain economists on her thinking that have ultimately affected how she conditions her understanding of social justice and how it should be executed and comported in society. She stated,

> I do think, like, I don't know what an ideal economic model would be. I'm pretty sure it's not any of the forms of communism that we've seen. And I'm pretty sure it's not this form of capitalism. But also, I am convinced by some people, even parts of Hayek about,like, the role the markets can play in providing information by, like, a top-down model doesn't provide, right? I think some of that is true. So I think probably an ideal economic system would involve some elements of the market but would also involve some redistribution, especially to deal with the ways that injustices of the past are passed down and intergenerational wealth transfers (Sofia).

In terms of other larger philosophical standpoints, Victoria explicitly pointed to Emmanuel Levinas' perspective on responsibility as something that drove her social justice pedagogy. She stated,

> I think it's something that evolves and is responsive -- is a responsive quality. So I think in terms of Levinas, in terms of seeing each other's faces, of responding to each other. So it's a responsive quality, not -- some people -- not a patriarchal term, which it's turned out to be too often, where some people care for other people. But a condition wherein we, we care for one another, and the resources that we have and we can, we're constantly becoming more socially just (Victoria).

Victoria has also been strongly impressed by the concept of cultural capital and its attending themes and implications. While she was not explicit about tying her overall teaching philosophy to Bourdieu, she spoke of the need of cultural capital for minoritized students as a driver for her commitment a social justice pedagogy (Victoria).

Lauren pointed to the exposure to critical thought as instrumental in displacing the banking method of education (as understood by Paulo Freire) from her thinking and causing a new approach to teaching and learning that challenged the status quo and sought to enfranchise those who had been subject to injustice and marginalization. Kevin, who acknowledged that his upbringing and personal experience were foundational in establishing his concerns for social justice also underscored that Freire's work, particularly his work that argues for the co-creation of knowledge between teacher and student, has had a significant impact on why he teaches for social justice. Kevin stated, "My teaching philosophy, I start from the space, Freirean pedagogy. Like, I start from that space, a Freirean co-creator of knowledge, that's actually my lens, yeah, I love that". Jennifer stated that her exposure to various critical pedagogues and feminist scholars strongly conditioned how she structures and comports her pedagogy. In fact some of these scholars she knew personally as she was beginning her academic career and they had a profound impact on the direction she took in the academy. Jennifer also emphasized that how she was "raised", her personal experience, heavily determined what is foundationally important to her which in turn gave her a foundation for her work. She said that she "was raised to always think about other people first" (Jennifer).

In addition, Jennifer also underscored that the types of music she listened to as a teenager had a significant impact on shaping her thinking. As an example, the music of U2 inspired her to want to make a difference in the world. Growing up, particularly in Jr. High and High School, she saw how some of her friends who weren't part of the 'popular crowd' were mistreated. This mistreatment of her friends helped lay the groundwork of her identification with various groups in society who she believed were being treated unfairly.

Kevin began to notice as a young boy that he was treated differently because he didn't look like everyone else and this began to have an effect on him that he said would lead to his future work. Lauren was planning to teach at the K-12 level but had such a negative personal experience with her student teaching that she decided to forgo teaching all-together but came back to the possibility of teaching at the university level in graduate school when and where she "found a space that was appropriate for me, which was the college space, university space". For Lauren, teaching, and teaching for social justice, is primarily driven by a personal desire for growth as a human being through personal enrichment and helping others versus some major undergirding philosophical perspective. She stated, "And so if you ask me why, I would say because, from a selfish perspective, it [teaching for social justice] allows me to continue thinking and growing, and it allows me to help other people continue to find their voice" (Lauren).

In an example of both the impact of personal experience and larger, metaphysical perspectives undergirding future social justice work, Jennifer pointed to her religious upbringing (her personal experience) and to two significant religious concepts -- two

larger metaphysical perspectives -- specifically, the notion that human beings are 'created in God's image' and the notion that 'God is Love', as greatly influencing her identity and subsequently her work as a social justice educator. She sees the intersection of these large, metaphysical perspectives as paramount to human social relations. Jennifer stated, "In order to live in the image of God, we have to love each other". The first perspective, that all people are created in God's image, to her mind and value system, secures the full and absolute dignity of all people and demands their absolute and unequivocal equality. The second perspective, that 'God is Love', strongly impressed her as a young child and never left her. Her religious upbringing, while greatly flawed to her current way of thinking, nevertheless left her with the settled conviction that 'God is love' and such a perspective underpins her centering of social justice concerns in her pedagogy and activism. It fuels her views on personal emancipation and liberation. Jennifer stated,

> I could never let go of the idea that God is love, and love your neighbor. The 'why there' was always, always that wanting to be groomed by love. Love as liberation. Love as not having always the feeling of 'less than'.

Such data gives us the foundation to move into our remaining themes. The next three themes have a strong relationship to one another in the thinking of the professors. These themes often overlap and intersect in the answers and discussion the professors gave in their interviews and demonstrated in their observations. They are as follows: Need for Societal Renewal (Theme 2), Resistance to Hegemony (Theme 3), and Student Empowerment (Theme 4). While themes two, three, and four are in fact individual themes, I want to emphasize that they have a symbiotic relationship to one another. That

is, they exist in connection to one another. To put it succinctly, the professors to a person believe that the world is full of injustice and in need of transformation and that this transformation begins with challenging hegemonic ideas and providing a context for student empowerment. A preeminent concern, a charge, a mandate, if you will, of the professors in the study, is to bring about *societal renewal through resistance to hegemony and student empowerment*.

Theme 2: Need for Societal Renewal

Each professor viewed their work as a way to combat the marginalization and disenfranchisement experienced by minoritized groups, particularly minoritized students, and bring needed change and renewal to society. Kevin stated that he became a professor "to create open doors for others that look like me, think like me, who are typically minoritized and under-represented who may not have that opportunity, so to me it is a calling, and one I don't take lightly". Sofia sees her work as centered upon correcting inequities and convincing people the world needs to change. She stated,

> So we do all this stuff, and it is still on some level about social justice, even when we're talking about what evidence can you gather or whatever because it's like how do you change the world, right? How do you convince people the world needs to be changed (Sofia).

Sofia sees a world "where there is a lot of trauma, where there is a lot of inequality, there is a lot of, I mean, you could use the word oppression", and then expresses, "I think that social justice is making the world as close to what it should be as it can be". She further states, "The kind of world I want ultimately is one in which to the degree possible everyone's needs are being met as fully as possible" (Sofia).

During an observation of Katerina's class, she emphasized to her students that "all of you have a responsibility to change the world; we all have to be part of the change". In my interview with Katerina, in connection to some of Arendt's views, she underscored that she sees higher education as a place to press and prepare students to be change agents in society. She stated,

> I think young people come in and think that somebody else is going to fix things. They want somebody else to make the world better, and I have to wake them up and say, wait, you know, there is nobody else here, including me. It's you. I mean, if anything's going to change, it's going to be up to you (Katerina).

Similarly, in discussing an Arendtian approach to education, Jennifer underscored that education should be a conduit, a means to remake society, a way of

> really undoing and remaking the structures that have created this situation. I want my students to be equipped to see that in a structural and institutional framework but also to be able to meet the needs of the kids they're with right in that minute in a way that will start undoing the power of 'isms', racism in particular.

As mentioned earlier, Victoria was strongly concerned about "cultural capital" and the "sharing and allocation of power" to the marginalized and disenfranchised. She makes the expansion of cultural capital central to her pedagogy. She believes there will be no transformation of society without a significant increase in cultural capital for those who don't have it. Victoria believes the acquisition of cultural capital for the transformation of society should be a fundamental concern of higher education. She underscored, "one of the things you come to the university for is to have the tools to get what you want out of society" (Victoria). From a similar standpoint, Lauren sees her

work as a teacher and higher education educator as one who is to encourage her students "to think about how we can best create communities that will create positive change". Kevin emphasized that he exposes his students to the inequality and inequity in society and then presses them to make a change once they have a better understanding and knowledge of the world. He stated,

> It's important to respect experience. And so we all have growth areas that we -- we all have that. But some people just weren't exposed to a lot of things. And so people are really entering the space really wanting to learn genuinely. But my whole thing is when you know better you do better. So now that you know these things, what are you going to do about it? What are you going to do about it? You can't use this -- 'well, I didn't know, I've never' -- but now you know and now you've been exposed so what are you going to do (Kevin).

Finally, Jennifer emphasized that she "teaches for social justice" as a "nonviolent way to make change". Incidentally, no professor advocated for violence against persons to bring about change and societal transformation but some acknowledged that violence against property during protest situations *might* be necessary. It was clear the professors felt a tension in even acknowledging, in stating 'out loud', such a perspective, nevertheless it was present. While some of the professors employed the language and discourse of *revolution* to describe their work as social justice educators, most of this discussion was around policy change versus physical violence as a pathway to societal renewal. As Jennifer put it, "revolution is about changing policy".

As has been mentioned, a fundamental aspect of societal renewal is resistance to hegemony. The status quo cannot go unchallenged if there is to be any hope of societal

change. The professors in the study allocate time in their pedagogical practices to the questioning and disruption of hegemonic norms and assumptions.

Theme 3: Resistance to Hegemony

Part of Lauren's impetus in getting advanced degrees and becoming a university professor was a desire to question conventional wisdom. She expressed she was brought up in a small town and a certain church environment where questioning was frowned upon. She stated, "I asked a lot of questions, and that wasn't always favored. Questioning could bring trouble…for me it was I just wanted to know more" (Lauren). The tension she felt between the constraints of her small town and church experience and the questions that filled her mind pushed her to want to learn and to help others question and grow. She stated,

> So that probably is what really pushed me, and then as I went through both undergrad and my master's, it became more and more apparent that helping people to grow in meaningful ways was really what I wanted to do with my life. To kind of help them see how you could be thinking in different and unique and diverse ways (Lauren).

Victoria expressed a similar concern regarding her students. She stated, "You need to provide some exposure to alternate ways of being" (Victoria). Sofia underscored that she governs her classroom space in such a way that she doesn't allow speech that would reinforce hegemonic stereotypes. She stated,

> So like a student saying something that's very stereotypical about another student, or something like that, I think it's actually my job to say that's not going to happen in this space, and here's why (Sofia).

She is also very intentional in assigning readings that demonstrate a diversity of thought and do not just simply reinforce hegemonic norms and ideas. Sofia stated,

> But that is an approach that I take for social justice reasons. It means things like thinking about readings and making sure my readings aren't all from one perspective so that different people have different connections to the readings, different ways in thinking.

Kevin has a similar approach to his classroom. He doesn't allow what he perceives to be racist perspectives or paradigms in society to go unchallenged, particularly when he sees his students embracing some of those ideas or attitudes. He sees it as his duty to reduce disenfranchisement and marginalization. He stated,

> It's my job as an instructor to help them ask those questions, to identify those things. That's important on one level. On another level, for those that disagree, and for me this isn't optional, I don't see this as okay, you could have this paradigm. You couldn't. For me, like, my job is to help folks see the world in this way. Like, so this is how I think, how I operate. Me, personally, how I come to this, I just think from a couple different ways, just being in settings where I felt marginalized. And so wanting to reduce that for others (Kevin).

Jennifer was strongly concerned about fostering agency through her pedagogy, particularly agency for her minoritized students, because she believes that hegemonic interests have 'stacked the deck' against her students of color and trans students and she wants to push back on the ways in which hegemonic society has silenced them or rendered them invisible. She believes that American "democracy" has failed many of her students because it is often equated with 'majority rule' which often merely serves to reify hegemony. She believes part of her mission as a college professor is to challenge and push against forms of democracy that simply reify hegemony. She sees her work as a

way to "remake society where everyone has a seat at the table and no one gets left out". As part of her pedagogy, Jennifer routinely challenges various assumptions and norms in society right down to how she crafts her lesson plans. In reference to one of her courses, she stated, "And so I went through a process of decentering whiteness from the course and then making the course actively anti-racist and social justice oriented" (Jennifer).

Victoria emphasized that she is concerned about deficits in society regarding "justice", "fairness", and "equity". She views her teaching as a way to politically challenge and disrupt power. She believes that part of her role as a higher education educator is to subvert hegemonic interests. She stated, "And we do talk explicitly about power, I help my students to strategically be subversive" (Victoria). She sees her teaching as a way to influence society to share power. She stated,

> I do believe that teaching is a political act, that whatever we do has to be around understanding and sharing power, and that has to be explicit, appropriately explicit at every level (Victoria).

Kevin sees social justice as a direct assault on various hegemonic structures and ideas and sees his role as an educator as one who prepares others to see and dismantle injustices created by the dominant culture. He stated,

> If I had to define social justice, the way I think about it, I think of social justice -- I think about power. I think about privilege. I think about larger systemic societal issues. I'm thinking about how can we begin to better understand but also critically interrogate many of the 'isms'. I think -- how do you prepare individuals to live in a way, to be socially just. So if we are beginning to train people to have this paradigm or this worldview to be able to identify injustice and be a vessel, to be a vessel to create change in society, then you be a change agent and understand how to identify and also dismantle inequities (Kevin).

Katerina, when asked about the place of social justice in her work as a teacher and scholar, stated,

> What I focus my energies on is really looking at the notion of justice that happens in the social arena. This is about addressing inequities and imbalances in society that disproportionately hurt people of color, oftentimes women, people with disabilities, any of those groups that have been traditionally or historically disenfranchised, marginalized,or under-resourced.

Resistance to hegemony characterized the spirit of much of the work of the professors in the study. Such efforts, however, did not exist in a vacuum. They were directly tied to the concern of student empowerment.

Theme 4: Student Empowerment

Lauren expressed that a key concern for her was to create a classroom context where her students could find their voice and their individual power to do good in the world. She stated,

> It [teaching] allows me to help other people continue to find their voice…I think for my students in particular, I think of just helping them to recognize that they do have skill sets and beliefs and power that they don't recognize. It is a matter of helping them to see how they can use those for good (Lauren).

While observing one of her classes, Lauren weaved this concern for student voice into her pedagogical practice. She dedicated a significant portion of the class time to having the students get into groups and share their ideas and opinions to one another about the topic at hand. Lauren then brought the class together and asked the students to stand up and share their individual thoughts to the entire class. Many students were eager to share

demonstrating among other things a degree of comfort with self and confidence in their particular ideas and perspectives. Along similar lines, Katerina stated,

> what is at the core of what I do in my teaching is really asking students to -- well, you know, let's start with the easy one. To stand up and speak out because the whole world would just as soon you do not do that. And so it's time for you to kind of reclaim your voice and your space and to speak.

Sofia expressed a similar viewpoint when she emphasized that her calling as a social justice educator made her concerned about "equal outcomes" for her students and not just "equal opportunities". She felt real empowerment for her minoritized students became evident at the point of equal realized benefits and privileges. She stated that a push merely for equal opportunity was "too hollow. Unless we created such a robust educational system that really everybody was faced with all these opportunities. But we're not there yet" (Sofia). Katerina concurs. "I think the outcomes are obviously most important. I think the impact or the outcome has got to be the goal" (Katerina). Lauren disagreed with such a standpoint. "I can't secure equal outcomes. I don't think that's what I'm to do" (Lauren). Lauren articulated that there needs to be a degree of meritocracy operative in the classroom in order for students to grow and to come to some earned, organic confidence and empowerment. (Not every professor agrees that meritocracy and its sister concept, competition, are good for the classroom space as we shall see later).

Kevin emphasized that a core value of his teaching philosophy is that education is transformative for the individual and by derivation society. "I really just think about knowledge and the nature of knowledge and the power of education. I think education

can be transformative. It can change lives" (Kevin). He goes on to say, "I think universities should be a place where individuals can go and learn and to bring something back to society, so it's like this accountability piece to the public" (Kevin).

In relation to student empowerment, the professors in the study were concerned about their students, particularly their historically disenfranchised students, having voice and agency. Lauren stated,

> Because there are certainly times and spaces where social justice is fighting for the underdog, and that's really how I would summarize it. It's identifying, you know, the needs of those in the minority space, and then making sure we do everything in our power, whether that is writing, whether that is teaching, whether that is facilitating dialogue, do everything in our power to move that voice to the front of the room.

Jennifer spoke of privileging voices of color over white voices. She creates space in her classroom where minoritized students can lead and be empowered and where they can educate the majority culture. Jennifer emphasized,

> And also whose voices I privilege in class. There are voices that if a student of color is willing to make themselves vulnerable and share and educate the white students in the class, for example, I'm going to make space for that person's voice much more than when that white student is wanting to dominate the conversation again.

Sofia spoke passionately about trying to make her classroom a space of empowerment for all. She wants all her students to feel welcome and valued. She stated,

> So I think I come at in two levels. There is the level of pedagogy itself, which a phrase that I've only recently started using by the name of inclusive pedagogy, trying to make the space actually welcoming to everybody, no matter their background, no matter their ability, no matter what they're coming to the space with (Sofia).

Victoria sees her classroom as a space to provide cultural capital to marginalized students. Right down to how she crafts her specific assignments, she sees her classroom time as an opportunity to give her students, particularly those who stand on the periphery of the status quo, the necessary tools to be able to barter for power in the larger society. She explained,

> I hope so. I mean, I hope so. I hope that my assignments are responsive -- that I've been able to modify and recreate my assignments so that they meet the needs of the student as well as, again, this notion of cultural capital that I'm giving them what they need. One of the things you come to the university for is to have the tools to get what you want out of society. So some of that you need to learn. Like, you need to write in the language – so to speak -- so that you're going to be able to trade for power (Victoria).

While each of the professors felt that part of changing the world had to do with student empowerment, they did not share identical views on how this empowerment occurs. Some felt they could not actually empower anyone, that empowerment comes from *within* the student and could not be *caused* by someone outside the student. Others felt they had such a direct influence of their students that they could practically give power to their students by their actions. That they could (as we have seen) give agency by prioritizing the voices of the historically disenfranchised and therefore ultimately cede and give power. These felt they could be the difference in their students to whether they achieved empowerment or not. Such perspectives harken to the tension I discussed

regarding subjectification and emancipation in chapter two. Whether a teacher can *cause* empowerment, whether a teacher can *cause* subjectification and emancipation was something each of the professors in the study wrestled with to some degree. None were entirely exclusive to one side or the other. They all felt the tension between the two perspectives and were often blended in their answers. Here are some examples of this tension. Katerina said,

> My students shouldn't be a mini Katerina. That would be really -- that would be awful. But rather that my passion, my commitment, I would hope that would be contagious. And, right, so whether that's actually empowering or creating the conditions for somebody else to see that -- I mean, I think about that when I go see somebody who's passionate about their work, I get excited about that work. Did that empower me or -- you know, I mean, it's in me too. And I think everybody has it in them. And so, yeah, I think that notion of I'm going to empower somebody suggests that I have the power to do that, and I don't think I do. I think what I have -- the -- the ability to do is demonstrate, model what's important…to tap into what I think is already there.

Jennifer saw her teaching and work as pushing for freedom and liberation and enabling her students to become an empowered human. Her pedagogical practices are distinctly oriented to social justice empowerment and liberation. Jennifer stated,

> And so I went through a process of making my courses social justice oriented. Social justice, meaning freedom and liberation…you know, what equality is about. I don't want to just say available to everyone, but that people are able to live, you know…equally safe, equally free lives. I have some trans students of color who don't feel safe a day or moment of their life, students who are sitting in the room with me who are being brave every time they walk out the door, you know, so what I mean by that is really an empowered human.

Lauren stated, "Empower is a tricky word, for sure. But I think there are ways to create spaces to allow others to come to power and to find power". Victoria seemed to concur

with such a standpoint. She said, "We draw the power -- we help to draw what's inherent [in them] out. I think part of that drawing power out is providing resources in the form of content that would not necessarily be available" (Victoria).

A necessary component of resistance to hegemony, student empowerment, and societal change is critical thinking, which brings us to our next theme. Critical thinking can be both a cause and result of subjectification and emancipation, and was a priority of all the professors in the study.

Theme 5: Critical Thinking

Another theme prevalent in the data was *the concern that students think critically*. This theme was seen to be fundamental to carrying Themes 2, 3, and 4. The professors in the study wanted to see their students willingly and effectively able to question the status quo, to interrogate and deconstruct various hegemonic ideas, perspectives, and norms in society, particularly those that leave certain groups marginalized and disenfranchised. The promotion of critical thinking fosters an environment in the classroom that allows their students to pushback on a range of hegemonic perspectives. Lauren underscored that she wants to help her students

> to learn how to think critically, to find ways to think critically and to analyze their decisions and analyze their knowledge…to kind of help them see how you could be thinking in different and unique and diverse ways.

Regarding her classroom and students, Jennifer stated, "I want there to be dissent in the room. But I want it to be informed dissent".

Victoria indicated she tries to unsettle her students. She wants them to question their long held assumptions particularly as it pertains to hegemonic power. She said, "I push a lot of critical questions. I've been called the Devil because I tend to discomfort people. I do try to provoke aporia, you know, that kind of grappling" (Victoria). Sofia emphasized that she felt it was her responsibility to introduce her students to a broad range of perspectives to foster critical thinking and contemplation instead of just telling them of only one right way to consider something. She stated,

> But I will, for example, teach a variety of perspectives on justice, education, on whatever I'm teaching about. I do that intentionally because I think my job as a teacher is more about opening up students to think about the world in broader ways that it is to tell them this is the one right way to think (Sofia).

Underneath the skill of thinking critically is the ability to listen well, to listen carefully. Sofia saw it as part of her duty, part of her calling as a teacher, to help her students become good listeners to the end that her students would become engaged and effective citizens. Sofia explained,

> I try to create an environment in which there's a lot of encouragement for students to listen carefully to each other. And sometimes that is as straightforward as me just saying, 'so you heard what Michael just said, what do you think' or whatever, and just really trying to create an environment where they need to listen to each other to do well in the classroom. And then also, ultimately, I mean, our department's mission statement says that we are trying to create engaged citizens.

In terms of pedagogical practice, in my observation of one of Lauren's classes she had the students get into groups and work through a 'hate speech' worksheet. She pressed them to make a distinction between 'hate speech' and honest, legitimate dissent. She

warned them to not regulate all disagreement to one category. She exhorted them to "think critically" (Lauren). She wanted them to be thorough and assiduous in their assessment and pressed them to do so. During the past Presidential election season, Lauren felt that students who were for Trump felt silenced at times. "My guess, from what I see, is that the students who are in favor of Trump do feel a bit silenced at times" (Lauren). Given the climate, she tried to ensure that divergent voices could be expressed and heard in the classroom. In terms of pedagogical practice, she recounted one of her assignments where her students had to take several ethical systems under consideration and apply them to an outside event taking place in society. She had a Muslim student who focused on Trump's Muslim Ban, Trump's Executive Order that banned foreign nationals for 90 days from visiting the U.S. from seven predominantly Muslim countries; a ban that was instituted in January of 2017. Lauren said the student did an excellent job and while the student was against the ban (as were most of the students in the class) she presented different sides of the argument in keeping with possible ethical approaches to the ban. Lauren stated,

> And so she [the student] looked at a couple of different perspectives. One of them saying that if we look at it from this ethical perspective, we might be able to justify that this is an ethical decision. And if we look at it from this system, we could clearly say, no, this is not an ethical decision, or an ethical proposal, which I thought was really great. And that's really the bottom line for me is I want students to be able to look at things from different perspectives, even if it challenges their own beliefs. I want them to be able to logically take - take ideas and look at how they could be seen from different angles.
> Even if they are super passionate about a side, they need to understand the other side completely.

Each of the professors valued diversity of thought. In my observation of Katerina's class, she encouraged her students that they could and needed to learn from people with different identities than theirs. In a similar vein, Kevin puts material in front of his students to compel them to meaningfully interact across difference. He wants them to think critically, to be able to interrogate prevailing ideas and deconstruct how power is siloed. Kevin said,

> Yeah so let me speak to that. So I see -- I look at it as being very broad. So for me it's bringing in readings to get people to think about meaningfully interacting across difference, reading about how folks really think about -- so again, the understanding piece of a lot of power, privilege, oppression, the different isms, and again, some of the things I said earlier, getting folks to ask those questions, looking at different policies and practices and interrogating them.

In terms of pedagogical practice, during my observation of Jennifer's class, Jennifer put her students through an exercise to enable them to "de-center whiteness". Later in the observation, towards the end of the class period, Jennifer softly challenged an older white male student who she perceived was using some antiquated, patriarchal speech that might be offensive to some other students. She encouraged him to think critically and deeply about the words he used. He seemed to receive her comments well. One of her goals for the class period was to make it "social justice centric" and "anti-racist". Part of the class time was dedicated to discussing and unpacking white privilege. She also exhorted her students to re-evaluate their impression of Blacks living prior to the Civil War. To not think of them exclusively and only as slaves, but to understand that there were whole areas, towns and townships where Free-Blacks were living and thriving.

For many of the professors, teaching their students to think critically was directly related to teaching their students to get directly involved in society and becoming "people who can participate in politics effectively" (Sofia). As Lauren put it,

> I think that if we are teaching students to think critically and to relate to people and to think about how we can best create communities that will create positive change, then we are ultimately preparing them for anything that they will encounter in the world.

Thus far we have considered themes that are primarily (but not exclusively) connected to student and classroom ideology, comportment, and pedagogy (micro analysis). Now we will move to themes that are primarily (but not exclusively) connected to things outside of the classroom (meso and macro analysis).

Theme 6: Activism

As the professors in the study considered the university's role in society, the subject of educator activism came into focus. In fact when they discussed their work as a whole, activism was mentioned as an important feature of their work by most of the professors. Nevertheless, the professors in the study were not in lock-step in terms of how they understood the place of activism in the life of an educator committed to social justice. There was some disagreement over what should be considered activism. Some felt that activism could take place *in* the classroom. Some felt that activism, if it were true activism, could only take place *outside* the classroom and that indeed, authentic social justice educators *will* be doing activism *outside* the classroom. Before I get into these different perspectives about activism, I do want to reiterate that most of the

professors did engage in outside activism regardless if they felt it was a necessary component to being a social justice educator.

Jennifer early in her vocational journey organized members of the medical community "to create a clinic for kids" who were being underserved. Katerina routinely engages in activism designed to move her local city government to action to the end of making policy changes that better serve a wider range of constituencies in her community. She also leads activities that put students directly involved with city and community leaders. At times having the students make formal presentations and requests to city officials in order to expose certain needs within the wider community and to get her students acquainted with municipality processes. Kevin has regularly engaged in activism to draw attention to injustices being done to students of color. His efforts consisted of organizing students and faculty, galvanizing protests, and making formal demands to school officials. Sofia devoted significant time to Occupy Wall Street, taking part in a range of activities and protests over an 18 month period. "Yeah, I was part of Occupy, which I found quite frustrating. But I really thought there needed to be a poor people's movement" (Sofia). She protested, she led meetings. She worked on a documentary film project that focused on predatory lending practices by banks. She also has worked "many, many, many hours" campaigning and pushing for marriage equality (Sofia). Her personal concerns for activism naturally impacted her activism goals for her students. Sofia emphasized that she wants her students to become "people who can participate in politics effectively". As Lauren put it, "We're teaching students to be activists. We're teaching them to speak up for social justice issues".

In a similar vein, Katerina underscored that her pedagogy is specifically designed to get her students to take action wherever it is needed. She stated,

> My pedagogy is infused with a desire to inspire students to look around, notice, and take action where it is needed and be compelled to make better laws, engage in more loving conversations, and to lend a hand in community matters. We cannot let injustices persist…we just *cannot* (her emphasis) (Katerina).

In keeping with this perspective, while observing one of Katerina's classes I noticed she had her students bring in various news items of things happening in the local community. She had the students tie what they were learning in class to situations and events happening in the community. This was explicitly from a social justice standpoint. Katerina wanted her students to take action in the community and not just leave what they were learning in the classroom. She wanted them to make a difference in the lives of people in their community. She wants her students to figure out what is individually important to them and then apply that desire and interest in the community for the good of the community. As she stated, Katerina wants her students to

> really think about what's important and to really make some commitment towards it. So that's what I mean when I do community-based research or service learning, it's really designed for them to have a small immersion into something to see what comes out of that. And I think then the value that seems to generally come is that, wow, I didn't know that, one, people were suffering or that something was wrong.

Katerina went on to say, "From my two decades of experience in the academy as a mentor to new student activists, I have found that collective action is the most powerful means by which people can express their support and dissent".

Not every professor in the study, however, felt that outside activism was necessary to being a social justice educator. Lauren viewed her work in the classroom as *possibly* a type of activism but acknowledged that many professors concerned about social justice would question her ultimate commitment to social justice since she does not engage in outside activism. She sees her work as an advocate for students as a type of activism and without it she wouldn't be a teacher. She stated, "And so -- yes, for me, if I wasn't doing that, if I wasn't in this to be an advocate, I wouldn't be in this" (Lauren). She also underscored that she "cares deeply about social justice" and that professors who are *not* concerned about social justice would view her as "activist in the classroom" based on what and how she teaches (Lauren). However, when asked if she sees herself as an activist, Lauren stated,

> That's a tough one. I don't think I would be defined that way by other people, by other activists, other activists would say 'but you're not -- you're not marching. You didn't attend the Women's March in Washington. You know, you're not teaching your students how to march and how to fight back against the system'. So I think that many activists would say, no, you are not a social activist in the academy.

Regardless of the perception others might have of her, Lauren believes that "social justice can be manifested in many ways, not just from a purely activist standpoint". To her mind, outside activism is not required to be an authentic social justice educator. Victoria had a similar viewpoint. She stated,

> Well, teaching teachers, I think, is a form of activism. So because my discipline is active in the community -- we actually are in the schools and putting people in the schools -- to that extent I believe my teaching is a form of activism. But I struggle with that because I'm not -- so I agree with the literature that says to be a social -- an educator for social activism in higher education, you don't necessarily have to be explicitly or overtly active. There are lots of ways to be active just in terms of causing people to question in terms of the way you conduct your own life (Victoria).

As indicated, there wasn't complete agreement among the professors in the study regarding the place and role of activism for educators committed to social justice. Jennifer sees an essential part of her calling as a social justice educator the need to be "organized and protesting". To her mind it is "part and parcel" to being a social justice educator (Jennifer). In regards to activism in her community, Jennifer underscored,

> I do see that as part of my role, I certainly do…there are people who will call on me to do things and take action, and I'll be there. I'll always show up for that. And there are groups that I'm part of that I'll always show up for that.

Kevin emphasized that he sees activism outside of the classroom as "absolutely necessary" for educators who truly understand the injustices taking place in society. Katerina, when asked 'is it your view that if you're going to be about social justice as a professor, you will have to be involved in activism outside of the confines of the university or do you NOT think it automatically has to be that way?', replied, "I think it *does* (her emphasis) have to be that way. I do. I don't see how you can confine it to anything. I mean, social justice is larger than the university" (Katerina).

Speaking of things 'larger than the university', we will now turn our attention to neoliberalism. As expected, neoliberalism was a serious concern of all the professors and was a prominent theme in our discussions.

Theme 7: Neoliberalism's 'Take Over' of Higher Education

As this study has already emphasized, neoliberalism has posed and continues to pose a serious threat to higher education. This section will review data from the professors in the study that underscored their concerns over neoliberalism. It should be noted that the professors had a *range* of concerns regarding higher education that were rooted in neoliberalism. I will group and italicize these concerns into four headings and organize the professors' comments under these four areas.

The professors in the study, to a person, had serious concerns about the seemingly ubiquitous pressure of neoliberalism on the academy. As Katerina put it in discussing the absurdity of granite counter tops and flat screen TVs in her school's student housing, "'this is the neoliberal takeover". One of the key concerns of the professors was that *money was the main, if not, singular, driver of everything in society, including everything that takes place in the college and university environment*. Katerina argued,

> I think the problem in our society is more of the hyper market fundamentalism that has made money, you know, the only thing you ought to aspire for, which is related to all other things in education and everything else.

Lauren underscored that she believed that "money" was the "prime mover" behind every decision her institution makes and that social justice concerns had very little, if anything, to do with the decisions her administration makes in leading the school. Lauren stated,

"Money drives the decisions. I don't think social justice drives the decisions. I don't know that they've [administration, university leaders] ever been huge advocates of social justice". Jennifer lamented her institution's lack of commitment to being a transformational societal stakeholder and was increasingly frustrated at her institution's priority to generate profits above everything else. She stated,

> I mean, I do feel we are supposed to have minds in a university that are able to think andcreate solutions for society. We have to have an ethic, right!? I mean if we don't have an ethic, we're creating what we have right now, which is profit mode (Jennifer).

Sofia acknowledged that it might be needed to market her institution as a place that can provide a job and career, but she fears that once the students arrive and enroll they are still being bombarded with job and career throughout their education instead of being prompted to consider larger, societal issues. She stated,

> I think we are under a lot of financial pressure, and that there are moments where it still feels like -- despite our core values -- there are moments where it feels like marketing is driving things. And what worries me is when it feels like marketing is driving everything instead of just marketing driving that opening of the door (Sofia).

Related to the concern that money drives everything in higher education was the perspective that *social justice considerations are devalued in higher education as demonstrated (and determined) by how money flows in institutions of higher education.*

Kevin stated,

> For folks who are committed to equity and justice work, you're told it's important, but then there is no true commitment to it. I think about what is espoused versus what's enacted. I think about what institutions project versus what they really want to happen. Institutions put money behind things they value, you, know. I just think that a lot of times there is a lot of lip service around many social justice issues but the money isn't there to back it up.

Kevin went on to express his concern over funding cuts to his department and that he notices that other departments seemed to have plenty of money, departments that he believes have very little, if anything, to do with equity and social justice concerns. In discussing this point, he acknowledged that those departments were likely bringing more money into the university than his department. Nevertheless he felt that it "reeks of neoliberalism" and that modeling the "marketplace and competition takes away creativity" and undermines being "truly about diversity, social justice, and inclusion" (Kevin). Katerina expressed strong concern over the lack of money being directed to the humanities and social sciences while the business school was overflowing with funding. In connection with this, she expressed serious concern that colleges and universities had adopted a standard that a department's or discipline's value was to be directly understood by the amount of money it brought into the university. Katerina stated,

> I think at a university to have the liberal arts part that is not the money machine, by any stretch, but it's the ethics, it's the critical thinking, and I think that's a value, but a lot of people want to see, okay, again, going with the narrative of does it make money, you know, and then if it doesn't, why should we have it.

Another concern of the professors related to the pressures of neoliberalism is *the commodification of higher education*. The notion that higher education has been reduced to a financial transaction where customers (students) with their expectations and demands buy their specific products (degrees). Speaking about the college degree, Lauren stated,

> And so much so that it's advertised and sold and bought with the idea or the notion that you don't even have to do the work. You just have to pay the money and get a degree, and you get to choose everything else. That's sort of how it is prefaced, right? It's a commodity. I purchased it already. And I've had students say things to that effect. You know, 'I'm paying for this class, you can't do that', or 'I'm paying for this class, you can't make me leave, you can't kick me out'. Or, 'I've paid for this class. I can't fail'. So I think it's certainly a commodity. It's been commodified, right. And so in terms of that idea of helping people think, you have to convince students to buy into that -- that it's even a part or even relevant to why we're here.

In addition to the notion of *entitlement* (as demonstrated above) being brought on by the commodification of higher education, the notion of *competition* is also present. It is the other side of the coin, the apparent opposite of entitlement, yet present alongside of it. Students are competing for grades because they are ultimately competing for jobs. Jennifer, Sofia, and Katerina each expressed concern that even the notion of grades was deleterious to true learning because of the competition surrounding them and the reifying of meritocracy that comes with them. In relation to this concern, Katerina stated,

> I think what's happened, like you know, like many things, when competition or meritocracy is taken to an extreme, it really distorts any possible good. I mean, I think in schools, of course I think the high stakes testing, the emphasis on grades to the exclusion of real learning, when that happens, is a problem.

Katerina went on to say that she believes grades themselves have become a commodity and may should be done away with altogether because they often get in the way of a focus on learning.

An insidious reality of neoliberalism is its uncanny ability to co-opt and consumerize social justice. Sofia pointed to this dynamic when discussing the commodification of higher education and its movement away from being a public good. She stated,

> I don't think it [the notion of a college education being a public good] has entirely gone away, but I think it's moved too far in the direction of a commodity. And we see that in how a lot of students talk. Like even some students' claims to justice, they ground it in 'I pay tuition'. I'm, like, is that really where you want to ground your claim to justice? Because you're going to be in some settings where you're going to want to make claims to justice, and you're not paying money there. And so, like, we need claims to justice that are not just about I'm a consumer (Sofia).

One of the byproducts of the commodification of the college degree is the threat that such a system poses to a robust investigation of ideas and genuine critical thinking. Victoria, in discussing her institution's concern about branding itself as a place to go to get a job and secure a career, expressed concern that such a commodification of her students and institution stifled critical inquiry. She stated,

> That's not only the sense I get from my students, it's also the sense I get from the college. I mean, we have to -- we talk a lot about branding. I mean, we've treated our students like commodities for a long time, our most precious commodity certainly -- having to bring paying customers in and satisfying the customer. So it does -- in a critical field, you are really -- it really puts -- puts some reins on you sometimes if you make people unhappy (Victoria).

Jennifer said plainly, "Well, I think the intention and the belief that college is about getting a job is ruinous". While Jennifer understood that societal realities made it necessary for higher education to have some connection to career attainment she lamented there wasn't a stronger priority by students to address and engage important social justice concerns plaguing society. She stated,

> What are all these graduations turning out? You know, are we in a better space? Are we in a better space in terms of the environment, in terms of hunger, in terms of war? I mean, really!? And if we're part of that -- I mean we're a pretty big system. What the hell are we doing (Jennifer)?

Such a perspective leads us to the final sub-category under the theme of neoliberalism, namely, *colleges and universities are important stakeholders in society that simultaneously operate as sites of co-optation by neoliberalism and societal transformation*. As indicated by this sub-category, the professors in the study are both encouraged and discouraged about higher education's place in society. In relation to higher education being co-opted by neoliberalism, Katerina stated,

> Higher education is a huge market for a lot of businesses. And I think what you're seeing is the influence of that and so those businesses have rallied around, and they've gone around to the conservatives in the state and somehow have, you know, and not just our state, other states, and have really influenced the decision making. I think the corporate elite has influenced our elected officials, bought them out. Let's just say what it is. And I think they are the ones -- so I'm thinking, like, why are elected officials, for instance, cutting the budgets to education. Why would they do that? And I think the reason they do that is because they have corporations who found and seized upon that there is money to be made in education.

Notwithstanding her belief in corporate and government corruption relative to higher education, she still believes the university to be an indispensable stakeholder in society for the good of society. She believes "the university is the ally of the people" (Katerina). Kevin felt strongly that colleges and universities are significant stakeholders in society. He believes that "education is transformative" and that "universities are influencers of society" (Kevin). He sees universities as being accountable to society and responsible to contribute to society in meaningful ways. Kevin underscored, "I think universities should be a place where individuals can go and learn and to bring something back to society, so it's like this accountability piece to the public." Some of the strongest influencers in his own life to help get him to where he is have been teachers and professors. While he recognizes that universities are often in the vanguard of stating a concern and commitment to the marginalized and disenfranchised, he believes it is impossible to disentangle the influence of money on the actual direction of the university no matter what it publicly espouses. Kevin contends that universities need money and money always brings with it expectations which may (and often does) effect the university's stated mission and goals. Kevin stated,

> For example, if there's a donor who's willing to give millions of dollars who wants it to be directed and shaped in a certain way, how does that align and does it take mission drift. Does it go in a different direction of what needs to be done, do we tweak what we are doing to get this money?

Kevin believes that neoliberal pressure, pressure that says the financial bottom line is paramount, compels universities to realign and recalibrate their social justice

commitments. He believes there is often a strong disconnect between "what is espoused and what is enacted" (Kevin).

As mentioned earlier, three professors specifically indicated that they see higher education to some degree through an Arendtian lens: that it should be a place, a stakeholder in society, for transformation and renewal (Katerina, Jennifer, Sofia). From Arendt's standpoint this entails being able to effectively live in the context of the 'plurality of others' (Young-Bruehl & Kohn, 2001). Along this vector, Sofia emphasized, "I also think we need the engaged citizen piece, the piece in which part of what education is, is thinking about how to be a human in the world, in a world of other humans". Along similar lines of societal transformation, Jennifer underscored that institutions of higher education should be stakeholders, effective conduits designed to remake society, a way of "really undoing and remaking the structures that have created this situation". It should be noted here that Jennifer, along with the majority of the professors in this study, viewed her activism as a way for her institution, by extension, to be a positive stakeholder in society for needed change.

Jennifer also stated that interrogating the status quo was often difficult for many of her students and at times it led to complaints from their parents. Nevertheless, she insisted that higher education must be about transformation in relation to social justice causes in and out of the classroom, regardless of any pushback from parents. To her mind it must be a "stakeholder in society" to "reform it" (Jennifer). When asked if her administration was behind her push to make the college and university a stakeholder for social justice ideals in society, even in the face of parental pressure to the contrary,

Jennifer stated, "Oh, super supportive. They were great". However, she later added that while her Department Chair is in full support of making education a stakeholder for social justice concerns in society, she feels that her upper administration is a little doubleminded. She said, "their hearts are in it; they are emotionally committed but not in action" (Jennifer). She said such a perspective has a direct effect on the most vulnerable students on campus. "When it comes down to who we are going to support and who we are going to be behind, it is never the most directly affected, the most vulnerable students on campus" (Jennifer). When asked directly as to whether her institution and her field were having an impact in the wider culture for the cause of democratic ideals and social justice concerns or whether her institution was being neutralized or even coopted in this regard by neoliberal forces, she stated,

> I think we've completely failed in communicating the usefulness of liberal arts, of thinking and analysis, of critical thinking that we've allowed a lot of really important terms like criticality to be coopted, that we haven't gotten ahead of it (Jennifer).

Sofia was more hopeful. She felt that her concerns for social justice were shared by school administration all the way to the top of her institution. Regarding the president of her school she said, "She's really concerned with social justice. She's really open about being concerned about social justice" (Sofia). Sofia went on to say about the president of her school,

> I think she is really sincere. We had some protests a couple of years ago. They started and there have been some ongoing. And unlike our former president, she would go and stand and listen to the protestors and then bring what they say back to the deans and say these are some of the students' concerns. Like, how can we deal with them. Her thought process is basically like how can we listen to what they're saying.

Nevertheless, Sofia does feel that the president and upper administration have to keep donors happy and that those donors are not always for social justice concerns and that this dynamic creates conflict and impedes her institutions ability to be a fully effective stakeholder in society for social justice concerns. She stated,

> At the same time, she's the president of a college and does a lot of work, what I consider kissing up to rich people. And that's part of her job. And so I think that she's in a weird position in that she's got to keep the donors happy, keep the people who are potential donors happy and keep the image of [names her institution]. And I see these butting up against each other a lot (Sofia).

When asked directly if she felt her institution was an effective stakeholder in society for renewing and improving society from a social justice standpoint or if she felt that her institution had been co-opted by neoliberal pressure and concerns, she said, "I think it's both" (Sofia).

Victoria expressed optimism about her school as a whole. She stated, "I don't agree with everything, but I think that undergirding [states her school's name] is a strong commitment to social justice" (Victoria). Lauren was less optimistic. Speaking about her school's overall approach to social justice as expressed by her institution's administration and leaders, Lauren stated, "I don't know that they've [administration, university leaders] ever been huge advocates of social justice". Kevin acknowledged that there was some

meaningful diversity in upper administration at his institution but was concerned that a type of "interest convergence" was at play and that possibly the diversity was actually in service to and coopted by the majoritarian status quo.

At times, in scholarship and society, social justice concerns and democratic concerns are conflated. When asked to define democracy, Lauren stated, "for me, democracy is voice, fair opportunity for all to voice, and I don't want to say just voice, but to be heard, to be listened to". When asked 'do you believe your university has an authentic commitment to democracy in terms of how it handles its faculty and in terms of how it operates as a stakeholder in society', Lauren stated,

> No. Sometimes there is a false sense of democracy. I would actually say I think that happens a lot in the academy, in general, the false. I think individual departments have a commitment to democracy, but as a whole, looking from top down, no.

For some of the professors, the notion of a 'false democracy' bled over into how society at large is perceived. As Kevin put it, "I don't feel we live in a democracy".

I should point out that the term 'democracy' was problematized to some extent among the professors. Some did not see it as synonymous with social justice or even related to social justice as it is often understood. Jennifer said plainly, "If democracy is always going to be based on majority rule, there can't be social justice". Nevertheless, most of the professors saw a relationship between authentic democratic principles and social justice.

In keeping with the issue of being a stakeholder, Victoria contended that universities should, and to some extent, do "participate in the building and maybe the

transformation of the society, continue to transform society so that it becomes more and more just, more and more healthy, more and more equitable". But she also expressed concern that colleges and universities are too elitist in how they frame and dispense knowledge. She believes that this often causes division in society between those who are "educated" and those who are not. She stated, "I think it's broadened the gap between the kind of ivory tower and the kind of indigenous, practical valuing of knowledge in society. And I think it's -- I think it's perpetuating some division in our society" (Victoria).

Thus far we have emphasized the commodification of higher education and the incessant neoliberal pressure to make colleges and universities factories for job and career generation. In an effort to reverse this trend and co-opt neoliberalism to social justice ends, Sofia approaches her students from the standpoint of encouraging them to take up jobs and careers that promote societal renewal. Sofia stated,

> And I think ideally, we should be saying, 'here's the kind of world we can create, or at least here are some options of the kinds of worlds we can create. Here are some kinds of jobs you can get where you would be doing this meaningful work and also be getting paid'. And I think the more we can move in that direction, the better.

Conclusion

By way of review, in this chapter I have reported the data from my interviews and observations. I divided the data into seven themes. The themes are as follows: 1) Epistemological Foundations: A Blend of Personal Experience and Large Ideas, 2) Need for Societal Renewal, 3) Resistance to Hegemony, 4) Student Empowerment, 5) Critical Thinking, 6) Activism, and 7) Neoliberalism's 'Take Over' of Higher Education. The

seventh theme, Neoliberalism's 'Take Over' of Higher Education was broken into four parts: 1) the reality that money drives almost everything in society including higher education, 2) the reality that social justice issues are devalued in the academy as evidenced as to how money flows in institutions of higher education, 3) the commodification of higher education, and 4) the stakeholder quality of higher education.

This chapter was designed to have the professors in the study give a first-hand account of how their prioritization of social justice concerns impacts their pedagogy and overall work as higher education educators. In the next and final chapter, chapter five, I will tie everything together. I will review the study. I will summarize the findings in light of the study's research questions and the macro, meso, and micro concerns of the study. I will discuss various implications and conclusions that can be drawn from the study. Finally, I will make a few recommendations for higher education and a few recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: REVIEW, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS, SUGGESTIONS AND CLOSE

Review

This study has focused on higher education. It has addressed the following research questions: ***RQ1:*** *In what way(s) does the current state and climate of higher education in the U.S. resist and impede the prioritization and implementation of social justice concerns and initiatives within the college and university space(?) and* ***RQ2:*** *How do professors concerned with the prioritization and implementation of social justice concerns and initiatives successfully navigate the college and university space while maintaining their explicit identification with social justice concerns and initiatives?* This study has been a qualitative study rooted in critical theory, critical pedagogy, and cultural foundations. It has also drawn from certain aspects of grounded theory.

The study has offered epistemological and philosophical foundations for the claim that higher education educators *should* teach and pursue their vocations with the concerns and considerations of social justice squarely in view. In addition it has explored certain key themes resident in the histories of K-12 education and higher education. It has also highlighted important scholarship on what it means to teach critically, to teach with social justice concerns and ideals at the forefront of one's pedagogical purpose and objectives. The study has also unpacked the current state of higher education and the ubiquitous

presence of neoliberalism and the draconian influence and hold it has on our colleges and universities. It has highlighted several issues stemming from neoliberalism that impede a full realization of social justice priorities in the college and university space. This has been done through a review of relevant scholarship and through direct contact with higher education educators and their classrooms. Finally, the study has presented relevant data from interviews and observations of professors currently working in higher education who are committed to social justice concerns and priorities. It has highlighted this data along three applications or contexts: societal (macro), university administration (meso), and the classroom (micro). The study has presented data that illuminates how professors in higher education who are committed to social justice navigate their respective colleges and universities; institutions that have been influenced and conditioned by neoliberalism.

As a lead-in to our discussion of the data from chapter four, I want to encapsulate and position the seven themes in relation to their primary and secondary applications in relation to their macro, meso, and micro standpoints. They are as follows:

- Theme 1: **Epistemological Foundations**: Primary Applications: Macro, Meso, and Micro
- Theme 2: **Need for Societal Renewal**: Primary Application: Macro; Secondary Applications: Micro and Meso
- Theme 3: **Resistance to Hegemony**: Primary Applications: Macro and Micro; Secondary Application: Meso

- Theme 4: **Student Empowerment**: Primary Applications: Micro; Secondary Application: Macro
- Theme 5: **Critical Thinking**: Primary Application: Micro; Secondary Application: Macro and Meso
- Theme 6: **Activism**: Primary Application: Macro; Secondary Applications: Meso and Micro
- Theme 7: **Neoliberalism's 'Take Over' of Higher Education**: Primary Applications: Macro, Meso, and Micro

Discussion and Implications

As we begin this section I want to acknowledge that I am aware that this study has a small sample size (n=6). Six respondents/professors are not a lot of people. This is true. Nevertheless, given who my respondents/professors are and the differing institutions to which they belong, I think we are able to draw out some reasonable implications from the data. As long as we don't dip too heavily into dogmatism or the absolute, I think we are safe to make some generalizable inferences. I also want to point out what is no doubt patently obvious at this point: the data from the respondents/professors directly corresponds with much of the scholarship reviewed in chapters two and three. Each of the themes two through seven are represented in the scholarship pertaining to social justice education and neoliberalism highlighted earlier in the study. With that understanding in place, let's take a closer look at the themes from the data.

The first theme, *Epistemological Foundations*, incorporates all three macro, meso, and micro standpoints. These perspectives ultimately drive how the professors in the study comport themselves in larger society (macro) with their institution's administration (meso), and with their specific classrooms (micro). These foundations are also the basis, the impetus, for the 'how and why' these professors are able to navigate their college and university spaces while maintaining strong commitments to social justice concerns and initiatives (RQ2).

The professors acknowledged both larger philosophical ideas and individual personal experience as the foundational impetus and reasons for them becoming teachers concerned about social justice. In terms of larger, more universal (although not absolute) philosophical ideas, the professors in the study looked to a range of perspective including, Levinas' 'responsibility for the Other', Arendt's concern that education should be understood in light of the need to 'renew the common world', Bourdieu's conceptualization of 'cultural capital', and the Judeo-Christian beliefs that people are created in God's image (and consequently have equal worth and value) and that 'God is Love' (and consequently people should love and enfranchise the 'Other').

In addition to larger, more pervasive philosophical perspectives, the professors also have been motivated to be teachers concerned about social justice by virtue of their individual, personal experience(s). How their lives have unfolded, has been a primary reason for each of the professors to be concerned about social justice and to compel others to be concerned about social justice. These personal experiences included several categories of things including, how they were individually treated and mistreated, how

their friends were treated and mistreated, what they saw in and from their parents, pronounced negative experiences they had in high school, professors they happened to meet in college, and even strong impressions they felt while listening to certain music.

While there were certainly some connections being made to larger, more pervasive epistemological and philosophical ideas, I was surprised there wasn't more of this. Here's part of the reason why of my surprise. Moral philosophy makes important distinctions between morality (more universal) and ethics (more situational), between what is 'the right' and what is 'the good', or put another way, between 'justice' and the 'good life'. While a robust discussion of this distinction and these concepts and moral philosophy is beyond the scope of this work, I want to simply make the point that issues of social justice are tethered in some meaningful way to the concept of 'recognition', that is, the acknowledgment, 'taking notice', and respect of the autonomous subject/agent before you. (I have been particularly impressed by the writings of Frantz Fanon in this regard). In fact the themes of *need for societal renewal, resistance to hegemony,* and *student empowerment* are strongly tied to the notion of recognition. Not to mention that the themes *critical thinking*, *activism*, and *neoliberalism* have secondary associations to recognition. While 'recognition' has historically been domiciled to the domain of ethics (see Hegel and his concept of *Sittlichkeit* - the ethical life), and therefore conditioned, even grounded in fluid, situational, norms, customs, and traditions, I would argue for there to be any actual "good life" (ergo, human flourishing) for ALL, 'recognition', and the social justice concerns that flow from it ***must be*** ultimately grounded in 'morality', 'right', and 'justice' -- concepts that carry the freight of universal standing and

accountability. I agree and contend that "claims for recognition are *justice claims* (author's emphasis)" and that we must "recuperate the politics of recognition for *Moralitat* and thus to resist the turn to ethics" (Fraser, 2018, p. 88). The implications are significant. For the calls and cries of social justice to have any binding sway or lasting influence in society, "norms of justice are thought to be universally binding; they hold independently of actors' commitments to specific values" (Fraser, 2018, p. 87). That is, for calls of social justice to be binding and have any lasting influence, they must be rooted in something bigger, more universal, than one's personal experience.

Moreover, for there to be any abstract, independent notions of justice that approximate universality that *don't* inform human flourishing OR for there to be any binding press for human flourishing for ALL that is *not* grounded in abstract, independent notions of justice that are insulated from the whims and machinations of individuals, or even whole societies (see Nazi Germany, the Antebellum South, among many others), I believe we are unavoidably reduced to trafficking in the incoherent and nonsensical.

For our purposes I simply want to underscore that while personal, individual reasons are helpful, even necessary, in fueling a commitment to social justice, foundational, epistemological reasons must be in play when determining and claiming what everyone ought to do. Moreover, a well-grounded epistemological and philosophical basis for teaching for social justice cannot be as easily dismissed as personal, anecdotal experience by those who are against social justice emphases in higher education. Groups that are in the habit of shouting "identity politics!" at any hint of a social justice pedagogy, will have to marshal better arguments when social justice is

rooted in larger (even metaphysical) ideas, ideas that don't blink in the face of catapulted epithets.

The second theme, *Need for Societal Renewal*, has a primary application to society (macro) and two secondary applications, to the classroom space (micro) and to college/university administration (meso). The professors in the study to a person believe society is in need of transformation and they see their callings as higher education educators as bound up with this need. In a sense their entire vocational efforts are to this end. Whether it is teaching their students, weighing in at department and administration meetings, writing scholarship, doing service learning or activism, an overriding concern is the injustice that reigns in society and the need to 'renew the common world'. This theme addresses both research questions (RQ1 and RQ2). It highlights the ways in which neoliberalism has conditioned society and it underpins much of the vocational and pedagogical efforts of the professors.

This theme, as much as any other, was often tied to the epistemological foundations that catalyzed and guided the professors. While large concepts were often pointed to, such as Arendt's perspective to 'renew the common world', often the professors identified injustices they had experienced or witnessed which led to their desire to be instrumental in creating change for others. For instance, Kevin emphasized, the injustices he endured ("being in settings where I felt marginalized") motivated him to become a professor "to create open doors for others that look like me, think like me, who are typically minoritized and under-represented". Others who felt less personal disenfranchisement still felt it necessary to try to convince others, even out of their own

privilege, that the world needs to change. These professors felt the difficulty of this message getting through: "it's like how do you change the world, right? How do you convince people the world needs to be changed?" (Sofia).

As indicated earlier, this was a prominent theme with all the professors in the study. At bottom of this concern is the thought that for all educational enterprises, whether it's teaching philosophy, music, biology, or HVAC installation, the overriding concern should be and must be: are we teaching with a view of making the planet a better place for ALL of its people. The secondary applications of this theme, the micro and meso standpoints, show up in how the professors encourage their respective college and university administrators (meso) and how they manifest their pedagogy among their students (micro). Four of the professors, three from the private college and one from the state university, feel they have the ear of their administration to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the professor and the particular concern. Two of the professors from the state university feel they have no real influence with their administration. The professors from the private college believe their administrations are also concerned that education should be foremost about societal renewal and change. The professors from the state university were less confident about their administration. To reiterate, the professors at the private college as a whole had a much stronger belief that their administrations both cared what they thought and had their back when it came to the implementation of pedagogical practices that fore-fronted the *need for societal renewal*.

All six professors felt freedom in their classroom spaces (micro standpoint) to prioritize the *need for societal renewal*. When it came to navigating their classroom

spaces with this aspect of social justice in view, each of the professors felt very comfortable and empowered to this end regardless of the overriding presence of neoliberalism at their institution.

In terms of the need for societal renewal, the professors not only embodied this theme by their specific pedagogical practices, but they also were keen to emphasize to their students that they would have to become change-agents themselves. The professors exhorted their students that they could not wait or look to others to bring about change but that they must see to it themselves. As Katerina stated,

> They want somebody else to make the world better, and I have to wake them up and say, wait, you know, there is nobody else here, including me. It's you. I mean, if anything's going to change, it's going to be up to you.

Such exhortations and such a climate have a profound impact on the classroom experience and ultimately society as a whole. The implications for students and society are pronounced. Students are compelled to consider becoming attentive to the needs of society as a fundamental expression of their lives. They are taught to look beyond themselves and to the needs of others. For students whose class or ethnicity have been disenfranchised, such an emphasis gives them hope. They recognize they are not alone and their situation matters. Students who have been taught under this social justice ethic have the possibility of being in the vanguard of societal change. Such a perspective opposes a neoliberal ethic that prioritizes competition and looking out for number one.

Part of my concern as a citizen in the society in which I live is: 'where is there a concerted effort from a social systems standpoint to evaluate society and be in the

vanguard of critique and transformation where needed? Obviously this is happening in certain spheres: certain religious groups and organizations, certain humanitarian organizations, certain non-profits and think tanks, but I believe if we are not capitalizing on the captive audiences in our school systems, both K-12 and higher education, we are missing out on a tremendous opportunity, or worse, helping create further inequality and disenfranchisement. To be sure, 'what kind of world do we want to create', what really is 'the just and the good', needs to be interrogated and defined, but to approach education from the standpoint of merely teaching the subject at hand, and to do so strictly conditioned and motivated by a neoliberal ethic and a hoped for neoliberal result, is a fatal societal error. Education, by definition, I am arguing, must be a redemptive and transformative force for societal good. Institutions of higher education must see themselves as crucial stakeholders in this regard. I agree with the late David Purple (1999) when he underscored that central to educational work is "the nonnegotiable, permanent, and solemn responsibility to work for the elimination of unnecessary human suffering" (p. 161). Such a perspective is an underlying principle for effective expressions of our next theme.

Theme three is *Resistance to Hegemony*. The primary applications are macro (to society) and micro (within the classroom). There is a secondary meso application as the professors meaningfully engage their administrations and their campuses for changes in the university where hegemonic reifications of disenfranchisement and marginalization are at work. For instance, Kevin expressed that while even as a university student he directly engaged his university over practices that were marginalizing certain students.

From the data we see that an overarching concern of the professors in the study was to provide their students with the necessary tools to resist and push back against hegemony in society. As Victoria underscored, "And we do talk explicitly about [hegemonic] power, I help my students to strategically be subversive". The professors explicitly and routinely interrogated hegemonic ideas resident in society as a way to teach their curriculum. They also regularly challenged their students when they represented or exhibited hegemonic perspectives that could be construed as racist or sexist. As when Jennifer, in one of my observations, challenged an older white male student who engaged in some antiquated, patriarchal speech that could have been offensive to some others in the classroom.

The professors were also strategic about building resistance to hegemony into their curriculums. They did this through not only the topics discussed but the type of assignments they assigned. Such efforts to resist hegemony by efforts in the classroom harken to Giroux's (2007) insistence that higher education must be a place where "anti-democratic forms of power can be identified and critically engaged" (p. 210) and to Hackman's (2005) observation that social justice education involves analyzing and engaging oppression.

The professors in the study not only provided a critique of hegemonic ideas but they also provided "exposure to alternate ways of being" (Victoria). This exposure, through the ideas they embodied and espoused and the curriculum they constructed, provides their students with either new ways of thinking or confirmation that their "different" ideas are valid and valued. The implications are significant. As these

students enter society (macro application) as adults their very existence will challenge entrenched hegemonic ideas that prioritize the few and leave out the many. They will be positioned to make a life-long difference. Recognizing that many professors have no interest in social justice concerns, the students of the professors in the study will in effect alter the hegemonic idea landscape of the school itself. Moreover, at times the professors in the study would hear complaints from the parents of their students when certain perspectives were either being confronted or taught. As the professors were compelled to have to respond and answer to their administrative leadership in these instances, the meso application of their teaching for social justice was brought into play.

Finally, as the professors are highlighting and critiquing hegemonic ideas brought into their classrooms by their students, they are often exposing neoliberal thinking and perspective and consequently giving insight into some of the ways neoliberalism has impacted the university and consequently offered resistance to social justice initiatives (RQ1). As the professors confront hegemonic ideas rooted in neoliberalism in their classrooms, they are demonstrating one of the ways in which they specifically navigate the college and university space while both maintaining and exemplifying their commitment to social justice ideals (RQ2).

Theme four is *Student Empowerment*. This theme was most acutely expressed in the classroom (micro). A secondary application of student empowerment is its effect on society (macro). As students experience subjectification and emancipation in meaningful ways through the educative process, society is ultimately affected and altered. While the professors mentioned the term 'empowerment' more than they did the terms

'emancipation' or 'subjectification' it was clear that they viewed all three terms in a similar fashion by how they spoke of the terms in their interviews and conversation with me.

Student empowerment was of vital concern to all the professors in the study. Many students enter college and university having been conditioned and dominated by neoliberal expectations and ideas. In relation to research question one (RQ1), such a reality makes it harder for genuine expressions of subjectification and emancipation to take place, particularly for students that are minoritized and are a part of groups that have experienced draconian levels of disenfranchisement. This theme represents a fundamental component in the way in which professors committed to social justice concerns comport their classrooms. As such it helps answer research question two (RQ2).

A critical feature of student empowerment shared by all the professors is the issue of 'voice'. The professors saw to it that ALL their students could exercise their individual voices and contribute to the class in important and substantive ways. As Lauren emphasized, "it [teaching] allows me to help other people continue to find their voice…and power that they don't recognize". As Lauren indicated, there was a view among the professors that voice was connected to agency and agency to power, and moreover, that students *already had* power, power they merely needed to recognize or come into. As Katerina put it, she exhorts her students to "stand up and speak out" and "reclaim your space". In other words, she and the other professors want their students to come into a position, a state of being, that is already theirs. As indicated, this empowerment, this emancipation was something that each of the professors dealt with in

terms of the best way to bring it out in their students. At times this meant prioritizing voices of color over white voices. Jennifer underscored,

> And also whose voices I privilege in class. There are voices that if a student of color is willing to make themselves vulnerable and share and educate the white students in the class, for example, I'm going to make space for that person's voice much more than when that white student is wanting to dominate the conversation again.

Jennifer was strategic in this way because she viewed such actions as a way to push back against dominant, hegemonic perspectives thereby making room for her minoritized students to come into their power. Such a perspective supports McLeod's (2011) contention that

> Acknowledging different voices unsettles the authority and perspective of the so called 'centre', those whose voices are already well and truly heard, symbolically and practically dominating the seemingly natural ways of looking at and organizing the world (pp. 179-180).

The implications for the students in this regard are stark. Think of the drastic difference between the students of these professors in terms of self-concept and identity formation as compared to the students of professors who care little to nothing about honoring student voice and agency.

As indicated in chapter four, there was some uncertainty within each professor as to how much they believed they personally have a part in bringing about emancipation and subjectification in their students. There was a degree of internal debate within each of the professors as to how much they could "cause" emancipation and empowerment in their students. Nevertheless they each felt a responsibility to structure their courses and

their classroom environment in ways they believed would lead to empowerment for their students.

At the foundation of the desire for student empowerment is the belief that education is transformational at its core, for the student and by derivation for society. As Kevin underscored, "I really just think about knowledge and the nature of knowledge and the power of education. I think education can be transformative. It can change lives". For the professors in the study, transformative education begins with an "inclusive pedagogy" (Sofia) that makes "courses social justice oriented. Social justice, meaning freedom and liberation" that leads to "equally free lives" and "an empowered human" (Jennifer). Victoria expressed a similar approach and a nod to Bourdieu when she stated that she crafts her assignments in such a way that she is able to impart "this notion of cultural capital that I'm giving them what they need…to be able to trade for power".

The professors in the study were very intentional about making their classroom spaces into sites for student empowerment. As Lauren put it, "I think there are ways to create spaces to allow others to come to power and to find power". The implications for society are significant. By making their classes crucibles for empowerment and emancipation for ALL students, the professors, in effect, push their institutions to be stakeholders for social justice, for the expansion of agency, equality, and equity in society.

Before we move to the next theme I want to mention two other implications of student empowerment for students. These implications are related. First, professors that exercise their pedagogy against the backdrop of student empowerment better equip

students to find and make meaning for their lives through the educative process. Shapiro (2006) has argued that education should be central to "the struggle for a meaningful life" and that "it must deal with what it means to be a human being in all its complexity" (p. 23). Student empowerment is directly related to core identity concerns that deal directly with finding meaning and purpose for the life. Being intentional about student empowerment requires and implies approaching students as whole persons and honoring the complexity Shapiro is referring to. Secondly and relatedly, I have argued in other places that "education must seek to help students know who they are and provide guidance to translate their core interests into life-long callings" (Sawyer, 2014). Such a perspective is an altogether different enterprise (an entirely different species of a thing) than treating education as merely a ticket to get a job to make money. What I'm suggesting here involves the whole person, helping the student figure out *who they are* and *what they are about* at the ontological (mode of being) and phenomenological (day to day experience) levels. Such an endeavor is predicated upon, conditioned by, and part of the process of student empowerment -- student emancipation and subjectification.

Theme five is *Critical Thinking*. An emphasis on critical thinking was present throughout the interviews and observations. The primary application of critical thinking is in the classroom (micro). It has secondary applications to the university administration (meso) and society (macro). An emphasis on critical thinking exposes some of the answer to RQ1, some of the ways neoliberalism has impeded social justices concerns in higher education, and it gives some of the answer to RQ2 by being an example and

pathway as to how professors committed to social justice navigate the college and university space.

It can be argued that critical thinking is fundamental to themes two, three, and four. In a certain sense it is foundational to them. The professors in the study were not interested in just delivering knowledge to their students, they wanted their students to get underneath what was being taught, to analyze the presuppositions embedded in knowledge derived from the status quo. The professors wanted their students to learn how to be self-aware of their existing knowledge bases, how they were embraced, why they were embraced, and analyze them in the light of other competing ideas and ways of thinking. As Lauren put it,

> to learn how to think critically, to find ways to think critically and to analyze their decisions and analyze their knowledge…to kind of help them see how you could be thinking in different and unique and diverse ways.

Informed dissent was welcomed. As Jennifer stated, "I want there to be dissent in the room. But I want it to be informed dissent".

One of the implications for students is the type of classroom environment that is operative when critical thinking is the expectation. An emphasis on student empowerment can give the false impression that professors committed to social justice coddle their students. An emphasis on critical thinking reminds us this is not the case. In my own classes when I am pressing students to ground what they believe epistemologically or reminding them of other worldview standpoints that run counter to their assumptions it can get a little uncomfortable for them. As Victoria emphasized, "I

push a lot of critical questions. I've been called the Devil because I tend to discomfort people. I do try to provoke aporia, you know, that kind of grappling" (Victoria). I personally try to steer clear of being called the Devil. But the point is well taken. Authentic critical thinking is hard. It can be unnerving to have our long held, cherished beliefs challenged. Yet this is hard work that must be done. Students must be confronted with competing ideas if we want our college and university classrooms to yield deep learning and pervasive understanding. As Sofia stated,

> But I will, for example, teach a variety of perspectives on justice, education, on whatever I'm teaching about. I do that intentionally because I think my job as a teacher is more about opening up students to think about the world in broader ways that it is to tell them this is the one right way to think.

I want to also note that critical thinking fosters personal reflection and self-awareness, important and integral hallmarks of a social justice pedagogy (Hytten & Bettez, 2011; Hackman, 2005). Students that make critical thinking and the attending attributes of personal reflection and self-awareness part of their approach to not only the classroom but also the world are better positioned to make a difference in the world for the good of ALL people and society (macro application).

Another implication regarding critical thinking is that an emphasis on critical thinking requires students to listen well, to become adept at listening carefully and thoroughly. As Sofia emphasized, "I try to create an environment in which there's a lot of encouragement for students to listen carefully to each other". Students armed with both the disposition and the ability to listen well are furnished with a virtue that bodes well for

society. It is hard to imagine authentic renewal taking place in any society where listening well is absent.

Finally, an emphasis on critical thinking by professors committed to social justice has implications for college and university administration (meso). The professors in the study (like most professors) at times interact with the administration of their institution. They do this through informal conversations and formal meetings. As they do this, they bring to bear on their administrations a concern for critical thinking. Such a concern fuels them to encourage their administrations to push back against the status quo. When necessary, they call their administrations to account when they see them caving to neoliberal forces and pressure. Along these lines, Victoria and Sofia felt strongly they had the ear of their administration. Jennifer felt she somewhat did as did Katerina. As these professors interact with their school's administrators they have a genuine opportunity to affect the direction of the school in vital ways for the cause of critical thinking.

Theme six is *Activism*. The primary application of this theme is society (macro) with the secondary applications being university administration (meso) and the classroom (micro). This theme answers some of the question of RQ2, recognizing that activism is part of the total work of higher education educators committed to social justice. Indeed, some of the scholarship on social justice education views teachers as explicitly 'teacher-activists'. Montano, Lopez-Torres, DeLissovy, Pacheco, and Stillman (2002) contend,

> We maintain that an effective and caring teacher must not only recognize the inequities and disadvantages experienced by students of color but should realize that history dictates that educational opportunities are born out of political struggle. This belief in social action implies that a teacher must not only possess competence in subject matter but also should assume the role of teacher activist and student advocate (p. 265)

Notwithstanding such scholarship, the data revealed the professors in the study were not in lock-step with how they viewed activism. Some understood activism to be *outside* the classroom, such as protest and demonstration efforts in the community. Jennifer and Katerina felt outside activism was a necessary component to being an educator committed to social justice. Commenting specifically on this point, Katerina stated, "I think it *does* (her emphasis) have to be that way. I do. I don't see how you can confine it to anything. I mean, social justice is larger than the university".

Others, like Lauren and Victoria, didn't think it was necessary to incorporate outside activism into their work to be authentic social justice educators, even though Victoria engaged in outside activism efforts regularly. Regardless of her lack of outside activism, Lauren saw herself as an activist *in* the classroom, even underscoring that part of her role is "We're teaching students to be activists. We're teaching them to speak up for social justice issues". Victoria supported this notion when she said, "Well, teaching teachers, I think, is a form of activism…we actually are in the schools and putting people in the schools -- to that extent I believe my teaching is a form of activism ".

The implications for society are clear. When it comes to outside activism, as higher education educators committed to social justice take their ideas and stances to the streets, society is impacted. As professors committed to social justice teach their student

to be activists, society is impacted. In a sense, the university, through proxy, acts as a stakeholder for societal change when social justice professors engage their communities in this regard. In addition, teaching students to be activists has a transforming effect on society as those students become teachers and as some of them take ownership of the examples of their professors and engage the community themselves. The theme of activism has a way of conditioning the climate of the classroom. It provides an underlying substrate to the classroom experience that serves to convince students that they, through direct action, can impact their world. Naturally school administrations are impacted as their constituencies engage in *in-classroom activism* and *outside in-community activism*. In an indirect sense, school administrations are being represented by what their faculty are doing in relation to activism both on and off campus.

Theme seven is *Neoliberalism's 'Take Over' of Higher Education.* This theme directly answers RQ1. In addition, the way the professors in the study dealt with the various ways neoliberalism presents itself in their institutions signal some of the ways they navigate the university space which speaks to RQ2. This theme has macro (society), meso (university administration), and micro (classroom) applications.

Each of the professors in the study were strongly concerned about neoliberalism in general in society and specifically as it pertains to higher education. Given the volume of data on this theme I will just offer a sampling, a stream of consciousness, of some of the things the professors said about neoliberalism and higher education:

> this is the neoliberal takeover…money is the prime mover…Money drives the decisions. I don't think social justice drives the decisions…it feels like marketing is driving things… institutions put money behind things they value, you, know. I just think that a lot of times there is a lot of lip service around many social justice issues…reeks of neoliberalism, marketplace and competition takes away creativity… I think about what is espoused versus what's enacted… you don't even have to do the work. You just have to pay the money and get a degree. It's a commodity…We talk a lot about branding. I mean, we've treated our students like commodities for a long time, our most precious commodity certainly… Higher education is a huge market for a lot of businesses. I think the corporate elite has influenced our elected officials, bought them out…Let's just say what it is….the reason they do that is because they have corporations who found and seized upon that there is money to be made in education…Okay, again, going with the narrative of does it [certain subjects/departments] make money, you know, and then if it doesn't, why should we have it?

Again, the above is just a small sample. For this theme I grouped the data into four sub-categories. They are as follows: 1) money was the main, if not, singular, driver of everything in society, including everything that takes place in the college and university environment, 2) social justice considerations are devalued in higher education as demonstrated (and determined) by how money flows in institutions of higher education, 3) the commodification of higher education, and 4) colleges and universities are important stakeholders in society that simultaneously operate as sites of co-optation by neoliberalism and societal transformation.

As somewhat expected the data from the professors relative to their assessment of the ways in which neoliberalism has affected higher education is in step with much of the prevailing scholarship regarding neoliberalism's influence on the academy as seen in chapter three. In addition, as stated earlier, the data -- the direct assessment of higher education educators currently in the field of higher education -- gives a robust and multifaceted answer to RQ1.

The implications for the academy are severe and ominous. I will name but a few. First, we are running the risk of the *entire* academy being commodified. Case and Ngo (2017) underscore,

> In our institutions of higher education, funding, research agendas, curriculum, faculty, and overall pedagogies and policies are likened to commodities and assets, and are highly influenced by the corporate world (p. 216).

Second, and more narrowly, the academy is at risk of being seen and approached as merely a job factory. The pursuit of knowledge is being replaced with the pursuit of a job. My students are less and less concerned with whether they get a job connected to their major; they just want a job that pays well. Do we get what that means for their psyche? For their soul? For the individual, college is becoming just a step to what is really important, money. Third, from a society standpoint, we are losing the notion of education, particularly higher education, being a *public good*. That is, something our society has collectively decided to honor, protect, and maintain for the sake of itself and not merely for its utilitarian value, what it can yield. We see this by the loss of whole departments at a number of institutions that have come to embrace what Katerina noted that some are concluding, "does it make money, you know, and then if it doesn't, why should we have it?". This has tremendous consequences for the 'life of the mind' and the place that 'thinking' has in our collective consciousness. The possible downstream effects of this for society are alarming. Particularly when we combine this concern with the tandem concern of what our increasingly mediated society is doing to our ontology. Is it even possible to exist without being plugged in?

Fourth, and finally, because of the overbearing pressure of neoliberalism, the academy is at risk of being nullified as a critical and crucial stakeholder of democratic ideals. If the academy is neutered and defanged by neoliberalism, or worse, fully and permanently co-opted by neoliberalism, what does this signal for society at large? Disaster. The stakes are high. As Jovanovic (2017) has noted,

> There is a growing insistence that higher education be regarded as a private right designed for job creation rather than as a public good considered necessary for nurturing democratic capacities, such as critical thinking, deliberation, and dialogue across differences (p. 327).

As I close out this section I want to point out again that theme seven directly answers RQ1 and themes one through six directly answer RQ2 and demonstrate definitively fundamental ways that professors committed to social justice concerns and ideals navigate the college and university space. I also want to point out in keeping with RQ2 that each of the professors in the study felt great liberty in their classrooms. They felt they had significant agency and control to structure and comport their classes in the ways they saw fit. This reality went a long way in their being able to navigate a college and university space significantly influenced by neoliberalism while maintaining their explicit identification with social justice concerns and initiatives. I also want to point out that there was consistency between what the professors told me in their interviews and what I observed them doing in their classroom. Finally, I want to mention what is most likely already obvious. The professors at the private college are in an environment more conducive to their social justice commitments than are their colleagues at the state university.

Suggestions and Close

As I close out the study I want to make some suggestions. First I want to make a few suggestions regarding higher education; ways that I believe will improve it along the vector of social justice concerns and ideals. Next I will make some suggestions regarding future research under the singular heading: Suggestions for Future Research. In the first section I will provide headings for my suggestions regarding higher education and give some brief explication. In some ways these suggestions/proposals will read like a wish list. This is by design.

Firmly Establish Higher Education as a Public Good

I believe higher education should be a *public good*. By public good, I mean a service that society has collectively decided should be part of its societal DNA for the health of its very existence and comportment as a society, and consequently is made widely available to its citizens. Now I recognize our society does not unanimously feel as I do; which is partly, I would argue, why higher education is in the state it is in. U.S. society has been split on whether higher education should be a public good and fully supported at the federal level since its inception. The Constitution says nothing about higher education. And while George Washington championed the idea and creation of a national university, the founding fathers ultimately decided against it and rejected its implementation (Cook, 1998). However, in keeping with the notion of a public good, we have passed at the federal level important legislation regarding higher education such as the Higher Education Act of 1965 and the Higher Education Act of 2008. Historically state funding of higher education has been greater than federal funding but recently this

has changed. From 1987 to 2012, states spent 65% more on higher education than the federal government (Woodhouse, 2015). In 2013 that changed and the combination of federal student grant funding and research funding -- multiple billions of dollars -- outpaced the states (Woodhouse, 2015). Nevertheless, public state colleges and universities (versus private, or for-profit) still receive most of their funding from their respective state governments (Woodhouse, 2015).

While the allocation of tax dollars and tax payer agency are beyond the scope of this work, I want to at least acknowledge that I believe a shift in how we approach higher education has to come via a groundswell of the people. It just can't be imposed by government elites and societal power-brokers. It must have the buy-in from the populace. This means, I believe, that higher education educators (and I include myself in this group) need to make a stronger case as to why we must, as a society, view education as a public good. Stronger cases need to be made linking the health of society with the 'life of the mind' and the pursuit of a range of knowledge bases and the indispensable place our colleges and universities have in this endeavor. (I recognize this is a claim that will need to be proven, but that is for another dissertation. For now, I'm already convinced and operating from this standpoint). I think straight lines need to be made between a robust pursuit of knowledge and societal health and harmony. And then the case needs to be made directly to both society at large and directly to federal and state legislators. The people, common citizens, need to be convinced of the high importance of higher education for society. And then the people, we, need to vote people into office

who see things the same way. What we need is a movement. Movements put pressure on societal decision makers.

While I recognize there are many institutes, think tanks, and research centers dedicated to education, many of these organizations are captivated by and aligned with neoliberal principles. That's not to mean that some of these organizations aren't doing important research and don't have astute and percipient things to contribute. They are and do. It just means the overall push and mission of these organizations are against a formal understanding of education as a public good and are often blind to the vital and critical social justice concerns that must be part and parcel to a robust understanding of education in society. I also recognize there are organizations committed to the promotion of social justice concerns in education, such as the Alliance to Reclaim Public Schools, the Freire Institute, the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the National Education Policy Center, the bell hooks Institute, the SEED project, among several others. These organizations are doing important work. It's my sense these types of organizations are more focused on the politics and policies of K-12 education than making a broad, philosophical case for higher education to be understood as a vital, indispensable, pervasive public good necessary to the very existence of society and necessary to the ontological thriving of all of its constituencies. Obviously there are some efforts being made along the lines of what I'm suggesting is needed. Nevertheless I think a much stronger, a more focused, and much more pervasive effort is in order.

New Focus on the Underachieving Relative to Higher Ed

Related to higher education being viewed as a public good are concerns I have for the underachieving. While there have been improvements in getting historically under-resourced students into the best institutions of higher education, I think we are yet to address the under-achieving in any considerable way relative to what it means for their engagement with higher education. While I believe that performance measures matter and have an important role to play in high school and higher education, I think we need a radical revamp of the punitive and prohibitive nature of performance measures in high school. There has to be a mechanism for late bloomers of the discipline of course work to have opportunity to engage robust expressions of higher education and the rich, lived experience that comes with such an engagement. Certainly there are a range of programs in existence that are designed to help students with particular needs. For instance, the American Talent Initiative (ATI) pushes lower-income students to top academic schools. But as is often the case with such initiatives, all the students in the ATI program have met or exceeded exceptional academic standards in high school, and to a student, are viewed as 'highly-qualified' and 'highly-meritorious' (Porterfield, 2018). While I applaud these efforts to some extent, and want nothing best for all students including those that are academically gifted by hegemonic standards and assessments, and see the need for students and parents to take advantage of these programs when they can, I also think these efforts can serve to reify the inordinate place of competition in education in high school and also serve to out-group less achieving students way too early in their lives. Let me be clear as to not be misunderstood; if you are flunking out of medical school you

don't need to be a doctor! Please, spare the health, and potentially the lives, of your future patients. Go do something else. Without question, at a certain point and in certain contexts in education, high performance must be reinforced and low performance must be disenfranchised. My concern is that the punitive aspect of high school performance measures relative to higher education opportunities can serve to block under-achieving students from higher education experiences. Experiences that may be just what they need to wake them up to academic discipline and a love for the pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding which is often fundamental to the struggle for a full and robust existence. A by-product of our country viewing higher education as a pervasive, indispensable public good will be concerted efforts to get the underachieving into vigorous expressions of higher education in order to stoke a passion for learning along interests that they already have but are dormant.

I want to pause here and make a comment that will give a necessary qualification to some of what I have said. I'm not being an essentialist. I'm not saying that a pursuit and love of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding is fundamentally, 100%, necessary to having a full and robust existence or to make meaning in and of life in pronounced and significant ways. I'm merely acknowledging and underscoring our distinctive human condition, our unique and multidimensional capacity for rationality, emotional depth, creativity, and spirituality that often comes alive and thrives in and through the pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Given this, I believe we need to do more to give the underachieving the opportunity to experience rich learning contexts in higher education to possibly stoke a love of learning and the transformational qualities that come

with it. No doubt concerns for emancipation and subjectification that social justice oriented higher education educators have will play a part in this. I should note that I'm fully aware there are "underachieving" high school students who have strongly developed passions and interests where they are soaking up learning and knowledge that have not come to light or been honored in their high school experience. My concern is not these type of students. They have a love of learning which is already paying dividends for their state of being. My concern is for the chronic underachieving who have little to no idea what they want to dedicate their lives to and have a hard time even identifying their core passions and interests.

One of the practical and policy ways I think we need to deal with the underachieving is a significant reset to how we do K-12 education. This will insulate against even having underachieving students in the high school years. A thorough explanation of the model I am working on is beyond the scope of this work. For now I will just state that I believe K through 8th grade should have a national core-curriculum covering a broad range of subjects including the arts. Grade 9 will be dedicated to the student working with guidance counselors (their job description will undergo a full renovation) and taking exploratory courses to help identify and isolate their core passions and interests. Grades 10 and 11 will be dedicated to courses specifically tailored to the student's core passions and interests. Grade 12 will be dedicated to immersive place-based education for the student as he/she engages in elaborate internships in the field, industry, organization, or location that best compliments their core passions and interests. For the students who get to the end of 12th grade stoked about what they have been doing

the last three years, they will continue their tailored path in college/university. For the students who get to the end of 12th grade still indecisive as to what they want to pursue in college/university, all higher education institutions will have a 1-2 year interest formation program designed to help the student narrow what she/he wants to study and pursue.

Higher Education Needs to Map to the Whole Person

I believe we have to do a hard-stop and alter the trend in higher education that seeks to prioritize STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) fields and business departments at the expense of the humanities and social sciences. I believe that human ontology, the nature of human 'being', the nature of our human condition, our very humanity itself, demonstrates unequivocally that we have understandings and knowledge(s), and capacities for understanding and knowledge(s) that fall outside the jurisdiction of STEM and Business. Love, meaning, being, dance, poetry, the Divine, existence, song, consciousness, creative story, free will, modified compatibilism, faith, unpredictability, unpredictable unpredictability, our self-awareness, self-awareness of our self-awareness, inexplicable human connection (a love for enemy), beauty, unfounded hope, and a host of other metaphysical realities and creative injunctions into time and space, defy knowledge(s) reducible to STEM or Business, or worse, scientism. To atrophy these types of knowledge(s) and erode them from higher education is ontological suicide. It is self-defeating for our humanity and what it means to be human in all its complexity.

Again, BIG IDEA work needs to be done. The populace and government officials need to see the importance of mapping higher education to the whole person. Politicians

need to be supported, lobbied for, and elected who see this. State education budgets need to be recalibrated to reflect this reality. Private organizations that understand and get this concern need to be lobbied to give support including financial support to the humanities and social sciences in increasing ways, exponentially more than what is currently taking place. Higher education educators themselves who see the importance of this perspective need to be on the front lines raising popular and financial support.

Create and Incentivize Career Pathways that are Social Justice Centric

Another suggestion I would make is to have our public institutions of higher education create and incentivize career pathways that are social justice centric. From a certain standpoint, this would be an effort to co-opt neoliberalism for social justice ends. Similar to what Sofia mentioned in her interview that I referenced in chapter four. This would constitute colleges and universities creating an independent department, one that would work in tandem with career services, to explore and network a range of vocational pathways that prioritize social justice concerns.

Part of the role of this department would be concentrated public relations work that seeks to build alliances with community non-profits, private companies - local, statewide, and national, NGOs, and other organizations concerned with equality, opportunity, agency, equity, and authentic democracy for ALL. An aspect of this work would be to raise money from wealthy individuals who possess a similar vision for society.

In conjunction with these efforts, the college/university would create courses specifically designed to move social justice ideas and ideals into the various institutional

systems that make up society as well as the marketplace and business community. This department would also spearhead the creation and implementation of scholarships to students interested in social justice work. Finally, this department would house a project center, a type of social justice incubator, dedicated to the creation of new and innovative ways to apply social justice principles and initiatives to a wide range of societal needs.

Re-evaluate and Expand Student Evaluations

Finally, the last thing I want to suggest concerns student evaluations. I think our colleges and universities need to re-evaluate (pun intended) how we typically handle student evaluations. Student evaluation research is extensive. A lot of work has been done regarding a number of concerns related to student evaluations including gender differences and bias among students and about faculty, the relationship to grades and course work load, the accuracy of student responses, the relationship to student learning, the effect on faculty self-image, uses of by both department and university administration, among other things. However, there is very little scholarship on evaluations that directly ask students about how they perceive social justice concerns have been addressed and handled in their classroom and university experience. In my experience as a university instructor I have seen department evaluations that get to some issues related to social justice and I have seen others that have zero intersection with social justice issues.

I suggest that colleges and universities add a mandatory, defined section regarding social justice concerns to their student evaluation forms. Putting an official section on student evaluation forms regarding social justice concerns and initiatives will signal to

students its importance and it will also signal to faculty its importance which will likely motivate faculty to heighten their concerns about social justice. It will also likely motivate certain behaviors in faculty as they lead their classrooms. Such an action, although minor and relatively easy to implement, could have a profound impact on the culture of our institutions of higher learning.

Suggestions for Future Research

When it comes to future studies, I believe studies analyzing student evaluations relative to questions pertaining to social justice need to be more prolific. Analyzing the attitudes and perceptions of students regarding how they think social justice concerns are being addressed and handled in their classrooms and institutions would yield some interesting data in terms of the school's overall commitment to social justice concerns and principles. These studies could become particularly insightful after we make social justice questions mandatory for all student evaluations. Relatedly, as I mentioned in chapter one, future studies should engage students from minoritized communities regarding their experience in college and university classrooms that prioritize social justice perspectives and concerns. Students' perspectives on issues of social justice, such as equality, democracy, equity, and empowerment relative to their situated classroom experience in classrooms led by professors who incorporate social justice concerns in their teaching would be interesting information to review and analyze.

In terms of other suggestions for future research, I think a lot of work needs to be done around the question of how important is it for those committed to social justice, and who through their discourse and behavior require it of others, be able to ground their

claims for social justice in larger, more pervasive, and therefore more binding, epistemological and philosophical ideas versus merely making appeals to their anecdotal, personal experience as the ground, the *raison d'etre*, for their push for social justice in society. I personally believe without a grounding of social justice in larger epistemological and philosophical perspectives any moral imperative for social justice is eroded.

Another line of studies that I would suggest would be to take a closer look at the scholarship of higher education educators and analyze what they are writing about. Let's take for example a scholar in the field of sociology committed to social justice. Is she constantly writing about social justice or is she writing about sociology? Has she abandoned meaningful scholarship about sociology proper because everything has become about social justice for her? In other words, is the field of sociology suffering because of being co-opted by social justice pressure? Or is the field of sociology benefiting from a focus on social justice? Is there a distinct separation between sociology work and social justice work? Or is that impossible? If it's not, *should* it be impossible? These types of studies would yield some fascinating data and insights.

I also suggest taking a closer look at the university's role in the 'life of the mind' and the implications for society that follow. It needs to be considered that if colleges and universities cease to make a meaningful contribution to the place of contemplation and thinking in society what does that mean for society in the long term. What does it mean for colleges and universities themselves?

Finally, I think it would be enlightening to look at schools, particularly Division 1 schools, that have massive sports programs and see how their academic programs are doing with a particular interest in departments and fields that tend to be more social justice oriented, such as the humanities and social sciences. Does the excessive amount of money coming in from the sports programs help or hurt those departments? It very well may be that one of the bastions of neoliberalism -- high stakes college sports -- might actually help certain departments committed to social justice not only stay afloat financially but actually thrive. This type of study would be interesting from a plethora of angles.

As I draw this study to a complete and final close I want to leave us with a poem by one of our nation's luminaries that encapsulates my heart behind much of what I have tried to do in this study. I have found this poem to be profoundly inspirational and refer to it often.

I note the obvious differences
in the human family.
Some of us are serious,
some thrive on comedy.

Some declare their lives are lived
as true profundity,
and others claim they really live
the real reality.

The variety of our skin tones
can confuse, bemuse, delight,
brown and pink and beige and purple,
tan and blue and white.

I've sailed upon the seven seas
and stopped in every land,
I've seen the wonders of the world
not yet one common man.

I know ten thousand women
called Jane and Mary Jane,
but I've not seen any two
who really were the same.
Mirror twins are different
although their features jibe,
and lovers think quite different thoughts
while lying side by side.

We love and lose in China,
we weep on England's moors,
and laugh and moan in Guinea,
and thrive on Spanish shores.

We seek success in Finland,
are born and die in Maine.
In minor ways we differ,
in major we're the same.

I note the obvious differences
between each sort and type,
but we are more alike, my friends,
than we are unalike.

We are more alike, my friends,
than we are unalike.

We are more alike, my friends,
than we are unalike.

-- Maya Angelou, "Human Family"

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APPENDIX A

SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following are some of the initial interview questions I asked with possible variation depending on the flow of the conversation. Naturally, there were many follow-up questions in the course of the interview process.

- Why do you teach?
- How would you define social justice and why are you concerned about it?
- How do you incorporate your commitment to social justice in your pedagogy?
- Are there any foundational, philosophical ideas that compel your social justice pedagogy?
- From your standpoint, how is higher education doing?
- In your view, what should the university's role be in society?
- How would you define neoliberalism?
- Do you believe that neoliberalism has an impact on higher education? In what ways?
- What do you think of grades and performance measures in general?
- How do you maintain a commitment to social justice in your teaching and work given the pressures of neoliberalism on your institution?
- Do you believe your department chair and administration share the same commitment you have to social justice?
- In what ways are you praxis and activism oriented in the university? In society?

- Is outside activism requisite to being a social justice educator?
- What level of pressure do you feel to do research and publish?
- How do you balance your research and teaching responsibilities?
- How do you define democracy and do you believe your institution is committed to it?