

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Economic Democracy:
From Continual Crisis to a People Oriented Economy

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In Political Science

by

Alfredo Carlos Marquez

Dissertation Committee:
Professor, Dr. Cecelia Lynch, Co-Chair
Professor, Dr. Rodolfo D. Torres, Co-Chair
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DEDICATION

For

my family:

my daughter, my little June bug and my sunshine Amelie Carlos-Martinez;

my father Alfredo Carlos Sr.;

my mother Eva Carlos Marquez;

my sisters,

Lourdes (Lulu) Carlos,

Gabriela (Gaby) Elizabeth Carlos

and in the memory of my sister Veronica Carlos.

You have all inspired me and this work in more ways than you know.

May your legacy of struggle, determination, survival

and above all your sense of justice live on in my work beyond these pages.

"When I rise, it will be with the ranks, not from the ranks."

-Eugene V. Debs

"It takes a lot of laughing to make a new world, one where many worlds fit."

-Subcomandante Marcos

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank my family, friends and people whose paths have crossed mine to teach me. I thank them for all of the support, inspiration, sacrifices, wisdom and knowledge that they have provided me in setting the foundation for this work and what comes after. I am a reflection of their work and lessons.

To my mentors and dissertation committee Cecelia Lynch, Rodolfo Torres, Raul Fernandez and Kevin Olson, I have a great debt of gratitude for your guidance and support. I am extremely thankful and appreciative of the time you spent on helping and guiding me. Each of you had a fundamental role in shaping my scholarship.

I am indebted to a great many people. Rudy Torres, who I met my second year in graduate school and has become a great friend and mentor provided me the space to explore my intellectual curiosity. I would not have been able to complete this project without his support, dedication, guidance, expertise and more importantly friendship. I am greatly humbled to have been your student. I will miss our discussions and debates but I will always carry your passion for social justice and economic democracy with me. Thank you.

To Cecelia Lynch, I offer you my deepest respect. Your guidance has been invaluable and I am especially grateful for the way you balanced supporting my research interest with challenging me to do better. You provided me the methodological, intellectual and writing support that has been instrumental to my development. Thank you.

To Profe Raul Fernandez who I met as a wide-eyed and new graduate student my first quarter at UCI, I am grateful for so many things that you have imparted on me. Your time, support, guidance, knowledge, wisdom and friendship have meant a great deal to me. I have the utmost respect and admiration for you and I will miss our coffee platicas. Thank you for guiding my theoretical interests and for being a kindred spirit.

I am very grateful and deeply indebted to Ralph-Armbruster Sandoval and Zaragosa Vargas who were the very first to take a chance on a young Chicano from Los Angeles at UC Santa Barbara majoring in History and Chicano Studies. I would never have thought of being on this path let alone begin it without your vote of confidence. It was in your classes that my intellectual passion for economic justice first grew. My dissertation is a culmination of the work you inspired in my early years. Both of your' passion and focus on working class politics continues to inspire and motivate me.

To El Congreso de UCSB, all of the people that came with me, before me and have come after me, I have the greatest of respect and appreciation for you. It is here that I first learned how to fight for social and economic justice. It was the people of El Congreso who taught me to think and question critically but also to act with praxis. It was El Congreso that instilled in me a great sense of justice for working people, who without, I would not be who or where I am today.

I want to thank all of the great minds and friends that I made at UC Irvine. Armando Ibarra, Robert Nothoff, Alejandra Albarran, Carolina Sarmiento, Erin Evans, Danny Gascon, Aaron Roussell, Nicole Shortt, Analicia Mejia Mesinas, Tom Le, Arturo Jimenez, Hector Martinez, Dirk Horn, Archie Delshad, Jennifer Garcia, and the members of the Chicano Latino Graduate Student Collective, all of you taught me as much as any graduate seminar and your support sustained me in this process. Thank you all.

To my carnales, Osvaldo “Ozze” Orozco, Nicholas “Nick-Cuz” Centino, Saul “DJ Orbs” Serrano, Saul “Chapo” Zevada, Miguel “Miggy Mumbles” Solis, Erick “Chonsy” Iniguez, and my carnalas, Angela “Chola” Portillo and Gloria “G” Sanchez, thank you for all of your support and carnalismo in difficult as well as good times. It has meant the world.

I am grateful to all of the hard working people of all sorts of different racial, ethnic and gender backgrounds struggling to make a living in and outside the U.S. Their struggle inspires me. I am especially indebted to the workers that shared their stories with me. Their stories are the backbone and the purpose of this work.

To Sonia L. Martinez, thank you for accompanying me on this journey. Your support has meant more than you will ever know.

Above all I extend my love, admiration and appreciation to padres y familia. Eva Carlos Marquez y Alfredo Carlos Ramirez, gracias por todos sus sacrificios y enseñanzas y mas que nada su apoyo y amor. Gracias Familia: Lourdes Carlos, Gabriela Carlos, Veronica Carlos Johnny Ortiz, Luna Ortiz, Rocky Ortiz and all of my family in the U.S. and Mexico, too many to name. Tia Belen you are deeply missed, thank you for helping to raise me, may you rest in power.

And finally, thank you miija, my little June bug Amelie Carlos-Martinez. Your smile gives me strength and purpose.

I only hope that in some small way I can continue all of your legacies and be the kind of academic and agent for justice that you have all taught me to be. Mil respetos a todos/as and with mad flaming amor, GRACIAS!

CURRICULUM VITAE

Alfredo Carlos Marquez

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Political Science in American Politics Political Theory	University of California, Irvine Irvine, California. 2015
M.A., Political Science in Comparative Politics International Relations	California State University, Long Beach Long Beach, California. 2008
B.A., History and Chicano Studies	University of California, Santa Barbara Santa Barbara, California. 2003

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

Social Movements and Economic Democracy; Racial and Ethnic Politics; Mexican, Chicano and Latin American Politics; Immigration; Urban Politics; Labor Politics; Political Economy; Democratic Theory; Politics of Development; Politics in Entertainment Media and Culture.

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

- UC Irvine Associate Dean's Fellowship, School of Social Science 2014- Fall
- University of California President's Dissertation Year Fellowship 2013- 2014
- Q.A. Shaw McKean, Jr. Fellowship, Rutgers University 2013- 2014
School of Management and Labor Relations
- DECADE Graduate Student Travel Award, UC Irvine 2013- March
- Gilbert G. Gonzalez Graduate Student Research Paper Award 2013- February
Department of Chicano/Latino Studies, UC Irvine
- Research Grant, Department of Political Science, UC Irvine 2013- February
- DECADE Graduate Student Travel Award, UC Irvine 2013- February
- Travel Award, University of California – Cuba Academic Initiative 2013- Nov.
- Eugene Cota-Robles Fellowship, University of California, Irvine 2008- 2012
- Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship, Honorable Mention 2009- March
- Research Grant, Department of Political Science, UC Irvine 2009- Summer
- Award of Distinction, University of California, Santa Barbara 2003- June
- 81% of 695 Instructor and TA Effectiveness Evaluations Above Average 2008- Present

PUBLICATIONS

Books in Progress

- *The Latino Question in Neoliberal Capitalism*, Co-Authored with Rodolfo D. Torres and Armando Ibarra. Pluto Press (Palgrave) London: UK. Forthcoming 2016.

Single Authored Journal Articles

- “Mexico “Under Siege”: Drug Cartels or American Imperialism?” *Latin American Perspectives*. October 23, 2013.
- “The Future of the American Economy: Economic Democracy or Bust!” *Publicación Oficial. Eventos Sociedad Cubana de Investigaciones Filosóficas (SCIF)*. Havana, Cuba. November 16, 2012.

Co-Authored Journal Articles

- “Mexican Mass Labor Migration in a Not-So changing Political Economy,” Co-Authored with Armando Ibarra. *Ethnicities Journal*. Volume 15, Issue 2. April 2015.

ACADEMIC AND TEACHING EXPERIENCE

California State University, Long Beach

Fall 2013 – Present

Adjunct/Part-Time Lecturer:

- Racial and Ethnic Politics in the U.S. Fall and Spring, 2013- Present
- How Democratic is the U.S.? Spring 2015
- Introduction to American Government 2015 Spring & Summer 2014, Spring 2015
- Politics Through Culture Fall 2014
- California Politics Fall 2014
- Comparative Political Movements Summer 2014
- The Media and American Politics Fall and Spring, 2013-2014

University of California, Irvine

Fall 2011 – Summer 2013

Teaching Associate/Instructor:

- Comparative Latin American Politics Summer Session 2, 2013
- Race/Ethnicity Summer Session 2, 2013
- Current Issues in The Latino Community Summer Session 2, 2012
- Marxist Social Thought (Graduate Seminar) Spring 2013, Spring 2012
- Political Science and Urban Planning Independent Studies Seminar
 - Political Economic Theory and the Current Economic Crisis Winter 2011

Co-Instructor:

- Urban Sociology and Politics Winter 2012
- Latino Metropolis Fall 2011, Fall 2010
- Chicano Movement Spring 2011

Teaching Assistant

Sept 2009 – 2013

University of California, Irvine

- Prepared and taught for four, one-hour discussion sections per week for students to help them understand the course material; assisted faculty with evaluating and grading student work, hold office hours and assist students with assignments.

- Courses: Political Sociology, Current Issues in Chicano Latino Studies, Sociology of Race, Ethnicity and Nationality; Introduction to Chicano Latino Studies; Sociology Undergraduate Seminar, Introduction to Sociology.

Graduate Student Researcher/Leader

Summer 2012, 2011

University of California, Irvine

- Acted as a mentor for undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds participating in the 2011 and 2012 summer graduate preparations programs. Duties consisted of guiding undergraduate students with graduate type research and writing and providing feedback with Abstracts, Research Proposals and Research Papers.

Lead Researcher

June – Sept, 2009

Universidad Autonoma de Zacatecas, Mexico

- Engaged in participant observation and ethnographic field research on my own project focused on how Mexicans understand, construct and perpetuate the narrative of Mexican Drug violence and crime, as well as its relation to government and politics. The goal is to understand how these narratives differ from the ones constructed in the U.S. I worked closely and was guided by faculty at the Universidad Autonoma de Zacatecas.

Research Assistant

Nov 2007 – Aug 2008

California State University, Long Beach

- Position consisted of assisting Political Science Professor, Dr. Amy Cabrera-Rasmussen research the health effects that the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach have on the local population. This included researching local government policy, compiling a database on individuals and groups involved in the debate over the issue, as well as helping her conduct interviews with these individuals. Position also consisted of assisting Dr. Rasmussen in her researching of the current local and national debates over reproductive and sexual health.

Graduate Assistant

Jan 2007 – May 2008

California State University, Long Beach

- Position consisted of assisting faculty in evaluating the written work of students; maintaining office hours to advise and assist students; preparing and facilitating review sessions for Introduction to American Politics; and assisting the department's staff.

CONFERENCE PAPERS, PRESENTATIONS and PARTICIPATION

- April 17, 2015. “Democratizing the Discipline: Gramsci, the academy and a War of Position”. Paper Presentation at the National Association of Chicana and Chicano Scholars annual conference. San Francisco, CA.
- April 3, 2015. “Hegemony, War of Position and Workplace Democracy”. Paper Presentation at the Western Political Science Association annual conference. Las Vegas NV.
- June 24, 2014. “Worker Cooperatives and Action Research”. Symposium Presentation at the Annual Beyster Symposium. Sponsored by the Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations and The Foundation for Enterprise Development. La Jolla, CA.
- April 12, 2014. “ Action Research and Economic Democracy”. Paper Presentation at the National Association of Chicana and Chicano Scholars Annual Conference. Salt Lake City, UT.

- January 13, 2014. “Cooperative Development in the Bay Area; A Case Study” Research Update at Louis O. Kelso Mid-year Fellows Symposium. Sponsored by the Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations and The Foundation for Enterprise Development. Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.
- June 24, 2013. “Cooperative Development in the Bay Area; A Case Study” Research Update at The Beyster Symposium. Sponsored by the Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations and The Foundation for Enterprise Development. La Jolla, CA.
- May 17, 2013. Conference Organizer for the 2nd Annual UC Comparative Latino Studies Workshop. Sponsored by the UCI Department of Chicano Latino Studies, the UC Berkeley Center for Latino Policy Research and hosted by the UCI Chicano Latino Graduate Student Collective at the University of California Irvine.
- March, 29, 2013. “The Future of the American Economy: Expanding Democracy to the Workplace.” Paper presentation at Western Political Science Association Annual Conference. Hollywood, CA.
- February 22, 2013. ““Under Siege”: Drug Violence or U.S. Economic Paternalism in Mexico?” Paper presentation at “Horizons” Global Studies Conference. University of California, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara CA.
- November 15, 2012. “Economic Democracy: The Future of the American Economy.” Paper Presentation at the 15th International Conference on the New Political Science. Sponsored by La Sociedad Cubana de Investigaciones Filosóficas and La Universidad de La Habana, Havana, Cuba.
- May 5, 2012. Conference Organizer for the UC Latino Issues Conference and paper presentation of “Mexico Under Siege: Drug Cartels or American Imperialism?” Sponsored by the UC Berkeley Center for Latino Policy Research. Berkeley, CA.
- April 28, 2011. Conference Participant for “Cuba: The State of UC Research” the UC-Cuba Academic Initiative. Irvine, CA.
- April 22, 2011. “Mexico Under Siege: The Drug Narrative About Mexico and U.S. Imperialism.” Paper presentation at Western Political Science Association Annual Conference. San Antonio, TX.
- March 31, 2011. “Theories of Economic Democracy: Constructing New Forms of Social, Political and Economic Organization.” National Association of Chicana and Chicano Scholars Annual Conference. Pasadena, CA.
- March 24, 2009. “Fidel, Che and the Diffusion of Cuban Revolutionary Idealism.” Paper presentation at “Intersecting Histories” Graduate Student Conference. Claremont Graduate University, Claremont CA.
- May 21-22, 1999. Conference Organizer. “El Plan and Chicano Studies: Power, Resistance and Social Change, 30 years of Chicano/a Studies”. University of California, Santa Barbara. Santa Barbara CA.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS, GUEST LECTURES & MEDIA APPEARANCES

- February 19, 2015. “Theories of Immigration.” Guest Lecture in Introduction to Chicano Latino Life (CHLS 101). California State University, Long Beach
- May 18, 2013. “Building Stronger Healthier Communities Through Worker Ownership.” Workshop Presentation. The 11th Social Services in the Latina/o Community Conference. Presented by the Social Welfare Latina/o Caucus. UC, Los Angeles.

- October 11, 2012. “The Legacy of Chicano/Latino Struggle in the U.S.: Labor Activism in the early 1900’s.” Guest Lecture in Introduction to Chicano/Latino Studies (CLS 61). 250 students. University of California, Irvine
- October 31, 2011. “The Law Concerning Diversity in Higher Education” Panel Discussant. Moderated by School of Law Dean Erwin Chemerinsky. University of California, Irvine.
- April 22, 2008. “Hispanic voters are the key: Some feel comfortable with Clinton, other young voters leaning to another.” The Asahi Shimbun Japanese Newspaper. Circulation: 8 million
- April 15, 2011. “Stagnation and the Economic Crisis” Guest lecture in Introduction to Social Problems (Soc 3) University of California, Irvine
- May 5, 2009. “The Cuban Revolution: Revolutionary Central” Presentation at Chicano/Latino Culture Week. University of California, Santa Barbara
- April 11, 2007. “Social Movements In American Politics” Guest lecture in Introduction to American Politics (POSC 100). Class of 300 students. California State University, Long Beach
- April 22, 2006. “Politics of Identity” Workshop presentation at Raza College Day high school outreach conference. University of California, Santa Barbara

WORK EXPERIENCE

Organizer

March – June 2012

UAW2865, Irvine, CA

- Position consisted of organizing academic student employees to improve their conditions in the workplace. Specifically to lead an affordable housing campaign and membership drive focusing on workload issues.

Independent Consultant

2011

Ersoylu Consulting, Costa Mesa, CA

- To help Ersoylu provide project planning and research services to philanthropy, non-profit organizations (NGOs), government agencies and other institutions. With a focus on helping Ersoylu clients accurately analyze progressive social issues, make effective policy decisions and measure their community impacts.

Research Consultant

Fall 2011

Orange County Communities Organized for Responsible Development, Garden Grove, CA

- Position consisted of analyzing data from campaign contributions for the cities of Santa Ana and Anaheim as well as looking at approval process for development projects in both cities.

Los Angeles Outreach and Program Coordinator

March 2005 – January 2007

Incentive Awards Program/Pre-Collegiate Academy, University of California, Berkeley

- Position consisted of working closely with a group of 44 Academy scholars from 22 low income LAUSD schools, mentoring them and providing academic guidance to them for a period of two years, after which they would have completed the expected requirements to get into UC Berkeley.

Norwalk High School Bigs Program Manager
Catholic Big Brothers Big Sisters

August 2004 – February 2005

- Position consisted of managing a mentoring program in which High School Students mentor K-5th children at an after-school program based at their school. Duties included, recruiting and screening mentors and mentees, enrolling them into the program and case-managing a caseload of about 80 matches (160 students).

Recreation Assistant II

May 2004 – June 2005

Los Angeles Recreation and Parks

- Position consisted of assisting the Teen Program supervisor, plan and coordinate events and programming for the Teen club. Events and programs were all geared towards helping teens improve self-esteem and teach gang, drug, and alcohol prevention, leadership skills as well as the value of teamwork.

Program Leader

April 2004 – August 2004

Richstone Family Center, Hawthorne, CA

- Position consisted of working effectively and cooperatively with parents, teachers, and community partners to supervise and ensure quality services and safety of all students as well as oversee and direct academic, homework and enrichment/ recreation activities with a cluster of 15 to 20 students

Union Organizer

Nov 2003 – Dec 2003

United Farm Workers of America, Oxnard, CA

- Position consisted of organizing strawberry workers to form a union so that they may improve their conditions in the workplace. Such conditions are better pay, medical plans, respect from management, and pensions plans. Duties included visiting workers at home and informing them of their rights as well as organizing and planning events and actions geared towards improving their quality of life.

Truancy Case Manager

Dec 2002 – June 2003

Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, Santa Barbara, CA

- Position consisted of working with youth that were at the last step within the DA's truancy program and were in danger of being placed on probation. Duties included visiting homes and being a resource, visiting youth at schools and providing guidance to in order for them to improve their performance in school.

Academic Intervention Through Mentoring Program Coordinator

January 2001 – June 2002

Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara, CA

- Position consisted of coordinating a mentoring program that consisted of pairing up "at risk" youth with positive role models from UCSB. Tracking youth academic progress by monitoring grades, attendance, and suspensions. Work also included working closely with parents, mentor and youth to encourage youth's personal growth.

Teaching Responsibility and Independence By Education, Educator/Facilitator Oct 2000 – Jan 2001

Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara, CA

- Position consisted of teaching progressive and alternative curriculum, which attempts to educate teens on issues that are not covered in mainstream schooling as well as organizing recreation activities, such as Sports, Art,

Cultural etc. Work also consisted of developing teaching material that sought to get youth to think critically about the world they live in.

Peer Advisor / Resident Assistant / Team Leader Sep 1999 – March 2000
 Educational Opportunity Program, University of California, Santa Barbara Summer 99' 01' 02

- The position consisted of working as a Resident Assistant for a summer transition program for low-income and/or first generation college students. Duties included guiding a team of resident assistants in organizing events and services geared towards acclimatizing incoming students to the university environment for and assisting them with transition issues.

SERVICE

School

- General Education Governing Council, Academic Senate, CSU Long Beach 2015- Present
- Faculty Advisor, La Raza Student Association, CSU Long Beach 2014- Present
- Advisory Council on Campus Climate, Culture and Inclusion, UCI 2012- 2014
 Working Group on Constructive Engagement, Policing and Crisis Response: Member
- The Dean of Graduate Division's Advisory Council on Diversity: Member 2011- 2014
- Chicano Latino Graduate Student Collective of UCI: Co-Founder and Officer 2009- 2014

Departmental

- UCI Department of Political Science Doctoral Senior Mentor 2010-2015
- UAW Local 2865 Active Member and Head Steward 2010-2015
- UCI Department of Political Science, 2009-2010
 Department and Graduate Committee Representative
- Chicano Studies Major Representative, UCSB 2000-2001

Professional

- National Association of Chicana and Chicano Scholars 2014- Present
 Southern California Regional Foco Representative
- Scholarship Application Reviewer, UC Berkeley Incentive Awards Program 2013
- Scholarship Application Reviewer, UC Berkeley Pre-Collegiate Academy 2005 – 2011
- Manuscript Reviewer, Sociologists Without Borders Summer 2012

Community

- Mentor of undergraduates seeking to apply to Graduate School 2010- Present
 (approximately 6 yearly)
- Mentor, Los Angeles Harbor College PUENTE program 2012
- Graduate Mentor, Graduate Division and Campuswide Honors Program's 2010-2012
 THINK program for Honor Transfer Students
- Vice President of the Board of Directors, La Casa De La Raza 2002-2003
 Community Center, Santa Barbara

- Chair of El Congreso, UCSB (Chicano/a Student Union) 2002-2003
- External Co-chair of El Congreso, UCSB
2001-2002
- Board of Directors, Coalition for a Living Wage, Santa Barbara 2001-2002
- Volunteer for Los Compadres, young men program,
Community Action Commission of Santa Barbara 2000-2002

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Economic Democracy:

From Continual Crisis to a People Oriented Economy

BY

Alfredo Carlos Marquez

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California, Irvine 2015

Professors Cecelia Lynch and Rodolfo Torres, Co-Chairs

Economic Democracy and worker cooperatives are part of a growing movement for economic change. In the dissertation I explore the ideas of Economic Democracy, what they can teach the academy, their history and theoretical underpinnings. I am specifically interested in understanding whether worker cooperatives offer a solution to the problems of capitalism and whether they fundamentally change the nature and process of work as well as the quality of life for ordinary workers, especially those workers who traditionally have been relegated to the bottom of the labor market, workers of color. Through the use of the Marxist theory and the Gramscian concepts of hegemony and war of position I analyze the complicated and difficult structural, administrative, ideological/cultural and racial struggles that these types of enterprises face in enacting their visions.

Through a comparative case study based on interviews and participatory action research of workers and developers involved in the worker-cooperative movement of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Area of California, I study how worker cooperatives can and do impact

communities of color in the U.S. as well as what problems they face when it comes to issues of race, racism and gender politics. I argue that worker cooperatives are a valuable resource in the hegemonic contest over ideological discourses and visions of how the world ought to function. Alternative forms like cooperatives become discredited within the realm of possibility because they offer a different understanding about how the economy should work that threatens the current dominant capitalist model. Worker cooperatives as part of a democratic economy are not just different ways of engaging within a capitalist economy or of creating small niche sharing economies to help bolster communities of color who have often not been allowed to advance because of racist glass ceilings. They are part of a war of position in the ideological and cultural struggle over what role and whose needs the economy and capital should serve in the course of human history, and as such are a fundamentally different mode of production. In order for them to fill this important historical role, however, they must take seriously the tenets and the day-to-day practice of democracy.

INTRODUCTION

[People] have unrealized potential for self-cultivation, self-direction, self-understanding, and creativity. It is this potential that we regard as crucial and to which we appeal, not to the human potentiality for violence, unreason, and submission to authority. The goal of [people] and society should be human independence: a concern not with image of popularity but with finding a meaning in life that is personally authentic: a quality of mind not compulsively driven by a sense of powerlessness, nor one which unthinkingly adopts status values, nor one which represses all threats to its habits, but one which has full, spontaneous access to present and past experiences, one which easily unites the fragmented parts of personal history, one which openly faces problems which are troubling and unresolved: one with an intuitive awareness of possibilities, an active sense of curiosity, an ability and willingness to learn... Human relationships should involve fraternity and honesty. Human interdependence is contemporary fact; human brotherhood must be willed however, as a condition of future survival and as the most appropriate form of social relations. Personal links between [person] and [person] are needed, especially to go beyond the partial and fragmentary bonds of function that bind [people] only as worker to worker, employer to employee, teacher to student, American to Russian... As a social system we seek the establishment of a democracy of individual participation, governed by two central aims: that the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life; that society be organized to encourage independence in [people] and provide the media for their common participation. In a participatory democracy, the political life would be based in several root principles:

- that decision-making of basic social consequence be carried on by public groupings;
- that politics be seen positively, as the art of collectively creating an acceptable pattern of social relations;
- that politics has the function of bringing people out of isolation and into community, thus being a necessary, though not sufficient, means of finding meaning in personal life;
- that the political order should serve to clarify problems in a way instrumental to their solution; it should provide outlets for the expression of personal grievance and aspiration; opposing views should be organized so as to illuminate choices and facilitate the attainment of goals; channels should be commonly available to related men to knowledge and to power so that private problems -- from bad recreation facilities to personal alienation -- are formulated as general issues.

The economic sphere would have as its basis the principles:

- that work should involve incentives worthier than money or survival. It should be educative, not stultifying; creative, not mechanical; selfdirect, not manipulated, encouraging independence; a respect for others, a sense of dignity and a willingness to accept social responsibility, since it is this experience that has crucial influence on habits, perceptions and individual ethics;
- that the economic experience is so personally decisive that the individual must share in its full determination;
- that the economy itself is of such social importance that its major resources and means of production should be open to democratic participation and subject to democratic social regulation...

- Port Huron Statement, Students for a Democratic Society, 1962

In 1962 students who had seen the undemocratic nature of the system in which they lived put out a statement of their intention to create a program to more fully democratize U.S. society. In this statement they made reference to finding meaning in life beyond money and work, beyond the objectification and commodification that prevailed in their time and prevails in ours. They spoke of a politics and economics more rooted in meaningful participation by an active citizenry and workers and more importantly they spoke about living with dignity. This dissertation is an attempt to take seriously the ideas of a more democratic way of life, to attempt to understand what that means for working people, especially workers of color who have traditionally served an explicit role of cheap labor. What does it mean for workers to be able to participate in decision-making at work and share in the fruits of their labor? What does it mean to have an economic form of organization rooted in democratic practice and shared ownership? Where have these ideas originated and what are their theoretical and practical implications? What is the experience of workers of color in these types of structures? In attempting to address these questions, I probe the nature of Economic Democracy in the U.S. within the context of U.S.

capitalism¹ that has recently experienced one of the worst economic crises in its history.

Context

On Wednesday April 9, 2008, Simon Johnson, research director for the International Monetary Fund, one of the two largest financial institutions in the world (the other being the World Bank) that since the Bretton Woods agreement of 1944, oversees global financial capitalist policies, stated that the American economy had spiraled into “the largest financial shock since the Great Depression.” The statement warned of a one-in-four chance of a full-blown global recession in the following 12 months (Stewart, 2008). The recession, it stated, has inflicted, “extensive damage on markets and institutions at the heart of the financial system” (2008). The crisis itself began in 2007 in the housing market, due to failed investments in derivatives based on U.S. subprime mortgage securities (Schwartz, 2009). Herman M. Schwartz describes what followed:

By September 2008, \$1.3 trillion of equity in U.S. financial firms had evaporated. Banks worldwide had written down \$0.5 trillion just in subprime mortgage losses, and legendary and lucrative Wall Street firms such as Lehman Brothers, Bear Stearns, and Merrill Lynch had disappeared as independent entities. Global stock markets were in free fall. In the supposed bastion of neoliberal orthodoxy and free markets, U.S. taxpayers suddenly found themselves renationalizing the housing finance giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, as well as owning substantial holdings in the giant AIG insurance company, the largest commercial banks in the United States, and the one remaining independent investment bank. The Federal Reserve meanwhile was providing liquidity to all parts of the financial system against any kind of collateral, in a sharp departure from normal practices limiting lending to depository institutions and against U.S. Treasury and agency bonds. By October 2008, the Fed and the U.S. Treasury had committed in excess of \$2.25 trillion in bailouts and liquidity, more than 16 percent of the U.S. GDP at that time (Schwartz, 2009, p. xiii).

Global financial behemoths like Wells Fargo, Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup, and Goldman Sachs each received over tens of billions in ‘Troubled Asset Relief Program’ money²

¹ Capitalism is defined by a historically unique social relationship where there are workers and owners. It is not defined by seeking profits (which only happen within this social relationship by exploiting workers), or greed or the

² Wells Fargo-\$25 billion; Bank of America- \$15 billion; JP Morgan Chase- \$25 billion; Citigroup- \$25 billion; Goldman Sachs- \$10 billion From: <http://money.cnn.com/news/specials/storysupplement/bankbailout/>

while also raking in billions in profits in the same year. However, more important than its impact on markets and financial systems is the disastrous impact the American economic crisis has had on people.

At the same time, over the past 20 years we have seen one of the largest increases in income inequality since the beginning of the industrial revolution. The Economic Policy Institute argues that in recent decades the majority of income growth in the U.S. has gone and continues to go to the top 10% of families (Orr, 2011). In 1978, compensation of CEOs was 35 times greater than compensation of average workers³. Since the recession CEO pay has actually increased from 185:1 to 303:1 (Mishel & Davis, June 21, 2015). In September 2008, towards the beginning of the what is now termed the Great Recession, the Economic Policy Institute reported that there were 9.5 million unemployed workers in the U.S., up from 7.5 million in January and 6.7 million in March of 2007; there were 2.9 unemployed workers for every job opening in August 2008, up from 1.9 the year before; the median weekly wages for full time workers fell by 1.6% in the previous year; and an estimated \$2 trillion in pension wealth had been lost as a result of the crisis, leaving many workers unsure about their retirement status (Eisenbrey, 2008).

For those companies that remained successful during the crisis, the benefits of profits are all siphoned to the very top, while average workers continue to face the perils of downsizing, layoffs, furloughs, pink slips, increased medical premiums and stagnant wages (even though it is because of them that these corporations are successful). This was made clear when according to the Wall Street Journal right before the recession hit, directors and executives in 120 public companies in such sectors as banking, mortgage finance, student lending, stock brokerage and home building, cashed out a total of more than \$21 billion and fifteen of the top corporate chieftains in these companies *each* reaped more than \$100 million in cash compensation and

³ Not the lowest paid workers.

proceeds from such stock sales (Maremont, Hechinger, & Tamman, 2008). At the same time in early 2009 after a \$182 Billion federal bailout financed with public money, AIG planned to pay out \$165 million in bonuses to executives (Andrews and Baker, 2009) and subsequently considered whether to sue the federal government for intervening (Associated Press, 2013). In 2008 the top “earning” CEO raked in more than \$702 million. As Washington continued to mull tax breaks and corporate tax loopholes, between 2008 and 2012 oil companies consistently documented record windfall profits (Hargreaves, 2012). In the third quarter of 2012 corporate earnings were \$1.75 trillion, up 18.6 % from the previous year bringing in a record \$824 billion while at the same time total wages fell to a record low 43.5% of GDP (Garofalo, 2012).

The results of this mismanaging of the American economy are as follows: poverty rates increased from 13.2% to 14.3% in 2009 alone, representing an increase of 3.7 million people for a total of 43.6 million Americans living in poverty, the highest rate in over 50 years. One-third of the poor (35%) are children; Blacks and Latinos were the hardest hit groups (Gould and Shierholz, 2010). Unemployment in December of 2012 was 14 percent for Blacks and 9.6 for Latinos (Shierholz, January 4, 2013). Unemployment skyrocketed from 6.7 million workers in March of 2007 to 7.5 million in January of 2009 and 9.5 in September 2009; then rose to 12 million by the end of 2012 (Shierholz, January 10, 2013). As of November 1, 2014 the unemployment rate stood at 5.8%, which should indicate a recovered economy. However, Josh Bivens suggests that the number is misleading because it doesn’t factor in the kind of jobs the recovery has created nor does it reflect what he calls sidelined workers⁴ (Bivens, 2014).

⁴ Alternatively called marginally attached workers.

The unemployment rate does not count those that are ‘under-employed’⁵ which the Economic Policy Institute currently estimated was 11 million workers in 2013. There were 6 unemployed workers for every available job, and a total of 27 million workers either unemployed or underemployed (EPI, 2013). In October of 2013, Heidi Shierholz estimated that there were at least 5 million missing workers from these official unemployment and marginally attached figures because in order to qualify for the latter designation, one has to have been looking for work within the past year (Shierholz, 2013). When people who have given up looking for work over a year are factored in, along with incarcerated persons and undocumented persons (who are not reflected in any official figures) the numbers easily and quickly soar. It is important to note that these figures take account of the positive impacts of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, without which the situation would have been much worse.

The recession, as scholars have documented, affected Americans but especially racial minorities in areas of health, education, and housing resulting in an increase in mental health issues, food insecurity, forced housing dislocations, poor physical health, and families having to forego college for their children. Such results in turn lead to increased risk of low earnings, crime and poor overall health. John Irons describes this process as long term ‘economic scarring’ (Irons, 2009). Children bear a disproportionate share of the burden. Amy Novotny argues that poor children “could be haunted by the devastating effects of the recession for years to come...research shows that children who slip into poverty, even for a short time, suffer long term setbacks...” (2010). These setbacks take the form of poor readiness as well as negative

⁵ “Underemployed” is defined as the inability to secure full-time work and refers to: 1) ‘involuntary part-timers’ who are working one or multiple jobs part time at part time pay, but want and are available for full time work; 2) ‘marginally attached’ workers who want a job and are available for work but have become tired of searching and given up actively seeking work; neither is included in unemployment figures.

educational and cognitive outcomes that result from less mental stimulation and increased stress in their living situations (Novotny, 2010; Rothstein, 2004; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997).

Significance of Research

In the face of this growing inequality and people's dissatisfaction with the government's (in)ability to cope with or regulate growing economic problems, workers and scholars alike in cities like Cleveland, San Francisco and New York have started to turn inwards for solutions. Focusing on what can be done locally and through "self-help," some activists and groups, for example, are articulating and implementing alternative economic models that also can provide meaningful democratic participation on a day-to-day basis. These models include but are not limited to worker cooperatives, democratized planning, public banking and regulation, democratized schools and many others. Taken together these varied democratic forms of organizations have become known as Economic Democracy⁶.

As a result of the tumultuous economy there has been a renewed interest in scholarship on alternatives forms of ownership that keep more wealth in the hands of more workers. Economic Democracy includes various forms of alternatives to this form of state subsidized capitalism including, worker-ownership and social enterprises among others. Economic democracy can be understood as a spectrum of economic activity, both formal and informal, that privileges democratic participation and community empowerment and above all incorporates a common socio-economic ethical philosophy that applies to the social relations inherent in the economy (Da Ros, 2007). The various types of models that fit within the spectrum of economic democracy run the gamut from non-profit organizations and foundations to worker cooperatives and self help mutual aid associations. What distinguishes them from other forms is their interest

⁶ Also known as or related to the concepts of Solidarity Economy and Social Economy used in other parts of the world like the European Union and Latin America.

in multiple bottom lines (Perez de Mendiguren Castresana, Etxezarreta Etxarri, & Aldonondo, 2009). In other words, such organizations are not interested in profits only (some not at all), but instead act to change the social ramifications of economic processes. Their goal is not just monetary value but also humanistic values that lie in democratic participation as well as the social well being of the members of the organizations and the communities they come from (Da Ros, 2007). They all seek to impart or change the impacts of the economy, specifically where the state itself cannot or will not intervene, or where it should but does not.

There are differences among these organizations, which are marked by where they focus their attention. The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) for example, defines worker cooperatives as, “autonomous associations of persons, united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratic controlled enterprise” (International Co-operative Alliance). They focus their attention on the front end of the economy, changing the social and economic relations at the level of production by equating ownership and decision-making power among the workers, thereby leveling and sharing profits more equitably. Non-profits and foundations focus their attention on the back end, seeking to mitigate the negative results of the capitalist economy by imparting social services and support to make up for the lack of support from the state (Perez de Mendiguren Castresana, Etxezarreta Etxarri, & Aldonondo, 2009). Whether these actually constitute part of Economic Democracy is heavily debated, based on the functions they play. Those non-profits and foundations that play a role in advancing democratic ownership do seem to have a role but they are also criticized for often themselves lacking democratic structures or practices.

The renewed interest in forms of economic democracy in the U.S. is part of scholarship and praxis by people who have rejected ideas of profit maximizing at the expense of people’s

health and lives, children's development, environmental degradation, education and public health. This history is ultimately intertwined with the origins and development of various forms of capitalism, providing resistance, analysis, and new models of social organization based on principles of horizontal distribution of wealth. While this seems to be a positive development these types of organizations exist within a capitalist cultural framework, and for the purposes of this project, an explicitly American one.

My dissertation addresses empirically the question of how Economic Democracy functions in general and worker cooperatives in particular within this cultural framework. I am interested in how in particular, do worker cooperatives solve inherent economic problems that stem from overproduction and a failure of sufficient circulation of capital, and do they "humanize" the labor process by allowing increased worker participation as well as giving workers dignity and opportunities for skill building, especially those workers who traditionally have been relegated to the bottom of the labor market, workers of color? But I am also interested in how larger American traditions, specifically those of racism and sexism play themselves out within the community of cooperatives. I undertake a comparative study of one alternative form of economic organization, specifically collectively-owned and democratically-controlled worker cooperatives, with a particular interest in how they deal with issues of race, racism, gender and class on a micro-organizational level as well as a macro-structural level. Because they are seen as a vehicle to a better more meaningful work-life of dignity, I am interested in how they can and do impact communities of color in the U.S. as well as what problems they face when it comes to issues of race, racism and gender politics.

Through the use of the Gramscian concepts of hegemony and war of position I analyze the complicated and difficult structural, administrative, ideological/cultural and racial struggles

that these types of enterprises face in enacting their visions. The greatest of these struggles take place on an ideological terrain or what Gramsci and Marx would call the superstructure and are over fundamental values of human interaction. Building on Gramsci's concepts I use worker cooperatives as a unique and important tool/weapon in a war of position in the struggle over fundamental values that inform how economies should function on a day-to-day basis. I do this though also realizing that there are important challenges that worker-cooperatives face. Among some of the challenges I encountered were racial, gender and identity issues resulting from socialization in a society with a long and sordid history of racism and patriarchy. Using the literature on the study of race and intersectionality, as well as Marxist analyses of race I explore the implications of some of these issues for the worker-cooperative movement.

There is a great deal of debate regarding race, class and gender, often with people coming down on one side vs the other. Critical Race Theory and Racial Formation scholars argue that race is the central to unit of analysis within the American context. They argue that you cannot understand American politics without understanding its racial dynamics. Intersectionality focuses on the multi-layered complex and contextual identities that people inhabit and how they function to ascribe different social positions to different groups of people. These theories often pit themselves against theories focusing on issues of class and tend to be absent of a critique of capitalism as the foundation of society's social relations. My own position is that all of the racial literature helps us illuminate different processes at work. Intersectionality, Critical Race Theory and Racial Formation help us discover the ways in which individuals navigate and negotiate identity based conflict and the minefield that is American racial and gender politics. In that respect they are important. However, it is as important to note that these interactions all occur within the backdrop of capitalist social relations of production. That is to say, that all social

interactions within our current system occur within the structural system of capitalism and are influenced and conditioned by peoples position within that system, their class position.

The result of this analysis is to make visible the way in which the discourse of capitalism attempts to prevent alternative discourses as well as how American capitalism structures social relationships within worker cooperative workplaces in the San Francisco/Oakland Bay Area. My aim is to illuminate how these types of organizations empower workers, but also how they deal with macro-structural issues like the racial and gender problems of the larger society.

The majority of U.S. literature on this topic addresses the need for these types of enterprises but lacks depth in analyzing the actual experience of them, and is especially quiet in discussing issues of race. While U.S. scholars have begun to address this gap (Alperovitz, 2011; Ness & Azzellini, 2011; Restakis, 2010; Wolff, 2012), there is not currently an extensive understanding of how U.S. based collectively-owned enterprises are structured, how they function daily in society, what their benefits are, or the kind of conditions or experiences workers-owners have within them, particular to their experience as U.S. based enterprises. There is also an uncomfortable silence in any sort of discussion of racial or gender issues within cooperatives. There is also a common misconception that these kinds of businesses can only be small-scale and that, as such, they are highly inefficient and rarely successful, when in fact worker-owned industrial enterprises can be quite substantial in size.

I argue that this misconception is actually part of the hegemonic contest over ideological assumptions and visions of how the world functions that benefit the current model of production. This particular misconception is tied to an ideological move that attempts to impart a hegemonic hierarchical and capitalist understanding of the way the economy should function. It imposes only one purpose for and one way of structuring a company. The reason these alternative forms

become discredited within the realm of possibility is because they offer a different understanding and different assumptions about how the economy should work that threatens those benefitting from the current dominant model. In this very sense these worker cooperatives as part of a democratic economy are not just different ways of engaging in a capitalist economy or of creating small niche economies to help bolster communities of color who have often not been allowed to advance because of racist glass ceilings, as some authors suggest (Gordon Nembhard, 2014). But instead, they are part of a war of position in the ideological and cultural struggle over what role and whose needs the economy and capital should serve in the course of human history, and as such are a fundamentally different mode of production.

In order for them to fill this important historical role, however, they must take seriously the tenets of democracy as well as acknowledge and contend with racial, gender and class politics. I found many worker-cooperatives and worker-cooperative developers that unfortunately did not take democracy seriously, nor sought to deal with racial, gender, or class based discrimination. Instead they only paid lip service to it. These organizations, largely (but not all) non-profit worker-cooperative developers exhibited paternalistic behavior towards the workers they attempted to help, especially towards workers of color. Those worker-cooperatives that were committed to practicing and promoting a culture of democracy and autonomy on a daily basis found themselves to be more successful in not only their profitability but also worker happiness. They also coped better with racial, gender and class issues as they were more conscious and open to not only discussing these issues when they arose, but they had the procedural support to deal with them, in terms of a culture and discourse of respect and solidarity as well as well facilitated meetings. Acting and practicing democratically is key to fighting the war of position. Worker-cooperatives cannot just focus on better wages and conditions; they

must seek to change the culture of the workplace itself; to change the social relations of production.

The contribution of this research project therefore lies in filling a gap in the literature about worker-owned cooperatives, by providing an analysis of the material forces and the social relations that constitute them, while examining their inner workings, including racial dynamics, as well as what this means for those interested in building a counter hegemonic strategy that deals effectively with the fundamental social, economic and political problems of capitalism. This is therefore an effort to engage in a Gramscian and Marxist study that is praxis oriented and theoretically driven to understand the complex material social and political relations and how they interact with the struggle over culture and ideology and the role that worker cooperatives play in this struggle.

Research Questions

I aim to analyze how collectively owned and democratically run enterprises function and what problems they face internally as well as externally in order to understand whether they are a viable horizontally organized, wealth-generating alternative to corporate managerialism and its hierarchical structures. I also seek to understand the challenges that worker-cooperatives face.

I will do so by engaging the following questions:

1. How are worker owned and democratically run enterprises different than private or corporate enterprises?
2. Are they more or less meaningful to laborers than prior corporate jobs they have had? What are their personal and financial advantages or disadvantages?
3. What structural, (policy) as well as cultural limitations do worker owned enterprises face and how are they circumvented with a particular interest around issues of race, racism and gender?

4. What impact do worker owned enterprises have on the lives of the worker-owners?

Can changes to the way work and workplaces are structured deal with broad structural problems such as low wages, unemployment and a stagnant economy? If so how so?

5. How do issues of race, gender and identity in general impact worker cooperatives?

I address these questions by engaging in a comparative study using interpretive methods of participant observation and semi-structured interviews. I interviewed workers in several worker owned cooperatives, including Arizmendi Bakeries, Design Action Collective and Fusion Latina Catering, as well as workers in the non-profits US Federation of Worker Cooperatives, the Sustainable Economies Legal Center, Network of Bay Area Worker Cooperatives that help develop worker owned enterprises. I focus on understanding not just one enterprise but the collection of activity going on in the Bay Area to understand what is unique about this region where these cooperatives seem to have been normalized as opposed to other regions like Los Angeles where worker cooperatives are largely unheard of. My interest is in understanding their internal culture and struggles but also the macro social and economic aspects of their environment to understand how they have been successful in developing cooperatives and how that may be transplanted to other places. I also seek to highlight some of the problems worker-cooperatives and their workers face in their daily practices. As I began interviewing workers it became evident that there were very interesting and important racial, class and identity dynamics. There were also problems regarding white privilege and paternalism stemming from how workers were dealt with by whites in developer organizations. I attempt address some of these issues by focusing my case study largely on three workers from various cooperatives and their interactions within their worker-cooperatives and the worker-cooperative community in general.

Outline of Dissertation

What follows in Chapter One is first a Gramscian analysis of ideas and the role that intellectuals play in the development of culture and the dissemination of popular ideas. Specifically I turn inward towards analyzing the role that Social Science and specifically Political Science has historically played in solving social problems, as well as the methodological and disciplinary implications of taking seriously the idea of Economic Democracy. It is an effort to broaden the understanding of the role that research can play in the struggles involved in daily life. Suffice it to say that Chapter One is an attempt to situate theory and praxis through the lens of the discipline and what results from inherent assumptions about what role it ought to play in society. It is an attempt to articulate a disciplinary approach to research that is based on the foundations of Economic Democracy.

In Chapter Two I engage in a Gramscian analysis of the changing nature of labor and unions. I pay particular attention to the way in which declining union membership has resulted in a crisis for working people, which they themselves are beginning to solve outside of traditional union models by democratizing ownership. Seen from this perspective worker-cooperatives can be seen as the construction of a counter hegemony and a means to fighting a war of position with capital.

In Chapter Three I undertake a theoretical and historical analysis of the evolution of the concept and praxis of Economic Democracy. The presentation of the literature in this way allows not just a restatement of the literature itself but also of an analysis of the genealogy of the idea and the struggles over developing it. This is important not just to present existing literature but also to engage in theoretical debate about the importance of and ideological struggle over key ideas that later influence the attempted application or praxis of Economic Democracy.

Chapter Four directs its attention to a case study of the worker cooperative community

movement largely in the Bay area of San Francisco, with a particular focus on issues of race, racism, gender and identity politics, and white paternalism within individual worker cooperatives as well as across the worker cooperative industry. I interviewed workers from the Arizmendi Bakery Cooperative, Fusion Latina Restaurant and Catering Cooperative, and Design Action Collective; as well as cooperative developers from the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives, the Sustainable Economies Law Center, the Network Of Bay Area Worker Cooperatives, the Democracy Collaborative and others totaling 14 different organizations. The result was a varied picture of democracy among the organizations, with some paying lip service to the concept, while others were successful in their business as well as dealing with internal tensions because they effectively and consciously practiced democracy on a regular basis. The practice of democracy and worker-autonomy is one of the critical components to changing the paradigm of capitalism to something different. Those worker cooperatives that practiced and promoted these two things had success; in profits; but also in worker happiness.

The concluding Chapter Five looks to the future of building sustainable economies and democratic workplaces within a Neo-Liberal Capitalist world economy, as part of a war of position against the current model. I provide theoretical, as well as policy and institutional recommendations that can help develop the growth of democratic ownership in the U.S. as a third way between individualist capitalism and collectivist socialism without a soul (Azurmendi, 2001). An important aspect of accomplishing this is that there must be an intentional commitment to the daily practice of democracy and not just a lip service to it.

CHAPTER ONE: DEMOCRATIZING THE DISCIPLINE

With the ongoing economic crisis as the backdrop of my research, my dissertation explores the theories and praxis of Economic Democracy. Economic Democracy can be understood as an opening up of the economy, especially with regards to private property, to ideals of democratic governance and ownership as well as increasing participation by the people that make the economy function. It is composed of a multiplicity of different types of projects, including but not limited to the three forms of cooperatives, worker, consumer, and producer, along with direct public control of public budgets, open book (transparent) and democratic management, city development projects geared around social justice goals, investment in public housing, and democratically-run schools among other initiatives (Carnoy & Shearer, 1980). My research aims to understand the growing importance of Economic Democracy projects within a changing U.S. economy characterized by growing inequality.

However, before I delve into the research and explore the concept's role in the changing nature of labor and work and its theoretical history as well as a case study of recent attempts to implement democratic economies in the U.S., it is important to understand the role that intellectuals play in promoting and producing certain avenues of research over others which implicitly legitimize certain political and economic ideologies and their impacts. Antonio Gramsci argues that professional intellectuals serve largely as the deputies of hegemony, advancing the consent given by the general population to the direction imposed on social life by the dominant group, as well as legitimizing the apparatus of the state coercive power (Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 1971, p. 12). In short, professional intellectuals have the function of advancing the theories and ideologies on which the dominant society is based. They in essence become the political and cultural intermediaries that help spread the ideas that maintain and reproduce a given economic and social order in the exercise of hegemony (Gramsci,

2000, p. 300).

Gramsci elaborates on this idea, arguing that

Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. The capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy the organizer of a new culture, of a new legal system (Gramsci, 2000, p. 301).

My interest in this line of thought is to analyze how academic disciplines like Political Science and Social Science more generally obscure and de-legitimize alternative lines of thought and research, as well as to assess the implications of economic democracy for the discipline of political science and the social sciences in general function and should function.

While my research analyzes democratic forms of economic organization, how they function, the problems they face, and the practices that they have enacted to make them either successful or unsuccessful, it also first looks inward and seeks to understand 1) the role that the discipline and scholars play in advancing certain research agendas over others, 2) the purposes and goals of these fields, 3) how the accepted research methodologies limit the scope of impact that mainstream political science can have on society, 4) the prospects for a broadening of acceptable research agendas and a more nuanced understanding of politics, 5) the implications of economic democracy for the discipline of political science and social sciences in general, and finally 6) developing a research methodology that incorporates the values of democracy. The limitations of currently accepted notions of what political science is, what it does and what its purpose is, is central to the focus of my research about rethinking the processes of democracy in society. It is interesting, for example that research on the politics of collaborative and democratic forms of economic organization is scant even though such forms have been in existence for

centuries, table in their current iteration⁷ at least to Scottish weavers in Fenwick (1761), Goran (1777), and Darvel (1840) who created collective production associations (Merino Hernandez, 2005). I note this issue because ultimately I am interested in the role that political science and broader social science research can play in excavating possibilities that attempt to alleviate social problems.

In attempting to understand some of these issues one can begin with the fact that predominant social science theories, methods and goals are based on a set of implicit ontological and epistemological assumptions, which have largely led to the splintering into smaller disciplines of sociology, economics, political science, and anthropology (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008). This has also happened in conjunction with the development of frameworks advancing capitalism, producing particular confines and limits to research while inherently assuming that which should be questioned. Where one stands on these ontological and epistemological debates largely informs the separation of one field from another, the base assumptions made by that field, and therefore all of the acceptable questions that field can ask, including how it can and should study them. Marsh and Furlong argue that one's ontological and epistemological positions shape one's approach to theory and the methods that can be utilized to the point where they are like a skin and not a sweater that can be taken off whenever the researcher sees fit (March & Furlong, 2002). As such, the field of questions that are asked, that can be asked and should be asked are mostly conditioned by this context.

In this chapter I aim to discuss how social science and political science in particular have grown into and promote a dominant discourse that defines what political science is and what it is not. This discourse has purpose and power, it advances certain propositions while ignoring or

⁷ Older forms of cooperative production trace back to at least Babylonia 3000 BC in forms associations of collective agricultural production, Egypt from 3100 BC to 1150 AD in cooperative associations of masters and artesian and Aztec calpulli (cooperative housing) systems (Merino Hernandez, 2005)

discounting others and it has additional consequences in areas such as funding and job priorities within the field. The result, I argue, is counter-productive to a social science that aims to study and understand the complexity of the social, political, economic world in order to solve social problems. I then follow with an analysis of Marxism as what Gramsci would call a “philosophy of praxis” (2000) or what I call a democratic methodological process of praxis. This is a discussion of what it means to be engaged in a dialectical process of democratizing the discipline as well as the process of engaging in research through a discussion of participatory and democratic action research. These discussions are important to engage in before moving to the research itself because they establish the *purpose, meaning and process* of research. There is a reason and purpose for why we engage in these intellectual endeavors that should be stated and understood at the outset. Our ultimate goal as researchers should be for our research to be useful, but in what ways, by whom and for what purposes necessitates a conversation about what it means to do research within the social sciences and political science in particular. How is what we study connected to how we study and why we study it? These questions are often overlooked. Specifically, I argue that political science scholars should ask whether the discipline that is tasked with understanding, analyzing and ultimately promoting democracy, actually practices it ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically. And if not, why not?

A Short Sighted Politics: The Discipline as Discourse

In the early 2000’s there was dissent brewing from within the discipline of political science within its flagship organization, the American Political Science Association (APSA). The dissent is now famously referred to as Perestroika! because it became a movement focused on how Political Science is done and what types of political science are valued. The debate that began with an email in 2000 is far from over, but it raised many important concerns. One of the main conversations centered on a need for a problem-driven rather than a method driven political

science (Hoeber Rudolph, 2005, p. 13). Many of the dissenters argued that political science should be centered around understanding political problems and asking scientific questions about these problems rather than focusing on what questions can be asked by using quantitative (or any) methods. Specifically the argument was that political science and its flagship journal had been, “hijacked and monopolized by practitioners of rational choice and formal modelers using statistical tests and mathematical proofs” (Hoeber Rudolph, 2005). This “hi-jacking” in turn limited what was understood or seen as “real”, “acceptable” or “good” political science and therefore what types of problems or questions merited investigation. Political science had reached a point where it not only limited the types of questions it asked about the world but it did so by limiting the way in which it could ask them. There existed a very constrained definition of what we mean by and what counts as ‘political science’ and ‘politics’. It was taken for granted that political science is the field of study of ‘formal’ politics: elections, political parties, voting behavior, which ultimately means political science is the field of study of the selling and buying of votes. How did the mainstream discipline arrive at such a narrow field of vision? A field of vision that obscured the kinds of questions that were asked because the discipline itself limited what could be seen or understood as politics, especially dictated by the tools of research it accepted as proper.

To try and understand this one must first understand the historical trajectory and development of the larger school of thought known as social science. The term social science has its origins in a debate between cooperativists. William Thomson coined the term by proclaiming himself and his followers champions of the new social science in an effort to distinguish his cooperativists views from those of Robert Owen, (Bowman, 2011). Thompson argued that Robert Owen’s cooperativist vision was overly authoritarian, paternalistic and anti-

democratic and over the course of many debates, Thompson eventually shortened the term social science to socialist in a November 1827 letter to *The Cooperative Magazine* (Bowman, 2011).

From the outset then, the idea of a social science was geared towards not just understanding the current world, but also and more importantly, of creating an egalitarian society. Marx, and many others who followed, worked from this tradition to understand problems as a means to bring into existence a more just and equitable society through the combination of theory and praxis. As the concept of social science developed, arguments for egalitarianism were met with opposition or delegitimized.

While social science has its roots in radical democratic ideas, quite literally having been a synonym for socialist at its inception (Bowman, 2011), the modern social science disciplines grew out of the response to Marxian and Socialist theories of society, politics and economics, and as such they generally became, directly or indirectly, capitalist apologist enterprises. Both Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, responded to Marx by negating his economic theory of society and instead positing ideas based on values, norms and culture. These theories, while not without merit, advance a very important notion that has a large impact on how the disciplines developed from then on. By negating the connection between the economy, society, and politics that Marx attempted to understand in all of its complexity and retreating to positions that narrow the field of inquiry, these early scholars gave birth to the separate modern disciplines within the social sciences that we know today that largely focus on understanding individual or collective behavior without analyzing power structures. This separation begins a narrowing process that atomizes how different fields study what they study. According to Ozanne and Saatcioglu, Thomas Kuhn (1962) much later but in the same tradition, further popularized the idea that “studies are encapsulated within paradigms with their own internal logic” (Ozanne & Saatcioglu,

2008). As a result of this process there is a common practice to separate society into these spheres or bubbles: political; civil; private, economic, social etc.

Scholars then further this encapsulating effect by making it common practice to attempt to separate themselves from that which they study. They make claims to objectivity in order to distance themselves from the objects or subjects of their study when in reality they are also part of the social world they are attempting to study. There is no “real” objectivity, but only one that we can approximate based on shared understandings of similar experiences and observations. Having a narrow understanding of politics and therefore a separation of spheres that defines what is worthy of research also results in a separation of researchers from that which they research. The goal should not be to achieve “objectivity” by the researcher separating herself from that which she studies but rather to achieve “objectivity” by understanding the situatedness of the researcher and the role that the researcher plays in the political world. Political Science Scholar Christopher Kyriakides at Cyprus University of Technology who has written on the process of research and the inherent assumptions made by scholars, argues that:

It is quite amazing how some academics, occupying as they do, a privileged position of being paid to think about the human world, ignore the totality of human relationships that make it possible for them to eat, drink, wear clothes, live in houses; in short, everything that makes it possible for academics to exist in a state of privilege without themselves having to lift a finger. More amazing is when any attempt to understand how human existence works under capitalism is dismissed by those academics as economic reductionist/determinist. Of course, the analytical separation of the human world into ‘economic’ and ‘other’ spheres (that shouldn't meet) is a legacy of 19th century Western bourgeois sociology, which accompanied the reactionary Western bourgeois irrationalism that made a philosophical and political virtue out of the complete separation of those ‘spheres’ in the ‘real’ world. (Kyriakides, 2014)

While that separation happens for a “real” objectivity, rather than an approximate one, even within the “hard” sciences and specifically quantum physics there is a common

understanding that how one studies something affects the outcome of the research. In 1923 Arthur Compton devised an experiment now known as Compton Scattering to study light. What he learned through his experiments was that light acted differently depending on whether he studied light as particles or light as waves (Zukav, 2001). When we study something, we are not studying external reality independent of ourselves but instead we are studying our interaction with that which we study (Zukav, 2001). The further development of Compton's research led to Heisenberg studying electrons and finding that all of his varied attempts to observe the electron actually altered the electron. This important contribution to the "hard" sciences, that we cannot observe something without changing it, is known as Heisenberg's "uncertainty principle" (Zukav, 2001). The failure to understand this in the social sciences has a very limiting effect as it narrows each discipline's field of vision and privileges one discourse of what political science really is and as a result also defining and delegitimizing what it is not.

The paradigm of legitimate research emanating from political science has power in that it tends to delegitimize and therefore devalue research that deviates from the created, promoted and accepted discourse of what is "good" political science. Gramsci argues that this is the purpose of intellectuals in a society. Similarly, Michel Foucault (1972-1977, p. 120) argued that, "discourse serves to make possible a whole series of interventions, tactical and positive interventions of surveillance, circulation, control and so forth..." Discourses generate knowledge and "truth," giving those who speak this "truth" social, cultural, and even political power. This power "produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth" (Foucault, 1979, p. 194). For Foucault (1972-1977, p. 119), "what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is . . . that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse." In essence, power produces discourse that justifies, legitimates, and

increases and often leads to hegemonic discourses and social relations. In a similar manner, Antonio Gramsci advances a theory of cultural hegemony as a certain type of domination that exhibits itself not through physical or overt force but instead as a dialectical social process involving discursive practices that have material impacts (1971, p. 13). In social science and political science in particular the discipline produces specific knowledges that act as a form of discourse that justifies what is acceptable. This normalization of acceptability constructs a hegemonic political science that establishes what is outside of that norm and therefore unacceptable political science. Similarly, Edward Said (1994, p. 14), speaking in reference to literary discourse, asserts that literature as a cultural form is not just about literature, but instead is about history and politics. Said argues that literature supports, elaborates, and consolidates the practices of empire. Journal articles, course requirements, book publishing, conference presentations, colloquia, tenure requirements and all other aspects of academic culture and disciplines construct stories of acceptability, creating cultures of “us” that are differentiated from “them” (Said, 1994: xiii). Academia, through universities and their respective departments, as the creators of knowledge, advance particular types of knowledge over others, based on which types of knowledge are deemed acceptable and which are rejected from the above-mentioned screening processes. Ultimately, as Habermas suggests, knowledge is inseparable from the interests that guide it (Habermas, 1971).

Universities, disciplines and departments all elaborate and consolidate the practices of power in multiple overlapping discourses from which dominant hegemonic discourses emerge. In political science and other fields of social science these privileged types of research are largely based on what research methods are used, which fit one very specific ontological and epistemological view of the world and how we understand that world. The privileged methods

and positions are limited to positivism, empiricism and quantitative methods, even though methods do not exist in a void. Dvora Yanow argues that, “they are intimately bound up with a fundamental orientation toward the reality status of what those methods allow us to study and the knowability that we presume about the world” (2005, p. 206).

Dominant discourses are constructed and perpetuated for particular reasons. As Kevin Dunn (2003: 6) points out, representations have very precise political consequences. They either legitimize or delegitimize power, depending on what they are and whom they are about (Said, 1994: 16). Representing interpretive and qualitative methods as ‘not real’ political science has a particular impact. A narrative emerges that separates what is not acceptable social ‘science’ from the acceptable disciplinary ethos of quantitative, statistical research (Hoeber Rudolph, 2005) (Sanders, 2005) (Schram, 2005). These discourses are advanced in the interest of exerting power over others; they tell a story that provides a justification for action. They allow for certain types of research to be funded, published, accepted at conferences, acceptable for coursework, which has consequences for who gets accepted and funded into graduate school, hired and promoted. For Said, there is always an intention or will to use power and therefore to perpetuate some discourses at the expense of others. It isn’t only about what methodologies are acceptable but also about what types of questions those methods allow to be asked.

The types of research that are regarded as acceptable are not very good at dealing with complex questions of social, economic and political structures. The dominant methodology in mainstream political science negates the very questioning of the assumptions it takes for granted. For instance, a preponderant sector of the subfield of American Politics focuses largely on elections and voting. Think tanks and universities across the country devote a great deal of time and resources to studying elections and voting. However there is an inherent assumption in the

studying of elections and voting that the U.S. is a democracy. But how deep is our democracy? Do people feel empowered or disempowered by our democracy and more importantly why? These questions can't be understood just by a limiting count of yes and no answers. The focus on certain methods as acceptable precludes questions about the legitimacy of the structure of our society. In this way mainstream political science is very intentional in what it deems legitimate research and illegitimate research. It is this intentionality that makes particular discourse dangerous and powerful. As Roxanne Doty suggests, through repetition there is created a "regime of truth and knowledge" (1996, p. 2). There is a regime of truth that normalizes the fact that the U.S. is a democracy, and it is legitimized and becomes accepted as such through discursive practices, by the constant studying of elections and voting. But this does not actually constitute truth, as it does not measure whether people feel engaged or empowered in our system of government. So rather than study the depth of our democracy and how and whether people feel engaged, there is a dominant discourse that assumes democracy from the outset and proceeds tinker with counting votes.

This dominant discourse of what the study of American Politics is, and disciplinary meta-narrative (master frame that are often unquestioned [see Klotz and Lynch, 2007]), is important because it construct "realities" that are taken seriously and acted upon. Cecelia Lynch asserts that "dominant narratives do 'work', to the degree that their conceptual foundations call upon or validate norms that are deemed intersubjectively legitimate" (1999, p. 13). They establish unquestioned "truths" and thus provide justification for those with power to act "accordingly." They allow the production of specific relations of power. Powerful social actors are in a prime position to construct and perpetuate discourses that legitimize the policies they seek to establish. Political scientists who study mainstream "American politics" get to decide what that frame

means and whether or not up and coming scholars “do” that kind of work. As Lynch argues, these types of “narrative interpretations don’t arise out of thin air, they must be constantly articulated, promoted, legitimized, reproduced, and changed by actual people” (Lynch, 1999). Social actors with this kind of power do this by what Doty (1994) calls self-definition by the “other.” Said (1994: 52) suggests that the formation of cultural identities can only be understood contrapuntally—that an identity cannot exist without an array of opposites.

Within the field of political science there is a construction of what is deemed “good” political science and as a result there is the dichotomous “bad” political science. Charles Taylor argues that “the progress of natural science has lent great credibility to [a specific] epistemology... [and that] the temptation has been overwhelming to reconstruct the sciences of man on the same model; or rather to launch them in lines of inquiry that fit that paradigm” (Taylor J. , 1979, p. 9). This epistemological bias is one that privileges empiricist inquiry that produces what Taylor calls brute data, data whose validity cannot be questioned by offering another interpretation (Taylor J. , 1979, p. 8). He argues that this empiricist orientation must be hostile to a conduct of inquiry, which is based on interpretation.

One of the problems with the mainstream political science methodology is that fundamental questions about the process of research are overlooked rather than seriously discussed. The process of engaging in any sort of research ought not overlook the effect that researchers have in interjecting into the lives of people. Researchers, by asking respondents any question alter any opportunity at a natural response. The question itself takes respondents outside of the normal world and thus affects what their response may be. The framing of it may also affect how they respond. In this vein, Michel Foucault argues that when people know they are being observed they tend to police themselves (Foucault, 1979). He develops this line of

reasoning through elaborating Bentham's concept of the Panopticon or Panopticism as well as developing an understanding of normalizing judgment and examination. Panopticism is defined as the, "constituted technique, universally widespread, of coercion" (Foucault, 1984, p. 211).

This coercion occurs through,

a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify, and to punish. It [the examination] establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected. The super imposition of the power relations and knowledge relations assumes in the examination all its visible brilliance. (Foucault, 1984, p. 197)

Within the researcher-subject relationship, there exists a specific power relationship that affects the dynamics of the research. There is a taken-for-granted assumption about who has legitimate authority and therefore power in the carrying out of research. In a ritualized empiricist line of research there is little to no room for the "subject" to exert any power by answering questions in a manner that she feels is important or in a manner which allows for her contextual understanding of the questions being asked. If the process of this type of research coerces and creates a situation of self-policing, how well can we know if the information gathered in these labs, focus groups, or polls is correct and more importantly useful? That is why it is important to have these discussions and for researchers to be self-reflective in their research process.

But the effects the researcher has on her research is largely overlooked in quantitative research and one of the adverse results of this is that in the social sciences and political science in particular research focuses more on questions of patterns or how people behave rather than attempting to understand why. Elizabeth Sanders argues that leading journals in the field of political science adopt this narrow view of what real "science" is, where only "arcane statistical

analysis counts as systematic, “scientific” analysis” (Sanders, 2005). Sanders argues that for years the APSR, one of the flagship journals in Political Science, has considered pioneering descriptive works as “unscientific” (2005, p. 171).

Through constant repetition of these disciplinary discursive practices of what courses are taught, what methods are promoted and funded, what is published, accepted at conferences and what job requirements are desirable and promotable, a positivist and quantitative view of the world is consistently articulated and thus promoted. This view is taken as a truth of what political science is and what it is not, and how it ought to be done, thus also creating a delegitimized identity of the “not real” political science “other” of Interpretive and Qualitative inquiry. Consequently, these dominant discourses and meta-narratives provide a veil for “imperial encounters” (Doty, 1996), even within the university environment. Dunn (2003: 174) suggests that dominant discourses legitimize and authorize specific political actions, particularly economic ones. In political science, those that do “good” political science get funded, published, jobs, promoted, irrespective of whether their work contributes to solving social problems. Much like Foucault suggests, “the universality of our knowledge [especially our disciplinary knowledge and how we understand that knowledge and promote that knowledge], has been acquired at the cost of exclusions, bans, denials, rejections, at the price of a kind of cruelty with regard to reality” (Foucault, 1972-1977).

Sanford F. Schram argues that the dominant paradigm of research in political science “assumes that a study of a single case is “unscientific,” provides no basis for generalizing, does not build theory, cannot contribute to the growth of political knowledge, and as a result, is not even to be considered for publication in the leading journals and is to be discouraged as a legitimate doctoral dissertation project” (2005, p. 104). The empiricist discourse that privileges

method-driven political science has consequently driven political science to the types of understandings that Charles Taylor regards as sterile, “because we cannot come to understand important dimensions of human life within the bounds set by this epistemological orientation.” (1979, p. 10).

The historical process that devalues the understanding of “important dimensions of human life” to the point where they are deemed illegitimate avenues of research only occurs in a way that is intellectually artificial, because in reality political phenomena are completely enmeshed and embedded in the complexity of human life. Thus separating the economy from politics and society is not really possible, the three are inextricably linked and co-constitutive of each other. Karl Polanyi argues that the idea that society and politics are separate from the economy and therefore the workplace is one that is constructed and thus their separation is only at the level of theory and abstraction (1944). Wood takes the argument a step further, stating that, “there has been a tendency to perpetuate the rigid conceptual separation of the ‘economic’ and ‘political’ which has served capitalist ideology so well ever since the classical economist discovered the ‘economy’ in the abstract and began emptying capitalism of its social and political content” (Wood, 1995, p. 19). Parenti argues along a similar line,

The economy is not a neutral entity. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as “the economy”. Nobody has ever seen or touched the economy. What we see are people engaged in the exchange of values, in productive and not such productive labor, and we give an overarching name to all these activities, calling them ‘the economy’, a hypothetical construct imposed on observable actualities. We then often treat our abstractions as reified entities, as self-generating forces of their own. So we talk about the problems of the economy in general terms, not the problems of the capitalist economy with a specific set of social relations and a discernable distribution of class power. The economy becomes an embodied entity unto itself. (Parenti, 1995, p. 81).

Darder and Torres also oppose the separation of political and economic spheres by pointing to Marx's notion that, "the ultimate secret of capitalist production is a political one. The key to

Marx's argument is that the well camouflaged continuity between what we term economic and political spheres be exposed. In Marxist analysis, the economy is viewed as a set of social relations" (Darder & Torres, 2004, p. 108). As such, economic processes that control the daily social relations of workers are inherently political. Thus, scholarship ought to make an attempt to understand the complexity of the social, economic and political world rather than perpetuate a reductionist understanding of it.

Following strict disciplinary boundaries has led not only to political science becoming largely secluded in its own 'sphere' or bubble; it has also had a very limiting effect on what is considered 'politics'. As a result, one of the areas of study that is ignored by political science is the workplace and the nature and structure of work as an area of political analysis. Stanley Warner asks "why is there no field [or study] of workplace democracy?" even when as a subject it "coheres around fundamental social questions and lends itself extremely well to the type of critical inquiry supposedly valued at universities?" (1987). He answers, "Because even at the more general level, the study of work, the experience of work, and how work is organized do not constitute an important category of study within the mainstream social sciences" because scholars assume the naturalness of capitalist labor relations, the very thing they are supposed to question. (Warner, 1987)(Marx, 1867) In 2015, these arguments still largely hold true.

What we mean by 'politics' has drastic implications for how, why, where and when we study politics science. If we limit the definition of politics to what occurs in the recognized political 'sphere', then the logical outcome of research on politics is limited to studying elites through elections, voting, congress, the supreme court, the presidency and foreign policy, while leaving out the daily political struggles of working people. However, if we define politics as Sheldon Wolin does, "the legitimized and public contestation, primarily by organized and

unequal social powers over access to the resources available” (Wolin, 1994), then it makes possible a much larger expanded area for study. It also democratizes the discussion over who and what is worthy of being studied. The limited view of politics privileges those with the authority to make societal decisions, namely elite elected or appointed officials. If politics is continuous, ceaseless and endless (Wolin, 1994), and about the struggle for power by those not in influential or privileged positions, then it makes it possible and important to place the non-privileged and their daily politics at the center of investigation.

Towards an Emancipatory Social Sciences

If political science aims to truly understand politics it ought to do so not by attempting to remove the complexity and isolate the constituent parts of that complexity or by claiming objectivity, but rather by grappling with understanding the complexity itself, including each of its constituent parts and how they interconnect. One way of doing this is by approaching social science research much like the Gramscian theory of hegemony approaches it, which is to say that it accepts social complexity as the very condition of political struggle (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Interpretivist and qualitative researchers do this by making no pretensions about objectivity and seeking to systematically understand complex political phenomena while understanding and reflecting on their situated positions as researchers. These researchers attempt to get at nuanced and complex understandings of phenomena by understanding the complex power dynamics at work in the process of research. The goal of being self-reflective concerns not only the “subject’s” responses but also the researcher’s assessment and understanding of the subject’s responses. Interpretivists do this in order to understand how the researcher’s situatedness may affect the outcome of the research. Yanow argues that for these researchers, “the subject of social scientific study is not an inert fact of nature... merely there... [they have] a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that [have] given [it] reality and presence” (Yanow, 2006). It is

important to acknowledge that there is also an inevitable role played by the researcher's *a priori* knowledge, experiences and situatedness in interactions and entanglements embedded within a historical and social context (Yanow, 2006). Researchers exist within these interactions and entanglements, within a constructed social reality, and they are not and cannot be outside of them (Yanow, 2006, p. 75). As Samer Shehata suggests, we bring our own identity and therefore our own theories to our research, but as such, we are also able to reflect critically about these in relation to our research (Shehata, 2006). Similarly Cecelia Lynch argues that,

critical interpretation assumes that we must analyze the situatedness of the arguments themselves, the evidence used to support them, and the ethical lessons drawn from them, to understand the power relations that they support or deny. In evaluating this combination of arguments evidence, and ethics, the researcher must also be aware of the context that underlies her own questioning stance. (2013, p. 299)

A political science that seeks to solve problems needs to ask questions not based on what is politically or efficiently expedient but on what is important to understand, while also being self-reflective in the process. The goal of such an endeavor is that the interaction between empirical grounding and critical questioning can permit researchers to break through powerful, and possibly stale, paradigms to gain new insights on politics, power, and ethics (Lynch, 2013).

Research should focus on the problems affecting our society that need to be understood in order to propose remedies or solutions. As far back as 1968, David Easton called for the profession to address the pressing issues of the era, such as race, poverty, and gender (Hoerber Rudolph, 2005, p. 14). It is an impediment to the understanding of such important issues to study them only from strict disciplinary boundaries and strict methodological norms. Raul Fernandez suggests that, "These pitfalls of the social sciences have rendered social science incapable of understanding the economic plight of racial minorities [and now to a greater extent non racial majorities] in the United States" (1977).

Those social scientists whom have taken up the study of work mostly attempt to address and combat the ills of capitalism through ‘reform’ within established structures and institutions, which results only in ameliorating rather than challenging the roots of extreme structural inequality and poverty. This is done most notably through promoting the establishment of social safety nets (Keynes, 1936) and in the field of labor relations through ‘quality of worklife programs’, employee involvement and participation, and quality circles programs geared towards placating workers in order to improve production processes, productivity, competitiveness and therefore profits. (Elbing, Gadon, & Gordon, 1974; Taylor J. , 1979; Guest, 1979; Roche & MacKinnon, 1970). Many of these programs and ideologies have remained and continue to circulate throughout the corporate business culture of today. These programs focus on improving the working relationships and environment at work, but do not address changing the fundamental power dynamics or the structure or nature of work itself. They limit the scope of research to questions of how to improve worker efficiency and not worker dignity, or the relationship between work, poverty and inequality.

If then political science aims to be the field tasked with the study of politics and more specifically the study of democracy it must first democratize from within broaden its disciplinary boundaries in order to contend with the realities of complex political problems. This begins with acknowledging that there is a multiplicity of different conceptions of what “politics” is. As Dvora Yanow suggests, “in the house of “science” there are many rooms, and especially with regards to conceptualizations of “politics” (2005). Secondly, when it comes to methods we must also let a hundred flowers bloom, and let a hundred schools of thought contend (Rudolph, 2005), in order for us to understand the complexity of politics and its interconnection with the economy and society. Finally, researchers must also try and break from the purported objective nature of

research and their separation from that which they study. Researchers are all shaped by their own experience. In my research of work and poverty I understand my situatedness, having grown up in a working class immigrant background. This has an effect on how I perceive these issues. The fact that I chose to study issues that I myself have experience with is a testament to the problematics of wholly ‘objective’ research. But this also does not mean I can’t study these without reflecting on my experiences and produce a thorough analysis.

Marxism as a Pedagogy and Method of Theory AND Praxis

Marxism as a method that analyzes social relations has much to offer on issues ranging from the economy, government, policy and administration, social welfare, healthcare and many others (Torres & Martin, 2004). It does so because its foundation is quite opposite to the separation and atomization that has occurred in the social sciences. Marxism as a system of analysis is primarily guided by a logic of drawing connections between all the varying social relations in society within specific historical contexts and dialectical processes.

As mentioned before, knowledge is inseparable from the interests that guide it, as are the theories and methods and paradigms used to advance these knowledges (Habermas, 1971).

Rodolfo Torres and Edward Martin argue that,

Cursory analyses have been all too common in academic discussions regarding the alleged demise of Marxist scholarship, especially in light of the political transformations of Eastern Europe and the catalytic drive of the globalization phenomena. Rational choice, public choice, and neo-liberal devotees have assigned Marxism to anachronistic categories while identifying scholarship in this field as self-serving. (Torres & Martin, 2004, p. 13).

This is particularly pronounced in political science where there is little space to be taken seriously if one uses a Marxist methodology, especially since political scientist Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the “End of History” announcing to the world that communism and all of its related concepts and forms of analysis (i.e. socialism, Marxism) were dead (1989).

However as Torres and Martin suggest, Marxism “has much to offer by providing a conduit for enlightened criticism on issues ranging from economy, government, policy and administration, to social welfare, health care, and other numerous topics in public affairs” (2004, p. 13). Instead of attempting to draw disciplinary boundaries which tend to preclude certain types of questions and research, Marxism attempts to understand the complexity of the world through notions of historical and dialectical materialism. It is rooted in the connection between things and people rather than their separation. Marxist methodology provides a context for deriving valuable information on the systemic causes of social injustice and the subordination of fundamental human rights as well as a nuanced understanding of an expanded notion of politics (Torres & Martin, 2004). Marxism as a method provides the best (but not exclusive) and most comprehensive approach to understanding politics as a contestation of power because it draws connections from the complexity of the social, economic and political world, especially one dominated by capitalist accumulation (Torres & Martin, 2004). This approach to disciplinary research is completely contrary to the taxonomy and incessant divisions that happens within the social sciences, a taxonomy which is not accidental. According to Torres and Martin, “this is because social interests determine precisely which ideas are to be adopted specifically by the ruling class” (2004, p. 15). In this respect Marx and Engels note that “the ruling class having the means of material production has also control over the means of intellectual production, so that... the ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant [social classes]” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 64). In an era of intensified campaigns to privatize education and with corporations funneling millions of dollars into business schools and also the primary funders of fellowships and research grants, it is not difficult to see corporate influence in what kinds of research is funded and which is not (Henkel, 1997).

The challenge for scholars then becomes one of working towards challenging the dominant paradigm and uncovering the ways in which the capitalist hegemonic ideas have changed over time. In doing so scholars should attempt to shed light on how these ideas became dominant while articulating and highlighting counter-hegemonic discourses. The goal here is to understand the struggle over discourses as a dynamic process rather than a static one.

This type of nuanced understanding is important for understanding the potential power of competing discourses. This type of understanding can help challenge hegemonic conceptions of what politics is and how it ought to be studied. This allows people to consider and research other possibilities without researchers falling victim to academic reductionism. To change or breakdown the dominant discourses we must begin to (re)introduce and take seriously ideas and practices that are alternatives to the capitalist paradigm, especially within the academy where these hegemonic discourses ought to be scrutinized. Marxism as pedagogy, and a research method of theory *and* praxis provides a conceptually sound way of understanding complexity and nuance in order to attempt to solve social problems. While Karl Marx is most remembered for his works on Capital, his lasting and most important contribution is that he challenged us to think differently while providing the basis for people to envision alternatives; to imagine a society based on cooperation rather than competition and to strive, work and struggle towards it.

As Lenin stated in his notes on Marx's writings on the Paris Commune,

such a statement...is quite incomprehensible and even alien in principle to [even] our present-day quasi Marxists, who like to take the name of Marx in vain, to borrow only his estimate of the past, and not his ability to make the future. (Lenin 1940, p. 94).

Similarly, scholarship should not just be about understanding the past or the present, but should also seek to create a better future. Scholarship can only do this by challenging dominant paradigms of how the world should work and developing ideas for how it ought to and can work.

If one takes seriously ideas of democracy, giving people not just voices but also power, then the research process should also reflect that. Research should also be inclusive rather than divided, done in partnership and collaboratively with the people a researcher is attempting to study.

Democratic Research: Action Research

One of the ways researchers can work towards attempting to do what Marx set out to do is to engage in democratic research focused on a continuing critique of capital but more importantly on developing and extending the knowledge of the counter-hegemonic forms and practices. One such counter-hegemonic form is economic democracy. The goal of economic democracy as a conceptual paradigm is to create the bases for involving a greater number of people in the daily economic and political processes that govern their lives, through meaningful participation. Taking Economic Democracy seriously within academia means involving what I call the partners in research or research collaborators (what are traditionally called subjects or units of analysis) in the research process through a mutually beneficial process known as Participatory Action Research. Participatory action research (PAR) or community action research is a research method that forges research alliances with relevant stakeholders in the community to explore and develop solutions to local problems, with the intention of being mutually beneficial (Ozanne & Anderson, 2010). Reason and Bradbury define it as, “a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes” (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Fals-Borda and Rahman define it simply as “a systemic approach that seeks knowledge for social action” (1991). This research paradigm is based upon the goal of working with and helping people, also employing methodologies that are different from traditional research (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008). Instead of viewing the “research subjects” as independent of the research, in PAR their knowledges and

expertise are put at the center of study and are therefore seen as collaborators. Reason and Bradbury argue that, “participants are collaborators in the research project because action researchers assume that people who participate and are committed to the process will generate more thorough social accounts and will be more invested in the successful application of the findings” (2001). The research itself becomes a partnership between the researcher and what are often called the “practitioners” to develop each other’s capacities and find solutions.

This research process is a dialogical process that has its origins in what Paulo Freire calls the pedagogy of the oppressed (1970). Its roots lie in liberation and creating a situation in which groups strive *with* each other for liberation. In the specific researcher-subject relationship there must be a striving for liberation together. In the process of research there must be mutually beneficial exchanges of knowledge and skills between both parties. The researcher learns and is taught the processes he/she wishes to study, but the researcher must also share his/her expertise so as to leave the research collaborators with information and skills that they did not have before and can use to empower themselves once the researcher is gone. This research practice is one not of “doing for” but of “building-with,” and the goal is for the community to be the possessors of skills and knowledge. It is based on the creation and empowering concept of self-help. Therefore, an important goal for Action Research is for both the researcher and the practitioners in the process to understand a complex problem better and provide workable solutions to immediate political problems, while also building human capacities for self-empowerment. (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008). Participatory action research assumes that, the act of doing research helps “practitioners” develop new capacities and is itself empowering. (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008). Ultimately the goal and result is what Yanow and Shwartz-Shea call the “co-generation” of data, data gathered together and solutions worked on together (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006).

In practice PAR begins with the researcher understanding that those with the expertise of what is to be studied lies in those who are involved daily in the processes being studied. This involves having and developing a sense of humility and is in line with what Steve Maynard-Moody and Michael Musheno suggest when they argue that, “we are not the experts in their worlds; they are” (2006). Such an approach turns standard social science research on its head. Currently, the social relations of research separate the researcher from that which he/she researches including research subjects. Paulo Freire suggests that this approach closes the researchers into “circles of certainty from which they cannot escape,” which leads them to make their own truth (Freire, 1970, p. 38). This truth, he argues, is, “not the truth of men and women who struggle to build the future, running the risk involved in this very construction. Nor is it the truth of men and women who fight side by side and learn together how to build this future...” (Freire, 1970, p. 39).

Participatory action research requires the researcher to understand that he/she is the person who is new to the processes being observed or research and therefore is the one learning in this process. In doing so the researcher is entering into dialogue *with* the collaborators. From this point there are many different methods than can be employed (participatory observation, interviews, archival research), and several of these may be employed together. First, however, building trust with those whom the researcher has entered into dialogue with is necessary. One way of doing this is for the researcher to bring something helpful to the table. What this really means is to volunteer in some capacity by being a resource or being willing to provide resources or knowledge that the research partners may need and the researcher has access to. It can mean to help the research partners access information about colleges for their daughters and sons, or it may mean to help their organization with resources from the university regarding grant

applications or any other endeavor that shares the resources and access of the researcher with the research partners.

Yanow and Schwartz Shea suggest that participating by volunteering helps the researcher gain access, and provides a place from which to start new research (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). They recommend, “that a more human-centered, interactive process, approach dovetails with our articulation of a set of methodological skills used in accessing potential sources...” (2006). Participating by volunteering allows the researcher to build trust, which will increase the possibility of access to potential interviewees in a non-formal and welcoming environment. Interviews in this context are very helpful and allow a much better, closer and in-depth understanding of the subject. Joe Soss describes this process as semi-structured or unstructured format that provides freedom and flexibility for probes and follow-up questions; it is a more conversational format (Soss, 2006). The benefits of this format is that it provides room for human agency, in that the persons being interviewed have the ability to also guide the conversation into things they want to discuss and feel are important and move past things they do not. As. These methodological practices allow the research partners to construct their own political narratives and allow a nuanced understanding of the area, processes of study.

One note of caution, however, is that participatory action research must be done with good intentions and should not be used as a mechanism to take advantage of a set of people for the sake of accessing research subjects. While this is important it is also not sufficient. Participatory action research necessitates ethical commitments to the people and communities that become involved in the research process and the researcher has a duty to help them maintain their dignity not only in the research process but with the research results. This can be difficult when one confronts important issues to be raised in the writing up of the research but one must

find a way to make sure that one does not abuse the trust that the research partners placed in the researcher when they granted him/her with access. These sorts of ethical dilemmas are not necessarily unique to participatory action research, but they are more pronounced, and the researcher bears an explicit responsibility to think them through. This has its origins in the ontological, and epistemological positions from which PAR originates.

Because PAR is a form of research that seeks to empower people, is based on local understandings developed in collaboration with the partners of research, and employs dialogical methods to generate knowledge *with* people, it strives for a balanced power relationship between researcher and research partners (Denzin, 2001). In fact it actually seeks to negate the division between researcher and research partners and seeks to balance out the relations of power by acknowledging everyone's positions and focusing on the end result and realizing that everyone involved has an interest in working together for common purpose. Participatory action researchers generally use this method because they seek change across individual, group or national politics, developing solutions in collaboration with "practitioners" that are also sensitive to their needs and desires. (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008). PAR researchers have an emancipatory interest in improving human welfare and use methods of reflection and action (Murray & Ozanne, 1991), which is rooted in a pedagogy, which must be forged with, not for the community (Freire, 1970, p. 48). Therefore, Participatory action research is a democratic methodology that compliments a Marxist research methodology. It is a praxis oriented methodology that can actually be derived from Marx's famous dictum in the "Thesis on Feuerbach" that, "the philosophers [and academics] have interpreted the world in various ways; the point however, is to change it." (Marx, Thesis on Feuerbach, 1845).

If political science wishes to be the field tasked with the study politics and especially of democracy, it must have a purpose and that purpose must be to help in some way to improve the human condition. If it is to do this, it must also take seriously the locations it has often ignored, those locations around which our society functions, and those other “spheres” it has neglected which together construct our social, political and economic world. It must burst the bubble in which it has operated in order to be a problem-driven endeavor that seeks to improve the politics it studies and more importantly the political realities of everyday people. If democracy really means anything then, we must study it, especially in *the* place that conditions this society’s social relations, where people spend an increasingly large majority of their time, within a changing capitalist economy, that changes first in the workplace. In this respect Marxist methodology coupled with the study of the democratic workplace and a democratic economy is the ultimate expression, understanding and affirmation of: 1) the fact that, society, politics and economy are embedded, part of and co-constitutive of each other 2) If we are to believe in and promote the values of democracy, research must be problem driven and be done *with* collaborators for the purposes of striving for liberation. In the final analysis political science should be an intellectual pursuit that strives to fit Erik Ollin Wright’s conception of “an emancipatory social science that diagnoses the world as it exists, envisions viable alternatives and understands the obstacles, possibilities and dilemmas of transformation” (Wright, 2010). Ultimately, context matters. historical, theoretical, pedagogical, and praxis all matter and as Raul Fernandez suggests, “meaningful research and analysis that guides subsequent political and social action must be grounded on the material forces and social relations of production, which ultimately condition the historical course of any group of people” (Fernandez R. A., 1977). In order to understand our unique political economic crisis in 2014 and find our way out of it better than we went into it, we

must involve ourselves in a pursuit of structural analysis that attempts to make connections between all the so called “spheres”.

Economic Democracy

What follows is an attempt to draw these connections by examining the concept of Economic Democracy. In the following chapter, I focus on a Gramscian analysis of hegemony and the role discourse plays in how we understand and accept certain labor relations. Using Gramsci’s conception of a “war of position” I analyze how the concept of Economic Democracy can be and is being used to change the historical political dynamics of the role labor has traditionally played in our economic system. Economic Democracy deploys a counter-hegemonic theory that shifts the labor relations paradigm. In chapter 3 I analyze the theoretical, historical and political arguments about production, the creation of value, who benefits from this creation, all in relation to expanding democracy to the economy. I specifically seek to sketch out the origins of the concept of Economic Democracy. Because this research is exploratory and Economic Democracy has been conceptualized in various ways from different theoretical traditions, after a careful consideration of the theoretical debates, Chapter 4 turns its focus towards the praxis of Economic Democracy. Through the use of qualitative and interpretive methods composed of participant observations, in depth interviews, archival research and discourse analysis I engage in a case study of the growing worker cooperative and sustainable economies movement and community focusing largely on the San Francisco Bay Area of California. I interviewed workers from the Arizmendi Bakery Cooperative, Fusion Latina Restaurant and Catering Cooperative, and Design Action Collective; as well as cooperative developers from the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives, the Sustainable Economies Law Center, the Network Of Bay Area Worker Cooperatives, the Democracy Collaborative and others totaling 14 different organizations. In addition to those interviews I also analyzed public talks

and interviews, video, manuals, and other content from these organizations. The case study is primarily focused on understanding the intersectional experiences of people involved in worker cooperatives, with a particular interest drawing out racial, and gender relations. Chapter five concludes the dissertation drawing out a larger structural analysis of the role that economic democracy can play moving forward as well as laying out further research avenues. The dissertation is very much driven by a dialectic of theoretical analysis and an attempt at praxis oriented problem solving.

The current economic landscape that is causing the worsening economic inequality, is unsustainable and it is paramount that researchers engage in the process of understanding organizations, policies, and practices that focus on human needs rather than profit. For me, it is the explicit role of an emancipatory social science to focus on the problems afflicting society and engage in meaningful research and analysis that can help guide political, social and economic action. My dissertation research project is an attempt to assess and articulate such a direction.

CHAPTER TWO: Hegemony, War of Position and Workplace Democracy

The Changing Nature of Labor: Capitalism and Workplace Democracy

In the early late 1700s and early 1800s what we now call capitalism was still in its early stage, the period of manufacture in England. Manufacture was a transitional stage where the former guilds and trades people were gathered to work on projects in one location, known as a manufactory. At this point there was no difference in how their work was done, or any of the processes involved in doing their work (Marx, 1967). This was before the industrial revolution and before any mechanization. However, there was an important and fundamental change in how their work was arranged (Marx, 1967). They were now working in one warehouse doing skilled work cooperatively, but for someone else. This began to change as the work itself began to require less skilled trades people as a result of mechanization and the deskilling of the work itself. Workers increasingly began doing solely one task. This extreme division of labor gave rise to what we now know as the factory system that reached its pinnacle in the form of Ford's assembly line. The work was still done cooperatively, but there was less need for expert craftsmen as people began to focus on only one aspect of the overall job. This process of deskilling labor resulted in changing the nature and meaning of work, which was also accompanied by an ideological and cultural triumph of capitalism. This form of organizing workers, where workers are seen as expendable and interchangeable as parts of machines has largely remained intact.

The deskilling of labor occurred alongside the displacement of masses of people from formerly commonly held lands through the enclosure acts (Marx, 1967)⁸. Skilled craftsmen whom were forced out of their trades by mechanization and forced to work to earn a living because of displacement landed in assembly line work. This process was not just technically and materially jarring as it was also spiritually alienating. Paul Thompson recounts how workers reacted to this change in their work,

...attracted there by the money, soon they found there was nothing else. They didn't like the line, the last thing they wanted to do was to screw on wheels. They left jobs unfinished, they plagued the foremen; they threw bombs of bostic into scrap bins. The effects of such work systems on productivity, absenteeism, labor turnover and industrial conflict were of sufficient concern for the US government to set up a task force to investigate the problem (Thompson P. , 1983, p. 2).

While there has been a decentralization of the assembly lines and work is contracted and outsourced all around the world, workers are still largely organized along the idea of expendability. This process of devalued and alienated labor is taken for granted and assumed to be natural rather than a historically specific form of organizing labor that has resulted from a material change in the social relations of production by the bourgeoisie. It has also been accompanied and fortified by an ideological and cultural struggle by the bourgeoisie to legitimize that form of organization.

Capitalist Hegemony and a War of Position: Human Nature, Culture, and Ideology

One of the historical problems that accompany this development of capitalism and work is the tendency to see that development as natural, as if 'capitalism happened because it was inevitable and final'. Marx reminds us that "Nature does not produce on the one side owners of money or commodities and on the other men possessing nothing but their own labor power....", this sort of relation has no natural basis and is not common to all social periods (Marx, Capital: A Critical

⁸ Marx thoroughly describes and documents this process in section 8 The So Called Primitive Accumulation in Capital.

Analysis of Capitalist Production, 1967, p. 166). Marx makes an important contribution in this regard when he states that scholars, “presuppose private property, the separation of labor, capital and land, and of wages, profit of capital and rent of land –likewise division of labor, competition, the concept of exchange value etc.” (Marx, 1844, p. 106). In arguing against this same tendency in his time, Marx argues that:

Political Economy [by which he means classical economics; Adam Smith, Ricardo, Malthus etc.] *starts* with the *fact* of private property, but it does not explain it to us... [classical economics] does not disclose the source of the division between labor and capital and between capital and land... it takes for granted what it is supposed to explain [emphasis added] (Marx, 1844, p. 106).

It is important to note that the current relations of production and social relations resulting therein are a consequence of historical processes and not the result of a ‘human nature’ or a ‘natural’ evolution or progression. It is only through a historical process that, “the advance of capitalist production develops a working class, which by education, tradition, habit, look upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of nature” (Marx, 1967, p. 689). However, capitalist production originates first in the period of manufacture and commences as a spontaneous formation, as in here and there, but only through consistent practice, expansion and experience does it *then* become the recognized method and form of production and hence the “normal” state of society (Marx, 1967, p. 343). Raul Fernandez argues:

Once the “dice” are loaded things look different. Once the capitalist mode of production is established [and hegemonic]... there are haves and have-nots, owners and workers, and inequality appears as a *self-evident* law of nature, or a consequence of individual, or group, characteristics [emphasis added] (Fernandez R. , 2009).

Similarly, Gramsci argues “there is no abstract “human nature”, but that human nature is the totality of historically determined social relations...” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 133).

Scholars often unknowingly partake in this construction of a myth of the evolution of capitalist society as being natural by participating in the creation a dominant culture that appears to be natural and perpetuates itself through a hegemonic control of the society's culture and ideology. For Gramsci, hegemony is an explanatory tool for cultural subordination: power based on control of consciousness through the creation of common sense and ethical leadership producing consent rather than overt control (Baldacchino, 1990). Williams describes this process as:

An order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused through society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations (Williams, 1960).

Gramsci sees this struggle over hegemony and the logic of domination as spilling over from the economic sphere and into the terrain of culture and ideology in what he attributes to Marx as the superstructure, which is the depository of dominant culture (Baldacchino, 1990). Hegemony is created, built and fought over in the realm of culture and ideas, but also within the contexts and material conditions (structure) of a given economy/society.

Thus, the hegemony of the capitalist paradigm has been constructed not just through the structure and organization of the economy, but it has been supported and maintained by what Gramsci outlines as the roles of intellectuals in a given society. Gramsci suggests that intellectuals are “anyone whose function in society is primarily that of organizing, administering, directing, educating or leading others” but in a given society they function on behalf of a dominant social group to organize coercion and consent of the dominant social group's way of life (Gramsci, 2000, p. 300). Intellectuals could be “managers, engineers, technicians, politicians, prominent writers and academics, broadcasters, journalists, civil servants officers of the armed

forces, judges and magistrates. It is these people, along with priests above all who produce the ideas, values and beliefs that consolidate the... social formation” (Donaldson, 2007). Those in society who have the role and function of intellectuals then are the ones tasked with “maintaining and reproducing a given economic and social order (in the exercise of hegemony) on a daily basis (Gramsci, 2000, p. 300). In the day-to-day organization of hegemony the, “intellectuals are the dominant group’s “deputies” exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12). Marx and Engels first posited this line of reasoning when they stated:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class, which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. (Marx & Engels, 1970)

Intellectuals have helped to construct this dominance through the promotion of what J. Pocock refers to as a ‘hegemonic language’. Pocock describes hegemonic language as verbal manipulation as:

I impose on you, without your consent, information you cannot ignore. I have demanded your response, and I have also sought to determine it... and the more complex and intelligible the information imposed by this act of verbal rape – this penetration of your consciousness without your consent – the more I have tried to determine what your response shall be (Pocock, 1985, p. 19).

The hegemonic discourse of economic capitalism and the free market paradigm has resulted in its unquestioned acceptance as a fact of life rather than a historically specific organizational form.

The hegemonic discourse has devalued the thinking and innovating of other forms of economic organization for the vast majority of society. In this respect, Baldacchino argues that,

“the cooperative logic is subsumed by powerful indoctrinating agents which transmit and inculcate the legitimacy of top down hierarchical and in-egalitarian principles and values which fashion the social relations of capitalist production” (1990). This occurs to the extent that even to think of alternatives is regarded at best as naïve. As suggested by Aronowitz et al., the very idea of social change, let alone socialist futures has all but been excluded from the public imagination, in essence there is a complete lack of radical imagination (Aronowitz, DiFazio, Fraad, Pelias, & Wolff, 2008).

None of this however, is to say that there isn't any resistance to the capitalist hegemonic paradigm, only that such resistance is not taken seriously. Hegemonic does not mean the same thing as omnipresent. Gramsci was largely concerned with the praxis of developing a counter hegemony and recruiting troops to fight the cultural battle with what he referred to as “organic intellectuals” of subaltern social groups that could be tasked with opposing and transforming the existing social order (Gramsci, 1971, p. 15). This transformation for Gramsci takes place in the realm of ideology as well as the material social relations of production. He argues that in order to oppose and transform the current situation:

one of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing toward dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer “ideologically” the traditional intellectuals, but this assimilation and conquest is made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals. (Gramsci, 1971, p. 10)

In addition, these organic intellectuals attempting to engage in intellectual and moral reform must articulate a program of economic reform. (Gramsci, 1971, p. 133) In order for the dominant hegemonic logic to be eroded it must be replaced to some extent by an alternative logic or a counter-hegemony, which must emerge from the mass organization of workers invested in counter-hegemonic education and institution building (Baldacchino, 1990).

For Gramsci, this political and economic struggle is a struggle about winning hearts and minds over a vision of how society should function. In these struggles competing parties or groups engage in different strategies in the terrain of ideology and culture to assert their dominance. Using the metaphor of war, Gramsci states:

War of movement is a frontal assault on the state where war of position is conducted mainly on the terrain of civil society. Civil society is a site of consent, hegemony, direction...[it is] at once the political terrain on which the dominant class organizes its hegemony and the terrain on which opposition parties and movements organize, win allies and build their social power (Gramsci, 2000, p. 224)

In a situation where a group is struggling to build hegemony against the current hegemon, Gramsci argues that, “one cannot choose the form of war one wants, unless from the start one has crushing superiority over the enemy” (Gramsci, 2000, p. 226). And since one is struggling for hegemony against a group that already has it, it makes sense that one doesn’t already have the capacity to crush the hegemon. Baldacchino describes this process as follows:

One such strategy for social change has been described as a ‘war of position’ - a strategy based on a power model of society but which seeks an evolutionary sequence for transforming power relations and overcoming vested interests. The concept is of military extraction. It distinguishes the frontal attacks and maneuvers characteristic of classical and heroic warfare from the trench-bogged techniques of superpower conflicts, of which the First World War (1914-18) is the most notorious example. The tactic is conditioned by the strength of the enemy. To formulate military strategy as a ‘war of maneuver’ when pitted against a powerful adversary is tantamount to a lethal and suicidal adventure (Baldacchino, 1990).

And so in the absence of the capacity or ability to engage in frontal assault or war of movement (social movements or revolutions) opposing groups engage in a war of position to jockey for advantageous positions. Gramsci considers these strategies as part of the same struggle:

war of position does not entail a renunciation of revolution, only a change in its strategy and its form... the strategy must be different. It must involve the building of hegemony between the working class and its allies. It must involve ideological

struggle. It must involve the construction of mass democratic movement (Gramsci, 2000, p. 223).

This war of position demands enormous sacrifices by infinite masses of people. And so the war of position can be seen as an ideological as well as political struggle over recruiting troops to a cause and vision.

During the second period in the development of capitalism⁹, the period of manufacture approximately from 1600-1775, where the bourgeoisie had not yet become hegemonic, it engaged in a war of position with the aristocracy. Together the bourgeoisie deployed a very specific vision and ideology of natural laws and human nature through conceptions of natural rights and the state of nature, conceptions that had their basis on the individual and self-interest (Gramsci, 2000, p. 198). This conception of human nature was the ideological complement of the historical development of the bourgeoisie and the values it prized (i.e. profit maximizing), and as such it became an enormously powerful weapon, which it used against the privileges and oppressions it sought to destroy in the hegemony of the aristocracy (Gramsci, 2000, p. 198). This war of position that the bourgeoisie engaged in allowed it to develop a hegemonic discourse, ideological program and culture to accompany their economic model, which then through experience and practice became the dominant one as it won the war of position against the aristocracy. But there was nothing inherent or natural about the values purported in this vision of human nature.

Albert Hirschman shows us how the historical development of ideas changed the way in which capitalist forms of economic organization actually became dominant (Hirschman, 1977). In his discussion of ‘interests’ and ‘passions’ he suggests that the “triumph of capitalism... owes much to the widespread refusal to take it seriously or to believe it capable of a great design or

⁹ The first being the stage of primitive accumulation outline in part 8 of Marx, *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, 1967.

achievement” (Hirschman, 1977, p. 59). Hirschman outlines the development of this specific way of thinking as connected to only one specific epoch of social, political and economic organization, and that is our current epoch of capitalist development, what Gramsci would call a historical bloc. Capitalism arose out of the slow legitimization through a war of position against the aristocracy of an ideology that privileged bourgeois self-interest. Hirschman shows that the profit motive as the fundamental way of achieving self-interest was not always as accepted as it now is; it was a process that occurred over a long period of time and through a prolonged war of position over ideological underpinnings of capitalist culture, a process that resulted in its normalization.

It is this very war of position that Gramsci and Marx seek for workers to develop in order to change the current social order that results in the mass inequality rampant in our society. It is key to understand this ongoing struggle over ideology in attempting to break out of the hegemonic language and paradigm in order to allow people to consider alternative forms of economic and social organization, specifically democratic ones oriented around ideas of cooperation and collectivity. Understanding the development of culture and ideas as occurring in a terrain of struggle allows for spaces of contestation to develop alternative visions that take seriously ideas and practices that are alternatives to the capitalist paradigm. Ultimately,

the great task of workers all over the world is not simply to combat repression and exploitation, they must primarily achieve victory in the terrain of the superstructure, escaping ideological incorporation. It is this which, in the Gramscian tradition, essentially enables the ruling class to enjoy cultural ascendancy and, therefore, to rule by consent” (Baldacchino, 1990).

Capital, Laboring Classes, Labor Unions and the War of Position

One of the effects of this normalization of capitalism is that it limits the boundaries by which workers can effectively organize for their right to a dignified life. Even though the

naturalness of capitalism had set in and become the dominant economic, political, social and cultural ideology of the U.S. and the world, its effects were always heavily and violently contested. Workers in the 1930's organized en masse against the exploitation inherent in the system. They formed workers organizations, labor unions that engaged in wildcat strikes, sit-ins, factory shut downs, picket lines meant to be impenetrable by scabs, and self-help mutual aid societies that promoted cooperative values. The majority of the gains in worker conditions, wages and benefits were gained by engaging in a simultaneous violent war of maneuver where thousands were killed in labor struggles like the Haymarket (1886), Bay View (1886) Ludlow (1914), and Everett (1916) massacres, and a war of position that sought to combat the ideology of profits above all else by changing what was a reasonable and acceptable work-day, work-wage, and work-age.

The war for labor rights changed when in 1947 the Labor-Management Relations Act (also known as Taft-Hartley) was enacted into law. It effectively ended labor's war of maneuver against capital and has since also fundamentally altered how the labor movement operates and engages capital in this country, resulting in a limited and scattered war of position. In one fell swoop the law effectively de-radicalized labor unions and limited the scope in which they could act. It outlawed wild-cat strikes, solidarity strikes, secondary boycotts, mass picketing, promoted the red scare, and ultimately allowed the government to control labor if it was 'in the national interest' to do so (Smith S. , 2006). What is more surprising is that at its passing it largely had the support of the bureaucrats of the Labor Unions. Since that time the Labor Movement has ceased to be a 'movement' in the traditional sense. Currently it represents only about 11.3% of the workforce, and only 6.6% of the workforce in the private industry both of which are all time lows (Drake, 2013). But, even at its height at the end of WWII, union membership reached only

35.5% of the workforce, which not coincidentally was also the era of mass communist and socialist labor organizing (Smith S. , 2006). There is also a long sordid racist history of labor unions not just excluding workers of color, but also figuratively throwing them under the bus. In this present context it is difficult and analytically impractical to equate “Labor” with unions, even though historically they had been almost synonymous.

This is unfortunate because labor unions have traditionally been the organizations at the forefront of workers’ historic war of position against capital, pressing forward on issues of economic inequality. Over the last 30 to 40 years, this has ceased to be the case. Labor unions and “Labor” broadly speaking have been on their heels in this time period, losing many concessions capital (the bourgeoisie) had agreed to in the past. This includes but is not limited to pensions, health care, wages, and other working conditions that have been taken back by capital. In the face of this onslaught and frontal assault by capital, bureaucratic unions have been unsuccessful in their struggles to fend off these attacks. The acquiescence of the leaders of the AFL-CIO to the Taft-Hartley law essentially spelled the demise of the labor movement as a ‘movement’. According to Fletcher and Gapasin:

“The U.S. trade union movement finds itself on a global battlefield filled with land mines and littered with the remains of various social movements. It is engaged in a war for which it was entirely unprepared, having convinced itself that it had secured a permanent seat at the table of national authority because of its loyalty to the state during the Cold War and to the interests of U.S. Capitalism (Fletcher & Gapasin, 2008, p. ix).

Taft-Hartley essentially converted the Labor movement overnight into a giant bureaucratic machine that limited its field of vision to lobbying the Democratic Party in government and limited its role in labor relations solely to negotiating collective bargaining agreements.

It has done this all while capital has become increasingly sophisticated in its ongoing war of position and war of maneuver with labor, labor unions and labor relations. This can be seen in

how Capital has successfully promoted de-unionization drives and outsourcing, and has spent millions of dollars to prevent unionization, as in the case of Walmart (Berman, 2014), as well as successfully criminalizing and policing public strikes and protests (Ortiz, 2014). The attack on Labor by Capital has taken on all sorts of forms, frontal as well as ideological. Currently public employee labor unions are fending off ideological and policy attacks in right-to-work states where tea-party republicans are blaming government bloat on unions (Nichols, 2015). But in the last 60 years, the AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions have generally not changed their approach to fighting these varied even though the terrain of struggle has shifted tremendously. For the most part, outside of a few unions doing interesting grass roots organizing, most have stuck to their approach, mostly unsuccessfully, of fighting for Labor by negotiating collective bargaining agreements. The larger unions have also confronted membership from paternalistic trustee perspectives where they act in what they believe to be the best interest of the workers (Smith S. , 2006). They do this instead of building up the organizing skills of their membership to fight collectively and democratically for their workers rights. This has resulted in dwindling union membership in the U.S. and non-active members with little organizing skills in times of organizing need (Smith S. , 2006). Thinking of labor-capital relations as a sort of chess game, unions have lost because the government at the behest of corporations has dictated very rigidly what moves can be made on the terrain of struggle. Union officials at best have largely limited themselves to playing within that framework and at worst they have played the role of maintaining capitalist order in the labor market.

In this regard, Ness and Azzellini argue that, “trade unions...operating through institutional frameworks of governments have held a monopoly over labor history...and have had no interest in promoting workers’ autonomous struggles, since the mere existence of those

struggles called into question the traditional union structures and roles” (2011, p. 1). One of the problems that bureaucratic labor unions present is that they limit the terrain from which workers can build power, not because they inherently do, but because they have made a choice to acquiesce to capitalist relations of production, between workers and owners. Melman, quoting Lawrence B Cohen, argues that the continuous history of trade union activities represents an approach that traditionally “has neither sought to eliminate the employer nor to share his managerial functions. Rather it has pursued a course seeking to ameliorate the workers’ position and to modify their relations *with* the employer...[emphasis added]” (Cohen, 2001).

Martin Carnoy and Derek Shearer agree with the limits of unions when they argue that, “the unions have never moved out from their production base to develop an overall labor political program,” instead the labor movement has failed to extend workers’ rights or decentralize and democratize union organizations (Carnoy & Shearer, 1980, pp. 29-30). Thus, traditional unions have been unwilling to go beyond collective bargaining in part because as Carnoy and Shearer argue:

the growth of union bureaucracy and the decline of rank-and-file initiatives is *built* into the theory and practice of collective bargaining... Labor leaders have become more concerned with maintaining their own powers and privileges than with organizing the unorganized, contributing to innovative trends in unionism, or promoting a program of labor reform [emphasis added] (1980, p. 30).

The result is unions serving a contradictory function under capitalism, “on the one hand they exist to improve the conditions of work for their members; but on the other, they compromise themselves to deliver disciplined labor to capital owners and their managers” (Carnoy & Shearer, 1980, p. 30). Similarly, Schuller argues that, “Labor movements where they exist, have been largely incorporated within this dominant ideology. Having accepted the rules of the game, they are constrained in both the range and style of their collective political action (1985, p. 25).

Wendy Brown broadens this argument to include not just unions but the larger left when she states that, “leftists have largely forsaken analyses of the liberal state and capitalism as sites of domination and have focused instead on their implication in political and economic inequalities... [instead they] turn to the state for protection against the worst abuses of the market [and in doing so] they decline to consider the state as a vehicle of domination...” (Brown, 1995, pp. 10, 15).

Opportunity to Change the Nature of Labor

The failure of Unions in the U.S. to fight these attacks on labor through creating their own sophisticated forms and thinking outside of the traditional collective bargaining agreement has out of necessity created an opportunity for non-traditional forms of labor relations in the United States. As fewer and fewer people are able to join unions, the ideas of the so-called radicals that were purged from the AFL-CIO in the 50’s have made a sort of comeback. While those ideas come from a long line of history dating back to William Thompson, Thomas Spence and Robert Owen, the U.S. last saw them actively within the labor movement in the 1950’s. Currently the ideas of property in common and self-help, heavily influenced by the peak of union activism in the 1930s during the great depression, the communist party and its focus on mutual aid organizations as well as socialist internationalism, anarcho-syndicalist and social and solidarity economy movements in Europe in the 1940’s and 50’s are again raising the question of the changing role of Labor in the U.S. They are also challenging the role of traditional labor unions in the U.S. and often but not always to unwelcome receptions. These varied ideas all sort of converge on the question of changing conceptions of property relations in the United States and re-conceptualizing both the role of labor and capital within these property relations. This reconceptualization can be best understood through Abraham Lincoln’s understanding of the two. He argues that, “Labor is prior to and independent of capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor,

and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration.” (Lincoln, 1861). In this same respect Mikel Lezamiz, Director of Cooperative Outreach of the Mondragon Cooperatives, suggests that capital is only a factor of production, a tool for creating jobs, and doesn’t or shouldn’t have privileges over and above of those of labor (Dworkin & Young, 2012). If then, Labor-Management relations are indeed a game of chess, then U.S. labor must move beyond only collective bargaining and begin to use and expand all of the available means and moves in order to give itself its best possible chance for success. This means changing the game itself and expanding the ideological terrain of struggle.

Capital has become successful at dealing with and subordinating labor with help from the state as it responds to protests and strikes using repression, propaganda and coercion. Capital has been fighting a technologically savvy war on multiple fronts with the newest weapons like right-to-work, outsourcing, increased mechanization of production, and Labor Unions have failed to adapt. Labor finds itself at a place where it should and has begun to engage in a war of position to change the relative position of power between labor and capital to one reflective of Lincoln’s statement and that of Mikel Lezamiz from Mondragon.

Given the unsuccessful attempts of massive social transformation in the early part of the 20th century, labor has been forced to engage in this political struggle, but it has done so without really engaging in this form of “war of position.” Where capital has adapted to the techniques and the methods of union organizing, Unions have not done the same in return. The current economic crisis has resulted in a double crisis, what Gramsci calls a “crisis of hegemony” or a “crisis of authority”. (Gramsci, 1971, p. 210). He describes this crisis as a certain historical period where social classes become detached from their traditional parties because the ruling

class has failed in some major political undertaking or because huge masses have passed from a state of political passivity to a certain activity and put forward demands (Gramsci, 1971, p. 210). It is a double crisis because the current crisis fits this description as most people continue to be disillusioned by both traditional parties, but also because people on the left are also disillusioned with historical forms of activism through unions. The crisis of hegemony really is a crisis of the lack of trust people feel in the political process and well as a crisis of hegemony and authority of those that had been historically entrusted to fight on behalf of labor. This can be seen by the shrinking ranks of union membership as well as the outgrowth of the Occupy Movement, which largely was a response of laboring classes completely outside of labor union structures to the current economic situation. This double crisis has resulted in the fact that labor and unions are no longer synonymous and also more importantly provides an immensely important opportunity and juncture to re-conceptualize different potentialities for all laboring classes.

Sheldon Wolin calls such a moment of rupture a democratic moment. Wolin understands Democracy as being one form of the political which is always episodic and rare (Wolin, 1994, p. 11). He goes on to suggest that Democracy is about how the political is experienced and asserts that it has a fugitive character (Wolin, 1994, pp. 18, 22). Democracy according to Wolin is destined to be a moment, temporary, one that is rebellious and may assume revolutionary, destructive proportions, or may not, but a moment nonetheless (1994, pp. 19, 23). One where ordinary individuals realize they are capable of creating new cultural patterns of commonality and act accordingly. This democratic moment provides an opportunity for labor to attempt to engage in a war of position, working outside of the rigid boundaries of the collective bargaining process, in order to attempt to adapt to the maneuvering of capital over the last 60 years. In this war of position, labor is responding in various ways, especially by trying to subvert concepts of

private property relations building not only a new political and social program but also an economic program, one where workers themselves become owners through cooperative democratic ownership of workplaces.

A Different Social Relations of Production: Worker Cooperatives and building a counter-hegemonic culture and organizational form

During the Flint sit down strike of 1936, many who opposed the strike argued, “Why bite the hand that feeds you?” (Pietro, 2012). This saying is a summation of the problem of unions and how they interact with the owners of the means of production. One solution that Carnoy and Shearer pose to this problem is what they refer to as democratic control of investments within trade unions. They outline examples of how trade unions in Western Europe operate banks and investments, using their members’ money in an effort to democratize the process by bringing these decisions under the control of working people (1980, p. 89). Carnoy and Shearer in 1980 estimated that there were \$443.4 billion dollars of assets held by pension funds (1980, p. 100). This is average workers’ money invested in a system that seeks to squeeze them out of every cent they own. If this money could be put into a program that built industrial cooperatives focused on multiple bottom lines of creating jobs as well as profit it could result in a system of economic transformation that better reflects and benefits those doing the work.

When workers choose to create cooperatives they aren’t just choosing a different organizational structure; they are also choosing to change the nature and culture of work. Work under cooperatives takes on a different meaning than work at traditional corporations and serves as the foundation for change in the hegemonic structure. Worker cooperatives provide the opportunity for not only the development of a counter-hegemonic discourse but also counter-hegemonic practices. Tim Huet, one of the founders of the Arizmendi Bakery Cooperative

Association and initially a baker in the first named Arizmendi Bakery cooperative, argues that “worker cooperatives are not simply businesses; they are democracy demonstration projects, schools for democracy, laboratories for democracy, and organizing bases for democracy” (Huet, *A Cooperative Manifesto*, 2013). They are businesses that take the idea of democracy seriously and institute it into their workplaces. As such they become an important weapon in the ongoing war of position for economic justice and a radical democratic project.

Some people argue that capitalism can be reformed or at least tamed through regulation. John Maynard Keynes (1936) and currently Robert Reich (2013) believe that as long as we set rules to our current system it will result in more equality. Many have tried to address and combat the ills of capitalism through ‘political reform’ within established structures and institutions. Robert Owen found these type of efforts to be insufficient, because he believed that it was the environment in which people live and work that determines their place in society (Owen, *A New View of Society and Other Writings*, 1991). Similarly Huet argues that, “Regulation and reform will not keep capitalism from destroying our environment and creating disastrous social cleavages; fundamental change is needed” (Huet, *A Cooperative Manifesto*, 2013). As such it is the specific environment which conditions people’s lives that must be changed. For Owen the environment that takes precedence over all others, the one where people must spend a majority of their lives, forced to work to earn wages to buy the necessities of life, is the workplace. Here we find Owen’s refusal to seek only political reform as a fundamentally important political and historic contribution. Owen argues that the so-called economic sphere itself is the space that conditions the rest. This is why he made the factory system the sole foundation of his experiments and also declared that system to be the theoretical starting point of the social revolution (Marx, 1967, p. 472). He refused to believe that social justice and change can occur

without fundamentally transforming the very foundation of society, the place that conditions all others, the economy; the workplace.

Helen Keller a life long political activist once stated that, “Our Democracy is but a name. We vote? What does that mean? It means that we choose between two bodies of real, though not avowed, autocrats. We choose between Tweedledum and Tweedledee...” (qtd in Zinn, 2005, p. 345). It is therefore not enough to be able to vote once a year or to call elected representatives, or even to have ‘economic justice’; there cannot be economic justice without having a day-to-day democracy. That means democracy in the places that we participate in every day of our lives primarily our workplaces, our banks, democracy in community development and planning, democracy in schools and education, democracy in health care, democracy in public utilities, and democracy in local neighborhoods. Tim Huet argues that,

You cannot say a society is truly democratic if its adults spend the majority of their waking hours in undemocratic workplaces and do not enjoy control over the basic elements of their lives (no control over their jobs ultimately means no security regarding their homes, healthcare, time, education, etc.). And the undemocratic nature of work for most adults has effects beyond the workplace and outside working hours. Autocratic models of relating in the workplace carry over into the family, larger community, and political realm. Conversely, I believe that members of worker cooperatives learn democratic skills and ways of interacting with each other—and the confidence that comes from taking control over your life—that benefits their families and larger communities, and can carryover into the political realm (Huet, *A Cooperative Manifesto*, 2013).

This led Tim and others away from the business of ‘social justice’ to the work of growing democratic businesses because, as he states in his *Cooperative manifesto*, “we need to build cooperatives as bases for a democracy movement” and so “while chaining oneself to a tree might be sexier; while blockading WTO meetings might seem more ‘front-line’; while busting-out Starbucks windows might seem more cutting-edge—There Is No More Important Social Change Work You Can Do Than Cooperative Development” (Huet, *A Cooperative Manifesto*, 2013).

Currently the majority of the literature on this topic theoretically addresses the need for these types of enterprises but lacks depth in analyzing the actual experience of worker-cooperatives. While scholars are beginning to address this (Alperovitz, 2011; Ness & Azzellini, 2011; Restakis, 2010; Wolff, 2012; Maheshvarananda, *After Capitalism: Economic Democracy in Action*, 2012; Meyers, 2011) (Olsen, 2013), there is currently not an extensive understanding of how collectively-owned enterprises are actually structured, how they function daily in society, their benefits, or the kind of conditions or experiences workers-owners have within them. There is a universal common misconception that these kinds of businesses can only be small scale and that they are highly inefficient and rarely successful. Whyte and Whyte suggest that, “ a negative judgment on worker cooperatives was first rendered early in the [last] century by the prestigious social scientists Beatrice and Sidney Webb. Their Verdict has been the conventional wisdom ever since:

All such associations of producers that start as alternatives to the capitalist system either fail or cease to be democracies of producers...In the relatively few instances in which such enterprises have not succumbed as business concerns, they have ceased to be democracies of producers, managing their own work and have become, in effect, associations of capitalists... Making profit for themselves by the employment at wages of workers outside their association (qtd. in Whyte and Whyte, 1988 p. 3)

The reality is that while worker cooperatives run the risk of becoming associations of capitalists, this is not a universal outcome. Worker-owned industrial enterprises can be as successful as other models while also successfully transforming many of the problems inherent in capitalism, like poverty, inequality and powerlessness. One of the key ingredients for this to happen is the development of a workplace culture and values that revolve around social justice and equity. The greatest example of this is the Mondragon cooperatives, which employ nearly 20,000 workers at over 100 cooperatives. Whyte and Whyte argue that, “their record for survival has been

phenomenal- of the 103 worker cooperatives that were created from 1956 to 1986, only 3 have been shut down. Compared to the frequently noted finding that only 20 percent of all firms founded in the U.S. survive for five years, Mondragon's survival rate of more than 97 percent across three decades commands attention" (Whyte & Whyte, 1988). However, the key to Mondragon's success has been less its business operations and savvy and more the culture and values upon which Mondragon was founded. Mondragon didn't start as a business enterprise but rather as a result of a specific deployment of cooperative values and practices in the Basque area of Spain.

Mondragon began around 75 years ago in the Basque region of Spain where after the civil war, there was mass unemployment and poverty in the isolated region (Dworkin & Young, 2012). A new priest much unlike his predecessors arrived in the Mondragon Basque region in Spain on February 5, 1941 (Whyte & Whyte, 1988). He was not an oratorically skilled priest but he won favor with people slowly not because of the style of his sermons but instead their content. For Father Arizmendi it was important to promote certain values. Whyte and Whyte write that, "in his sermons and writings, he stressed that work should not be seen as a punishment but as a means of self-realization. There should be dignity in any work. He spoke of the need for cooperation and collective solidarity. He combined a social vision with an emphasis on education for technical knowledge and skills" (1988). He began to focus on blue-collar youth by developing a social base through athletics and social services like a medical clinic. This social base produced a site for future institution building that he used to build an independent school to teach craft and industrial skills to young boys (Whyte & Whyte, 1988).

The importance of this work is two-fold. The first is quite obvious and practical. A school that teaches technical skills, helped young men develop into skilled workers that could

earn living wages. But the second is probably the most important. By having his own school and designing the curriculum himself, he was able to promote the cultural values he felt were important and these are the values that would become the lynchpin of the Mondragon Cooperative complex; cooperation, solidarity and dignity. By injecting these values into the educational system he was able to produce a culture within a community that valued other people and their potential; that respected each other and above all began to cooperate together to overcome obstacles.

Frederick Freundlich, a Business professor from Mondragon University, suggested that Father Arizmendi did not start off with the intention of building businesses nor cooperatives but instead that the Mondragon cooperatives grew out of the values that Father Arizmendi had imparted on the youth and the people of that town (Freundlich, interview, 2014). It grew out of his focus on values, education, solidarity, mutual responsibility, the centrality of work and community and technical skills (Freundlich, interview, 2014). These things eventually coalesce into the Mondragon Cooperative complex, currently the 7th largest corporation in Spain with over 289 companies, 80,000 workers as part of its network, and over 14 billion in total yearly revenue (Mondragon Corporation, 2014). While this is immensely impressive, it all began with a re-shifting of the cultural education of a town. Mondragon is the current model that most are attempting to emulate, including those that would name their bakery after the priest himself.

In a Gramscian sense, Mondragon developed as a counter-hegemonic war of position in an area ravaged by world capitalism in the 1950s. What was important in the development of these enterprises was an ideological/cultural program rooted in attempting to change the structure of society. Seen this way, worker cooperatives can be a critical part of creating an alternative to capitalism. But cooperatives must deploy not just a different economy but also ideas and a

culture that are different than that of capitalism. Without this attempt at building a cultural hegemony, cooperatives will find themselves as only niche operations within the cultural framework of capitalism, and be seen as merely a different, more human way to do capitalism, rather than a fundamental transformation away from capitalism, which is what they have the potential to be.

These ideas and projects based on cooperative work principles and the corresponding scholarship are premised upon ideas which are fundamentally different than those that drive the current society: ideas of profit maximizing at the expense of people's health and lives; of the rational choice bottom-line thinking being the most important driving factor in our society even at the expense of children's development, environmental degradation, education or public health. These ideas of cooperative democratic economic development are promoted to shift where the wealth goes in a capitalist economy. This concept is known as creating community wealth, a more horizontal system of production. The Democracy Collaborative describes this growing trend as follows,

Across the United States, democratic, community wealth-building institutions have begun to multiply dramatically in number in recent years. Although many ventures are small in size, a number have already become a major presence in their communities and have implications for longer-term community change. The various efforts differ from traditional corporations, on the one hand, and small individually-owned businesses, on the other. For example:

- community development corporations have grown from a mere handful in the late 1960s to around 4,000 today;
- there are also now more than 11,000 employee-owned firms (ESOPs), which employ more people than workers in America's private sector labor unions;
- cooperatively-owned businesses involve more than 100 million members nationwide;
- nonprofit organizations have increasingly begun to initiate profit-making business enterprises to support their public service missions;

- in one of the fastest-growing and most interesting innovations, a host of local municipal enterprises that help anchor jobs and contribute to the tax base have gained the support of Republican and Democratic mayors alike.

These seemingly diverse institutional strategies share certain key principles. First, they change the nature of asset and wealth ownership in a manner which serves the community. Second, they offer new ways to provide and anchor local jobs and to finance community services. (The Democracy Collaborative, 2014).

Steve Dubb from the Democracy Collaborative suggests that these ideas aren't taken seriously in mainstream politics and economics because they are antithetical to U.S. [capitalist] culture (Dubb, interview, 2013).

The U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives defines worker cooperatives as business entities that are owned and controlled by the people who work in them (USFWC). The Sustainable Economies Law Center describes the three defining characteristics of worker-cooperatives as;

- 1) *Joint Ownership*: In traditional for-profit businesses, the owners are sole proprietors or shareholders whose main interest is in generating a profit. Worker cooperatives are interested in making money too, but they are also invested in making sure that the business meets the needs of its members, such as paying fair wages, providing a sustainable livelihood, investing in the local community, and promoting a healthy environment (SELC, 2013).
- 2) *Democratic Control*: In typical business enterprises, elections are held and major decisions are made by investors who cast votes based on the number of shares they own. In worker cooperatives, directors are elected and major decisions are made by the workers, on a one-member, one-vote basis. Therefore, control is vested with each member, not each share of stock. No member has a larger or more influential vote because she invested more money in the business.
- 3) *Cooperative Distribution of Earnings*: In investor-owned businesses profits are distributed based on how many shares each person owns. Worker cooperatives instead distribute surplus earnings based on a patronage system. This means profit is distributed equitably based on factors such as hours worked or value of work provided. Profit distribution is thus based on labor input, not on capital contribution. Workers generally do not receive a greater profit share by contributing more money directly to the business or by purchasing shares." (SELC, 2013).

The Grassroots Economic Organizing collective defines cooperatives as “ an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise (Johnson, 2012). They also suggest that “cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity...[as well as] honest, openness, social responsibility and caring for others” (Johnson, 2012). In addition people within the larger cooperative community understand and abide by what are the seven generally accepted cooperative principles:

1. Co-operatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.
2. Co-operatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are also organized in a democratic manner.
3. Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.
- 4 Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter to agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.
5. Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.
6. Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.
7. Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members. (Johnson, 2012)

It is clear from an analysis of these that the value they place on jobs and businesses is only a means to an end. Worker-cooperatives definitely care about creating value and revenue (commonly referred to as profit), but it is only a means to create a better standard of living and quality of life for the workers. It is not an end in itself but a means to be able to fulfill more meaningful goals in their lives. In that sense all of the culturally important values that they promote are related to returning to an economy based on production for use rather than profit. Ultimately worker cooperatives are focused on creating jobs for people rooted in their long-term well being and providing dignity in the process.

One of the macro economic benefits of worker cooperatives is that they tend to create long-term stable jobs. Because the cooperative is owned and democratically controlled by the workers collectively, there is a natural safeguard against outsourcing built in to the structure of the business. A collectively owned business wouldn't decide to get up and move to a different location to save on costs because the workers that own that business depend on those jobs. Worker cooperatives also have a tendency to have sustainable business practices, and be connected and accountable to their community because they are more likely to live in the communities that they work in (USFWC). Workers-owners who live in the community are more likely to want to take care of that community for themselves, their family and the people they work with. Ultimately in a worker cooperative, workers own their jobs and thus have not only a direct stake in the local environment but the power to decide to do business in a way that creates community benefit rather than destroying it (USFWC). One of the ways some worker cooperatives do this is by having what they call a "multiple bottom line" - that is, they evaluate their success by looking not just at the money they make, but at things like their sustainability as a business, their contribution to the community, and the happiness and longevity of their

workers. For instance Huet states that, “Our mission is to create as many decently paid democratic jobs, living wage jobs as possible,” (Huet, interview, 2013). However great this all sounds, it all begins with creating viable businesses that are revenue generating.¹⁰

Building Cooperative Culture and Fighting a War of Position in the Bay Area

The origin of Worker Cooperatives in the Bay Area lies in a generation of people that grew up during the radical 60’s and aspired to the ideals of a better country through collective struggle, collective solidarity and even the hippie culture of collective living as well as being influenced by the Mondragon cooperatives. This cultural milieu is a key factor in why cooperatives have been successful and are growing in the Bay Area and not in many other places. People in the Bay Area are used to the idea of cooperatives, they understand them, and find them to be a normal part of economic life.

In 1967, a small cheese store opened in Berkeley CA named the Cheeseboard. No less than four years later the original owners decided to sell their business to their employees and created a 100% worker owned business where they remained a part (The Cheese Board Collective). Heavily influenced by the democratic outpouring of the 60’s and by ideals of cooperation as well as the great relationship and community they had built with their workers, the original owners felt it was irresponsible for them to be the primary beneficiaries of the work done by all at the business (Huet, interview, 2013). Years later they would come to help Tim Huet finance as well as develop the complex of bakeries known as the Arizmendi Bakeries. From

¹⁰ I have opted to use the term of revenue generating rather than use the more commonly understood concept of profits because of the foundational and theoretical implication of the word profit. Profits originate from the surplus value created by workers and is inherently an exploitative process and outcome of the relationship between owner and worker. Because in a worker cooperative there is no separation between the two one cannot extract surplus value out of another because power and ownership is shared. Surplus value in this instance results in shared revenue rather than exploitative profit extracted from a differential power relationship that workers are subjected to in a capitalist enterprise.

the famous Cheeseboard¹¹, to the popular Rainbow Grocers¹², as well as cooperative bookstores, coffee shops, couriers, print shops and others¹³, working cooperatively is something that has permeated Bay Area living. This is a lasting legacy of the democratic and economic justice spirit of the 1960s.

¹¹ The Cheese Board opened as a small cheese store in 1967. In 1971, the two original owners sold their business to their employees and created a 100% worker owned business of which they remained a part. The transition to a worker-owned and operated cooperative relied upon a shared work ethic, high standards, and the strong emotional connections among the group. Decisions were made, after much debate, either on the shift or at the monthly meetings. The new owners shared a belief that the collective process would organically create a truly democratic society.

Over time, we have grown in size and in the number of products we sell. We moved from our first storefront around the corner to our current home on Shattuck Avenue. The cheese store and bakery now features an espresso bar, we sell almost 400 different cheeses and an extensive selection of freshly baked breads and pastries. We have a pizzeria (a few doors down from the cheese store and bakery) that sells the pizza of the day, made from fresh ingredients, for lunch and dinner 5 days a week. Much of what we have done has come about by chance, by following our passion for food and with the support of our community. The belief that every voice is central has sustained us over the years. We have never wavered from the original vision of a democratic workplace. This commitment has made it possible to constantly reinvent ourselves, while remaining faithful to our political vision, and our belief in good, honest food.” (The Cheese Board Collective Website)

¹² We have been a vegetarian food store serving San Francisco and the Bay Area since 1975. While we strive to offer the widest selection of organic and locally sourced products at the most affordable price, we also hope to be a resource for our community to exchange information about the health and sustainability of the foods we put on our tables.

As a worker-owned cooperative, those of us who work here are more than simply the labor-force of this business, we are the business. And while we have come to work here for many different reasons, we all share the common desire to work in a non-hierarchical, democratic workplace where everyone’s opinion matters. Not only do we hope to make a difference by providing healthy food and products to everyone who shops with us, we believe that through our successful business model for cooperative work we are also putting the ideals of sustainable living into practice.

Since we moved from 15th and Mission to our building at 13th and Folsom, we have more than doubled our workforce from about 85 people to over 220. While we add new worker/owners every year, some of us are celebrating our 20th, 25th, even 30 year anniversaries!

Rainbow is more than just a job for us. And we hope that for you, our store is more than just a place to find healthy food! (Rainbow Grocers Website).

¹³ To see a map and list of the cooperative businesses go to:
<https://maps.google.com/maps/ms?msa=0&msid=216345576087333362442.0004b378e6c0af59a54f0&dg=feature>

It is evident that part of what has made the climate amenable to supporting these types of endeavors is a cultural and organizational (how production is organized) convergence of several factors. Baldacchino suggests that,

Where cooperatives have flourished, it was partly because they found a supportive institutional and cultural framework within which formal worker cooperation could become a normal, legitimate undertaking; or, following on from this, that they have actually transformed their environment to the extent that it has become more supportive of their operations and ideology. (Baldacchino, 1990)

I found this to be true in the Bay Area worker cooperatives as the successful ones that I studied had a cooperative culture that was purposely deployed within businesses. The cooperatives actively and intentionally promote and deploy cooperative culture through praxis in the form training, development and administration. It is at the very core of their work processes, as they delegate and share responsibilities through committee work and democratic decision-making. But in doing this all they also interact with their clients and have an opportunity to expose them to the differences in their way of doing business. The fact that the Bakery mission statement was painted on the wall in a large enough size for anyone to be able to read from anywhere in the bakery is no accident. There is a clear intention in deploying their values with an aim to educate and influence their customers. This interaction becomes an everyday counter-hegemonic interaction because of the intent to shift peoples perceptions of how businesses should or could be organized. It becomes an opportunity to impart alternative possibilities to someone who potentially had not considered them or may not have been open to them. It could open up a world of alternatives to people who had come to accept the hegemonic understanding of a capitalist world and consented to its form of organization.

This process of opening possibilities that has its origins in the Bay Area movements of the sixties has led to the development of cultural support for the idea of actively sustaining and

frequenting cooperative workplace enterprises by people familiar to the idea of collaborative workplaces and businesses. In the bay area large enough numbers of people know about cooperatives and support them to make them profitable and viable as not just social or economic justice organizations but as profitable businesses. The Network of Bay Area Worker Cooperatives has no less than 40 members, which do not include other worker cooperative developer or support organizations like the CLEAN, the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives or the Sustainable Economies Legal Center, who are all based in the Bay Area. (Network of Bay Area Worker Cooperatives, 2014)

This cultural cooperative ethos of collective values is also purposely tied to successful examples with foreign origins, specifically the Mondragon cooperatives in Spain. One of the successful models of worker cooperatives in the Bay Area is the Arizmendi Bakery association. This network of bakeries has seven independent cooperatives, six of which are bakeries (one is the original Cheeseboard) and one is the association that supports the bakeries. It is no accident that they were collectively named after the priest whose work led to the growth of the largest worker cooperative complex in the world, Mondragon.

Tim Huet of the Arizmendi Bakery Cooperatives grew up in a working class union household and became involved in political movements of the 1960s. While he learned a lot from these movements, he and others from the time took to heart the values that were instilled in them from the movements, including social and economic justice. Looking back he echoes Wendy Brown, arguing that the student protests of the 1960's and the social justice movements historically did not change the economic system, which for him was the root of a lot of the exploitation and oppression (Huet, interview, 2013). He goes on to suggest that,

If you really want to have a sustained democratic movement you have to have an economic basis for that sustained democratic movement. And more so that you

also be able to have institutions that would build democratic skills on a day-to-day basis.... So when I heard about Mondragon it all clicked for me, it was like ah! They built an economic system with democracy built in, it's a regional economic, ecological system, this is what we need to build and we need to show that we could build it here in the United States (Huet, interview, July 19, 2013).

So Tim and a few others set out to build a cooperative complex with the help of the people of the Cheeseboard, one of the bay area's oldest worker cooperatives. But while Arizmendi Bakery Cooperatives officially began in 1997, this beginning is really the convergence of several different but very similar influences and origin stories; Father Arizmendiarieta and Mondragon, the democratic and justice ethos of the 60's, and two original owners deciding to let their workers share in the dignity and the profits of ownership in the original Cheeseboard.

In the midst of an economy that has largely disposed of workers through layoffs, outsourcing or underemploying, worker cooperatives offer a unique alternative to mainstream notions of 'job growth'. Osvaldo, a worker at one of the Arizmendi bakeries suggests, "Cooperatives are the future of society...I feel like that's what we should be working towards. I think cooperativism is the answer to [capitalism]...I feel like we are evolving toward that" (Osvaldo, interview, July 24, 2013). Worker Cooperatives are different because their focus is not solely on profit, they also offer other benefits equally to all of their worker-owners not just one or two investors. These benefits include, employment with dignity and job security. They give groups of people an opportunity to become economically independent in a mutually beneficial way and as long as the enterprise is economically viable income is not the only purpose for worker cooperatives (SELC, 2013). Worker cooperatives are managed to generate income *and* provide stable employment for their members while also providing worker-owners control over the way their work is organized, performed, and managed (SELC, 2013). They provide a financial and ownership stake in the enterprise that affects the motivation and the

initiative that worker-owners personally invest in to the business in order to see it succeed.

Samantha from Arizmendi agrees stating, “I own it, I am personally and financially invested in this business, so when its like that, its not just like you are passing through, you just learn... a lot more, you care more...because when its not doing well it’s a reflection of you” (Samantha, interview, July 7, 2013).

In the war of position to change the dominant ideas of how business and businesses should function and be organized, worker cooperatives have become instrumental in articulating, as Gramsci suggested, a political and economic program that not only challenges the hegemonic one but seeks to replace it. Worker cooperatives in their daily practices beyond just being anti-capitalist are involved in articulating a viable alternative form of organizing the social relations of production. Economic Democracy as counter hegemonic discourse and program allows people to conceptualize and implement a different way of doing things and in doing so calling in to question the normality, efficiency and ethics of capitalist hierarchy.

In this same line of thought Seymour Melman questions the assumption that the hierarchical mode of organization is the best one for carrying out modern production. According to Melman, “the central cover story proclaims that there is above all, no alternative to managerialism, the market economy or state capitalism and this assumption virtually excludes the discussion of the possibility of present or future alternatives” (2001, p. 4). He rips into this ethos, deconstructing it and showing how managerialism and a market economy result in what he refers to as production weakness, where the market is a chaotic anarchic place based on overproduction and underconsumption. Essentially, capitalism is characterized by a highly inefficient marketplace leading to stagnation and crises.

Laclau and Mouffe assert that the 90's witnessed the emergence of a, "new hegemonic project of liberal-conservative discourse, which articulates the neo-liberal defense of the free market economy with the profoundly anti-egalitarian cultural and social traditionalism of conservatism" (2001, p. 175). This discourse is deployed in order to continue achieving the consent of the masses and perpetuating the normalization of capitalism. In a Gramscian tradition and in order to combat this process, they call on the left to envision an alternative hegemonic project. In doing so they then seek to activate a specific discourse, what Laclau and Mouffe would call a 'hegemonic articulation'. Laclau and Mouffe go on to suggest that this articulation cannot simply,

consist of the affirmation, from positions or marginality, of a set of anti-system demands; on the contrary, it must base itself upon the search for a point of equilibrium between a maximum advance for democratic revolution in a broad range of spheres, and the capacity for the hegemonic direction of positive reconstruction of these spheres on the part of subordinated groups (2001, pp. , 189).

The goal therefore is to develop a counterhegemonic discourse, program and strategy. Laclau and Mouffe suggest then that, "the task of the left therefore cannot be to renounce liberal-democratic ideology, but on the contrary, to deepen and expand it in the direction of a radical and plural democracy." (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 176) This counterhegemonic program must move beyond being anti-capitalist and must develop not just a critique of the current structure. It must develop a program and strategy to replace it. Over the last 60 years the major discussions over the ills of the current system have remained largely within the confines of opposing it and attempts to move to a position of advancing a program or strategy to actually build its replacement have remained on the margins of the left. These historical attempts actually merit study because they are the attempts to not just be against the current system, but they actually attempt to build something in its place. To be successful in building a Gramscian counter

hegemony there needs to be success at the level of ideology, culture and discourse, as well as practically developing a program and strategy to supplant the current system. The project of Worker Cooperatives attempts to achieve these different levels by building a hegemony of the laboring classes through both theory and praxis.

CHAPTER THREE: Economic Democracy: Its Origins, Debates, Theoretical Legacy and Praxis

Economic Democracy can be understood as an opening up of the economy, especially with regards to private property, ideals of democratic governance and ownership, and participation by the workers who make the economy function. It is composed of a multiplicity of different types of projects including but not limited to the three forms of cooperatives: worker, consumer, and producer, direct public control of public budgets, open and democratic management, city development projects geared around social justice goals, investment in public housing, democratic schools and many others. But it has most recently coalesced as a burgeoning social movement that strategically and very purposefully aims to inject democratic practices into economic endeavors. My research aims to understand the importance of the growing Economic Democracy projects within a changing U.S. economy suffering from growing inequality, especially within racial and ethnic minority communities. Before I engage in any context-specific analysis, however, it is important to trace the historical as well as ideological origins of the concept of Economic Democracy so as to inform our understanding in later chapters of its potential to have a positive impact on disaffected racial and ethnic communities facing stagnant wages and a sluggish job market. This chapter is less a historical analysis than it is a review of the literature and main theoretical ideas that influence Economic Democracy.

With the seeming continuity of economic boom followed by an ever more intense economic disaster, it becomes imperative for political and social scientists to advance research geared toward improving the quality of life of the societies that they live in. Laclau and Mouffe suggest that the task facing our societies today “cannot be to [only] renounce liberal-democratic ideology, but on the contrary, to deepen and expand it in the direction of a radical and plural democracy” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

Ultimately it becomes important to ask the fundamental question, that after centuries of economic crises and their devastating impacts on the majority of working people, can't we collectively do better? How do we go about doing so? This is a more profound and purposeful research agenda, one that goes beyond, logistical, technical and a tinkering politics and instead attempts to help launch our society into a politics of the future through providing important research that helps us live more collectively and at peace with our natural surroundings. A research agenda that constructs and builds a counter-hegemonic articulation, one necessary to deal with the immense problems facing the world, problems not solved by any candidate in the next election. As Robert Cox summarizes Gramsci, "only a war of position can, in the long run, bring about structural changes, and a war of position involves building up the socio-political [and economic] base for change through the creation of new historical blocs" (1983, p. 173).

In this same vein, Laclau and Mouffe's call for the construction of an alternative hegemonic project to counter the capitalist hegemonic discourse reminds us that capitalism itself is a product of the development of a materially contingent discourse of self-interest, and is therefore not an ahistorical economic system. Rather it is a central component of a particular historical development that does not preclude other alternatives, which could theoretically gain currency and become themselves dominant methods and discourses. In this case, ideas that gain currency and are converted into actual processes and methods of organization, ideas and praxis combined are key to the development of a new way. As Robert Cox states "In short, the task of changing the world order begins with the long, laborious effort to build new historical blocs..." (Cox, 1983, p. 174). This process is both discursive and applied, theory and praxis.

The counter-hegemonic articulation which is called Economic Democracy already exists and has its origins in a long history of people who have attempted to promote these sorts of ideas

and research agendas that seek a more equitable, democratic and just economy (O'Shaughnessy, 1945; Carnoy & Shearer, 1980; Dahl, 1985; Melman, 2001; Smith J., 2005; Engler, 2010; Panayotakis, 2011; Wolff, 2012; Maheshvarananda, 2012). These ideas challenge the conventional wisdom of the bottom line being the most important driving factor in our society even at the expense of children's development, environmental degradation, education or public health. Alternative ideas based on collectivism and cooperation have not caught on, however, because they challenge those who benefit from the current relations.

The primary tenet of Economic Democracy is fairly simple. The concept denotes a process of democratizing the economy; i.e. injecting democratic participation into the daily functions of an economy that is often assumed to be non-political. Such a process necessitates a fundamental paradigmatic shift from an emphasis on profit-generation to the well being of people. It is about creating a sustainable economy that provides a humane standard of living for *all*, and refocuses the purpose of production from production for profit to *production for use*, from a focus on wealth for a few to a focus on quality of life for all. If democracy in its root form means "people power" as Lummis suggests (1996), then ultimately Economic Democracy is about the praxis of democracy, injecting it into spaces often thought to be part of the private sphere. Economic Democracy seeks to empower people in the social relations that condition their lives, including workplaces, city budgets, and schools.

These types of ideas, of cooperation, community or economic democracy are not new; Marx and many others in the history of political and economic thought have debated them. However, some people have actually taken them seriously and have taken Marx literally in the idea that workers should own the means of production; they have taken theory and implemented it into praxis. In recent history, Latin American and a few other countries have seen a rise in the

“worker recovered factories” movement whereby workers occupy and take democratic ownership of the factories. Cooperative enterprises can take various forms from being a local factory run by local workers to being an immense multinational cooperative that operates on a global scale, like the Mondragon Cooperative in Spain.

Economic Democracy and the Failure of Capitalism and Politics

In attempting to grasp this concept of Economic Democracy it is important to know what we mean by democracy as well as what we don't. Lummis describes at length all the things that democracy is not, including; the free market, republicanism, liberalism, or elections; while at the same time he defines democracy simply as “people power” (1996, p. 19). Lummis argues that our current economic structure is a particular way of organizing power in a society, specifically a way that conceals it; the economy pretends not to be but is in fact political and is so in the most fundamental way because it organizes people to work in order to extract surplus value from their work; it organizes power, distributes goods and most of all rules people (1996, p. 46). Capitalism, not formal politics, determines the basic ordering of society as we are unquestioningly taught to see this ordering as inevitable (Lummis, 1996, p. 46). We take as given the fact that we live in a democracy, yet we spend an immense part of our time in an economic space of work that is completely undemocratic, governed by an authoritative structure of corporate managers (Lummis, 1996, p. 133). Political activities are pushed to the peripheries of life, rather than being part of the day-to-day interactions of people. People don't have any type of control over their workspace as the current system regulates the activities of each worker each day and maintains their discipline undemocratically. This type of control also and potentially more importantly leads to incredibly enormous disparities in the distribution of wealth. The anti-democratic nature of

capitalism has left us living in a world where over 1.3 billion people live in abject poverty, and the income gap has over doubled from 30:1 to 74:1 from 1960 to 1997 alone (Hoogvelt, 2001).

One of the fascinating things about the concept of economic democracy is that it places a concept most people understand and are familiar with, ‘democracy’, in a context and in a locale that most would never think to place it in: the economy and specifically workplaces. The status quo is an economy, workplace and corporations that are supervised and managed by people who are hired by a board of directors who represent owners. They are places and spaces where the rights of property/capital are privileged above all others, especially those of labor and surrounding communities affected by the processes of the corporation. Allan Engler in *Economic Democracy: The Working Class Alternative to Capitalism* reminds us that, “when men and women must submit to dictatorship at work, democracy is superficial, little more than ceremonial” (2010, p. 51). Likewise, J.W. Smith in *Economic Democracy: The Political Struggle of the Twenty-First Century*, argues that, “In spite of the deepest beliefs of the masses that they have full and equal rights, representative democracies, such as are established throughout Western culture, are not full democracies. Financial and political powerbrokers have firm control over greater percentage of nominees” (Smith J. , 2005).

Not many would question this arrangement, because it is how most have grown up thinking about the world and is seen as the norm. Even when in the ‘civic’ and ‘political’ sphere, people are losing hope in democracy, as Gar Alperovitz in *American Beyond Capitalism: Reclaiming Our Wealth, Our Liberty & Our Democracy*, suggests. He notes that when it comes to the question of democracy itself, “many have noted the trends of a failing belief, the radical decline in voting, the massive role of money and corporate influence in lobbying, media and elections...” (2011). The workers and people who join and support alternative economic spaces

realize that, “[their] dreams don’t fit in [those] ballot boxes” (Klein, 2004). However if we begin to think about democracy and seek to take it seriously, it begins to move us in a direction where we can be constructively critical of what is seen as ‘normal’ so that we may move towards a more inclusive democracy that exists in all facets of society.

The struggle to achieve this has been continuous since the inception of capitalism. The current examples of Economic Democracy stem from the continual crises that capitalism engenders. And this interest has grown periodically and is historically connected to capitalist failures in the international economy. The earliest trace of the phrase of Economic Democracy goes back to an attempt to promote an alternative economy within the already existing American way of life.¹⁴ In 1945 Michael O’Shaughnessy wrote a small book, *Economic Democracy and Private Enterprise*, in which he argues in favor of labor, government and employers joining together to create, “a form of economic government which would be truly democratic in character” (1945). It is not by accident, however, that he begins his argument for an alternative by elaborating on the failures of the current system, reminding us of how these crises are so eerily similar to recent events and conditions,

Private enterprise capitalism reached the zenith of its power in the first quarter of the twentieth century. As a social order, an economic philosophy, a political and social way of life it has failed. Two world wars and a ten year depression, that irreparably impaired the health of our people, that cost the taxpayers of the country twenty-five billion dollars constituting forty percent of our national debt before the war, is proof of this assertion (O’Shaughnessy, 1945, p. i).

Without explicitly using the same terminology, Helen Alfred shares similar sentiments in *Public Ownership in the U.S.A: Goals and Priorities*:

Persistent symptoms of an ailing capitalist economy-chronic unemployment and low purchasing power, too high prices and too low real wages-have dogged the efforts of one national administration after another- Republican and Democrat. And today the “better American way” of “free” private enterprise finds great

¹⁴ the concept itself goes back much further and will be explored later in the chapter

difficulty in limping along, even with the aid of an enormous arms production and distribution program—a program still highly lucrative to the owning minority (1961, p. 8).

These insights also apply to the predatory business practices of the present. Economic Democracy, thus grows out of an interest to right the wrongs of capitalism, specifically the unjust and unequal distribution of wealth in society.¹⁵

In 2009, just over 60 years after O’Shaughnessy made his statement, these same taxpayers and their future generations are footing the bill, bailing out incompetent self-interested corporations. Nobel-laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz writes of the current financial crisis, “The bailout package was like a massive transfusion to a patient suffering from internal bleeding... “cash for trash,” buying up the bad assets and putting the risk onto American taxpayers” (2009). With taxpayers constantly footing the bill for economic failures, it is necessary to redefine the concept of what self-interest means. O’Shaughnessy promotes the concept of cooperation as the best way to serve everyone’s interest because it would help establish “a functional type of government based on production primarily for use [consumption] and secondarily for profit... Cooperation would supplant competition” (1945, p. i).

The problem with the current structure according to O’Shaughnessy is that in what he calls corporationism:

Men use corporations to avoid their civic, social and moral responsibilities. This serious situation is complicated by stockholders of corporations surrendering their right of ownership to managers... they exercise no right ownership but leave the use of their property entirely to management, who run the corporations as if they were their own private business (1945, p. 53).

Adolf Berle and Gardiner Means wrote on this very problem of self-interest. In their book, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, they thoroughly describe the problem of self-interest

¹⁵ See the film “Inequality for all” by Robert Reich 2013.

within the corporate structure. According to the authors, the problem arises from the separation of ownership from control (Berle & Means, 1932). Through the corporate form which at the time was a new form of economic organization there arises a situation in which there are potentially three adversaries whose interests may and often do conflict (Berle & Means, 1932, p. 7). The Owners (stockholders) who have a long term interest in the corporation, the management which controls the corporation but whose interests lie materially in the short term gains they can squeeze out of the corporation, and finally those who work for the company and also have a long term interest in the company in order to make a living. Berle and Means posit the problem leading to a changed nature of profit-seeking enterprise as being a situation where the owners are “left with a loose expectation that a group of men under nominal duty to run the enterprise for his benefit and others like him will actually do so,” when in fact they function according to the accepted and legitimized discourse of self-interest (Berle & Means, 1932, p. 244).

Under the current corporate structure there has been a further alienating effect. Whereas first it separated workers from ownership, now ownership is alienated from control. Corporations today strip control from the very people who own the corporation. This process of removing control from ownership results in the different actors within the corporation all acting antagonistically towards each other’s interest because the language of self-interest justifies and legitimizes them doing so. In contrast an Economic Democratic business enterprise functions opposite to the corporate form. In this type of business, there is a focus on the workers being owners and exerting control, having and exerting agency, democratically managing, working, producing and most importantly profiting collectively. O’Shaughnessy suggests building on the already prevalent growth of worker cooperatives, where the relation between owners, workers and those who control the enterprise (management) is entirely and fundamentally different,

where community ownership guarantees democratic production and control geared for consumption rather than profit (O'Shaughnessy, 1945, pp. 52-53). We see this in worker cooperative businesses where there is no separation from worker-ownership and control.

In making the case for the need for an alternative economy, Costas Panayotakis argues that, “the armies of the unemployed that the [current] economic crisis has created clearly refute the claims of mainstream neoclassical economics and neoliberal opinion makers that capitalism uses scarce resources efficiently” (2011, p. 1) O’Shaughnessy reminds us that taxpayers pay the majority of the costs, both social and economic, when it comes to innovation through the military as well as the costs when the economy collapses. This is still true today as government bailouts through Trouble Asset Relief Program are funded by taxpayer money. Banks accumulating record profits are given a hand out and the average American worker through no fault of his own is laid off. Yet, even though the public pays most of these costs, it never sees the benefits, in either profits or acknowledgment. To remedy the situation, O’Shaughnessy calls for income levels to be raised to a minimum income per family per year to the average standard of living in the U.S.¹⁶

O’Shaughnessy also calls for converting our very chaotic economy to become more organized and planned, based not on overproduction but rather on consumption. While many may think this to be a communist idea, it is actually a very practical one. Currently our economy is based on people producing whatever they want in hopes that enough people will purchase their goods to turn a profit. The problem with this is twofold: 1) it is based on the idea of wish-fulfillment and 2) there must be not just enough people who *want* to purchase these goods but there must be enough people who can afford to and are thus *able* to purchase these goods. Our

¹⁶ This minimum income level would be much higher than what we now know minimum wage to be. It would be the average income in the United States as the minimum.

current economic crisis is a direct result of poor economic planning, primarily in Housing but also in industries like auto manufacturing. Plainly said, while there were enough people *wanting* to purchase homes in the U.S., too many people who couldn't actually afford them were given high-interest loans to do so. When it came time to pay the bill, they could not do so, which put unbearable pressure on the banks (Schwartz, 2009). In another example, many of the auto manufacturing companies, like FORD, were producing cars that people weren't purchasing because they could not afford to. Over the last 35-40 years there has been a downward trend to real wages in the U.S. (Reich R. B., 2013). The average person today has much less purchasing power than they did 40 years ago. Michael O'Shaughnessy states that people "must conscientiously put [themselves] in a state of mind to think in terms of [people] rather than things, of happiness rather than money..." (1945, p. 6). O'Shaughnessy is not advocating a left wing ideology, but rather what he calls a "functional economy" through production primarily for use, and idea he along with many others see as "the most realistic common sense" (1945, pp. 5, 50).

These ongoing economic conditions that dis-empower most Americans led Robert Dahl, in *A Preface to Economic Democracy*, to argue that it is important to achieve the values of democracy in an expanded sense (1985). Alperovitz echoes this sentiment in quoting John Stuart Mill who argued that local governance was, "the peculiar training of a citizen, the practical part of political education of a free people" because,

we do not learn to read or write, to ride or swim, by being merely told how to do it, but by doing it, so it is only by practicing popular government on a limited scale, that the people will ever learn how to exercise it on a larger (2011).

Dahl promotes Economic Democracy by juxtaposing political equality with individual liberty and arguing that one does not necessarily have to thwart the other. Instead, he explores the

possibility of an alternative economic structure that would, “help to strengthen political equality and democracy by reducing inequalities originating in the ownership and control of firms in a system like that we now possess... corporate capitalism” (Dahl, 1985, p. 4). Martin Carnoy and Derek Shearer in *Economic Democracy: The Challenge of the 1980's*, agree that “political democracy... can be achieved in practice only through a democratization of the economy” (1980, p. 132). Allan Engler argues that our economy is already set up to make the transition because, capitalism, “is actually a system of socialized labor,” something that echoes Marx’s analysis of the inherent cooperative nature of work under capitalism (1967, p. 305). One example Engler gives of socialized labor is with our current system of patent law and how, innovations become the ‘intellectual property’ of the corporations that employ the innovators, with innovators receiving nothing except their salary (2010, p. 11).

Similarly C. Douglas Lummis in *Radical Democracy* conceives democracy as *the* radical position taking seriously the etymology of the word from Greek; *demos* meaning people and *kratia* meaning power- People’s Power (1996, p. 11). Lummis argues that “democracy” was once a word of the people, a critical word, a revolutionary word, which has now been stolen by those who would rule over the people, to add legitimacy to their rule, it has been used to justify hegemonic rule (1996, pp. , 15). It is radical because it seeks the root source of power and Lummis argues that it should be put back to where it belongs, where the people are. Costas Panayotakis in *Remaking Scarcity: From Capitalist Inefficiency to Economic Democracy*, agrees when he states that economic democracy is, “the principle that all citizens should democratically determine their society’s economic goals and priorities” (Panayotakis, 2011, p. 149).

Lummis elaborates how he envisions radical democracy developing the commonwealth on a local level. With it, “we would be free to decide for ourselves what we need and what we

want, balancing those desires against how much work we want to do and how much leisure time we want to have” (1996, pp. , 78). Lummis here is drawing a picture of an economy based not on production for profit but rather production for use, based on local community needs and not on excess. He envisions the use of machines much as Marx did, to free men and women from the shackles of work, allowing people to engage in and develop their interests (Lummis, 1996, p. 86). Alperovitz in a similar vein argues that, “if the local foundations of democracy are to be meaningfully rebuilt, this also requires an approach to achieving greater local economic stability that does not rely so heavily on the traditional business-oriented strategies,” (2011, pp. , 48), strategies focused more on human development and freedom than on profits. Ultimately this is the end goal for all those who see capitalism as a failed social and economic system.

Economic Democracy is the attempt to bring into realization the bettering of the human condition for the whole of humanity. It seeks to create a situation in which people are free to enjoy their leisure time and develop the things that make them feel fulfilled while living in cooperation and peace with one another. It is O’Shaughnessy’s appeal to ethical considerations that in the final analysis brings out the humanism inherent in the concept of Economic Democracy and all others seeking an alternative to capitalism and thus the importance of changing our failed system, by democratizing it. He argues,

if democracy, as a form of government, is to endure the people must rule not in theory only but in fact. Such a rule can easily degenerate into tyranny by majorities or by wealthy and highly organized minorities or into mob action by the victims of social injustice. Mass production and consumption must be met with a mass social and economic action. Cooperation must supersede destructive competition. Unity and harmony must take the place of discord and strife. Good will not contention must prevail... (O’Shaughnessy, 1945, p. 113).

Property In Common

This unity and harmony that will provide us with real democracy stems from what Allan Engler refers to as ‘equal human entitlement’. He says that, “It is the right of everyone to a fair share of social products, to education, skills training and employment opportunities. It is the right of all inhabitants to a voice and equal vote in their communities economic decisions”, an idea he bases on the idea of the commons (Engler, 2010, p. 47). In the same way, J.W. Smith argues for a modern land, technology, money, information and wi-fi commons that makes resources available to and empowers all, the way that oxygen is free to everyone and is what keeps them alive (2005, pp. , 357-415).

Property in common is not a new idea as human kind has lived under this design much longer than under current private property relations.¹⁷ For the majority of human history people have shared natural resources and although private property relations have existed for some time, before the capitalist form of private property the majority of societies shared resources in common, such as forests, lakes, rivers, open arable land, local mines, oxygen etc. (Merino Hernandez, 2005). It wasn’t until capitalism began to develop that people illegally and in an atrociously violent manner began to seize formerly common lands.¹⁸

As this system developed alongside the widespread displacement of people from the countryside, through the enclosure acts as well as the forced labor imparted by the vagrancy laws there were various people and movements who opposed the new economic system and the social structure it engendered. People such as Thomas Spence, the Quakers, the Shakers, Rappites, Mennonites, Amish, Luddites and the Levellers in one form or another all railed against the new

¹⁷ “A ridiculous presumption has latterly got abroad that common property in its primitive form is specifically a Slovenian, or even exclusive Russian form. It is the primitive form that we can prove to have existed among Romans, Teutons, and Celts and even to this day we find numerous examples, ruins though they be, in India. A more exhaustive study of Asiatic, and especially of Indian forms of primitive common property, would show how from the different forms of primitive common property, different forms of its dissolution have developed. Thus, for instance. The various original types of Roman and Teutonic private property are deducible from different forms of Indian common property.” (Marx, *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, 1967, p.82)

¹⁸ See Part 8 of Marx, Karl. *Capital* for a detailed description.

economic system. Quakers, Shakers, Mennonites, Amish and Rappites were religious communities that rejected the new social order and set up their own isolated communities with their own method of collective coordination and social norms (Trahair, 2013). The Luddites were heavily anti-mechanization and quite literally raged against the machines, often destroying and sabotaging them (Donnelly, 1986). The Levellers often destroyed the homes of the wealthy and took the belongings to distribute amongst themselves in a Robin Hood manner (Zinn, 2005). Thomas Spence and his followers were against the individualism that came out of the Enlightenment. His defining contribution, still an important one, was to argue not for nationalization, but instead for the local collective ownership of land (Knox, 1977). According to Knox, Spence argued that, “the right to life depended on a right to the products of nature; and that right, in turn, rested on a common and equal right to the land. Whatever the wealth accumulated by trade and industry, the life of the individual and that of the community was supported ultimately by the land” (Knox, 1977, p. 77). Spence assumed that, “the country of any people, in a native state, is properly their common, in which each of them has an equal property.” (Spence, 1793).

Robert Owen similarly found the new economic system of manufacture repugnant and the source of impoverishment and misery in society and he too developed a vision of society based on property in common, which he believed would lead to the “emancipation of mankind” (Claeys, 1991). His plan for society stems from his shift in his own beliefs from having been a factory owner to believing that the system of private property and the subordination of all of society’s values to the drive for profit, was what prevented the full development of the human capacity (Owen, 1813). Owen understood, even at the stage where capitalism was still not fully developed that it was the root cause of, “corruption and degradation...with towns and

villages transformed into sooty, crowded, immoral, dangerous appendages of the machine....” (1813). His vision therefore was to transform what he felt was the foundation of society, the place around which communities and life, and society were organized; the workplace.

Owen’s contribution to the idea of property in common took the form of his envisioned ‘villages of union’ which were the first co-operative societies called into being within the new capitalist system (Marx, 1967, p. 283). In these societies people were to be motivated by ‘mutual and combined interest’ to produce for themselves and for each other. Owen’s ideas and social experiments were driven by his belief in kindness, sympathy and charity, which he believed were inherent in human nature (Claeys, 1991). Unlike others who rejected industrialization and organized isolated communities, Owen, much like Marx later did, believed in the advantages of machinery, which he felt could be used in these cooperative communities. However, unlike their use in capitalist factories, under the control of one capitalist, they would be under social control; that is under the collective control of the community itself and the people who used them (Owen, 1813). He saw machinery as the greatest hope for the future as it would produce greater efficiency in production and necessitate fewer workers in production but because it would be collectively owned, would result in less necessary labor time by all, subsequently increasing the time available for people to develop their intellectual and leisurely capacities. Unfortunately, Robert Owen’s attempts at these societies failed largely because of his paternalistic tendencies, including his belief that people were incapable of cooperating successfully without his leadership (Knox, 1977).

William Thompson promoted similar ideals of cooperation but unlike Owen, he did not have authoritarian or anti-democratic tendencies (Thompson W. , Letter to the Cooperative Magazine, 1827). Thompson distrusted Owen's courtship of people with wealth, believing that

the rich could never be expected to be in favor of any project that emancipated the laboring poor because it would threaten their privilege (1827). This is essentially the birth of Marx's theory of class antagonism. Thompson also believed in the necessity for the workers in any co-operative community of having the security of ownership of the community's land and capital property (Thompson W. , 1827). Owen and Thompson are the forefathers of considering the concept of production and labor for use rather than for profit within the framework of capitalist industrialization. Thompson as an anti-authoritarian and collectivist democrat has been given credit for coining the term socialist in his letter to the *The Cooperative Magazine*, as separating himself and other cooperativists from Owenists (Bowman, 2011). If we are to understand the difference between labor under capitalism and labor under a democratic economy, we must first understand underlying logic of labor under capitalist production and how it changed to that form from feudal labor relations.

Source of Wealth and Value and the (Dis)unity of Worker and Means of Labor

The ideas of property in common, which later give rise to theories of socialism, anarchism, and economic democracy, all stem from the basic idea, which Adam Smith and David Ricardo developed, that labor is the source of all wealth.¹⁹ As such people like Thompson, Owen and Marx believed the reward from any productive process should be given only to the productive laborers, not to capitalists or retailers; but rather to those that directly engage in the labor process to produce what Marx later would expand upon: value. This is a foundational concept to many of the different anti-capitalist and alternative social and economic ideologies. The fact that there is recognition of where wealth comes from and therefore who should reap the benefits of wealth is critical to the history of alternatives to capitalism. Economic democracy as the latest iteration of

¹⁹ Known as the Labor Theory of Value.

a cooperative economy, promotes this same concept, that workers should reap the fruit of their own labor and be able to own productive property in common; essentially that they should own the means of production collectively. The collective ownership of property, of communities, changes the fundamental separation that occurs in capitalism between worker and owner, between producer and capitalist.

In *Value, Price and Profit* as well as *Capital*, Marx analyzes this separation and the original accumulation of wealth, which he argues is nothing but a “series of historical processes, resulting in a *Decomposition of the Original Union* existing between the Labouring Man and his Means of Labour” [emphasis in original] (1865, pp. , 42). Here he looks at the historical split in the unity between man and the means of labor (the tools and materials used for production), which become property of the capitalists. He argues that the split occurs when a shift occurs in the purpose of money. Originally money served only as a means to purchase other things necessary for the maintenance of the worker and his family. People would make commodities to take to and sell in market for money, they would then use that money to purchase what Marx called necessities (food, shelter, clothing etc.). Marx referred to this process to as the C-M-C medium of circulation or selling in order to buy.²⁰ Money in this phase was only an intermediary to attain the necessary products for survival. At a certain point some position themselves in society at points in the circulation of money where they can take advantage of the process. They have money, which allows them to buy commodities (including other people’s labor) and then sell these commodities above the cost of their production. This form of circulation Marx referred

²⁰ Marx. *Capital*, Chapter 3 C-M-C refers to a process of exchanging a Commodity one makes or produces for Money in order to use that money to purchase some other Commodity one needs or wants (Commodity → Money → Commodity). This process has its foundation in exchange or purchasing for use, rather than exchange for profit. Money plays its original role of only being a medium of exchange for those things we need to survive.

to as the M-C-M'²¹ form, or buying in order to sell dear. The emphasis in this form is the M' which is the cost of production of the product plus a surplus, what we all know as profit. As a result you begin to have people who have wealth, (illegally gotten at first, which is why Marx quips when he describes this in Capital as primitive accumulation, primitive as in original, as in original sin) advancing it to produce wealth over and above that which they invested. These people, known as capitalists employ others to labor on their behalf and from whom profit is extracted. And thus results the disunity of man from that which he produces as he no longer produces things he/she owns, but instead produces for someone else. (Marx, 1967, pp. 106-130)

Not only is there is a physical separation between producer and that which he produces but there is also a metaphysical separation, which Marx refers to as the estrangement of labor (also known by many Marxist scholars as Alienation which are both just alternate translations of *Verfremdung* in the original). For the first time in human history the laborer confronts the object, which he produces as something alien, as a power independent of him/herself (Marx, 1844, p. 108). The laborer now relates to the product that he produces as an alien object, he puts his life into the object but now his life no longer belongs to him but rather to the object. The dynamics change the quality of work. It changes the effort and care that are put in to something created by the worker that that worker will keep. It changes the fulfillment, satisfaction and pride the worker receives from this almost personal creation. And even if the product is exchanged for something else, there is still pride felt in knowing that the worker created and crafted something of value and quality that has that workers name behind it. The process of capitalist production strips the personal connection of work from the laborer, as it is not concerned with quality or fulfillment but instead with quantity, pure and simple. Labor and the objects labored upon

²¹ The ' = prime; M-C-M' = Money → Commodity (labor, or product to sell) → Money + prime (Surplus which we call a profit).

become external to the worker, “it does not belong to his essential being.... In his work therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his mental and physical energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 17). Capitalism divides the formerly existing unity between producer and product.

It also comes to divide the workers from themselves and those in society in positions to empower them. Under capitalism,

The man of knowledge and the productive laborer come to be widely divided from each other, and knowledge, instead of remaining the handmaid of labor in the hand of the laborer to increase his productive powers... has almost everywhere arrayed itself against labor... systematically deluding and leading them astray in order to render their muscular powers entirely mechanical and obedient (W. Thompson qtd. in Marx, 1967, p. 341).

Where once laborers created products for themselves that empowered them to live their lives as they saw fit, with an air of freedom, under capitalism they are stripped from the meaning of work and made into mechanical automatons only good for churning out commodities. Under capitalism as Marx argues in various places the worker,

...is robbed of his birthright for the potential for his full development” he is nothing else than labor power and as such Capitalism... with were-wolf hunger for surplus labor... oversteps the moral and physical maximum bounds of the working day sucking like a vampire any possible leisure time, education time, time for free-play and time for the development of his interests...resulting in, the deterioration of human capacity and in producing the death of the laborer all while sucking any hope for the reasonable enjoyment of life... (1967, pp. 341, 252, 253).

The meaning of work changes under capitalism. It becomes the largely insufferable way that you earn a paycheck to pay for the bills. Economic democracy seeks to inject meaning back into the work that people do. It seeks for people to not only find fulfillment and dignity in their work and

how it contributes to the social whole but it specifically seeks to re-unify workers with their means of labor in order to have them be the primary beneficiaries of the wealth they create.

The Cooperative Mode of Production and the Reunification of Laborer and his Product

Marx defines capitalism not as a thing in itself but rather a social relation between persons (Marx, 1967, p. 717). It is a historically unique mode of production in which the social relations of production are between those that own the means of production and those that own only their own “free” labor. If, as Marx suggests, the social relations of production are the foundation of society and what conditions (*not determines*) civil society and politics, then radical change must occur not at the state level but at the place in which the social relations themselves occur. This is a key point that many scholars and activists often overlook. In their struggle against oppression workers have historically fought and struggled with those they see as the harbingers of exploitation, the state, corporations or sometimes both. But capitalism did not develop by capitalists fighting against the state or the gentry, at least not initially. They did so, in the 1700’s, only after they had amassed great wealth by establishing the hierarchical capitalist economic mode of production and normalizing it to a point where they could challenge the dominant and entrenched power structures and discourse.

According to Marx, fundamental change happens in production (not in the actual process but in the relations constitutive of that process). Under capitalist production the change that occurred was that the means of production are no longer consumed by the laborer “Instead they consume him [quite literally, health wise he is used up as fast as possible] as the necessary ferment to their own life processes” (Marx, 1967, p. 294). This change in the relation between the worker and what he produces has an exponential affect on how society organizes from the production floor on out, like a ripple effect in a pond. It establishes a hierarchical form of

production where the worker becomes the expendable part and the commodities supersede the worker in importance. Larger society and the social structures this mode engenders take on the mold of the production hierarchy. While hierarchy is itself not new, under capitalism the worker becomes the dispensable one in the social and productive process. Because the foundations of any society lie in the way in which they produce and the social relations therein, any change to the power structures of society must begin at the location where the social relations of production that engender a certain hierarchical society must occur, and that is the workplace. Robert Cox argues that “World Orders... are grounded in social relations. A significant structural change in world order is, accordingly, likely to be traceable to some fundamental change in social relations and in the national political orders which correspond to national structures of social relations” (Cox, 1983). For Marx, these social relations and how they are organized have their foundation in the processes by which humans survive or access those things necessary for them to survive. We call these processes, the economy.

Cooperativists like Thompson, Owen, the Paris Communards and many others become important because of the attempt to reunify the disunity in the workplace created by capitalism, that of separating the laborer from the product of his labor. These people attempted to create a situation where those who own the means of labor/production are the workers themselves. Their vision was to get society back to the production for use motive (C-M-C) for production; working in order to live.

This situation erases the exploitation that occurs in capitalism whereby the capitalist pays a worker a “fair” wage for his labor power (ability or capacity to work), which Marx defines as the minimum necessary to produce that particular commodity, in the laborer’s case that needed to perpetuate his/her existence; to buy the necessities of life. The exploitation results from the

capitalist extracting the most amount of surplus labor and surplus value and thus profit possible from this contract (Marx, 1967, p. 164). Because the worker is forced to work as a “free”²² laborer having no access to land, and being freed from the implements of labor, having had his tools and resources (i.e. land) taken from him, he must work what the capitalist and society recognize as a full normal working day. The capitalist tries to expand this working day as long as possible, while the worker in his interests tries to shorten it.

But if the worker were the owner there would be no need to extract surplus value. Cooperativists prompt us to ask a paradigm-shifting question, what if the workers owned and therefore controlled the means of production, the places they worked at and the tools they used? If this were the case, there would be no need to extract profit, defined as the extraction of surplus labor from the laborers, because the laborers are the owners. Any benefit that would come from the labor they expend goes back directly to them. As such the laborers are free to decide collectively how long to work and no matter how long they worked past the necessary labor time to reproduce the costs of their operation and that necessary to perpetuate themselves as workers; the revenues would come back to *them* rather than being syphoned off by an “owner” who does little if any work. This system is fundamentally different because worker-owners no longer receive *wages*, but rather benefit collectively by the revenues generated by their production or service. Profit no longer exists because profit is the extraction of surplus labor from workers. In this scenario there is no extraction of surplus labor, no exploitation, the workers work for themselves collectively and as such benefit collectively by sharing and deciding democratically how to share such revenues. The fundamental separation that capitalism creates between worker

²² Free in the double sense where he is free to chose where he works, but must work on account of harsh vagrancy laws and the inability to provide for himself due to the having no access to land to live off of; and being freed from the implements of labor, having had his tools taken from him.

and the product he creates would be reunited and as such would obliterate class conflict because the workers would be the owners.

This I would argue could be part of the formation of a New Historical Bloc, if pursued as part of an intentional war of position that seeks to change the cultural values and the foundational social relations of production. This form of collective ownership can change the way we think about production and work and also freedom. Immanuel Ness and Dario Azzellini, in *Ours to Master and to Own: Workers Control From the Commune to the Present* (2011), document many examples in which people have taken ideas of democracy and liberation seriously and have instituted workers' cooperatives and councils, developing forms of co- and self-management or workers control, even without the knowledge of previous council experiences, as a genuine expression and manifestation of their historical and material interests (Ness & Azzellini, 2011). What is clear from these examples according to Ness and Azzellini, is the emancipatory nature of workers' control in transforming a situation of capitalist alienation and authoritarian control into one of democratic practice (2011, p. 1). Democracy in the workplace transforms the monotony and drudgery of the workplace inherent under capitalism. It allows for the self-investment and motivation of the workers as they are directly connected to that which they are producing, through the benefits of its sale, and the realization of the full value for the worker, as well as a situation in which they are allowed to have dignity in the work they do.

Seymour Melman, in *After Capitalism: From Managerialism to Workplace Democracy* (2001), refers to this process as “dis-alienation”: a process of response of workers to alienations that have been long pursued by the state and corporate managers, characterized by *new* relations of production, an alternative to the long-familiar decision process of business and state capitalism. Dis-alienation takes the form of workers' actions to restore power to affect their work,

and their places in occupations and communities (Melman, 2001, p. 3). Workers' decision process is what defines the core features of workplace democracy: "those who do production work of every sort are also final decision makers..." (Melman, 2001, p. ix)

If the driving motive for production was use rather than profit; C-M-C rather than M-C-M', then worker-owners would be able to themselves decide to work long enough to keep their businesses open and fully functioning and provide a standard of living collectively decided upon. Workers would decide how much leisure time to spend with their families and develop their interests, providing them with their birthright for their full development as humans, as well as the freedom to control how they spend their time. The focus here is not on how much money workers can accumulate, but more importantly how much workers can collectively improve their quality of life while also being able to use and control their time on their own.

The focus on quality of life versus profit also has the consequence of connecting the economic to the social-political where it ought to be, instead of separating them as capitalism does. If worker-owners are concerned with quality of life, then cooperative workplaces can become extensions of communities. Currently, workplaces are places to *go* and work rather than spaces for a *community of producers*. Under a democratic economy, workplaces might concern themselves with developing the communities they exist in and the workers live in, funding local schools or public works projects, community centers, parks, health centers and other resources to help people develop their communities.

Anarchism and Economic Democracy

In 2014, one cannot talk about economic justice or economic democracy without acknowledging the struggle of all those who have resisted capitalism and advanced alternative ideas and visions, especially in the 20th century. Some of the first people to debate issues of

economic democracy in the 20th century were those who promoted the ideas of Anarcho-Syndicalism, which was one of the several strands of anarchism, but one that is closely connected to ideas of economic democracy.

Anarchism is an anti-statist ideology that comes out of Enlightenment liberalism. It is not at all centralized or one cohesive theory. Many people understand it to be a destructive ideology.

Bertrand Russell argues that,

in the popular mind, an Anarchist is a person who throws bombs and commits other outrages, either because he is more or less insane, or because he uses the pretense of extreme political opinions as a cloak for criminal proclivities (Russell, 1918, p. 49).

But this really has nothing at all to do with what Anarchism is or what Anarchism promotes.

Peter Kropotkin defined Anarchism as a “principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government...harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law or by obedience to authority but by free agreements concluded between various groups” (Novak, 1958, p. 308). This definition leaves many questions, particularly regarding how society would organize large tasks such as maintaining infrastructure, public services and technological development, all things that states have become very good at providing. Kropotkin’s definition leaves it unclear how these free agreements between various groups would be concluded. Perhaps the best understanding and summation of the different strands of Anarchism is brought to us by Rudolf Rocker, in *Anarcho –Syndicalism* (Rocker, 2004), and D. Novak in “The Place of Anarchism in the History of Political Thought” (1958). Novak suggests that Anarchism is a theory that concerns itself with, “the problems of power, authority and coercion, especially as manifested in the machinery of the State...” (Novak, 1958). Similarly Rocker describes it as, “a definite intellectual current... whose adherents advocate the abolition of economic monopolies and of all political and social coercive institutions within

society.” (2004, p. 1). He discusses not just what they are against but what Anarchists are in favor of when he states,

In place of the present capitalistic economic order Anarchists would have a free association of all productive forces based upon co-operative labour, which would have as its sole purpose the satisfying of the necessary requirements of every member of society, and would no longer have in view the special interest of privileged minorities within the social union (Rocker, 2004, p. 1).

Here we can see some of the basic tenets of Anarchism, individual freedom and liberty from a coercive state power. In many respects Anarchism is born out of the liberalism of the enlightenment. It seeks for all humans to live free and unfettered by a coercive power. Yet there is an inherent tension in Anarchism as it strains to promote *both* individual freedom along with cooperative values. This is something that has troubled political theorists across the ages, reconciling the *individual will* with collective goals and thus according to Novak, some writers “...put anarchism and socialism as antitheses. Such judgment arises out of the conception of anarchism as a doctrine championing the rights of the individual *against* the rights of society, whereas socialism is conceived as a doctrine emphasizing the rights of society against those of the individual” (Novak, 1958) [emphasis added]. This battle between individual and communal wants and needs, leads to the development of the different strands of Anarchism that fall on different places in the individual – collective spectrum.

Novak describes a few separate and often conflicting Anarchisms. While they all have a belief in individual freedom and a denial of authority how they manage the above-mentioned tension is what separates them. The first is Religious Anarchism, which is a rejection of the organized church and promotes the individual’s right to interpret the bible for him/herself (Novak, 1958, p. 317). This kind of anarchism is most associated with Anabaptists, early

Quakers and most notably, Tolstoy. Its emphasis is on the teaching of love as the fundamental essence of the soul, focusing on living in harmony and peace with one another.

Anarchist-individualism mostly resembles or takes its cue from liberalism that came out of the enlightenment and is today best understood as libertarianism. Novak describes this Anarchism as, "...the proclamation of the absolute freedom of the individual. The individual has the right to do whatever he wants, and everything that would curtail his freedom must be fought against" (1958, pp. , 322). This is clearly problematic when ones comes up against the problem of where one person's freedom to do whatever she want begins to impinge upon another person's freedom do what he want. Ironically, this ideology is very much alive today, namely amongst neo and far right conservatives; especially those in the tea party that are anti-government and wish to do as they please, especially as it concerns corporations, so long as others don't impinge upon their right to do so. They do this while ignoring the government's public contributions in the form of roads, highways, laying the foundation for electricity and telephones as well as the internet et al. This form of anarchism lacks real world application in a society where people are by nature or by circumstance forced to live near others, work in common and live in community with others.

The other forms of anarchism struggle much more to "reach a synthesis and harmony of the individual and communal, or social tendencies..." (Novak, 1958, p. 325). These are the anarchisms that I address, especially anarcho-communism and anarcho-syndicalism. Kropotkin was an advocate of anarcho-communism as he saw it convey "the idea of unity or harmony between individual freedom and a well ordered social life" (Kropotkin, 1880). Anarcho-communism places its focus on the political struggle of the working class and diminishing if not entirely eradicating the state's interference in social life. It does so in the form of union activism

and reforming the state from within by developing a political party that slowly diminishes the power of the state. Anarcho-syndicalism places much more emphasis on democratizing the economy as opposed to political institutions. Novak explains,

that the trade unions, or syndicates, can serve both as the leading units in the present-day struggle for the amelioration of the conditions of the workers and as the bases of a *new* economic organization of society after a victorious revolution, in which the General Strike is to play the leading part. The anarcho-syndicalists intend to abolish the State and carry on the activities of society through the syndicates associated by industries and localities (1958, p. 322).

While there may be differences in where these two different types of anarchisms focus their criticisms, both accept the same principles in their approach to the economic problems of society and both oppose the private ownership of land and capital. However the anarcho-syndicalists, unlike the anarcho-communists who focus on the political sphere and by so doing legitimate the separation of “spheres”, focus on what Marx saw as the centrality of our society, the economy, specifically the mode of production; which then conditions the social relations of production.

Marx argued:

the sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life *conditions* [not determines] the social, political and intellectual life process in general (Marx, 1859, p. 1) [emphasis added].

Marx saw the economy as central to the development of society, especially at the point of production. For him this was where society began and ended and consequently, where it must change. Anarcho-syndicalists’ focus on the economy, namely work, is therefore crucial to the development of the idea an expanded notion of democracy in society. If democracy does not exist in the workplace (the economy) then it cannot exist in society.

Anarcho-syndicalists have attempted to extend the liberal idea of freedom into the workplace. Rocker states that anarcho-syndicalists assumed the social ownership of all natural

and social wealth and that economic life would be carried on by the free *co-operation* of the producers (2004, p. 4). Their attempts at setting up workers democratic syndicates as the basis for a free society are still the linchpin for a truly democratic society.

Rocker provides a full history of the development of anarcho-syndicalists movements from the luddites to Robert Owen to the successful examples of anarcho-syndicalist organizations that had tremendous political clout such as the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union of Great Britain and Ireland (GNC) in the 1830's as well as the Spanish Confederacion Nacional de Trabajadores (CNT) in the 1930's. The latter laid the foundation of a radical tradition in Spain that has had very positive results and even spurred the development of a worker owned culture culminating in Mondragon²³. One of the main differences between these movements and organizations and other types of syndicates and even modern unions is that they understood what Thompson, Owen and later Marx argued; that there was an existing conflict between capital and labor that could never be settled by ordinary battles over wages, in a sense making "a fair days wage for a fair days work" irrelevant (Marx, 1847). For Owen and Marx the issue wasn't about how much people were being paid, but rather it was about the fundamental exploitation inherent in the capitalist system whereby the workers are separated from that which they produce as well as the implements which they produce with. Their goal was to create a system with the technology coming out of capitalism, where the producers controlled and benefited directly from their labor expended and that which they produced, without some CEO, or majority shareholder siphoning off the fruits of their labor. The Anarcho-syndicalists promoted this incredibly important paradigmatic shift in how society could be organized, itself

²³ Mondragon is the 7th largest corporation in Spain. It is worker owned and controlled, having a workers' congress that decides and votes on company policy, hiring, promotions, and wealth distribution. It also has a university accessible to its worker-owners.

based on the fundamental idea that value comes from those who labor and thus, should remain with them.

Conclusion

In questioning our society and the way we have chosen to organize it, researchers must be at the forefront of studying the alternative forms of social, economic and political organization that exist, especially ones based on concepts of co-operation, community, economic democracy and inclusiveness. Ultimately, taking an analytical perspective of where we are in the development of human potential and other possibilities, intellectuals can be critical of our current state, ask whether we can do better and give some potential viable alternatives. My underlying assumption is, that we can *always* improve and do better and people are attempting to do better in many places, including the Bay Area of San Francisco and Oakland where there is a burgeoning Cooperative movement.

This cooperative movement is composed of a myriad of worker-cooperatives as well as worker-cooperative support and developer non-profit organizations. In total I interviewed 21 workers from 14 workplaces/organizations, composing just a small sample of the number of worker-cooperatives and support and developer organizations in the region. The interviews provided more than sufficient data to understand some of the major contributions as well as issues that worker-cooperatives make and face. The workers in the cooperatives largely had a better quality of life than workers in similar industries but also in relation to the jobs the workers held before they joined the cooperatives. This quality of life is measured not only by better pay and benefits but also by more autonomy and decision making power in the workplace. That being said, like most workplaces, worker-cooperatives face substantial challenges. The list is long and includes issues faced by other kinds of businesses (profitability, expansion,

accountability, financing, conflict resolution), but some are unique to worker-cooperatives such as the facilitation of democratic decision-making. More importantly are issues related to race, gender, sexuality and the way they are experienced and overcome in a workplace committed to social justice and equity. The focus of the next chapter will largely deal with these sorts of questions. How do worker cooperatives that are interested in changing the relations of production effectively deal with internal tensions that stem from the larger society, like racism, sexism, identity politics, and gentrification?

CHAPTER FOUR: Racism, Capitalist Inequality and the Cooperative Mode of Production

Introduction

I walked in and there was a steady line of people trying to get their last minute pastries before closing (Carlos, participant observation, 2013). When the bakery finally closed, the workers began joking and laughing as they worked comfortably closing down. There was no one rushing them or telling them what to do. They all had tasks and seemed to know what each had to do. The radio was playing a Spanish station with Mexican music (music I was familiar with and made me feel at home). I found this interesting as I was on Valencia Street, which is the dividing line between the traditional working class Mission district and a more upscale community that has been moving in with the tech boom in the Bay Area. Mexican music playing in a business that caters to an upscale and largely white demographic seemed rather odd to me but at the same time pleasant. It initially highlighted to me the diversity that this type of cooperative might seek to represent.

As I waited for the Network of Bay Area Worker Cooperatives (No BAWC) meeting, the worker-owners regularly offered me coffee or water, or asked if I needed anything. They asked me where I worked and I told them I was doing research on worker cooperatives. They seemed surprised to learn this and they told me it was “cool”. I replied that what they were doing was cool and I just wanted to tell their story as I thought it was important. I couldn’t tell if we both understood the historical significance of what they were engaged in, but their mission statement on the wall in very large and bold writing read,

We are a worker owned cooperative that values and supports local community, social justice, and the environment. We aim to create the highest quality affordable baked goods; maintain an equal and positive work space; and provide

workers with ongoing learning and skill development opportunities. We also support the creation of new cooperatives in the mission.

-Bakery Mission Statement

This bakery is one of seven independently-run worker cooperatives that are part of a bakery association. There are many things that differentiate this business from others, including its culture, the collegiality among the workers and the initiative and pride they take in their work. However, these features begin with the fact that this business is not like other businesses, because it is worker-owned and democratically-controlled. While these sorts of enterprises have been around for several decades (the first bakery, named Cheeseboard, was started in 1971) they seem to be spreading and catching steam as a viable and sustainable alternative to the types of businesses that led us into recent economic crisis. They incorporate values that are different than those that give preference to profits above all else.

Identity Challenges within Cooperatives

While cooperatives provide more value for worker-owners as well as community members than normal businesses because of how they distribute earnings horizontally (Wolff, 2012; The Democracy Collaborative, 2013; Alperovitz, Williamson, & Howard, 2010; Alperovitz, 2011), they are not without their fair share of problems. Because workers are socialized into the values and norms of a given society, on a micro-level as well as macro-level, they are subject to the problems that that society perpetuates. One of the issues that arises from the U.S. macro-social and political context is how perception of race and racism affects workers interactions within these types of organizations. Cooperatives within the U.S., while attempting to change the economic structure of society, are still products of the U.S. socio-cultural arena and its norms, including the often-complex impacts of racism.

Ron Schmidt argues, “that race plays a role in U.S. politics because there is contestation over the political meaning and significance of so-called racial identities, and over inequalities and power relations between so-called racial groups” (Schmidt, 2015, p. 326). The literature on race, racism and racial inequality is vast but necessary to explore in attempting to understand both how these types of organizations are affected by race on a micro level within the organization and also by how the cooperative national structure is affected by issues of racial inequality stemming from other societal influences. For instance, Critical Race Theory (CRT) scholars argue that Race occupies the central and most important position of oppression in the U.S. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Specifically, they argue that “racism is ordinary, not aberrational—“normal science,” the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 6). The CRT arguments focus on placing race in a central position in any legal, educational, social policy or institutional analysis.

Similarly, Omi and Winant's classic theory of racial formation places the same emphasis on race (Omi & Winant, 2014). For Omi and Winant, race is the primary factor in the development of U.S. politics through what they term the “racial state”, which has operated according to the logic of the ideology of white supremacy (2014, p. 82). They argue that the state is inherently racial and, “far from intervening in racial conflicts, the state is itself the preeminent site of racial conflict” (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 82). The Racial State engages in racial politics through what was initially a racial dictatorship that completely excluded people of color and exacted physical violence upon non-whites to attain their subjugation (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 66). This Racial Dictatorship eventually became a racial hegemony that operates on both physical subjugation as well as consent through psychological fear of violence. This social

hegemony, in turn, elaborates, and maintains “a popular system of ideas and practices-through education, the media, religion, folk wisdom, etc.-- which [Gramsci] called ‘common sense’” (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 67). The hegemonic system is achieved by what they term “racial projects”, which are defined as “simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or exploitation of racial dynamics and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines” (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 55). Their theoretical framework ultimately focuses on the hierarchical racial dissemination of resources that leaves people of color and specifically Blacks on the outside looking in.

Intersectionality also provides a useful analytical tool in order to understand the complexity of human interactions within organizations, especially within U.S. contexts. In 1945 Claudia Jones introduced the concept of the “triple oppression” that poor women of color face in the U.S. Denise Lynn argues that “Claudia Jones argued that black women were peripheral...because of “triple oppression, the oppression of black women based on sex, race, and class” (Lynn, 2009). Claudia Jones, a Trinidad immigrant and member of the American Communist Party (CPUSA), challenged American Communist Party leadership on the essentialist question of whether to focus on class issues or race issues (Lynn, 2009). For Jones, the layered identities of poor women of color could not be detached from each another. They were all three different identities: gender, class and race. For her, having a conversation about which to focus on was simplistic and reductionist. Similarly, in 1991 Kimberle Crenshaw building on the conception of multiple layers of oppression, introduced the now famous and heavily debated concept of intersectionality to highlight the essentialism existing within identity politics (Crenshaw, 1991). According to Crenshaw, “The problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite, that it

frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences” (1991, p. 1242). Often, people’s identities’ are essentialized into one-dimensional categories and put in contradistinction with one another.

Crenshaw begins to add more complexity to Jones’ initial framework of multiple oppressions, focusing on the way in which identities are multidimensional, situationally contextual and interact with one another in different ways for different people. They are fluid and non-static markers of who we are and they interact with each other in a myriad of very interesting complex and often-contradictory ways. Thus, Jones’ and Crenshaw’s arguments bring to light the need to pay attention to the different layers of identity and how they interact with one another. Patricia Hill Collins takes this argument and coupled with Black Feminist thought shows us how the controlling images of black women have a real world effect on the lives of black women (Hill Collins, 2000). She shows us how the intersection of how black women are perceived along with their gender, class, race and other identities function to create conditions of different intersecting layers of oppression for black women and women of color that other racial groups don’t have to face in the type and level of magnitude that they do (Hill Collins, 2000). In order to understand racial oppression one must understand the social complexity in which it is integrated and how it functions differently for different people. Peggy Macintosh adds to this debate but draws out the different systems of privilege that have historically been created by these dynamics. She specifically highlights the ways in which White privilege mirrors Male privilege (McIntosh, 1988).

These frameworks are instructive in attempting to understand the internal behavioral dynamics of work relations within cooperatives even when there is an attempt to create an inclusive and equitable environment. Despite the fact that cooperatives as a collective of workers-owners are interested in creating a different economy and culture, one largely

progressive and open, they still face social identity problems. Samantha, a queer Black-Latina, for instance argues that while her co-worker-owners are on the same page about the business and what kind of economy they are attempting to build, within the organization issues of race, class, gender, sexuality etc. often surface, even though she feels they are intentional about addressing these and building solidarity around them. She argues that:

...despite as much as we may try we will still see forms of oppression kind of springing forth here, its disheartening but it's a good reminder that there is so much work to be done... on one level its hard because you see hierarchies sort of forming here in a way like some people's opinions could be taken more seriously than others, or some people talk more than others, or some people take on more responsibilities, or some people are more dominant in this workplace, and I think a lot of times it has a lot of overlap with race, gender, class and you'll see that happening. So there's that and its not horrible and we are constantly trying to work on it, like you'll see people having a moment, "I'm talking a lot here" and step back at meetings. People are growing and learning and getting better at it with time, which is so appreciated. So there's that, that's difficult. Then there is also a notion of our different sense of priorities could be difficult. Because none of our priorities are all the same... But there was a large division in our [coop], it's still kind of lingering, of like Latin American immigrants vs. everyone else... there's these bohemian non immigrant people and then there's Latin American immigrants who are trying to hold it down so there is a definite cultural and definite social division happening here... (Samantha, interview, July 7, 2013).

In this exchange with Samantha, she is attempting to express the complexities of identities and how they manifest in the work processes they are all engaged in. Even under a condition where people are conscious about their identities and the different privileges they have, and even though they may be intentional in addressing them in positive ways, through open dialogues and conflict resolution, different issues still surface. Osvaldo, another worker-owner at the coop hints at the same issues:

...you could see the divide in our [cooperative] you know like pretty clearly too, between the Latinos and the LGBT community and whenever we're making decisions and voting on them you can see a clear line you know in terms of which way people are voting. It's very visible and everybody sees it and we're only now starting to talk about it in terms of common vision because I think thats

what the biggest problem is in terms of being able to work through these issues...
(Osvaldo, interview, July 24, 2013).

Intersectionality helps in attempting to understand these issues within the workplace. It is clear that the various workers at Samantha's cooperative all come from different backgrounds all of which affect the struggles they each individually face or even ones they don't. Samantha expressed differences between those workers in her cooperative who are struggling to survive (holding it down) and those she feels are privileged and are doing it because it's cool or trendy (bohemian). Osvaldo was a little more specific in pointing at Latinos and LGBT. But it is important to note there aren't clear dividing lines. Osvaldo points to LGBT members, but he is specifically referring to white LGBT worker-owners. But some worker-owners like Samantha fall into both identity group categories, as she is Afro-Latina LGBT. This points to the interesting and complex nature of how intersectionality helps us understand the nature of work in an environment specifically designed to ameliorate societal inequalities. Samantha herself understands that there is a life difference and a difference in the magnitude of struggle between gender, national origin, class and race and this affects the way in which people interact at work and specifically what they take for granted (their different systems of privilege). For Samantha, the struggle of being a working class immigrant in the U.S. has a different magnitude than that of some of the other issues.

To understand Osvaldo's position and why the line of demarcation for him within the cooperative is clearer, it is important to understand his story.

So I grew up in Immokalee, It's a small farm worker town man, but it's big in terms of like, It's all farm work out there man, tomatoes, bell peppers, you know watermelon season usually starts down there in South West Florida and the town I grew up in pretty much, I guess like a lot of small towns man there are no opportunities there really. You don't really learn anything about the outside world you know. When you're in a small town like that you sort of live in a box man in

a way. You don't see the shit that is going on in the outside world, you just see your own little community and like I don't know man. Like everyone that I grew up with pretty much has gone to prison or did some crazy shit or is like nowhere right now man because we are not sort of like the culture of like going to fucking college and shit. You know what I'm saying? It's mainly like drinking and hanging out in the street and shit. So that's pretty much where I grew up and the thing that sort of changed for me I think, was this organization man. When I turned about 14, you know, I was out in the streets you know, chilling and I see this group hanging out in front of a farm, maybe 15 and I see this group of people marching past the water man in Immokalee and I'm like what the hell is that? It turns out this farm worker was beaten in the fields for basically wanting to get a drink of water and I didn't know that at the time, I just see this group of people and I thought it was fucking cool. They were marching past and yelling and shit. Later on when I found out about it, I don't know? I'd never seen anything like that in our community man. It was like the beginning of something just different and then I ended up you know, I had been a farm worker for a long time... and so since then man I've been sort of, I've been doing that [organizing] off and on 'cause I was still, even though the coalition²⁴ was a new window into a way of looking at shit man I was still kind of stuck in my own, like drinking all the time and screwing up in the streets and shit like that, you know what I mean? And so every year we'd go do our thing I mean um every now and then I'd go take off and do something else for a little bit, then I'd come back and be in the coalition again. But I think who I am today man has a lot to do with the coalition man in terms of opening my mind to like see things in a different way and the cooperative that we did during watermelon season I think it was really an eye opener in terms of like always trying to think outside of the box. Try to do things differently you know what I mean. Anyway so ultimately I did a good amount of stuff, but I was also going out and doing my own shit too and I eventually ended up in prison any damn way and I did three years for some dumb shit...I was like on the run in Mexico City for like a year during that time too and then I was away from my daughter and so my daughter was born and I was fucking up so bad I started drinking more and more and obviously you know I ended up stealing a cop car and hauling ass and then went to Mexico for a year on the run. I ended up getting caught and coming back I got caught on the border and um and that's when I decided, you know what? I need to go and do my time. I want to be with my daughter you know? I don't want to be on the fucking run all the damn time. So I did my three years and said to myself, you know while I'm in there, I'm going to do whatever the fuck I can to change the way I think about things and like I don't know figure out how to do something with my life so that I can be a part of her life you know what I'm saying? And so as soon as I got out of prison in Florida my daughter had moved over here to Berkeley with her mother and so I

²⁴ Coalition here refers to the coalition of Immokalee workers, which is a worker-based human rights organization internationally recognized for its achievements in the fields of social responsibility, human trafficking, and gender-based violence at work. Built on a foundation of farmworker community organizing starting in 1993, and reinforced with the creation of a national consumer network since 2000, CIW's work has steadily grown over more than twenty years <http://ciw-online.org/>

worked my way this way and just did whatever I could do get by (Osvaldo, interview, July 24, 2013).

This history of struggle to him sets him apart from the other people in his cooperative, especially those Samantha refers to as “bohemian”. For Osvaldo his struggle has always been about a lack of resources, which is a material struggle. His struggle has not been just an internal or personal identity struggle but one about what material resources he has available (or ones he lacks) to him to improve his life. His personal and identity struggles are all couched by the fact that he has lived in poverty his whole life. So the identity struggles he does encounter are all conditioned by this material reality. By the time he joins the cooperative there's multiple levels of identities he carries: farm-worker, ex-convict, Latino, organizer and father and all are conditioned by what material resources he has access to (monetary or otherwise). So for him these sorts of issues, of economic survival undergird his understanding of the politics within the cooperative. He clearly delineates between those who are trying to survive a struggle like his own, one of overcoming poverty and those who are in the cooperative for a more welcoming space. My highlighting these issues should not be taken as an attempt to rank order any of the specific types of struggles but rather to show the nuance and complexity of how these all come to interact within spaces that are supposed to and intend to be “an equal and positive work space”. For both Samantha and Osvaldo, the layers of struggle for the immigrants in the cooperative run deeper and are more complex because of the racial dynamics and how immigrants are often treated and infantilized. What comes out clear is not a rank ordering of struggles, but rather a racial dividing line between what issues matter more and to who. Based on my interviews and observations, the brown/black workers seem to be more concerned about material well being because they come from vulnerable backgrounds of poverty. The white workers seem to be more concerned with issues of identity and process. McIntosh points to these dynamics, which she attributes to whiteness, but

can also be interpreted as class based (McIntosh, 1988). What results from this is a contestation in the workplace over who has what power. And for Samantha and Osvaldo the dividing line over that struggle for power is somewhat racialized even though intersectionality helps us see its not that simple. Clearly, something having to do with race and how worker-owners treat each other is going on.

Paternalism in a Cooperative Environment

Along these lines of racial interactions, Gabriela, a Latina immigrant, reports that in her attempts to start a worker cooperative, she has been faced with a level of paternalism from the mostly white worker-cooperative developers²⁵ as well as superiors of the same ethnic background but different class position. She states,

Entonces como [Freedom] Café ya existía y nosotros queríamos existir, empezamos hablar a compartir información; cuales era sus retos cuales eran nuestros retos . Me dijo un día la facilitadora me dice “oye yo me voy a ir pero porque tu no te vienes a tomar mi posición en [Freedom] Café” Y le digo, “sabes que yo tengo un compromiso con estas mujeres en Latina Center , no quiero dejarlas para irme por eso puesto de trabajo. Le digo ahora que si nos aceptan a todas, le digo nosotras queremos ser parte de una cooperativa e si ustedes son una cooperativa tal vez podamos colaborar con ustedes. So ella hablo con Kim , e Kim dijo pues vamos a hablar. Los fuimos todas la mujer de Latina Center a participar con [Freedom] Café. El problema fue que [Freedom] Café tenia una idea de negocio, que es la venta de comida saludable. No es que nosotros estamos contra la comida saludable porque nosotras también vendemos comida saludables ...los hemos educado, parte de la educación que nos dan en Latina Center es sobre nutrición. Entonces queríamos nosotras o mas que nada mis compañeras , soñaban con personificar nuestra cooperativa . Decían “es que nosotros somos Fusión Latina e la comida que nosotras vendemos es muy diferente e el concepto es muy diferente e la comida latina también es saludable” Entonces tres meses después decidimos que siempre “no” e que queríamos continuar con la idea de nuestro negocio. Entonces hablamos con Kim e decidimos nosotras continuar con la idea de Fusión Latina.

[Since Freedom Café (a worker cooperative) existed already and we wanted to exist, we started talking with them to share information, what were their

²⁵ Worker Cooperative Developers are those people that work for non-profit organizations whose mission it is to promote, expand and develop worker cooperatives.

challenges... what were our challenges? One day the facilitator tells me "hey I'm leaving but why don't you come and take my position in Freedom Café?" And I say, "I have a commitment to these women in Latina Center, I cannot leave them for that job." But if you accept us all... we want to be part of a cooperative and since you are a cooperative maybe we can work with you. So she spoke with Jane, and Jane said we would talk. All of the women from the Latina Center went to participate at Freedom Cafe. The problem was the people running the cafe had a different business idea than ours, which was selling healthy food. Not that we are against healthy food because we also sell healthy food... but we wanted and were Latin Fusion and the food that we sell is very different and the concept is very different even though the Latin food we sell is also healthy. Then three months later we decided that we no longer wanted to continue with their cooperative and instead we wanted to continue with the idea of our business.] (Gabriela, interview, July 17, 2013).

This exchange calls into question several factors. The first is the democratic process of worker cooperatives. If Gabriela and her friends joined this new organization and now made up the majority, why couldn't they change the direction of the business, especially if they were going to be the owners of the cooperative? Why would the café not be willing to consider changes or a new directions in light of new membership? Based on my observations during the interview with Gabriela, it was clear that those people in positions to make such decisions weren't actually the workers but rather the people working for non-profits that funded these endeavors, who were largely white. This brings into focus a different aspect of race and racial paternalism. Gabriela did not say it outright but I could tell from how she talked about it and her non-verbal communication that she experienced a racialized and class based paternalism in her interactions with the white cooperative developers. I observed simialr processes in other cooperatives during my initial observations.

My study was supposed to initially focus on an organization that focused on developing Latina cooperatives. I was unable to see that research through because of the organization's inability to grant me access to the cooperatives. The people at the organization who were mostly white and formally educated, explicitly told me not to ask the cooperatives' workers themselves

for access to interviews or observations. I wondered whether, if these worker cooperatives were in fact democratically-owned and controlled and therefore autonomous, why would the non profit leaders ask me not to talk to the worker-owners? That seemed rather undemocratic and paternalistic to me. I came to see that these sorts of paternalistic interactions weren't just racialized but based on class status and assumptions about the type of decisions that workers were assumed to be able to make or not make. In some of my interviews, especially those in which a worker cooperative was created by a developer organization (usually a non-profit), there was much less worker autonomy in decision making, much like Gabriela experienced in Freedom Café. I would argue that the lack of autonomy comes from base assumptions (often false ones) about the education and experience of these workers, assumptions that largely disempower and take agency away from the workers, especially low-income immigrant women. It was odd that in one instance these organizations were empowering low income Latina women with good jobs with dignity, but at the same time doing it through racialized paternalism. The fact remains that most of the people at the forefront of cooperative development, while very well intentioned, were educated white people. And in their attempts to address economic issues of inequality, I witnessed hard working Latina and Latino coop worker-owners being paraded around to workshops and presentations to tell and sell "their" story.

This is a common development in the non-profit world where good stories make for more funding. The concept is even called "poverty pimping" by those critical of the non-profit industrial complex that often takes advantage of the dire conditions that people in poverty face. The poverty pimping functions, is that these stories are packaged into a grant proposal and program to help alleviate the conditions, never really dealing with the root causes of them. A classic example of this that Mike Davis discusses is the drug and gang war in the U.S. and

specifically Los Angeles, and how it fed the massive growth of police departments and non-profit anti-gang programs across the country (Davis, 1990). Gangs were extremely profitable for both of these industries and when in 1992 during the L.A. Uprising, there was a truce between the Crips and the Bloods the LA Police department instigated, that is played both gangs against each other so that both gangs would return to their antagonism (Davis, 1990). Selling the story of fear and gangs to Los Angeles paid for SWAT tanks and equipment. It also funded anti-gang programs that attempted to reform the individual rather than deal with the root causes of gang affiliation, namely a lack of access to well paying jobs that had been available a generation before but had since been outsourced abroad due to Neoliberalism (Davis, 1990).

The difference in the case of the coops is that they are focusing on dealing with root causes, but that doesn't preclude them from engaging in the same kind of paternalism, in which they commodify workers' stories in order to sell their brand. Gabriela experienced this multiple times with different organizations including the one that had trained her in organizing and the one she was working at when she began to research cooperatives but on her own time. With respect to the work she did building her cooperative she says:

Yo lo hice en tiempo extra de mi trabajo en la organización . Entonces llego un punto en que la organización quiso tomar eso ...o sea a mi no me pagaban absolutamente nada por mis investigación , por mi trabajo , por mis reuniones . Era trabajo extra que yo hacia , yo me reunía los sábados por la noche con las lideres . Entonces todo eso era trabajo que no se me pagaba pero como comenzó acumular todo un reto historial entonces la organización quiso...okay como va eso de la cooperativa?...Entonces yo le dije pues yo termino mi trabajo en julio porque yo me voy con la cooperativa . Y eso no fue muy agradable y es lo que tu dices inicio aquí y es mío...entonces dije no porque a mi no me pagaron por hacer ese trabajo , fue mucho trabajo; fue investigación, fueron mis recursos, fue todo. Realmente lo que estaba haciendo la organización, y esto si quieres grabarlo sino no ...que pasa?! Todo esto tu sabes que sirve para escribir grants para que traiga dinero a la organización, pero nada de eso iba llegar a la cooperativa, nada....Entonces utilizan esa cosas para obtener mas dinero para poder aplicar para mas apoyo. Pues yo dije yo no quiere ese tipo de paternalismo porque eso es usar a la gente pero no darle los recursos que necesita. Entonces en conclusión si

con nosotros iba pasar lo mismo que esta pasando en [CLEAN] , no pienso que sea bueno ...estar bajo el paraguas de una organización , por lo menos nosotras realmente si estamos empoderadas. Nosotras la decisiones que hacemos es de los miembros no de la organización.

[I did the work of organizing (the cooperative) on my own time. There came a point where the organization (Latina Center) wanted to take that ... I mean they did not pay absolutely anything for my research, my work, my meetings. It was extra work I was doing, I met Saturday night with the leaders. But none of that work I did was paid, but as it began to accumulate the challenge became that they wanted it and they began asking ‘okay how is the cooperative going?’ as if it was a project I was working on for them. I then notified them that I would be leaving work for the center in July because I would be going with the cooperative full time. That process was not a positive one because they tried to say that the cooperative began with them and was theirs and it wasn’t. I had to tell them it did not belong to them because they did not pay me for doing that job and it was a lot of work; it was my research that I did with my resources, that was it. Really what the organization was doing... all this you know they wanted to use to write grants to bring money to the organization, but none of it would reach the cooperative, nothing... They use that stuff to obtain more money, to apply for more support. And I said that I did not want that kind of paternalism because that's using people but without giving them the resources they need. So in conclusion, I do not think that it would do us or anyone well to be under the umbrella of an organization At least we are truly empowered. For us the decisions that we make are those of the members not of an outside organization.] (Gabriela, interview, July 17, 2013)

There was an attempt by the organization she worked for to commodify Gabriela’s work and time because they saw potential in what she was doing on her own time. They saw it as a potential funding source for the work of their center rather than as a good for the worker-owners who would benefit from the economic independence of co-owning their own business. This is why they attempted to assume ownership of the project she was engaged in. And the fact that they felt they could assume ownership points to what they ultimately felt about Gabriela. The assumption that a project could be taken from someone who had put so much work into it is an attempt to exert power over that person and that is done only when someone feels that other person is weak. It points to an inherent paternalism and disjointed power relationships within the

people involved. They thought they could get away with taking advantage of Gabriela because ultimately they didn't see her as an equal.

What these comments from Samantha, Osvaldo and Gabriela point to is that sometimes embedded in racial, gender or sexuality categories are connotations of class and more that these are all conditioned by real circumstances. When Samantha and Osvaldo refer to Latinos, there is embedded in their use of the term the idea that people that come from difficult working and often poverty backgrounds who are also often immigrants. Gabriela similarly confided in me that she felt that although it came from well meaning people, the paternalism stemmed from their assumptions about her based on her working-class immigrant background, which is only her identity on this side of the border because of her immigration status. In Mexico, Gabriela was a college-educated teacher who worked in the countryside helping rural communities. Her actual experience working with cooperatives, I would argue far exceeds that of the people who were paternalistic towards her. In Mexico she dramatically changed a small, impoverished rural town over time by employing all the women through an embroidering cooperative. She tells the story as follows:

Entonces me di cuenta que las mujeres de el pueblo bordaban muy bonito. Pero solamente bordaban servilletas porque ellas habían perdido la tradición de usar los trajes típicos, entonces solamente bordaban en servilletas. Y les pregunte ..fui un día a Ocosingo (al pueblo mas cercano) y me di cuenta que con los bordados que ellas sabían hacer había mujeres que hacían blusas y las vendían a 50 pesos, que era bastante dinero en es tiempo. Entonces regrese y le propuse a una muchacha, le dije “oye no te interesaría bordar blusas, haces un trabajo muy bonito en tus servilletas” se rio y dice “no, eso...para que una blusa” ..Y le digo pues para venderlas. Estaba en ese tiempo visitando una religiosa muy joven y yo le digo porque fijate si ellas saben bordar esas servilletas tan bonitas también pueden hacer blusas. Y me dice ella la joven religiosa, “pues si conseguimos que hagan blusas yo les regalo 500 pesos para comprar tela y hilo” ...y fuimos las dos (ella y yo) a comprar tela y hilo y llamamos a esta muchacha ..y entonces cortamos una blusa y yo les dibuje las flores y le dije a la muchacha “te gustaría ayudarnos a bordarlo y cuando termines la vamos a vender y te vamos a dar la mitad de lo que

cuesta la blusa” y dice “bueno” y se fue y en tres días regreso con la blusa terminada, una belleza de blusa. Le digo “quieres llevarte otra?”. Bueno y se llevo la otra pero regreso, tres días después, con otra blusa y con su prima. Entonces, la prima se llevo y después trajeron otra muchacha y después a otra muchacha...y cuando ya teníamos veinte blusas llegaron tres alemanas a visitar la comunidad (eran jovencitas). Les dije “oye estamos vendiendo blusas bordadas” y me dicen “oh si pues vamos a la escuela” . Pues habíamos echo una escuelita y pusimos una exhibición de las blusas y dijeron las muchachas “queremos todas”. Entonces vendimos todas las blusas y la mitad de lo que se gano se lo dimos a cada una de las que bordaron y la otra mitad se quedo para compra mas tela y mas hilo. Cuando las mujeres vieron eso, después venían ya 15 mujeres y después 20 mujeres y empezamos una cooperativa. Entonces llegamos a tener las 100 mujeres de la comunidad trabajando en la cooperativa. Y yo viajaba a Guadalajara porque ya eran demasiadas blusas y ya no sabíamos que hacer con ellas. Comencé a viajar a Guadalajara a llevar la blusas a vender y a re-invertir. Cuando ya teníamos demasiado dinero decidimos que ellas ganarían el 75% del trabajo y el 25% se quedaría para re-invertir. Obviamente que no pagábamos licencia, ni permisos, ni impuestos, ni nada. Entonces el 25% se quedaba para la cooperativa y el 75% se iba para la mujer que la bordaba. Cambio y se volvió en todo algo revolucionario porque la mujer comenzó a generar un ingreso. Con la ganancia que teníamos logramos a construir una casita donde después compramos maquinas de coser. Tres años después que comenzamos ya teníamos un taller, teníamos tres maquinas de coser, teníamos una bodega con tela y hilos. Y estábamos llevando blusas a Guadalajara y el Distrito Federal. Yo termine mi trabajo porque mi niño estaba creciendo y yo quería que el fuera a otro lugar a estudiar. Y creo que mi ciclo en la comunidad había terminado, pero se quedo la escuela, se quedo el taller... y tenían mis contactos para distribuir las blusas. Empezaron no solamente hacer blusas para vender en el exterior si no también para vender ropa que a ellas les gustaba, la vendían ahí mismo en la comunidad. Y ellas distribuían en las ganancias y hacían sus reuniones.... porque yo les digo que la comunidad indígena usa el cooperativismo como un sistema de vida, no es algo nuevo para ellos. Entonces tenían su fortaleza comunitaria de mujeres la fortaleza comunitaria de hombres...entonces ellos ya usan el cooperativismo como su sistema de vida ...ellos saben que deben hacer reuniones, que deben reportar, que deben llegar a acuerdos, que debe haber una votación y nadie se los tiene que enseñar. Ellos saben que así funcionan sus vidas

[I then noticed the women of the village embroidered very nice. But they only embroidered napkins because they had lost the tradition of wearing embroidered blouses, so they only embroidered on napkins. So I asked them... I went one day to Ocosingo (the nearest town) and I realized that they knew how to embroider and the women there did make blouses and sold at 50 pesos, which was quite a bit of money at that time. So I came back and I proposed to a girl, I said "hey would you be interested embroidering blouses, you do a very nice job on your napkins She laughed and said “no, blouses, what for?”...and I told her well to sell. It was at that time that a young religious woman was visiting and I told her that they

knew how to make those beautiful embroidered napkins and they could also make blouses. And she tells me, " if we can make blouses I will give them 500 pesos to buy fabric and thread" ... and we went (she and I) to buy fabric and thread and then we called that girl...and then we cut one blouse and I drew the flowers and told the girl "can you help us embroider it and when we finish we will sell it and I will give half" and says "ok". And so she went and in three days she came back with the finished blouse, and boy was it a beauty of a blouse. I tell her "you want to take another?" And well she took the other but returned three days later with another blouse and her cousin. Then, the cousin took one and then she brought another girl and then another girl ... and when we had twenty blouses three German tourists women arrived to visit the community. I told them "hey we are selling embroidered blouses" and they said "ok then lets go to the school." Well we had put up a small school and we put a display of blouses there and the German girls said "we want them all". So we sold all the blouses and half of what we made we gave to each of those who embroidered and the other half was left to purchase more fabric. I finished my work there because my child was growing up and I wanted him to go to another place to study. And I think my cycle in the community was over, but the school was still there, the workshop was still there... and had my contacts to distribute blouses stayed as well. They started to not only make blouses to sell abroad but they also began to sell clothes that they liked there in the community. And they distributed the earnings and had gatherings... I tell you, that the indigenous community uses cooperatives as a way of life, it is not something new for them. So they had their communal strength of community strength of women and men... and they already use cooperatives as their way of life... they know they should do meetings, they should report and they must reach agreements, there must be a vote and no one needs to teach them this. They know that is how their lives function] (Gabriela, interview, July 17, 2013).

This experience was a formative one for Gabriela, as it showed her the power that working collaboratively had on the experience of the women's lives. It allowed them economic freedom, which wasn't just about money. This translated to something much more important than being able to purchase goods but rather the ability to not have to depend on men for their economic survival. This is a large accomplishment because according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, lack of income is a common reason victims cite for staying in abusive relationships (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2015). Batterers often control victims' finances to prevent them from accessing resources, working or maintaining control of earnings, achieving self sufficiency, and gaining financial independence. (Mouradian, 2000).

Gabriela helped develop a community worker-cooperative that employed approximately 100 women but yet in the U.S. she was being told by cooperative developers that she should follow their lead or hand the project over to them, even though in most cases they were leading a failing enterprise like the Freedom Café, or had little to no experience with building cooperatives themselves. This paternalism is ultimately what led her to struggle from the very bottom with her colleagues to develop their own cooperative that was unaffiliated with a developer non-profit organization. What was important to the women was the autonomy to carry their vision forward even at the expense of having to start from scratch with little to no resources. This autonomy is a key factor in the building of cooperatives and why they are important. The ability and freedom of collective and autonomous decision making is a fundamental factor in what many workers enjoy about cooperatives. They have the freedom to decide the fate of their business together. Worker cooperative developer organizations ought to be mindful of this fact and allow the workers they are purporting to help the freedom to make decisions. Which often is not the case as workers of color are often recruited to be part of a project by developer organizations rather than recruited to build their own project semi-autonomously. There was in these cases relations of power that were clearly prejudiced by racial and other identity dynamics. These dynamics also play themselves out within worker cooperatives themselves.

Moving Beyond a Politics of Difference

Samantha further deconstructs the complexity of not just the identities themselves but of how they interact with each other and manifest themselves in the social relations at work, when she responded to a question about the identity make up of her co-worker-owners,

its almost everybody is a person of color, almost everybody... What makes it hard is that there so many queer people here but I actually don't count them as white in my head because they have another form of discrimination so yes they benefit from whiteness but there is also something that is so heavily going against them....

I think sometimes there's an 'oppression Olympics' thing that sort of happens here. It happens a lot in social justice circles I think where its like the person with the most boxes gets away with most shit. I feel like it happens here a lot. Its awful, right?, If you're a woman, if your trans, if you're an immigrant, if English isn't your first language... do you know what I'm trying to say? Well then it's like 'I can say whatever I want in this space now because I'm the most oppressed', like shut up it doesn't work that way... (Samantha, interview, July 7, 2013).

Her comment here points to an interesting dynamic, which she terms "oppression Olympics", which in essence is workers competing for the status of being the most authentically oppressed, as if this earns you more legitimacy or space to speak over others. While intersectionality can be useful in understanding and acknowledging the struggles of co-workers, which can be empowering and positive if used to build solidarity, when what Samantha describes begins to happen, it is much like tumbling down Alice's rabbit hole. The conversation or dynamics cease to be constructive and results in this "oppression Olympics" or what Darder and Torres term a "laundry list of oppressions" (Darder & Torres, 2004). Where does a competition over who is more oppressed really lead?

Samantha confronts the positive way in which cooperatives deal with intersectional issues like this from the very beginning of her experience at the cooperative. In her interview she confronts the very first time that she faces being interviewed by only women. She states,

they got back to me and I was in the interview and I was already feeling the place because it was all women interviewing me. Number one, women were interviewing me, which I thought was interesting, because usually a couple of white guys are talking to me and I'm like rolling my eyes and you just mentally want to shut down. So it was all women interviewing me first off. And then it was two women of color, There was Cristy and Lulu both, like brown women and then also Madeline who's Eurasian and then Jane who's a queer white woman and then I can clearly see this is kind of my spot....right off the bat it was super diverse and so I said cool and they were all really friendly and awesome and I felt really good about my interview and it was nice." (Samantha, interview, July 7, 2013).

Here intersectionality is instructive in helping to understand the social processes of interaction and the power dynamics of getting a job. For the first time in Samantha's life she confronts a

seemingly normal interaction, a “job interview” under completely non-normal circumstances, being interviewed by only women. To Samantha this changes the whole power dynamic of the interview process. For her it means being asked questions by people that she thinks she can relate to her on some level and may share similar struggles. Whether or not that is actually true is not necessarily the point, the point is that for Samantha her perception of the situation of understanding the different intersectional processes going on with the multiple people and identities in the room change her response to the situation. It allows her to feel more justified in being herself rather than attempting to fit into what her perception of a “white male job candidate might be.” The fact that she is able to identify the differences and the layered politics, (gender, race, class, sexuality) within the group of women interviewing her and how they matter for her contextual situation is important in helping her navigate the intersectional politics in the process of getting the job. Specifically, through understanding the intersectional politics at play in the situation, she is able to relate to the shared struggle and find a feeling of solidarity with the diversity of women in the room, especially finding common cause with the two women of color in the room, allows her to interview for the job with a feeling of liberation and freedom she has never experienced before. It is obvious that the cooperative was intentional in this process, and Osvaldo, confirms this when he argues that he thinks, “people were hired with diversity in mind, you know what I mean because of the community that we’re in you know in the Mission District and all of the history of gentrification there” (Osvaldo, 2013). Samantha, was allowed to first become an employee and has since been voted in and allowed to buy into the cooperative becoming a worker-owner. In this way intersectionality is useful in helping us and others understand how people navigate social situations as it helped Samantha deconstruct the social process of her job interview based on her and the interviewers' race, gender and sexuality.

Similarly it helped the people who were already worker owners be intentional about the interviewing new candidates and changing the power dynamics of a process that is often taken for granted.

But it is important to note that these social working relationships take place within a given arena, what Gramsci would call the structure. In Samantha's situation, she was after all in that situation because she needed a job. Osvaldo, began his journey as a child-laborer and continues to define himself by being a hard worker. Gabriela began her cooperative journey as means for self-sufficiency. As such intersectionality is useful in attempting to understand the complex nature of day-to-day social relations, but as Samantha suggests, things don't happen in a vacuum (Samantha, interview, 2013). Similarly, for Osvaldo, the cooperative isn't *just* about creating a socially progressive alternative or building something for the future. While he cares about that also, the cooperative for him is about the immediate impact that the cooperative has materially on *his* and his daughters' life and more important what that material impact *MEANS*. While he cares about solidarity within his co-workers and respecting the different identities within his workplace, ultimately the cooperative form to him matters because it has provided him an opportunity that is rarely afforded to others with his background. For Osvaldo, these other issues matter but they exist within a material struggle for survival. He argues, "The thing is there's a class difference man. We really have to recognize how different people are in different classes. you know what I mean?" His understanding of these dynamics points to the knowledge that, while his co-workers are dealing with issues of identity, all of these issues are situated within a given economic social formation that conditions (not determines) how they all play themselves out. Similarly for Gabriela, cooperatives are a means of empowering women and helping them become self-sufficient to escape abuse and domestic violence (Gabriela, 2013). And thus the

conversations about identity and intersectionality ought to be tempered and situated within the material context in which they occur.

Darder and Torres suggest that the legal system, education, identity politics and all of the complexity therein are located in a given economic context and are shaped by the imperatives of capital (2004, p. 99). Therefore when attempting to analyze issues of identity it is important to always keep in mind that the complex social relations that intersectionality and Critical Race Theory attempt to draw attention to, all happen within that framework. Any analysis of racism in contemporary society thus ought to begin with the capitalist mode of production, classes and class struggle (Darder & Torres, 2004). The processes, which intersectionality and Critical Race Theory seek to understand and make central are themselves imbedded within a given context conditioned by the economic (survival) necessities of people within a society. In this respect, Darder and Torres argue that an explicit focus on this “politics of identity” rather than challenge the social construction of the category of race, only serves to entrench race as an identity, which has been proven to be biologically false (Darder & Torres, 2004). This is not to say that they argue for a colorblind society rather they suggest that instead of entrenching race as an identity category, we must analyze the processes of racism instead. As such they argue that an explicit focus on *only* race leaves Critical Race Theory and Racial Formation Theory, lacking a systematic analysis of class or more importantly a substantive critique of capitalism (Darder & Torres, 2004, p. 105). In fact, Wood argues that these and other theories actually conflate the two (class and capitalism) at best and at worst they reduce one (capitalism) into another (class) (Wood, 1995, p. 242). She goes on to argue that it is important to understand that, “the class relation that constitutes capitalism is not, after all, just a personal identity, nor even just a principle of ‘stratification’ or inequality. It is not only a specific system of power relations but

also the constitutive relation of a distinctive social process, the dynamic of accumulation and the self-expansion of capital” (Wood, 1995, p. 246). It is important to note that Darder and Torres in their denial of the centrality of race as a category do “not imply the denial of racism or the racist ideologies that have been central to capitalist exploitation and domination around the globe” (Darder & Torres, 2004, p. 114). For them racism, “is *one of* the primary ideologies by which material conditions in society are organized and perpetuated in the service of capitalist accumulation” (Darder & Torres, 2004, p. 101) [emphasis added].

An important contribution then of cooperatives that Jessica highlights is that for those like the one she co-owns that make a conscious effort to deal with difficult issues of identity and struggle, they provide an avenue for not just identity but also structural economic equality. Darder and Torres make an important contribution in this regard as they highlight that intersectionality and for that matter Critical Race Theory and Racial Formation all function and occur within the context of global capitalism. For them and for Wood these plural identities exist, “within the determinative force of capitalism, its drive for accumulation, its commodification of all social life, its creation of the market as a necessity, and so on” (Wood, 1995, p. 246). As the dominant economic system it permeates and conditions every aspect of the varying identities, rather than being reducible to just one of them (class) (Darder & Torres, 2004).

What this means is that within the confines of the workplace, intersectionality and Critical Race Theory, and Racial Formation theory help in understanding the different positions from which workers are operating. It helps in being able to acknowledge each others' struggles as long as it leads to building solidarity rather than becoming a type of “oppression olympics” as Samantha put it. She went on to state that for her the importance in understanding identities is in *acknowledging* the different oppressions rather than using them as a trump card. For her it was

important to use intersectional understandings of identity to “build bridges” of solidarity with each other in order to keep their eye on the big picture (economic equality) but while also building identity equity (Samantha, 2013). Osvaldo also weighed in, arguing that:

I mean you could be well-intentioned but you're not recognizing that there is a huge difference in culture man, you know what I'm saying, and willing to work through the differences together as opposed to wanting your own sort of ideology to push through, then it's not going to fucking work man. There needs to be openness in terms of like, on both sides, in terms of like working together to solve these problems to create something new you know what I mean. And I do think something new needs to be created, you know what I mean, 'cause it's not just going to go one way or the other in my opinion, it's going to be something different and something unique that has to come from dialogue from both sides and openness from both sides that I don't see happening right now and I see as a problem. And I think it's one of the things we've been trying to work through or work with at our bakery. I think that is why It's so important for us to start talking about what our common vision is with all of this stuff man so that we can be able to communicate more effectively in a more productive way like you know, in a more understanding way of each other and who we are and where we come from. 'Cause without that shit man it's like we're going to be constantly fighting over stupid stuff then not being able to talk about it you know what I mean because we don't understand each other. Anyways it took us a while to get there man, but we're now just starting to talk about that stuff and it's a good fucking thing and it's only going to get better hopefully (Osvaldo, interview, July 24, 2013).

Ultimately they both feel that cooperatives that practice democratic decision making and promote a culture of democracy, inclusiveness and solidarity aren't just good for and effective at dealing with identity issues within the workplace but they also serve as a space for economic equality, especially for people of color that lack access to opportunities because of structural discrimination.

Racism, and the Macropolitics of Cooperatives

Stepping back from the specific case of Samantha, Osvaldo and Gabriela we can begin to look at how these processes look on the macrolevel, specifically in relation to cooperatives. When wanting to introduce people to what cooperatives do and what they represent, one of the most

accessible tools for this is the film “Shift Change”²⁶. The film interviews workers-owners from several worker cooperatives, most in the U.S. While this is an exceptional tool to show how these organizations function, some of the problems they face and how they are resolved, one of the things that becomes apparent throughout the film is the racial composition of the worker-owners in different industries. In the engineering cooperatives that are featured most if not all of the workers that were interviewed and even those seen during company meetings are white and mostly male. When workers of color are featured they are doing explicitly traditionally low wage labor work, cleaning cooperatives in the bay area, or industrial manual labor jobs in Cleveland (Young & Dwrokin, 2012). This isn’t to say that these companies have problems of racial discrimination (they may), but it is to say that these cooperatives are subject to and a microcosm of the racial conditions and contexts of the larger society. For instance, women make up the majority of worker-owners in cooperatives, yet find themselves on the outside looking in when it comes to accessing white-collar cooperative worker-ownership positions as well as leadership positions within their own cooperatives (Huet, 2013). This is a result of the educational structure and the gendered and racialized labor force in the U.S.

Latinas for instance, according to the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) “are part of the largest and fastest growing minority group in the U.S...[yet] earn a meager 60 cents for every dollar earned by a white man, representing the largest wage gap of any other group of working women.” (2012). More than one third of Latinas also have less than a high school education, and compose a group of laborers that have the lowest employment to population ratio in the nation at 52.7% (LCLAA, 2012). Latinas are also more likely to work in the low wage service industry than any other population of color and thus, create a lack of stable financial opportunities which results in placing Latinas in a very vulnerable economic position

²⁶ (Young & Dwrokin, 2012)

where they experience one of the highest poverty rates of women in the labor force (LCLAA, 2012).

Given this, it is not surprising to see that Latinas compose the largest segment of the growing worker-cooperative movement but in largely service-sector industries. For instance in the Bay Area there is a complex of worker-cooperatives devoted to helping Latina women, but whose focus is largely in developing cleaning and food cooperatives. This isn't necessarily a negative development because Latinas are largely doing that work already. And cooperative opportunities allow them to do that work in a safer and better paying environment. On an individual level the cooperatives clearly provide better opportunities and working conditions for their female workers and workers of color. For instance the complex of cleaning cooperatives in the Bay Area pays on average 158% of what competitor companies pay and on average the cooperatives in the complex increase the median household income of their workers by 70-86% (CLEAN). They also cover medical benefits as well as time off for vacation or sick days and disability benefits. There is also less mental stress on women when they need to request days off as there is no pressure that the supervisor will be upset. This is a non-quantifiable benefit but one that is extremely important. Peace of mind in the workplace is rare, but as stress is more and more linked to issues of health it becomes an important benefit of working in cooperatives. That benefit provides the confidence and freedom to not have to stress over having to take time off to attend to a sick family member or one's own health. Cooperatives also empower the women with democratic decision-making that allows them to discuss, for example, whether to work with, toxic or organic cleaning products?

Similarly, Samantha when replying to a question about her income responds that her cooperative, "pays 14 [dollars per hour] on the weekdays and 18 on the weekends...so it's really

minimal like super minimal but you can live on it you know?” She goes on to say, “if I had a family, no that wouldn’t work, but for me as a single woman it works” (Samantha, 2013). Her cooperative is one of the fairly new ones, but in her cooperative network, mature cooperatives pay \$30 an hour or more making it a very livable wage (Huet, 2013). In relation to other workers’ living and family conditions, she states that, “one candidate has two children, one of our founders has a kid and two people recently had kids around the same time, each of them have one kid now, one little child... I know I can live in Oakland easily but over here [San Francisco] that’s hard” (Samantha, 2013). Clearly the cooperative is paying her what she considers a fair amount, especially in regards to the benefits it provides.

However, another implication is that while her job provides a decent living for her, it does so only as long as she is a single woman without children. Also, she points to an interesting discussion over cost of living and specifically issues of gentrification. The fact that Samantha makes enough to live what she feels is a life with dignity does not obscure the fact that she cannot afford to live in or near the area where she works. This highlights another important conversation on the role of cooperatives in building a different type of economy. What responsibility do cooperatives as a whole have in addressing structural issues like racism and even gentrification? So while in a real material sense cooperatives benefit the workers as stated above, looking at them from a macrostructural perspective demonstrates that they face problems in achieving the goals that they seek for in the economy itself. If cooperatives are truly interested in developing social and economic justice, like the bakery suggests with its missions statement, then there needs to be a discussion about how to accomplish justice, not just within the respective cooperatives and for their individual worker-owner members, but also within the economy as a whole. For instance, what are the broader implications of perpetuating a largeley

two tiered labor system that has its roots in racial segregation, racial job competition and structural inequality in educational attainment?

Statistically speaking, it is well known that African Americans and Latinos, because of lack of resources and access to quality education, have dismally low university enrollment and worse still graduation rates. In the STEM fields those numbers are even lower (Taningco, Mathew, & Pachon, 2008). This isn't a problem of that particular group of people not being motivated, rather a failing of the larger society to promote and develop African American and Latino talent. Knowing this though, cooperatives should make a concerted effort to recruit those few students of color who make it out of their white-collar professional undergraduate training. Otherwise they run the risk of perpetuating the historic two tiered labor system that relegated and still relegates workers of color to manual labor jobs. Currently the Economic Policy Institute estimates that while the national unemployment rate had fallen to 5.6% for African Americans it remains 10.4 percent in December of 2014 and is double for that for the demographic of people between 16 and 30 (Wilson, 2015).²⁷ The report also argues that black unemployment is more volatile than it is for whites as well as the fact that wages for black workers are on average 8 percent lower than white workers in the same industries (Wilson, 2015). Latinos also compose a larger percentage of lower income level jobs. This is why it is key that cooperatives address these sorts of issues or they will continue to promote a two-tiered labor system.

As a result, dealing with incomes is only part of the macro-structural conversation. Housing is important as Samantha noted. Thus it is important to ask what sort of impact cooperatives have on processes of gentrification. In an interview with a director of a national organization for cooperatives, I was told:

²⁷ remembering that the unemployment figures don't account for underemployed workers nor marginally attached workers.

...there's only so much profit margin you're going to get with retail, unless you're selling things at a huge mark-up to rich people, which is a strategy. We don't try putting bakeries in neighborhoods in which people aren't going to pay four dollars for a scone. And it's like a wealth re-distribution strategy. It's not necessarily meeting a community need, because that's not where the money is. So I think with retail, it's an interesting strategic question. Are you trying to meet a community need, and create jobs, and make a stable institution, or are you trying to make a cash cow. And if that's that the case, then you probably don't want to meet a community need, because you don't want to try and extract that from people. I mean I think you can do both. I mean somebody has to run a Laundromat, and that's a way to make money, and still meet the community need. But I'm always interested in pushing it to the next level, beyond retail, what do we do that meets people's needs for real jobs and maybe also produces something people need (Monica, interview, July 21, 2013).

Monica here points to a sort of paradox facing the development of cooperatives. In order for cooperatives to function they need to be profitable. And in order for them to be profitable and pay what they want to pay worker-owners, they need to sell products at markup prices. This means they strategically put retail cooperatives in neighborhoods where people can afford their products, or in communities that are "up an coming" (in the process of being gentrified). They do this because rent is relatively cheap in these "up and coming" neighborhoods but they still get the clientele that is moving in and will pay \$4 for a scone. However this has a negative effect on driving housing prices up. So while Melissa sees this process as a redistributive process of taking money from wealthier people (customers) and giving it to working people (worker-owners) it also works in reverse as worker-owners and others begin to be priced out of those same neighborhoods. One of those bakeries is in the middle of this paradox as Osvaldo suggests:

I mean the way I see this playing out in our bakery and in the communities, I'm guessing it's like all over, you know what I think it's a whole...So from my perspective, when I first came in I started seeing the difference between Mission St. and Valencia St. which I don't know if you, you saw the difference right? It's pretty much all white upper middle class people moving into the neighborhood pushing poorer brown folks out. I know there's a history between the African-Americans who have been sort of pushed out of the community and so there's a lot of that, and I've been talking to a whole lot of different organizations around there about it... [and its important to fight] for more inclusivity in the African-

American and Latino communities man. Instead of us [cooperative] just being part of the gentrification process which is sort of what we are being right now because we are not really reaching out to the community in the ways that I think we can. Well we kind of are but I feel like we could be doing more and so I don't know man I really feel like it's so, for me it's really important... (Osvaldo, interview, July 24, 2013)

Here Osvaldo points to the tension he feels in the role that his cooperative is playing in the gentrification process. To Osvaldo it is important to use the cooperative as a way to stave off gentrification rather than advancing it. He is very intentional in his thought process about how the cooperative should and can accomplish that,

I think it's important to base the decisions on the community and put that shit first. One of the examples of that is when we are voting on whether or not to raise the prices on our products you know what I mean, we could be raising the prices on our products because of the location that we are at you know what I'm saying and a lot of us don't go for that unless that we see we really have to raise the prices 'cause we want our products to be accessible to those who aren't loaded with money you know what I mean. That is part of combating the whole gentrification shit (Osvaldo, interview, July 24, 2013).

Another example of this that Osvaldo covers has to do with the way that his bakery can combat gentrification through hiring practices:

I know there's this thing where you can't really base hiring on race or anything like that, but I feel like if we don't the result will be gentrification and there is a reason because a lot of it has to do with education. I mean you have all of these upper middle class really white people who are moving into the area so when they are applying for a job, you know what I mean, they are the ones who are going to get the opportunity. It's not going to be the people in the community and so if we don't actively reach out and actively hire in terms of class and culture and race then there is only one way that shit is going to go (Osvaldo, interview, July 24, 2013).

For this reason, cooperatives remain, I argue the most forward thinking economic alternative to business as usual. Especially when coupled with other policies that help tackle issues like gentrification from different angles. For instance while cooperatives provide better wages, that only deals with one side of the issue. What good are higher wages if they are accompanied by

higher rents and costs of living? But cooperatives accompanied by rent control and other policies like implementing affordable non-profit or even cooperative housing all help collectively deal with issues of affordability that allow communities to thrive without causing displacement. Communities are not made up of buildings, they are made up of people. What good is it to improve the infrastructure in a neighborhood through redevelopment if it displaces the community that had given that neighborhood its history and culture?

Cooperatives are therefore an important part of the economic democracy eco-system that is necessary to make communities more livable and democratic in nature and practice. However there needs to be a more concerted effort to deal effectively with some of the internal problems, like paternalism, identity and racial relations issues, and some of the more structural issues of systemic racism, gentrification, which are all problems that confront all businesses. Those that deal effectively with these have in my experience been those that use consciously engage in democracy and worker autonomy. These are necessary elements that these businesses need to promote in order for workers to actually begin to address these sorts of issues and talk about their impact on local communities. They also help to cope or deal with issues of racism and race in their cooperative and more importantly tackle the material issues of inequality in their communities, especially for working communities of color. And it will be important for them to begin to ask these larger questions and deal with their macro-structural role in alleviating the history of racial inequality, especially if they are to be truly transformative models for people of color.

Cooperatives and a Better Quality of Life

For the people like those that I interviewed the cooperatives and the cooperative idea has had a fundamental impact in changing the material reality of their life and opportunities. But their value doesn't come across in the dollar amounts but in what this means to the workers. So for these workers, it was not only about the autonomy and the democracy and even the ability to deal with identity politics but do deal with systemic issues in spaces that allowed for them to confront these issues head on. This is ultimately the power of cooperatives, they have the potential and ability to treat their workers with dignity to deal with issues that worker-owners feel are important issues to confront. This is especially beneficial for workers of color who are the most vulnerable demographic in the labor force when it comes to abuse and maltreatment from bosses. For instance, Samantha stated that from the moment she interviewed she felt good about the space, "right off the bat it was super diverse and so I said cool and they were all really friendly and awesome and I felt really good about my interview and it was nice" (2013). There was intentionality by those interviewing her to provide a space that was amenable to and aware of the power dynamics of race and gender. This is important in helping people to thrive in spaces or situations of pressure. Ultimately this is why she enjoys working at her cooperative:

I enjoy coming here for sure...everyone can tell you that... I walk in at that door with a giant smile on my face... at the nonprofit I was working at before... it was always straight white girls and I had a really hard time being myself in that environment... they were all wonderful though. It was about me, they weren't doing anything wrong... they are all still my good good friends and I love them all so much but it was definitely a different place to be in... like I had to play straight... raise my voice up a couple octaves and play into the surroundings I was in... And here I can just be whoever, like you look behind the counter we are a really random group of people... and I feel like I can just paint a picture of who I am here and it will somehow fit in and be useful in some way.. I also feel like I can just grown in whatever way I want to compared to my nonprofit world experience... just because say I wanted to skill in a certain area I can do that I can bring it here whereas at a nonprofit if I had a set of tasks I did those tasks and if I sucked at it then I needed to get better and if there was something else I

wanted to bring to it, it wasn't as easy to just fit it in, but say here if I wanted to start taking up web design, I could easily start practicing on the web site here or if I wanted to, I could easily start repairing stuff around here or bring that in or I could learn bunch of stuff that could help this place out and I probably should now that I think about it but... yeah I can bring who I am here (Samantha, interview, July 7, 2013).

For her, working at the cooperative has been a liberating experience that has allowed her to develop her interests and helped her grow in any direction she has sought to. Beyond her personally benefiting in these ways from the cooperative, she also believes they are especially helpful in developing people of color in their leadership abilities that for her has larger impacts.

She suggest that she views cooperatives as a benefit especially for people of color because:

I see it as a way of how colored people are working together... of course I'm not trying to say that it should be a exclusive to people of color only... but it could definitely work in favor of people of color in terms of building a community, building skills, building a sense of leadership, because of course you have to be a leader and you cant just sit back, and I think its great for people of color (Samantha, interview, July 7, 2013).

Samantha sees cooperatives as not just a workplace to get better wages or a space of personal liberation, but as spaces where people of color can develop leadership skills and training to improve their communities. For cooperatives that intentionally work towards providing these skill building and trainings it becomes an important space for workers of color to learn skills and become educated in democracy and organization which they can then contribute to their communities. This is what Tim Huet referred to when he described cooperatives as “democracy demonstration projects”. What he meant was that we need spaces where people learn how to act and participate democratically in everyday life, so that we can live democratically on a daily basis.

For others they are all of these things but also opportunities to escape conditions that historically keep people from thriving. For Osvaldo, an ex-convict with little education and

minimal job prospects, it had redefined his whole life:

I was able to apply then and yeah and I went through the process and I got the job and it's been pretty awesome. But um, I don't know what I'd be doing now man. I mean I went to 9th grade basically and I was only in 9th grade for like a few fucking months man you know what I'm saying, like I was kicked out of 9th grade when I was 15. I've just been working ever since . I just didn't have an experience with anything else man. Like right now I don't even have a trade that you know, I could fall on to. I don't have a lot of fucking options especially since I'm an ex-convict now. If it wasn't for [the bakery], I don't know what the fuck I'd be doing. I definitely wouldn't be the owner of a business, you know what I'm saying? (Osvaldo, interview, July 24, 2013).

Working for the bakery has given him an opportunity afforded to very few with his type of background. It has allowed him to thrive and also develop intellectually. While he may not have formal education beyond 9th grade, in our interview we discussed gentrification, the system of capitalism and he had a very developed frame of thought based on his life experience. Not only did the bakery give him a new opportunity at life, it did so by providing him a well paying job that is allowing him to become a good father and live with dignity. The material impact it has had on his life goes beyond dollars and cents and is about what it has allowed him to do, improving his quality of life and even saving his life in the process. This has meant the world to him:

I never ever in my life had health insurance or even thought about having health insurance man, and now I have all of that stuff, and it's weird 'cause like at a time when like, I don't know it's just weird it's like everything is falling into place. I never thought about having health insurance and now I do. I like recently found out that I had a brain tumor that was like the size of a golf ball that I wouldn't have known that I had, had I not been working here. They operated on it, took it out, I didn't have to pay shit for it, you know what I'm saying, it's like I don't know man it's kind of crazy how shit works out and so I'm like really like grateful (Osvaldo, interview, July 24, 2013).

In an era where workers benefits and wages are being taken from them, this is a tremendous contribution for people like Osvaldo. Working at the cooperative literally saved his life, while also transforming his ability to change the trajectory of where his life had been headed.

Similarly Gabriela sees cooperatives as not just income generating spaces, but also as a way to transform people's lives. Her interest in them developed from her experience in Mexico, to provide economic independence to women. What this means is allowing women to not have to rely on men for their economic survival, that then gave them options in situations where they would otherwise be trapped. Because of her personal experience she specifically saw cooperatives as a potential vehicle for women to gain economic independence and autonomy to escape domestic violence. After leaving Chiapas and the indigenous women, she moved back to Guadalajara and worked at a non-profit where she met her now ex-husband. After that they moved to the U.S. and this was a tremendous change, even for someone who was educated:

En el 2005 fue cuando yo me vine ...y pues ya sabes no hablaba ingles no sabia manejar...eh...me estaban arreglando los documentos. Y comencé a vivir violencia domestica con el papa de mis hijos. Pero como yo estoy acostumbrada siempre a buscar recursos , comencé a buscar recursos para apoyarme y encontré "Latina Center". Visitando la clínica y llevando mis hijos a la clínica para su revisión fisica encontré ese folleto de "Latina Center" y hable con la directora y llame y un día me contesto la directora...me hizo mil preguntas, que de donde venia , cuales eran mi habilidades, cuales eran mis sueños, cual era mi situación y como me sentía...me escucho por dos horas. Me dijo "mira mi hijita vas a tomar el autobús numero 72... y no le vayas a decir al papa de tus hijos que vienes paraca"... y empecé a ir a un grupo de apoyo y me empecé a dar cuenta de la cual era la situación de todas la mujeres. Pero la particularidad de este organización es que tiene un programa de liderazgo para la mujer latina. Este programa dura un año y da un entrenamiento mensual que se divide en tres fases. La primera fase sobre autoestima, trabajo mucho en que la mujer aumenta su autoestima se valore, conozca sus habilidades o mas bien reconozca sus habilidades y todo el potencial que pueda tener... se ponga metas y comienza fijarse en metas y comience a buscarlas. La siguiente fase es que la mujer tiene que pensar en algo que esta afectando su vida atreves de lo que esta afectando su comunidad. Y tiene que elegir un proyecto que ayude a resolver ese problema y ella misma tiene que escribir de que manera lo va a resolver... de que manera con sus posibilidades puede ser un cambio. La tercera fase es ir a la comunidad y ponerla en acción y después de eso se gradúa como una líder comunitaria. Entonces de acuerdo de lo que yo había vivido en México y de acuerdo lo de los retos que se me estaban presentado aquí y de lo que yo había conocido con la gente cuando estaba en el grupo de apoyo... mi proyectó fue... okay dije si en Chiapas juntándonos todas logramos desarrollar un proyecto de esta cooperativa tal vez aquí podremos hacer lo mismo. Mi enfoque era desarrollar una cooperativa que ayudara las mujeres en

violencia domestica, hacer económicamente auto-suficientes para poder independizarse de una relación abusiva... o si salieron de una relación abusiva que pudieran ser económicamente auto-suficientes.

[I came in 2005... and as you know, I did not speak English or know how to drive and was undocumented. And then I started living with domestic violence by the father of my children. But as I always used to look for resources, I started looking for resources for support and I found the “Latina Center”. When I visited the clinic for my children for their physical examination I found a brochure about the “Latina Center”. I went to talk to the director and one day she answered the phone... and she had a thousand questions, where did I come from? What were my skills? What were my dreams? What was my situation and how did I feel? She heard me for two hours. She said, “Look honey, you are going to take bus number 72... and do not tell the father of your children that you are coming here”. So I started going to a support group and I started to realize that it was the situation of all the women there. But the peculiarity of this organization is that it has a leadership program for Latinas. The program lasts one year and gives a monthly training that is divided into three phases. The first phase was of self-esteem. They work a lot to help women increase their self-esteem and know their worth, know your abilities and recognize their skills and to help them see their full potential they could have... and help with setting goals to start to look at goals, set them fulfill them. The next phase is that women have to think of something that is affecting their life in relation to what is affecting their community. And so you have to choose a project to help solve that problem and she has to write how that project will solve a problem... how can it be a change. The third phase is to go into the community and put it into action and after that you graduate as a community leader. So according to what I had lived in Mexico and according to the challenges that I was being presented here and I the challenges facing the people I met when I was in the support group... my project was... okay I said if in Chiapas by all us women getting together we developed a project with the cooperative maybe here we can do the same. My approach was to develop a cooperative to help women in domestic violence that focused on helping to make them financially self-sufficient so they could find independence from an abusive relationship... or of they were already out of an abusive relationship that they could be economically self-sufficient] (Gabriela, interview, July 17, 2013).

For Gabriela, it wasn't just about making a good living or being able to buy nice things, but it was about what that good living meant for women in abusive relationships. It meant freedom from fear. Much like in Osvaldo's case (but differently of course), it meant the opportunity and ability to change direction when stuck in a situation that is difficult to get out of. Ultimately for these women it is the difference between living miserable abusive lives or living with a sense of

freedom, possibility and the capacity to develop and grow as human beings. Gabriela sees cooperatives as an opportunity to overcome structural gender barriers that exist for vulnerable populations, for her specifically Latina undocumented immigrant women. For women with very little opportunity and prospects, this is a game changer. Words can't describe what this means for women in those types of situations, so much so that Gabriela in discussing this with me began to shed tears. Both of sadness in remembering what she had been through and also happiness in what potential she saw that cooperatives had for women like herself.

In the final analysis this is why cooperatives matter for communities of color, not just because of the dollar amounts involved but what those dollar amounts mean. They mean opportunity within a system of capitalism that has relegated them to the bottom rungs of society. Opportunities not easily accessed unless you have the right education, the right connections or networks or simply the right skin color or gender. Cooperatives offer not just an opportunity within capitalism but an opportunity to transform and shift the mode of production to something different, that allows for people to develop their humanity. It allows for the opportunity for people like Samantha, Osvaldo and Gabriela to liberate themselves from that which they otherwise had a practically zero chance to escape, racial, gender, sexual and economic inequality.

CHAPTER FIVE: Cooperatives, Neo-Liberal Capitalism and Changing the Mode of Production

Cooperatives, a Cultural war of position and the Formation of a new Historical Bloc

In her excellent book “Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice,” Jessica Gordon Nembhard recounts the history and practice of cooperatives among black communities in the U.S. (Gordon Nembhard, 2014). In her book she situates black cooperative economics as an alternative form of economic development that grows out of racist exclusionary structures and a need in the black community to develop their own economy in order to access resources necessary for survival. She recounts how the U.S. system of slavery and then post-reconstruction Jim Crow left blacks in the U.S. shut out of the ownership as well as large segments of the labor force (especially those where there were advancement opportunities), which necessitated alternative strategies for communities to come together to provide the resources and services that were critical for their survival (Gordon Nembhard, 2014). She argues that she was

interested in cooperative economic development as a community economic development strategy... and [her] focus was on how cooperatives help subaltern populations gain economic independence, especially in the face of racial segregation, racial discrimination and market failure...[she] began exploring ways in which cooperative ownership, particularly in worker cooperatives, is a strategy for community-based asset building, and [she] began to develop a concept of community wealth based on cooperative ownership and community assets. (Gordon Nembhard, 2014, p. 18)

The book is fascinating and well researched and while she comes to the same conclusion as I have, in that for her cooperatives offer people of color opportunities that they can't or don't have access to because of structural racism, there is one fundamental difference in our approach to the topic. Dr. Gordon Nembhard situates cooperatives as a niche alternative within a framework of

capitalism that has socially and economically excluded African-Americans. For her they are a solution to being shut out of a capitalist economy and labor market, and as such cooperatives become a way for Blacks to enter into the capitalist economy through this different means of economic development. She sees them as a means to economically develop black communities within the system of capitalism, as a corrective to “market failure”. Cooperatives for her, and in this case Black cooperatives, become a mechanism for accessing and becoming part of capitalism rather than an alternative form of subverting it.

My assessment of cooperatives suggests that rather than being this niche solution within a system of capitalism, or a corrective for “market failure”, that cooperatives are themselves a counterhegemonic program that can transform capitalism into something else. The idea and praxis of cooperatives are part of the necessary conditions to create what Gramsci referred to a new historical bloc (2000, p. 190). Gramsci argues that changing the socio-economic circumstances do not of themselves produce political changes (2000, p. 190). They only set the conditions in which such changes become possible (Gramsci, 2000, p. 190). Cooperatives and the cooperative mode of production provide the conditions for the possibility for political change in their practice of democracy. Because they are founded on democratic principles and they focus on daily democratic participation they become training grounds for democracy, or as Tim Huet suggested, “democracy demonstration projects” where democracy and democratic culture can be practiced on a daily basis. In this sense they fundamentally change the structure of our society in at least two fundamental ways. One, they change the ownership structure of society from one in which there is a separation between workers and owners and therefore those who extract profit and have control (power and decision making) and those who only receive part of what they produce (and have no power to participate in decisions), to one in which the two are

one in the same, thus eliminating exploitation from the worker-owner relation. Secondly, they impart a cultural transformation in the daily practice of democracy. They promote and disseminate democracy as a process in the very act of practicing it, expounding theory through praxis, leading through example. This second point is important and should not be overlooked.

People in the U.S. assume we live in a democracy, but what is democratic about having it only in the “civic” sphere, practicing it once or maybe twice a year and not in the economy, the “arena” which is the foundation of our society. How can we truly say that a country, our country is democratic if people themselves aren’t practicing it on a daily basis? If you define democracy as most political science scholars do: having free and fair elections, then it appears we do live in a democracy. The problem with this definition however, is that democracy is not about having choices, it is about having power. The two are not one and the same. Recall, Helen Keller’s comment about democratic choice, “Our Democracy is but a name. We vote? What does that mean? It means that we choose between two bodies of real, though not avowed, autocrats. We choose between Tweedledum and Tweedledee...” (qtd in Zinn, 2005).

Sheldon Wolin describes democracy as:

one among many versions of the political but it is peculiar in being the one idea that most other versions pay lip service to. I am reluctant...to describe democracy as a “form” of government... in my understanding, democracy is project concerned with the political potentialities of ordinary citizens, that is with their possibilities for becoming political beings through self discovery of common concerns and of modes of action for realizing them (Wolin, 1994, p. 11).

He understands democracy as being one form of the political that is rooted in action. He goes on to suggest that democracy is about how the political is experienced and asserts that it has a fugitive character (Wolin, 1994). But this fugitive character only characterizes democracy in our current society where it is in fact rare. In an economy based on democratic cooperativism it is practiced daily on a regular basis. In an economy with a Democratic character and value as its

founding principle, democracy takes on the meaning of being a verb, something to be engaged in regularly, where ordinary individuals realize they are capable of creating new cultural patterns of commonality and act accordingly (Wolin, 1994). Similarly Lummis has defined democracy as its simple etymology; People Power (Lummis, 1996). How can you have democracy in a society whose whole economy is structured around keeping people from having power within the workforce?

The importance of cooperatives is not just in their power to transform working peoples lives (which is in of itself extremely valuable), but in their ability to be part of creating a new historical bloc, what Laclau and Mouffe call a counterhegemonic program that has the potential to challenge capitalism for hegemony. Worker cooperatives provide the cultural training, the cultural activity, the ideological and value laden discourse, and the potential for forming a cultural front that is necessary to run alongside the changing economic and political structures. Worker cooperatives have the capacity to function as part of the ideological war of position between capital and labor, changing the conceptions of how people imagine labor relations can function. They change the terrain of what is possible, achievable and also necessary. In that sense cooperatives don't just make sense as a niche market for people shut out of the economy, or as a way into that very same economy as a corrective to "market failure", they make sense as a more efficient, and democratic new normal form of organization that has the potential to transform and change the capitalist paradigm to something different. Capitalism has already provided the space for their development.

Neo-liberal Crises and space for Counter Hegemony

One of the assertions made by Marx about capitalism is that there are internal contradictions within the system of capitalism that lead it to provide spaces for change (Marx,

1967). Marx and current Marxist scholars suggest that periodic crises within capitalism leave openings for new possibilities, or at the very least for other modes of production to challenge capitalism. Because as Maurice Dobb once wrote:

Systems are never in reality to be found in their pure form, and in any period of history elements characteristic both of preceding and succeeding periods are to be found, sometimes mingled in extraordinary complexity. Important elements of each new society, although not necessarily the complete embryo of it, are contained within the womb of the old; and relics of an old society survive for long into the new (Dobb, 1946, p. 11).

Capitalist crises provide spaces for these new or other systems to challenge it. The crises that the U.S. has been experiencing since the 1970s have wreaked havoc on this and the world society. We enter a critical time in the world, the proverbial fork in the economic as well as biospheric road if you will; continue down the same destructive, predatory, profiteering, militaristic path or begin not just to think about but also enact alternatives. One of the major problems with the current American economy is the fact that it no longer manufactures anything. The American economy used to be such a world power because of the fact that it was built around industrial production. “Until the latter part of the twentieth century, U.S. industries were world-class producers of basic industrial equipment” (Melman, 2001, p. 59). This is no longer the case as we have moved to a post-Fordist economy that outsources production to other countries. As a result, we have become a “post-industrial economy” with very few tech jobs and a whole lot of low wage service industry jobs. This has had a disastrous effect on the average worker’s purchasing power. More and more people find themselves having to work longer hours, jobs they never thought they would have and sometimes multiple jobs, just to get by. According to Melman the design and the production capabilities for ships, propulsion, navigation and infrastructure, as well as the classes of equipment and the skills required for manufacturing heavy railroad equipment has disappeared from and is no longer available in the United States (2001, p. 60).

Without this potential the U.S. has to rely on other countries to provide our technological infrastructure. There is a massive need in the U.S. to manufacture the innovative ideas and products that individuals and companies are developing to meet the growing need for greener and advanced technologies. From hyperloops (LeBeau, 2015), to solar roadways and playgrounds (Oltermann, 2014), to moisture capturing Billboards (Prois, 2013), the opportunities are endless. For each one of these ideas there are many others, for which our manufacturing capacity is ill equipped to produce these on the scale necessary to fix our crumbling infrastructure or to create a prosperous new economy. What led to the dwindling of our manufacturing economy though, ironically is also part of the “embryo” that can help develop a new cooperative economy. In highlighting the necessity of rebuilding our manufacturing base, it need not be a Fordist massive operation of manufacturing, with smoke stacks everywhere as we recall in the early 1900’s. While Neo-liberalism has been devastating in many respects to people and places around the world, it has also shown that decentralization is not only possible, it can also be efficient. David Harvey defines, Neo-Liberalism as:

Neo-Liberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade... the role of the state is to guarantee, for example the quality and integrity of money. It must also setup those military, defense, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be the proper functioning of markets... Furthermore if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. (Harvey, 2005, p. 2).

The turn towards Neoliberalism since the 1970’s has led to 3 key and new features of this form of capitalism, deregulation, privatization and decentralization (Harvey, 2005). In the first instance governments have retreated from regulating businesses letting markets “self-regulate”

which has been disastrous for the conditions of workers and communities the world over, especially because your average workers or citizens have no input into the decisions companies are making. There is no discussion within firms about the moral or ethical practices of corporations nor the impacts that these decisions have, much less the space for such dialogue as people's livelihoods are at stake. In the second instance it has led to a move away from the conception that the state has a role in providing citizens with any sort of "public good". This has caused a series of state sell-offs of formerly government provided services that were and are essential to establish a fair market. The government public services in many ways keep private industry honest by providing affordable not for profit competition, that keeps private business prices down. Imagine what the cost of mailing a letter would be if the U.S. Postal Service was privatized. Where companies are meant to compete they often collude to raise prices, this is historically and especially apparent with the oil industry (Stark, 2015). In the third instance it has resulted in an economy that has become decentralized by outsourcing of manufacturing to countries where labor is cheaper. This has meant a shift in the U.S. away from industrialization to a post-industrial paradox of high-tech knowledge labor jobs and a no-tech service sector with a very minimal intervening economy to bridge the two. The majority of workers in the U.S. are currently employed in the service industry at 79.9% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013), most of which provide very low wages (Rampell, 2012).

This transformation has resulted in former union, car and other manufacturing workers who made middle class wages and had middle class lifestyles being sacked and put out on the street, leaving them in minimum wage jobs struggling and fighting to escape poverty. While this is in and of itself tragic, the mental health impacts to a generation of older men who used to be able to support their family and are now making close to minimum wage, are themselves

heartbreaking. Hit in higher proportion to their numbers were workers of color who are historically the last hired and thus the first fired in the process of transformation (Weller & Fields, 2011). This de-industrialization has been one of the major reasons for the continued and decades long urban inequality that is today being brought to light by protests and uprisings in places like Ferguson and Baltimore (Ware, 2015). According to Robert Pollin, neo-Liberalist policies have led to, “Deeper vulnerabilities” being exposed, “problems of *American capitalism itself* – the system as a whole” (2005, p. 3). How is a system that continues to impoverish working people efficient? It isn’t and Engler argues that, “the capitalist market *is the* problem, not the solution (2010, p. 37).

An interesting development regarding the current crisis is that, where Neoliberalism has created conditions that have eroded workers wages and conditions and structured a declining standard of living for many American’s it also provides some opportunities for moving forward. This neoliberal iteration of capitalism has opened up spaces for change. In the impetus to decentralize production, neo-liberalism has shown that local decentralized production is not only possible but can be efficient. What I mean by efficient is not only efficiency in getting products from production to market but also efficient at stabilizing local economies where production takes place in a decentralized and democratically organized form. Worker cooperatives are primed to develop within this framework of decentralization, and if they do develop they could also empower local communities. Neo-liberalism has laid the foundation for a decentralized cooperative mode of production that is controlled democratically by workers at the point of production. In decentralizing the economy, neo-liberalism has provided space for workers to control the operations at the point of production and this has the potential to change the structure of the economy from the ground up. The challenge now comes in changing the mode of

production to one where workers own the means of production while at the same time deploying the culture and values of democracy in an effort to challenge the dominance of the profit motive and capitalism itself. An example of this came to me in a discussion with a professor. We were talking about the outsourcing of the UC Irvine janitorial staff. There had been a few years long campaign to get the custodial staff insourced so that workers could receive benefits and fair wages. Workers and students were finally successful in convincing the administration to insource the workers but this created a problem for workers who had immigration status issues. As we discussed this issue, I told the professor that it would be interesting if rather than insource the workers if someone could organize them into a worker cooperative that they controlled and run democratically. This would allow them to cut out the non-productive owners of the business who created no value, and it would solve the issue of the university not wanting to insource the workers as well as their requirement to document immigration statuses. The workers would be outsourced workers but they would own and control their own business and focus on their specialization (and have the opportunity to grow their market share), and the university would support that form of community support (with some pressure from students and faculty as a way of supporting living wages).

The move towards outsourcing while a neo-liberal practice doesn't need to be a negative. It is only negative in that in its current orientation it leads to diminished wages, but its need comes from a business' interest to shed non-essential functions. In the case of the University of California, that means shedding non knowledge producing or transmitting functions, like custodial work. As currently practiced this is detrimental to workers as they are outsourced to private low wage paying companies. But this need not be the case as worker cooperatives can compete effectively in that market because they don't need to subsidize the wealthy lifestyle of

the owner or their family. However convincing people that this is possible and also appealing as a form of empowering working communities is a large task in that even though we have been through this crisis, politicians continue to promote the same old remedies to our economic problems. Brendan Martin argues that:

slump, financial instability, collapsing infrastructure and public services, deeper and wider social divisions, record homelessness, declining sense of community and national morale - these have been among Thatcherism's legacies, compounded by its eponym's successors. Reaganism has bequeathed similar millstones in the United States, and what is there to show for it? In both countries, the rationale was cut public spending. In both countries, it ended up deeper in the red than ever before. If that is success then failure is hard to imagine, and yet the free market triumphalists appear to have learned nothing (Martin, 1993, p. 200).

Currently, President Obama, a Democrat, is seeking support for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a free trade deal between involving 12 countries that would further the damage that other trade agreements (Reich R. , 2015) like NAFTA have done to American Workers (Carlos, 2014; Ibarra & Carlos, 2015).

Moving From and Anti-Agenda towards a Cooperative mode of production

Oswaldo believes the shift towards cooperatives is immensely important. He states:

I feel like cooperatives, like that's the future, like the future of human society, you know what I'm saying like I feel like that's what we should be working towards because the current situation I mean capitalism just doesn't fucking work man! I mean it works for a few people, it doesn't work for everybody and people get left behind and yeah. I mean I think I feel like cooperativism is like the answer to that shit and maybe it's not cooperativism in like what it looks like today, but I feel like we're sort of evolving towards like whatever it is that it's going to be in the future (Oswaldo, interview, July 24, 2013).

This comment by Oswaldo is poignant for a few reasons. In the first instance many (not myself) would be surprised that someone with his background could make a statement about the totality and the failure for American capitalism. But why would anyone be surprised that someone who has been part of the backbone of the capitalist economy, a worker who has worked various jobs,

understands the nature of the system. Osvaldo, like many workers across the country understands the system and who it is meant to work for. When you begin to pick fruit in the fields at the age of eight you know instantly this system was not meant for you nor will it ever work for people like yourself. Secondly, his critique of capitalism evolves beyond an anti-systemic sentiment.

This is seems trivial but is of immense importance. Often as scholars or critics we focus on what is wrong with the current system or structures and we attempt to pinpoint problems, what has been termed a “tinkering politics”. There is a slew of movements or loose associations tied to ideas of anti-systems or anti-structures. For instance there are people who care about and do work on anti-racism or anti-capitalism or anti-patriarchy. But rarely do these associated ideas and people confer around ideas of what their visions are, rather they focus on what they are against. It is easy to see the problems of our current society because we are living them, but if we are anti-racism, anti-capitalist, or anti-patriarchy, what would we replace them with once we have done the work of toppling them, what are we for? This also begs the question of process. Is the goal to topple these discourses and practices first and then to replace them with something else, or does the replacing happen as a process leading up to the destruction of the old? One only need too look at history to answer this question.

Capitalism developed during and within the system of feudalism only to become the dominant form once it had gained enough traction, supporters and wealth to challenge the aristocracy. With this in mind then, one of the important findings of my research is that it isn't enough to be anti-systemic, rather much like Tim Huet suggested we must begin to build that which we seek to replace our anti-systemic proclivities. For Osvaldo and others, that means growing and building the cooperative movement with the social justice ideals and democratic culture. This means moving beyond a critique of capital and even beyond looking to the state to

ameliorate the effects of capitalism. It means there must be a move towards building that thing we wish to see replace what we currently have.

Worse still than being Anti-, Wendy Brown argues that today too often, “leftists have largely forsaken analyses of the liberal state and capitalism as sites of domination and have focused instead on their implication in political and economic inequalities... [instead they] turn to the state for protection against the worst abuses of the market” (1995, pp. , 10, 15). In doing so Brown would argue that, “they decline to consider the state as a vehicle of domination...”(15). While in many ways it is important to force the state to open up and become democratic, as the women’s movement and the civil rights movement and the anti-Vietnam war movement have done, it is also important to begin to live democratically And even, while many leftists put an emphasis on agency through social movements and seeking redress in the social or political sphere, i.e. the State, it is ultimately the mode of production that is the source of exploitation and injustice. As long as the mode of production remains the same any political victories will be minimal as political candidates and office holders may differ on social policy but never really on economic policy. E.P. Thompson notes that a central concept of Marx is, “that a given productive system not only produces commodities, it also reproduces itself, its productive relations and its ideological forms and legitimations” (2008, pp. , 141). Therefore the capitalist mode of production reproduces capitalism and always will as long as that mode or form exists. The only place within which to change the reproduction of the system then, is to change the way the productive system itself is structured. If we look at democracy as a process and practice, then we cant look to the state to give it to us, we must begin to practice it and the only agents capable of doing so are those who produce, the working class. Thompson suggests that the connection between historical process and the mode of production is human experience; praxis

(human experience through agency) is what allows change in the mode of production in a historical process (Thompson E. , 2008, p. 164). Therefore any change in the structure will have to take place in the restructuring of the mode of production itself and not necessarily in the political sphere. Simply, what this means is that we have to change our mode of thinking and being, we need to begin to live and practice democratically.

There is a fine philosophical line here that merits discussion as far as what role worker cooperatives have in reproducing vs. restructuring the mode of production. Are the hegemonic projects of anti-racism, anti-capitalism and anti-patriarchy about seeking inclusion and fixing the current system? Are they working within the system rather than trying to challenge it and even more replace it with something? As posed by well meaning scholars like Gordon Nembhard and others, cooperatives are a means towards achieving inclusion for those that have been excluded or are means of correcting the problems of capitalism. This can be seen in how some people write about cooperatives under the topic of “shared capitalism”. They talk about expanding ownership and granting access to private ownership to more people (Blasi, Freeman, & Kruse, 2014) (Carberry, 2011). For these scholars, cooperatives offer better access to the American dream without necessarily changing it.

While Brown is accurate in her analysis of leftist proclivities towards inclusion at the expense of critically challenging the established order, in the case of cooperatives it doesn't have to be a choice between the two. Worker cooperatives can be engaged in a double project in that they seek a better standard of living for their workers in the short-term, but also call on others to seek these same rights and mobilize to create a true democracy, a radical economic democracy that challenges the ‘new world order’ in the long term. In a war of position against the current hegemonic ideology there are short-term battles and long term battles. It is just as important to

win short-term battles as there is to win the war itself. Cooperatives call on others to democratize the economy as a means towards emancipation. Cooperatives seek rights for themselves, like in California, the AB 816 the California Worker Cooperative Act that provides a business entity specifically for worker cooperatives within the existing Consumer Cooperative Corporations Law (SELC, 2015). Worker cooperatives and those invested in them do this, not as ends in themselves but as means towards a specific end. Worker Cooperatives, especially those based on fundamental discourses of social justice and democratic ownership do so in the hopes that these rights will open up a rupture, a political space, that will allow others to engage in a real economic democratic project. It may seem paradoxical to look to a liberal state for rights while at the same time use these rights to then challenge the very state that granted them. But if worker cooperatives are intentional about the end goal, to transform our current system into something else then it will be done by opening and transitioning of this system that will give birth to something new. This intentionality though is a necessary cultural precondition towards a paradigm shift. It can't just be a diffuse scattering of different worker cooperatives doing their own thing, without some cultural or ideological goal. If that is the case then we run the risk of just having a community of capitalist cooperatives.

This is where the cultural discourse of democracy becomes key. The goal isn't just to develop shared ownership enterprises that provide a better standard of living to their workers, it is to institute what Huet referred to as, "democracy demonstration projects". It is to establish into the economy the normalization of democratic practice. To make democracy not just a system or form of power sharing and decision-making but make it into one that occurs regularly. Because that is what real democracy is. Democracy is a process, a verb, something to be engaged in

regularly. Democracy is a perpetual ongoing political moment of the potentiality of citizens to have and execute power on a regular and daily basis.

The disruption caused by the daily practice of democracy is a rejection and therefore alternative against what Ranciere calls the “police”, which he describes as, “an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the say-able...” (Ranciere, 2004). It is thus also a challenge to the concepts of Normal ways of being and doing. Foucault argues that, “The normal is established as a principle of coercion in teaching...normalization becomes one of the great instruments of power” (Foucault, 1984, p. 196). And thus worker cooperatives through their existence and daily practices de-normalize and challenge on a daily basis, in ways that regular people can access see and experience the dominant discourse of how to organize businesses. They show democracy in action, as a verb, a practice not just a theory or form. This cooperative duality is what is so transformational about worker cooperatives. They empower workers to practice democracy and they show the public (their clients) that they engage with that it is possible. Much like the radical democratic project of the Zapatista movement, worker cooperatives that aim to change the economic structure have a dual role, they engage in seeking for their workers a part of today's American dream, but they also work towards changing the dream into one where the world is a “world where many worlds fit” (Marcos, 2002).

In doing so they both proclaim themselves as ‘a part’ of today but also of tomorrow. Just like, “the Zapatistas speak for a time further on...[their] words do not fit the present, but they are made to fit into a puzzle that does not yet exist”, Osvaldo similarly makes this reference with worker cooperatives when he states, “I mean I think I feel like cooperativism is like the answer

to that shit [capitalism] and maybe it's not cooperativism in like what it looks like today, but I feel like we're sort of evolving towards like whatever it is that it's going to be in the future" (Osvaldo, 2013). The "puzzle does not yet exist" and it is "evolving towards, like whatever it is that it's going to be in the future" because we do not know what it will be. And we do not know because democracy is a process, a contingent one at that. One that involves discussion and deliberation, and context. All of that is dependent on people and it will hopefully result in not just one form of being and doing, but on a variety of forms, what Esteva and Prakash call grassroots post-modernism, the way in which the world's social majorities are escaping from the monoculture of a single global society and regenerating their own cultural, natural and economic spaces (1998), that results in "a world where many worlds fit" (Marcos, 2002).

Ultimately one cannot speak any project of change without at once speaking of humanity, agency and praxis in creating that change, for it is humanity that necessitates the kind of change Marx envisioned. Capitalism is inhumane and therefore there must be a move towards more humane and democratic forms of relations of production, culture and engagement. And it is humanity itself, real men and women that will move us towards more humane forms of the relations of production. E.P. Thompson reminds us, "that people can [and do] assert their humanity." And these assertions are what have historically led to change. And the kind of change that Marxists speak of and envision must occur not just in the political sphere, but especially in the economic sphere, in the mode of production itself. Only by transforming the relations of production through economic and workplace democracy where workers actually own and control the means of production will workers be disalienated (Melman, 2001) and the structure thus transformed. Transforming the workplace will also transform how the economy engages the social and political. After all capitalism began with the reorganization of production, shouldn't

that be where we begin the process out of capitalism? The potentialities engendered by actual men and women and their capacities to reconstruct society are tantamount to any theory or philosophy of change. Abstractions can be helpful, analyses of structures useful, but only when connected to material reality and the experiences of human agents, who at the end of the day always have and employ the capacity to change their conditions, only then does change occur. Of central importance to accomplishing this change is the concept of agency; workers should be done waiting for politicians to fix their problems. They should and in many cases have decided to fix the problems themselves, to have self-responsibility, dignity and self-respect, which is why they have been and will be successful. They are invested in their enterprises, as are the communities they stem from, they have a personal stake in the success; their lives depend on it. There is no greater power than a community collectively working together to accomplish the goal of a better life for each other and for the future. These different movements, then provide living examples that another world is possible, a world where many worlds fit (Marcos, 2002). Economic democracy as an idea and a project then provides immense potential for empowering whole societies and more importantly allowing them better standards of living through fairer distributions of wealth and ultimately more control over their daily lives. The practice and process of democracy is the only real alternative that is based on actual freedom and liberation and as such should be taken serious as a, if not the method of improving and ultimately eliminating the degradation in our world. The worker cooperative that Osvaldo co-owns has given him the experience that Fromm discusses, “freedom to create and to construct, to wonder and to venture, Such freedom requires that the individual be active and responsible, not a slave or a well-fed cog in the machine... it is not enough that men are not slaves; if social conditions further the existence of automatons, the result will not be love of life but love of death” (Fromm,

1966, pp. 52-53). Osvaldo makes this clear when he describes his the magnitude that economic democracy and specifically worker cooperatives have had on changing his world:

It's only just the idea, I mean this shit is really important to me. When I think of my history as a worker, you know a farm worker and you know I did other stuff too like construction and shit, I've milked cows before at a dairy farm, I've been in so much different shit you know man. I'm a worker you know what I'm saying and in every single one of those fucking jobs, that's all I was, I was a worker and it meant something different to me and I definitely took pride in the work I did, 'cause I've always been a hard worker, but I was always just, I don't know, right now worker has a different meaning. Before I was a worker which meant you know that I was working for this person and I worked hard and that was how I had job security, but here [at the cooperative] it's like I'm a worker and an owner too man, like I don't know man and it makes me feel like that's how all workers should feel because... when you don't own it, it takes something away the pride aspect of it man, the joy of being a worker, it just takes, I don't know, I can't explain it. It just feels different, as a worker I feel fulfilled like I have a purpose. In every other job I didn't have a purpose... [with the cooperative] I'm like I have some say in where our business goes you know what I mean I have really like a lot of control and power, like I feel really empowered right now man. In terms of direction that our coop is taking and you know the decisions that are being made you know what I mean. I'm like I'm a part of that process where as in other ones I was just like following orders man and whether I liked it or not it is what it is and you do that you know what I mean and you feel that sort of disempowerment... I mean this cooperative is my life man you know what I mean like, it's not just my work and that's like just another huge difference like when I'm working at some other place man for somebody it's not mine you know what I'm saying it's like I'm working for somebody and that's like what it is. Here like I have a sense of ownership here man it's like even when I'm not working man I'm working you know what I mean I'm thinking about it and I'm doing it and I like it, the fact that I'm thinking about it and doing it when I'm not even there you know what I mean 'cause it's just become such a big part of who I am... (Osvaldo, interview, July 24, 2013).

In many ways Osvaldo through his experience in his cooperative is here describing a pedagogy of the oppressed:

a pedagogy that is forged *with* not *for*, the oppressed, in the incessant struggle to regain humanity... [one where] the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation... [and where] the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation (Freire, 1970, p. 48).

The worker cooperative has become the vehicle through which Osvaldo and his co-workers practice a pedagogy of liberation within themselves as well as disseminating it to and exposing those they interact with in their communities to the liberating practice of democracy. It is their form of struggle in the war of position to create an alternative hegemony, a world where many worlds fit. But it all begins with spreading the idea of economic democracy through praxis, because as Carnoy and Shearer argue:

Ideas have power that can free untapped hope and energy in a people. The democratic idea of America has been and can again be a powerful weapon. It is a living heritage, which we can apply to the economic system in which we live, and with it we can build a new reality (1980, p. 403).

APPENDIX A: Sample Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself and where you come from?
2. Did you go to college and if so what did you major in?
3. How did you first become interested in worker-cooperatives?
4. How long have you been working at this worker-cooperative?
5. Where did you work before you worked at a worker-cooperative?
 - a. Tell me about that experience.
 - b. How much did you make there?
 - c. How did you get along with your co-workers and superiors?
 - d. How is it different at the worker-cooperative?
6. What sorts of issues or challenges do you face at your cooperative?
7. Are there ever instances of racial tension, or gender or identity discrimination?
 - a. How do you as a cooperative workplace handle those situations?
 - b. How was that process different from previous jobs?
8. Tell me a little bit about the process of how you were hired? (this includes the application and interview process but also how you became a worker-owner)
9. What do you think is the role of worker-cooperatives in the current economy?
 - a. What is their role long term?

(follow up questions were also asked)

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