

Dispossessing Educational Equity: A Critical Exploration of California's Community College Student Success Act

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Abstract

As a result of the economic recession, the State of California has set in motion new policies for its community college system known as the Student Success Act, fundamentally altering open-access (Yamagata-Noji, 2014; Bennett et. al. 2013). Individuals most vulnerable to the policy shift are under-represented college students who constitute the greatest number of low-income and first generation students in the community college system (Provasnik & Planty, 2008). Fundamentally, this policy shares continuity with No Child Left Behind which scholars have described as an 'act of whiteness' (Broderick & Leonardo, 2011). A critical analysis finds that the formation of such policies as hegemonic 'common sense' (Gramsci, 1971) is perpetuated through the framework of social efficiency theory (Taylor, 1911). One strategy for challenging the oppression of the Student Success Act is the application of standpoint epistemology (Smith, 1987) to raise awareness from the location of students negatively impacted by the reform.

Keywords: Student Success Act, California Community College, Gramsci, Whiteness, and Standpoint Epistemology

The California Master Plan for Higher Education is a tripartite system of postsecondary public research universities, comprehensive four-year undergraduate campuses, and open-access affordable community colleges –all of which other states and even countries have replicated (Douglass, 2000). The cornerstone of this success is the open-access and readily available California community college system that provides low cost educational opportunities to all Californians. “Clark Kerr, an architect of the California higher education system, termed the community college the great innovation of American higher education in the 20th century” (Brint and Karabel, 1989, p. v). As a result of the 2007 economic recession, both the Democratic and Republican State Legislature along with Governor Schwarzenegger created the Student Success Task Force with twenty-one academics in an effort to prioritize and re-configure the core mission of the community college system to better reflect the economic climate: a state proxy to reinforce austerity measures.

Unfortunately, citing the credo of ‘efficiency,’ the new policies known as the Student Success Act (SSA) implemented from the task force (and carried out by Governor Brown) have fundamentally altered the “open-access” policy that was once the pride of California’s higher educational system. Individuals most vulnerable to the policy shift are *under-represented* college students who will feel the pinch of these new reforms the most; the result is reduced access for marginalized populations (Yamagata-Noji, 2014; Bennett et. al. 2013; Richetts, 2012) as the community college system serves the greatest number of low-income and students of color (Provasnik & Planty, 2008) and where the majority of students (70%) are from non-white communities (CCCCO, 2014).

The *new* Student Success Task Force policies prioritize who is provided access to a community college education and who is not. Classes that provide degrees and transferability to four year institutions are supplanting previous classes that provided opportunities to “life-long learners” and those pursuing “self-improvement” (such as the disabled and elderly). Students who take longer than average to matriculate in job training or transfer to a four year institution, repeat courses too often, perform inadequately on high stakes testing, lack the proper educational plan, or have over 110 units -quite simply-are pushed out. In sum, the ‘community’ college system is changing to a ‘junior’ college model with a narrowing view of who constitutes the student.

Although the policies are new, the modus operandi is not. Such policies have been described by the Chancellor of the community college system as the “rationing of education” and “the efficient model of education,” and by Governor Brown as “not being all things to all people” (Harris, 2012; Bennett et al., 2013). At the heart of the new school is the old. What is at play in the new reform is really a recapitulation of the education curriculum model of social efficiency inspired by the scientific management philosophy of Fredrick Taylor (known as Taylorism) that pre-dates the recent conversation by nearly a century. The justification for policies based on a social efficiency model was the government of California’s quest for more austerity measures.

Advocates of “modern” reform in the California community college system mirror the social American efficiency educational curriculum reformers of the 1920’s and 1930’s such as Bobbitt, Taylor, Ross, and Snedden (Drost, 1967; Kilebard, 1987) who all share the desire to “rationalize,” “streamline,” “control,” and “improve based on test assessments.” The important questions that arise are to whom does it become efficient and to whom is it rationalized? By applying multiple philosophical frameworks of social and cultural studies through the shared lens of curriculum theory, this paper presents the Student Success Act in the California community college system as an act of whiteness, by which the non-disabled, white, middle-upper class student benefits at the expense of the marginalized (e.g. students of color, disabled, low income).

In many ways the SSA reforms ideologically share continuity with No Child Left Behind (NCLB), in which Leonardo (2009) has argued that NCLB re-produces and re-affirms whiteness. The question that arises is how do such oppressive educational reforms come to garnish

overwhelming consent from both Democrats and Republicans, city and countryside, and all constituents required of such political change? In the California Senate, the SSA legislation was approved with only one dissenting vote in the entire state (CCCCO, 2013).

In this article, I argue that social efficiency in SSA educational reform, founded in the philosophy of Taylorism, re-produces whiteness, which can be understood by Foucault's (1977, 1978, & 1982) framework of power relations. Moreover, Gramsci's (1971) concept of the development of hegemonic 'common sense' accelerated during moments of "crisis" provides an insight into how social efficiency and oppressive educational policy (such as the SSA and NCLB) become the site and par excellence of mass consciousness. The tools to deconstruct can also be those to reconfigure. By applying both Foucauldian and Gramscian frameworks with standpoint epistemology founded in feminist scholarship, a valuable method of critique is made possible that also empowers the voice of students at the margin.

Contextualization of Whiteness in Educational Policy

To frame social efficiency in SSA reform as an act of whiteness, the paper contextualizes the characteristics of whiteness. Broderick and Leonardo (2011) describe the systematic processes of whiteness as a "privileged group that is provided with honor, investment, and capital whereas the marginalized segment is dis-honored and dispossessed" (P. 220). Primarily, the demarcation of the non-privileged is associated with the hue of skin color with lighter skin individuals possessing privileges at the expense of those with darker skin.

Whiteness's genealogical precursor is Eurocentric racism. Charles Mills states in the Racial Contract that as "white people, Europeans and their descendants, continue to benefit from the Racial Contract [of whiteness], which creates a work in their cultural image...an economy structured around racist exploitation of others, and moral skewed consciously or unconsciously toward privileging them (1997, p. 40). Moreover, whiteness is as 'much to do about' skin color as it does about ableism and patriarchy. The way by which society comes to interpret and value the concept of "smartness" and "intelligence" becomes co-opted by whiteness whereby the norm is measured in relation to the non-disabled, white, Eurocentric norm (Broderick and Leonardo, 2011). For Disability studies, scholars' theories on whiteness provide a way to "dismantle the unspoken language of normative ideologies that create disability as a social category" as whiteness represents skin color as it does ableism (P. Smith, 2004). Feminist Scholars also remind us that hierarchy of whiteness privileges a patriarchal structure whereby non-male genders assume secondary status (Grummet, 1998; D. Smith, 1987; Weed on, 1997).

Subsequently, whiteness is not necessarily about white skin, ableism, and patriarchy, although no doubt are critically important parts. It is rather about the power relations that justify and support the domination of one group over others: an ideological system. For example, whiteness embodies the subjugation of Irishmen by the Englishmen, who subsequently have it better than

women, of which the richer are better off than the poor, who subsequently have it better than blacks, who subsequently have it better than the disabled, and so on and so on. In sum, the par excellence of white supremacy is the pinnacle embodiment of the non-disabled (i.e., normate) white European colonial man, all of which is affirmed and reproduced in the oblique power structures of a white society.

The prime reproduction mechanism of the ideological and oppressive power structures of whiteness is the institution of education. John Dewey informs us that all society has become for itself “is put through the agency of school, at the disposal of its future members” (1915, p. 1); school is foremost a “place for acculturating children into our national life” (Hirsch, 1998, p. 110). By de facto the institution of education serves as the mechanism to reinforce who is privileged in society, what groups get “invested” in, and what groups are “dispossessed” or “dis-honored”—all of which goes towards privileging the non-disabled white European male.

Fundamentally, what often reinforces the structure of whiteness in educational institutions is the cleverness of social efficiency in curriculum. The foundation of social efficiency in educational policy is the philosophy of utilitarianism which enables whiteness. “Utilitarianism is a theory in normative ethics holding that the proper course of action is the one that maximizes utility, usually defined as maximizing total benefit and reducing the negatives” (Goodstein, 2011, p. 26). Jeremy Bentham, one of the founders of utilitarianism, describes such as the “tendency of any act by which it is produced” (Rosen, 2003, p. 132). The overarching theme is that utilitarianism is about maximizing ones utility by analyzing the shortcomings in any given process / act. By controlling the act to the utmost efficiency and scrutiny, the final product (be it material, educational, or social) maximizes utility and minimizes “waste.” To the economic social efficient theorist Frederick Taylor, who was one of the early influences for educational social efficiency, “the heart of scientific management lay in the careful specification of the task [the act] performed and the ordering of elements of that task to the most efficient sequence [the product]” (Taylor, 1911).

Pre-dating the Student Success Act by seventy years, early American curriculum and educational reform scholars such as Franklin Bobbitt sought to follow in Frederick Taylor’s legacy: What utilitarian concepts Taylor brought to business management, Bobbitt and others from the same frame of view sought to apply to the institution of education. The foundation for Bobbitt’s social efficiency educational reforms is deficiency and control. He states that “only as we list the errors and shortcomings of human performance...can we know what to include and emphasize in curriculum” (1918, p.52). In the social efficiency model of curriculum, the credo of utilitarianism supersedes the individual and manifests itself in a more efficient social order. Kliebard in the *Struggle for the American Curriculum*, explains that “social efficiency curriculum-makers devise programs of educational study that prepare individuals specifically and directly for the role they would play as adult members of the social order....*social utility* became the supreme criterion against which the value of school studies was measured” (1995, p 85). By controlling the

deficiencies and rationalizing waste, a more perfect social order arises. The underlying assumption of such is that the institution of education becomes a whiteness proxy for privileging, honoring, rationalizing, and placing all members in their “proper” place in society.

Taylorism and Foucault

In his analysis of ideology Althusser explains that through Ideological State Apparatuses (such as the institution of education) and Repressive State Apparatuses (paramilitary) that individuals are interpolated into the dominant ideology such that it “guarantees the conditions of exploitation and reproduction” (1971, p. 184). Foucault ‘revises’ Althusser’s notion of ideology which “leads him to ultimately abolish the category of ‘ideology’ altogether” (Hall, 1996, p. 31) in favor of a poststructuralist framework that views subjectivity as an oblique web of internal and external power relations. What both scholars have to offer when placed together is that for social efficiency curriculum to flourish it needs support of the state (Althusser) along with the individual’s internalization of social power relationships (Foucault).

Taylorism and social efficiency demands constant supervision to the point that the workers supervise themselves (1911). Similarly, Foucault asserts that what makes social control effective is that “it is not necessary to use force to constrain the...worker to work” (1977, p. 202). By using Jeremy Bentham’s concept of the Panopticon building in the prison, by which the guard tower could constantly keep surveillance on all prisoners, Foucault asserts that as the guard / surveyor is in the central tower he or she “sees everything without ever being seen” (Foucault, 1977, p. 202). Hence, the fear of judgment / guise of the guard internalizes discipline within the prisoner without the need for ‘physical’ discipline (RSA) to intervene –the embodiment of maximum utility.

Education policy such as NCLB and SSA which rely on ‘performance’ testing to make educational institutions and students ‘accountable’ and ‘efficient’ use the principles of Taylorism and self-supervision that shares continuity with Bentham’s Panopticon. For the student the ‘test’ becomes the prison guard of education by which students (and even teachers) are constantly judged by the all-seeing administrator of the state test; the process of the ‘test’ becomes a highly self-supervised process as the students must regulate themselves (e.g. studying and going to class) to pass the ‘judgment’ of the supervisor. Furthermore, each student’s test score is kept private or hidden from the other students with only the test administrator knowing the result—such is similar to the prisoner being in full view of Panopticon tower guard without being able to ever view other prisoners in adjacent cells. Policies such as NCLB and SSA quintessentially parallel Taylorism and Foucault in the sense that a student’s fear of judgment internalizes discipline to the state and oppressive educational matriculation processes.¹

Through either succeeding or failing, students come to view themselves as either ‘passing’ or being ‘deficient’ in the eyes of the supervisor (state). This begs the question for example, how are

students with disabilities to interpolate themselves if they do not have the “ability” to take the test in the first place? What are prisoners (i.e., disabled student) when they are excluded from the prison (classroom), but relegated to the mental asylum (special education)? The point is that power relations re-produced by Taylorism have ideological implications. When the ‘answer’ to all test questions is developed by a state apparatus of whiteness, all students condition themselves to accept oppression via self-discipline to reach the white ideal or be discarded.

Taylorism in social efficiency curriculum serves to enforce ideological subjugation and exploitation whereby the modis operandi is a clever ‘class war from above’ (Hill, 1998) that reinforces a neoliberal political agenda, “to strengthen the force of the state behind it” (Macrine, McLaren, & Hill, 2009). In U.S. society where race and racism are endemic (Leonardo, 2013, p. 12, 45), the constant ‘state’ of whiteness remains inextricably linked to class struggle under the illusion of austerity and hyper scientific management in education policy.

Crisis: The Modus Operandi of Whiteness in Educational Reform

If Foucault reveals how whiteness ‘efficiently’ re-produces itself through self-discipline, Gramsci’s theoretical framework of hegemony enables scholars to see how such oppressive modes of production gain consent of the masses. Fundamentally, what is perplexing about the Students Success Act (SSA) in California and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on a Federal level is how such oppressive policies come to transcend bi-partisan support for a political topic (education) that is historically shrouded in political dissent, fierce debate, and grid-lock. Since the early implementation of the SSA, entire community education health programs for the disability community have begun to closeⁱⁱ along with vital educational services that benefit virtually every marginalized student group (Yamagata, 2014; Haynes et. al. 2002) –all of which passed the legislative governance structure with minimal resistance (if any) by leaders who were “representatives” for these marginalized groups themselves. What seems legislatively preposterous becomes quite possible once Gramsci’s theoretical framework of the ‘crisis’ is synchronized with his concept of hegemony.

NCLB cannot succeed unless it has support from the metropolitans of New York to the rural countryside’s South Dakota. SSA cannot gain the consent of California if the large cities of Los Angeles and San Francisco do not agree with the countryside agricultural ambitions of Modesto and Stockton Counties. Using the French Revolution as a moment of historical analysis, Gramsci comes to the conclusion that the unity of France was not possible unless the countryside aligned with city and vice-a-versa. What makes the French Revolution successful, among a plethora of unsuccessful revolts in Europe, is the way by which the Jacobin Pariscameto garnish ideological consent from countryside (1971, p. 79).ⁱⁱⁱ According to Gramsci, what makes the continuity of the ideological framework of both city and countryside possible is they both buy into a collective “crisis” and common ideology that forms a hegemonic unity.

To Gramsci, the oppressive capitalistic system is by default, due to its exploitive nature, always in a mode of crisis without ever exposing the capitalistic system itself. This is propelled by the fact that “the crisis consists precisely in the act that the old is dying and the new cannot be reborn” (1971, p. 276). Gramsci’s notion of crisis shares continuity with a Marxist theory of historical materialism. Fundamentally, what Gramsci describes as crisis through his analysis of Italian history in the *Prison Notebooks* (1971) mirrors Marx’s work on the history of the capitalistic class system (1993). Whether the transition of Italy from the Fourteenth Century medieval communes of the Signorie to the Napoleonic Invasion of the Italian lands or to Marx’s transition from feudalism to a class based capitalistic society, the story in principle remains the same: a narrative that reflects the struggle of classes seeking to reaffirm their power over others. In the case of Gramsci and Marx the perceived ‘old’ system (such as feudalism or medieval commune of noble families) can no longer sustain itself in the ‘new’ mass consciousness and thereby must reinvent itself. Hence, the old structure cannot be reborn and therefore a crisis emerges without truly undermining the power structure of the ‘haves’ itself.

Due to capitalism existing in a constant state of struggle between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots,’ there exists a constant social anxiety (i.e. crisis) that plays out without ever focusing attention on the structure itself. Other areas of society including the superstructure institutions of education, religion, and government become the focal point of the crisis as a means to disguise the capitalistic base as a whole –what Gramsci calls the civil society. In relation to educational reform, such is always inadvertently tied to the capitalistic system without ever directly exposing the flaws or contradictions of the underlining base system.

Gramsci’s concept of the crisis and how it hides the exploitive nature of capitalism benefits from the insight of Paul Hudis’ Marxist critique of austerity and class struggle (2012a, 2012b). He explains that the enormous profits of speculative capital by the elite class remain hidden to the average person, but what is visible is the government’s burgeoning financial debts and fiscal ‘crisis’ that comes with it. “This situation acts as an ideological cover, an alibi or smoke screen, by making people believe that the reason for the declining conditions of everyday life is because the government is spending too much of their money” (Hudis 2012a, 2012b). This critique when applied to educational policy during moments of ‘crisis’ reveals that austerity reforms, such as the Student Success Act, are really what Gramsci cites as the hegemonic process by which the dominant maintain authority over the underserved working class (Allan, 2002; Gramsci, 1971).

In practice, educational reforms such as the SSA and NCLB arise in moments of ‘new’ high anxiety (i.e. crisis) caused by social challenges to the ‘old’ system; crisis provides a clever opportunity to form a new dominant hegemonic narrative that reinvents the same old power relations of whiteness. Perhaps the best educational crisis example that serves as the precursor to California’s SSA is the Federal NCLB educational reform that similarly ignored and distorted the realities of schooling for the marginalized (Jimerson, 2007). NCLB came to sweep the dominant hegemony in the United States as a nationwide response to the threat of losing a white

identity as the “creation of a white nation has arguably been one of the strongest forms of identity politics, both real and imagined” (Leonardo, 2009, p. 128). During this time white vigilante Minute Men took to the borders of Arizona with their own weapons to harass immigrants crossing at the Mexican border (Leonardo, 2009) and political debates flourished around building walls to close off all U.S. borders, while multicultural educational curriculum focused on non-white groups flourished in the U.S. classroom (Banks, 1993, p. 219). With such ‘new’ anxieties to immigration and the emerging of a ‘not-so-white’ nation, “NCLB represents a node in nation creation that is intimate with the educational construction of a white polity....an instantiation of whiteness (Leonardo, 2009, p. 129).

As immigration continued to grow, such minority groups slowly started to gain a foothold in the economic structure, thus, “boosting [financial] growth and combating the concentration wealth” as “population growth [from immigration] doesn’t make the rich any poorer, but it does diminish the power of the wealthy” (Piketty, 2014). Hence, the old structure of relations becomes challenged by a new order, and in the Gramscian sense, has to be reinvented in order to sustain the power of the old guard (whiteness). For scholars, the policy of NCLB serves to further oppress marginalized groups, in particular non-whites, by structurally limiting their educational opportunity and the subsequent economic benefits (Borkowski & Sneed, 2006; Leonardo, 2009; Jimerson, 2007). What makes such economic disparity possible is the national hegemonic view that frames immigration, and the economic changes associated with it, as a threat to the identity of a white nation.^{iv} Fear from immigration represents an anxiety of foreign invasion to whiteness. Gramsci claims that “intransigent against foreign domination is key to unity and inspired progressive movement in Italy” (1971, p. 79).

California is a site for high racial anxiety as it is home to more immigrants than any other state in the United States (PPIC, 2013). With the housing boom prior to the 2007 economic recession, minority groups were owning homes in record numbers, which caused a temporary increase in the redistribution of wealth. Immigrants gained more political traction for state rights including the right to a driver license and identification cards under California Assembly Bill 60. Undocumented students in California for the first time were granted in-state tuition (Keller, 2010). Record numbers of minority communities were also advancing through the open-access community college system in setting national records of matriculation (Sengupta & Jepsen, 2006).

NCLB was not enough. When the 2007 economic “crisis” occurred, it placed whiteness and the base power structure behind it into a crisis mode. As fortunes crumbled from both the privileged and the non-privileged groups the playing field started to equalize –the old system was not working. The appropriate response from the stewards of whiteness was to “rationalize,” “control,” and make more “accountable” the playing field by limiting the front line of economic and educational mobility: the California community college system. At the heart of SSA reform in California is another attempt for whiteness to reinvent itself under the disguise of a crisis, in

the case of the latter, a challenge to a California white identity and the economic base which supports it. As Paul Hudis argues, as austerity policies gain the consent of the masses during moments economic crisis, conservatives and advocates of social efficiency can more easily blame economic woes on immigration / minority groups and other false assumptions (2012a, 2012b).

Acts of whiteness found in California and U.S. educational policy share continuity with global class struggles. “Under austerity/ immiseration capitalism, Europe [in 2012] witnessed its deepest economic and social crisis since the Second World War” (McLaren & Cole, 2014). British Marxist Dave Hill (2012) sites many instances where European austerity measures have brought about a period of Immiseration Capitalism that has impoverished millions whereby the gains of democracy and the working class are being stolen away by the elite, “which like vultures, are picking at the carcass of the welfares state and free education” (p. 35-36). In Greece the “transnational capitalist class is seeing just how far it can push a national working class before there is social breakdown and revolution” (Kloke, 2012a, b). For the working class in the UK, austerity policies have pushed back the standard of living back 30 years (Shaoul, 2012). Post-austerity social cuts in Ireland resulted in new educators starting off their careers with 30% less pay (Derwin, 2012). One Marxist critique that describes these European struggles well is that exploitation from the ‘crisis’ is a ‘class war from above’ by which the elite drive down the standard of living for the working poor through dramatically reducing benefits and access to public education (Malott, 2012).

Marxist critiques of European austerity and education reform could benefit from whiteness studies. Although the majority of the European working class is white and do indeed suffer from austerity measures and diminishing access to public education, the degree to which non-whites and immigrant communities suffer an ‘even greater’ hardship needs to be taken into account fully. As Williamson (2014) points out, “many more young people, from diverse backgrounds and perspectives [non-whites], are now exposed to precarious social circumstances” due to austerity measures in Europe. This begs the question, could the academy’s discussion of austerity and ‘crisis’ develop new insights by learning from the ‘play book’ of whiteness found in the educational policy reforms of the United States (NCLB) and California (SSA)? Could Zeus Leonardo’s (2003, 2009, 2013) emergence of a ‘not-so-white’ society form an alliance with Eurocentric Marxist critiques of austerity?

Taylorism as Justification of Whiteness in Educational Reform

The question that still remains is how does the underlying crisis come to sweep the hegemonic consent of the masses in California? The threat to whiteness and the economic base may be the root cause, but how does such become practicum? What necessitates educational reform is the consent of the masses *far beyond the elite power players alone*. To Gramsci, consent is made possible by his notion of hegemony that is “the processes by which the dominate culture

maintains its dominant position” (Allan, 2002). Such processes include the formation of “Ideological State Apparatuses” superstructures (e.g. institutions of schools, church, family) that re-affirm real and imagined power, oblique employment structures that disguise exploitive labor practices, indoctrination of the masses to accept their own oppressive conditions, and the mobilization of “Repressive State Apparatuses” to physically reinforce power through the paramilitary superstructure (Althusser, 1971).^v

What makes whiteness in educational reform unique is that it is more of a subversive ideological and cultural shift rather than an outright physically violent act. Instead of storming the Bastille from the outside, whiteness convinces those inside to dismantle such brick-by-brick as a daily task without ever realizing the true change of the structure itself. Whiteness is clever. According to Gramsci what makes the formation of hegemony palpable is when the dominant group uses its influence to establish its ideology and politics as ‘norms’; these social structures and relationships help the powerful but disadvantaged others as they are presented as ‘natural’ –the ‘way of things’ (Altheide, 1984; Condit, 1994; Harden & Harden 2004). One of the methods by which whiteness becomes the natural ‘way of things’ is through the use of Taylorism and social efficiency framework.

“In reality, the state must be conceived of as an educator, in as much as it tends precisely to create a new type or level of civilization. . . .the state, in this field, too, is an instrument of “rationalization,” of acceleration and of Taylorisation. It operates according to a plan, urges, incites, solicits, and punishes” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 247). What Gramsci is pointing out is that the Ideological State Apparatus of education, in service to the state, plays a critical role in the ideological formation of the masses who come to constitute themselves as willing subjects; more importantly, the justification of the latter is propagated by the philosophy of Taylorism that rationalizes, accelerates, and justifies the hegemonic narrative of the hegemonic bloc. Gramsci mentions in his essay entitled *Americanism and Fordism* (1971) that Taylorism and scientific management of efficiency become the “natural” way of thinking, thus, making the acceptance of “rational” policies that disproportionately benefit the ruling class acceptable. But, to whom is such efficient? What is the normative benchmark by which all ideal outcomes are measured? Who is rationalized out?

To understand the structure of Taylorism one should answer who reaps the most benefits in America? Whiteness. The latter can be traced to the way social efficiency theory manifests itself in educational policies of the SSA and NCLB. What makes social efficiency palpable within policy is the fetishism, in the sense that Adorno mentions that Veblen critiques the fundamental values of the capitalist economic system itself (1989, p. 150), that the United States has with hyper scientific management, especially within industrialism and capitalism (Crowley et. al. 2010; and Gramsci, 1971). For Frankfurt school scholars such as Horkheimer, efficient “production is production of unity, and production is itself the product” (1971, p. 198).^{vi} To be non-efficient in production, in either Ford’s industrial assembly line or the factories of the

classroom, is to be valued as second class citizen who dis-honors the unity of a productive society.

NCLB and the SSA embody the principle of Taylorism in numerous ways. For example, NCLB is a non-funded mandate by which schools who score well on standardized tests stand to prosper at the expense of those who do not. Children at the margin who attend “poor” performing schools, have socio-economic disparities that impact the quality of education within their district, live with a disability that impedes “productivity,” and come from locations that do not favor the Eurocentric norm are prone to fail.

Similarly, the SSA reform in California community colleges rationalizes the institution by expunging non-efficient students who repeat courses too often, do not score well on standardized tests, or have an educational plan that leads to “inadequate” timely transferability. Students more likely to suffer from rationalization of such are college students who are first generation, immigrants, have disabilities, or students of color (Yamagato-Noji, 2014; Bennett et. al. 2013; and Haynes 2013). The result of both reforms is that the groups who are deemed “non-efficient” and worthy of “rationalization” are placed at the margin of a white society.

The perceived necessity to be efficient is what enables a dominant hegemonic discourse. Both NCLB and SSA were not framed as oppressing the marginalized, rather, they were conceptualized, in the neo-liberal sense, as ushering in efficient accountability measures that were not the fault of the structure, but the deficiency of the individual. The idea that Taylorism sells to the masses is that through efficient scientific measurement all educational access is judged equally. Testing eludes itself as not highlighting the structure that caused the student to have correct or wrong answer, but solely on the answer alone. In the hermeneutical sense, such testing is “a process without dialogue” as the student is judged entirely from a test result with complete disregard of the student’s origin such as location, race, or socio-economic status (Leonardo, 2003, p. 331).

Taylorism becomes the justification by which the “neoliberal project, the latest stage of the capitalist project” aims to reshape educational institutions via “intensive testing pre-designed curricula” to produce “passive worker/citizens with just enough skills to render themselves useful to the demands of capital” (Macrine, McLaren & Hill, 2009). In the context of California, the passive worker/citizen most vulnerable to exploitation are those expunged from the privileges of whiteness; the California community college system ‘was’ considered by scholars to be primary gateway for underserved students to achieve educational and income equality (Yamagata-Noji, 2014; Provasnik & Planty, 2008; Ratchetts, 2012). The consequences of ‘unbiased’ testing and hyper scientific measurements in the Student Success Act matriculation process is the illusion of an equal playing field which frames the process as “socially homogeneous, hence it occupies a position of perfect equality”(Gramsci, 1971, p. 105). To

Gramsci, the framing of the latter in the public purview enables a dominant hegemony to take root in the social imagination.

Education reform such as NCLB and SSA is successful because it focuses its attention on the measurement of the eurocentric norm while diverting attention from structural inequity itself. Similar to the philosophical grounding of Taylorism in utilitarianism, educational reform becomes ‘common sense’ to the masses by overtly focusing on “the tendency of an act by which it is produced,” rather than the structure that made the act possible in the first place (Rosen, 2003). The dominant hegemonic bloc of whiteness is preserved as the masses are too busy ‘efficiently’ measuring the outcome to take notice of the base oppression: the capitalistic system that reproduces the privileges of whiteness. Moreover, the dominant view of Taylorism is pervasive to the point that many of the oppressed participate in their own oppression without notice.

Hegemony as Universal Suffrage, Sacrifice, and Hope

In order for the crisis and subsequent educational reform to become part of the dominant hegemony, the masses have to be united in their perceived suffering. Gramsci asserts that Mussolini in his rise as the dominant fascist leader of Italy compromised the political descent of the old politico by “uniting all of Italy through the framework of universal suffrage” (1971, p. 95). Although the North of Italy held the industrial wealth and the South was largely subjugated to positions of agricultural labor, Mussolini transcended the two by focusing on the suffrage both felt. Despite one’s status, all could unite around suffering from trains not running on time to the political debacles of democratic rule. What Gramsci realizes is that when the masses unite around a universal suffering –mass consent is possible.

When George W. Bush promoted NCLB the rallying cry was framed around the “perceived” universal suffrage of an inadequate educational system; regardless of political location (county, state, or federal) the universal disappointment of education set forth the political will for a new policy (despite its consequences). Prompted by government austerity measures a decade later, California politicians from all sides would similarly unite under the new SSA reform under the mantra of “we are all in this together” (CCCCO, 2012), and the “pain will be experienced by all in the state for the good of California’s community college system” (Harris, 2012). Nonetheless, despite the fact George W. Bush’s NCLB has resulted in schools failing nationwide (Stokes, 2014) and that Mussolini ran Italy into ruins, perceived universal suffrage made consequential unity possible.

What makes the perception of suffering palpable is that all groups indeed do ‘give’ a little and sacrifice to one extent; however, the myth is that all groups suffer equally when minority populations suffer at disproportionately higher rates. Although all of Italy suffered from delayed trains and all of California would lose some benefits in the new model of community college

reform, marginalized groups overwhelmingly lost / lose the most. After all, the ‘haves’ in the dominate bloc have access to cars and planes versus being dependent on trains, and the privileged / elite in California can afford to side step the entire community college system by using, for example, expensive private educational services. What propagates the ‘buy-in’ from the masses is the collective myth that “we are all in this together” through collective suffering and sacrifice. The act of “giving a little” is effective as the dominant group over-embellishes their suffering / sacrifice while simultaneously minimizing the suffering / sacrifice of the non-privileged.

Stuart Hall’s insight into Marx’s concept of ideology from a post-Marxist framework adds another layer to Gramsci’s universal suffrage. Hall explains that Marx through the framework of Hegel illustrates that the dominate bloc of those in power uses a one side account to normalize their power by not taking into account the “differentiated whole of ‘ensemble’ of which it is a part ... one sides explanations are always a distortion” (1996, p. 37). In the case of the dominant bloc creating a successful discourse they rely on a one-sided myth by which they are ‘suffering’ or stand to ‘lose’ the same as the rest of the population. The full implication and truth is hidden under the auspice of austerity while a ‘class war from above’ takes shape as universal suffrage. Educational reform like NCLB and SSA perpetuate a one-sided account by which all members of society are equally tested and thus have assumed equal opportunity regardless of race or socio-economic status; the ‘hidden’ other side of the account is how the structural inequalities are missing from the narrative altogether.

What further unites the hegemony of universal suffering and sacrifice is the illusion of hope. “What is important from a political and ideological point of view is that it is capable of creating –and indeed does create –a period of expectation and hope ... it thus reinforces the hegemonic system at disposal of the traditional ruling class (Gramsci, 1971, p. 120). In the case of the SSA the political hope was to have a more “efficient, rational, and cost effective” community college system (Harris, 2012). For NCLB it was the hope of selling an educational system that treated people fairly “regardless of (i.e. not taking into account) race and its legacies” (Leonardo, 2009, p. 131). Educational policies of both play into the suffering and hopes of the masses at key moments in the crisis –ironically, only to prove ineffective overtime thus warranting another future “crisis” –which will no longer be able to use the hegemonic system of the ‘old’ and will have to reinvent a ‘new’ one. The process repeats itself as Gramsci traces such historically in Italy to the “fall of the Roman Empire in the West” (1971, p. 47).

The Sin of Omission as the Ball and Chain of Hegemony

The complexity of hegemony is that it re-produces conditions favorable to the dominate group while simultaneously gaining the consent of the individuals it marginalizes. Through couching social efficiency in terms of universal suffrage and sacrifice, and envisioning a new hope, common ‘unity’ is achieved; however, Gramsci explains that in order sustain the ‘haves’ over the

‘have-nots’ there has to be indifference within the relationship. In Italy the North and South were united while at the same time the agricultural South was framed as inferior to the industrial North. Gramsci termed this relationship the “ball and chain” whereas as for Italy the South was framed as a burden who impeded the overall progress of the nation (1971, p. 71). Ironically, the North could not succeed without exploiting the labor of the South. Furthermore, the ball and chain of the South is perceived as always dragging down Italy, but like a ball and chain connected to the body, it never disconnects from the body (Italy) itself as such would constitute a revolution. Gramsci illustrates that what kept the South in the subordinate position was the hegemonic framing of them as “burden” and a “ball and chain” to Italy as a whole. Overtime, such a framework lowered the status of such peoples to a second class status by which oppressive policies could be justified and implemented with minimal resistance.

What instigates and propagates the “ball and chain” view of the oppressed is often silence. Charles Mills (1997) and his concept of the Racial Contract enables us to add a new ‘silent’ layer to Gramsci’s ball and chain analysis. Mills asserts that “silence constitutes good prima facie evidence that the subject [marginalized races] was not of particular interest. By their failure to denounce the great crimes ... leading European ethical theorist reveal their complicity in the Racial Contract” (1997, p. 94). Ignorance is bliss for the dominate bloc. Through the process of ignoring a subaltern group it becomes possible to “characterize the Racial Contract (hence subordination marginalized groups) as ‘consensual’ and ‘voluntaristic’ even for non-whites” (Mills, 1997, p. 89). The sin of omission is a critical part of forming a dominant hegemony that serves to Other the marginalized while simultaneously gaining the consent of the masses by method of not becoming consent in the first place.

NCLB does this flawlessly as the lack of focus on its racial consequences forms a national consciousness that “sees no race, speaks of no race, and hears of no race” (Leonardo, 2009, p. 131). In the instance of the SSA its consequences on students of color, the disabled and elderly, and other minority groups are missing entirely from the dominate narrative –a sin of omission. In addition, the omission is further compounded by the common hegemonic view that frames such non-privileged groups as second-class citizens in the first place (Reiter, 2012). The combination of framing subordinates as deficient and ignoring / silencing the oppressed develops a hegemonic narrative that serves to marginalize the non-privileged with minimal to no objection.

The Organic Intellectual and the Everyday World as Problematic

With sins of omission, unity through universal suffrage, and the dominant logic of Taylorism, is it possible to disrupt or even develop a dominant counter hegemony? According to Gramsci the path toward a new hegemony is made possible by the intellectual.^{vii} “If a group of intellectuals situates itself on a new basis of concrete pro-peasant policies, it ends up drawing with it ever more important elements of the masses ... it is best to start the movement from intellectuals groups” (1971, p. 74). Ideally Gramsci believes that an Organic intellectual, which is different

from the traditional intelligentsia who view themselves as a class separate from the masses, should organically derive from the rank-and-file of society to express the masses who could not express for themselves. Although Gramsci sets forth a path toward developing a new dominant hegemony, his concept does not go far and wide enough. How could someone dismantle the oppressor by using the very tools of the oppressor? How is it that the organic intellectual is the only primary path toward a new hegemonic discourse?

Poststructuralist scholars such as Chris Weedon (1997) unveil the complexity of Gramsci's hegemonic challenge by asserting that the formation of a theory is difficult when one "seeks to explain the relations and forces of power from the only discursive evidence available" (p. 111), and of which the discourse is the oppressors as they control the means of re-producing it (Volosinov, 2006). Gramsci's intellectual (be it traditional and organic) is still dependent on the structure that enables the oppression in the first place; similar to a builder trying to re-build a house using the same tools, wood, and nails that have always been in the construction yard.

Foucault's theory of power complicates Gramsci's hegemony in many ways. For example, instead of the intellectuals framing the counter hegemonic process Foucault complicates this by explaining how power relations constitute the very utterance of "hegemony" itself. Foucault reminds us that "[we should] look at power relations through the antagonism of strategies. For example, to find out what our society means by sanity, perhaps we should investigate what is happening in the field of insanity" (1982, p. 780). The antagonist of intellectualism is non-intellectualism. Although Gramsci's organic intellectual is organically produced from sometimes non-intellectual spaces of the masses, his concept is dependent upon an outside organic intellectual being the primary proprietor / instigator of a counter hegemonic discourse. While Gramsci's organic intellectual may have the best intentions for the masses, the systematic dependence on the intelligentsia serves to reinforce an old mode of productive power relation by which the 'haves' of knowledge are placed in a hierarchy above the 'have-nots' in society. Aside from the re-production of an old node of power, the dependence on intellectualism as the key to changing the dominant hegemony also risks an unhealthy radical subversion of the system itself.^{viii}

Gramsci does not account for how the rise of fascism was in part made possible by the radicalism of the anti-intellectual movement.^{ix} John Searle in his book *The Campus Wars* asserts that "in the radical movement [such as fascism], the intellectual idea of knowledge for its own sake is rejected. Far more important than what one knows is how one feels" (1971). To idealist philosopher Giovanni Gentile, founder of fascist ideology, such "combats not intelligence but intellectualism ... which derives from the false belief that one can segregate oneself from life" (1925). What Searle and Gentile illustrate is the danger of framing / forming a hegemony based on intellectualism alone which can have unintended consequences, as seen in fascist Italy and Germany. If not firmly situated, both imagined and real, in the lived experience of the non-intellectual masses such runs the risk of radical subversion. Although the intelligentsia may have

little to do with the oppression of the masses, in fact their position promotes a positive contribution to society, the perceived intellectual disconnect (as promoted by the idealism of Giovanni) can foster unhealthy associations with the public at large. How can one form a counter hegemonic discourse if the people are not creators of such fully?

From an educational policy perspective, the Student Success Act was a victim of intellectualism as the policy was constructed by twenty-one academics from California and the Ivy League. Unfortunately, the intellectuals who made up the Student Success Act Task were hyper-focused on the rationalization of education to the extent that they lost touch with the bodies on the ground. Furthermore, as reform became institutionalized the response from academia has been lackluster with the only descent coming from students, faculty, and administrators on the community college level.^xThe lesson learned from the SSA is that dependency on intellectualism alone can be problematic; however, that is not to discredit the valuable work and scholarship that intellectuals do bring to the world. There needs to be room for intellectualism and the lived experience of the masse to equally co-exist (both real and imagined).

Dorothy Smith (1987) in her book entitled *The Everyday World as Problematic* provides a solution to Gramsci's organic intellectual quandary. According to Smith, to subvert the dominate discourse (hence hegemony), it is best to use the standpoint of the individual's experience (in this case women against patriarchy). This strategy has taken "as its base what the women we spoke to knew of and told us about, namely, their own work...this method of inquiry explores relations of the ruling from within the working experience of women subjects" (pp. 203 – 204). Although Dorothy Smith can be critiqued for using the same hegemonic discourse of patriarchy (virtually impossible to escape) to give voice to the location of woman, it positions society one step further to eventually breaking free from the dominant discourse by virtue of a new perspective.

Foucault similarly explains how a new hegemonic discourse can be successfully formed from the location of the Other. In *The History of Sexuality* (1978), he explains that the homosexual community was hidden from society and as such was able to use that location and experience to create a new counter discourse to heteronormativity. In time, the homosexual community was able to turn the tools / language of the dominant group against itself (hetero normativity) to promote a more inclusive discourse friendly to the LGBTQIA community. Standpoint epistemology, which emerged from second-wave feminist thinking, is the ideal mechanism to develop a counter narrative to oppressive educational policies as it brings forth the overlooked perspectives of individuals located at the oppressive margins of power relations.

If we apply Smith's standpoint with Gramsci's intellectual, a new hope emerges. Standpoint epistemology proves itself to be more than researching or interviewing the oppressed from an intellectual frame of reference: it is the mechanism by which the lived experience of the individual and subsequent masses drives a new hegemonic narrative *in partnership* with the intelligentsia –not by it. With the emphasis on the individual experience guiding the research,

this disrupts the perceived hierarchy of intellectualism over the masses. New alternative paths of dissent and discourse are made possible by new perspectives. Educational policies such as NCLB or SSA become uninhabitable as the voices of the marginalized disrupt normative modes of ‘commonsensical’ whiteness. Standpoint epistemology creates the cyborg, in the Haraway sense (1991), which is part lived experience and part intellectual without the need for a new ‘efficient’ world order: an incubator for a counter narrative to whiteness.

The potential for standpoint epistemology to challenge the educational climate in California is immense due to the precedent that student advocates from around the world have set. With growing austerity policies burgeoning around the globe along with social cutbacks specifically targeting educational institutions, student protestors have made substantial gains for equity in education. From their standpoint and its epistemology we can find inspiration and hope. In South Africa fourteen campuses were closed (in 2015) due to student protests –resulting in students being shot with teargas and stun grenades by the Repressive State Apparatuses (paramilitary)- to bring about demands for racial justice, economic inequity, and highlight the exorbitant cost of higher education (Laterza, 2015). One of the largest demonstrations in England by the National Union of Students (in 2010) went to the streets of London with the cries of “no to education cuts” and “education should be free” (Englert, 2010; Robinson, 2011). More recently, students invoked further protests (in 2015) with police through central London “in a rally calling for free education, with some activists throwing smoke bombs and targeting government buildings” (Smith & Tran, 2015).

The time for dissent in the California community college is approaching. Due to the five year process to implement the Student Success Act fully, consequences of the reform are on the horizon, but not fully felt. One of the first populations to experience the limitations of California’s reform are students with disabilities who substantially lost access to physical education and other life enrichment opportunities. One example was at Cypress community college where students with disabilities protested after losing their forty year old wheelchair basketball program due to the Student Success Act (Whiting, 2012). *The Press Democrat* reported the standpoint of several individuals with disabilities, including Daniele Joliff who was born with epilepsy and cerebral palsy, who “will no longer be eligible to take most adapted health classes because of a sweeping new statewide policy [SSA] intended to prioritize enrollment and resources for students pursuing transfer to four-year universities” (Benefield, 2013); individuals with disabilities also constitute the largest impoverished group in California (PPIC, 2013,b) and do not have access to any other affordable physical activity health programs in the state (Bennett et al., 2013).

As the California community college system continues to implement more reforms of the multi-year Student Success Act transformation, the new hyper social efficiency focus on high stakes testing, accountability schemes, and intensive testing of pre-designed curricula will foremost stymie educational access to more vulnerable students groups including those from under-

represented backgrounds, first generation college students (Yamagata-Noji, 2014), and others placed at the margin of whiteness. With the enrollment of over 2.4 million students who represent a majority of non-white communities (CCCCO, 2016), scholars must remain ready in the years to come to support these expunged students and their standpoint experience and its epistemology. In partnership with the standpoint of bodies on the ground, the theoretical tools of cultural studies can provide a useful path forward for the emergence of a 'not-so-white' society whereby *all* minority communities can counter act the SSA to secure their advancement through education.

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Notes

ⁱ Some would argue the state is not necessarily associated with educational institutions; however, state and federal funding in the United States context along with common core restrictions and policies make it an extension of such.

ⁱⁱ In another paper under review I have quantified the closure of physical education programs with the 112 campus community college system finding that it marks “the declining of an era in Adapted Physical Education.”

ⁱⁱⁱ Jacobins was used to describe the revolutionary club that assured in the French Revolution.

^{iv} Immigration often starts off as an exploitive practice by which the wealthy gain at the expense of cheap labor; however, as the immigrant population takes foot they economically achieve more over time gaining a stronger economic footing, thus, challenging the supremacy of the privileged (i.e. source of anxiety).

^v Gramsci work pre-dates Althusser but the logical framework of Althusser aligns well with Marx’s principles and Gramsci’s concept of the formation of hegemony (albeit Althusser more focuses on an individualistic formation).

^{vi} Horkheimer critique of production comes from Hermann Cohen’s *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis* (Berlin, 1914, pp. 23ff).

^{vii} Although Gramsci differentiates between traditional and organic intellectuals, and clearly favors the formation of the organic, it is my opinion that both are needed to successfully develop a counter hegemonic narrative. Both serve a unique role that is necessary for a new dominant hegemony to form; hence, the larger concept of “intellectual” is applied.

^{viii} Gramsci’s organic intellectual could be argued as eventually, through reason and logic, determining for itself the need to align with the masses over the intelligentsia; however, I interpret his work to not strongly make the case.

^{ix} In fairness to Gramsci as a prisoner the full outcome of fascism and World War II may not have been at his disposal.

^x The lack of response from the academy was determined by conducting a literature review on the topic and preliminary results from an ethnographic study with California community college educators.

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