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SOCIAL JUSTICE AND WORKER COOPERATIVES: TRANSFORMATIVE

IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

By

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Abstract

Social Justice (SJ) is an organizing principle of contemporary community psychology (CP); however, the concept and understanding of social justice in community psychology is undertheorized and narrow. Specifically, the concept of distributive justice, which has been a popular notion of social justice in community psychology discourse, does not translate well into transformative action. In order to address this issue, the research uses a qualitative approach to explore the understanding of social justice from the perspectives of worker-members of 5 worker cooperatives in Ontario, with the aim to contribute to an understanding of SJ that has transformative implications. A worker cooperative is an autonomous businesses that is democratically owned and operated and developed with the intent to meet the social, economic and environmental needs of its members and community. Worker cooperatives were selected due to their engagement in practices of social justice as part of their pursuit for social change. The findings suggest that worker-members understand social justice as transformative action and they identified the capitalist labour market, as well as aspects of the worker cooperative model, as being a challenge that prevents them from living the value of SJ. Based on these findings, the research provides community psychologists with an exemplar of SJ practice that has transformative implications in the context of enterprise. Further, it may be beneficial for CP to incorporate people who are engaged in practices of social justice, such as members of worker cooperatives, in formulating a theory of SJ that has transformative implications.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Social justice is an organizing principle of contemporary community psychology (CP) and is considered a value of the discipline (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). According to Nelson and Prilleltensky (1997), the concept of social justice (SJ) is the field's *raison d'être* and the guiding principle towards social change. In CP, the utility of the concept falls short of enacting social change that has transformative implications, which is an important aspect of SJ. For this reason and despite the proliferation of the term "social justice" in CP, the meaning of this term is largely undertheorized. Historically, scholarship within the discipline used either a distributive approach – the fair and equitable allocation of resources and power in society as a whole – or procedural approach – the fair and participatory decision making process – when delineating SJ as a concept. In addition, it should be noted that definitions of SJ were nowhere to be found in CP textbooks until the 20th century (e.g., Heller et al., 1984; Heller & Monahan, 1977; Levine & Perkins, 1997; Rappaport, 1977). While contemporary community psychology textbooks define the concept of social justice (e.g., Kloss et al., 2012; Nelson & Prilletensky, 2010), these definitions are narrow in scope (Evans, Rosen, & Nelson, 2014; Walsh & Gokani, 2014). As a result, recent literature has given increasing attention for community psychology to adopt a clear and operational framework of SJ that is foregrounded in sound theory that corresponds to practice (Fondacaro & Weinberg, 2002; Munger, Macleod, & Loomis, in press; Walsh, Teo, & Baydala, 2014). Against this background, I will explore the concept of social justice as it is understood and practiced within worker cooperatives, which is one type of enterprise that is part of the cooperative movement. The cooperative movement comprises of consumer cooperatives, producer cooperatives, agricultural cooperatives, credit unions, and there is cooperative activity in the housing, medical, insurance, and retail sectors (CWCF, 2015).

Understanding the concept and practice of social justice from the context of social movements or coalitions can produce a broad understanding of the term since these groups are typically pursuing social change. In their pursuit of social change, these movements employ social justice as a strategic tool for fighting against their oppression (Freire, 1970). As demonstrated throughout the globe, many of these groups have significant impacts towards liberation (e.g., cooperative movements, women's rights movement, civil rights movement). These movements are characterized by a struggle and led by people in solidarity with the goal of transforming oppressive systems (Della Porta & Diani, 2009). Worker cooperatives specifically have been designed to address economic injustice and encourage the creation of employment within democratic structures run by its members. In my view, understanding SJ from people in these movements can have significant implications on community psychologists' social justice research and outcomes. Specifically, it will provide community psychologists with an exemplar of a transformative based praxis carried out by people in solidarity.

Cooperatives are an example of an international social movement that have a long history of pursuing social change within the social economy (McMurtry, 2010). The social economy includes organizations that have a social mission and economic value (Quarter et al., 2009), and cooperatives have been gaining recognition as alternative socioeconomic enterprises capable of addressing the challenges of globalization (S. Zamagni & V. Zamagni, 2010), promoting socioeconomic equality and workplace equity (Quarter 1992; Quarter, Mook, & Armstrong, 2009; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2011), empowering poor communities (Gertler, 2004; Harnecker, 2009), and promoting SJ (Vicari, 2009). The ideology underpinning cooperatives is one that adheres to the dynamics of the market while meeting the social needs of people and their communities (S. Zamagni & V. Zamagni 2010). In other words, cooperatives serve member

needs and arise in market niches where the market nor the state have met social or economic needs (Restakis, 2010). Considering the negative economic, social and environmental impacts of dominant structures of the 21st century, such as pervasive economic inequality, environmental destruction, and social crises inherent in various communities in the world over, cooperatives are important topics of study that could contribute to the understanding of SJ that has transformative implications. There are various types of cooperatives and each type has unique qualities and methods of contributing to the environmental, economic and social needs of society. There is a growing body of literature that explores the impact of credit unions (Hulme & Mosley, 1996), producer and consumer cooperatives (Merrett & Walzer, 2004), multi-stakeholder cooperatives (Lund, 2010), housing cooperatives (Deller, Hoyt, Heauth, & Sundaram-Stukel, 2009), and worker cooperatives (Quarter, 1989; Quarter et al., 2009). Furthermore, cooperatives have become recognized as constituents of the social economy and are studied from within this lens (e.g., McMurtry 2010; Quarter et al., 2009). Although the literature on the social economy will be referenced in the context of cooperatives, the aim of this thesis is to focus on the worker cooperative (WC) type.

An example of a social coalition concerned with SJ is worker cooperatives (WCs). They are businesses that are owned and managed by the workers that follow the cooperative principles, which include: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; co-operation among co-operatives; and concern for community (CWCF, 2012). The foundation of these principles were developed by the Rochdale pioneers, who were a group of working class weavers that organized the first WC in 1854 England. Historically, the WC was utilized as a means to resist the centralization of capital and power inherent in the capitalism of industrial

England. The advent of industrialization brought upon a wave of social issues particularly for

working class people, and the WC was developed as a means to meet people's economic and

social needs. WCs provide fertile ground for exploring how the concept of SJ is understood and

deployed in the regional, national, and international community.

This thesis has two primary objectives: (a) to advance the understanding of SJ in CP

discourse and specify how SJ theory and its practice is presented in the CP literature, and; (b) to

present the perspectives of worker members of how SJ is understood and practiced in the context

of WCs. The goal of this research is to contribute to the theory of SJ in CP that has

transformative implications and speaks to the realities of people facing economic, social and

environmental hardships.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

Community psychologists have explored theories of justice from other disciplines and

recognized how a cross-pollination of ideas with CP could contribute to and advance the

understanding and application of SJ (Munger et al., in press). Nevertheless, linking aspects of SJ

from CP with other academic frameworks such as Rawlsian theory of justice and Amartya Sens

capabilities approach can only contribute to theory and practice of SJ from academic (or

governmental) perspectives because of the challenges of accessibility to community members.

However, CP is also well positioned to develop its understanding of SJ from the perspectives of

people in social movements; that is, if community psychologists aims to conduct social change

work that represents the realities of community members outside of the academy. The notion of

developing an epistemology that is constructed by members of the community in the context of

social movements has been a prominent inclination in CP since the discipline's inception (Kelly,

2002). The ideas of freedom and emancipation that are inherent in the doctrines of critical

pedagogy and liberation theology, which emerged in the context of social movements in post-world-war two Latin America, are imperative for a theory of SJ that aims to speak to the realities of people facing socioeconomic hardships.

Critical pedagogy is a philosophy of education underpinned by critical Marxist theory that aims to develop a critical consciousness of one's oppressive state so that one could engage in action towards their freedom (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Liberation theology is a philosophy and movement that began in the Catholic Church as a response to the social injustices inherent in communities populated by poor people, and focused on understanding injustices and its emancipation from the perspectives of the poor (Martín-Baró, 1994). A similarity in critical pedagogy and liberation theology is the notion of working in solidarity with the oppressed to overcome oppression. It is important to recognize that there is an emphasis on a grass-roots process of understanding and deploying SJ, which is imperative to a theory of justice that speaks to the realities of people with socioeconomic needs. There are two prominent scholar-activists whose work in critical pedagogy and liberation theology community psychologists have often referenced; the work of Paulo Freire (1997) and Ignacio Martín-Baró (1994).

Paulo Freire developed a theory and practice of education for critical consciousness and action for the oppressed during the military dictatorship of Brazil in 1960′s. Freire believed that education was a tool for the poor to emancipate and free themselves from oppression. Freire's (1997) ideas about praxis, transformative action and conscientization, which are rooted in Marxist thought have important implications for SJ that has transformative implications (as will be discussed in the proceeding section). Influenced by Freire's work, Ignacio Martín-Baró (1994) believed that psychologists should work in solidarity with the oppressed and towards recognizing oppressive structures and developing emancipatory alternatives. Both of these scholar-activists

were exemplars of community-based SJ practitioners, who sought after an epistemology constructed alongside and with the oppressed.

In the literature on the social economy, the notion of an epistemology constructed by people pursuing social change is conducive to the characteristics and socioeconomic nature inherent in the organization of cooperatives. McMurtry (2010) describes the social economy as one that promotes humanism. Quarter et al., (2009) denotes characteristics of social objective, social ownership, volunteer and social participation and civic engagement to cooperatives (see p. 12). From its very essence, the cooperative idea is underpinned by the notion of people, who in solidarity, work towards developing and maintaining a kind of socioeconomic structure that responds to the real needs of humanity. Cooperatives, such as the WC type, have important implications for an understanding of SJ, and an opportunity for community psychologists to employ SJ work and research that is an exemplar of the ideas proposed by scholar-activists in the critical emancipatory tradition.

It is critical for CP to understand SJ based on the work of scholar-activists from the critical emancipatory tradition (e.g., Freire & Baró) and to recognize the grass-roots and solidarity nature inherent in the cooperative idea as it was and continues to be deployed by the proponents of the cooperative movement. Further, CP is well positioned to develop a theorization of SJ that incorporates the perspectives of people pursuing social change from within the cooperative movement. Considering the impetus of social movements to pursue SJ, CP has the opportunity to build its understanding of SJ from the context of the cooperative movement that provide fertile ground for understanding solidarity and social transformation.

Social Justice in Community Psychology

Community psychology is concerned with individual and environment interactions and how society affects the individual and the community (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Although SJ has gained a popular place in CP literature (Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997; Prilleltensky, 2001; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997; Sloan, 2005) the concept, as it is employed in CP, is undertheorized (Munger et al., in press) and does not speak to the socioeconomic realities of community members and the environmental needs of the planet. Further, this questions the integrity of how we conduct SJ work that is ostensibly intended to have transformative implications.

In one of the latest CP texts, *Community Psychology: In Pursuit of Liberation and Well-being*, concepts such as oppression and liberation have gained much popularity in CP discourse (Nelson & Prilleletensky, 2010). Overarching concepts in CP, such as ecology, prevention and promotion, psychological sense of community, power and empowerment, inclusion, and wellbeing are employed by community psychologists in their attempts to achieve the value of social change. For example, Rappaport (1987) understands empowerment as improving access to resources for marginalized and underprivileged individuals and groups. Similarly, Albee (1981) understands the cycling of resources in ecology as the 'identification, development and allocation of resources within systems' (pg. 77). These concepts have come under much scrutiny as being inconsistent and conceptually ambiguous (Gokani & Walsh, N.d.; Riger, 1993); however, in contemporary texts, they are underpinned by the notion of distributive justice (Evans, Rosen, & Nelson, 2014), which poses challenges to scholar-activists seeking transformative change.

Distributive justice. Distributive justice rests on an ideology of ameliorative change, which implies changes to individuals within a system because the actualization of distributive justice leaves the larger social, cultural, institutional, and economic systems intact promoting complacency to oppressive systems (Gokani & Walsh, N.d.; Sloan, 2010). Moreover, the concept rules out the importance of community members obtaining power and autonomy over resources, which is imperative for a theory and practice of SJ (Bennett, 1987).

In contemporary CP, distributive justice has found common place in SJ discourse (e.g., Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997). Although the notion of the equal allocation of goods for a virtuous society is inherent in the genealogy of SJ discourse, however, the deployment of the concept in recent times tends to leave out oppressive ideologies that underpin the 'systems of distribution' (Gokani & Walsh, N.d.). Considering the challenges of the 21st century, thinking about SJ in terms of distributive justice is inadequate (Munger et al., in press). Further, the conceptualization of distributive justice is often initiated from positions of authority, such as the academy and/or the government, and rarely discussed by people who are part of social movements, rendering it exclusive. Nevertheless, notions of SJ that are based on the concept of distributive justice seek out ameliorative change and pose challenges for community psychologists who seek out transformative change.

Further, Walsh and Gokani (2014) have highlighted some of the challenges of conducting SJ work from within the academy, which presents an obstacle for community psychologists conducting SJ work intended to have transformative implications. The authors recognize how the social positions of most academics (upper-middle class) and the academy (profit-based business) from which we conduct our work pose challenges to conducting SJ work with integrity. In order to be attuned to the values of SJ, community psychologists and other social scientists must

understand the influence of dominant ideologies that are inextricable linked to the current

capitalist structure on our work and behaviour. Specifically, research mandates, career

progression, funding requirements, and demands of publications are important factors that must

be reflected upon when conducting SJ work, particularly the kind that is intended to have

transformative implications.

Transformative change. In contrast to ameliorative change, transformative change seeks

to change the system. Transformative change requires an alteration of the underlying ideologies

and practices underpinning the assumptions, values, structural relations, and rules governing the

system itself (Bennett, 1987). It is important to understand that transformative change is a higher

logical level of change, which attempts to disrupt dominant systems and propose revolutionary

alternatives. In contrast to ameliorative change, which attempts to reform segments of the

system, solutions to transformative change look quite different from solutions offered in

ameliorative change (Bennett, 1987).

Although there is limited research on transformative change in CP (Evans, Rosen &

Nelson, 2014; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010) however, many scholars have expressed a desire to

understand the concept and implement its practice (Moane, 2003; Nelson, 2013; Prilleltensky &

Nelson, 2002, 2009; Sloan, 2005). Gokani and Walsh (N.d.) have noted that definitions of SJ in

community psychology "are bound up with a mentality and set of practices that strongly suggest

accommodation to the political-economic status quo" (p. 20). From this regard, the authors

suggest then that the notion of social transformation becomes a rather reformist undertaking than

a radical one. Community psychologists have proposed and suggested conceptual frameworks on

how to understand and implement transformative change (e.g., Moane, 2003; Prilleltensky,

2001); however, there is a need to recognize that the concept must be developed from within the

community context and alongside members of the community. Further, and from the perspective

of scholar-activists from the critical emancipatory tradition, the idea of transformative change

cannot be dislocated from praxis (Freire, 1997).

Praxis. Although community psychologists have proposed conceptualizations of praxis

(e.g., Prilleltensky, 2001; Williams, 2008), this idea has typically been developed as independent

of transformative action. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1997), Paulo Freire explains that praxis

is a dialectical relationship between reflection and transformative action. The oppressed reflect

on their oppressive state or on their actions that transform their oppressive state. This process of

reflection leads to action in which the oppressed transform their oppression (Freire, 1997). The

process of reflection and transformative action helps the oppressed to develop a critical

awareness of their social reality, and this idea was understood by Freire as conscientization.

Conscientization is rooted in post-Marxist critical theory, which drives at the critical

understanding of the social and political predicaments as well as action taken towards

challenging these oppressive predicaments.

In the context of psychology, Baró urged psychologists to develop a new horizon and

epistemology indebted to praxis. Baró explained that psychologists must refocus their agendas

on the needs of the oppressed by adopting a new epistemology that is developed and constructed

by the oppressed (Martín-Baró, 1994). The notion of working in solidarity with groups and

organizations comprised of the oppressed was imperative to his psychology of liberation.

Although the work of Freire and Baró was developed in the context of Latin American

oppression during the 1960's and 1970's, the work of Edward Bennett is a good example of how

community psychologists could implement the concepts proposed by scholar-activists in the

critical emancipatory tradition in the 21st century.

Edward Bennett proposed a theory and practice of social intervention that implements change and illustrates its processes (1987). Social intervention rests on the ideology of social transformation, and the author suggests ways of enacting change in various social systems of society. An example of theory and practice of social intervention is well captured in Bennett's (2003) work with the Old Order Amish community of Ontario. Bennet (2003) noted that the policies set in place for and the ideology underpinning industrial agricultural practices posed challenges to the implementation of the cultural practices and social economy of the Old Order Amish. Specifically, the dominant social paradigm of industrial agriculture, based on a profit motive and the notion of how bigger is better, was antithetical to the worldview of the Old Order Amish, which is understood as supporting community and the land and environment. Alongside the Amish peoples, Bennett developed community economic development initiatives that mobilized the community's resources in order to be well equipped for transforming the oppressive dominant structure and for sustaining their diverse cultural practices. The process of transformation had involved ideological challenges, including dominant political worldviews versus the Old Order Amish values, and the development of alternative economic enterprises in which resources and operations were controlled by the community members. Further, community support and respectful dialogue among all parties involved was an important antecedent to their liberation. The process of transformation took approximately 7 years; however, Bennett was immersed in the community and worked alongside the oppressed.

Understanding Social Justice

How CP conceptualizes SJ is important in specifying what type of social change the discipline pursues. If SJ, transformative change and praxis are deployed in ways that do not correspond to the critical emancipatory tradition (e.g., Freire & Martín-Baró), then the

application of these concepts reinforce an agenda that may not have transformative implications. Thus, to develop a theory and practice of SJ, it is necessary for community psychologists to adopt the traditional concept of praxis where theory is born from practice, and to do so by immersing ourselves in the location of the community context and form a union with members of the community. Social movements such as WCs are good exemplars of praxis that have transformative implications and that are based on a union of solidarity.

Worker Cooperatives practical application, grass-root nature and social foundation make it a fertile social movement for considering an applied definition of SJ; in short they are an exemplar of praxis as it was understood in the critical emancipatory tradition. There is a need to engage with and understand the concept of SJ from the perspectives of social movements such as members of WCs who adopt praxis in ways that resonate with the critical emancipatory tradition. This can contribute to a theory of SJ that has transformative implications and one that speaks to the socioeconomic realities of common people. Thus, providing space in CP discourse for such groups in contributing to the theorization and practice of SJ could be valuable to our pursuit of achieving transformative social change.

Worker Cooperatives

Worker cooperatives have gained much attention as promoters of SJ (Satgar, 2007; CWCF, 2012; S. Zamagni & V. Zamagni, 2009). They attempt to promote culture, well-being, human dignity and environmentalism through enterprises that provide social, political and economic empowerment for their members (Gertler, 2004). In Canada, WCs are businesses that are created by citizens who base economic operations on the cooperative principles and pursue SJ within their specific market niche (Fairbairn, 1994; Hough, Wilson, & Corcoran, 2010; Miller, 2006). Worker cooperatives are established during times of economic and social

instability in order to fill a void left unaddressed by the public and private sectors (Curl, 2010; Restakis, 2010; Vicari & Du Muro, 2012; S. Zamagni & V. Zamagni, 2009).

Since 2006, it was recorded that Canada has over 346 WCs, with two-thirds of them residing in Quebec and in over 30 different sectors, with revenues of over 470 million dollars (Hough et al., 2010). According to Vaillancourt (2010), in Quebec, WC development was supported more thoroughly because of provincial government support since the 1960's than English-speaking Canada, which renders the province of Ontario to have fewer cooperative developments.

In Canada, worker cooperatives engage in a democratic process, which allows worker-members to exercise control over their business. Worker cooperatives have been called worker-owned businesses and in South America they are sometimes referred to worker-owned factories (Ranis, 2006). While there are various forms of WCs, the ideological underpinning subscribe the same cooperative ethics that are modelled by worker-members actively engaging in social, economic, political, and cultural aspects of human life.

The Province of Ontario is home to about 13 WCs operating in various niches of the market. This thesis seeks to form an alternative perspective of SJ from the vantage point of members of five thriving WCs in the province including Come as You Are, The New Internationalist, The Fourth Pig, Urbane Cyclists and La Siembre. All of these WCs have SJ etched in their mandates.

Renowned as the only WC sex shop in the world, Come As You Are opened its doors in west-end Toronto 1997 and has consistently been rated as Canada's best sex store. Come As You Are is a sex-positive shop with the intent to disseminate knowledge in the community on safe sex practices, gender and disability studies, feminism, and SJ. Come As You Are holds outreach

workshops and speaking events aimed to provide the community with education about sexuality (http://www.comeasyouare.com/).

The New Internationalists WC is based out of the United Kingdom and is an independent not-for-profit media co-operative specializing in investigative reporting. The cooperative attempts to provide transparency on social justice issues that seldom reaches people through dominant media outlets. Their focus is on human rights, politics, social and environmental justice, and they provide the public with a list of agencies or organizations that proactively deal with injustices and promote social change (http://newint.org/about/).

The Fourth Pig WC is based out of the Muskoka region of Ontario, and focuses on building and renovations. Their mission is to foster ecologically balanced methods of construction and energy products in order to promote more sustainable and healthy communities (http://www.fourthpig.org/whatwedo/).

Urbane Cyclists WC is based out of Toronto, Ontario and promotes the use of human-powered alternatives. The WC provides quality products and services in an active and inclusive way. The workers are involved in promoting sustainability and playing a part in the larger human powered transportation movement that promotes the awesomeness of bicycling (http://www.ucycle.com/about/our-history-pg56.htm).

Chapter 3: Literature Review

In the first section of the literature review, I will present an early account of WCs as they emerged in the context of the industrial revolution. I will then present the revival of WCs in the context of post-civil war Spain. Finally, I will connect social justice with WCs and position my own research.

Historical Analysis of WCs

Worker cooperatives appeared during the industrial revolution in England in the mid 1800's and were developed by workers as an economic alternative to resist – in their view - the exploitative and hegemonic nature of capitalism. The industrial revolution had intensified the disparity of power and wages between the upper-class owners of the means of production and the working-class wage-labourers (Polanyi, 1944). Worker cooperatives were intended to transform the capitalist economic system with its inequitable distribution of profit to wage-labourers. (Curl, 2010; Gertler, 2004; Holmstrom, 1984). As it becomes evident in the following section, WCs could be understood as a working class praxis aimed at achieving their emancipation.

The WC pursuit of transforming the exploitative nature of capitalism is often depicted in the literature as an emancipatory struggle led by citizens, and has a Marxist underpinning (Johnson, 2010; McMurtry, 2010; Quarter et al., 2009; Scott, 2008). Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1844) proposed a historical analysis of the political-economy that revolved around the idea of class struggle. Stated plainly, class struggle is the competing socioeconomic interests between owners and workers (bourgeois and the proletariat). As the profits of labour accrue largely to owners of production a struggle for social, economic, and political power occurs between owners and workers. During the industrial revolution this uneven distribution of profit fuelled conflict between social classes. One manifestation of this class conflict was WCs that sought to challenge capitalist modes of production in order to more equitably distribute the profits of labour to workers (Fairbairn, 1994) and to provoke wider socioeconomic change that benefited the working class (Johnson, 2010; Scott, 2008). Unsurprisingly, the emergence of WCs occurred in the context of social and economic crises (Curl, 2010).

McMurtry (2010) offers an understanding of the social economy that recognizes the social aspects of economics, which is inherent in the genealogy of the WC. Specifically, the

economics of industrial capitalism was not designed to recognize the social consequences of the economic objective. The economic objective was based on profit accumulation, and accordingly, the organizational processes that were related to it were promoted. From this regard, the WC implemented a design of socioeconomics that responded to the social consequences while maintaining its economic vitality. It is the social responsiveness of WCs that continues to be its distinct feature as an economic enterprise.

In the sections that follow I will draw an analogy between early WCs responding to the capitalism of industrial England and contemporary WCs responding to the accelerated economic inequity brought about by neoliberalism and post-2008 austerity.

Early worker cooperatives. In 1854 a group of working-class weavers formed a WC in Rochdale, England in order to improve their working conditions and wages (Fairbairn, 1994). The development of the Rochdale WC was a reaction to surges of insecurity over wages and employment related to declining demand for skilled labour (MacPherson, 2010; Quarter et al., 2009). As the demand for skilled labour diminished, Rochdale experienced dramatic increases in poverty amongst the working class and the initiation of a WC was a calculated strategy amongst the working class to resist the dynamics of the industrial wage economy and to improve the structural conditions of labour in their community (Quarter, 1992).

The Rochdale weavers were influenced by the Owenites, a utopian socialist movement that was founded by Robert Owen that sought to reform society through a system of communitarian economics grounded in the adoption of cooperative principles to guide enterprise (Fairbairn, 1994). Generally, Owenites attempt to develop communal societies, however in the context of Rochdale, the focus of the movements were hyper-local and avoided broader social and economic change at the regional or national levels. Nevertheless, Owenism greatly

influenced the working class throughout England. The Rochdale weavers drew on this

philosophy in the creation of their WC (Fairbairn, 1994). Although the first WC cotton mill

encountered various difficulties, which are outlined below, it has proved to be a historically

salient movement in the genealogy of WCs. The Rochdale WC provided an important model that

has been replicated in other WCs internationally.

The Knights of Labour formed in the U.S. in the early 19th century and spread to Canada

by 1870, solidifying the labour movement in North America (Curl, 2010; Johnson, 2010;

Quarter, 1989). The organization of labour mirrored that of Europe where profits were unevenly

distributed amongst owners and workers. Rising economic inequality and labour conditions

prompted class conflict between owners and workers pre-empting broad based labour

organization like the Knights of Labour. The mandate of the Knights of Labour was to disrupt

the capitalist wage system through the adoption of workplace democracy and worker solidarity

which would enable bargaining power for members. In other words, the goal was to challenge

the inequitable distribution of wages, power imbalances over business matters, and poor working

conditions inherent in capitalist modes of production.

In Canada, the WC emerged from within labour organizations as tensions arose between

owners and workers over socioeconomic interests and was an important antecedent to unions.

The WC was viewed as a practical example of organized labour that sought better wages and

working conditions for workers before the emergence of trade unions (Curl, 2010). The Knights

of Labour had up to 800,000 members and held over 450 local assemblies across Canada and

became recognized as a powerful political force in electoral politics (Quarter, 1992). To a

smaller scale, the Iron Moulders International Union in Ontario was influenced by principles of

communitarianism and radical democracy that underpinned the WC movement in England

(Quarter et al., 2009). The WC was utilized as an alternative form of organizing and one that would bring about political, social and economic autonomy for workers. Although the WC made great leaps towards providing the working classes with better working conditions and wages, it never gained the momentum to be a dominant form of labour organization. Worker cooperatives had done well to resist the oppressive and uneven distribution of wages inherent in industrial capitalism by utilizing a practical form of democratic organizing. During the early 1900's however, the WC movement ended abruptly as collective bargaining became dominant within the labour movement and unions (MacPherson, 2010; Quarter, 1992).

Early WCs were unable to establish themselves as a dominant form of labour organization. In the case of the Rochdale weavers WC, one of its major challenges was to acquire enough capital for the upkeep of the business and eventually this challenge led to the cooperative ending in 1862, and transitioning into a private investor-owned business (Quarter, 1992). An important Marxist critique of these early WCs was that they needed to have a clear political identity to produce economic change, and because WCs emerged in the early stages of the labour movement, this identity was never solidified (Johnson, 2010; Scott, 2008). Fortunately, in the mid-20th century, the WC appeared again during social unrests in parts of Europe and South America, and this time, it brought much success.

The revitalization of worker cooperatives. Worker cooperatives as well as other types of cooperatives have been revitalized in recent years likely related to the emergence of historic economic inequality associated with the global neoliberalism of the 1980's. WCs have become the economic counterparts to socialist political parties and have been promoted by other organizations advocating for labour (Restakis, 2011). Examples include the 8,000 member Lega di Cooperative e Mutue (the Federation of Cooperatives and Mutual Societies) associated with

Communist Party of Italy (Restakis, 2011), the Chavez government in Venezuala who developed

a legislative body to promote the development of cooperative enterprise (Harnecker, 2009), and

the Argentinian government that has provided a legislative environment supportive of

cooperative enterprise, particularly after the economic crises of 2001 (Corcoran, 2012; Ranis,

2006). In Canada, the social economy of Europe particularly France helped to guide the

development in Quebec namely the Le Chantier de l'economie sociale. More so than the rest of

Canada, the cooperative movement has much support from Québec's government (MacPherson,

2010), and for this reason Quebec holds majority of cooperatives enterprises (Quarter, 1992;

Vaillancourt, 2010). The development of cooperative enterprises in these countries and the

province of Quebec signals national commitments to challenging the position of labour in the

globalized neoliberal economy.

Contemporary Themes in Worker Cooperative Movements

Although WCs in Canada are smaller than in European and South American countries,

their primary objective is to challenge the orthodoxy of capitalist modes of production by

incorporating democratic organizational structures that follow the cooperative principles. WCs

provide the space for citizens to challenge the status quo by participating in an alternative form

of economic production and consumption.

During post world war two, the WC development began to take serious footing in

Quebec, particularly in the forestry sector. Subsequently, workers and consumers concerned

about the workplace environment responded in ways that supported WC development

particularly in the major urban centres of Canada, and included businesses in the energy, retail,

food and entertainment sectors (MacPherson, 2010). The growth in WCs in Quebec spurred the

'solidarity economy', which provided a space for communities and other stakeholders involved

with WCs to voice their concerns (Vaillancourt, 2010). More recently, WCs have been a popular form of organizing in the food sector because of the environmental devastation caused by modern methods of agriculture and its trade. Further, the cooperative movement has established important alliances with international cooperative movements (e.g., International Cooperative Alliance) by supporting international development activities. Also, the cooperative movement has made strong partnerships with universities across the nation, including in Quebec (Laval University, Université de Québec á Montréal and the Université de Montréal), and elsewhere in Canada (University of Saskatchewan). Support for such cooperative development and research in Canada often comes from the social democrats on the left. However, according to MacPherson (2010) the cooperative ideology has been weakly developed particularly in political circles.

Unfortunately, however, the recent literature on WCs in Canada is in its infancy. Nevertheless, the literature in the form of case studies illustrates how citizens participate in changing oppressive socioeconomic systems through the promotion of education, economic fairness and democratic member control, which are themes that have been pertinent to the WC type (Hough et al., 2010; Quarter, 1989) and parallel to the cooperative principles; and each of these themes extrapolated from these case studies on WCs is discussed below.

Promotion of education. The promotion of education for the worker-members and the broader community has been an important incentive for the WC since its inception. In Fridell's (2008) comparative analysis of Starbucks Corporation and Planet Bean WC views of fair-trade, the author illustrates the difference between a stake-holder driven business that is devoted to consumer education to a share-holder driven corporation that is devoted to marketing strategies for profit. Based out of Guelph Ontario, Planet Bean WC promotes equity in management and ownership, sells 100 percent fair-trade coffee beans, and takes a leading role in educating

consumers on the injustices of the coffee trade by linking consumers to farmers in the global south. Fridell sheds light on how monopolistic corporations like Starbucks advertise false notions of fair-trade as a marketing strategy aimed to increase profit, whereas Planet Bean challenges corporations through economic action and consumer education. Similarly, the participatory nature of WCs provides worker-members with knowledge on how to run a business (Mahee, 2008), gaining social consciousness by learning and responding to the needs of the community (Harnecker, 2009), and promotes active citizenship by providing worker-members an opportunity to explore and be critical of political matters (Ranis, 1994; Vieta, 2010).

Economic fairness. In the recent times, WCs have been developed as alternatives to capitalist modes of production that tend to distribute profit inequitably, particularly for workers. Rouf (2012) conducts a comparative analysis among social enterprises, which includes The Big Carrot in Toronto, and illustrates how they promote community economic development and address issues of poverty and unemployment through community control and autonomy. Worker Cooperatives have fair wage structures, where money is allocated among workers more evenly than in more hierarchical pay structures, where the allocation of money is skewed towards the upper level positions (Holmstrom, 1985).

Democratic member control. The WC is based on worker-member participation. The participatory nature of WCs allows the worker-members to gain control over working conditions and decision making at the organizational level. According to Restakis (2008), the participatory nature utilizes the talents of the worker-members by allowing them to intervene or initiate an activity that contributes to the social and economic goals of the business. As a result, worker-members become agents of social change as they actively participate in denunciating dominant forms of oppression. The democratic nature of WCs has been of great interest to scholars as an

alternative strategy to address social problems. For example, Findlay, Popham, Ince, and Takahashi (2013) conducted a qualitative study on studying the potential impact of the democratic nature of WCs, and found how the WC would be a potential means to transform recidivism rates and promote positive integration to the community for incarcerated women in Saskatchewan. In Nembhard's (2006) proposal for community economic development in New Orleans, the democratic nature of WCs was described as promoting social values, culture, economic empowerment, environmental justice, education, equity and SJ.

   Mondagron: A Spanish model for Canadian WCs. In Canada, WCs operate as successful businesses while maintaining a SJ agenda. Much of the WCs in Canada are inspired by the Mondragon cooperative in Spain, and attempt to follow suit. The Mondragon Cooperative is a cluster of WCs that was created in the Basque region of Spain in 1955 influenced by the utiopianism of Owenites and spearheaded by a Jesuit priest named Jose Arimendiarrieta (Quarter, 1989).The Spanish civil war that began in the 1930's and ended in the 1950's produced a social climate in which poverty, hunger, geographical dispersion and social tensions were pervasive in the Basque region (Quarter, 1989). Jose Arimendiarrieta began teaching people about SJ, and the importance of promoting democracy, economic fairness, worker rights, and education in the workplace (Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation, 2012). The first cohort of students taught by Arimendiarrieta, however, was unable to apply the humanist teachings to other institutions and ended up joining together, and with Arimendiarrieta started a WC. The WC carried out economic operations that were based on the social betterment of the community.

   From 1960's to 1990's the Mondragon grew into a cluster of WCs specializing in finance, industry, retail, and knowledge. The primary objective for Mondragon was to provide workers with the administrative support and technical skills to run successful businesses.

According to Clamp (1987), the key features of the Mondragon movement are cultural solidarity, mutual self-help, equality, and wage equity. The primary activities of the movement are education and democratic participation in both workplaces and within the larger movement. The Mondragon has become a self-sustained cluster of WC organizations that have socialized production within a globalized economic climate. Mondragon's success in operating a democratic business that consists of over 90, 000 employees within a globalized economic climate has inspired WCs in Canada.

Table 1 below presents a synthesis of the historical and contemporary themes in the WC literature. It is evident that in the historical and contemporary themes, the WC was utilized as an alternative form of socioeconomic enterprise that challenged the status quo. Historically, the development of the cooperative principles provided for a method of organizing that resisted the inequitable wage economy and structural conditions of labour. Contemporarily, the cooperative principles continue to be the epicentre for economic organizing and for pursuing SJ within their specific market niches.

Table 1

Comparison of Historical and Contemporary Themes in the WC Literature

Historical themes in the WC literature	Contemporary themes in the WC literature
1. Alternative form of economic organizing adopted by workers to resist the inequitable industrial wage economy and structural conditions of labor.	1. Alternative businesses based on democratic worker-member control and the equitable distribution of wages.
2. Communitarian economics influenced by socialist utopianism by the Owenite movement and the development of the cooperative principles.	2. Businesses pursuing SJ within specific market niches and adopting the cooperative principles with a focus on education, economic control, and democratic member control.

Summary

In this section I have suggested that CP definitions of SJ are under-theorized and are tenuously linked to the socioeconomic realities faced by people in the 21st century. I have argued on the importance of developing a theory of SJ in CP that corresponds to its practice and suggested that WCs are good exemplars of it. I have provided an overview of the history of WCs and outlined contemporary themes in the analysis of these enterprises. Worker cooperatives present an interesting case study of SJ that should be instructive for the understanding and application of this concept, particularly in the context of socioeconomic enterprise. By understanding the perspectives of workers who are actively engaged in alternative models of economic production, we might gain a perspective of SJ that is dramatically under-represented in the community psychology literature; which has privileged the voices of upper-middle class academics.

Chapter 4: Research Goals and Questions

Research Goals

This research can contribute to the growing body of literature on WCs and the literature in CP on SJ, specifically, this research contributes to the theorizing of SJ and SJ discourse in CP from the vantage point of worker-members. Furthermore, this research lays the groundwork for potential collaborations between academics and justice-oriented social change practitioners working within the cooperative movement such as members of WCs. In particular, it is hoped that this research will contribute to the theorizing of SJ in CP by: (a) understanding how SJ is understood by worker members of 5 WCs in Ontario and; (b) by applying the perspectives of worker-members on SJ to the practice of CP.

Research Questions

My research questions are aimed at exploring how SJ is understood by worker-members of a WC and how it is implemented within the respective WC. The three research questions that guided data collection and analysis were: (1) how do worker-members conceptualize social justice? (2) How do worker-members live the value of social justice? And; (3) what are the challenges that prevent worker-members WCs from living the value of social justice in the context of WCs?

Chapter 5: Methodology

Reflexivity

Maxwell (2005) places emphasis on the 'researcher-as-instrument' in qualitative research. In opposition to the value-neutrality of post-positivism, it is important for qualitative researchers to situate themselves in relation to their research in order to foreground how their experiences might show up in the research (Maxwell, 2005). In approaching my thesis project,

my own experiences underpin and inform my research interests and conceptual apparatus.

When I reflect on the conception of my aspirations of understanding the theory and practice of social justice, it took on strong footing during my experiences in Attawapiskat, Ontario, a fly-in aboriginal reserve located near James Bay. Having been introduced to the community by my brother, who worked as a teacher for literacy development and for the band office for two years as a financial officer, it was important for me to visit in order to satisfy my personal interest in indigenous culture and my curiosity of their social conditions. However, it was not the apparent oppressive deadlock circumstance that many indigenous peoples in Ontario find themselves trapped to that had struck me, but it was their camaraderie spirit that I found to be striking and similar to the spirit of my community; Crescent Town. I realized then that if I wanted to understand social justice with integrity and be a part of a community to pursue its emancipation, then I needed to immerse myself within the community and become part of the camaraderie spirit in order to understand the struggle.

I grew up in an ethnic minority working class community where issues, similar to native reserves, like incarcerations, drug trafficking and escalated levels of violent behaviours were common. Communities like mine were viewed as risky because of the negative attention we received, however, it was in my community where people including myself learned the importance of camaraderie, respect, honesty and reciprocity that often went unrecognized. These characteristics were necessary because they helped us to overcome social, mental, financial and spiritual hardships regardless of the illicit underpinning of our motives. Any social and governmental programs or outsiders wishing to impose their ideas were usually Band-Aids to deep-rooted infections. I realized that like other successful social movements or revolutions, social transformation and emancipation comes from within the community and from the

camaraderie spirit. From this view, I believe that these characteristics are important to form and understand as a community psychology researcher dedicated to SJ. Specifically, we should find ways to personalize the struggle so that we immerse ourselves to emancipatory alternatives in solidarity with members of the community.

Being inspired by the work of Paulo Freire and Ignacio Martin-Baró (to name but two action-oriented scholar-activists), I was hoping to learn about social justice in terms of processes of oppression and emancipation. Although the principles of CP are admirable, I found that they lacked radical inclinations. Further, this may very well be due to the fact that the larger institution in which CP operates in influences the kind of SJ work we conducted. For instance, how does the culture of business promoting elitism, self-referential ideas and career opportunism inherent in the academy impact the way we understand social justice? How do we deploy SJ work that has transformative implications and resonates with the people who our work attempts to inform? From this experience, and for my aspiration of being a social justice practitioner, I found it necessary to learn about social justice from those who practice it and those who have come to form the camaraderie spirit in meaningful ways. In particular, worker cooperatives were of interest to me because they share a history of camaraderie and have continuously struggled towards social transformation.

In the last few years, I had the opportunity to gain experience working for and developing social enterprises in Bancroft, Ontario. I worked for one year with Community Futures Economic Development Corporation (CFDC) as a program coordinator for community economic development initiatives. During my time with CFDC, I had the opportunity to be one of six founding members for 'A Place for the Arts', which is a cooperative that provides space for local artists to showcase and sell their work and to use the space for teaching, training, or rehearsing.

Considering there were many artists in the area who did not have the opportunity to make a decent living off of their work, organizing in a democratic fashion where everyone owned a space and operated the business was well received. This provided artists with a storefront to sell their artwork as well as space to develop their art. Furthermore, I was elected to be a member on the board of directors for the Art Gallery of Bancroft, which is a not-for-profit social enterprise that is democratically run and bases its operations similar to that of a cooperative. Our goal is to represent the needs of the members which include artists and volunteers. Lastly, I had the opportunity to work for a credit union, which contributed to my understanding of how financial cooperatives operate, as well as the financial products and services made available to credit union's membership. Although my experiences in cooperatives are limited, I have learned that cooperatives are developed by the members of the community with the intention to serve the needs of the community.

Design and Methods

Background. In the following section, I outline my research design and explain how this research study addressed the research questions. I will specify participant recruitment, data collection and analysis.

'Big Q' orientation. Given the exploratory nature of my research questions, I used a qualitative research design for my thesis because I focused on participant experiences and their understanding of SJ. Qualitative researchers focus on processes of experience, as opposed to making predictions of outcomes, by using "Big-Q" or open-ended questions. "Big Q" methods are used to explore meanings that generate theory through open-ended and inductive research methodologies (Walsh, Teo, & Baydala, 2014). To the contrary, "little-q" are qualitative questions that act as adjuncts to quantitative approaches, which attempt to follow a hypothesis-

testing epistemological stance (Kidder & Fine, 1997). In other words, "Big-Q" questions seek to understand phenomena through inductive reasoning.

Thus, qualitative methods that use "Big-Q" methods have their epistemological roots in social constructionism (Walsh, Teo, & Baydala, 2014). Social constructionism claims that what humans experience and perceive is mediated historically, culturally and linguistically implying that there are 'knowledges' rather than a 'knowledge' out there (Willig, 2008). In other words, a similar phenomenon could be understood and described in different ways, and from this regard, research is concerned with understanding the different ways of constructing social reality (Willig, 2008).

The rationale to use the 'Big Q' methodology rather than an established qualitative tradition is based on my exploratory approach. Rather than being affiliated to a particular research paradigm or established tradition, I decided to approach my research from a neutral position rooted in the traditional social constructionist view that foregrounds qualitative research.

In turn, I have developed my interview guide according to the "Big Q" orientation. The research questions attempted to seek out worker-members' understanding of SJ that are based on their experiences from participating in a WC. I used questions that were open-ended to explore the participant's understanding of SJ and how it is implemented in their respective WC. Knowledge about SJ was generated by the participants' responses but I used analytic memos to provide me with the opportunity to reflect and challenge how my assumptions, thoughts and decisions shaped the analysis of this data (Saldana, 2012). Memos are comparable to research journals, in that they allow the researcher to reflect on the process of collecting and analyzing data (Saldana, 2012).

Semi-structured interviews. I conducted semi-structured interviews involving worker-member participants from each WC individually (9 interviews total). The worker-members are the owners and workers of 5 WCs in Ontario, who share the responsibilities of running and managing the business. These interviews were held in a space recommended by the worker-members to ensure their security and comfort. The average length of the interviews was approximately 80 minutes.

The protocols for these interviews are foregrounded by the Big Q orientation and developed with the help of my supervisor. Interviews were semi-structured to ensure compatibility with the inductive nature of the "Big-Q" orientation and to allow flexibility in the exploration of the phenomenon. The interview questions consisted of a small number of open-ended questions driving at the research questions. Considering the broad nature of my research questions, Willig (2008) explains the importance for the interviewer to be naïve in order to ensure clarity in the participant's responses. Accordingly, I developed probe questions to ensure that responses corresponded to my research questions particularly when discussions during the interview went off tangent. In addition, I asked for organizational documents as supplementary data. Few of the supplementary documents described the conceptualizations, practice, understanding or values of SJ of the respective WC. The documents were used as supplements during the interview as participants elaborated on their conceptualizations of SJ and its practice. Table 2 presents an overview of my research questions linked with my protocol questions.

WORKER COOPERATIVES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Table 2

Research Questions and Interview Protocol Questions

Research Question	Focus Group Protocol Questions
Q1. How do worker-members conceptualize SJ?	1. From the point of view of a worker-member, what is the understanding of SJ? (Based on your experiences at your WC) 2. What does the concept of SJ encompass? (Social, political, economic, cultural, environmental relevancy?) 3. As a worker-member, why is SJ important? (How is it relevant today, particularly in your community?)
Q2. How do WCs live the value of SJ?	1. As worker-members, what experiences in the WC have shaped your understanding of SJ? 2. How is the concept of SJ applied to your WC? (Can you provide examples?)
Q3. What are the challenges that prevent the WC from living the value of SJ?	1. at are some of the challenges encountered by your WC when pursuing SJ? (Specifically, what are these?) 2. How do you think these challenges can be overcome?

The interviews generated insights into experiences with regards to participants'

understanding of SJ. Worker-members discussed the ways in which they personally understand

SJ and how their respective WC implements it. I captured a clear understanding of SJ and

presented an illustration on the successes and challenges of its implementation within the

respective WC.

Sampling Strategy

I wanted to research WCs that were focused on SJ and operated in different market

niches within Ontario in order to obtain a diverse sample. A diverse sample was based on the

WCs market niche; in this case, each of the 5 WCs operated in different niches of the market. I

focused on Ontario considering the convenience of location. I researched about the different

WCs in Ontario paying particular attention to their mandates. At times, I called the WC and

asked them about their business, social and economic goals, and their overall focus. For those

WCs that were located in Toronto and Ottawa, I decided to visit them and see what the actual

business looked like. Most WCs had much of their information on their business websites as well

as on the website of the Canadian Worker Cooperative Federation (CWCF). These sources

provided me with ample information on their business, which helped me to determine a diverse

and well represented sample for my research. Further, it was interesting to note how every WC

that I briefly researched online were SJ oriented. In other words, the WC sector particularly in

Ontario is quite small, and for this reason, they share similar characteristics. Fortunately, all the

WCs that I chose to research had accepted the offer to participate in my research.

Participants

I was able to interview two worker-members from each of the five WCs with the

exception of one member who represented one WC. There were a total of nine worker-members

that participated in the study. As a result, I was able to gather a diverse data set that reflected the

unique SJ practices based on the particular market niche in which the WC operated in. In light of

acquiring a diverse data set, I found it important, particularly for research question two, that I

include each response that corresponds to each respective WC.

Considering the small size of the WC sector in Ontario, it is challenging to maintain

confidentiality. However, I will keep responses anonymous by not sharing who said what. All of

the participants were between the ages of 31 – 65, and of these 9 participants, 5 were male, 1 was

trans-male, and 3 were female. Majority of the participants worked for the WC sector for more

than 10 years, with the exception of two participants who worked for their respective WC for 2 years. Further, one of the participant had recently retired in 2015 however, the participant continues to support the WC on a volunteer basis.

Analysis Plan

The interviews were recorded by an audio recorder and transcribed verbatim. I read through the transcriptions once to become familiar with the data. Then for the initial coding I used the holistic coding method, which is a preliminary First Cycle exploratory method that attempts to grasp major themes and issues in a unit of data as a whole (Saldana, 2012). Holistic coding is useful when the researcher has a specific focus on what is to be investigated - in this case being the concept of SJ from the perspectives of worker-members. For my research, went through the data and extracted initial codes that linked to each of my research questions: 1) How do worker-members conceptualize SJ, 2) How do worker-members live the value of SJ, and 3) What are the challenges that prevent worker-members from living the value of SJ.

My focus was to understand SJ, which is considered to be a multidimensional concept. Analysing the data as a whole produced codes that captured broadly the multidimensional nature of SJ. Furthermore, WCs too are multidimensional, and for this reason their understanding and application of SJ embodied various dimensions, such as the environment, economic organizing to name but a few. Holistic coding prepared me well for the Second Cycle coding process (Saldana, 2012).

Pattern coding is a Second Cycle coding process that groups the initial common holistic codes into broader categories (pattern codes). From these categories, patterns in themes, sets and constructs begin to emerge, which provides the researcher with a meaningful unit of analysis to make statements regarding the data (Saldana, 2012). For my research, pattern coding had

allowed me to further group the set of common holistic codes to form themes. This was useful

for my research because it helped me to further grasp the multidimensional nature of SJ and WCs

within the pattern codes. These codes supported statements regarding the data. An explanation

for the statements regarding the data were extrapolated from a single unit of data, which included

either a set of phrases or sentences for the intent to help the reader understand the rationale

behind the statements. The statements will illustrate the themes, which I will present in the

findings section and critically analyze in the discussion section.

Ethical Consideration

      Risks and benefits. In this research, the risks to participants are minimal. Some

questions, particularly those about the challenges preventing WCs to live the value of SJ, may

evoke tension among some worker-members by remembering unpleasant experiences. Potential

risks were minimized by presenting a consent form describing the broad theme of the study and

stating clearly that participation is voluntary, participants are not required to answer questions if

they do not want to and that they can withdraw from the interview at any time.

      The findings of this study may contribute to knowledge that could benefit the WC

movement in Canada and contribute to the SJ literature in CP. The findings of this research

contributes to a knowledge set that is useful to academic (CP) discourse. The findings of this

may very well contribute to the theory of SJ in CP by presenting a case from a social movement

perspective.

      Privacy and confidentiality. The data collected from the interviews were handled

according to the protocols of Wilfrid Laurier University and have gone through ethics review.

Interviews were held in spaces that were recommended by the participants and the protocols of

privacy and confidentiality were presented prior to the interviews. Audio files and transcriptions

were saved on an encrypted flash drive and stored in a secured office. Names of the participants

were kept anonymous. Only my supervisor and I have access to the data. After the successful

defensive of this these, the data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and will be destroyed after

6 years.

Community Engagement Strategy

After researching and speaking with members from WCs, I reached out and exchanged

correspondence with five Ontario-based WCs all of who described themselves as

organizationally committed to SJ. Worker-members had responded positively to my proposed

thesis project and indicated a commitment to taking part in this research. Also, worker-members

had indicated a willingness to help me recruit participants for interviews. In order to capture an

integral depiction of SJ, the worker-members suggested those worker-members that would be

well suited to participate in the interviews. The worker members decided that it would be

effective if I interviewed people with diverse backgrounds and experiences in order to gain a

well-rounded understanding of SJ. In this case, a diverse set of worker members meant people

who worked at the WC for various periods of time, who identified as ethnic minorities and those

who shared different responsibilities within the WC.

Chapter 6: Findings

The responses for the research questions frequently overlapped and supported each other.

As a result, it was challenging to distinguish responses from questions one and two because the

lived value of SJ often informed members' conceptualization of SJ. For example, participants

provided examples of their conceptualization of SJ and connected it with an example of how

they lived its value. Although this made it difficult to analyse the data into themes, the overlap in

the responses illustrated the dialectical relationship inherent in praxis, which I will elaborate on

in the discussion section. I was also intrigued to find that two participants viewed the WC model as being a challenge that prevented them from living the value of SJ. Of particular interest to this study, there may be disconnect between the WC fundamental principles and the ways in which WCs operate within a capitalist economic system.

The findings are structured according to my three research questions. Table 3 organizes the salient themes and subthemes under each research question, and a description of these findings are included below.

Table 3

Research Questions and Corresponding Themes and Subsidiary Themes

Research Question	Theme	Subsidiary Theme
Conceptualization of social justice	Social transformative action	Psychology of solidarity
Living the value of social justice	Alternative economics	Flat pay structure
		Democratic economic organization
		Market niche
	Proactive struggle	Activism
		Conscientization
Challenges that prevent from living the value of social justice	Capitalist labour market	Capitalist ideology
		Privatization
	WC model	Democracy as time consuming
		Unfairness in flat pay structure

Conceptualization of Social Justice

  Social justice as social transformative action. The conceptualization of SJ offered by

participants was underpinned by the idea of social transformation, and participants

conceptualized SJ in ways that reflected the transformative inclination of their WC organization.

For example, participants expressed ideas of Cooperativism and viewed themselves as being

constituents that facilitate social transformation. One participant explains how,

> it's the question of democracy, egalitarianism, a commitment to treating people as
> you would want to be treated yourself,…So the worker cooperatives that I've been
> a part of…were committed to putting forward the idea…put forward a sense of
> struggling for social justice.

This response illustrates a need for a system that nurtures the social dimension of economic

activity. Another participant explains how their intent is to focus on transformative action. This

response illustrates the transformative nature of their WC in regards to SJ. The participant

explains how,

> We're all committed to social transformation…the idea was to combat that
> structure and that model of society and put forward a more egalitarian notion of it.
> And so we deal with a whole range of subjects in that struggle.

This response indicates the oppressive nature inherent in the current system, and the necessity to

transform it with one that is more egalitarian. Interestingly, one participant discussed how their

vision of SJ was quite contradictory to the dominant sociopolitical and economic climate.

Although indirectly, this response is indicative of the transformative nature of their SJ vision.

The participant explains,

> So, they're kind of caught in this contradiction of surviving based on, you know,
> entrepreneurialism and having a vision which transcends that…You're swimming
> against the current, the current out there is a business-oriented current…they all
> thought that the kind of society we lived in – which was a 'me-first' kind of
> growth oriented society – that was based on self-advancement, was not the way to
> go.

It is evident in the responses that the conceptualization of SJ is a process that has transformative

implications. Further, the overlap in the responses of research question one and two suggests that

an inherent feature of social transformation is praxis, which speaks to idea that transformative

action cannot be dislocated from praxis. One of the participants states plainly that,

> They came together around the idea that a grouping of workers in a
> democratically controlled situation, could work to put forward a different notion
> of what society could and should be about…there was more of an eclectic

pragmatic range of radicalism, and commitment to social justice, that animated peoples commitments.

Arguably, the overlap in the responses to my research questions one and two suggests that worker-members are continuously engaged with praxis due to their transformative inclinations. Further, it is evident in the responses above how transformative action is indebted to praxis.

It is important to note that the breadth of these responses could easily have been broken down into several themes under the conceptualization of SJ. In particular, it could be noted that the conceptualization of SJ as transformative action manifests into practice that deals with various social issues including relating to gender inequity, LGBTQ, racism, economic inequality, power, and environmental degradation. At the same time it is important to note that my focus here is to illustrate the transformative and praxis based nature inherent in the responses. Further, I thought the subtheme of psychology of solidarity to be an important antecedent to transformative action, because it was present in the responses, and the mentality of solidarity allows for a better understanding of the cooperative approach.

Considering the collective nature of these WCs, worker-members share a sense of solidarity that enables them to work in a fashion that is antithetical to the psychology inherent in the dominant economic structure, which I understand to be an important aspect of pursuing social transformative action.

Psychology of solidarity. Although the cooperative principles stood out in many of the responses, which I will discuss in the proceeding section titled 'alternative', which includes alternative economic organization, equal pay, and alternative operations within respective market niches however, it is important to highlight the relational psychology that sustains

Cooperativism, and thus, allows for a successful pursuit of transformative action. One participant

responds to question one by stating that

> It is not a worker cooperative (organizing) thing it is the kind of people who join
> the WC…camaraderie is great and important…it hits insecurities head on and
> provides solutions…It is just part of the nature (social justice), natural extensions
> of those who are members of worker co-ops.

This response reflects the unique interpersonal quality carried by people who come from a

cooperative membership. Specifically, this response is indicative of the solidarity mindset that

allows members to engage cooperatively and pursue SJ. Another participant explains the culture

of corporations vs cooperatives, and by explaining this dichotomy, the participant reveals the

solidarity essence of the members,

> Supervisors and directors are actually not in the same type of functional areas (as
> corporations), they're really just good pairings of mentor and trainee…and that
> really allows people to grow and be, anyone can grow and be experts in the things
> that they do, and lend their skills and lend their talents and exercise their voice.

This response demonstrate how the psychology of solidarity carried by members complements

the organizational form of the WC. In other words, relationships between members are guided by

respect as opposed to positionalities within a hierarchy. Another participant highlights the

psychology of worker-members and explains how,

> we think everybody's opinion, everybody's contribution is important and how
> everybody should share in the benefits and the risks…that's intrinsic to the worker
> cooperative model.

In this regard, the notion of solidarity is closely related to the concepts of reciprocity and

mutualism. This allows members to deploy transformative practices collectively, that are

otherwise quite antithetical to the dominant economic climate.

Living the Value of Social Justice

  Alternative economics. Participants described their living the value of SJ as engaging in

an alternative form of economic organization as well as operating their business differently from

dominant forms of business within their market niche. Most of the responses were indicative of

the democratic nature of their organization, and described the various practices of democracy.

One participant explains how WCs provide a mode of organization that socialises labour, in

which their own expressions and beliefs about the business is acknowledged. The participant

states,

> cannot find within mainstream of society and conventional organizations through
> which they can express themselves and do their work, so they setup worker
> cooperatives as creating a, kind of, democratic civil society.

Another participant describes how engaging in an alternative way of economic organizing is

conducive to having a larger impact within their particular market niche. The participant

explains,

> We chose to become a worker co-op because we believe that if we think that the
> democratic cooperative model is the best model for small farmers…either chose
> or ended up with, but decided to keep it because it allows them (small farmers) to
> work together democratically, to be stronger. Because individually they were not
> able to move the market, influence the market or even have adequate market
> access. We thought it was only fair for us to work under that same model…relate
> to it and share our experience with them and be influenced and learn from their
> own experience of a cooperative model.

This response is illustrative of the social responsiveness of the alternative characteristic of the

WC. In other words, the response indicates how small farmers utilize the WC model as way to

fulfill their social needs through economic organizing. Another participant noted how, "we

demonstrate social justice and our commitment to that…we do so through our worker co-op, sort

of, organizational structure." All participants elaborated on and provided examples of the

alternative economic organization of their respective WC as well as the alternative method of

operations conducted within their market niche. For this reason I present these subthemes

separately.

       Flat pay structure. Participants explained how the alternative model of their WC was in

itself an enactment of SJ. Many participants expressed the importance of a flat pay structure as a

component of SJ. One participant explained,

> One of the major reasons for existing is to provide good and strong dependable
> wages for the workers which, of course is not the reason for most businesses to
> start. Most businesses start in order to maximize profits for the shareholders.

Similarly, another participant explains how,

> Any worker co-op would have perspective on that (social justice) just by the fact
> of being a worker cooperative. Choosing that model, one-member-one-vote, equal
> ownership, varying levels of participative management is already such a view of
> the world.

One of the participants explained that their WC is an alternative to dominant forms of wage

labour primarily because it, empowers people to own the means of their own production…be

responsible of their own economic lives and also be able to bring other people up with us." One

participant explains how "No one has made more than twice what the lowest paid workers have

made" and another participant illustrates how their WC promotes "Equal pay and pay living

wages". Interestingly, one participant explained how their WC pay ratios are "1:1.7". It was

evident that participants lived the value of SJ by adopting an alternative way of wage labour that

supported a flat pay structure. Another subtheme of alternative economics is democratic

organizational structure, which captures the descriptions and examples of how worker-members

adopt a fair share of control over their WC's business operations.

       Democratic organizational structure. The notion of democracy and its importance

within economic institutions was pervasive in participant responses. One participant explains the

connection of democracy and SJ by stating, "it is an alternative form from, a lens of social justice

in terms of, lets democratize the workplace…" Further, another participant demonstrated, within

the response, the collective nature of their WC's democratic organizational structure. This

participant explained, "…aggressively non-hierarchal…no one manages anything…we have

more than one idea or experience that goes into and forms how we make decisions…we have a

consensus-based decision making model". Another participant describes the alternative

economic organizational structure as, "…people in a democratic fashion put forward what

society could and should be about." Another participant explained how "…you are your own

boss…fruits of the labour are belonged back to the labourers". These responses are indicative of

the democratic nature of the WCs in this study. Not only are these responses about democracy

but rather the important of incorporating a democratic model in an enterprise that is pursuing SJ.

Another important subtheme of alternative economics is conducting alternative operations within

their respective market niche.

Alternative operations within market niche. It is important to note that every WC

operated in a particular market niche. In this regard, every market sector posed unique

challenges. For this reason, I have provided space to include the responses of every participant

representing each of the five WCs in this study as to provide context of SJ issues within their

respective market niche, and how the WC adopts alternative methods to challenge these SJ

issues.

One of the participant's, who was a worker-member for Come As You Are WC lived the

value of SJ by promoting accessibility and intersectionality. The participant explained,

> to provide access to, you know, sexual pleasure information, education, health for
> (any) people… in the last 10 years that we have become, we've considered
> ourselves more with intersectionality.

According to the participant, intersectionality is,

> looking at the way things like…racism intersects with other forms of privilege.
> So, whether that's socioeconomic privilege or…the way all of these different
> positionalities in the world influence each other…interact with each other,
> intersect with each other… create a web of privilege and a hierarchy.

In contrast to dominant methods of operation within this market niche, the participant explained

how their WC focused on illuminating the interplay of power and how it shows up in sexuality.

In other words, the participant referred to the ways their WC attempted to eliminate the dynamics

of power based on peoples, racial, economic, and sex positionalities.

Two participants, who were worker-members for the New Internationalist WC explained,

"…our ultimate goal is to focus on that (social justice) issue". The participants explained how the

idea of transparency and exposing those SJ issues, which seldom gain attention in mainstream

media, is crucial to their operations. According to one participant, "Well, I think it's because in

terms of media, a lot of these issues are things that the media is avoiding. And it's more

important than ever that these things be kept out in front for people to read about and to get

involved…" Similarly, the other participant explained that their mission is to,

> To expose, to produce or distribute books, films, magazines. To write, to…, to
> distribute documentaries, to do seminars…to do whatever was within our range of
> possibilities to get people to think about the way, the direction society was
> moving, and how we could do it differently.

These participants had explained that with transparency comes awareness and with awareness

comes change.

Two of the participants from the Fourth Pig WC explained how climate change was an

important SJ issue and how their aim is to address climate change through alternative forms of

construction as well as promoting and building safe, secure, and accessible sustainable housing.

One of the participants explained,

We were like, well, how we promote a different way of doing shelter and shelter work? And that has to be both through modelling and producing more sustainable shelters, and then educating the public around the challenges around sustainable shelters.

Two participants representing Urbane Cyclist WC explained how their vision was to promote awesomeness of bicycles; not just in its literal sense, but also on how bicycles or human powered alternatives creates a socially just way of life. According to one of the participants,

we want to promote human powered alternatives to cars (motorized vehicles)… not just necessarily bikes but human powered… because we're also a bit interested in mobility services…well I mean, I think bikes can equalize people…that you can do more things under your own power…and when you ride on your bike you're just free.

The other participant explained how "human-powered" is liberation. In other words, the response illustrated how human powered mobility relies on one's own capabilities, and promotes a kind of structure, culture and lifestyle that is dedicated to localism.

The last participants to be interviewed were members of La Siembre WC. One of the worker-members explained how they are committed to the idea of 100% fair trade. According to the participant,

being a cooperative dedicated to fair trade and organic, we have that perspective also, a network perspective of trying to foster social justice with small farmers…so, we focus on small farmers because we believe that small farmers have been – are still treated unfairly in many ways…so for us, social justice in doing fair trades…a set of principles which apply to trade. To ensure that, in any commercial relationship that's established between a seller and a buyer that we take into account not only factors like supply and demand, but the reality of the producer who's selling the product, right.

Participants had linked their lived value of SJ, in regards to their respective WC's market focus, with examples of how they adopt alternative methods that are antithetical to the dominant methods employed within their particular market niche. Finally, another theme that emerged in

the responses to research question two is what I labelled as 'Proactive struggle'. This theme is

intended to present an illustration of some of the struggles encountered by participants and the

methods of dealing with them. Subsidiary themes under proactive struggle include activism and

education.

Proactive struggle. Worker-members had shared experiences, examples and practices

that demonstrated a struggle in their pursuit of social change. Although the alternative nature

inherent in these WCs provided for a fertile ground for the worker-members to pursue social

change, these responses are indicative of the struggle, which is an important aspect for the

pursuit of SJ. One of the participants explained that, "we actively (pursue SJ)…to make sure that

we're accountable (to SJ)." Another participant mentioned,

> so, it was… an activist magazine, kind of an activist magazine. It wasn't just that
> you read and absorb. It was sort of gets you involved and taking action on some of
> these issues…we take a stand as well, you know, I mean, you could say the Globe
> and Mail and the Toronto Star, you know, they take a stand in their editorial
> column's. But we kind of take a stand from start to finish.

One participant captures the essence of struggle for SJ as, "more of an eclectic, pragmatic range

of radicalism, and commitment to social justice, that animated peoples commitments." This is an

important idea that characterises the nature of people engaging cooperatively to pursue SJ.

Another participant stated that, "We live this…we believe in this…we promote it…" Another

participant explained how, "…Our larger goal is to focus on social change." These responses

represent an overall view on how worker-members have a goal of actively pursuing social

change through an inescapable nature of struggle. There were two subthemes of proactive

struggle, these include activism and conscientization, which are presented below.

Activism. The notion of enacting social change was described by participants as actively

partaking in a struggle to change certain structures of society that prevented them to live the

value of SJ. Although these WCs operated within a particular market niche, their lived value of

SJ was similar in that the majority of them engaged in the political, social and environmental

structures of society regardless of the market niche in which they operated in.

The participant who worked for Come As You Are WC explains, "…when we go on the

road or we do events, most of our messaging is…spread the good word of anti-capitalism and

sex positivity…conversations at any (retail) shop… would not look like that." Furthermore, the

worker-member explains how, "we do sex toy recycling…we try to promote and carry as much

local…huge percentage of our stock is local…we change peoples' lives who are in, like, sexual

trauma or questioning their orientation or gender, or sexuality." In other words, the participant

explained how they work as sex counsellors within a "radical retail shop", promoting, "…we

make the argument that's nothing's normal, I mean, and that everything is right." In addition, the

participant explains, "we don't try to sell…we speak honestly about our products…we don't

carry any product unless it comes… if a product comes in a skin tone, if it only comes in one

skin tone we don't carry it…" Although some of these responses do not fit within the traditional

ideals of activism, they can be viewed as such because simple behaviours of marketing have

great impacts towards challenging the dominant social paradigm; in this case being colour tones

of sex toys underpinned by racist stereotypes.

Two worker-members from the New internationalist WC explained, "we carry different

themes each month from…genetically modified foods at Monsanto…we were one of the first

magazines who broke the story on Nestlé's baby formula…we did a show on maternal mortality,

covered climate change…we write vegetarian cook books." One of the participants stated,

"…we're doing a story about maternal mortality in Africa… there's actually someone based in

Kenya doing it." Also, in their stories, one participant mentioned how, "…We list the addresses

and phone numbers of groups around the world focused on the topic…NGO's…" One of the

participants shared a very interesting story on how their WC actively participated in changing

how child sponsor agencies allocate funds. Instead of having the agencies determine where the

funds go, they began to allow communities to determine the allocation of funds. The participant

explains,

> we did an issue and on the cover it said do not sponsor this child. And as a result
> of that a lot of these agencies that do sponsor children and encourage people to
> sponsor a child, they've changed the way they set it up… so, the money, in fact,
> all goes to a village or a group of people.

One participant from the Fourth Pig WC explained how they actively promote methods

that contribute to an energy reduction economy. The participant illustrates how they actively take

part in associations and model methods that promote the reduction of greenhouse emissions. The

participant explains,

> the construction sector of Canada produces a lot of greenhouse gases per
> capita…things need to change into an energy reduction economy…we are also
> members of larger associations that advocate and promote at a policy level,
> changes in the building codes… and one of them is Passive House, so we push for
> that…it is a results-based criteria for a building…essentially it means that the
> building is built so well, so airtight….that it often can be heated through passive
> heat. Like the heat from your body and my body, and machinery around…needs
> very little heat source, like a furnace…their heat uses 80, 90, 95 percent lower
> than a conventional building.

Two worker-members from Urbane Cyclist explain how they, "donate $10,000 dollars a

year to local community items…or support items by having mechanics at the event (repairing

human powered alternatives)…we promote the local, we live conveniently close to work…we

help with advocating the Cycle Toronto, which is an advocacy group here." In this case, items

were referred to mechanical parts for or tools used to fix bikes and/or non-motorized vehicles.

Interestingly, one of the worker-members explained to me of a legal battle that they were

involved with in regards to the redesign of John Street in Toronto. The participant explained their

legal battle as,

> there is a big redesign in the works for John Street….Well there's no room for
> bikes on it. And yet it's the cycle route…they basically eliminated any room for
> bikes… instead they widened up restaurant patios… and so we launched a legal
> battle on that, on the redesign… we also placed two big bike racks in the car
> parking spots…well the bylaw officer came…he made a big fuss about the fact we
> had bikes at the front, and that we couldn't have bike racks in parking spots…we
> took them back out in the spring we're just, like, that is just foolishness, like they
> can come and give us a ticket.

> Participants representing La Siembre WC provided examples on how they conduct and

advocate for 100% fair trade in their business operations. One of the participants explained,

> we decided to focus on cocoa, coffee, sugar, coconut and all the other ingredients
> that go into making chocolate. And we do that 100%...influence the food system
> itself; industry, governments, around those issues as well…try to influence public
> policy…on issues like child slavery…child labour in cocoa – forced child labour
> in cocoa, in sugar and other supply chains…we support small farmers…we also
> work towards gender issues…our women are involved in leadership positions and
> they (small farmers) see that…we work closely with other worker co-ops… and
> 10% of us thought we identified as a political group.

One of the participants explained how working collectively with small farmers had benefited

both groups in great ways. The small farmers in Paraguay were, "the first small farmer

organization in the universe to own its own, very high industrial capacity sugar mill –

Gaugamela Indians in Paraguay owning a 20,000 metric ton sugar mill in a country that was long

controlled by oligarchy is, it's a revelation." In this response, it is illustrative of how a struggle

brings about change that is transformative and empowering.

> These responses illustrate how worker-members are actively engaging with a struggle in

their pursuits for SJ. Another important aspect of the struggle was conscientization. Education is

one of the cooperative principles, which the participants explained as being an important aspect

of the struggle. Advocating for education regarding the injustices within their particular market

niche and modelling alternatives that promote SJ was common in participant responses. In other words, the notion of raising a critical conscious of one's oppressive state speaks to the notions of conscientization.

Conscientization. Worker-members explained the importance of educating society on SJ issues in juxtaposition with demonstrating an alternative way that promotes SJ. The education that was promoted by these WCs was pertinent to the challenges inherent within each WCs respective market niche.

One of the participants explained how, as a result of winning a cash prize from the Cooperatives National Co-op Challenge, the worker-members bought a used Volkswagen Westfalia and travelled "to Regina and Saskatoon and conducted workshops on sex positivity". Also, the participant explains how all worker-members "we sometimes do outreach workshops, like sex education workshops for universities or organizations…"

Worker-members who worked for the New Internationalist WC had demonstrated in their responses the act of educating society as a result of being in the market of media. In addition to magazines, for example, the participants explained how worker-members "…produce a series of books called the No-Nonsense Guides… it's like a, social justice issues for dummies…as well as vegetarian cook books…we expand on what the magazine is trying to do…". Interestingly, one of the participants shared an anecdote of how their magazine was an inspiration for individuals who have now become popular and gained much media attention over their successful and provocative NGO. The participant explains,

> I've spoken to their parents a number of times... And they mentioned to me that
> one of the things that really inspired those two guys, was reading New
> Internationalist magazine. When they were young their parents introduced them to
> it.

One of the participants working for The Fourth Pig WC explained how it is crucial to "…educate the public around the challenges around sustainable shelters", while "producing more sustainable shelters". The participant explains,

> we have these public education events around open houses where people can come in and see the work we're doing. And we're always connecting what we do to climate change, because if we don't change the construction business, then you can forget about it.

Participants from Urbane Cyclist WC explained how education was an important piece of their WC organization. One member explained how, "we have some classes, service department classes that got started at the beginning of this year", in the hopes to spread the idea of human-powered alternatives. This is an important concept which denotes human powered alternative to liberation.

Lastly, one participant from La Siembre WC explains,

> we are called upon – you're certainly not the first – I'd say like a student or an educator or a part of the community who calls upon us to provides some type of education or discourse…we really do endeavour to support our own people in that way because we think it's an important message.

This response demonstrates the openness of WCs to invite educators who are well positioned to pass on a critical education, as a way that promotes their pursuit of SJ.

Challenges to Living the Value of Social Justice

Based on the responses for the second research question, it could be noted how alternative methods of organization and the struggle inherent in the pursuit of SJ, particularly through the methods of activism and conscientization, contributes to a conceptualization of SJ that is indicative of praxis and thus social transformation. In the following section, I present responses for research question three under the themes of Capitalist labour market and the

worker model, which were recognized by participants as being a challenge that prevented them from living the value of SJ.

Capitalist labour market as a challenge. One common theme in the responses to the third research question was the capitalist labour market as being a challenge that prevented worker-members from living the value of SJ. This is evident particularly from a transformative viewpoint. In other words, the idea of transformation attempts to transform the system and this includes the dominant economic and social paradigm, which in this case is described by the participants as the Capitalist labour market. One participant put it bluntly as, "the problem is capitalism". Another participant emphatically stated that the food process, in its totality, which is carried out by majority of businesses that are multinational corporations are very oppressive and "counter social justice", and therefore difficult when you are "competing against multinationals." This participant highlights how institutions such as multinational corporations, which are often promoted and rewarded within a capitalist market, are the very same organizations that must be dismantled in order to promote SJ.

The following subthemes for the capitalist labour market include the capitalist ideology and privatization.

Capitalist ideology. One of the participants explained how Capitalism, "is set up to be a disincentive to doing good work…it's an incentive to do selfish work." This response indicates how the notion of self-interest in Capitalism is deployed in ways that promotes selfishness. One participant explains how the political ideology within a capitalist market is antithetical to their pursuit of promoting a culture that is healthy and environmentally friendly. The participant explains, "The political climate in Toronto is not conducive to cycling, although Toronto is ready for it, there is no political will." In other words, this response demonstrates how the political

climate is an important mediator for advocates of human-powered transportation, an ideal that

challenges motorized transportation. Another participant spoke on the idea of profit growth in

regards to it being an indicator of human well-being; the participant explains that measurement

of a nation should also consider other aspects that are crucial to human wellbeing. The

participant states, "The measurement can't be profit margin. But, is it a measurement of creating

sustainable supportive jobs, jobs that are helping the environment." Finally, one participant

explained how corporations hijack ideas that were primarily focused on promoting SJ, the

participant explains how certain ideas of SJ become marketing tools to increases profit. The

participant states,

> the social justice work we're doing, one other barrier we have is the greenwashing
> of large corporations that come in. That is why I said fair trade is dead. Fair trade
> when we built it, we handed over the keys, without realizing it, to multinationals.

This response is a great example indicating the clash of ideologies, in other words, it

demonstrates what corporations do with an idea that has originally been developed for socially

just cause. Another participant explains how, "People see bikes as toys, which pushes their value

to a lesser state in the market" and which further demotes the larger goal of localism. This

response refers to the idea of how bikes have always been seen as toys as opposed to legitimate

vehicles for transportation. Another participant explains how fair trade is not conducive to "the

broader culture that's not necessarily supportive or understanding. Or even understands what

we're trying to do…". The participant referred to the lack of education regarding the negative

impacts of the dominant food industry to the health of humans and the environment. Another

participant explains how people have "negative attitudes, tunnel vision…" towards alternative

construction and products. One participant described how "it is not the developers job to build

better, sustainable houses anymore…developers are trying to maximize profit." This responses

are indicative of how the dominant mindset carried out in the market place is not conducive to

their SJ vision, but rather acts as a barrier. In view of the dominant mindset, one participant

summed it up thusly:

> We are educated with the capitalistic model of the good father that's going to
> show you the way. And it's not participative, equal, and it's not about
> empowering people and having people work together… Co-ops, it's really against
> the grain.

Privatization. The notion of privatization within a capitalist economic structure was

understood as a barrier to democratic rights, which is a central principle of cooperatives. One

participant spoke strongly about the disadvantages of privatization, which was described as a

major aspect of the capitalist market. The participant explained how, "so many people want this

privatized and that privatized. I'm like, well, where are your democratic rights…they don't exist

in private spaces." In other words, the participant explained how the idea of privatization is non-

conducive to democracy. Another participant explained the profit-growth ideology underpinning

capitalism by mentioning that, "capitalism must own…By law in capitalism you are required to

maximize profit and be liable to shareholders." In this quote, the participant refers to 'by law' as

an inexplicit way that a capitalist structure imposes ownership, and how it is linked the idea of

profit growth. In others, a system of privatization promotes capital accumulation.

Worker cooperative model as a challenge. It was interesting to see how two of the nine

participants expressed the WC model as being a challenge to their pursuit of SJ. Although this

subtheme comprises of responses from two participants, I deemed it to be important because of

the interesting and contradictory nature of these responses. The subthemes presented below

include democratic and unfair wage distribution, and are presented below.

Democracy as time consuming. One of the participants explained how the organizational structure, such as the democratic-consensus based process can be inefficient and unproductive. The participant describes how the WC is at times insular by stating, "it is the structure of having a cooperative, where there isn't a hierarchy…Issues are really complex and really difficult. We kind of get bogged down when a tough decision has to be made…It took us forever just to decide we were going to try this...". This response is particularly interesting because it further illustrates the contrast between the capitalist and cooperativist ideologies. Another participant illustrated how the organizational structure could be inefficient because it is difficult to make decisions. Also, the participant adds how it is difficult to seek career progression within a cooperatives. The participant explained how decisions sometimes take,

> longer and (are) less efficient simply because we want to ensure that everyone's voice is heard, and there are no barriers to people voicing their thoughts and options…also, people who are seeking career progression and titles and high pay levels – but yet appreciate the worker co-op structure and have the same values – that's a challenge because we can't offer those things, necessarily.

Similar to the first response, this response illustrates a clashing of contradictory ideologies. In other words, there is an inclination towards certain aspects of capitalism within the WC.

Unfairness in flat pay structure. The participant explains how economic equality can sometimes be unfair. In regards to the pay-structure, the participant explains how new-comers, "they get their foot in the door. Shouldn't that be more important to build a legacy for a young person coming up, than just this model where we all make the same?" The participant explained how sometimes paying everyone evenly makes it difficult for the collective to economically sustain itself and at the same time commit to a SJ vision.

The participants noted how WCs could be inefficient and how wage equality could be unfair. These aspects of the WC model poses challenges or act as distractors from attaining the larger SJ vision.

Chapter 7: Discussion

The major findings suggest that worker-members view *social transformative action,* as a core tenant of social justice that is underpinned by the *psychology of solidarity*. Worker-members' conceptualization of SJ is informed by their lived value of SJ, which is demonstrated through *alternative economic* methods of *flat pay structure, democratic economic organizing,* and operating within their respective *market niche.* Furthermore, the lived value of SJ is indicative of a *proactive struggle* described as *activism* and *conscientization.* The challenges that prevent worker-members from pursuing SJ include the *capitalist labour market*, particularly the *capitalist ideology* and the concept of *privatization.* In addition, this study identified particular aspects of the *WC model,* namely the *unfairness of a flat pay structure* and *democracy as time consuming,* as being a deterrent for worker-members who actively attempt to live the value of SJ.

The significance of this study lies in the transformative nature of the conceptualizations and lived value of SJ. According to Graham et al. (2011), "useful research necessitates making clear the assumptions, frameworks, and paradigms used in crafting of investigations and articulating that they affect the way research is carried out" (pg. 92). As such, it is beneficial to use this interpretative stance of social justice to improve the quality and robustness of research on social justice. In addition, this interpretative view offers a unique perspective with transformative implications. In particular, the results of this study illustrate the complex relationship between praxis, reflection and transformative action. In the following section, I will comment on the relationship between the findings and the literature I reviewed. Then, I will

present the implications of the findings for CP literature that is concerned with SJ and suggest

future directions for research. Finally, I will discuss the strengths and limitations of the research

followed by the conclusion.

Comparisons to the Literature

Participants' responses to questions about the conceptualization of SJ and the lived value

of SJ were interrelated. Social justice was articulated as a process of transformative action

conducted cooperatively by people organized within the context of cooperative principles.

Further, an important aspect of SJ that has transformative implications is the psychology of

solidarity. As the findings demonstrate, participant's conceptualizations of SJ were congruent

with the work of scholars writing from the critical emancipatory tradition. In the section below, I

will present the critical emancipatory position as it is related to SJ drawing heavily on the work

of Freire (1997) and using the concepts of social transformation, praxis, and conscientization.

Social transformation. There is a strand of scholarship within CP which positions social

transformation as central to the concept of SJ (Montero & Sonn, 2009; Nelson & Prilelltensky,

2010). In view of social transformation and in the context of WCs, the pursuit of SJ involves a

struggle towards transforming the capitalist structure. The practice of social transformation

inherent in WCs resonates with the concepts of struggle put forth by proponents of Karl Marx

(Marx, 1988; Lebowitz, 2000). Specifically, we notice a tendency in the responses of

transforming the capitalist structure by developing alternative forms of socioeconomic

organizing led by people in solidarity.

According, to Vaillancourt (2010), proponents of the social economy envision their

organizations to be elements of profound social change. In other words, the social economy

introduces a new kind of socioeconomic structure that is based on the ideals of cooperativism. As

opposed to the revolutionary notion underpinned by Marxism (transformation) or the reformist inclinations of social democracy (reform), the author alludes to a new form of economic structure that is socially responsive. The application of this new form of socioeconomics is demonstrated by the participants of this study. Specifically, the participants demonstrate an application of socioeconomics that is capable of meeting the growing needs of humanity and the environment. However, the participants recognized how the psychology underpinning the capitalist labour market inherent in capitalism is antithetical to this new form of socioeconomics. For example, the practice of privatization is a product of capitalism and a mechanism supporting the profit growth ideology (Restakis, 2010). According to McMurtry (2010), the socioeconomic nature of cooperatives operating in the social economy do well in addressing the social consequences of our economic actions. Historically, and as the findings indicate, the WC as a model and in lieu of the negative social impacts of industrial capitalism, proposed a practical form of alternative organizing, which gravitated around the ideals of democracy, participatory economics and co-ownership (MacPherson, 2010; Quarter et al., 2009).

As the ideology of the labour market informs the capitalist structure, the psychology of solidarity informs the cooperativist structure. Solidarity is unity among members that form a group or class based on shared interests and objectives (Bayertz, 1999). The psychology of solidarity resonates with the notion of promoting and working towards the common good. According to S. Zamagni and V. Zamagni (2010), the common good represents the final good of the collective as opposed to the individual. In other words, the authors explain that in the context of the economic market, economic activities should be directed at promoting the common good. From this regard, economic activity is justified when its social consequence benefits the collective (see p. 9). To the contrary, the capitalist ideology is rooted in individual self-interest

(Restakis, 2010). The findings demonstrate that the capitalist economic system is not conducive

to the maintenance and promotion of solidarity and thus, it poses challenges to WCs. For this

reason, pursuing transformative action requires one to adopt the psychology of solidarity.

Considering the economic basis of WCs in this study, the transformative inclinations of

SJ that are illustrated in the responses resemble the transformative inclinations of community

economic development (CED) put forth by Bennett (1987). In contrast to traditional social

policies such as welfare, CED aims to develop social and economic organizations within

communities by its members. Community economic development is based on the idea of having

community members play an active role in developing and controlling resources (Bennett, 1987).

According to Bennett (1987), the goal of CED is to alter the underlying social issue by

developing mechanisms of collective ownership and participatory economics. The WC is an

exemplar of CED, which alters the root causes of a particular issue by offering an alternative

way that is based on the cooperative principles.

Finally, the similarities between CP values and WC practice are worth elaborating. Social

issues that are identified within CP discourse are similar to the issues addressed by WCs. Social

issues related to gender equity, fair trade, environmentalism, democracy, empowerment, to name

just a few, are often discussed in CP discourse. As the findings suggest, worker-members

develop practical methods to address these issues in the context of enterprise. For example, the

Come As You Are worker cooperative deploy practices that adhere to the notions of

intersectionality and sex positivity. La Siembra employs democratic methods when trading with

small farmers from the global south. The Fourth Pig maintains gender equity as it develops

environmentally sound homes within the construction industry, which is a male dominated sector

of the market. From this perspective, there are various social issues that could be further

analyzed from the viewpoint of WCs and for the benefit of community psychologists conducting SJ work pertaining to a particular social issue.

The findings are illustrative of a conceptualization of SJ that adheres to the concept of transformative action. Furthermore, the psychology of solidarity is considered to be an antecedent to SJ and is complementary to the ways in which transformative action is deployed.

Praxis. Praxis is a concept that is closely related to SJ and embedded in the scholarship of Karl Marx that describes an active struggle led by the working classes seeking to overthrow dominant capitalist structures (Lebowitz, 2003). In the context of critical pedagogy, the concept was advanced by Paulo Freire (1997) as the dialectical relationship between reflection and transformative action. The dialectics of reflection and transformative action was vividly demonstrated in the responses of the participants. An important finding in this study was that participants' responses demonstrated the reciprocal relationship between reflection and transformative action as they pursued social change through their cooperative organization. In other words, the WC could be considered as a viable practice characterised as a revolutionary struggle led by people in solidarity rooted in the cooperative principles (Curl, 2010; Johnson, 2010). This notion of proactive struggle was clearly depicted in participant responses. Further, the transformative inclination and the democratic culture of the WC enterprise operates in a way in which its very existence is based on the dialectical cycle of action and reflection, as it was understood by Freire. The cooperative principles provide fertile ground for the action-reflection relationship to occur. This relationship leads worker-members towards a continuous pursuit of social transformation and a commitment to challenge oppression within the context of the dominant capitalist labour market. The findings illustrate that worker-members simultaneously

understand oppression while exerting their influence on the dominant capitalist labour market, which is a crucial aspect of the SJ pursuit.

Conscientization. In the Freirean sense, worker-members are in a continuous process of conscientization as they struggle through the barriers inherent in the capitalist structure. An outcome of conscientization was transformative action. This was demonstrated through the continuous commitment of adopting alternative methods of organizing and operating, within their market niche, to challenge the oppressive nature of the capitalist labour market. In addition, the process of conscientization demonstrated by worker-members was further supported through facilitating educational sessions that promote a critical awareness. In addition, worker-members provided alternative possibilities of addressing oppressive systems that are present within their respective market niche. Participant responses to research question three demonstrate how their understanding of liberation is a product of the oppressive nature and ideas imbedded by the capitalist structure.

Based on the relationship between the research findings and the literature review, the findings demonstrate and provide an example of how praxis – reflection and social transformative action, and conscientization are concepts that are intimately linked. In other words, it is valuable and imperative to understand that these concepts work in a reciprocal fashion particularly when SJ is deployed (Walsh & Gokani, 2014). Furthermore, the conceptualizations and applications of SJ inherent in the WC model resonate well with ideas of CED. Essentially, the findings demonstrate an exemplar of transformative action that respond to various social issues faced by people living in a globalized capitalist economy.

Implications of the Findings

The findings of this research have important implications to the SJ literature in CP.

Although these findings may have implications beyond CP, as a critical student of CP, my goal is to demonstrate how community psychologists could implement the concepts put forth by scholar-activists from the critical emancipatory period as demonstrated by worker-members of these WCs. The goal of this section is to promote an understanding of SJ in CP that is developed alongside members of communities, accessible to non-academics, practical, and speaks to the realities of people and communities with social, economic and environmental needs. In the following section, I will present the implications of the findings to CP literature concerned with SJ.

        Application of social justice. The first implication of the findings is the fact that WCs are an application of SJ, whereas SJ discourse in CP is theoretical and developed within the safeguards of the academy, which impacts the way we conduct and understand SJ (Walsh & Gokani, 2014). In other words, it is important to reflect on the context in which the understanding and practice of SJ comes from. In this study, knowledge about SJ was developed from SJ practitioners operating within the wage-labour economy. As we are researchers working within the academy, we are not exposed to oppression in the context of socioeconomic class as compared to worker-members operating in the capitalist labour market. In other words, social scientists may not be as attuned to the values of SJ as compared to those who dedicate their livelihoods to it. Thus, unless strong participatory research approaches are utilized, CPs' conceptualization of SJ is susceptible to uphold than to challenge the status quo considering the social position and commensurate privilege afforded to academics (Greenwood & Levine, 2000). The findings in this research represent a conceptualization and practice of SJ in a context where oppression is real, and from the perspectives of citizens who proactively engage in transformative action. If community psychologists aspire to conduct SJ work that has

transformative implications, then it may be crucial for us to engage with worker-members and develop a union of solidarity in our pursuits for liberation.

   Praxis as reflection and transformative action. Secondly, the relationship between reflection and transformative action, to the degree that is demonstrated in the findings above, is understood independently within SJ discourse in CP and is often theoretically based (e.g., Prilleltensky, 2001; Williams, 2008). This may have serious ramifications in CP's epistemology of SJ and how SJ is understood and practiced. The findings suggest that the very essence of reflection and transformative action is intimately related and an important antecedent in the pursuit of SJ. Nevertheless, from a researcher's point of view, it is challenging and perhaps sometimes untenable to conduct SJ work where one employs praxis and for this reason, most of the literature has the tendency to intellectualize SJ to the point where it becomes inaccessible and unemployable. Some of the challenges that prevent us from deploying praxis is simply due to the fact that it takes a lot of time, and possibly, as researchers, our presence in the struggle is temporary. In other words, the deployment of praxis requires time, and a commitment to the struggle. From this regard, certain impositions and research mandates (such as time limits on research or the lack of participatory approaches) put forth by the academy, and the culture of professionalism and elitism inherent in the academy may not fit well within the context of struggle. Therefore, it is imperative for the academy to understand the commitments for research that aims to engage in the dialectics of reflection and transformative action that is inherent in the struggle. As it is illustrated in the responses and proposed by Freire, praxis is one of the key features of SJ. Also, the findings illustrate that praxis is a continuous process of reflection and transformative action which informs the vitality of the struggle (Della Porta & Diani, 2009). In order to conduct SJ work with integrity, researchers must be cognizant of the invested time and

commitment to the struggle. Further, the academy must adhere to research that employs praxis with the intent of pursuing transformative change.

Study of economics. Thirdly, it is important that CP incorporates a study of macro and micro economics and the dynamics of the capitalist labour market in its discourse. Economic structure is inevitably intertwined to the wellbeing of humanity (Sloan, 2010). If we begin to grasp the dynamics of economics in the context of capitalism, then we may be well equipped to understand and develop alternative methods of economics that promote development and SJ. For instance, it is crucial, particularly in the current post-neoliberal climate, we pay attention to the scholarly approaches of community economic development as social intervention (e.g. Bennett, 1987). These approaches documented during the late 1980's have important transformative implications that go beyond the notions of distributive justice, and are demonstrated in the conceptualisations of SJ from the perspectives of worker-members. Specifically, the WC model provides an organizational basis for CED that community psychologists could utilize in their pursuit of transformative change.

Solidarity. The findings demonstrate how worker-members' livelihoods are on the line when conducting SJ work, and for this reason the notion of solidarity bare great importance and meaning particularly for an understanding of SJ that speaks to the realities of people pursuing social change. However, in contemporary CP and as researchers, we often maintain an outsider role when conducting SJ work, which prevents us from developing a meaningful relationship with people in which attempts of solidarity are not methods but natural inclinations. This is evident in the findings under the psychology of solidarity, which is characterized as economic activity aimed towards the common good (S. Zamagni & V Zamagni, 2010). In other words, it is

important to reorient research aimed at promoting the common good, and to develop methods that inform the psychology of solidarity.

Based on the implications these findings, community psychologists must re-examine their privileged positions as researchers conducting SJ (Walsh & Gokani, 2014). Also, there is a need to establish a relationship with the academy in which it is conducive to the development of SJ work that is intended to have transformative implications (greenwood & Levine, 2000). Then, from this regard, community psychologists may consider to immerse themselves in the context of oppression and work alongside members of the community in developing SJ research and practice.

At last, it is crucial to understand that the various aspects of SJ, including praxis, reflection and transformative action and the psychology of solidarity, cannot be employed independently but rather as concepts that are intimately linked. For this reason, and as the findings suggest, SJ research and practice requires a commitment to pursue a holistic notion of SJ. We can learn much about the dynamics of SJ if we look to social enterprises or movements such as the WCs that comprise of people who operate in the context of oppression where their livelihoods are at stake and understandings of SJ have practical and transformative implications.

Future Research

The following section will begin with a presentation on how future research could look at the ways and/or challenges of developing a political identity that represents the social economy of which WCs are a part of. Then I will present participant responses to research question three illustrating the challenges that prevented members from pursuing SJ. Next, I will suggest potential ways of conducting future research that promotes cooperation among WCs. The goal

for this section is to explore research opportunities that can promote the WC cause, and promote a potential collaborative relationship between the CP community and the WC movement.

Political identity. An important aspect of transformative change, particularly in the Marxist sense, is the development of a political identity that is used to disable the oppressive dominant structure and enable one that is geared towards emancipation (Lebowitz, 2000). Historically, as the literature on WCs illustrates, a political scope enabled the working classes to unite and challenge the status quo (Johnson, 2010). Also, the genealogy of the WC movement was in some ways intertwined with various labour organizations that challenged the political orthodoxy of industrial organizing (MacPherson, 2010; Quarter et al., 2009). As the literature has recognized, the findings in this research suggest that any political implications or aspirations within the WC movement is still in its infancy (Johnson, 2010; Miller, 2006). This poses challenges to the future of the WC movement.

It could be of benefit to pursue a political identity particularly now that cooperatives are understood within the larger umbrella of the social economy (McMurtry, 2010; Quarter et al., 2009). Given the organizational power that fuels the social economy in both economic and social ways, a political identity that informs its socioeconomic activities may contribute to the social economy's political vitality, which could set the stage to the beginnings of a cooperative economy. In regards to SJ, this political identity may do well in challenging the orthodoxy of the current post-neoliberal era, which has supported economic behaviour that has devastated environments, communities and cultures (Sloan, 2010).

Worker cooperative challenges as research opportunities. In regards to the question *what are the challenges that prevent you from living the value of SJ* (research question three) participants highlighted challenges that are worth understanding as opportunities for future

research. Considering my outsider role as a researcher, I found it fitting to speak as a critical

friend within this section as to understand opportunities as opposed to being critical towards

these WCs that I am not a part of.

Two out of the nine participants expressed how the democratic structure of the WC is at

times inefficient and how a flat pay structure could be unfair. These challenges raise important

questions regarding the WC structure particularly in the context of SJ.

The challenge of the democratic structure as inefficient in terms of preventing worker-

members from living the value of SJ speaks to the resistance between organizing alternatively

within the context of the larger capitalist economic system. The democratic inclinations of

organizing may hinder SJ pursuits because of the enormous energy spent on achieving a

democratic organizational structure within a capitalist structure that is unsupportive of

democracy in the workplace. From this regard, worker-members may want to engage in dialogue

that drives at maintaining democracy at the workplace without compromising SJ pursuits. In

other words, how can WCs adapt, in some ways, to the capitalist system of economics without

being bogged down and possibly eliminated by it? In response to question three, participants

explained that it is useful, particularly for the sake of conducting SJ work, to adapt to capitalism

in certain ways so that it does not take away from their pursuit of SJ. Similarly, the issue of a flat

pay structure, acts as a disincentive for new comers joining the WC as well as current members

wishing to advance their careers. Further, it is important to question how WCs can promote

career progression as it is an important aspect of peoples working lives. This raises important

questions on work equity. In other words, how is work that might require more complex methods

justified a pay scale similar to work that does not require complex methods? Or, how does ones

experience play a role in pay scale? These questions are important to consider particularly for the role of WCs operating in the context of capitalism.

Furthermore, it is important to note that these challenges are very complex. It can be noted that there is a conflict in ideologies, namely the capitalist ideology and the ideology of solidarity. In other words, is it normal to have capitalist inclinations while engaging in solidarity, considering that for majority of our lives we have been taught within the culture of capitalism? These are important questions and dialogues to have as it may have important implications to the development of the WC movement and potentially for a cooperative economy.

Cooperation among worker cooperatives. Another challenge that I observed, as an outsider, was the lack of cooperation or initiatives that promote WC collaboration. For instance, WCs operating in Ontario could conduct business with one another and find methods of promoting the business of their colleagues. Furthermore, by developing incentives for WCs to collaborate, could create a larger support system for future members and WC development. Nevertheless, the CWFC has continued to provide support and resources to WCs in Canada, however, initiatives amongst WCs could be of great value. By having a collaborative culture among WCs may help to form an identity within the larger social economy, which could be conducive to WC support and development.

Community psychologists can play an important role in contributing to literature that advances the WC cause. Specifically, community psychologists are well positioned to highlight the social impacts of the WC enterprise. Also, developing partnerships with social movements like the WC movement will contribute to an understanding and practice of SJ that has transformative implications.

Limitations of Research

The fact that I drew my sample solely from WCs, suggests that the sample consists of a

very select group of people who are inclined to think about SJ in a transformative way.

Developing or participating in an economic organization like the WC speaks to the radical

groups of people in society. Thus, other formulations or conceptualization of SJ may not have

been shared amongst my sample. Also, the data was collected through semi-structured interviews

of one to two participants representing each respective WC. Initially, I intended to conduct focus

groups with each WC in order to gain more input on each respective WC. Having conducted

focus groups, may have given me a larger variety of responses, which may have provided valid

and reliable data corresponding to the respective WC.

Secondly, it may have been valuable to conduct interviews with people who are not

necessarily members of WCs but in some way affiliated, such as members of the CWCF. This

may have offered a different perspective of the WC and SJ relationship. Also, it may have

provided insight into challenges that affect WCs beyond those that are inherent within WC

organizations.

Finally, another limitation of my research was the fact that I was an outsider. This

prevented from obtaining information regarding the economic aspects of the business, namely

profits, income, assets and expenses. These could have provided important demographics related

to the business side of operating an alternative enterprise. Further, understanding these aspects of

the business could have provided insights into their economic viability as an alternative

enterprise operating in a capitalist economy.

Strengths of Research

A strength of this research lies in its capacity to understand the relationship between SJ

and WCs from the perspectives of worker-members while being positioned in the SJ literature of

CP. This helped to provide a comparison between the project of SJ in CP and how it is

understood from the perspectives of worker-members. The research provides valuable critique of

SJ in CP by appropriating the limited literature that attempts to promote the more radical

inclinations of SJ (e.g., Bennett, 1987; Gokani & Walsh, N.d.).

Secondly, this research provides an incentive for students and professors of CP to initiate

research collaborations with social movements. Conducting research with such populations could

have impacts on the ways we conduct SJ research. Specifically, it will help us understand the

importance of social transformation in SJ work. Also, it provides community psychologists with

an application of SJ that resonates with the values of CP. Further, this research opens discussions

on re-examining the relationship we hold with the academy. Specifically, it will shed light on the

relationship between our roles as researchers working within the academy and SJ research and

work that is intended to have transformative implications.

Knowledge Transfer

The findings of this research could be interpreted as a conceptualization and process of

social justice that represents the realities of people pursuing SJ situated outside of the academy.

My research is well positioned to capture the perspectives of worker-members pursuing SJ in the

context of enterprise. Additionally, the WC model draws on themes of mutual-support, peer-

support, fairness and equity, participation, and empowerment and should be salient to

community psychology interventions. I intend to translate this thesis into a peer-review

manuscript and/or book-chapter. This will allow for showcasing the WCs I researched within

circles of academia and programs focused on SJ. In regards to non-academic publications, this

research will provide knowledge sharing. In other words, WCs may gain a better understanding

of the pursuit of SJ carried out by their worker-member colleagues. I will also work with the

WCs I am conducting research with to present a final report that should be useful in shaping

strategic planning.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

In the 21st century, social justice has become an important topic and one of much debate

in various academic and non-academic contexts. Recently, it has been a popular topic for

community psychologists however, CP discourse on SJ reflects how the concept is inconsistently

defined, which leads some of us to question the way we conduct social change. Unfortunately,

the concept has drifted away from its critical emancipatory roots to one that serves a reformist

agenda that is influenced by university mandates and one that reinforces the status quo. In other

words, as researchers we must be reflective of how universities support and promote a capitalist

ideology and thus reinforce the status quo. Further, this questions the integrity of the concepts

ability to represent the realities of people facing the consequences of the dominant capitalist

structure. For this reason it is important to be reflective of how the academy influences our work

particularly on transformative change.

As community psychologists, we are obligated to understand SJ in ways that encompass

the realities of people facing social and economic hardships, and pursue social change that aims

to transform dominant systems of oppression. In order to understand SJ and its practice, we

ought to collaborate with social coalitions, such as WCs, who proactively pursue SJ in ways that

represents its transformative nature and the essence of solidarity. Furthermore, we must engage

in an exploration of alternative socioeconomics and support those, such as WCs who implement

its practice. This exploration will help to strengthen our values and allow us to adapt in

responding to the oppressive nature inherent in dominant economic structures.

The genealogy of the WC indicates a consistent pursuit of SJ that proactively attempts to transform systems of oppression. Although WCs have faced many challenges, one being the challenge of developing a cohesive political identity, it has consistently been characterized as a grassroots movement developed and led by people devoted to a struggle in pursuit of social change. Not only do WCs drive at issues within the working aspects of human life, they extend beyond this and challenge the oppressive business dynamics inherent within their respective market niche.

The findings suggest how the conceptualization of SJ is informed by WC practice, and how SJ is comprised of various components such as praxis, reflection and transformative action, and conscientization. These components of SJ work together in a congenial manner towards transforming oppressive structures by people in solidarity engaged with a struggle. The WC provides a fertile ground for people to submit their livelihoods to a meaningful pursuit and have an intimate relationship with SJ that manifests beyond the academic context. Nevertheless, community psychologists could make efforts to include an understanding of SJ based on the perspectives of worker-members in order to obtain an integral understanding of SJ that has transformative implications. Not only can community psychologists develop research that promotes the WC cause, we can promote the cooperative idea within circles of the academy. Considering that other universities in Canada have taken an active role in teaching and collaborating with cooperatives (e.g. The Centre of Cooperative Studies affiliated with the University of Saskatchewan), CP should consider the role of cooperatives as an important aspect of socioeconomic enterprise that is reflective of CP values and transformative social change.

Finally, it is important to note that as much as SJ has become a glorified theme in academic circles, it requires us to understand and practice SJ within the real considerations of

oppression. For this reason it is important for us, to adopt the ideology of solidarity, in order to

extend beyond the notions of SJ produced within the academy and understand it with those who

we can join, and in solidarity and with integrity, pursue liberation and social justice.

Appendix A

Informed Consent Statement

You are invited to participate in my research study because you have identified yourself, have been identified by someone you know, or have been identified by me as an appropriate or good candidate. The purpose of this study is to understand the concept of social justice from the perspectives of worker-members of a worker cooperative, and to contribute to critical dialogue within the worker cooperative movement and social justice discourse. This research is being conducted by ME, THE PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR (1), Gurveer Shaan Dhillon, a Master of Arts student in the Department of Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University, under the supervision of Dr. Ketan Shankardass, a Professor in the Community Psychology programme.

INFORMATION

You, a participant, will be asked to join a focus group session with me, the researcher, Gurveer Shaan Dhillon, at a time that is mutually beneficial and a place that is selected by the participants of the focus group. I ask you to read this form, as it provides important information about this study and asks for your consent. If, after having read this form, you agree to participate, I ask you to sign this consent form. If you sign the consent form, then I will ask you if I may record the focus group discussion with a digital audio recorder. If any member of the focus group declines, I will take notes instead.

A total of 12-16 adults (i.e., 18+ years of age) who belong to a worker cooperative in the City of Toronto will participate in a focus group. Each focus group will consist of 6-8 participants and take approximately 90 -120 minutes. During the focus group, I will ask you questions pertaining to your experience as a worker-member of a worker cooperative, and in particular any observations and opinions you may have about your understanding of social justice pertinent to you respective worker cooperative. You will also be asked to provide some demographic information.

RISKS

There are only minimal risks for you participating in this study. Some of the questions may cause you to reflect on experiences that caused negative emotions. These feelings are normal and should be temporary. If negative feelings persist, please contact the researchers. There are also counseling services that you can access, such as the KW Counseling Centre, (email: intake@kwcounselling.com: phone: (519) 884-0000). You can also refuse to answer any questions and withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

BENEFITS

By participating in this study we hope that you will gain a better understanding of how social justice is understood in your respective worker-cooperative. We hope to facilitate an environment in which you will be able to engage in critical thinking about this topic and feel comfortable answering questions. You will also be contributing to the scientific community by increasing awareness about the understanding of social justice from the vantage point of worker-members of worker cooperative. Finally, you will be assisting the researcher, Gurveer Shaan Dhillon, by offering your perspectives (i.e., "data") for my Master of Arts thesis.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Since there may be up to 16 people who will participate in this study and all of them will belong to a worker cooperative in the City of Toronto, your anonymity cannot be guaranteed; however, all reasonable measures will be taken to ensure that your personal information is kept confidential. Your name will never be used to identify data; instead, ID codes (e.g. 007) and made up names (e.g. "John" and "Jill") will be used. If you consent, the focus groups will be audio recorded and transcribed by Gurveer Shaan Dhillon.

All personal contact information will be kept in a password protected file separate from the research data and will be accessible only by Gurveer Shaan Dhillon and Dr. Ketan Shankardass. The researchers will destroy personal and/or contact information by December 31, 2015. At all times during the study and analysis, hard-copy data and consent forms will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Ketan Shankardass's locked lab and electronic data will be stored on a password-protected high security Wilfrid Laurier University access drive. After the analysis is completed, the original recordings will be retained on the high security access drive for seven years. The same procedure will be used for copies containing any information and any of the notes I make during the interview. Dr. Ketan Shankardass will destroy the original recordings, paper surveys and consent forms by December 1, 2022. The study's transcript file, with all identifying information removed, will be retained indefinitely for future analyses. Finally, we may use direct quotes from you and the other participants in reports, publications, and presentations, with your consent. All personal identifying information will be removed from the quotes and we will ensure that the quotes cannot be linked to you as an individual. You will have the opportunity to contribute to and review the (de-identified) quotations before they are published. This process will be completed via email. Please note that confidently cannot be guaranteed while data are in transmission over the Internet. A confidentiality agreement will be used among the participants during the focus group.

COMPENSATION

There is no monetary compensation for your participation.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Gurveer Shaan Dhillon at dhil1180@mylaurier.ca. You may also contact Dr. Ketan Shankardass at kshankardass@wlu.ca or 519-884-0710 ext.4316. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Board (REB #4514), which receives funding from the Research Support Fund. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Robert Basso, Chair, University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, (519) 884-0710, ext. 4994 or email rbasso@wlu.ca.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time from the study without loss or penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be destroyed. Please note that the audio tape of the focus group will not be immediately destroyed, but your contributions will not be transcribed. Data cannot be withdrawn or destroyed after data has been transcribed because they are stored without identifiers. You have the right to omit any question(s)/procedure(s) you choose.

FEEDBACK AND PUBLICATION

The findings of this study will be included in Gurveer Shaan Dhillon's Master of Arts thesis. They may also be presented at scientific and professional conferences, published in scientific journals, and made available through Open Access. We will also email you a report of the findings by October 31, 2015 if you choose to provide your email address below.

Use of Quotes

Sometimes researchers like to use quotations of research participants to emphasize certain points in presentations and published papers. We would like to ask for your permission to use quotations from your data. Your name will not be linked to the quotes and we will remove any potentially identifying information before quotations will be used.

[ ]   I give blanket permission for my de-identified quotations to be used (e.g., in publications, presentations).

[ ]   You may use my de-identified quotations, but I would like the opportunity to review the (de-identified) quotations before they are published.
        Please provide your email address:
        _____

[ ]   I do not want to be quoted

Audio-Recording

[ ]   I consent to have the focus group discussion audio taped

[ ]   I do not wish to have the focus group discussion audio taped (i.e., I prefer the researcher
         to take written notes)

Feedback

[ ]   I would like to receive an electronic version of the results.
         Please provide your email address:

         _____

[ ]   I do not want to receive the feedback summary.

<u>CONSENT</u>

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to
participate in this study.

Participant's name (please print) _____

Participant's Signature_____
Date_____

Investigator's signature_____
Date_____

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Introductory Comment

Do you have any questions or comments before I begin the focus group?

Do you mind if I begin to record this focus group?

Introductory Questions

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?

3. Where were you born? (country)

4. What is your role at the WC?

RQ1: How do worker-members conceptualize Social Justice?

1. Based on your experience at the worker cooperative and as worker-members, what is the
   understanding of social justice?
   a. Prod #1 Do these conceptualizations have broader (political, social, economic,
      environmental, cultural and anything else) implications? If so, how?
   b. Prod #3 As worker-members, why is social justice important? How is it relevant
      today; for you, your cooperative, your community and/or society at large?

RQ2: How does your WC live the value of SJ?

1. How is the definition of social justice applied to your worker cooperative? Do you have
   any specific examples?

      a. Prod #1 Are there any other examples that you could share that illustrates how your worker cooperative does social justice in a more practical sense?

RQ3: Are there any challenges that prevent your WC from living the value of Social Justice?

1. What are some of the challenges, if any, that prevent your worker cooperative from living the value of social justice?

   a. Prod #1 Are there any specific experiences or examples that prevent your worker cooperative from living the value of social justice? If so, what are they?

   b. Prod #2 How do these challenges prevent your worker cooperative from living the value of social justice? Do you have any specific examples?

   c. Prod #3 Why do you think these challenges prevent your worker cooperative from living the value of social justice?

   d. Prod #4 Are there ways of overcoming these challenges? How is it done? Do you have any examples or ideas?

Concluding Questions

1. Please feel free to comment or ask questions.

Concluding Comment

I will stop the recording now. You are welcome to ask any questions off the record.

Participant Debriefing

The purpose of this research is to capture the perspectives of workers that are engaged in an alternative model of economic production with regard to their personal and their respective institutional pursuit of social justice. This thesis has two primary objectives: (a) contribute to community psychology discourse and specify how social justice is understood in the community psychology literature, and; (b) to understand how members of worker cooperatives understand social justice and how it is practiced in their workplaces.

Appendix C

Letter of Invitation

Hello,

My name is Gurveer Shaan Dhillon and I am a second-year Master of Arts student in the Community Psychology programme at Wilfrid Laurier University. You have received this letter because you have identified yourself, have been identified by someone you know, or have been identified by me as an appropriate or good candidate for my research project, which is entitled "Worker Cooperatives and Social Justice". This research project aims to understand social justice from the perspectives of worker-members of a worker cooperative.

The purpose of this research is to capture the perspectives of workers that are engaged in an alternative model of economic production with regard to their personal and their respective institutional pursuit of social justice. First, I wish to understand how members of worker cooperatives understand social justice and how it is practiced in their workplaces. Second, I wish to contribute to community psychology discourse and specify how social justice is understood in the community psychology literature.

Should you agree to participate, you will be invited by me to select a commonly beneficial time that is decided by the worker-members of your worker cooperative to participate in a focus group for 90-120 minutes at the location of your respective worker cooperative. If you permit me, for the sake of data collection and analysis, I would like to record our interview using a digital audio recording device. You will be presented with a consent form that will outline in detail all of the above and ask for your consent. I hope to recruit approximately 6-8 participants (18+ years of age) for the focus group.

There is no compensation for participating. It is important for you to know that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. You may also agree to participate but decline the use of audio-recorder without penalty. The questions that would be asked of you, as well as the short survey asking you for demographic information, have been approved by the Wilfrid Laurier University Research Ethics Board (REB # 4514). If you have any questions regarding the project you may contact me, Gurveer Shaan Dhillon at dhil1180@mylaurier.ca or my supervisor, Ketan Shankardass at kshankardass@wlu.ca or (519) 884-0710, extension 4316.

At the end of this study, you will be given a written report of the details of this study and its findings via email, if you choose.

Sincerely,

Shaan Dhillon

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