

The Just World, Personal Belief and Social Work Education

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-- George Bernard Shaw

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Abstract

This paper examines six belief categories concerning whether the social world is just, unjust, or some combination of both. The six categories are Absolutist, Materialist, Citizen, Activist, New Activist, and Visionary. Four tasks are performed. First a background to development of the belief categories is offered. Six theoretical propositions making up the cosmology of social justice project that undergird the belief categories are then discussed. The belief categories are then laid out and six variables are developed that serve to make up each belief category; (1) a position on the reality of the just/unjust world, (2) a spiritual dimension, (3) an historical perspective, (4) a set of guiding principles, (5) a locus of responsibility, and (6) focus of the critical voice. Different visions of what social work education would look like based on the belief categories are explored. Finally I argue that the cutting edge of social work education's development is found in the New Activist category.

Introduction

Problem Statement

Currently in social work, social justice and injustice are most often framed within three perspectives. One is the distributive justice, or individual rights, Enlightenment perspective found in Pelton (2001), Rawls (1988, 2001) and Wakefield (1988a, 1988b). A second is the group rights or relational justice perspective found in Longres & Scanlon (2001) and Young (1990, 2000). The third is found in the critical perspective of radical social work in Gil (1998).

Other perspectives on social justice include Lundy (2004) who articulates what she calls the structural approach to social work practice. Reisch (2002) offers a historical/political perspective on use of the term for policy and practice. Chatterjee & D'Aprix (2002) discuss five definitions of social justice and their roles in social work practice. Pease & Fook (1999), an edited volume, offer a number of critical/post-modern perspectives on emancipatory social work practice.

The problem this paper seeks to address is that most discussions of social justice focus on social conditions or professional practices at a fair distance from the social work educator's or practitioner's own attitudes and beliefs. The discussion takes place at a distance from day to day living and the immediate concerns of persons in their worlds. A "moral imperative" seems to be missing that would encourage a reader to locate herself within a sense of personal responsibility for applying what is written to what a person does.

The primary argument this paper makes is that social work's discussion of social justice makes it easy for social work educators to avoid taking personal responsibility for expression of institutional attitudes and behaviors. This avoidance of responsibility is modeled for students,

who upon graduation model it for client systems. The consequence of this avoidance is the elephant in the living room; reproduction of social injustice through oppressive educational and professional practices.

Examples of statements about social justice include Pelton (2001, p. 433), who argues that a “*just* community must be one that benefits *all* of its individuals without *discrimination*...” He concludes his essay with the statement, “We must contemplate in open discussion whether social work education itself has become an accomplice to unjust systems” (p. 439). Longres & Scanlon (2001, p. 447) talk about “infusing” justice as a concept and value into the social work curriculum. They conclude, “How social work defines social justice is very much an open question” (p. 444). Gil (1998) argues that the origins of injustice are found in the “dynamics of domination and exploitation which permeate capitalist societies and the culture that sustains them” (p. 129).

While these are extremely important issues that need to be addressed, there is little in the work from which they come that facilitates a social work educator to “feel” what is being discussed has immediate relevance to him or her as a person. There don’t seem to be any theoretical frameworks utilized in the current discussions about social justice within which to locate one’s own beliefs and actions, and more importantly, their relation. There is lots of theoretical thinking about the problem social *injustice* presents.

In varying degrees, these perspectives locate the problem of injustice “out there” within social, cultural and historical systems of norms, policies and practices. Injustice is attributed existence apart from any one person’s expression of it. It exists in different forms; a regressive taxation system, wage disparity between genders, the movement to ban gay marriage, terrorism, a husband telling a wife what to do, a child exposed to emotional and physical violence within

the family. While these are important problems that beg solution, I argue here that locating the problem of injustice “out there” enables the person so locating to be invisible and avoid taking responsibility how s/he is a vehicle of injustice within these different systems.

Methodology

This paper uses a methodology of reversal (Foucault, 1980, p. 95) to create a cosmology where what is most concrete and real is what all humans have in common, the ongoing, ever-present and constant act of believing. This is a counter narrative to the common sense view that says what we experience through the five senses is most real, and Western science’s view that reality is known through empirical, instrumental observation using the scientific method.

Western science validates the parts and the patterns of relations between parts in our world. Whether or not there is a synthesizing whole greater than the sum of the parts is usually not an issue for social work researchers. Even if this were an issue, we don’t have scientific instruments that can measure a synthesizing whole. Science always starts with independent observations. A counter narrative to this is that there is a whole, believing, and it is more fundamental than any worldly part or relationship of parts, than specific and different beliefs. This paper begins with the fundamental whole – believing – and builds a categorical edifice within it.

The counter narrative continues by asserting the “whole” process of believing is not only humankind’s concrete foundation, it is the most important dimension in being human. The process of believing is also humanity’s least changing element. Empirical observation and scientific measurement constitute humankind’s most changing, and hence, abstract and least important dimension. This is a reversal of the common sense assumption put forth by Western science. Believing is the most concrete human reality and instrumental observation that expands

the senses the most abstract. This is the foundation of what I'll now call the cosmology of the social justice project. Upon this foundation is constructed a set of belief categories - the ongoing historical, cultural, social and political act of differentiating the process of believing.

Cosmology of the Social Justice Project: Theoretical Propositions

The six theoretical propositions developed in this section are flavored by both social constructionist (Gergen 2000) and post-structuralist perspectives (Foucault 1978, 1980; Falzon 1998) of the world.

Believing. The first proposition is that the *process of believing* is what human beings have in common. Believing is not something that happens at one time and not in another. It is the constant investment of purpose and meaning within the various moments and contexts of living. Believing is the core, most concrete context within which all communities and beliefs (difference) emerge. What is different and emergent from within what is common (believing) are specific beliefs held by each community and its members. Whether a tribal society in Borneo, an inner-city African-American church congregation, or the “agreement reality” (Rubin & Babbie, 2005, p. 3) of social work researchers, what is common is that each member believes.

Beliefs & difference. This leads to the second proposition; each and every human being is born into a community that shares specific historical, cultural and socio-political patterns of meaning and purpose (beliefs). Our very modes of explanation, description and representation are derived and generated by dialogical relationship within community (Gergen 2000, Falzon 1998). The idea of difference is aligned with the idea that there are many communities, each having its own unique and historically contingent understanding of reality. All humans within community believe. All communities are different from one another in terms of specific beliefs held.

Reproduction and transformation of meaning and purpose through dialogue. The third proposition is that throughout the lifespan individuals internalize community patterns of meaning and purpose (systems of belief), and both participate in reproducing and transforming these patterns through dialogue with other persons within and between communities. The act of believing remains the same through all cultural and socio-political change. What is different and contingent are the specific beliefs held by communities in any given historical, cultural and socio-political moment. When two or more persons engage in dialogue with one another they both reproduce and transform beliefs.

The just world. The fourth proposition has two parts. The first is that the just world has its origin in the ever-present act of believing. The just world emanates from within the context of believing, where emanate means to flow out from an ever-present source. In this paper the term “source” is understood as the process of believing, not a transcendent, universal God or big bang. Use of the term stems from a post-structuralist understanding of capillary power (Foucault 1980, pgs 39, 89, 104-105). Believing is continuous and beliefs emanate continuously through dialogue within community in reproduction and transformation of the world.

The second part of this proposition is that to the degree that any claim of “T”ruth is made about a specific historical, cultural, and social configuration of belief that is not prefaced with “I believe” - in that degree the just world is hidden, erased, eradicated, and/or rendered invisible. This parallels Foucault’s (1977, 1980) idea of totalizing discourses. A “T”ruth claim, or a totalizing discourse, not prefaced with “I believe” covers over the origin/reality of the just world, the ongoing act of believing. All claims to “T”ruth are contingent, and when not prefaced with “I believe” are necessarily contested by some other similarly contingent claim.

This proposition is captured in the difference between two statements. To say, “I believe God exists” is much different than saying, “God exists.” The former affirms the emanation of a belief from within the ongoing act of believing. The latter makes a blanket claim about reality for everyone. What this latter statement can be interpreted to be saying is, “God, as I understand him to be, exists for everyone.”

Continuum of believing - beliefs. The fifth proposition is that the relation between believing (what is common) and beliefs (what is different) is that of a continuum. A continuum is understood to be a coherent whole characterized as a sequence or progression of elements varying by degree from one pole to another. The coherent whole of this continuum is the claim about what is most common and fundamental and concrete in being human. On one side is the process of believing. On the other is any claim to “T”ruth in the form of a specific belief system.

Continuum of just – unjust world. The sixth proposition is that the reality of the just/unjust world is also a continuum, and lies upon the believing/belief continuum. To assume that believing is what humans have in common both reproduces and creatively expands the just world. To assume any one set of beliefs to be common is to reproduce and expand the unjust world. To say “I believe this” is to open one’s perspective to questioning, interpretation and critique within dialogue as suggested by Falzon (1998). To say, “My belief is real (for all),” is to close one’s perspective from questioning, interpretation and critique within dialogue. To start with “I believe” affirms the human being’s creative role within community. To start with “My belief is real” affirms the human being’s passive role within community.

Within the just world beliefs mingle and cohabit, are discussed, woven and transformed in sometimes unruly dialogue (Young, 1990, 2000). In the unjust world a person and her community can only reproduce the “T”ruth. Transformative dialogue occurs only at the

top of a community's hierarchy - major religious figures interpreting religious text, or scientists interpreting what their instruments show. In the just world everyone can participate in transforming the world. In the unjust world the vast majority of persons can only be a vehicle of an independent reality generated, maintained and transformed by a relative few.

This can be seen in another way - through the idea of locus of responsibility. In this paper, an internal locus of responsibility is found in believing that the process of believing is what is common to all. Consequently, I am responsible for what I believe and its actional consequences. An external locus of responsibility is found when specific beliefs have existence apart from my believing them. Actions are in some degree framed with statements such as, "It was God's will," or, "He deserved it."

Definition of the Just World

The definition of a just world is framed within Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs. Economic justice occurs when the first two needs (physiological and safety) are satisfied for each human being. The mechanism of this satisfaction is *community provision of access* to the opportunity to satisfy needs. In the case of these first two basic needs, access to opportunity consists of access to the fruits of economic functions; food, shelter, clothing, transportation and medical and wellness care. Social justice occurs when the third and fourth basic needs (belongingness and self-love/the love of others) are satisfied for each human being. The mechanism of this satisfaction is *community provision of access* to opportunity, in this case, the fruits of social functions; love, education, satisfying work, and prosocial role models. These four basic needs are satisfied for all in the just world.

The first two needs can be seen to parallel the individual rights perspective found in Pelton (2001) and Rawls (1988, 2001). The third and fourth needs parallel the group rights perspective described by Longres & Scanlon (2001) and Young (1990, 2000).

The process of self-actualization, Maslow's fifth basic need, occurs in this definition when a person has not only had the four basic needs enough satisfied, but chooses to be part of *community provision of access* to economic and social opportunity to other persons whose basic needs are not yet satisfied. The characteristics of a self-actualized individual described by Maslow have meaning only within the context of praxis - dialogue and action within a community (Freire, 1970). Personal and community growth includes the expressed intent to help make the just world visible and available for others to live within.

The following section outlines six belief categories; Absolutist, Materialist, Citizen, Activist, New Activist and Visionary. Each belief category is framed by the cosmology of the social justice project. Each category is internally organized by six variables; (1) a position on the reality of the just/unjust world, (2) a spiritual dimension, (3) an historical perspective, (4) a set of guiding principles, (5) a locus of responsibility, and (6) focus of the critical voice. The description of each category begins with a statement about the category's position on "T"ruth claims.

The reader is encouraged to locate him- or herself within the categories along the different continuums. Note that a person may find herself identifying with one area and not another within a category. This simply indicates a person has more than one active belief system, and these belief systems are in some degree context-dependent, i.e., in part, one's locus of responsibility is external.

Belief Categories

Variables	Absolutist	Materialist	Citizen	Activist	New Activist	Visionary
Position on Just/unjust world	Totally Unjust	Mostly Unjust	Just world is ideal, but world is unjust	Just world is possible by collective action	Local world is just, but larger world is unjust	World is just
Spiritual Dimension	Religious Absolutist Worldly Absolutist	Doesn't matter	Usually has a religious or spiritually based belief system	Usually secular humanist or agnostic or atheist.	Usually has religious or spiritual foundation	Ineffable sense of being part of a larger process or wholeness
Historical Perspective	Pre-modern, medieval in orientation Medieval	Evolutionary perspective as understood by Western science Modernity	Enlightenment based, belief in science and technological progress Modernity	Enlightenment Faith in humankind, historical progress Modernity	Historical grounding in the story of own culture or social group Post modern	Sees historical continuity working through difference. Post-post-modern.
Set of Guiding Principles	There is only one "T"ruth. Win/lose framework. Self-interest	Scientific method & rationality	The ideal just world is possible. Work to make the ideal real.	Confront injustice by transforming economic/class system and other unjust systems	Dialogue within and between communities. Affirms differences with "I believe"	Assumes personal responsibility for being a vehicle of both unjust and just worlds
Locus of Responsibility	Centered in religious texts or absolutely true creed or belief system.	Centered in Western Science's Nature	Centered in both ideal of personal efficacy and reality unjust world	Centered in both collective action and unjust world	Internal within in cultural or social community	Internal within personal belief system and personal ethics
Focus of the Critical Voice	False claims to "T"ruth in mechanism of judgment & condemnation	Pre-modern & Post-modern speculation & superstition	Unjust institutions & norms	Unjust institutions & norms maintaining a specific social problem	Visible norms serving as vehicles of oppression	Aligning saying and doing. Norms within immediate context

The Six Belief Categories

The Absolutist

The Absolutist overtly claims that her “T”ruths - her community’s assumptions about the nature of reality - are “T”rue for all.

The just/unjust world. The Absolutist category describes the behaviors and attitudes of those persons who reproduce the unjust world. It is grounded in one culturally and socially specific belief system. Within this specific belief system there may be the idea of a just world, and the Absolutist may argue that the world is just or becoming more just. However, because the Absolutist claims "T"ruth for all is found in one set of beliefs, when s/he comes in contact with different beliefs, they are perceived as wrong or a threat. The Absolutist’s belief system is more foundational and real than the process of believing.

The Absolutist is actively destructive of the possibility and reality of a just world. The claim to one “T”ruth for all is the destructive act. Its destructiveness is not necessarily visible – like the white supremacist’s defense of a mountain cabin against the FBI. The act of believing that there is only one “T”rue reality is a covert act of violence that is seldom, if ever, admitted to be an act of violence. What humans have in common is defined by the Absolutist’s belief system.

Spiritual dimension. There are two general types within this category. One is the religious Absolutist who believes the world is just as defined by the interpretations of the tenets and texts of her religion. The other is the worldly Absolutist for whom the world is a looming threat. Both see the world as a dichotomy between us and them. On the religious side, claims of “T”ruth stem from absolute belief in one specific interpretation of one or more religious texts and God’s will by the clergy. On the worldly or secular side, claims of “T”ruth often stem from

some form of a simplified Social-Darwinism – that the fittest survive. The worldly Absolutist may claim allegiance to a religion, but this allegiance is usually shaped by an extreme interpretation of a religious text. Whether religious or worldly, the claims made about reality are highly dogmatic, rigid and exclusionary.

Historical Perspective. The Absolutist category has its origin in the pre-modern, medieval world. Her community is essentially nuclear. Its identity based on “T”ruth that upon contact with other claims to “T”ruth, form the engine powering war, hatred, social, and cultural annihilation. At best it separates and divides. The Absolutist has little if any sense of being part of the flow of history outside her community. Her world is bound by the felt need to live according to a set of religious based principles, or the need to dominate and survive. The history she identifies with is that of her religion or social location, usually a tie to the land and/or creed. The origin myth that the Absolutist claims has historical reality validates the “T”ruth claims she makes.

An origin myth is a claim that a community’s story of its origins is based in a “real” nature, and that this historical reality validates its own “T”ruth claims. (See the introduction in White (1975) or White (1987) for an overview of historiographic orientations to truth.) History is the story of the origin and development of one’s own culture and society, and how it has dominated in spreading the “T”ruth (See Foucault, 1977 for a discussion of power, domination and subjugation, and totalizing discourses in what here are called “T”ruth claims.).

There is little, if any sense of participating in history outside of spreading (extending domination of) God’s word or fighting for the rights of one’s nuclear and intentionally isolated community.

Guiding principles. The Absolutist category has a very narrow self-interest as its primary guiding principle. Personal self-interest is a vehicle of a community position founded in conflict and competition with other communities for the right to claim "Truth. Whether religious or worldly, the Absolutist believes her community's way is right and all others wrong. There is no rainbow of perspectives for a person operating within this category. There is only the one way. Her self-interest makes claims about the world that brook no alternate perspectives on what is real. Whatever maximizes self-interest, personal and community, guides action.

Relationships for the worldly Absolutist are actively and consciously structured in relations of domination and subjugation. S/he often perceives herself to be chosen. To be chosen and dominate requires identification with specific characteristics that in their absence in other communities, allows the perception of superiority and claim to "Truth. Either the Chosen dominate and win, or don't, lose, and are dominated.

This win/lose framework also structures action for the religious Absolutist. This is usually expressed in terms of going to some version of heaven, hell or living in purgatory, and "the going" is often tied directly to specific normal/abnormal and/or moral/immoral behaviors such as straight/gay sex, sex in/out of marriage, or abortion.

Whatever form this feeling of superiority takes, it serves to maintain and sometimes deepen her community's origin myth. When the world doesn't acknowledge the Absolutist's claims to superiority, s/he may experience resentment that can deepen and magnify difference as a source of what's wrong with the world.

Locus of responsibility. The locus of responsibility for the Absolutist category is 100% external to the person believing, whether religious and/or worldly. Action is necessarily reactive, whether to God's will as interpreted in a religious text or perceived threat.

Critical Voice. The critical voice focuses solely on what is “out there” in the unnatural wrongness of all other community’s beliefs and behaviors. The critical voice is given embodiment in judging and fighting, in both covert and overt violence.

However, persons whose behaviors and beliefs fall in this category, like persons in all other categories, can be as likable and warm as anyone else. It is their orientation towards the reality of a just world that continues structures of oppression and actively destroys what others work for.

The Materialist

In contrast to the Absolutist who overtly makes “T”ruth claims, the Materialist covertly claims that her “T”ruths are T”rue for all.

The just/unjust world. The Materialist believes that for the most part, the world is unjust. This belief is based in an understanding of human nature that arises from the assumptions of Western science. S/he believes there is an objectively real world apart from human perception of it, and that human nature is part of this natural world. There may be the belief that human nature can evolve, and a just world emerge, but if this is so, it will emerge as part of how evolution is known by the sciences.

The Materialist to a lesser degree than the Absolutist is actively destructive of the just world. By believing in the world of Western science, the Materialist assumes at root, a dichotomous view of the world – the world described by science, and all other worlds. This dichotomy has layered within it a set of positions on specific issues that in a small degree affirms the ambiguity and complexity of the social world. These positions necessarily simplify or reduce complexity. Because there is possibility for discussion of specific issues, the underlying belief

that “my position is right and yours is wrong” is covert. It is seldom that such a blatant claim is made.

The Materialist’s perspective actively increases the tension and conflict between communities because its version of “T”rue nature renders all other worldviews speculative at best, and superstition at worst. The Materialist’s belief system contains an inherent sense of privilege in its relations with other communities. For the Materialist, the fruits of applied science are all the evidence needed to justify her claim to “T”ruth. Given enough time and exposure, other communities will come around to the “T”ruth. The privilege inhering in this category maintains relations of domination and subjugation and the reality of the unjust world.

Spiritual dimension. Whether there is or isn’t a spiritual dimension really doesn’t matter to the Materialist. The issue of belief in a just or unjust world, and its constructionist underpinnings, really doesn’t matter either. There may be rhetorical profession of belief in a higher power, adherence to moral and ethical guidelines of a religion and participation in a religious or spiritual community. However, the real world is that described by Western science. The Materialist thinks that if there is a God, it is so far removed from day to day life that the question of its existence is rhetorical and immaterial.

The Materialist may or may not have the emotional and cognitive capacity to live in a world where “T”ruth claims not based in the foundation of the physical world are not totally dismissed. The awe engendered by spiritual and/or religious belief and the feeling of honor and respect for cultural and social differences can be lacking for the Materialist. The obdurate reality of “nature” is so obvious spiritual matters are often validated rhetorically without the incumbent spiritual feeling. The Materialist in her heart of hearts is often an atheist in her beliefs.

Historical Perspective. The Materialist category is based in the history of science, stemming from Galileo through Newton. More modern, complex descriptions of relativity and quantum physics undercuts assumptions of an objectively real world and give birth to terms such as post-positivism. However, the Materialist at heart believes that humankind is part of nature and science's nature is real, and that is that.

The Materialist has a vague sense of being part of the flow of history, the course of human events. S/he generally sees history as being part of revealing the workings of nature; the history of science and technology, and how both change both the human and natural world. Human history is often perceived as an evolutionary story in linear time tied to the emergence of ever more complex bio-chemical-neural forms.

The evidence of the Materialist's "T"ruth is overwhelming. Because the Materialist is usually educated, claims of superiority are more covert than the Absolutist's, and are found in more sophisticated attitudes and expectations. Her identity is more complex than that of the Absolutist. The Absolutist connects beliefs as "T"ruth claims to either/or attitudes, positions and behaviors. The Materialist's identity is based in a set of positions that while less black and white than the Absolutist's, are nonetheless based in a sense of privilege to knowing what is really "T"rue. The dichotomies such as conservative or liberal, democrat or republican, for or against abortion, for or against civil rights, gay rights, or other broad issues will eventually be solved as one of the fruits of the scientific method. It is more expressive of the current historical moment than the Absolutist's but less so than the Citizen's.

Guiding principles. The Materialist adheres to a set of (rational) principles that dichotomizes action into rational and irrational. The scientific method and philosophical logic are the modicums of rational process. The fruit of basic and applied science is the model that

determines what counts as rational outcomes. Intuition, emotion, awe and non-empirical beliefs are irrational. The Materialist's self-interest comes from her community's belief in the processes of modernity, belief in technological innovation as the fruit of basic science. If only other cultures could see the possibilities Western science, education, and technology offer!

The Materialist feels a sense of privilege or entitlement that is related to the Absolutist's sense of superiority. The Materialist cares about those closest to them, and by extension in varying degrees, their community, nation, and perhaps the human race. It is the knowledge developed by Western science that underpins what these terms mean, that guides what is done.

Locus of Responsibility. The Materialist has a locus of responsibility that is centered in nature and things material. It is primarily external. Because human nature is understood through science, there is little the Materialist feels she can do to create a just world. Biological and genetic frameworks form the milieu within which family and community relations take place. Valid knowledge of what it means to be human comes primarily from the sciences. For example, the methodology of reversal and these belief categories are not viewed as valid knowledge as they are not empirically derived by use of the scientific method.

Critical Voice. The critical voice takes the form of rational argument founded in the scientific method and its discovered objectivity/reality of nature. The focus of the Materialist's critical voice is pre- and post- modern cultural assumptions and social institutions – any claim about reality not based in a rational or scientific method generating empirically derived knowledge. The Absolutist's beliefs are always irrational. The Citizens' claims about the nobility of human nature, or the New Activist's affirmation of belief communities are viewed as wishful and speculative by the Materialist. The critical voice demonstrates from within the privilege of its very logical assumptions that any other perspective is in some degree irrational.

The Citizen

In contrast to both the Absolutist and Materialist who respectively make overt and covert claims that her community's "T"ruths are T"rue for all, the Citizen's world is far more complex and ambiguous. "T"ruth per se, is not a central concern for the Citizen.

Just/unjust world. The Citizen path involves believing in the ideal of social justice, and that there is evidence that progress has been made toward achieving this ideal. The Citizen can point to social environments structured by belief in the just world. However, for the most part there is a real world and it is unjust. For the Citizen, the unjust world is seen in how economic and social resources are unequally distributed. The Citizen is torn between the obvious injustice everywhere in the world, and her implicit belief that a just world is possible. As vehicle of this community level conflict, the Citizen in one moment can be destructive of the just world, and in another, help maintain and create it. S/he strives to act from principle while at the same time, she often believes in the reality of venal motivations.

Spiritual dimension. The Citizen may have a set of spiritual beliefs, or a secular humanist orientation to the larger whole of what is real. Her belief system may reside within a religious affiliation, but not necessarily so. She often belongs to a church for its social opportunities. The spiritual dimension is often felt as a set of ethical guidelines for how to be in the world; it is her duty to act ethically. This duty is to work to transform the unjust into the just world. Because s/he feels a sense of duty, personal responsibility is in part resident in the expectations of what it means to be a good Citizen.

Historical perspective. The Citizen category is grounded in an 18th century, Enlightenment worldview. The Citizen has an historical sense she is part of a world that is getting better year by year, decade by decade. She sees that more and more people benefit from

the fruits of science and technology, from more education and increasing tolerance for and celebration of difference. Discussion and argument about what is real and ideal is grounded in a living sense of being part of the flow of history, that what she does personally makes a difference. S/he is able to argue both sides of issues as a means to explore the complexity of the modern world. She believes in both the obdurate reality of the unjust world and that by acting from principle she can be part of making the ideal real.

Guiding Principles. The Citizen path is very much centered in the modern, Western, Enlightenment tradition. What this means is that *ideally* everyone is a Citizen, with equal rights codified in law. She recognizes that access to opportunities and resources is not equally distributed, and that citizenship for most persons is rhetorical rather than actual. She participates in making the rhetorical actual by working to change and enforce the rule of law. Feeling a sense of duty s/he views herself as “good.” She works to make the ideal real based on the evidence that pockets of a just world do exist.

Locus of responsibility. The Citizen has a locus of responsibility that moves towards the balance of external and internal. The Citizen’s perspective usually comes from a sense of privilege or entitlement. As part of what makes her life meaningful she feels personal responsibility for being part of providing what she has been given – the rights of the Citizen - to others. To be a responsible Citizen requires her to participate in actions that allow others to live in a just world. Her personal beliefs require her to be part of providing access to resources to persons who due to unjust social and cultural conditions have had this access withheld. Her sense of meaning and purpose in life is intertwined with actually taking personal responsibility for doing her part to transform the unjust world.

Critical Voice. The Citizen's critical voice has as its focus the unjust institutions and norms that for the most part constitute modern society and the pre-modern, non-democratic, oppressive political institutions of other cultures. The dutiful Citizen critiques from within an Enlightenment perspective.

The Activist

The Activist, like the Citizen, has modern, Enlightenment "T"ruth forming the background for her actions. While the Citizen often has a dutiful component to her motivation, the Activist champions "T"ruth with passion for a specific social problem or issue.

Just/unjust world. The Activist sees a social problem – one element of the unjust world – and acts from a living sense of the obvious and concrete injustice in the passionate effort to rectify the specific wrong. S/he believes the world is mostly unjust. Her belief is based in what s/he sees, the obvious suffering caused by classism, racism, sexism or any institutionalized discrimination. The Activist feels outrage that resources are unequally distributed based on difference.

Spiritual dimension. The spiritual orientation of the Activist is less likely to be a factor in her orientation to injustice than that of the citizen or New Activist. She is more driven by emotion than by a religious or spiritual mission, although it may be a factor. Her ethics come from her sense of what is right, which comes from personal experience.

Historical perspective. The Activist category is grounded in an 18th century, Enlightenment worldview, overlaid with a 19th century reaction to classism. The labor/socialist movements in America form the Activist's social roots.

The Activist has more a living faith in a human nature that wants to do the right thing, but for some reason, doesn't, and less faith in technological progress than the Citizen. Her sense of

history is aligned with social movements or causes; civil rights, welfare rights, suffrage, children's rights, gay rights, disability rights, or the labor movement, as examples. She feels herself a vehicle of historical change by working on local and/or current issues that advance the cause of social justice. S/he may feel that unequal distribution of resources through the mechanism of class structure is the nexus for social problems.

Guiding principles. Like the Citizen, the Activist's guiding principles are very much centered in the modern, Western, Enlightenment tradition. The Activist not only believes that *ideally* everyone is a Citizen, with equal rights codified in law, but that it is only by challenging the socio/economic status quo that maintains various forms of oppression that the just world will be created. The Activist will often attach to one issue of injustice. While the Citizen may feel an ideal combined with a sense of duty, it is felt the stark evidence of injustice that motivates Activist. What guides action is the ever-present felt reality of injustice and the suffering it causes persons described by a category, such as children, labor, tenants, the poor, oppressed ethnic minorities, or the aged.

Locus of responsibility. The Activist may identify with her class or race, or some other socially constructed and subjugating category of oppression. Personal responsibility is usually attached to a group identity category and working for justice involves confrontation and conflict with those described by dominating categories of oppression. To the degree that "T"ruth is given to relations of domination and subjugation, the Activist's locus of responsibility is external. To the degree the Activist feels part of social and cultural transformation, her locus is internal.

Critical voice. Like the Citizen, the Activist's critical voice focuses on the unjust institutions and norms that constitute modern society and the pre-modern, non-democratic political institutions of other cultures. The Activist critiques from within an Enlightenment

perspective, but also claims socialist, Marxist, critical theorist, or other modern political perspectives as the foundation for critiquing institutionalized injustice.

The New Activist

In contrast to the Citizen for whom “T”ruth is not a central issue or the Activist for whom “T”ruth is found in unjust social conditions, the New Activist’s “T”ruth is very much the center of her life. What distinguishes her “T”ruth claims from those of the Absolutist, Materialist, Citizen, and Activist is that she always prefaces her claims with “I believe.

Just/unjust world. The New Activist believes that the world is mostly just as an expression of her identification with her social and/or cultural community. She believes that injustice can be transformed through dialogue and community action. The world is unjust, and evidence of this injustice is concrete, tangible and heart rending. At the same time, s/he believes that different cultures and different social groups within cultures can live together. She believes different communities can co-exist not only harmoniously, but richly. Communities can treat each other with dignity, respect and honor. The New Activist believes this is the primary means by which to transform the unjust world.

The New Activist is hampered by the prejudicial structures of institutional oppression. As part of her development, she often identifies with the categories of oppression (Activist). Whether race, gender, sexual orientation, age, nation status, or religion, the New Activist finds personal identity in the absence of what is normal, white versus all other colors, straight versus all other sexual orientations, Christian, versus all other religions, for example. At some point she recognizes that identification with what is abnormal reproduces the very structures of oppression she seeks to transform. She comes to see this is a reactive stance - that of a victim who reproduces the site of her own injury (Brown, 1995), as internalized oppression.

The New Activist learns that within the context of her own belief community, the world is mostly just, and that notions of normal/abnormal black/white, straight/gay, stem not from her community but from the dominant culture claiming the right to define what is normal. The New Activist seeks to dissolve the boundaries between categories of oppression by purposively engaging in cross-community dialogue. She maintains and creates the just world by reaching out to other communities. Overall, the New Activist is increasing the reality of the just world by participating in her community's movement from reactive belief in the reality of oppression to proactive belief in the just world. This movement takes place in an ever-deepening feeling of being part of the human community.

Spiritual dimension. The New Activist's spiritual life is often strongly felt, but not necessarily so. Her passion for social justice may have religious roots. The more the New Activist's community is subjugated because of *cultural characteristics*, such as ethnicity, the more likely there are religious and/or spiritual roots to her activism. New Activists coming from the dominant, American culture differentiate their activism by *social characteristics* such as sexual orientation, race, class or age. These traditions tend not to be as religious or actively spiritual in their orientation. Cultural communities work for recognition of difference *between* cultures. Social communities work for recognition and validation of difference *within* the dominant culture.

Historical perspective. The New Activist has a strong sense of her community's history and origin myth, and how different it is from that of the dominant culture's. The history of cultural New Activists is usually oral. Contact with the dominant culture has infused relations of domination and subjugation in a community's history, but this infusion has not substantially transformed the community's origin myth. The New Activist works in community to re-found

social life in cultural traditions in many cases. If the New Activist is distinguished by social characteristics forming the nexus of a community, such as an identity based in being gay or old or poor, history continues to be written.

Guiding principles. The principles that guide the New Activist grow from participating in dialogue within her community. She intrinsically grasps the problem-posing process found in Freire (1971). Dialogue has generated new meanings, and perhaps a new framework through which to perceive the world and act within it. While the Citizen often says, “if you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem,” the New Activist is much more likely to live this principle, to engage in dialogue with members of other communities across differences within the context of “I believe.” She is likely to view Enlightenment social justice principles as rhetoric maintaining domination and subjugation. However, s/he has learned to both listen to other’s beliefs and stories, regardless of what position within relations of domination and subjugation they come from, and educate about her own culture/society.

When the New Activist encounters oppression, she does not perceive it as a personal issue. She understands that oppression is structural. As part of her new activism she has left a victim stance behind. She understands the historical, institutionalized reality of oppression and how individuals in their ignorance blindly perpetuate it in prejudice through internalized oppression. For the New Activist, dialogue is the means to transform the ignorance of oppression into a bridge across differences. She has developed a high degree of self-consciousness about how to encounter relations of domination and subjugation and transform them into bridges across difference.

Locus of responsibility. The New Activist’s locus of responsibility is primarily internal, and is more grounded in her historical or identity community than any other category. She sees

the historical reality of oppression, has developed guiding principles to transform oppression, and sees her self as a vehicle of this transformation. However, much of what must be transformed is “out there,” existing within other’s ignorance and blindness to cultural and social differences. She advocates from within her community to illuminate the larger structures of the unjust world. She prefaces her actions with “I believe” and feels that by passionate, focused action, large scale change can happen.

While what needs changing is “out there” in the world, she feels her actions and identity to be part of a dialogical community and a vehicle of social change. She is very much an advocate of the group rights perspective of social justice (Young, 1990; Longres & Scanlon, 2001) The New Activist’s sense of meaning and purpose and personal identity are connected to but not based in, the lived, problematic issues s/he works to transform.

Critical Voice. The New Activist’s critical voice focuses on the immediate and obvious norms serving as vehicles of oppression. Her critical voice is found in questions that serve to facilitate others’ learning to see institutional mechanisms that reproduce the unjust world. This critical voice focuses on modernity and its Universalist assumptions. The New Activist’s critique has its roots in various strains of feminism, queer theory, French post-structuralism, or post-colonialism, as examples. It usually involves discovery and development of a voice claiming the right of the citizen for members of her community, to sit at the policy table.

One of the consequences of the New Activist’s use of the critical voice is that new identity categories emerge, each including fewer persons than the one previous. Over time the new category itself becomes the focus of the New Activist’s critical voice and newer categories are created. For example the Pakistani woman questions the homogeneous assumptions of American feminism and includes nationalism within her understanding of feminism. The

Pakistani lesbian questions and illuminates the inhering heterosexism within the focus of the Pakistani feminist. The old, Pakistani lesbian questions the ageist assumptions within the Pakistani lesbian's perspective. The New Activist both destabilizes old categories of domination and subjugation and creates new ones. The new ones always include fewer persons than the older categories from which they emerge. The New Activist can be seen to be preparing the social ground from which may emerge a woven voice that transforms the mechanisms of resource distribution based on privileging one category over another, white over all other colors, in American, the Christian religions over all others. The New Activist seeks to equalize distribution of resources and thereby value differences between persons.

The Visionary.

The Visionary perceives "T"ruth as a culture's story about what nature is - the history of its own beliefs - an origin myth. A person operating within the Visionary category utilizes her own historical/cultural/social location (beliefs) to illuminate the process of believing.

Just/unjust world. The Visionary belief category holds the belief that the world is just. The Visionary chooses to see that the just world exists and recognizes that she has been taught that the unjust world is real. For purposes of this paper, from within the Visionary perspective, this learned belief in the unjust world will be called the "Great Lie." The Visionary recognizes the existence of human suffering, but sees it exists as a consequence of believing it is most real. It is the process of believing that humans have most in common, and the world in which we live is the consequence of what we believe. The Great Lie is that it is the unjust world of human suffering that is real. The Visionary's "T"ruth is the just world is real, and we have been taught to believe the unjust world is real, rather than a consequence of what we believe. She sees that

the root of the Great Lie is the unquestioning acceptance of the “T”ruth as she has learned it to be growing up in her world.

What is concrete for the Visionary is believing, and from within believing, the emanating belief that the just world is real. What is abstract for the Visionary is the ever changing, moment to moment world of what the senses and their observing and measuring instruments offer. What is concrete is long term and stable. She understands that the belief system that sees the world as just is activated through principles and ethical guidelines for action. What doesn’t change is the living sense of being a vehicle of a larger process, of being part of momentous flow of history.

The Visionary consciously connects believing with acting through her own version of the hierarchical structure of the six variables; the belief in the just world, spirituality, historicity, guiding principles, locus of responsibility and critical voice. She actively participates in her community’s maintenance and creative expansion of the just world.

The spiritual dimension. The Visionary’s perception of reality is grounded in an ongoing feeling of being part of a larger whole that is undifferentiated, primordial, in itself unperceivable as some thing, yet very much real and present. This paper terms this whole “believing.” The Visionary belief category is inherently and necessarily spiritual, although the Visionary may not use this term.

Primordial believing is active and felt. However the Visionary gives context (belief expressed in words and action) to this feeling, it is what is most real. It changes the least, is the most stable, and is always here. It is also the least knowable, in the sense of it being something distinguished from something else. This belief category contrasts with all others in this regard. The Absolutist, Materialist, Citizen, Activist and New Activist believe in varying degrees that

the visible world given in moment-to-moment experience is most concrete. In some degree “T”ruth is given in a belief (system).

The Visionary’s belief system is unique, personal, and felt. S/he may claim atheism, agnosticism or deism, or any combination thereof. However, religious texts are seen as literature. She is generally a-religious, meaning that the religions stemming from textual interpretation are someone else’s claims about reality, not hers. She may belong to a religion as part of her dialogical cultural and social community, but her spiritual foundation is uniquely personal. She is conscious of a dimension of experience – believing – and is actively attempting to base her actions in its emanation through praxis; reflection and action.

The historical perspective. The Visionary category is “post” post-modern. What the New Activist does in creating bridges and facilitating integration between different communities is post-modern. Her actions help make the just world visible by dissolving the boundaries between the normal/abnormal, by transforming relations of domination and subjugation into bridges across difference. The Visionary maintains and extends the visible just world by believing it is real and acting within it, regardless of what the Great Lie says, regardless of modernity’s use of difference to give and withhold privilege.

Also by post post-modern is meant that there is a boundaryland between believing and a culture’s story about itself within which the Visionary is conscious. The Visionary’s historical perspective encompasses her culture’s origin myth and goes one step further as it opens to believing. She consciously maintains this openness. A culture writes or gives voice to its own history in an origin myth. The Visionary has this story as her historical scope, but does not base her identity or understanding of the world in it.

While there may be temporal linearity for the Visionary, there is no telos, no end or evolutionary, developmental or progressive movement towards an end. The just world exists and serves to guide how to be in the world, emanates through her beliefs and actions in the world. How history is written/constructed is part of a culture's story about itself. What is most real is the process of believing that written/spoken history gives shape (meaning and purpose) to.

Guiding principles. The third strand of the Visionary category's characteristics is a very simple and clear framework of principles that structure how to act. The Visionary becomes a vehicle of access to resources and opportunities for others so that they too may discover the just world. Each person constructs "how" this is performed as an individual act within the context of her community. The Visionary recognizes that it is not personal initiative that results in believing the world is just and acting within it. Rather, this possibility is a consequence of having been given access to economic and social opportunity by one's immediate community. The Visionary recognizes the very opportunity to believe this is a function of having been born into a set of historical, cultural and social categories that distribute enough access to economic and social opportunity to her.

Another guiding principle is that the Visionary recognizes it is her *personal responsibility*, as contrasted to the Citizen's sense of duty or Activist's passion, to be part of giving access to the fruits of economic and social functions to others. The Visionary feels it is her responsibility to do what she says she does. This is both the fundamental guiding principle of the Visionary belief category and its primary developmental goal – to unlearn the Great Lie and act from one's own clearly articulated "T"ruth within community. The unlearning and acting from one's own "T"ruth can be maintained and expanded only when personal responsibility for being a vehicle of economic and social justice is assumed as a foundational,

guiding principle. She recognizes the very possibility for her to take personal responsibility for unlearning the Great Lie is a gift of her community.

The very idea of *personal freedom* is framed by this personal responsibility. To be free within the Visionary belief category necessitates being part of constructing the social environment so that others may have their four basic needs satisfied enough to explore what it means to be human. Without this consciously creative component, a person discovers s/he does not act from the belief the world is just and in subtle manners, imposes her “T”ruths on others.

Locus of responsibility. The Visionary has, and is moving towards, an internal locus of responsibility. Action is structured from within believing through a clear set of guiding principles. To choose to believe in the just world does not mean that actions are structured by this belief. The Visionary has not “achieved” status as a Visionary. To the degree that the locus is external and her action is structured from within the Great Lie, the Visionary works to transform her foundation for action from external to internal. This is a long process that involves reflecting on what actions are and are not structured by the belief in a just world. Based on this reflection a person changes the foundation of an act or pattern of actions, and consequently, acts differently. There is a slow shift towards clarity and coherence in the relation between believing, belief, guiding principles and acting. She engages other members of her community in dialogue and participates in transforming her community’s belief in the unjust world.

Critical Voice. The Visionary’s version of the critical voice focuses on her own process of unlearning the Great Lie as part of making the just world visible. The Visionary’s critical focus is her ever-present being in the world with others within her communities. The Visionary makes use of the New Activist’s and Citizen’s critical voice, asking questions about injustice and oppression, but the defining critical focus of this category is on aligning “saying” with the “doing

what is said.” The Visionary’s is the most radical of critical voices. For the Visionary, it is far easier to focus on the injustice in the attitudes and behaviors of others, or social policy made by legislators far away in a capital city than it is to assume responsibility for making the just world visible through her own actions within the contexts of her living.

Social Work Education and the Belief Categories

This section explores what social work education might look like if structured by each of the belief categories.

The Absolutist

Belief in one interpretation of reality would have social work education a vehicle of this interpretation. The skills and knowledge with which to deal with client systems would be structured by the “Truth” claims inherent within the belief system.

Successful Absolutist social work education necessarily has two components; the doctrinal and secular. The doctrinal dimension consists of the correct interpretation of reality, including what behaviors and attitudes are right/wrong, moral/immoral, normal/abnormal. This is the dimension in which the elements of a belief system are internally related to one another – a belief system’s internal coherence and rationality. Within the doctrinal dimension there is no questioning of assumptions about the nature of reality. These assumptions are given in tenets that are unchangeable.

The secular dimension forms the system of external relations. The secular dimension allows the doctrinal to co-exist with the profession’s mission and value base that social work students internalize as foundation for practice. The secular dimension serves to neutralize doctrinal belief for the external practice world. For example, doctrine may say that gay sex is immoral and forbidden. The secular dimension is made up of neutralizing mechanisms such as,

“Every person is free to choose how to be in the world.” This statement is in line with social work’s value base. However, when asked about the specific behavior of sex between men, the Absolutist says that in her (doctrinal) opinion, the behavior is wrong, immoral or abnormal, but that it’s a choice every person is free to make (secular).

This co-existence of what are essentially contradictory sets of values is reinforced by social work education’s teaching that personal beliefs should be held in abeyance and monitored when working with client systems. Rather than stating personal belief is foundational to professional practice, social work education often says it can be treated as a bias and somehow held out of the professional relationship (Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen, 2002, pg. 64).

The doctrinal and secular dimensions interact so that there is no apparent contradiction between beliefs that would actively destroy the beliefs and condemn the lifestyles of others, and freedom of choice. For the Absolutist, the secular dimension buffers the “T”rue interpretation of reality from attention by CSWE. What is offered in policy, accreditation, and curriculum documents is secular rhetoric that validates the mission and value base of social work. However, all three emerge from and are structured by the deeper doctrinal dimension and actively project and impose this doctrine on the world outside of the community so believing. In this way Absolutist social work education can be seen to be actively destructive of the just world. The act of helping is at its heart destructive of other’s worlds.

The Materialist

For the Materialist, social work education is grounded in the reality of the world described by Western science. Valid knowledge is scientific knowledge. The curriculum is constructed to teach students how to develop knowledge and skills derived from the workings of the scientific method.

Materialist social work education is open to other kinds of knowledge, but alternate knowledges are viewed as political, and hence, not objective. The underlying assumption is that science will create a just world. The Enlightenment liberalism of the Citizen category and the culture-based, group rights perspective of the New Activist category are included in a Materialist based education. However, these perspectives in their subjective and historically contingent status don't describe what is real. Rather, they serve as institutional bridges to the real world described by science, mechanisms by which the West's view of reality is taken as "T"ruth. Other culture's "T"ruths are necessarily pre-modern and based in superstition, or post-modern and based in a more sophisticated superstition/speculation. Social work education is a process within which students internalize the West's version of nature as basis for practice.

Materialist practice theories are derived from the methods of the academic social sciences. Theories have to have short-term, measurable outcomes in order to demonstrate efficacy. Empirically derived theories include cognitive theory, behavioral theory, and social learning theory (Gambrill, 2003; Thyer, 2001). Fischer (1993) argued that the empirically based practice model seemed well positioned to be the dominant social work practice orientation of the 1990s and beyond. Thyer & Wodarski (1990), Pardeck & Meinert (1999) and Thyer & Myers (2003) continue this argument.

Practice methods in a Materialist social work education are necessarily validated by high quality research to be effective. It is a waste of time and money to engage in practices that have not been validated to be efficient and effective. Fisher's (1973) question about the effectiveness of social work's practice methods signaled the institution of the Materialist perspective in social work education. Over the course of a generation the clinician/professor has become the researcher/professor.

Materialist social work education feels its pre-eminence to be threatened and is opening its assumptions to include New Activist perspectives, to culturally competent, research based practices. However, this opening is more rhetorical than actual as the standards for what constitutes effective practice are still grounded in the methods of Western science. The Materialist set of assumptions seems to underlie most social work curriculums today.

The Citizen & Activist

The Citizen belief category has a vision in which all persons are thought to have equal worth, and that they deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Social work education is founded in the noble principles of Enlightenment liberalism, and/or Gil's (1998) radical social work perspective. These principles utilize discourses of freedom and equality, social justice and individual/class rights. This category views all persons as having a universal and political character in the form of "Citizen," whether coming from the Citizen or Activist category.

To be a Citizen is to be imbued with rights and responsibilities. The vision and mission of a social work program would use discourses of liberalism or the radical perspective, a firm grounding in the liberal arts, and a code of ethics having social justice a core value – the major tenets of professionalism. There is an unsaid expectation that those entering a social work program have a felt sense of how the principles of social justice do not structure the real world. The student is expected to feel that by becoming a social worker, s/he will learn tools to be part of making the ideal real.

Citizen & Activist education is based in principles expressing a profound sense of human dignity and worth. This is primary. The theory and methods of the social sciences are viewed more as tools to make the ideal of a just world real than as the means to discover what is objectively real.

Practice methods are based in the universal worth and dignity of the person. These methods assume the strengths perspective and empowerment practice. In a macro perspective, practice methods assume contract and law as methods to achieve social justice. The grand documents of the 18th century – America's Declaration of Independence and France's Declaration of the Rights of Man, for example – are given context and meaning in the ongoing battle to transform the world from being based in the sovereignty of blood and church to that of principles given voice in contract and law, or from capitalist oppression to a more just economic system.

Most social work education is based in the noble principles of our grand documents and the vision they express. Materialist tools are seen as one set of means to achieve the end of a just world, and not an end in and of themselves. Simply using the fruits of science will not get us anywhere without an implicit humanist value base. Social work education first and foremost sees itself as promoting the worth and dignity of each human being and economic and social justice for all. The Citizen raises law and the social contract to foundational status while the Activist raises the living horror of actual injustice to this status.

The New Activist.

The New Activist belief category might have an educational vision in which cultures and their social groupings co-exist harmoniously within the world of differences. Social work education has a mission to create transformational dialogues where relations of domination and subjugation are transformed into bridges across difference, into cultural realities and social realities having unique voices. The mechanism of this transformation might be inter-group dialogue where persons from different categories of oppression explore differences and transform them into vehicles of liberation. The classroom is a realm in which dialogue is

performed, and the curriculum the background within which the art of inter-group dialogue is learned and practiced.

Practice theories might be those offered by Freire (1970) or hooks (1994). New Activist practice methods based in intergroup dialogue can be found at Nagda & Zuniga (2003) and Zuniga & Nagda (2002). Alvarez & Cabbil (2001) discuss multicultural communication and collaboration within and among groups.

New Activist social work education forms the current cutting edge of curriculum design. It uses Materialist tools, offers the Citizen's ideals for critical scrutiny, and introduces students to a form of education where they learn to see their professional role to be based in creation of dialogical bridges across difference as a means to effect social change.

The Visionary

The Visionary's educational vision is formed within the cosmology of the social justice project. Every person believes, and within the process of believing, engages in dialogue with other members of her community in the reproduction and transformation of historical, cultural and social meaning and purpose (beliefs). The overall principle guiding social work education is "As I say, so I do."

A Visionary social work education would have students and faculty work together in a cohort model to create a curriculum based in individual, class, and cohort programs of study. The focus is not on content, but on process, on how to do what we say we do. Given the parameters of CSWE policy, faculty expertise, and student interests, each cohort, whether 10 students or 200, would develop a curriculum for the time they are in a social work program. Rather than beginning with a set of courses taken in specific sequences, each class of 10 students and one faculty would meet with the express goal of forming individual and class programs of

study. If there were more than one class, then a cohort program of study would need to be crafted as well.

Within the dominance of the Great Lie, learning to be personally responsible for one's own education would likely generate much conflict, confusion, fear and anxiety. This would occur not just among students, but faculty as well. Individual, class and cohort programs of study would be crafted within this emotional, developmental milieu. By engaging in dialogue within this maelstrom of emotion, the just world would slowly become visible to learning community members. The power of dialogue across difference within community would reveal the hitherto unquestioned assumptions that make up the Great Lie.

Each person, class and cohort would come up with her own path(s) to the terminal degree. Each person, class and cohort might learn to turn the critical, post-structuralist eye to one's own being-a-vehicle of the Great Lie with the intent to appraise the theories, methods and practices of the other five styles of social work education. A cohort might, or might not choose to examine what is offered in the other four visions of social work education, and reasonably adopt/reject the theory, practices and techniques offered there within.

The opportunity would be created to understand one's own history, the history of one's cultural and social communities, and then form a new set of communities in class and cohort. Taking advantage of this opportunity could be recognized as necessary in order to move person, class and cohort loci of responsibility from external to internal as part of making the just world visible. Each student, faculty member, class and cohort would move along her individual path to establishing a unique Visionary perspective on social work practice within the just world. Together, as part of a community whose foundation is believing the just world is real, new practitioners could enter the world of the Great Lie as effective vehicles providing access to

economic and social opportunity to others.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the problem of looking at social justice as “*injustice*” at a distance. As a means to encourage thinking differently about social justice, the methodology of reversal was utilized and the counter narrative of the cosmology of the social justice project was introduced. Housed in this cosmology a set of belief categories was developed, each of which has a unique position on the reality of the just/unjust world. The six categories are the Absolutist, Materialist, Citizen, Activist, New Activist and Visionary. Each category was explored in terms of six dimensions; belief in the just/unjust world, the spiritual dimension, the historical dimension, the realm of guiding principles, locus of responsibility, and focus of critical voice. A vision of social work education based in each of the belief categories was then suggested.

The overall purpose of this paper has been to present a framework within which the social work educator can question and locate her own perspective. In an important sense this paper offers a mirror within which to ask questions of, and understand, one’s personal orientation to the just and unjust world. Each of us believes and has a belief system that we understand in varying degrees of clarity. I think the degree of personal responsibility I take for the relation between what I believe (what I say) and my actions (what I do) is connected to how clear I am about this very relation. Only by doing what we say within community can we begin and continue to actually transform the very obvious injustices in our world.

The community of social work education seems to be at a point where the New Activist model is emerging. An example is the MSW curriculum at the University of Washington in Seattle. However, the perspectives that continue to dominate are those of the Materialist and

Citizen. I think that both these perspectives are very much grounded in existing relations of domination and subjugation. I believe that the New Activist perspective is going to emerge and become the norm in the first part of the 21st century. I also believe that this is a transitional stage in how social work education is performed. I express hope when I say I believe the New Activist perspective bridges the past and the future in a pace of change having as its end the living reality of the just world for all. I hope that the cutting edge of the next transition in social work education will be some form of a Visionary perspective.

To be clear about what one believes, one's history and ethical/guiding principles, and how they fit together to first frame one's life, and secondly, professional practice, is absolutely necessary as a first step to making the just world visible.

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