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ORGANIZING IN THE WORKING-CLASS: CONTRADICTIONS, LEARNING & THE MAKING OF LEFT ORGANIZERS

A Dissertation in
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by

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ABSTRACT

This study synthesizes Marxist theory of movements and Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) to explore social movement learning within movement organizing activity. The study poses and answers the following questions: how do Leftists learn through social movement organizing activity? What activities constitute movement organizing? What are the contradictions and learning that occur within these activities?

In this critical ethnography, data was collected over a four-year period using participant observation, informal interview, and semi-formal interviews with twenty-seven Left organizers involved in working-class organizing projects. Audio-visual, and written documents also served as important sources of data. The use of field notes, and theoretical memos were instrumental in aiding in reflection and analysis of the data (Charmaz, 2014).

An important finding of this study is that social movement organizing consists of three concrete interconnected activities: base-building, leadership development, and mobilization. A second finding is that historic macro-level racialized class relations generate contradictions within micro-level activities of movement organizing. One important way this was expressed was through uneven opportunities for leadership development which resulted in predominantly middle class and white Left leadership of predominantly working-class Black and Brown organizations within Black and Brown working-class communities (leadership from without). This finding coincides with previous studies of movement composition (Croteau, 1995; Morris & Staggenborg, 2002; Zugman, 2013).

The third finding was that learning to lead/organize requires that people confront the specific contradictions of leadership. Consequently, those members of the base not tasked with
executive level and/or directive participation are denied the opportunity for such development. This perpetuates the predominance of outside leadership, which is in contradiction with the self-emancipatory rule underpinning Left movement organizing, as articulated by the organizers in this study.

This study supports the notion that learning occurs within social movements. However, it suggests that learning is only a potential outcome of confronting contradictions within movement activity. Furthermore, this study suggests that the development of leadership capacity (a specific kind of social movement learning) occurs only when movement participants are confronted with the opportunity to grapple with contradictions associated with that mode of participation in movements.
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Introduction

Coming to the Question

This study falls under the broad topic of learning in social struggle, which in adult education is specifically focused on emancipatory social struggle (Fleming, 2016; Foley, 1999). The specific focus of this study is on the learning of Left organizers as a result of their participation in movement organizing. In particular, the study is anchored by the question: how do Left organizers learn through social movement organizing? My journey to this research question came from own experiences of becoming a Leftist, however, there were a handful of experiences that led to this question.

My first encounter with social struggle was in the form of books and films about the U.S. Civil Rights movements, and the Cuban Revolution. Both of my parents were autodidacts; self-taught historians. Consequently, the notion of social protest was never foreign to me. The image that symbolized this was the scene from Spike Lee’s biographic film, *Malcolm X*. In the film *Malcolm X* (played by Denzel Washington) marched through the streets with a mass of Black men. By simply gesturing with his hand he commands all of them to move perfectly in sync. The other image of organization were the marches in Selma and Washington with Martin Luther King Jr. Every Black History month my mother made sure I watched the different films depicting Black excellence. In third grade my mother had me reading and writing book reports on Alex Haley’ *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. In high school my education in social struggle continued through my Spanish class. In class we watched and read a range of films and books about Latin American social movements and the Spanish Civil War. From these materials I developed an interests in the role of collective action of oppressed people.
I did not become involved in any form of collective action until participated in several protest actions with classmates. In 2004, I was 16 years old when I participated in my first protest. We protested George W. Bush’s war efforts and I attended a rally in support of a national (socialized) health care system. Bush had come to Grit City to make an on speech on the economy. He was staying in a hotel on the south side of the city. Some friends and I left school during the lunch period and skipped the class period following lunch to attend. When we got the location right out across the street from the hotel, the police had created a barrier between a crowd of roughly 200 or so people and the hotel. I had never been at any political event at that time. And I had never been in a crowd of people that big before. To be counted among people advocating for change was a powerful feeling for me at that age. I remember feeling a certain sense of possibility in that moment. That is, the collectivity of the protest made me feel that we could really influence politics.

My second experience with collective action was in 2005. I participated in a series of May Day protests organized by immigrant rights organizations. This protest was more personal to me because a friend of mine had been deported by the Bush administration. The protest was also very different from my first one. The size, by far, exceeded first protest action I attended. And the demographics were different. The first protest experience was overwhelmingly white. This protest was overwhelmingly Black and Brown people. These were the kind of people I saw in my neighborhood on any given day. The experience in the protest amazed me. That day I felt a great sense of possibility. I was convinced that if we could get people working together, we could really change the way society worked. I remember wondering how did they get all those people
together? Who organized these people? At the time my knowledge of movements consisted of the glimpses of history from movies and books. I thought movements happened because skilled orators, and charismatic individuals inspired people to come together. I thought it was the promise of a better existence that made people engage in movement activity.

My experience as a union and community organizer helped me to develop true appreciation of the significance of formal organization in, not only the generation of social power, but also the capacity for the most basic forms of resistance to social domination. Organizations are networks of interdependent activities linked together by some overlapping or common purpose (Selander & Jarvenpaa, 2016). Social movements are large networks of organizations with an overlapping or shared vision of how society ought to be (Barker, 2014). Social movement theorists refer to these kinds of organizations as social movement organizations. As a socialist my interests has been in the development of Left social movement organizations with the capacity to align large masses of people behind a coherent vision for socialist transformation. My time as an organizer with the union, and the Industrial Areas Foundation was frustrating. In both organizations there was a pessimistic view of social change; from the perspective of leadership in these organizations, the most that working-class people could achieve was improvements in their benefits through making deals with political elites. Both of these experiences taught me that powerful social movements require organization to sustain them. And at the heart of such organizations are the leadership, and in particular the leadership exercised by organizers.
After working as a union and community organizer, I began to reflect on my past experiences with social protests. The protests were only moments or acts of mobilization in which organized people publicly demonstrated their power and interests. But in order for them to do that they had to be organized first. I concluded that strong organizations require strong organizers to lead their development. This lesson was further engrained in my mind after I tried to advance an organizing program as the chair of the Socialist Party in Grit City. The local members resisted the organizing program. For them organizing was about spreading the socialist gospel through paper sales, social media, and meetings.

On a couple of occasions, I had party members tell me that they did not want to knock on doors in working-class neighborhoods within the city because they were afraid of the people. If there was anything that I knew, it was that organizers could not organize if they were not talking with the people they wanted to be part of their organization. The organizing program ultimately fell through, and the local branch like most of the party’s locals across the country could not extend spontaneously beyond 15 members. Eventually, the local collapsed as there was only one organizer (myself) and a committed, but overworked comrade.

Over time I observed as party locals across the country struggled to grow in size and organizational capacity. The same core of committed and passionate activists came out to meetings and attended protest; but they were not organizing people. I came to the conclusion that the party as a whole lacked a sufficient number of people who were committed to developing the skills and knowledge to develop political strategy, build up a base of public support, and take issues that resonate with the working-class public. Instead the party’s membership consisted of mainly dedicated and sincere activists. By
activists, I mean people who would put themselves in the most uncomfortable situations to spread a message of change. These are people that march for miles, shut down expressways, hold rallies, and disrupt corporate board meetings. Social activists are unquestionably essential to bringing about social transformation. Many of the members of the party felt that if the party’s message was clear, coherent, and inspiring working-class people would spontaneously gravitate to the party, and once a critical mass was reached, the party would eventually be able to engage in larger scale struggles. My organizing experiences taught me that people must first feel a need to fight for something, before they are willing to join an organization. Moreover, they must believe that the organization is an effective instrument for meeting their needs.

In the case of the union, people did not come to union meetings unless there was a problem. For example, when I was organizing with the Industrial Areas Foundation, people got involved once they knew there was a clear issue we were trying to resolve an issue that pertained to their struggle. As I thought about my experiences as an organizer, I realized that it was marked by a lot of failures, mistakes, and hard lessons. One can hold formal title as organizer, but to be an organizer requires experience. By experience, I mean consistent engagement with the problems and contradictions of organizing people. People needed to learn to be organizers; but they did not learn from reading; they learned from doing the work of organizing. In staying firmly within the Marxist tradition of moving beyond mere interpretation of what Leftists learned through organizing, I felt it was necessary to explore how Leftists learned through movement organizing, because it could provide insights for critical intervention in Left organizing praxis that might
advance the struggle for building a socialist movement. From there I came to the primary research question: How do Leftists learn through doing social movement organizing?

**Background to the Problem**

At least since the industrial revolution social theorists and philosophers have taken note of the significance of social movements as processes that either facilitate and embody societal transformations (Engels, 1908; Marx, 2010a; 2010b; 2010c), or at least accompany major societal transformations (Le Bon, 1896; 1899; 1913). Scholars have continued to investigate social movements as important forms of social agency. By social agency, I am referring to the collective activity taken up by specific social to change some aspect society, or to remake society as a whole (Allman, 2001; Cox, 2014; Cox & Nilsen, 2014; Nilsen, 2009) or at least to engage in social struggles that can leverage political change in the favor of the social groups constituting the base of movement activity (McAdam, 1982; 1999; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Morris, 1984; Tilly, 1978).

Despite the importance of organizing as foundational processes of social movement formation, the academic literature on social movements has concentrated more heavily on the political outcomes of social struggles and/or the role of elite politico-economic processes in mobilizing and demobilizing social groups (Oberschall, 1978; Tilly, 1978). A partial explanation for this narrow focus is that much of the literature on social movements implicitly or explicitly reduces social movements to moments of mass mobilization, which are visible noted in the form of protests and demonstrations. Although popular protests actions, rallies, street theater, etc. are necessary for externalizing collective goals and demands, these alone do not constitute movement
organizing. Some of the best studies on social movements examine mobilization, which is part of organizing; it is not its entirety (Horton & Freire, 1990). Mobilization consists of processes through which an existing network of people seeks ways to take action in response to a particular set of social and political conditions (Tilly, 1978). Organizing entails, the use of these networks, but it also entails the construction of networks, and the development of the means to construct them and mobilize them for specific goals.

Studies that subsume organizing under mobilization overlook the processes through which groups and networks are put together. As Williams (2013) notes, organizing is essential the development of social movements, because people rarely come searching for vehicles of social change and political solidarity. Similarly, Stall & Stoeker (1998) assert that people rarely develop spontaneous political solidarity. Instead, the contend that: “They must be organized. Someone has to build strong enough relationships between people so they can support each other through long and sometimes dangerous struggles” (p. 730). Without organization there can be no mobilization. Paulo Freire notes: “It is impossible to start mobilizing without organizing. The very process of mobilizing demands organization of those who are being mobilized (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 117). As Freire suggests mobilizing is only part of organizing people. To organize entails developing an agenda or rationale, which is to say developing campaigns tied to strategies for broader change. It also entails bringing more and more people together around particular campaigns and rationales capable of unifying people in common struggle (Nilsen, 2009).

Organizing consists of the formation or building of new networks of people, building relations of solidarity between people, and defining issues and social problems
Movement organizing refers to the processes through which the object of consciously developing movement organization, because the purpose of the organization is to generate popular power which is to say the necessary collective capacity to achieve particular societal changes (Nilsen, 2009). Movement groups nourish movements by providing a collaborative space where people can develop their analysis or theory of social change, as well as develop the skills needed to participate substantively in movement activities (Haluza-DeLay, 2006).

The praxis of organizing people is led by a specific subset of activist leaders, which are called “organizers” (Payne, 1995). Organizers are the individuals that, regardless of whatever official or formal title they hold within an organization, are most active in building linkages between their organization and the broader public, building political unity within their organizations, and building linkages between organizations (James, 1980; Mann, 2011; Morris & Staggenborg, 2001). Morris & Staggenborg (2001), and Ganz (2010) argue that organizing/leadership is not simply mobilizing individuals into action, but developing their capacities to redefine movement processes and also to facilitate the development of others into leaders/organizers. The development of an individual into a movement organizer is in itself a form of learning that occurs through doing the work of movement organizing. Lacking are in-depth studies of the everyday processes through which people become movement organizers.

**Theoretical Problems in Adult Learning Approaches to Social Movements**

Much of the theorization of social movements overlooks the role of learning. However, Marxist approaches to social movement analysis recognizes learning as central
to the development of social movements (Allman, 2001; Chovanec, 2009; Foley, 1999; Harris, 2011; James, 1989). More broadly, the social movement learning literature argues that social movements are significant, because they are not only forms of struggle, but incubators of emancipatory learning (Allman, 2001; Cunningham, 1998; Finger, 1987; Freire, 2010; Holford, 1995; Holst, 2004; Imel, 1999; Welton, 1993). That is, through participation in social struggle people may undergo transformation of consciousness through which they learn to be, think, and act in emancipatory ways. The literature also makes the case that learning in social movements also manifests as the production of new knowledge. Knowledge production occurs as people develop new collective identities, disseminate movement analysis, and discourses through society, which can contribute to new ways of thinking about society and human needs.

Nevertheless, the literature has a tendency to separate movement activity from learning. That is, movements and particular modes of struggle are marginalized in analysis of social movement learning. Social struggle is treated more as a staging or setting in which a separate phenomenon called learning occurs. This is problematic because it distorts analysis of the role of learning in the development of emancipatory social struggle, which means we are not contributing to the type of critical-practical knowledge that is most relevant to movement protagonists (Bevington & Dixon, 2005; Foley, 1999; Frampton, Kinsman, Tillazcek, & Thompson, 2006). Rather, than exploring organizing as the central generative processes through which struggle emerges (Fantasia, 1988) social movement learning scholars typically concentrate on aspects of struggle that seem most obviously related to knowledge development, and non-formal education. For example, when adult learning scholars engage with social movement organizing analysis
is often limited to explicitly educational activities like workshops, programs, and popular education (Conway, 2004; Choudry, 2010; Harris, 2011; Kane, 2000; 2013; Walter, 2007; Walters, 1980; 2007).

Another issue is that much of social movement learning is incidental, as opposed to the result of trainings and workshops (Foley, 1999). This is not to say that nonformal educational processes and informal/incidental learning operate in different spheres. In fact, the two are dialectically interconnected. However, social movement learning scholars for the most part lack adequate analysis of the informal. As Foley (1999) notes one of the core tasks for social movement learning is to unearth the unrealized and obscured parts of movement practice that shape learning, which in turn shapes social struggles. Such an analysis requires a theoretical framework that allows scholars to “see” the internal workings of practice. Equally important, in order to provide a movement-relevant analysis of social movement learning scholars have to explore the processes of movement organizing. Ultimately, this requires a shift away from the implicit question that has oriented much of the social movement learning literature: why are social movements sites of emancipatory learning? The core question at the root of this study is: how do Leftists learn to struggle through social movement organizing?

**Purpose & Theoretical Framework**

There are two purposes for this study. First, it is to contribute to the rich and growing analysis of learning embedded in social movements. Second, the study brings attention to an under-analyzed aspect of social movement learning: learning embedded in the activities that constitute social movement organizing. The conceptualization of social
movement organizing is derived from the dialectical materialist socialist theory of praxis rooted in the works of Karl Marx and developed by revolutionary socialist theorists such as C.L.R. James (1948; 1980; 1989), Gramsci (2010), Cabral (1979), Freire (1978; 1985; 2010), Cox and Nilsen (2014); Nilsen and Cox (2013), Barker (2001); Harnecker (2009; 2013). I refer to this theory as Marxist movement theory.

Marxist movement theory views social movements as achievements of human learning (Allman, 2001). In particular, it views social movements as the result of pedagogical processes facilitated and sustained by networks of organic intellectuals who together constitute a movement’s leadership. Gramsci (2010) explains that among these organic intellectuals are organizers. Organizers are individuals who are most intimately responsible for the development popular social movement forces (i.e. mass organizations) that serve as the vehicles through which people are recruited into social struggle. Such vehicles are also the spaces in which movement leadership is developed. Given the pedagogical concept of social movement the question at the heart of the study is about the pedagogical or learning processes through which people become organizers. However, I am not interested in the development of all organizers. This is a critical ethnography rooted in my own socio-political values. As such, I am specifically interested in the development of Left leadership in and of social movements; and in particular, I am interested in the learning embedded in Left social movement organizing praxis.

To further frame this study, I draw on Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), which is a dialectical materialist theory with substantial theoretical underpinnings in the works of Karl Marx (Elhammoumi, 2006; Sawchuk, 2003; 2006). Central to CHAT is the notion that human consciousness is produced through human
existence within a particular set of social relations (Marx, 1993). The most abstract yet meaningful unit of human existence or human life is the human activity system (Leontiev, 1978). Each activity system consists of multiple individuals engage in cooperative work in order fulfill their own individual needs, as well as the collective need to transform elements of their conditions to do so (Sawchuk, 2003). Through participation in concrete activities people encounter different problems, which extend from historical contradictions embedded within the activity system. It is through engagement with the problems arising from these contradictions that people experience learning. Learning in this context is a processual change that improves an individual’s or a group’s ability to perform their work (Youn & Baptiste, 2007). At its most dramatic, learning may entail the complete transformation of collective praxis (Engestrom, 1987).

CHAT is useful for this study in that it provides dialectical theoretical concepts, which provide a concrete conceptualization of activity or praxis. Such a concept is necessary for being able to develop a concrete understanding of organizing as a praxis, as opposed to what Stuart Hall (1997) refers to as an “empty signifier” (p. 6). That is, a concept loaded with connotations, but lacking in concrete material rootedness. CHAT’s conceptualization of human praxis allows us to ground organizing in the material actions and interactions of real people within actual historically specific contexts.

**Research Questions**

In order for me to investigate learning embedded in Left organizer praxis, I developed a primary research question and three secondary research questions along with sub-questions. The research questions are guided by Marxist movement theory and
Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). Marxist movement theory informs my understanding of social movement organizing. CHAT provides the conceptual framework for learning and activity. CHAT posits learning as a processual outcome of people’s activity (Youn & Baptiste, 2007).

Learning occurs when people engage with contradictions and develop processes, and means of resolving the contradiction or managing the contradictions (Lord, 2009). From this perspective to understand learning requires that we understand what people are doing and what they are trying to achieve through their actions. It also requires that we understand the various systems of praxis (thought and action) that people are acting within (their activities) in order to make sense of their goals and actions.

**Primary question:** How do Grit City Left organizers learn to through social movement organizing?

**Secondary research questions:**

1. How do Left organizers go about engaging in movement organizing?
   a. What are the activity systems that constitute these organizers social movement organizing?

2. What are the different contradictions embedded in movement organizing activities?
   a. How are the manifested in these organizers’ activity?
   b. How do these organizers perceive and engage with the products of contradictions and the contradictions themselves?

3. What are the forms of learning that occur as a result of engaging with contradictions?
Definition of Theoretical Concepts

In this study I focus on the learning of Left organizers engaged in working-class organizing projects in one city. To provide a conceptual/theoretical framework for this study I draw on Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) to analyze and develop insights about learning. I also draw on Marxist theoretical perspectives on class-struggle, revolutionary leadership, and social movements to anchor the study. I begin first by discussing the key concepts that underpin CHAT’s conceptualization of learning. Second, I provide a discussion of Marxism, and its relevance to conceptualizing social movements.

CHAT & Learning

CHAT is a dialectical materialist theory rooted in early efforts by Vygotsky, Leontiev, and others within the cultural-historical school, to develop a Marxist psychology, (Elhammoumi, 2006; Wersch, 1985) during the revolutionary Soviet Union. Since then theory has maintained those roots, and has been developed to specifically analyze human development/learning. Theorists such as Langmeyer and Roth (2006), Sawchuk (2003; 2006; 2013) and Stetsenko and Arievitch (2004) have argued that in order for CHAT to maintain its use for connecting people’s everyday activity to aims of emancipatory social change must maintain and further build on those Marxist roots. CHAT posits that human development/learning is fundamentally a social process that occurs through human activity. From a CHAT perspective learning is a particular kind of processual outcome of human activity. It occurs when people through their efforts to
resolve contradictions of their activity generate new and improved ways of performing work. These improvements can take the form of using new tools, developing tools, constructing different goals, and reforming their activity, or generating a new activity system.

Activity

Activity is the minimal meaningful unit of analysis of human agency. In CHAT an activity is a collectively developed and sustained system oriented by a common object. An object is both material and ideational. That is, it has both a form replete with specific historically developed properties, and also a conceptual-projective form rooted in people’s understanding of their present and future needs. Every activity or activity system consists of goal directed actions or tasks that are performed by individuals or groups of people within a community. Here, community refers to those individuals who are participating in the development, and upkeep of a particular activity system. Each goal-directed action or task is constituted by sequences of operations. Operations are the most easily visible dimensions of activity. These are the specific acts people do as part of realizing an action. Operations are condition determined forms human agency. This means they are techniques people use to address the particular prevailing cultural and material conditions in which they exist in order to realize their conscious goals. To achieve a goal and the object of an activity people use tools. Tools may be mental/intellectual, and/or physical in nature. Every activity system has a division of labor and sets of rules that govern them. The division of labor refers to the hierarchical or vertical organization of roles, duties, and responsibilities and also the horizontal
distribution of roles, duties and responsibilities. This structure may be explicitly outlined within the rules or may be informally practiced. Similarly, rules, can be formally or informally held conventions that uphold the order of an activity system.

**Historicity, Mediation & Contradictions**

All of the different infrastructural components of activities are internally related, meaning that each is required for the other exist. In other words, they mediate each other. Tools mediate the relationship between actions and goals; operations mediate the relationship between prevailing conditions and actions, and goals mediate the relationship between the collectively held or shared object-motive of activity and the individually held motive/needs of subjects within an activity system. Within activity contradictions can exist. Contradiction are historically rooted incongruences within the infrastructure of an activity. It may exist between any of the aforementioned components of activities. Contradictions can also occur between the different elements of overlapping activity systems. In order for learning to occur, contradictions must become perceivable to people participating in an activity. Engestrom (1987) refers to this as the contradiction becoming aggravated. Another way to put it is that the contradiction generates tensions (i.e. conditions that people can feel), which prompts people to the need to question, investigate, and attempt to alleviate the tension, by changes in the structure of their activity.

The following section describes key concepts from Marxist social movement theory and Cultural Historical Activity Theory, which are important to framing the understanding social movement organizing and learning in this study.
Social Movement

A particular mode of social struggle in which people have developed distinct project for social change that seeks to up-end some core aspect or all of the existing social order (Cox & Nilsen, 2014). The measure of a movement is not whether it has the immediate capacity to bring about such transformation; rather, it is whether such a project, should it achieve such capacity would it result transformation (Nilsen & Cox, 2005). By its very nature at the minimal a social movement entails proposed changes that would affect the lives of people across the institutionally defined geographic boundaries of a society. At its maximum a social movement would affect the lives of people across the institutional borders of nation-states. Despite variations or differences, a social movement consists of unifying identity through which all members by virtue of their political aims, practices, and goals are recognizable to each other, as well as to the rest of the society.

Every movement despite its national or global vision consists of three levels of struggle which are dialectically connected (Nilsen & Cox 2005). The first was already mentioned is a project for transformation, which defines the movement. But this project also serves as kind of directive artifact that also provides underlying logic for broad-based campaigns of policy and institutional change, as well as for militant localized struggles, both of which can and often do occur without a particular movement project guiding them. In fact, it is these modes of struggle that provide the historical material from which social movement projects emerge (Nilsen, 2015; Thompson, 1966).
The Left

The Left refers to those people, who some may refer to as the hard left or the far left. These are those people who hold that liberation (from alienation and for full human development) and the abolition of historical social oppression (e.g. patriarchy, exploitation, and racism) cannot be achieved under capitalism (Allman, 2001; Bannerji, 1995; Harnecker, 2009). Broadly speaking, a Leftists is defined here as a social activist who holds the view that the working-class in alliance with other oppressed social groups must lead the movement for socialist transformation. Socialist transformation or socialism refers to an actual social movement, as opposed to an economic system. As Allman (2001) and Postone (1996) note socialism is a revolutionary social movement, which aims to transform and create new social institutions that participatory, democratic, and foster human solidarity, and development of human capacities (Marx, 1988).

Left Organizer

In this study an organizer is a particular kind of leader who works to bring more and more people into alignment with an organization’s vision and practices of political struggle and social change, thereby increasing the collective capacity to bring about social change (McAlevey, 2016). Collectively, organizers represent a level and type of leadership within movements (Morris & Staggenborg, 2002). A Left organizer is an organizer who seeks to build or expand the capacity of a group to struggle for socialist transformation (Harnecker, 2009; Mann, 2011, McAlevey, 2016. They take up their organizing work, no matter how small in terms of political outcome as part of a broader strategy for building the political power of working-class and oppressed social groups.
Working-class

In this study working-class those people whose necessity to sell their labor serves as the bedrock of the material production of human society. Furthermore, “working-class” also refers to the particular cultures produced as a result of the particular material conditions and everyday experiences of working-class people.

Middle-class

Like working-class people, middle class people must sell their labor to survive. It is not their income per se that defines their class position. Rather, it is the role their labor plays within society’s institutions. The objective or institutional middle class are those people whose labor consists of controlling and directing institutional knowledge production within society. They construct the ideological systems used to manage and subordinate working-class people, as well as those, which buttress and reproduce hegemonic institutions within capitalist society.

Capitalist Ruling Class

This consists of leaders of economic industries who through the institution of the market dominate the institutions of the State. The capitalist ruling class consists of a network of military elites, business people, and politicians that together command the institutions of society, and with the help of middle class agents are able to subordinate working people through ideological hegemony and the use of coercion and force.
Organization of the dissertation

Chapter two of this dissertation entails a critical review of social movement theory and key concepts from key traditions that I understand to be useful to my study. The section begins with a brief overview of U.S. social movement theory starting with its roots in European social psychological theories of collective action. I then go on to critically review the major social theoretical perspectives in U.S. social movement theory in terms of its suitability to explore the social movement organizing. I argue that Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) and New Social Movement Theory (NSMT) do not appropriately conceptualize social movements in ways to understand the concrete activity of people in the making of movements. Furthermore, I argue that Marxism, as a rich body of literature, contains within it (albeit diffused throughout) useful theoretical tools for conceptualizing social movements. These tools allow for inquiry that permits scholars to center movements and movement organizing, as dialectical human developmental/learning processes.

In chapter three I provide a critical overview of the literature on social movement learning. I argue that social movement learning scholars make a valuable argument for viewing social movements as sites of emancipatory learning. Moreover, I contend that the Marxist perspective on social movement learning is more appropriate, because it not only recognizes movements as sites where emancipatory learning may happen, it also situates learning within existing social relations of society, and argues that social movements themselves are products of learning.

Chapter four provides an overview of the theoretical underpinnings and core concepts of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). Chapter five of the overall
research design for this study. The chapter begins with a brief overview of conventional ethnography. The chapter continues by discussing critical ethnography. In particular I discuss the appropriateness of critical ethnography for the study of social movement learning and organizing within this study. Fourth, this chapter details an overview of the sample selection and site of the study, as well as the data collection tactics and data analysis used throughout the study.

In chapter six I discuss the findings from the data using CHAT as a my primary theoretical/interpretative perspective. Specifically, using CHAT’s concept of praxis (activity) I discuss the activity systems and the internal mediations of those activities, which constitute social movement organizing. I then provide examples of the contradictions and forms of learning that occurred among different organizers as a result of their participation in social movement organizing activity. Chapter seven consists of the conclusions, implications for theory and practice, and recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2: A Critical Review of Theories of Social Movements

Classical Theories of Social Movements

Early U.S. social movement theory has its roots in the functionalist perspective on social movements. This perspective is best captured in what has been referred to as the mass society thesis (Kornhauser, 1959). The mass society thesis is rooted in the functionalist perspective of social organization (Durkheim, 1897; Le Bon, 1896; 1899; 1913). The basis of classical social movement theory is the assumption that society, more or less, spontaneously forms with a natural equilibrium. At times profound social transformative changes occur as result of changes in human activity (e.g. technological change). These changes result in a disruption of natural societal equilibrium. The basis of this natural societal equilibrium are communal networks, which provide the foundation for norms and values that bond people together and provide mechanisms for social control (i.e. order). Classical social movement theorists argue that disruptions in social order. These disruptions create unstable social conditions, which stimulate the emergence of contentious collective behaviors or collective action, of which social movements are presumed to be a form (Blumer, 1951; Smelser, 1962). In general, classical perspectives on social movements have also been classified as strain and break theories of movements (Buechler, 2004).

Within the classical perspective there are two general orientations (Kornhauser, 1959). On one side there is what Kornhauser refers to as the aristocratic perspective, and the other side there is the pluralist democratic perspective. The aristocratic perspective is exemplified by Le Bon (1896; 1899; 1913). For Le Bon, a healthy society not only has a certain equilibrium to it, but that such a society naturally produces elites to govern it. In
other words, Le Bon assumes the natural state of society is one of inequality. Those who hold elite institutional and economic positions do so because they that is the natural order of things. Similarly, Kornhauser (1959) views social movements as the mobilization of disaffected people as a result of dis-equilibrium within society. For Kornhauser, the destruction of communal bonds and an increasing de-legitimization of social institutions (e.g. family, religion, government, etc.) generates a population of alienated people are potential sources of mass activism. That is, they can be persuaded to engage in mass protests as they search for ways to re-establish community bonds and restore for themselves a sense of order and belonging.

Kornhauser (1959) views social movements as indications that society’s institutions are no longer providing the proper mediation between elites in society and the masses. Without proper civil institutional mediation elites can be pressured by the influences of the masses. On the other hand, the masses can be manipulated by different sections of the elites for their benefit (p. 41). On one hand, the manipulation of the alienated by the elites leads to totalitarianism (p. 37). On the other hand, counter-elites (e.g. the Communists, p. 34) and the masses can lead to the destruction of freedom (i.e., a stable civil dialogue between different groups about the condition of society, p. 41).

Kornhauser’s perspective can be understood as a liberal democratic politics based in a pluralist view of societal power relations (McAdam, 1982). Pluralism assumes that the natural and normal organization of power in society is one in which no one group holds more power over society than the other. This perspective assumes that society naturally consists of both elites and masses, which are held in check through social institutions. These institutions provide the civil discourses pertaining to the governance of
society. For this reason, social movements are dangerous, because they threaten such a balance in power relations (Kornhauser, 1959, p. 41).

Similar to Kornhauser (1959), Smelser (1962) also considers the disruption of societal equilibrium or strain to be an important factor in the emergence of social movements. However, Smelser argues that there are five other factors in the emergence of social movements. In agreement with Kornhauser, he notes that structural strain generates a greater openness to alternative beliefs among the population of those being negatively affected by the strain. The growth of such beliefs among an affected group is necessary for the formation of collective action. Nevertheless, beliefs and strain are insufficient for collective action to occur. The other factors are structural conduciveness, social control mechanisms, precipitants, and mobilization processes (p. 15-17).

Structural conduciveness refers to the social organization of a place, a society, or an environment. According to Smelser different places, societies, or environments encourage certain kinds of collective action. Relatedly, the particular mechanisms of social control (e.g. actions of institutional leaders, authorities, and organizations) play an important role in whether different forms of collective action occur. One way in which social control mechanisms come into play is the way in which institutional leaders and authorities address the effects of structural strain. The way a crisis is handled can prevent the mobilization of movement groups and limit the grown the threatening beliefs. There are also the ways in which authorities suppress collective actions and restore order (p. 17). Precipitants or precipitating factors can be thought of as concrete expressions of social antagonism or social contradictions. These moments reveal such underlying relations in such a way that they become a point of mobilization. The last factor is
mobilization. Smelser defines mobilization as the actual moment of collective action or collective outbursts by groups, guided or directed by leaders (p. 17).

Another variation within the classical perspective is relative deprivation theory. Like mass society theory, relative deprivation assumes that societal changes generate strain within the different elements of society. However, they argue that strain is subjectively understood by people within the context of everyday lives. In other words, societal strain and deprivation is relative to people’s normal existence. As such, people participate in collective action when they feel or perceive that their conditions of life could be better (Buechler, 2004; Gurr, 1970; Piven & Cloward, 1977).

**Pro-Mobilization Theories of Social Movements**

In the end of the 1960s into the 1970s and the 1980s marked a major change in the prominence of the classical theory of social movements (Buechler, 2004; McAdam, 1982). The change was ushered in with a series of critiques and emergence of what I refer to as a pro-mobilization theories of social movements (Gamson, 1968; McAdam, 1982; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Morris, 1984; Oberschall, 1983; Tilly, 1978). I label these theoretical contributions pro-mobilization theories, because they share the assumption that social movements are forms of collective action that are rationally constructed in order to bring about desired changes. These perspectives also reject the notion that society has a natural state of harmony. Rather, they assume society to be rife with various social antagonisms, tensions, and therefore, grievances (McAdam, 1982; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Lastly, these theories share a common positive view of social movements, as a means through which social groups can shape policy and improve their social
conditions (Edwards & Gillham, 2004). In the following sections I discuss the two main traditions within the pro-mobilization paradigm: resource mobilization theory and political process theory¹

**Resource Mobilization Theory**

Resource mobilization theory (RMT) emerged most potently as a theoretical perspective with the works of McCarthy and Zald (1973; 1977). RM theorists argue that existence of social tensions and grievances are necessary for social movements to form, however, they are not the primary factor in the formation of movements. Rather, it is the mobilization of resources that is primary in the development of social movements (Edwards & Gillham, 2013; Jenkins, 1983; McCarthy & Zald, 1973; 1977). From this perspective, social movement organizations are important in that they are structured ensembles of resources. The most emphasized kind of resource in RMT is money (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004; Edwards & Gillham, 2013; McCarthy & Zald, 1973; 1977; 2001). Although monetary resources continue to be the central focus of RMT, the perspective has acknowledged the importance of different kinds of resources in the production of social movements.

In total Edwards and McCarthy (2004) list five types of resources, of which one set of resources is monetary and material resources. Other resources are human resources, _______

¹ McCarthy and Zald (2001) and Edwards and Gillham (2004) consider RMT to consists of both an entrepreneurial-organizationalist perspective and a political process perspective. However, some theorists of the political process perspective (McAdam, 1982) consider RMT and PPT to be two independent perspectives. Here I refer to RMT as synonymous with the entrepreneurial-organizationalist perspective. Although there is substantial cross-over in terms of theorists, there are also some real differences between both, which should be recognized.
moral resources, cultural resources, and social organizational resources. Human resources consist of people who can carry out the work of a movement. Among them are leaders, which are individuals with particular skills and know-how that are useful to carrying out specific tasks of a movement (Edwards, & McCarthy, 2004; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Morris & Staggenborg, 2002). Other kinds of resources outlined by Edward and McCarthy (2004) are cultural resources. They describe these as:

…. conceptual tools and specialized knowledge that have become widely, though not necessarily universally, known. These include tacit knowledge about how to accomplish specific tasks like enacting a protest event, holding a news conference, running a meeting, forming an organization, initiating a festival, or surfing the web. This category includes tactical repertoires, organizational templates, technical or strategic know-how encompassing both mobilization and production technologies (p. 126).

Their notion of cultural tools seems to be limited to the cultural context of movement network, and does not pertain to socio-cultures of a particular social group (e.g. working-class Black American culture, etc.). Perhaps, a better way to think about these cultural resources, are as tools of the field or as forms of human capital (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004).

The authors list moral resources and social organizational resources as important categories of resources. According to Edwards and McCarthy (2004), moral resources consist of: “legitimacy, solidarity support, sympathetic support, and celebrity” (p. 125). I
agree that each of these elements are important resources for social movement groups; however, the authors are unclear as to how each of these are moral in nature. Each of these resources are both products of a movement group’s activities within a particular set of socio-cultural relations. Solidarity support comes from groups that share political affinity with the other. I see nothing moral about such support. Rather, it is political and practical. Sympathetic support and celebrity support are given because the group is perceived to be morally in good standing. And as such this support may amplify the legitimacy of the group.

The authors also miss the fact that support from sources may be perceived in ways that de-legitimize the group from the perspective of others. Edwards and McCarthy seem to assume a universally shared moral framework throughout society. They overlook the fact that U.S. society is differentiated along gendered and racialized class experiences. Therefore, notions of morality and legitimacy depend on particular social standpoints. In terms of social organizational resources, they list three kinds: infrastructural, social networks, and organizations (p. 127). Edwards and McCarthy do not provide actual examples of infrastructural resources, aside from likening them to public goods like “the post office”, “the roads”, and “the internet” (p. 127). I think it is safe to assume that infrastructures are whatever available space, tools, etc. found within social environments that can be used to support collective struggle. For example, the use of public libraries, coffee shops, small restaurants, and food courts as meeting spaces. Social networks refer to the specific kinds of connections between people that can be used as means of sharing information, recruiting, and mobilizing for collective action. For example, an organizer may have friends in a motorcycle club. They can use this friend’s connection to
motorcyclists to perhaps spread a message across a geographic area. They may also make use of other organizations, which can provide technical support to them, or they can enter into coalition with such organizations in order to boost their political capacity (Edward & Gillham, 2013).

RM theorists have attempted to illustrate how their framework can accommodate different aspects of movements that have been raised by others. However, what they have done is merely expand the capitalist/neo-classical economic logic to these different concerns. They have created new economic inputs to feed the machine. The problem is that what is missing an actual perspective on (a) how people develop such skills, (b) how different resources mediate others, and (c) a concept of conflict, contradiction, and change within movement organizations, and the movements more broadly. In other words, the development of social movement organizations is viewed as a technocratic process, when in all reality it is a political-pedagogical process (De Smet, 2015).

RMT has enriched social movement theory, by providing a focus on the significance of formal social movement organizations as engines of social struggle. The theory has also elevated the significance of diverse kinds of resources (e.g. labor power, leaders, culture, money, networks, and material). However, there are some theoretical problems that limit the effectiveness of RMT as a theory of social movements. RMT’s concept of social movement remains problematic. I begin with the core definition of the RMT, which has been provided by McCarthy and Zald (1977). They define social movements in the following manner:
A social movement is a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society. A countermovement is a set of opinions and beliefs in a population opposed to a social movement. As is clear, we view social movements as nothing more than preference structures directed toward social change (1217-1218).

According to this definition of social movement, a movement is nothing more than defined values, ideas, and preferences held particular social groups within society. From my perspective, ideas, values, and preferences for how society should be organized are absolutely part of the social movements. In fact, these constitute the intellectual basis of a movement and the orient a movement. However, I find it deeply problematic that this definition separates the intellectual aspects of movements from the processes of organizing people.

The assumption is that collectively shared opinions, beliefs, and proposals for social change spontaneously form by virtue of being part of the same social group. However, while people may share common conditions, and grievances, it is not guaranteed they will spontaneously come to a shared understanding of what ought to be done (McAdam, 1982; Morris, 1984). Rather, it is through the processes of organizing that collective preferences and proposals are produced. The fact that this is not articulated by the McCarthy and Zald (1977) suggests another blind spot. The authors do not discuss the dialectic of informal and formal organizational processes.
The only organizational processes that are considered to be significant by McCarthy and Zald are those that are related to the workings of formal organizations. The problem is that the informal organizational processes that contribute to the formation of formal organizations, or that interact with formal organizations are under-analyzed. It is often within the realm of the informal that the sources of organizational change reside (Engestrom, 1987). Furthermore, social movement learning, which is expressed as development of resources, strategy, and leadership, are only partially the results of formal organizational processes. Informal processes that are embedded within organizations, and which have their origins in the broader socio-culture of society, shape these forms of learning (See for example Morris, 1984’s discussion of culture in the formation of the Civil Rights movements). The point is that how organizations come to represent a particular group of people is connected to their rootedness within the group’s communities. This effects the ability of such organizations to generate different kinds of resources from within the group.

**Political Process Theory**

Political process theorists argue that while organizations and resources such as labor, money, and facilities are important, they alone do not explain the emergence of social movements. PPT incorporates the Marxian consideration of historical technological processes, uneven support of the political state and group solidarity along with resource mobilization (McAdam, 1982; Oberschall, 1978; Tilly, 1978). Of particular importance to PP theorists is the structure of the social environment. This environment is constituted by political conflicts between elites, as well as economic shifts resulting economic and technological changes (McAdam, 1982; Morris, 1984). These various
political processes establish a dynamic field of struggle replete with distinct opportunities for political mobilization of different movement groups. Tilly (1978, p. 46) contends that the existence of organizations with the capacity to mobilize still require political opportunities to actually catalyze collective action.

Political opportunities can be understood as the perceived possibilities for victory that representatives of a social group can successfully mount a challenge for change (Tarrow, 2011). Meyers (2004) explains that PPT emphasizes the mobilization of people into collective action on the basis of these perceived opportunities. Meyers (2004) explains that activists develop their strategies and goals in accordance with the existing political environment. This political environment or political opportunity structure (Eisinger, 1973) essentially “sets the grievances around which activists mobilize, advantaging some claims and disadvantaging others” (Meyers, 2004, p. 127).

The political opportunity structure is also influenced by the organization of the polity (the dominant groups making up the state) and the dominant political groups operating through the polity (Meyers, 2004, p. 127-128). Those groups that are already within the polity and those which are favored by the polity have lower costs of mobilization, because they encounter little to no resistance from polity members. In fact, they may receive levels of support from such groups (Tilly, 1978). Groups which are favored by the most powerful factions within the polity are likely to receive greater support, and therefore flourish. In the Marxist sense one would say that the class or faction of class dominating the political institutions of the state shapes the terrain upon which social struggle is carried out (Marx, 2011; Poulantzas, 1979). Oberschall (1978) contends that powerful movements can alter the structure of the polity, and become part
of it. In doing so, they improve their ability to further their interests through institutional means (p. 305).

Tilly (1978) explains that ruling elites engage a range of political repression. Some of which may be direct (e.g. use of force). However, a great deal of political repression occurs through institutional processes that increase the level of threat and by extension the perceived costs of engaging in collective struggle. He also notes that in certain cases, repression of one form of collective action can facilitate other kinds of struggle. On the other hand, McAdam (1982) illustrates how elites can actually play a facilitative role for insurgent political movements. He provides the example of how the combination of Black military servicemen and World War 2 discourses around democracy and freedom encouraged Blacks’ demands for political, economic, and civil equality.

In sum PPT centers on the role of elites in shaping the terrain through which movement groups engage in struggle. While PPT recognizes the importance of internal group solidarity, social networks, and leadership, the theory emphasizes the agency of elites and their role in structuring the field of struggle. Consequently, PPT under-appreciates the agency from below of movement organizers and activists. I have to agree with Morris (2000) that “that this formulation locates far too much social movement agency in the hands of external actors” (p. 446). As Morris notes PPT rests on an assumption that political opportunities are generated by the activities of elites. There has been little theoretical development along the lines of social movement subjects’ self-production and generation of political opportunities from below.
PPT offers a definition of social movement that is quite different from RMT. Tilly (1984) provides the basic PPT definition of social movements as:

.... a sustained series of interactions between power-holders and persons successfully claiming to speak on behalf of a constituency lacking formal representation, in the course of which those persons make publicly visible demands for changes in the distribution or exercise of power, and back those demands with public demonstrations of support (p. 306).

There are several key aspects about this definition. First, a social movement exists when there is an ongoing interaction between those in positions of formal power and those who do not have access to the formal levers of power in society. Put another way, movements feature interactions between agents of the state and non-state agents. Such interactions feature public demands along with visible demonstrations as a means to advocate for some sort of change in the distribution of resources and/or the exercise of rule in society. Tarrow provides an alternative definition based on Tilly’s. He defines social movements as “collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities” (p. 9). In both definitions. The central features are common purpose, persistent demands on elites for social change, and a collective identity (membership to a group engaged in struggle). I also see them as superior to the definition proposed by RMT in that they do not separate collective action from the ideational dimension of movements. Furthermore, they center conflict in the very definition of social movement.
At the same time PPT does not provide a clear understanding of the relationship between different forms of contentious collective action. There are different kinds of contentious interactions that a challenging group can have with authorities. For example, there can be militant direct actions such as building take-overs, street closures, and strikes (Nilsen & Cox, 2014). There can be also be electoral challenges, and other forms demonstrations designed to pressure political elites and/or replace political elites with representatives of popular social groups.

This concept of social movement also centers on direct political mobilization against oppositional forces. But social movements consist of kinds of organizing activities, such as constructing alternative institutions (Fernandes, 2010; Gramsci, 2010), such as informal community and workers’ councils, and cooperatives, through which they learn to govern and establish prefigurative social relations. The importance of these alternative structures is that spread the logic of a social movement to others by connecting everyday social life with political ideas. Such institutions can also serve as the basis for stronger more sustainable direct mobilization against political elites (Harnecker, 2015; Larrabure, 2010).

In any case, both RMT and PPT’s focus on structural political opportunities, and resources as primary factors of movement formation, and the mobilization against elites has directed focus away from the actual day-to-day processes of building mobilizing structures and movement infrastructure. Neither of these theoretical frameworks have given sufficient attention to how people learn to perceive and interpret political opportunities, and how they develop political strategy and tactics. Neither RMT nor PPT provide an adequate analysis of how activists’ political practices and social movement
learning (i.e. the learning that occurs in the course of social struggle) contributes to political dynamics, and the formation of new political opportunities.

Moreover, the historical continuity between different social struggles is obscured. This makes an analysis of social movement learning in relation to the overall development of movements difficult, if not impossible, to provide. Someone has to make organizations. They do not incidentally and spontaneously form. The formation of a social movement organization is a product of distinct human processes of organizing. In fact, the development of campaigns, the development strategy, the training up of leaders, the politicization of local networks, the processes of grievance framing, and the forging of coalitions and political linkages between different local institutions that make up the mobilization structures of movements are all products of organizing. Organizing is not spontaneous; it is intentional, strategic, and requires specialized skills and knowledge that must be learned. In other words, organizers undergo a variety of processes through which they learn to be organizers. This renders these theoretical frameworks inadequate for understanding the development/learning of social movement organizers.

**New Social Movement Theory**

NSMT argues that with the post-industrial shift the working-class is no longer the leading force for social transformation (Touraine, 1985), and in fact, class-struggle itself is no longer the driving force of change (Cohen, 1985; Conway, 2004; Finger, 1987; Melucci, 1984; 1989). Melucci (1984) argues that with the move to a post-industrial society, the material mode of production no longer dictates the lines of social conflicts. He describes the new sources of social struggle as struggles over the mode in which
societal institutions and cultural processes make available the resources “for individualization, for self-realization, for an autonomous building of personal and collective identities” (p. 827). In other words, post-industrial era is rooted in lifestyle preferences, identities, communications, and environmental issues (Habermas, 1981; Melucci, 1980). For Melucci, NSMs are the movements of the era and have displaced working-class (socialist) social movements (Buechler, 1995; Conway, 2004; Finger, 1987; Habermas, 1981; Melucci, 1980; 1984; Touraine, 1985).

NSMs are said to be distinct from OSMs (working-class social movements) in terms of their structure, their politics, and the basis of their solidarity or collective subjectivity. While NSMT has a wide variety of theoretical perspectives within them one thing that is shared is the perspective that NSMs have a temporary nature to them. That is, they are not organized for the purpose of long-term transformative projects. The external or public mobilization of NSMs is presumed to be trigger by perceived incursions or colonization of some aspect of their lifeworld (Habermas, 1981). Such incursions may be experienced as cultural codes and institutional processes limiting people’s self-autonomy (Melucci, 1980). Cohen (1985) states that NSMs mobilize for collective action using less bureaucratic organizational forms:

Instead of forming unions or political parties of the socialist, social democratic, or communist type, they focus on grassroots politics and create horizontal, directly democratic associations that are loosely federated on national levels (p. 667).

This perspective is reflected by many of the NSM studies. For example, in Walter (2007) he describes the organizational processes and structures of Clayoquot rainforest activists
as focused on non-hierarchical modes of organizing and ensuring participatory democracy. Melucci (1980) describes this orientation in the following:

> All mediation is rejected as likely to reproduce the mechanisms of control and manipulation against which the struggle is directed in the first place. Hence the importance of direct action and of direct participation, in other words, of the spontaneous, anti-authoritarian, and anti-hierarchical nature of the protests originating in these movements (p. 220).

NSMs focus on anti-hierarchical modes of organizing and participatory democratic practice is also discussed in the works of Eyerman and Jamison (1992), Welton (1993), Buechler (1995), Gibson (2006), and Fernandes (2010). Melucci (1984) describes NSMs as decentralized “movement networks or movement areas” (p. 828). He describes these movements to be primarily embedded and submerged within everyday life, because central to them is enacting the values of their movement through their lifestyles. For Melucci this entails establishing counter-cultural practices based on ideals and values that cannot be assimilated into society without radical social change. In this way he argues that while NSMs struggle for specific reforms, they also serve as a form of media to the rest of society (p. 827).

Another term for these practices is prefigurative politics. These counter-cultural/prefigurative practices are carried out throughout broader social movement networks, some of which are “submerged” and others are more explicit and public (p. 827). Growth of NSMs are said to occur as activists engage in visible confrontations with oppositional forces. These public mobilizations attract to new people who are then
brought into the subcultural networks of the movement where they are socialized (p. 830).

Theorists also contend that NSMs have a different political orientation from working-class movements. For example, Johnston, Gusfield, and Larana (1997) write that "the ideological characteristics of NSMs stand in sharp contrast to the working-class movement and to the Marxist conception of ideology as a unifying and totalizing element for collective action" (p. 6-7). They describe the basic orientation of NSMs in the following way:

NSMs often involve personal and intimate aspects of human life. Movements focusing on gay rights or abortion, health movements such as alternative medicine or antismoking, New Age and self-transformation movements, and the women's movements all include efforts to change sexual and bodily behavior. They extend into arenas of daily life: what we eat, wear, and enjoy; how we make love, cope with personal problems, or plan or shun careers (p. 8).

Cohen (1985) states that rather, than organize and mobilize around the object of political and economic transformation, NSMs engage in a “self-limiting radicalism” that has the object of winning “structural reforms along with a defense of civil society that does not seek to abolish the autonomous functioning of political and economic systems” (p. 663). Similarly, Melucci (1980 asserts that NSMs differ from OSMs in that they do not seek political or social power. Specifically, he states that whereas working-class movements of the past oriented towards efforts “to transform movement into a new power”, NSM activists contend that “conflictual claims and power cannot be held by the
same actors” (p. 831). Social movements from Melucci’s perspective cannot enter into positions of power. They cannot seek or conquer power or else they cease to be social movements. In other words, NSMs remain independent from political institutions.

Lastly, NSMT argues that NSMs are not based on class or any structural position within society (Melucci, 1984). This is supported in the work of Johnston, Gusfield, and Larana (1997) who write:

NSMs do not bear a clear relation to structural roles of the participants. There is a tendency for the social base of new social movements to transcend class structure. The background of participants finds their most frequent structural roots in rather diffuse social statuses such as youth, gender, sexual orientation, or professions that do not correspond with structural explanations (p. 6).

Melucci (1980; 1984), Cohen (1985), and Conway (2004) see identity based on movements as more grounded in the actual everyday life experiences of people. They maintain that the working-class social movements of old were driven by utopian ideas that were not actually rooted in how people really experienced the world.

Although one of the major claims of NSMT is that NSMs are not based on class (Cohen, 1985; Melucci, 1984), there is a general consensus that NSMs do in fact have a middle class basis (Aronowitz, 1992; Cohen, 1985; Croteau, 1995; Kriesi, 1989; Offe, 1985; Rucht, 1988). In fact, Cohen (1985) writes that NSMs:

….do not view themselves in terms of a socioeconomic class. Most observers agree, however, that they come primarily from the "new middle classes,”.... Yet
class background does not determine the collective identities of the actors or the stakes of their action (p. 667).

On one hand Cohen clearly states that NSMs are rooted in the middle classes. But at the same time she asserts that this has no bearing on the collective subjectivity of a movement. Similarly, Johnston, Gusfield, and Larana assert that NSMs transcend class. However, a group’s or groups’ non-identification of their activism with their social class does not mean that their movement activity is not classed. From a Marxist perspective, it is impossible to separate the social relations that organize the material experiences, and by extension the consciousness of people from their activity. I am in agreement with Aronowitz (1992) in regards to the composition and classed nature of NSMs; he writes that NSMs’ leadership and core membership come from “the ranks of various strata of technical, scientific, and cultural intellectuals” and that “the emergence of these movements can hardly be separated from their social composition” (p. 34).

A core assumption of NSMT is that identity is not rooted in material social relations, and that identities that serve as the basis of collective mobilizations. Moreover, these identities are constructed on the basis of shared experiences and preferences for living life (Melucci, 1980; Melucci, 1989, p. 177-178). The conscious desire for living and being a certain way, forms the basis of collective identity. First, I do agree that identity is important. I understand identity to be a particular articulation of a person’s consciousness. To me identity refers to people’s recognition of their most salient relationships to others within a particular context (Bannerji, 1995). I understand identity, as well as the rest of consciousness to be produced through people’s daily activity within the material world. Such activities are always organized by social relations. The
dominant social relation in capitalist society, whether industrial or post-industrial, is class. As such, there is no collective action or movement that is not classed.

Class is a social category. As a social category it is constituted by the internal mediation of material, cultural and political processes (Bannerji, 2005). The material consists of the relations and processes producing specific objective conditions that give shape to concrete activities through which people produce themselves. The cultural refers to the particular historically derived modalities through which people carry out various aspects of their life activity. It also consists of the semiotic/symbolic aspects, which provide the interpretative frameworks people use to generate meaning in their lives. The political entails the ways in which people participate in processes of self-organization. These are the specific activities taken up in order to challenge aspects of institutional processes or the social order as a whole. People do so in order to change or sustain their way of life. There is no “class” that is not constituted by all of these processes. It is therefore, in my view, not possible for any mode or level of struggle to be conducted by a collective that is not classed. Hence, even struggles carried out around a specific issue or carried for the general good are carried out according to the class modality of the leading protagonists of that mode of struggle (Aronowitz, 1992).

Given my view social class, I conclude that NSMs are primarily middle class movements. In referring to them as such, I do not mean to imply that there are no working-class people involved. However, what determines the class nature of a struggle is the modality through which the struggle is carried out, the composition of its constituent base, and who stands to benefit from the particular proposals being advanced. Allow to me to provide an anecdote. As a railroad maintenance worker, I am a member of
the Brotherhood of Maintenance and Ways Employes Division of the International Brotherhood of the Teamsters (BMWED-IBT). As an activist member of the BMWED-IBT, I participated in at least three different coalition meetings in which middle class environmental activists representing the local environmental movement have sought support from our union to help curb oil train routes through the city.

My union’s leadership has been spectacularly progressive on a range of different issues. But the issue of oil trains and freight train routes is a difficult one, because on one hand it is good for the environment to stop these routes; it is also in the immediate interests of coal miners, and our union members to maintain those routes, because they provide jobs. Prior to entering into the coalition, the environmentalists had been perceived as, as one fellow member put it, “privileged kids who don’t know anything about hard work” (personal communication, 5/5/2013). There is no doubt that having clean water and air to breath is in the interest of all people; it is especially in the interest of working-class people.

However, middle class activists had not considered the specific material realities of working-class people. They had also not understood that a privilege of their material class and cultural socialization had permitted them privilege of considering the medium and long term consequences of environmental devastation in a manner that was free of considerations of economic survival. Being in the coalition with our union along with others helped, because members consistently raised the question of jobs, community economic support, and general livelihoods. This lead to joint exploration of policies such as the just transition legislation, which is currently being discussed through the union. In short just transition would allow workers in extractive and environmentally damaging
occupations to transition into occupations with comparable remuneration. This allowed our union leadership to generate rank-in-file support for stopping several proposals to expand oil routes, even when it meant more jobs for our members. In this example, the environmentalists and my union found a working-class approach to curbing environmental devastation in this one particular way. The success of these mobilizations against oil train routes expansion also established pedagogical opportunities for union members to learn more about the link between political economy and wellness.

There are other examples, how class shapes movement activities. Flacks (1988), Croteau (1995), Stout (1996), and Morris and Staggenborg (2002) each outline the ways in which class heavily influences patterns of advanced formal education. They argue that people’s participation in advanced formal educational processes are a key mediation of their participation in movement activities, and political work more broadly. Croteau and Flacks both contend that those most likely to act as movement leaders and social activists are socialized through their middle class life experiences (e.g. upbringing, formal education, and occupations) to seek out opportunities to participate in governance and other kinds of creative activities through which they can more fully express themselves. Flacks (1988) writes: “The college educated…. expect careers that provide work that is intrinsically meaningful and self-expressive” (p. 54). Flacks suggests that carries over into social activism.

Croteau (1995) writes that some middle class activists “clearly find social rewards in their political activities, through making friends and sharing social and cultural interests, in addition to political concerns” (p. 122). This coincides with NSM theorists’ observations that NSMs form strong countercultures (Conway, 2004; Melucci, 1984).
Furthermore, Croteau (1995) writes that in Left social movements “political activists also tend to have strong movement cultures in which people share cultural and political interests” that are not based in abstract political issues, but in their own material reality. In other words, the cultures that are formed are not simply movement collective identities and cultures, but political middle class subcultures that working-class people in general do not share (p. 123). Consequently, “working people…. who do not share in the cultural background, skills, lifestyles, or material resources of middle-class activists are unlikely to find middle-class social movements (i.e. NSMs) a comfortable or rewarding environment for self-expression or self-fulfillment” (p. 123).

NSMT makes an implicit assertion that the post-industrial shift in advanced western societies made working-class movements marginal to this kind of society, and irrelevant to social analysis (Melucci, 1984). But this is a kind of economic reductionism. NSMT assumes that the postindustrial shift (i.e. economic reorganization), is the primary factor in the prevalence of so-called NSMs, and the marginalization of working-class movements. Missing from NSMT are considerations of the political processes that have dismantled key movement projects of the working-class (Dray, 2010). I agree that shifts in the economic organization of advanced capitalist economies has played a role in the weakening of working-class movements. In the U.S. the dominant working-class social movement project has been trade unionism (De Smet, 2015). The reorganization of the capitalist economy by shifting manufacturing and heavy industrial production across national boundaries has meant a substantial weakening of trade union density (Anner, 2011; Fantasia & Voss, 2004).
However, even before this economic reorganization, trade unionism has been constrained by political processes from the capitalist ruling classes. For example, the usage of Taft-Hartley legislation has limited key union tactics, such as, secondary boycotts and sympathy strikes. In eliminating unions’ legal right to use these tactics, the political agents of the capitalist class or the capitalist movement broke up key methods of inter-union solidarity, which tilted the balance of power towards employers (Murolo & Chitty, 2001). The legislation also consisted of anti-communist provisions, which were used to force out over one million socialist and supposedly socialist union members (Fletcher Jr. & Gapasin, 2008). These political attacks on the trade unions effectively neutralized much of the Left leadership simultaneously empowering what has been called business unionism, as opposed to class-based movement unionism (Anner, 2011). As unions became more focused on their immediate membership, they shifted resources away from political development of the rank-in-file; they curtailed organizing non-union workers; they gave up fights to control socio-economic production, for benefits for members through collective bargaining (Anner, 2011; Dray, 2010; Fantasia & Voss, 2004). All of these union leadership decisions meant the unions were not prepared to organize for economic shifts. As unions experienced losses through collective bargaining they turned to politics, but only in a limited way. They contributed money and support for candidates that promised to improve union bargaining conditions.

The evisceration of trade unionism has meant that the U.S. working-class no longer has a movement organization through which it can struggle for social change. Given the organization of working-class life, trade unions have been the accessible organizational vehicles for exercising collective agency, and engaging in political
developmental processes (Spencer, 2005). One main reason for this is that unions are
directly connected to working people’s livelihoods. Participation in the union has a more
direct connection to workers’ ability to improve their material circumstances. As such the
union, at its best, combines the struggle for short-term politico-economic goals with long-
term working-class political development. Furthermore, the union is able to use its
collective resources from dues to provide necessary educational processes for members
without them losing pay. Unions also build into collective bargaining agreements union
committee clauses, which permit members to attend union trainings and classes without
being disciplined by the employer.

To return to a point that Tilly (1978) and Oberschall (1978) make, the particular
nature of the union lowers the cost of engaging in collective action, and in undergoing
political training for working-class people. NSMs lack this kind of organizational
capacity, and linkage to working-class people’s livelihoods, and as such come with a high
material cost of participation. While the previous points do not exhaust the political
explanation for the marginalization of working-class movements, they do illustrate that
internal union politics, and the politics of anti-labor forces have had substantial impact on
working-class movements. Therefore, the contention that economic reorganization
provides the best explanation for the emergence of identity-based movements (i.e. NSMs)
as the most common forms of social struggle is, at best, inadequate. Rather, the weakness
of political leadership and the vigor of Capital’s repression of Labor are central factors.

In my view NSMT’s contribution to understanding how people, and particular
working-class people learn to struggle is far from adequate. On the other hand, I do think
NSMT has provided key observations about the characteristics of middle class modalities
of struggle. I also think NSMT has contributed to social movement theory by creating conceptual space for consideration of the importance of emotions, movement cultural networks, interpersonal relations, the importance of knowledge production, and the identity within social struggle (Jasper, 2011; Polletta & Jasper, 2001). I also think the notion of collective identities and related collective identity artifacts (e.g. language, organizing approaches, symbols, meetings structures, etc.) are important aspects of movement mediation that should be explored (Allman, 2001; Anner, 2011; Blunden, 2011; Melucci, 1989). While I do not agree with NSM theorists that these processes are unique to middle class movements, I do think that exploration of these different inner mediations of social struggle has been underdeveloped within RMT, PPT, and within the works of some of the more popular Marxist theorists. Nevertheless, there are some notable exceptions within the Marxist tradition (Bannerji, 1995; 2011; Barker, 2014; Cabral, 1979; Fantasia, 1988; Gramsci, 2010; James, 1989; Nilsen & Cox, 2014; Thompson, 1966; Williams, 1977 to name a few).

**Recent Marxist Approaches to Social Movements**

More recently, Marxists have begun to explicate social movement concepts from past Marxist writings to construct an evolving framework for understanding twenty-first century movements and the potential for developing a transformative social movement of subaltern and oppressed social groups (Barker, Cox, Krinsky & Nilsen, 2014). This perspective conceptualizes social movement and movements as both the object of social struggle, and also the point of departure for social struggle (Nilsen, 2014). As such, it places the development of human agency and consciousness at the center of movement
Social movements do not appear from thin air. They are produced and constituted by the activities of real people at specific times, in specific places, living under specific socio-economic conditions, and confronting particular daily circumstances. The traditional Marxist assumption that existing social antagonisms stemming from the mode of social production are the wellspring of social struggle remains a substantive point of departure. Unlike many functionalist interpretations of Marx and other Marxists, it is not the abstract mode of production that encourages collective struggle; rather it is the dialectical interplay of both the perception of actual oppression and belief that collective struggle is the only means to preserve a group of people’s culturally and historically accepted standard of life (Cox, 1999; Thompson, 1966). It is at this point that historical analysis has shown time and time again that people become primed for social struggle.

Cox (1999), as does Marx (2010b) explains that movements emerge first out of the daily material circumstances of people. At first they emerge as a struggle against an immediate threat, a common enemy, or a new form or increased intensity of oppression; and then perhaps through learning they become a collective subject engaged in transformation of society in order to realize the fundamental needs of this new social subject (James, 1989; Thompson, 1966).

Nilsen and Cox (2014) are careful to begin their outline of movement processes by stressing that social movements emerge out of existing cultural-historical networks that constitute the everyday lives of communities of people. People experience much of everyday life through the imperatives of capitalism (Lebowitz, 2014), which is culturally and historically mediated through the relations of class, gender, race, and other relations.
of difference (Bannerji, 1995; Carpenter & Mojab, 2011). Nevertheless, among different communities of people there are modes of thinking, acting, knowing, and experiencing life that are in contradiction with the hegemony of capitalist society. These contradictory modes of knowing, thinking, acting, and experiencing life serve as the germ seeds of transformative social praxis.

For Marxists and other critical-revolutionary theorists, educators, and activists it is necessary to explore the prevailing historically formed cultures of communities. When people become part of protests, campaigns, or movement projects they do not come as individuals. They come as members of networks of people. They come “as people who already had particular ways of understanding their situation and acting upon it” (Cox, 2014, p. 134). They bring with them their own sense of what struggle is, and how struggle should be conducted.

In order to better understand the development of movements it is necessary to recognize the distinction of between different forms of collective struggle without creating binaries. Within literature on collective struggle there are two competing tendencies. One tendency has been to collapse all forms of collective struggle into the category of ‘social’ movement (Gibson, 2006). The other tendency has been to define social movements by the scale of their mobilizations, so as to separate it from less spectacular public demonstrations like union organizing drives, local protests around particular issues, and community organizing work (Stall & Stoeker, 1998). Consequently, neither of these tendencies allow for an analysis of how people in struggle might develop different levels of struggle. Drawing on concepts presented in the works of Nilsen and Cox (2014a), Cox (2014), Nilsen (2005), and Nilson and Cox (2014b) I understand social
movements to be social transformative processes consisting of different modes of struggle. Nilsen and Cox (2014) articulate three interconnected and dialectically constitutive modes of struggle. These modes of struggle are: militant particularisms, campaigns, and social movement projects.

**Militant Particularisms**

Militant particularism is an organization of struggle in which a collective of people uses their knowledge to develop specific activities to openly confront dominant groups or agents of the ruling groups within “a particular place at a particular time, in a particular conflict over a particular issue” (Nilsen & Cox, 2014, p. 76). Militant particularism is the clear development and articulation of social opposition directly emergent from the oppositional dimensions of a local rationality. Tarrow’s (2011) description of one mode of movement organization matches the concept of militant particularism put forward by Nilsen & Cox (2014) and Cox & Nilsen (2014). Tarrow describes this mode of organization [militant particularism] as “the organization of collective action at the point of contact with opponents”, which can be carried out by formal organizations, by coalitions, or by no particular formal organization at all (Tarrow, 2011, p. 123). One example of militant particularism is a strike, sit-in, or occupation of some space, facility, etc. Militant particularism always involves direct confrontation with agents or representatives of an opposing group.
Campaigns

In some cases, militant particularisms can develop into more general or broader struggles, when activists engaged in different forms of local militancy or protests connect their struggle with others in different areas to develop a broader campaign. A campaign is constituted by a range of activities in which activists coordinate their activities around some set of common demands against a common enemy, whether they be an individual, institution, organization, or policy. Campaign activity transcend particular geographic and spatial boundaries (Nilsen & Cox, 2014; Cox & Nilsen, 2014). Campaigns can be national or even international or they can be municipal. They can take the form of more centralized and tightly organized activities with clear demands and goals like a unionization campaign, or they can be more loose and decentralized with more diverse and flexible sets of demands like Black Lives Matter. Tarrow explains that at the level of campaigns, formal movement organizations play a central role advancing social struggle (2011). Formal movement organizations are central to constructing public grievances and claims in regards to certain aspects of society are organization, and how political change can affect their constituents (Tarrow, 2011, p. 123). Such organizations and modes of organizing are associated with campaigns like minimum wage struggles, health-care struggles, anti-pollution, anti-fracking campaigns, etc.

Social Movement Projects

Should activists adopt the goal of transformation of society as a whole and develop activities that targets society as the object of change then an actual social movement project has developed. Social movement projects consist of militant
particularisms, and campaigns. However, social movement projects differ from these other forms of contentious collective action in that they combine these different modes of struggle into a project for societal transformation, as opposed to addressing one condition or issue. Social movement projects emerge out of a social critique of the power, politics, culture, and economy. Social movement projects entail the synthesis of these critiques into a new concept of how society’s structure of human needs should be organized. Each social movement project articulates (organizationally, politically, and culturally) a particular approach to realizing a proposed direction of social transformation (Cox, 1999, p. 87).

Militant particularisms and campaigns serve as important spaces of struggle where activists may develop social movement projects, as they come up against the limitations of militant particularisms and campaigns. But when a social movement project develops it not only connects with militant particularist struggles, and campaigns, it becomes the orienting and generative source of militant particularisms, and campaigns. In other words, it becomes the directive logic for those modes of struggle.

**Critical Points of Engagement**

Nilsen and Cox (2014) touch on the importance of local rationalities or what they consider to be embedded notions of good sense that can be mobilized for social struggle. They define local rationality as “those aspects of subaltern consciousness that indicate that ‘the social group in question may indeed have its own conception of the world’” (p. 73). I agree with Nilsen and Cox that it is important to understand the ways people mobilize local rationalities for struggle. However, I think they paint too clean of a
picture. They describe local rationality, as a “second form of practical consciousness” (p. 73). However, this implies that two sets of consciousness: one dominated by ruling hegemony, and one that criticizes that hegemony. But people have one consciousness, which consists of contradictory notions, as a result of them participating in activities shot through with contradictions. This implies that everyday resistance to domination is tied up with acts acquiescence to domination. Critiques of oppression and alienation are wrapped up with cultural and ideological support for different forms of oppression and alienation. This also implies that movement organizers and scholars need to look more closely at the concrete everyday activity of those they expect to organize.

In order to understand the process of translation, from everyday resistance into militant particularist collective action, a deeper understanding of everyday resistance is required. For example, spontaneous resistance within the context of day-to-day life cannot bring about policy changes. Nevertheless, it is important to understand, because embedded within that resistance is a logic that may provide the basis of organizing people for a more general level of struggle. For the sake of clarity, my reference to spontaneous everyday resistance refers to the small, seemingly insignificant ways in which individuals and groups subvert existing social relations and material conditions for their own benefit. Certeau (1984) asserts that these kinds of spontaneous everyday resistance are embedded in the culture of a people. He provides an example of this in the following excerpt:

The operational models of popular culture cannot be confined to the past, the countryside, or primitive peoples. They exist in the heart of the strongholds of the contemporary economy. Take, for example, what in France is called la perruque,
"the wig."). La perruque may be as simple a matter as a secretary's writing a love letter on “company time” or as complex as a cabinetmaker's “borrowing” a lathe to make a piece of furniture for his living room... [T]he worker who indulges in la perruque actually diverts time (not goods, since he uses only scraps) from the factory for work that is free, creative, and precisely not directed towards profit... whose sole purpose is to signify his own capabilities through his work and to confirm this solidarity with other workers or his family through spending his time in this way. (Certeau 1984: 25-26)

In this example, everyday resistance is a culturally embedded forms of re-appropriation of workers’ time from Capital. It entails seizing advantages of openings or flexibility within the context of carrying out imperatives of the everyday system. The implicit argument in this excerpt is that human beings, in general, find ways to resist alienation and other forms social domination even when such resistance is in the subtest of ways and without conscious political intention.

Another form of everyday resistance involves the use of existing modes of living (culture) (Clarke, Hall, Jefferson & Roberts, 2006; Willis, 1977) to resist the quotidian workings of dominant institutions. In this case, oppressed social groups and groups within classes engage in forms of resistance to preserve their collective sense of self. At the same time, these same modes of resistance may play into dominant discourses and ideological responsible for their alienation and oppression. Willis (1977) specifically speaks to this in *Learning to Labor: How Working-class Kids Get Working Class Jobs.*
The book focused on the counter-cultural practices of white working-class boys in England. Throughout the study, Willis illustrates the various ways working-class boys mobilized their own working-class cultural frameworks to devise counter-cultural identities. In doing so, they unconsciously championed the anti-establishment ethos of working-class culture by refusing to reform to school rules and behavioral codes. They also adopted anti-schooling dispositions, which was expressed in deliberate efforts to not do well in school and to not conform. A consequence of this resistance, is that the boys reinforced the dominant socialization processes that sorted people into different classed occupations. As the title of the book suggests, the boys assist in their own placement into working-class jobs. The key takeaway is that spontaneous everyday resistance is, more often than not, contradictory in nature. Acts of spontaneous resistance such as *la perruque*, and counter-culture are not sufficient means of transforming social relations.

Everyday resistance is buried deep within the relations of domination within capitalist society. Although analysis can reveal the emancipatory logic of these forms of struggle, those who are engaged in them, by virtue of the informal modality of this kind of resistance are, often, unaware of how to critically use them for transformative social struggle (Willis, 1977). While everyday forms of resistance are “not direct resources for struggle” (Willis, 1977, p. 166), they are rooted in cultures generated by past struggles, and can serve as important dialogical points of mediation for future social struggle. In other words, the products of the past can serve as important raw materials and means of production for the future. This notion of everyday resistance, as culturally embedded in the life of a social group can strengthen the Marxist theory of movements outlined by Nilsen and Cox (2014).
**Everyday Networks & The Role of Organizers**

Social struggle is not sustained only through the strength or formal organizations. Each mode of struggle from everyday resistance to social movement projects are embedded in, and are mediated by, a variety social networks and informal interpersonal relationships. These social networks stem from the everyday activities of the leading activists engaged in struggle (Lefebvre, 2008; Thompson, 1966). By everyday activities, I mean those activities that people engage in to meet their daily cultural, economic, and spiritual needs (i.e., their normal social needs). This entails activities such as, work (going to work, being at work, and coming home from work). It also entails non-work activities (e.g. tailgating for sports event, going to BBQs, having Block Parties, taking care of family, going to religious activities, playing sports at the park, etc.). These different aspects of the everyday serve as important contexts through which people develop their consciousness, and through which they establish interpersonal relationships and links to organizations and institutions that they may use to leverage or wage social struggle.

However, these networks are not necessarily converted into means of popular mobilization. The labor of transforming these raw materials into means must be performed. It is here that leaders of a particular kind play the most crucial role. This is the role of organizers. Organizers mediate between social movement organizations and the everyday lives of those they seek to represent. They are the dialogical bridges between these two spheres of activity; they become deeply familiar with the cultural-historical traditions of a group, so as to appreciate the buried emancipatory logic of their everyday lives, and their social networks (Cabral, 1979). This appreciation is a necessary first step
for forging strong interpersonal trust with people. Second, interpersonal trust provides the basis of critical engagement with daily practice and thought of a community of people (Fantasia, 1988). Third, this critical education is the process through which the organizer provides politico-theoretical tools for people to re-interpret their own praxis, and also provides an opportunity for people to correct the theory and strategy of the organizer, thus making way for a new synthesis (Allman, 2001; De Smet, 2015; Freire, 2010; James, 1989).

It is through these processes that organizers become capable of articulating and convincing those they are organizing to adopt a broader sense of “we” and “us” in opposition to more critically understand “they” and “them”. (Cox, 2014, p. 141). These changes in collective subjectivity coincide with changes in demands for change. Broader collective subjectivity goes along with the embrace of new approaches to organizing in which a struggle is understood to include a larger base of people. This understanding is based in the perception that the source of problems faced by a group extends beyond the immediate moment and oppositional forces to broader and deeper systemic processes. This is the process of translation from one mode of struggle to a more advanced form (Nilsen & Cox, 2014). This being the case, the existence of skilled organizers is necessary for advanced development of social struggle (Payne, 1995; Williams, 2013).

**Conclusion**

Existing social movement literature discusses elements of organizing, however, it lacks concrete analysis of organizing processes, and the development of the central protagonists in organizing: the organizer. Much of the blame for this can be found in the
inadequate conceptualization of social movements as things set into motion by resources, and conditions. Nevertheless, Marxists have developed elements of a working theoretical framework for social movements. It conceptualizes movements as particular modes of social struggle produced and driven by human learning produced through different modes of organizing. I see this framework as particularly advantageous in that it emphasizes the dialectical interconnection between different forms of struggle, showing how each can yield and/or influence the other. But at the heart of these processes is the leadership of organizers who can facilitate the necessary processes through which a lower level of struggle is translated into the other.

The one main weakness in this framework is the lack concrete analysis of specific activities of organizing, and learning. Nevertheless, I understand this framework to be more suitable for developing such an analysis in conjunction with Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), because it presents a dialectical concept of social movements that allows for exploration of the connection of organizing in the development of social struggle. CHAT can help focus in on the concrete aspects of organizing.
Chapter 3: Adult Education Perspectives on Social Movements

Introduction

Over the last few decades there has been a resurgence of social movement scholarship among critical adult educators interested in informal/nonformal, and incidental learning (Finger, 1989; Foley, 1999; Holford, 1995; Spencer, 1995; Welton, 1993; Welton, 1995). Adult educationalists enter the debate about social movements from the perspective of emancipatory learning. That is, all these scholars have in common a belief that social change is the result of critical education and learning. Although the field has moved more towards “education for pay” (Cunningham, 1998), there has been a renewal of interests in emancipatory learning (Allman, 2001; Carpenter, 2012; Finger, 1987; Mezirow, 1985; Welton, 1993; 1995).

Scholars interested in emancipatory social movement learning (SML) take as their point of departure emancipatory learning. Emancipatory learning is understood by these scholars as a process of freeing ourselves from oppressive forces that take away our ability to control our lives. Emancipatory learning is viewed as a process through which critical reflection allows people to see those forces, which they have generally accepted as the norm (Allman, 2001; Cranton, 1994, Freire, 1985; 2010; Mezirow, 1997). The literature on SML has only loosely engaged with social movement studies (Sawchuk, 2013) via its New Social Movement (NSM) orientation. Nevertheless, the benefit to exploring social movements from the perspective of emancipatory learning is that it creates an opening for analysis of social movements as forms human activity; that is, we can explore social struggle as a fundamentally human process of development of
consciousness through action and so on (Sawchuk, 2011).

Political & Philosophical Underpinnings

Within emancipatory adult education there are two currents: radical pluralism and Marxism (Holst, 2004). In terms of the study of learning in social movements or social movement learning (SML) the radical pluralist perspective is the most expressed in the literature, and draws its social theoretical lineages from postmodern theorists like Alberto Melucci (1996), and critical theorists, in particular Habermas (1981). Radical pluralism takes as its point of departure a rejection of socialism as the emancipatory goal towards which people ought to be working. It rejects the Marxist imperative of winning control of the State and conquering political power, and typically does not see the “working-class” as the leading emancipatory agent of transformation in society (Cohen, 1985; Conway, 2006; Finger, 1987; Melucci, 1980; Welton, 1993). The radical pluralist orientation is one that either privileges NSMs as sites of emancipatory learning (Finger, 1987; Welton, 1993) or that loosely draws on the analytical focus, and incorporates the politics of NSMT.

As mentioned in the review of social movement theory NSMT is a hodge-podge of theory with some core common views. Since NSMT is discussed in detail elsewhere I will limit discussion of it to three points. (1) NSMT rejects the notion of social revolution, as that would require a strategy to conquer political power. Rather, NSMT argues that social movements can change society and the world through protest, disruption, and symbolic politics that ultimately pressure authorities and institutions to become more democratic and culturally pluralistic. (2) NSMT also contends that class
relations are not central to development of social movements. Instead, identities are the basis of social movements and the grounds of emancipatory struggle (Buechler, 1995; Johnston, Laraña & Gusfield, 1995, Melucci, 1996). In this perspective race, gender, sexuality, and even class are not social relations, but collective identities, and when these identities are mobilized as part of an effort to pressure institutions to accept them then a social movement exists. (3) Social movements are sites of individual transformation, and what is most important about them is not their conflict with the State and authorities, but their internal processes of identity formation, symbolic practices, and the knowledges they produce (Melucci, 1992; Welton, 2001).

These three points, whether explicitly or implicitly, have oriented much of the study of SML. The first two points tend to be more implicit in that they show up in the lack of discussion of how power is generated and how societal processes, and activist praxis shape the development of social struggle. The last point is the most pronounced in the literature. Following the two previous points about NSMT social movements the political character of social movements is downplayed while the cultural contextual character of movements is forefronted. As such movements are seen as cultural context in which important processes are occurring. For SML scholars these processes contain something called ‘learning’ (i.e. knowledge). The assumption is that what people learn is necessarily positive and emancipatory.

**Social Movements as Sites of Knowledge Production**

An important contribution to the field of SML is the work of Eyerman and Jamison’s cognitive approach to social movements (1992). This approach synthesizes
Habermas’s concepts from *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1971), with Melucci’s NSMT concept of collective identity formation to develop a perspective on social movements as sites of learning/knowledge production. For Melucci social movements are defined by the construction of oppositional collective identities constituted by a range of symbolic practices, which people mobilize as a means to pressure society to accept as part of a new normal. That is, movements are processes through these identities are proliferated throughout a society’s culture. Eyerman and Jamison (1992) conceptualize this as cognitive praxis, however, they take this a step further by using Habermas to outline three constituent processes of a cognitive praxis: cosmological, technological and organizational. As they note a movement is it cognitive praxis. And each component of it is expressed in the other in a dialectical fashion.

The cosmology of a social movement is made up of its core assumptions. These assumptions make up the foundation of a movement's general worldview (Eyerman & Jamison, 1992, p. 70). Embedded in these assumptions are the core ideas, concepts, and discourses generated by movement activists as a means of articulated the types of social changes they believe are necessary. For example, in Eyerman and Jamison (1992) study of the environmental movement they note that examples of these concepts are “ecosystem, dynamic balance, states of equilibrium, niche, network, etc.” (p. 70). These concepts were appropriated by environmental activists from the field of ecology, and they became core concepts through which activists connected coordinated their work. In Marxist terms we might say that a movements cosmology refers to its general consciousness.

The technological dimension of social movement “provides the specifics of
the...movement’s cognitive praxis” (Eyerman & Jamison, 1992, p. 75). In reference to the environmental movement they explain that the technological dimension of the movement consists of “the particular objects of critique” (p. 75). The authors add that “for a time there was a conscious search within the movement for alternative [energy production] technologies” (p. 75). In other words, we can consider a movement’s technological dimension as its social critiques and core demands. These demands are prescribed remedies movement activists advocate as a means of moving society in the way they believe it ought to be moved.

The last component of a movement’s cognitive praxis is its organizational dimension or paradigm. (Eyerman & Jamison, 1992, p. 76). The organizational paradigm of a movement has its roots in both its cosmology and technological dimensions. The core discourses and concepts, and the social critiques and demands for change, also gives rise to the organizational ideals a movement and its constituent organizations. Eyerman and Jamison explain ideals for how to structure movement organizations and practices are often transmitted from past movements. They write that: “the organizational dimension of the environmental movement’s cognitive praxis was a legacy of the student movement of the 1960s…. along with the women’s movement and later the peace movement” (p. 76-77). And these movements were based on organizational paradigms that were organizationally diffuse in structure (p. 77).

**Popular Education & Knowledge Production**

Drawing on Eyerman and Jamison’s (1992) notion of knowledge production in social movements, Conway (2004) contends that social movements as a sites of
Learning/knowledge production feature three modes of learning/knowing: tacit, praxis-based, and knowledge-production. Tacit knowledge refers to learning that comes from more mundane aspects of life. It is the ‘everyday learning’. Activists “draw on and produce tacit knowledges. These are the insights and know-how that activists employ constantly to do what they do as activists” (Conway, 2006, p. 21). Another way to think about tacit knowledge is to consider it the everyday taken for granted knowledge materialized by the doings of activists as they confront different movement problematics. In thinking about tacit knowledge in this way it allows us to avoid the notion of knowledge is existing in the head, as opposed to throughout the body in motion.

Knowledge always exists as a material product. Sometimes it is the way we do things, which implies a particular way of thinking. Praxis-based knowledge is the knowledge that comes from praxis. In essence, praxis-based knowledge or learning occurs when activists engaged in struggle critically evaluate their practices within the existing cultural, social, and politico-economic environment. Conway describes a third mode of learning (movement knowledge production), which is the learning that occurs through the production of the knowledge particular to a movement group.

Conway (2006) defines knowledge-production as learning or knowledge “in which the generation of a movement-based interpretation of the world becomes central to the movement’s self-understanding and development and to the capacity of social movement publics to enter into political struggles in which contestations over knowledge are central” (p. 21). This means that members of a movement group or organization come to see it as necessary to synthesize its only vision of how the world ought to be, and how the world is. This process is a deeply pedagogical process in which activists
internalize their experiences and also externalize their knowledge to the broader public as part of a process of what De Smet (2015) refers to as subject formation. Popular education/pedagogy is constituted by “active intentional knowledge production processes...in which intellectual development of self and others is a central dimension of capacity building for political struggle” (p. 33). This pedagogical process of developing individual and collective capacities for emancipatory struggle is synonymous with Freire’s (2010) notion of conscientization.

Popular pedagogy/education consists of a myriad of nonformal, strategically organized activities with the intention of facilitating capacities, and consciousness among oppressed social groups needed for engaging in emancipatory struggle. Nonformal education refers to structured educational processes that occur outside of formal institutional systems (Schugurensky, 2000, p. 2). Within the context of popular pedagogical processes nonformal education can take a variety of forms “including small group discussions, role-play, simulation exercises, case studies, buzz groups, workshops, the traditional lecture or seminar” (Ismail, 2006, p. 29).

Conway (2006) *Praxis and Politics: Knowledge Production in Social Movements* specifically focuses on the role of explicitly political nonformal education as a means to sustaining movement activity. The study is an ethnographic study of a social justice coalition in Toronto digs into the importance of popular/political education within social movements. The Metro Network for Social Justice (MNSJ) was a coalition consisting of over 200 different groups including labor unions, churches, anti-poverty groups, equity groups representing oppressed ethnic groups, gender-oppressed people, people of color, and internationalist organizations (p. 2). In the study several different groups were
developed to address different organizing challenges. The focus of the study focuses on the Economic and Political Literacy committee (EPL), which is one of the committees within the coalition. EPL which is the group in charge of developing political education tools and facilitating those processes.

The work of the EPL group proves to be important to holding together the coalition. The differing political analyses, tactical perspective, and ideological commitments of members creates underlying tensions. These tensions become particularly acute in times of crisis brought about by significant shifts in government policies. Conway explains that the group was crucial to sustaining the coalition because it used political education to create an open and collaborative dialogic space where people could learn about the policy shifts and develop a common response. Consequently, through political education a new strategy was forged.

The political education spaces resulted in the development of political education campaigns that activists used as they travelled throughout Toronto to challenge the ideological knowledge produced by the government to justify neoliberal austerity budgets. This a recurring theme throughout Conway’s study. Political education not only became a means for activist development and sustaining the coalition, it also became powerful means to engage people outside of the coalition and develop popular political knowledge and resistance to neoliberalism.

MNSJ activists had developed a two hour facilitated workshop or “traveling roadshow,” that went into community centers, ESL classes, churches, seniors’ groups, and to any other group who asked. The political objective was to increase
people’s capacity in local neighborhoods across Metro Toronto to understand municipal politics and debates about the budget (Conway, 2004, p. 80).

The EPL began with the broader public’s experiences. These experiences are shot through with the bits and pieces of information that social institutions like the government produces to legitimate their actions. Therefore, Conway notes that the EPL found it absolutely necessary to develop workshops that specifically undermined the popular misconception about the public debt. The workshops were designed in such a way that the public audience was able to not only understand institutional politics, but they were also able to use the knowledge to challenge local authorities carrying the neoliberal line (p. 82).

Conway’s (2006) study is an important study because it brings to the fore the importance of political education in the development activists capacities. At the same time the study does not provide a clear analysis of how tacit, and technical knowledge is produced within movement work. The study also does not clearly explain how specific tacit and technical knowledges informed knowledge production. Furthermore, Conway rightfully brings to the fore the importance of political education processes as a means of developing the capacities of activists and also expanding the base of people involved in activism; however, there is no account of how these processes were operationalized, and how people participated in them. There is no account of the challenges of engaging with people within these programs. For example, what was it like to interact with people while trying to teach them skills, and political analysis? Were people resistant? How did they decide who should participate in educational activities? How did the EPL determine
which material was considered appropriate? In other words, some of the more embedded and incidental learning (Foley, 1999) that takes place within different movement activities is left under-analyzed.

Clover (2002) and Walter (2007) argue that many different moments of incidental learning along with intentional critical reflection or analysis can lead people to undergo cosmological transformative learning (p. 522). This is synonymous with Conway’s (2006) view that through knowledge production processes people develop a collective identity that is rooted in the oppositional culture of a particular movement. Clover (2002) and Walter (2007; 2013) appropriate Freire’s (2010) concept of conscientization to describe this type of learning. In reference to environmental movement learning Clover explains that conscientization occurs as a result of educational work that pulls out of people their experiences and helps them see how they are tied to economic and political structures (p. 318). Walter (2007) makes the case that this process does not always happen through organized educational activities, but sometimes incidentally as a result of mobilization activities as activists engage in confrontation with authorities. In his study of environmental activists’ resistance to cutting down trees in the Clayoquot Sound rainforest this is most evident.

Social Movement Organizations as Sites of Learning

Haluza-DeLay (2006) explored social movement learning using an ethnographic approach. He draws on Lofland’s definition of social movement and social movement organization and Bourdieu’s concepts of field and habitus. Haluza-DeLay blends these diverse theoretical components together to help him analyze social movement learning.
Central to his study is the notion “place” and compassion. For Haluza-DeLay place has a significance to social movement activist because place is embedded with meaning and experiences. Compassion is understood as fundamental to the activist habitus in the ecological movement, and habitus gives direction to movement activists and their engagement in environmental social issues.

From experiential learning theory Haluza-DeLay contends that people learn through doing and feeling. He defines social movements as insurgent realities consisting of many different social movement organizations and groups (p. 29). This is a definition that comes from Lofland (1996). In addition, Haluza-DeLay states that social movements are forms of protest in which new notions of society are proposed against the existing hegemonic social order. These movements range from conservative to progressive in orientation (p. 29). Haluza-DeLay (2006) considers social movements as “incubators of learning” (p. 34), because they are spaces where new ideas about society are created.

Following Eyerman and Jamison (1991), Haluza-DeLay posits that through social movements that these ideas are disseminated throughout society. Some other important takeaways from this study revolve around the importance of social movement organizations. Haluza-DeLay explains that social movement organizations serve as places where individuals can plug into a movement. These organizational spaces constitute a “field” of sorts, where people learn to the rules of the game in terms of being a movement activist. It is where people can transform their ‘habitus’. When people participate in social movement organization they are also participating in a field that exists within or on top of the broader social fields. Within these fields, individuals find a space where they can reflect on themselves and the world using the collectively created tools of the
movement organization. The movement organization provides a particular mode of reflection or reflexivity. Reflexivity allows people to see contradictions between their habitus and the movement field and in the process they pursue no means of resolving the contradictions (p. 129). Movement organization, thus serve, as “anchor points of collective identity” or socio-political analysis, or how to be involved in the movement (p. 129).

Haluza DeLay explains that social movement fields consist of organizations and those organizations consists of actual spaces and places which are constituted by social relations or relations of power. Places are embedded with a sense groundedness, boundaries, and thus, meaning (p. 141). Within these spaces movement participants create discourses which help shape the habitus of movement participants, and the cognitive praxis of the movement (141).

Haluza-DeLay notes that learning in social movements is very difficult to really locate because it is embedded throughout the entire movement. “The ‘action’ – of both social movement involvement and of learning – was dilute” (p.193). That is, learning is not located in any one part of movements. This is because movements are constituted by human activity (i.e. practice). Learning does not exist independently of practice. The strength of the study is that it locates the importance of organizations as spaces where people learn to be activists, and take on the identity of the movement through organized activities. On the other hand, the study’s weakness is that it does not present an analysis of how individual learning connects with collective learning.
Mobilization as Moments of SML

All public mobilizations, especially direct action mobilizations to stop the activities of the opposition, requires a tremendous amount of rapid preparation. Activists have to rely on existing to knowledge to set up their protest actions, protect themselves, and also make sure their rationale for protesting is clearly articulated (Liberato, 2014). The context of the mobilization allowed environmental activists to learn to establish various processes to facilitate and sustain collective protest. These were processes like “consensus decision making, nonviolent conflict resolution, and civil disobedience” (Walter, 2007, p. 260).

Some of the richest conscientization occurred when the state responded through repression. As many protesters were arrested and sentenced to time in prison for protesting, they experienced the injustice of the prison system. Some of the protesters noted that they experienced sexual harassment, humiliation and had to evacuate their sense of self in order to survive their ordeal (p. 239). Many, in addition to their environmental activism, learned to be critical of the connection between the state, its prisons, and private industry. Walter concludes that: “The criminalization of protest, the harshness of initial sentences, and the apparent arbitrary nature of sentencing as a whole led many protestors and supporters to question their belief in the Canadian judicial system” (p. 257-258).

This study should be appreciated for its focus on learning within the context of direct mobilization. This is in line with Foley (1999) who notes that some of the richest learning occurs in particularly intense moments of struggle. Nevertheless, Walter (2007)
does not provide key information and analysis regarding the demographic composition of the activists involved. Furthermore, it seems almost as if the protest mobilization spontaneously emerged with no organizational basis. The demographic question (questions of class, race, and ethnicity in particular) is important to understand how the movement network is comprised and its mode of organizing. The organizational basis of the mobilization is important to understand just what type of power potential the protesters have and it can provide insights into how they might increase their power. The other issue is that the analysis of learning is primarily confined to learning about the system and not learning as collective practice, and individual action.

**Marxist Approaches to SML**

From Sawchuk’s (2011) perspective most theorizing of social movements and social movement learning are more or less interpretations of learning which do not allow any analysis of how people can potentially transform society. If we are to truly move from a theoretical-empirical approach that privileges notions of “adaptation over transformation in SMT analysis” we have to turn to “sociocultural perspectives on social movement” (Sawchuk, 2011, p. 847-848). The Marxist approach to understanding social movement learning takes as its point of departure social movements as critical human activity within a particular socio-political context. The social movement is not merely a context or a place where scholars can go to discover “learning”. Rather, social movements are historically specific processes of societal formation (Tilly, 2001), and the learning within are part of people’s efforts to change their circumstances. We cannot understand learning within social movements without taking up the standpoint of those
Foley (1999) argues that theorizing of learning in social struggle has largely been inadequate because scholars interested in learning in social struggle have not concerned themselves with the entire social struggle in which people are engaged. Foley (1999) argues that a Marxist approach is needed to adequately conceptualize and analyze incidental social movement learning and its interconnection with other educational activities within struggle. For Foley incidental learning is not merely another form of learning, but it is the most abundant, yet under-analyzed learning. It occurs through daily activity, and within the context of non-formal educational processes alongside the lessons facilitators and teachers hope participants will learn. Foley explains that incidental learning is particularly sensitive to the social and power relations within struggle, and therefore, a Marxist approach must pay close attention to how people are situated in these relations.

As Foley (1999) asserts the specific relations people are situated in are the relations of capitalism. As such all analysis must include an exploration and explication of “the broad political and economic context, micro-politics, ideologies, discourses and learning” (p.132). Foley’s perspective on learning in social struggle considers social movement learning as those developments that contribute to people’s ability to make social change. In other words, social movement learning is a specific type of learning that is social change and contributes the greater possibility of more far-reaching social change. Foley (1999) and Choudry (2010) argue the task of social movement scholarship is to uncover the often unobserved actions that lead to a better understanding of social processes. These actions and practices are part of the processes of knowledge production.
As such, knowledge production is also the development of struggle.

Foley’s (1999) perspective on learning in social struggle comes out of the Marxist perspective, which views social struggle and in particular social movements, as social change itself. I understand social change as not solely a discrete thing, such as a new institution, though this is certainly one result of social change. Foley examined several different “sites” of social struggle. And from his empirical investigations he formulated a framework for studying social movement learning. The framework consists of several questions to guide the analysis of social movement learning:

- What forms do education and learning take?
- What are the crucial features of the political and economic context? How do these shape education and learning?
- What are the micro-politics of the situation? shape education and learning?
- What are the ideological and discursive practices and struggles of social movement actors and their opponents?
- To what extent do these practices and struggles facilitate or hinder emancipatory learning and action?
- What does all this mean for education?
- What interventions are possible and helpful? (p. 10)

This is a useful start to some sort of framework. But unfortunately, Foley does not go far
enough in elaborating a framework for social movement learning. Instead, we have
questions that must be asked if we are to begin an analysis. The first question mentions
the forms education takes? Foley seems to make the error that NSMT make in relation to
learning and social movement. The social movement itself is the education and learning
is an outcome of that education. Of course social movements are the result of prior
learnings as well. I am also not sure why Foley separates “emancipatory learning and
action” since throughout his work he implies “learning” is form of action. It seems that he
may be referring to forms of dialectically related forms of learning: cognitive learning
and practical learning. Cognitive learning refers to the ideational and analytical outcomes
as a result of practice. Practical learning refers to the materialization or objectification of
what we know cognitively in the form of political, organizational, or economic practice.
From a Marxist perspective the cognitive is always in dialect with the practical in the
form of praxis (Freire, 1985; Allman, 2001).

Noticeably missing in his questions are the historical cultural dimensions of the
social. Foley reduces historical materialism to political economy. Political and economic
context, rather politico-economic context is not abstract. It does not exist without cultural
relations of gender and race (Gouin, 2009). When people engage in micro-politics they
confront racist and sexist representations and discourses which have been developed as
part of the ruling relations and relations of oppression. Even more so, they confront the
real economic and political disenfranchisement and the “ruptures” in experience resulting
from these relations of oppression. In my work with a working class community
organizing group in Grit City some of the challenges they have come across is the fact
that they are “white” women and men from more economically stable strata of the
working class. Their experiences with “race” are radically different from predominantly Black residents in the neighborhood. At times there is a friction regarding what type strategies and tactics should be used for building community power. Many residents are focused on electoral action, while the organizers are trying to build independent mobilization structures. The point is that longtime residents’ experiences with racial oppression in the city led them to a different set of assumptions about what needed to be done to improve the politico-economic situation in the neighborhood. These experiences also create some quiet tensions and uneasiness between “white” organizers and Black residents who are currently struggling against “racism”/racial oppression.

Despite some these problems with Foley’s (1999) framework I think these questions can be reworked to be included in part of a larger framework. “Social” movements are more than prolonged contentious campaigns. They are “movements” (transformations) of the social. Therefore, an analysis of social movement learning has to be grounded in a social ontology that accounts for the mediated nature of social interaction (Gouin, 2009).

Cooper (2007) and Sawchuk (2013), like Foley (1999) and Walter (2007) note the importance of mobilization in creating an environment of intense learning. Like Hall and Turray (2006), Cooper (2007) argues that through public mobilizations both the broader public and the protagonists of movement activities undergo intense and “condensed learning experiences” (p. 199). Sawchuk (2013) similarly explains that during periods of heightened or acute social protests or confrontation such as a unionization campaign activity systems form rapidly and learning is accelerated. In reference to the unionization campaign Sawchuk writes:
In the context of the aggressive and highly successful union organizing campaign, hotel workers became highly energized, in many ways fueled by the emergence of incredibly vibrant social movement learning in action. In CHAT terms we see a rapidly expanding series of activities; shifting from initial conditions of nonunionized and fragmented work lives under increasingly difficult work to the construction of union culture, often across ethnic and linguistic divides, and ultimately union/community coalition (p. 9).

Sawchuk’s description of the rapid formation of activity systems and learning during the campaign is similar to Cooper’s description of the formation of specialized community of practice meant to address the particular contingencies of strike activity:

Union activists were grappling with a large number of multi-faceted, complex issues, and having to deal with them literally ‘on the run’. Through participating under immense pressure in the activities surrounding the strike, lessons were being learnt and skills acquired which might only be reflected upon or acknowledged later…. This tacit learning was complemented by moments of self-conscious, critical reflection on experience in the midst of the strike. For example, in the strike assessment meeting observed on the third day of the strike, worker leaders and organisers engaged in a heated debate about how to account for the drop in support for the strike, and the lack of ‘discipline’ amongst some shop stewards. There was a lengthy process of sharing experiences, drawing lessons
and debating new courses of action, accompanied by explicit awareness of the importance of learning from the experience of the strike (p. 200).

This passage shows that learning is connected to union activists’ engagement with different problems within the context of striking. As people strike a new community of practice emerged out of the normal union community of practice. We might say that with the formation of strike activity there was a re-organization of relationships between union members. This is because people had to engage with the problems created by the immediate reality of striking. In the study the context of strike activity called into question the way the company treats its workers, and the way the union is organized (Cooper, 2007). For Cooper, mass action like the strike not only has the potential to illustrate the courage and solidarity of activists, but also the weaknesses, and disjunction within a movement organization.

As mentioned previously activity systems have within them different voices, and these voices are not always equal. Where there is a division of labor there is also hierarchies of leadership. Cooper notes that power is mediated by the particular forms of knowledge that are privileged within a particular moment and context. For example, in the case of mass action, the particular form it takes forces the traditional authorities within a movement organization to rely on an ever expanding and on some occasions spontaneous network boundary workers or informal educators to carry out action. To be clear, this is not always a conscious decision by the union leadership. In fact, there are times when the union leaders resist this, but the context carries with it its own weight. This is highlighted in the following passage from Cooper (2007):
Union workshops frequently draw on ‘outside expertise’, while in union meetings, ‘boundary workers’ knowledge of developments in a range of sites within the union and other institutional forums plays a key contextualising role. In the strike, however, it was to history and historical experience that union members seemed to turn most often as an authoritative source of knowledge. The role of the educator or ‘boundary worker’ shifted from a few, leading shop-stewards to many, ordinary members of the union whose experiences crossed significant time boundaries (p. 200-201).

In this situation, hegemonic forms of knowledge associated with the bureaucratic practices of formal union meetings and procedures gives way to other “voices” within the union because the traditional bureaucratic procedures are not relevant within the context organizing and sustaining strike activity. Different sources of knowledge carry different weight (p. 200) and through these differentials authority is granted to different people and this is how hierarchies of leadership form. Different contexts can shift authority away from the normal holders. Cooper (2005) and Sawchuk (2013) differ from previous studies examined in that they focus on the internal dynamics of movement praxis (i.e. strategic activity), and illustrate how incidental/tacit learning is produced within the context of these activities. These studies also highlight the contested nature of social movement learning.
New Socialization as SML

An important part of SML is the transformation of the everyday (daily praxis) in accordance with core social values of a movement. Such processes do not necessarily entail sustained disruptive mobilizations against an external enemy. Rather, these processes of transformation SML rooted in the adoption of everyday praxis that challenge the underlying social relations that support the power of ruling elites. An example of this is the study of Venezuela’s socialist production units by Manuel Larrabure (2010). Another example is Donna Chovanec’s (2009) study of women in revolutionary struggle against the dictatorship of Pinochet in Chile.

Larrabure (2010) explains that not only are social movements educative forces (Dykstra & Law, 1994) and sites of potentially emancipatory learning, they are constituted by human praxis, some of which transforms aspects of people’s everyday lives and breaks with or at least significantly challenges the prevailing social relations in society. In other words, the structure and organization of movement praxis (i.e. activity) creates the environment in which people think, reflect, and act. Larrabure (2010) writes that “our learning is influenced by our experiences within both our immediate environments, including an organization’s structure, as well as broader structures and systems of domination, such as market forces, racism and patriarchy” (p. 57). For Larrabure in order to more thoroughly explore SML we need to explore the structure of social movement praxis and their dialectical interplay with the existing social relations and social organization of society.

A concrete analysis of the social relations of society requires that we first understand how people are organized throughout society. That is, we have to understand
how their material conditions differ, and how those conditions and participation in
society are organized by oppressive social relations of capitalism, which are not limited
to the dialectical economic relations of production-consumption-distribution; these
relations of production are culturally organized by race and gender relations, which
together give capitalism its concrete character as a racist patriarchal system of
exploitation (Bannerji, 1995; 2011; Carpenter, & Mojab, 2011; Larrabure, 2010).

Larrabure (2010) also notes that SML should not be assumed to be emancipatory.
Rather, he argues, SML is contradictory in that movements can help reinforce oppressive
social relations, while attacking other oppressive relations. And these different forms of
learning have real political consequences for a social movement, as they can limit the
capacity of a movement to expand by connecting different struggles. Therefore, he
contends that SML has different orientations that can exist simultaneously within a
movement. Learning can take shape as reproduction of dominant relations and resistance
to dominant relations. But he also notes that another form of learning is possible in
movements. He refers to this type of learning as anticipatory or emancipatory learning.
Larrabure restricts the meaning of emancipatory learning to learnings that take form as
new collective prefigurative praxis, which are “qualitatively different from learning to
assimilate oppressive relations or to resist them. Such learning occurs in the context of
activities and initiatives that nurture new social relations” (p. 58).

Larrabure notes that because of social movements exist within capitalism
prefigurative or emancipatory projects are always challenged as they come up against
existing social contradictions of capitalism and its market forces. For example, within the
SPUs people practices cooperative and socialistic production, however, because
Venezuela is trapped within the global capitalist system its resources like oil are still subject to the price system, which in times of large supply of oil from different countries leads to a decreasing value of Venezuela’s oil. This is important because the bulk of Venezuela’s economy and therefore its ability to spend on social welfare projects is dependent on its oil sales (Larrabure, 2010).

Larrabure’s (2010) study is an important contribution to thinking about social movement learning in a concrete way. It is worth stating again that his centering of praxis or activity within the specificity of the most relevant social relations is critical. This allows us to understand how our praxis is not only informed by social relations, but actually organized by those relations. The study exposes the contradictory nature of social movement projects. Furthermore, by centering praxis Larrabure illustrates how consciousness is produced through our practical engagement with others and the world and how our practical engagement is also shaped by the praxis of others. These others may be those working alongside people on an emancipatory movement project, or they can be those from oppositional projects like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and local right-wing movements whose praxis and lead to internal conflict with emancipatory groups.

Relatedly, the study also illustrates how the production of human consciousness and learning can also be contradictory, and is mediated through the particularities of praxis. The study does have some key weaknesses. Like many studies on social movement learning, and learning more broadly there is a gap between identifying the particular context or activity in which people learn specific things, and how these particular learnings occur within the activity. In this particular study Larrabure describes
certain incidents where people had to take action to rectify a problem. Again he recognizes that the learning occurs within the context of taking on these problems, but he glosses over the actual details of what people did. Only the more salient events were highlighted.

For example, Larrabure writes about an incident in which there was a plant shutdown over management errors, which led to the death of a worker. From this Larrabure concludes that workers learned “to use the Workers Council as a vehicle not only for articulating their health care needs but also for attempting to meet these through collective action against technocratic state managers” (Larrabure, 2010, p. 120). Here, he notes an important expression of learning, but he does not actually explain how the workers learned to use the workers Council. This indicates that a workable framework to explicate the inner workings of praxis is needed.

**Early/Prior Political Learning**

Another important study of social movement learning is Chovanec’s (2009) study of women in Chile centers on women who worked to end the dictatorship of Pinochet. Pinochet with the help of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) lead the coup that ended the democratically elected socialist government of Salvador Allende on September 11th 1973. Chovanec makes the case that social movement learning does not exist apart from a thorough analysis of social movement praxis. She sees learning as both the process and outcome of processes. Chovanec makes is her analysis of how early/prior political learning (in this case ideas/knowledge about politics) is transmitted through communal social structures, and the family. This indicates the need for a historical
analysis of particular ideas that shape how people understand society, and the need for social struggle.

The concept of early political learning is a potentially useful concept, in that it can connect a history of struggle with the development of tacit political and movement knowledge. This is important because helps create continuity between past social struggles and the ways people draw on learning/knowledge from them to build new struggles in new times. Langdon (2011) also notes the importance of connecting the learnings from past movement activity and social struggles to the development of new social struggle. Although Chovanec (2009) makes an important conceptual contribution the study is limited in that it lacks a framework that allows for analysis of new learning in movement activity. For example, Chovanec writes that:

Movement participation prompted many women to critique and challenge their place in society. They planned their activities, analyzed security issues, evaluated outcomes and formulated strategies. They learned skills, they discussed politics, they used music, theatre and cultural events to raise awareness and, through their public action, they forced others to think about what was happening in the country (p. 88).

In the passage she identifies important activities that the women did as part of their movement work, however, Chovanec does not provide a clear analysis of how they incorporated early political learning to carry out these different aspects of movement work. She also does not provide an analysis of how these different aspects of movement
work were operationalized, nor how (if) learning occurs within and through them.

Development of Organic Intellectuals as SML

Marxists have long concerned themselves with the question of *leadership* in the development of social struggle into coherent efficacious social movements. The notion of leadership has been used in many different ways. Some understand leaders and leadership to refer to formal hierarchical organized structures. However, I use the term leader to refer to an individual’s whose actions and thinking are highly influential within particular collectives. There are also collective leaders in which organizations, collectives, and networks of collectives whose activities (i.e. praxis) are highly influential on the organization and direction of social struggle. We might also refer to these collective leaders as the leading social forces. Relatedly, leadership is fundamentally a question of the capacity of a group or groups to (1) shape the politico-philosophical views of others, and (2) the capacity to mobilize others into action for particular aims and purposes.

Gramsci (2010) introduces into Marxist thought the notion of a particular kind of leader needed in order to carry forth a social struggle. That leader is the organic intellectual. The organic intellectual is not necessarily someone who holds a professional position that we recognize as being an intellectual position. Although there may be times when an organic intellectual holds such a position. Rather, an organic intellectual is someone who organically comes out of a particular social layer and as such is capable to of articulating the needs, traditions, and culture of that layer. Gramsci’s primary focus was on the working-class. Eyerman and Jamison (1992) appropriate this concept as “movement intellectual”. The expansion of the concept to all layers is good. However, it
is important not to lose the depth of the concept.

For Eyerman and Jamison (1992) movement intellectuals emerge out of the movement. That is, the movement exists and then comes the intellectuals who develop within the movement. The problem with this view is that ignores the actual social basis of these intellectuals who may in fact be organic to a particular stratum of society, and as such have taken a leading role in the character development of a movement. Organic intellectuals not only express the interests, ideas, and culture of their strata, they also organize their base, and they organize struggle according to their social position. This means that aspects of social struggle like organizational structure and roles, political tactics, modes and means of communication, and language and grievances to a great degree reflect the dominant voices’ socio-cultural perspective (Esteves, 2008).

As Eyerman and Jamison (1992) and Gramsci (1999) note movements require the formation of intellectuals who help develop movement coherence and expand the movement. Harris (2011) explains that the development of such intellectuals is the result of learning processes that have historically been facilitated by political organizations. In the case of Harris who is concerned with the development of Black working-class organic intellectuals, discusses the role of revolutionary socialist political parties. Harris explains that traditionally socialist organizations not only engaged in direct political struggle they also train and educate working-class activists transforming them into organizers capable of leading mass struggle. Harris writes: “the process of organic intellectual formation can only occur through the dialectic of revolutionary organizational forms, praxis, and communist education in self-directed, collective, and intergenerational relations of learning” (p. 13). Revolutionary organizations serve as environments where collective
“organized learning” can occur.

Harris describes “organized learning” as “any form of intentional, planned, curriculum-based programs of education” (p. 11). Furthermore, revolutionary organizations tend to be intergenerational, meaning they have members with varying levels of experience. Some members are elders and others are newcomers. This creates the potential for elders to guide and facilitate newer members’ learning. Harris’ study explores the potential of developing socialist organic intellectuals within Canada’s anti-racist nonprofits. He notes that the decline of revolutionary socialist organizations has meant a decline in spaces for working-class organic intellectual development. Instead nonprofits have filled this void.

Harris draws on Vygotsky’s concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD) to describe the intergenerational pedagogical relationship with seasoned socialist/communist organic intellectuals and those entering social struggle. According to Harris the ZPD represents the trajectory of learning created by an organized pedagogical environment or process. In this case the use of anti-racist educational campaigns served as a key framework through which the ZPD was constituted (Harris, 2011, p. 139). These educational campaigns or programs were named The Freedom Cipher:

Freedom Cipher module of anti-racism education consisted of the following three types of revolutionary adult learning to educate BADC youth to become Black working-class organic intellectuals: 1) Informal learning through organizing a Hip Hop Music Program and Set It Off Girls Groups; 2) Inter-generational learning by producing Freedom Cipher Radio, a BADC youth news segment with Norman
—Otis Richmond on CKLN, 88.1 FM; 3) organized Marxist Anti-Racism Education in the form of political education classes in Jane/Finch and Lawrence Heights community centers; and 4) a bi-weekly Intellectual Discussion Group at the BADC office (p. 140).

In this piece informal learning refers to spontaneous learning. This is learning that occurs incidentally as a result of engaging in some form of activity. Intergenerational learning refers to the learning that occurs as result of working with movement elders who presumably transfer knowledge of their past experiences to the less experienced within the context of some activity. Freedom Cipher also developed explicit Marxist education in which the teachers taught Marxist and Black Feminist concepts (p. 140).

Harris explains that through these approaches participants a learned a lot and underwent significant political development. However, participants never developed into socialist/communist organic intellectuals. Rather, they adopted reformist or non-revolutionary dispositions. Harris describes how this process played out with two particular individuals. The first is a young woman named Keisha who had been deeply involved Freedom Cipher’s women’s program called Set It Off. The second quotation describes the development of a young man named Quanche who is was involved in the Hip Hop project:

Despite her extensive involvement in the initial organizing of the Freedom Cipher, Keisha withdrew from Set It Off halfway through the second year due a lack of sustained interest in grassroots organizing. As a part-time undergraduate
student, Keisha began to focus increasingly on gaining experience in a variety of social service agencies and completing her baccalaureate social work degree at Ryerson University. Keisha’s lack of sustained interest in Set It off organizing while the girls’ groups continued to expand, led her ZPD to become adaptive instead of transformative as she withdrew from the Freedom Cipher to focus more on professional career advancement in social work. (p. 146-147).

When Quanche completed the Youngest in Charge in July 2007, he began to retreat from participating in Freedom Cipher political-education classes and Hood2Hood organizing to resolve his legal issues as a young offender and pursue more professional artist development opportunities….Despite the advances Quanche made by developing as an anti-racist Hip Hop artist, his ZPD became adaptive; a shift that was signaled most clearly through his disengagement with political education classes and BADC intellectual discussions at the end of the first year of the program. (p. 152).

In both cases participants who were deeply involved in Freedom Cipher appeared to undergo a significant change in their ability to make sense of their circumstances. They developed a new political perspective, however, they did not become committed to revolutionary movement building. Harris concludes that their “ZPD became adaptive”. That is, rather than seeking to revolutionary political activity, they instead used the skills they learned to seek better employment circumstances.

Harris’ (2011) analysis of Keisha and Quanche’s participation and learning within
Freedom Cipher reveals that consciousness-raising does not mean that a person’s consciousness has become revolutionized. Consciousness-raising does not constitute full conscientization. Conscientization or transformation of consciousness occurs when the core interest or concept of self in relation to society is transformed. Harris explains that “Quanche worked in the Freedom Cipher to develop as a professional recording artist, and Keisha’s motivation was to receive further training as a professional social worker” (p. 185). These central goals continued to be the primary motive for their participation, while political training was peripheral at best. This has important implication for understanding how people undergo transformation within the context of social struggle. Left activists often assume that people will spontaneously develop revolutionary consciousness through campaign work, and political education. However, this study illustrates that movement praxis alone does not guarantee the transformation of consciousness; material conditions mediate the ways people think about themselves.

These circumstances also organize the trajectory of learning, as their motives remain primarily concerned with overcoming whatever the most pressing needs they have. These needs are perceived through what Harris calls an identity-artifact (p. 184). Each person enters into an activity with a particular concept of self. And through their conception of self, which is mediated by their own material existence and institutional discourses they interpret their needs and construct their motives. Accordingly, Harris explains that only through the development of a new revolutionary identity artifact can people become organic intellectuals. This can only occur by transforming both form or processes through which people engage political work, as well as the content (p. 184).

In transforming the mode of doing political work along with the content, identity
artifacts can be challenged creating openings for the formation of new concepts of self. Harris (2010) concludes that nonprofit organizations cannot fulfill the historic tasks of developing socialist organic intellectuals. Nonprofits are too entangled with foundations and state processes which place significant limits on the type of political activity they engage in. In order for people to become revolutionary subjects they must be engaged in work that provides them with the appropriate tools and artifacts for self-transformation. These artifacts are necessary for mediating people’s interests and capacity for engaging in movement activities. The study unfortunately seems to ignore the role of the learning embedded in participant’s prior life experiences in their development within the program. As Chovanec (2009) reminds us people enter different environments with knowledge stemming from their communal and social networks. That is their early political learning can serve as barrier/facilitator of different kinds of learning. It is then necessary to explore the pre-existing mediating identity artifacts (in Harris’ terms) and how they relate to the ideal movement identity artifact.

Artifact Production as SML

Goudar (2012) draws on Foley’s notion of learning in social struggle. Learning in social struggle is understood as tacit, non-formal, incidental, and informal education embedded in processes of popular education. Goudar does not clearly define learning, but her work clearly implies that learning consists of concrete changes in the movement participants understanding of their circumstances, their knowledge of social struggle, and their development of a social and political projects. Furthermore, learning is a collective
outcome and not only an individual’s intellectual development. Goudar focuses on the technologies of learning, namely forms of media created by feminists involved in the Palestinian Women’s movement. Along with these forms of media women also participated in trainings that taught them journalism, which helped to empower them to use movement technologies.

These organizations and training spaces also provided spaces away from the centers of patriarchal power where women were able to develop their own political ideas (p. 147). For example, Goudar notes that women in the movement began to question the relationship of women to society (p. 148). For Goudar emancipatory learning could be understood as actual emancipatory action. In other words, people not only developed new more critical analysis of society, they also took action by sharing movement materials with others and encouraging them to question society. Learning can be seen as have two levels: the individual and the collective. At the individual level learning is what a participant learns to do or a new method of thinking about or doing something. At the collective level learning is the actual production or creation of new forms of knowledge, campaigns and their corresponding demands (Goudar, 2012). I would add that collectivity itself is form of collective learning as it requires processes that enable individuals to navigate and negotiate material, and cultural circumstances to unite with others. From there the formation of organizations represents another form of collective learning, which entails learning to collectively develop and manage resources, develop organizational visions and approaches, and other things within the context of a larger field of struggle.
Paulo Freire & SML

One of the often cited Marxist adult educators in the SML literature is Paulo Freire. More often than not Freire is cited for his concept of conscientization and his intervention into the concept of education. Freire argues that emancipatory learning does not occur through banking, which is to say that people do not learn to become emancipatory protagonists simply by having content imputed into their heads by someone who is considered the knower or the expert. Freire’s notion of conscientization has roughly been translated into consciousness-raising, whereby individuals through collective practice become more aware of power relations and their needs. However, conscientization is more than consciousness-raising; it is an iterative dialectical process whereby through practice people uncover power relations and then develop new practices, strategy or tactics to advance their struggle for change. This last part is important because often discussion of conscientization ends with how activists became knowledgeable about power relations and conditions, without discussion of what they did as a result.

For Freire, however, conscientization is a dialectical process of internalization and practical externalization. In Freire’s theory political organizers are educators, and educators are organizers. The role of the organizer is to serve as part of the mediation of internalization and externalization processes. The organizer/educator is to synthesize their knowledge with the knowledge and traditions of a group of people in order to create new emancipatory praxis. And they do this not because they want to save the people, but because they believe they need the people to save themselves.

Freire describes the role of the organizer/educator as that of an artist, because
artists has their own vision of the world, which they present to the people and in doing so they are mediating not only their own social reality, but the reality of others. This particular process is a dialectical in that there is a tension between inviting people to become their own emancipatory agents, and the organizer/educator’s role as someone who is leading people or having authority within a context. For Freire the necessity of leadership and of the organizer/educator being a leader is rooted in the fact that the material and cultural conditions of the existing social order is such that it wants to silence the people and prevent them from developing revolutionary praxis. As such the organizer/educator is intervening in that process of subordination. This discussed in the following passage by Freire in his dialogue with Myles Horton.

The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves. And in doing that, he or she lives the experience of relating democratically as authority with the freedom of the students. It’s the same issue, for example, that we have in the relationship between leadership and masses of the people, between the leadership of a progressive party and the great masses of the people. What is the role of the leadership? It could not be just to look at the masses. The role of leadership is also to lead the masses while learning with them and never imposing on them. Even I accept that in some moments both teachers and political leaders have to take the initiative in order to do something that is necessary, and it’s not possible to wait for tomorrow. But for me, in any case, the next day the teacher as well as the
leadership have to begin to explain the reasons why it is necessary to take
initiative (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 181)

The artist, like a writer, is an author, and as such has some authority. In this sense, authority means they have a right and responsibility to initiate certain processes. In this sense, as Freire explains, organizers/educators/leaders are necessary for building movements, because they initiate different processes of social struggle, and aid in the development of other people to become revolutionary protagonists. More specifically, they aid in the process of the formation of new organizers/educators/leaders.

Elsewhere Freire (1985) discusses the importance of organizer/leadership development, and how their own social location or positioning in society can create certain barriers to their ability to develop revolutionary leadership. This of particular importance in that many of the leaders of historic movements have been people who come from socio-culturally elite layers of the working-class. Often times they are labeled as “middle class”. Within capitalist society there is a social division of labor between mental/intellectual production and physical/material production.

Along these lines of division people generally distinguish the common-sense notions of class (Harnecker, 2015). This distinction is an ideological one that distorts class affinities (See Marx). Nevertheless, the development of real cultural differences occurs along these lines as well. These differences are often manifested in movements as divisions between those who generate ideas and command, and those who are to internalize those ideas and follow. Freire (1985) speaks to this in the following passage.
The petit bourgeois [liberal-democrat] ideology that permeated them in their *class conditions* interferes with what should be their revolutionary practice. . .. It is in this sense that *methodological errors are always an expression of an ideological vision* . . . *In so doing, all they do is reproduce this dichotomy typical of a class society - between teaching and learning* . . . They refuse to learn with the people. (Italics is mine, p. 163).

Dorothy Smith (2005) refers to these practices as ideology. Similarly, Freire (1985) refers to ideology as a type of praxis rooted in the reproduction of a social order. In this case it is the capitalist social order. This is evident in the passage above. Freire’s (2010) notion of banking education is also his metaphor for a type of political praxis that seeks revolutionary change, but employs the same class-based methods and organizational structures that pervade capitalist society. From this perspective no revolutionary protagonist can be developed out of such an ideological process. Instead, we need dialogical practices that allow for the synthesis of different knowledge and capacities in order to create new revolutionary protagonists. Social movement learning in this sense is revolutionary organizing praxis, which is the process of bringing people together for their material needs in such a way that they are developing their capacities to lead and be protagonists. This is the full meaning of Freire’s (2010) notion of conscientization.

Those who are recognized for their institutionally developed intellectual capacities (engineers, architects, teachers, professors, doctors, etc.) are trained to lead through command over those without these credentialed capacities. They look upon their own capacities as private capital to be used in the market (Lebowitz, 2015). On the other
hand, those without have been trained to follow the leaders. In the process they suppress and subordinate their own intellectual capacities. Consequently, those who are in the same general economic class find themselves estranged in terms of cultural training, development, and institutional positioning within capitalist society. The shortcoming in Freire’s theory of social movement learning is the lack of clear analytical concepts that explain the mechanisms of learning. Consequently, how people learn is outlined in a very general way. Praxis is the general process through which learning and the development of consciousness occurs, however the internal mediations of praxis are not presented. Nevertheless, Freire does bring to the fore the importance of organizing as a critical form of SML.

Theoretical Concerns

The first concern is the binary between so-called “new” social movements (NSMs) and “old” social movements (OSMs). NSM theorists and SML scholars drawing from the tradition have decided that all movements that have to do with socialism, labor or working-class struggle are OSMs. All other movements are NSMs. And NSMs are and should be the dominant focus for those of us concerned with emancipatory social change. Scholars like Finger (1987), Welton (1993; 1995), and Walter (2007) have explicitly stated that they see NSMs are sites of emancipatory learning, and in their silence on OSMs have essentially dismissed the emancipatory potential of what they deem to be OSMs. In practice this has meant inquiry has been heavily slanted towards the investigation protest and other collective activity that are considered to be identity-based, non-hierarchical, and less centralized in the organizational sense. In my view there is no
such thing as NSMs and OSMs; to make such categorical distinctions obscures the potential continuity between different forms and modes of struggle. For example, movements like the Women’s movement have multiple origins consisting of middle class liberalism and working-class socialist traditions. Environmental critique and environmentalism has origins in Marxism as well as indigenous and liberal philosophies.

Newman (2007) finds that the binary of NSM and OSM is not useful. Instead provides three classifications of social movement as alternatives: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. These classifications are useful as descriptive categories, but not so much as analytic categories, because they reinforce the notion that there are essential ontological differences between social movements. That is, that the differences between the structure of social movements is inherent to the movements and not the product of real political, economic, and cultural relations in a particular historical moment. Furthermore, it reinforces a lack of clarity and precision as to what a social movement is, and how it might differ from other forms of contentious collective activity. Lastly, in his description of the different types of ‘movements’ Newman does not provide any account as to why networks are more or less centralized, or sporadic or consistent. The point is that we have to ask questions of how and why are these networks constituted this way? Is it beneficial for emancipatory struggle? What is necessary to improve movements’ capacities to change society? While Newman’s categories are more accurate descriptions of forms of collective struggle, they do not provide us with any greater analytical clarity.

The second concern is the “self-limiting politics” of NSMT, which argues that post-industrial society has eliminated the need and rationale for social movements that
serve as social revolutionary processes. NSMT asserts that today’s social movements do not seek state power and social revolution. The problem is not so much that NSM theorists have made such observational claims the problem lies in the assumption that this is an essential feature of so-called NSMs. And this essentialist claim is carried out in the SML literature the lack of analysis of the relationship between learning, movement practice, and movement power (i.e. capacity to bring about social change).

For example, Welton (2001) describes social movements as a manifestation of the capacity of rebelliousness…. inherent in all human interaction where we seek not power over nor the instrumental use of the other, but simply to understand and express” (p. 24). he is putting forward a radical liberal or pluralist ideological perspective. It is radical in that it is inspired by a utopian vision based in what some might view as the better tendencies of human beings; but it is liberal or pluralistic in that it glosses over the fact that the “system” that is colonizing the lifeworld is composed of real political actors engaged in their own movement work to transform civil society and the lifeworld according to their particular needs. Rebellion and utopian vision without a strategy, organization, and means to curtail the power of oppressive institutions whilst creating alternatives to displace them is a tragedy.

This assumes that social movements--their forms, strategies, tactics, and aims--are not contingent upon material, and political conditions through which people can learn and potentially change the nature of social struggle. From a Marxist perspective social movements are the products of human activity and learning. And human practice and learning are grounded in particular cultural-historical material conditions. Social movements are the product of human learning within concrete social relations, because
they are shaped by those participating and organizing them; and these protagonists are
themselves carriers of the social relations of society, and their particular experiences as
result of their location within these relations.

In this sense then social movements are also grounded within the social relations
which organize the social world. Class, race, ethnicity, and gender are not simply
identities, but fundamental social relations that together constitute the social totality or
the concrete whole we call society. Therefore, the notion that NSMs are not based in
class could not be farther from the truth. The dominant composition of protagonists
within a movement may not be from the industrial sector of the working-class, but since
class is constituted by social relations then we can see that economically many so-called
NSMs in fact are drawing from other sectors of the working-class. A good argument can
be made that because they do not come from the industrial working-class the cultural
practices of these sectors can be considered “middle class”. However, that requires a
more nuanced understanding of the linkages of the economic and cultural relations of
class. Furthermore, it requires a framework for understanding how race, gender, and
ethnicity also tie into create unique socio-cultural practices within the working-class.

Lastly, the SML literature has abstracted learning from the processes, needs, and
aims of movement protagonists. In many of the studies the movement or movement
group is more of a stage, setting, or backdrop for scholars to show that learning occurs
within movements, as well as in classrooms (Finger, 1987; Haluza-DeLay, 2006). They
show that people can be transformed through movement praxis, and that others not
directly involved in movements can learn because of the collective knowledge
disseminated by movement groups. All of these insights are important, but they remain
disconnected from the political, strategic, tactical, and organizational questions that movement protagonists are dealing with. However, without a clear concept of social movement and a dialectical concept of learning, insights on a learning and knowledge production remain disconnected from the aims of movement protagonists. Rather than focus on learning/knowledge production in the abstract it is important to ground learning/knowledge production in the movement practice of protagonists and their particular needs.

**Towards a Marxist Concept of SML**

Social struggle and social movement are often used interchangeably. However, drawing on the work of Cox and Nilsen (2014) I differential between social struggle and social movement. Rather, I understand social struggle to consist of social movements, and other forms of collective contentious activity that people engage in as a means of changing their circumstances. Social struggle consists of protest or militant particularism, campaigns, and social movement projects or social movements. Protest is a form of social struggle that highly particularistic. It can include a range of mobilizations like strikes, boycotts, mass public demonstrations, blockades, etc. Protests, sometimes referred to as a protest politics (Freeman, 1983; Piven & Cloward, 1977) is a form of struggle oriented around specific issues in a particular time and a particular place. Protest is also called militant particularism (Cox & Nilsen, 2014).

When people protest they may be doing it as a means to stop something from happening (defensive) or they may be doing it to encourage some sort of change that will benefit them (offensive). In the case of protest activity organizations (like trade unions,
community organizations, etc.) can be the main protagonists. But there are plenty of times when there is a blend of loose networks of people and organization that mobilize for demonstrations and other forms of actions for or against things. For example, a strike is a particular form of protest in which people cease generating production in order win particular changes in their work conditions, incomes, benefits, etc. When environmentalists create blockades to stop trees from being cut down, as in the case of the study by Walter (2007) they are engaged in protest. Protest in itself is not a social movement.

The next level of social struggle is campaign activity. A campaign is a form of activity in which organizers are able to connect different struggles through a common concern or set of concerns into a concrete demand for change. When people across particular issues, times, and places mobilize and organize their activity around a concrete demand for change a campaign has formed. Campaigns can be carried initiated and carried out by one organization framing the grievances of different constituent groups’ interests or by a coalition of organizations representing the interests of diverse constituencies. In the context of a campaign protests can be used as a tactic, but is no longer used for the particular interests of one group, in a particular place, but for a more general and broader alignment of forces over a longer period of time.

The highest level of social struggle is the social movement. Social movements involve protest activity, and campaign activity. However, these activities are governed by a more a general goal of either complete social transformation or partial social transformation. Cox and Nilsen (2014) refer to this as a social movement project. This a general project to change or move society or some core aspect of society in a particular
way. It involves a general consensus between a constellation of different informal groups, organizations, and networks of people all working towards this change. Members of a movement recognize each other according to their views and actions to bring about the commonly shared vision of change. Sometimes the particular modes of organization and concepts used can signal that people belong to a movement. However, not always, as there are often different currents within a single movement, which have differing analysis of society, power relations, social relations, and what must be done to change society. In this sense a social movement project is a dynamic contested space.

Questions of class, race, gender, and ethnicity are critical lines of tension, as these relations tell us how people are situated socially, which can shape political motivations within movements. These differences within movements manifest themselves along the lines of strategy for change. Lastly, important to recognize is that different currents of different social movements can coalesce with each other. To form a new movement. For example, different currents of different movements may share overlapping analyses. Women’s liberation, Black Liberation, and working-class liberation currents may find that they see patriarchy, white supremacy, and exploitation share a common root in capitalism, and as such they may work together and educate each other in the art of struggle.

The shift from each stage to the next is a question of organization, which here refers to the processes of organizing or bringing together the knowledge, skills, and capacities of people in particular ways or modalities suitable for a particular level of struggle. This entails learning. And although much of the rich and significant learning occurs incidentally and tacitly, it is deeply shaped by organized practices of movement
organizers or movement intellectuals in the words of Eyerman and Jamison (1992). By learning I am referring to the production of new ideas, goals, interests, motives, and modalities doing that is produced through materially grounded and culturally-historically mediated activities. Learning, as just described, occurs when people confront contradictions in their daily practice and generate new means and modes of dealing with them. Within the context of social struggle learning occurs when protagonists, as individuals and as collectives develop new means and modalities for collecting struggle to overcome perceived barriers to meeting their needs.

The transformation of social struggle from one level to another is the highest level of learning; it involves a transformation in the object of struggle. Engestrom (1987) refers to this type of learning as expansive learning. In this situation protagonists realize that the strategy and tactics they use are not sufficient for satisfying their need. They may uncover different power relations and the internal workings of social institutions. This can lead them to try different strategies and tactics, some of which may require more complex forms of organization and new objects. For example, in the wake of a wave of killings of unarmed Black and Brown people by police and vigilantes, and the refusal of the judicial system convict them, protests groups sharing what was at first #BlackLivesMatter formed and mobilized against police brutality. However, since then Black Liberationists have begun to articulate and organize around broader policy demands, as it has become clear that their protests have not been sufficient to stop the continued onslaught of Black and Brown people. Embedded within these demands are the echoes of past Black Liberation struggles, which may congeal into a renovated movement for Black Liberation. A concrete analysis of learning in the Black Liberation Movement
would require an analysis of how people are consciously organizing people to break the impasse and satisfy their need: the end of the oppression of Black people.

**Conclusion**

Adult education scholars have argued that social movements, and social struggle are rich sources of learning. However, the learning and knowledge that many scholars are writing about is abstracted from the actual goals and aspiration of movement protagonists. People are not engaged in social struggle to learn; they are in struggle to change their circumstances, and perhaps change the world. In the process they learn to do and learn to be. But this learning is always for the purpose of struggle. From a Marxist perspective the task of movement-oriented scholars to is to provide analysis of the developmental/learning processes of social movement praxis as a means of helping people struggle better and in more powerful ways. We need not only recognize that learning is embedded in praxis; we need a theoretical framework that helps us conceptualize social movements, as a social processes rooted in the particular cultural-historical and politico-economic relations of capitalist society. And with that we need a theoretical framework that allows us to understand learning not only embedded in, and related to human praxis, but also oriented by the particular goals and motives for engaging in a particular praxis. For that I look towards the rich body of theory that is Marxism and to the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT).

Drawing on the Marxist movement theory of Cox and Nilsen (2005; 2014), the Marxist theory of revolutionary leadership and organizing presented in the works of Paulo Freire (1985; 2010; Horton & Freire, 1990), and the theory of learning provided by
CHAT scholars (Engestrom, 1987; Baptiste & Youn, 2007), I reiterate my definition of social movement learning as the production/organization of new or different culturally mediated, and materially grounded practices, interests, objects, and modalities for conducting social struggle that expand people’s capacity to transform some aspect of society. I refer to this process of production as movement organizing.

SML occurs when protagonists, as individuals and as collectives must find different ways of organizing their skills, knowledge, and capacities in order to develop new means to better advance their goals in struggle and to overcome perceived barriers to meeting their needs. Central to this notion of social movement learning as movement organizing is the facilitative and pedagogical role of movement organizers. Movement organizers are those individuals within movement organizations and networks play a leading role in shaping strategy, devising tactics, connecting with people, recruiting, and synthesizing the knowledge and experiences of people into movement strategy, and helping others become organizers. The processes through which people learn to become movement organizers is of great importance to emancipatory struggle and can deepen our understanding of SML.
Chapter 4: Cultural Historical Activity Theory

Introduction

Cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) is an evolving theoretical framework which was originally developed out Vygotsky’s efforts to develop a Marxist psychology (Elhammoumi, 2006; Wersch, 1980). CHAT retains Marxian concepts, but has diversified with the Marxist tradition becoming less popular (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2010, p. 232). Broadly speaking CHAT is a framework for understanding human practice, development and learning within a particular cultural-historical and politico-economic context (Lompscher, 2006, p.37; Sawchuk, 2006, p. 238-239). The theory is both an interdisciplinary theory which has its philosophical roots in Marx’s dialectical historical materialist method, and theory of human development, and the cultural-historical school of Soviet psychology’s efforts to develop a Marxist psychology. The most popular current of CHAT, (the so-called third generation) has been substantively shaped by the works of Engeström (1987 & 1999) (Roth & Lee, 2007; Kaptelinin & Nardi 2006). The Marxist tradition within CHAT includes the Soviet Cultural Historical school and more recently Livingstone, 2006; Sawchuk, 2006; Stetsenko, 2008; Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004; Lompscher,2006 to name a few. Marxist versions of CHAT center the role of contradictions stemming from capitalist political economy (Taylor, 2014).

CHAT is a descriptive theory, which allows us to systematically examine and take account of human learning and the development of consciousness (Sawchuk, 2003, p. 39), which in CHAT is not is not only a mental or cognitive outcome, but a social one as well (Vygotsky, 1978). More specifically, Vygotsky rejected the binary between internal and external processes, and cognitive and practical processes. For him, human cognition
was the product of human participation in the material world. CHAT allows us to take a slice of human activity and examine just how we are the products and producers of our world.

**Vygotsky: Mediation & Internalization**

While Vygotsky’s work extended well beyond Marx’s analysis of human development and consciousness, it remains true that he took Marx’s materialist concept of consciousness (and language as practical consciousness), and mediation central aspects of his work. To clarify previous comments, although Vygotsky was trying to develop a Marxist psychology this does not mean he was limiting his work to Marx and Engels. Vygotsky’s approach was original and eclectic, and was underpinned by his empirical studies and experiments concerned with early childhood development. For Vygotsky, early childhood represents particular unit of human development in which the foundational structure of the human mind as a cultural-biological formation, occurs (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 19, 46).

However, using the dialectical materialist framework established by Marx, Vygotsky rejects the binary between the material/natural/biological and the cultural/sociological aspects of psychological development. He also rejects the binary of individual and social dimensions of psychological development. In other words, the individual’s consciousness is mediated by the larger socio-cultural relations of society, but the individual’s mind is still unique to the individual, and therefore, the actions of the individual also shapes in varying degrees the activity of the collective (Vygotsky, 1978).

For example, Vygotsky’s studies reveal that as a child develops culturally, as well as
biologically, those around the child also change the way they interact with the child. So, on one hand the child is internalizing the practices of the community, but the community is also responding to the child’s level of development and agency (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 25).

Some of Vygotsky’s analysis are more general to human psychological development that continues throughout our lives. Of particular interest is the dialectical process of internalization-externalization, which is foundational to learning. Vygotsky (1978) defines internalization as the process through which a person undergoes an “internal reconstruction of an external operation” (p. 56). Vygotsky provides the example of the child who is attempting to grasp some object that is outside of its reach. As the child reaches its hand an adult or some other child capable of reaching the object assists the child who cannot reach. Over the course of different attempts to grasp that which is out of reach, and successfully obtaining it through the assistance of others who respond to this motion, the child internalizes its own outreached grasping motion as a means of communicating its intention and directing others to the object of that intention.

The child then learns to signify to others its wants through pointing, which Vygotsky sees as a variation of the outreached hand. This ability to signify or to create a sign that conveys some action or activity is an example of externalization. Furthermore, the child now recognizes that when others perform a similar motion they are directing one’s attention to some object, as well. We see here that the development of the individual mind is a social product of their participation within a community. The individual is exercising its agency in reaching for something outside of its reach, but only when the motion is recognized by others as being a gesture (sign) is it meaningful. “It
becomes a true gesture after it manifests the all the functions of pointing for others, and is understood by others as such a gesture” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). In other words, the child has mastered some small aspect of the community’s language, and culture.

**Signs, Tools, & Mediation**

As Vygotsky has shown that internalization-externalization is in essence the basic cycle of human learning. And foundational to human learning is the ability to recognize, interpret, and produce signs that convey future activity (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). Signs are external representations of human activity that are oriented towards inwards as means to regulate human attention and thought. Vygotsky differentiates signs from tools, which he defines as instruments that are oriented towards the outside world. An instrument is something that is material and is used to alter some of another material object. A sign, although material is used to regulate the mind. Both signs and instruments are essential to the mediation of human relationships, and activities. Both of these are necessary for learning, as tools and signs are used to represent, interpret, and translate the outside world within the mind into meaning via human agency.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is another important aspect of Vygotsky’s work. Mironenka (2013) notes that many Activity Theorists in the Anglo-European world treat ZPD as its own theory, when in fact it is a practical extension of Vygotsky’s dialectic of internalization-externalization. The actual concept “zone of proximal development” is a concrete description of the process of communal socialization (Vygotsky, 1978). This process of communal socialization is a pedagogical process whereby new-comers in a group or community learn to participate in that new
group or community’s activity. Vygotsky’s empirical studies of child development shows that the rate of intellectual and skill capacity of a child can increase when working with other more advanced peers. The idea of this “zone” is that an individual may have a certain set of skills and on their own may develop more skills. However, the potential for what they can learn is greater in their broader surroundings. If we extend these findings to their logical ends ZPD means that human beings have a greater potential for development when working together collaboratively. ZPD relates to internalization-externalization in that other individuals who are more skilled and knowledgeable about an activity system help people internalize the appropriate knowledge.

**Leontiev’s Levels of Human Agency**

A.N. Leontiev, a collaborator of Vygotsky in the Cultural-Historical school, extended Vygotsky’s analysis of human activity and development a couple of ways. His most well-known contribution is the development of the hierarchical model of human activity (Leontiev, 1978). He considers all human existence to be social in that we come into a world shaped by others, and we continue to live out our existence in a world shaped by others. As such human activity is fundamentally social or collective. Nevertheless, Leontiev, in order to address the need for conceptual clarity when exploring human activity concretely devises a framework to distinguish between the differing orientations and complexity of activity. Leontiev’s framework consisted of three levels of complexity of human activity: operations, actions, and activity system (Engestrom, 1987; Leontiev, 1977; Sawchuk, 2013).
Operations

Operations are units or forms of activity oriented by the immediate conditions in which individuals find themselves. They are not self-conscious meaning that people perform operations in a second nature way. Furthermore, operations are not directly oriented towards a future goal, but towards the particularities of the challenges posed by immediate conditions physical, cultural-historical and socio-economic conditions of practice (Engestrom & Miettinen, 1999, p. 4; Sawchuk, 2006, p. 310). The ways in which an individual or group of individuals engage with their immediate conditions provides the basic mode in which they develop actions and carry them out. In other words, the totality the specific step by step exercise of individuals’ agency within the confines of material conditions serves as the basis for action. A person cannot distinguish between an action and operation simply by observing them. An action becomes an operation when it is mastered so that its performance is no longer a goal to be achieved, but a fact of life that is simply done without much thought. It remains a form of agency upon which self-conscious agency (goal-oriented actions) rest.

The prevailing conditions essentially determine the developmental possibilities of actions, and activities, as it consists of the “available tools, technology, and resources (instruments), and the qualities of the subjects engaged in the behavior”, all of which are historically derivative and culturally mediated (Baptiste, et al., p. 20). These conditions dictate the mode of action or the way individuals actually operationalize the intermediate processes (actions) necessary to transform an object. As explained before an action is a unit of activity (i.e. a conceptual device to differentiate between a more comprehensive process and its intermediate processes). In the case of playing basketball certain types of
clothing and footwear can affect an individual’s ability to run or jump.

Another way to think about the prevailing conditions is as the source of various mediating artifacts at the disposal of individuals. Referring back to the activity of playing basketball, there a few mediating instruments to consider. The basketball itself is important. If participants get a basketball the condition of the ball can shape play. If the ball does not have any air, then a new task emerges: to get air in the ball. Even still if the ball has air but is not enough then it affects the ability of people to shoot the ball. Players will need to adjust their mechanics to get the ball in the basket. Often players do not consciously make the adjustments to their mechanics. Rather, in pursuit of getting the ball into basket they unconsciously change the way they shoot. Similarly, the material of the backboard can affect the way a basketball rolls deflects off of it. While players may recognize that the backboard is made of wood, metal, or fiberglass, plastic, etc. their goal is still to make a basket.

In any case the action is shooting the ball at the basket. The operations are positioning feet, legs, and shoulders to generate enough force to shoot the ball over a particular distance. Another operation is positioning the ball using hands and arms above the shoulder such that ball can be released upwards on an arc. Depending on the player’s physical strength, stature, and distance from the basket she may propel her upwards to get the proper arc for the shot. Finally, she must properly use her wrist to accelerate the ball with the appropriate backspin so that the ball has enough power to cut through the air, while at the same time decelerating at the right point so that it falls into the basket. For someone just playing basketball these aspects of shooting are not consciously considered.
**Goal-directed Actions**

Actions are particular units or levels of agency involving the exercise of particular intellectual and physical capacities in alignment with *goals*. Goals are developmental markers or reference points understood by an individual or a group of individuals as necessary developmental achievements in order to satisfy a collectively determined need. In essence, goals are intermediate objects or problematics that people must strategically engage with as a means of satisfying the common need of the activity. For example, playing basketball is an activity. In order to play a game of basketball, an individual has to engage in several actions. She has to go find one or more individuals to participate. She may have to acquire a basketball, sneakers, and other appropriate clothing. Other individuals may have to do the same. Then they have to get to the basketball court.

Once at the court they may have to negotiate access to the court, as other people may be using it. From there they have to determine the rules for the game and who is on what team. During the game they have to sort out positions (post player, shooter, point-guard, etc.). Aside from these actions there are also other actions that occur throughout game play, which we need to discuss here. The point is that all of these actions are necessary in this scenario are part of playing basketball. The activity system exceeds limits of the basketball court and the game itself. An activity “exists only in the form of actions of chains of action” (Leontiev, 1974, p. 23). Every action corresponds to a goal. And the goal is derived from the group understanding that there are certain requirements for a particular outcome to be achieved. Any one of these actions could very well be an operation depending on whether or not a conscious effort is needed to realize them. If no conscious effort is required, then they are operations.
**Object-oriented Activity**

The concept of activity as deployed by Leontiev (1978) Engestrom (1987), and Sawchuk (2013) refers to particular level and form of human agency consisting of people engaged in operations, and actions in order to meet individual, and group’s needs, while realizing a larger collaborative need or object. Activity is a collaborative system of human agency. In CHAT activity and activity system are thus interchangeable. An activity is the “minimum meaningful unit of analysis” (Leontiev, 1978). Activity…. refers to the way that social life is created and structured by the multiple, overlapping and yet analytically distinguishable – conflictually and cooperatively shared – purposes of practice” (Sawchuk, 2013, p. 5). Every activity is a system in that it consists of “goal-directed activeness that contains elements of planning, prediction of possible consequences, and a logical framework” (Nyanungo, 2007, p. 45). “Activity is a collective, systemic formation that has a complex mediational structure. An activity system produces actions and is realized by means of actions” (Helsinki). Put another way, an activity is its own totality. Although the various actions and operations performed are oriented towards a person’s or group’s goals and immediate conditions, they are also oriented to the object (overarching purpose) of the community of which they are a part. The object of the community mediates the actions of the constituent individuals and groups giving an activity its coherence (De Smet, 2014).

The idea that an object is both ideal and material is based on the materialist concept of consciousness expressed by Marx. Leontiev writes: “Marx observes that the objects of the external world known to man were originally designated as the means of satisfying his needs, that is to say they were for him “goods”. …They endow an object
with the character of usefulness as though usefulness were intrinsic to the object itself”. If we return to Marx’s usage of object we can find some clarity on Leontiev’s usage. For Marx object refers to a particular piece of material whose actual properties allow for a particular need to be met. Marx (1990) writes: “Every object possesses various properties, and is thus capable of being applied to different uses” (p. 285). Put another way the object is that piece of material that contains within it new means of satisfying a need.

A need is the historically and culturally specific form in which human motives take. Motives are “enduring, universal drives or interests, such as sex, recreation, entertainment, mobility, physical safety, economic security, professional dignity, and so on” (Baptiste, 2009 et al. p. 19). The fact that individuals take up any activity or participate in broader systems of collaborative agency reflects the individual’s understanding that his/her motives can be adequately addressed either directly or indirectly.

It is precisely because certain material is perceived and identified by its properties as having the potential to satisfy certain needs that becomes a need, which facilitates the conduction human attention and effort towards it. Different material, and thus different objects have different properties, and this requires different techniques, tools, and human efforts (actions) to transform the particular piece of material into a form capable of satisfying a need. The need of a community of people cannot be satisfied by the activity of an individual, because the nature of the object itself requires cooperation of each individual within an object-defined community. The object in essence is a particular problematic or problem space (Lord, 2009); it is such because a particular collaborative
of individuals has identified it as a potential source for satisfying a need. From the standpoint of a particular object the activity of an individual can only comprise of intermediate processes or actions, organized around collectively determined goals, which are based on collectively based analysis and knowledge of the object being worked on and the prevailing conditions in which it is found (Baptiste, 2009, p. 20).

**Engestrom’s Contributions**

Yrjo Engestrom has played a significant role in popularizing the different elements of CHAT. In addition, Engestrom has expanded and systematized the concepts put forth by Vygotsky and Leontiev. One important conceptual contribution of Engestrom (1987) is activity network. Engestrom argues that it is important to consider at least two interacting activity systems. He also lays out five principles for exploring activity. First, Engestrom states that activity must be the primary unit of analysis and the point of departure of analysis. The second principle Engestrom puts forward is multivoicedness, which refers to the fact that activities have different points of views and division of labor which influences how different individuals and groups within an activity understand their role and the activity, Furthermore, it is important to pay attention to the different histories of these different internal perspectives or voices. Principle three is historicity. Historicity means that in order to examine any activity system we have examine its becoming. We must explore the processes through which the activity evolved over time. We also have to examine the history of the conceptual ideas and that influence or shape the activity (Engestrom, 1991, p. 136).

The fourth concept outlined by Engestrom is the centrality of *contradictions* in the
development of human activity systems. Engestrom (1991) sees contradictions as historically formed tensions rooted within the activities themselves, which allow for activities to change in different ways (p. 137). Lord (2009) explains that dialectical contradictions are not simply problems or conflicts, although they are often the underlying the source of conflicts. Contradictions are dialectical in that two elements that may be rooted in the ‘truth’ are nevertheless diametrically opposed, sometimes causing a potentially no-win situation, but always creating an activity system disturbance, and thus the potential for change and development” (p. 59). Contradictions in themselves do not lead to change, but they can create conditions, which encourage people to seek creative solutions to problems emerging from them. In some cases, these solutions extend by managing contradictions to the complete resolution of contradictions.

Engestrom (1987) delineates four types of contradictions: primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary. Primary contradictions are those which occur within the collective subjects, the instruments, or the rules of an activity. In this case the actual components themselves contain contradictions. Secondary contradictions emerge from relationships between the various components. For example, the relationship between an established formal or informal rule of an activity system and available tools to carry out an activity is contradictory. In another situation can be the division of labor contradicts the rules or tools, etc. (Engestrom, 1987). In Lord’s (2009) study of he describes how a particular machine in the steel mill (the mediating instrument) has a certain mechanical speed restriction:

the production rule mandates that the line speed for “Product A” needs to
be x feet per minute or greater. If following the rule, the line will function in optimum performance parameters informed by past practice but the material may track to one side and crash into the production machine’s structural support. By not following the rule, the production machine will run the product without problems but will not meet the production parameters (p. 62).

In this situation there is an impasse that requires a creative solution. It is also worth noting that this contradiction has its roots in other activity systems one of which is the quality control activity system (Lord, 2009).

Tertiary contradictions emerge as a result of the introduction of objects from more advanced activities into an activity system. These objects are introduced by “representatives of culture” (Engestrom, 1987) who refers to those who occupy institutional positions, such as a teacher, doctor, etc. Lastly, quaternary contradictions result from systemic tensions between adjacent activity systems. In this case the object of one activity system is in conflict with the other.

The fifth and last principle is the principle of expansive transformation. Engestrom (1991) notes that as people constituting an activity system continue to renovate the activities as that attempt to manage and/or overcome contradictions some individuals “may begin to question and deviate from the established norms. In some cases, this escalates into a collaborative envisioning and a deliberate collective change effort” (p. 137). In other words, some participants within an activity system may start a movement to change the existing system. The extent of this “collaborative visioning and
collect change effort” may so extensive that it results in the formation of another activity system altogether.

Theoretical Openings for CHAT

Social Relations

Human activity cannot form and exist in a vacuum; there is always a socio-cultural, and politico-economic context that has shaped the minds and actions of individuals. This social context does not exist as a backdrop to the activity, rather it permeates and is part of the constitution of human activity. Context, must be understood as a social organization of historically constituted social relations (Smith, 2005). By social relation I mean a specific historical mode/practices of human production/organization (Bannerji, 2005; Carpenter & Mojab, 2011; Marx, 2011; Smith, 2005). Sawchuk (2006) specifically speaks to the need to recognize the ways people are situated within activity systems as a result of their location within broader social relations:

Although people exercise their freedom in their participation with each other as individual human agents they are hardly free to articulate in any way they choose. People have different experiences by virtue of their standpoint in the social world, by virtue of their relationship to tools that mediate their participation, and by virtue of the distribution of material and culture resources. Their participation produces patterns that define major social divisions, through these patterns they also undergo changes that are unexpected. (p. 17)
These social relations which position us within different activity systems are both economic and cultural. Engestrom (1987) explains that all human activity systems consist of the three economic relations outlined by Marx in his manuscripts. These are the dialectical relations of production: production-consumption-distribution-exchange. In *Grundrisse* Marx writes the following:

Production creates the objects which correspond to the given needs; distribution divides them up according to social laws; exchange further parcels out the already divided shares in accord with individual needs; and finally, in consumption, the product steps outside this social movement and becomes a direct object and servant of individual need, and satisfies it in being consumed. Thus production appears to be the point of departure, consumption as the conclusion, distribution and exchange as the middle. (Marx, 1973, p.89)

These relations of production in the highest level of abstraction appear purely economic. Marxist CHAT scholars have brought to the fore the role of contradictions and social relations stemming from capitalism in shaping activity systems; however, little has been written on the role of race ethnicity and gender relations in their shaping of class and capitalist economic relations (Fredlund, 2016). These social relations are core cultural processes that organize the relations of production (production-consumption-distribution).

Marx notes subtly in the preceding passage these relations exist “according to social laws” (p. 89). These “social laws” are the cultural-institutional relations produced through the social institutions of society. Within the context of the U.S. these relations
entail relations difference, in particular race, gender, and ethnicity (Carpenter & Mojab, 2011). Social relations as forms historical practice are activities that specifically designed to regulate the way a society works. This is done through social institutions, which produce the discourses, ideologies, and ideational frameworks which serve to establish common-sense understandings regarding different issues. If we return to Smith’s (2005) notion of social relations as human activity, we can understand race and gender as particular forms of difference produced through social institutions. The discourses, ideas, and concepts produced and enforced through social institutions are called texts. Texts can be thought of as a specific type of mediating artifact that has a broadly recognized and agreed upon meaning for people within a particular context.

Following this we can think of race and gender relations as processes within activity systems that employ racialized and gendered artifacts that reproduce these relations of difference within a given activity system. Fredlund (2016) suggests that race and gender as forms of difference be treated as activity systems of their own. The same goes for class relations, which exceed the analytically imposed limits of political economy. Class like race and gender exists in the cultural realm of daily life as well as the economic. Class also shows up as a relation of difference (Bannerji, 1995). I would argue that the production and appropriation of race, gender, and class artifacts can only be understood by juxtaposing the institutional systems that produce them with the non-institutional activities be analyzed. To do this would mean taking a historical approach to analyzing the production of race and gender institutional artifact production, and then exploring how these artifacts influence non-institutional activity systems, the production of social relational artifacts is bound up in historical relations of power (i.e. relations of
domination and resistance) (Sawchuk, 2006). These relations of power have real implications for how the division of labor, norms, rules, contradictions and learning within activity systems manifest themselves.

**Learning**

“Learning” as a concept can be used referentially by people to express their intentional efforts to develop a capacity (intellectual) to overcome a perceived barrier. In this sense “learning” is understood as the mental or cognitive changes that people undergo as a result of various actions people intentionally take/engage in, in order to achieve mastery of a set of operations, capacity, or mastery over a set of challenges and conditions. In general, to learn is to master. The problem with this notion of learning is that it only recognizes what people consciously do in order to achieve their goal. It misses the incidental things people do at the level taken for granted operations. It also discounts the unintended consequences of people’s actions, which can lead to unintended learning. For others learning is a process of receiving information and cognitively mastering it.

CHAT differs from both of these views of learning. Learning in CHAT is a processual outcome (Youn & Baptiste, 2007). That is, learning is a particular production that occurs through human activity. It occurs when individuals encounter barriers to their achieving their goals and find that they must synthesize new means, of achieving their goals. Sometimes they develop new goals all together. Collectively, learning occurs when a collective or community of people encounter various contradiction within their practice that requires various changes in the practice or the total transformation of their collective practice.
CHAT understands learning to be new developments in individual behavior, thought, and action, as well as new developments in communal activity systems/objects, collective worldview and collective strategy. In individual and collective standpoints these new developments or learning can be intended or unintended; and they can be welcomed and unwelcomed among different voices within the community. Drawing on Youn and Baptiste (2007) and Youn (2007) I define learning as practical and processual outcomes of human activities, which result in new and/or improved modalities for engaging and participating in some aspect of social life. These new and/or improved modalities can take form as new concepts orienting a group or community’s understanding of itself and others. Learning can take form in the change in a collective’s organizational form and orientation towards the rest of the social world (i.e. its collective identity). Learning can also be produced in the form of new physical capacities and technologies.

From the standpoint of individuals within an activity system learning can be expressed as the individual’s improved capacity to participate in community life in a more protagonistic way. That is, they have a greater understanding of the internal dynamics of their activity system and have developed new skills and know-how that allows them participate in the activity in ways that are more enriching to themselves. Learning from an individual’s standpoint could also manifest itself in the individual exiting an activity system, as they may develop new goals and needs, which they do not perceive as attainable within their current activity system.
Standpoint & Power in Activity

Alas, it is important to remember that activity systems are multi-voiced. To understand learning we have to take a particular standpoint from within the activity system. Learning is often understood as something that is good or positive. However, whether it is seen as good or bad depends on the standpoint we occupy. People learn to be racists and exploitative of each other. From some standpoints this is good. From those oppressed by this learning, it is bad. The question of standpoint and its relationship to “good” learning or “bad learning”, or whether substantive developmental changes are acknowledged as learning in the first place leads to the question of power within activity systems. A remaining criticism of CHAT is that the framework does not adequately address the workings of power within activity systems. A big part of the problem is that a dialectical materialist concept of power has not been articulated. That aside, CHAT does house within it some of the concepts needed to analyze power within activity systems. To be specific, division of labor, rules, conventions, etc., are all products of particular social relationships that result from power relations and reproduce the particular set of power relations that produced them.

Power is not a thing, but a relationship of control between groups of people who require access or control of some the same object, but have differing rationales for pursuing the object. Drawing on Sawchuk (2006, p. 305) we might understand power as a dialectical/trialectical relationship of domination-resistance-transformation. Sawchuk’s study is focusing specifically on work-based activities, and as such the main focus on the relationship of workers’ learning to the contradictions between exchange and use value within the capitalist labor process. Within all activity systems under capitalism the
commodity relation is present, however, it is not always the central or core set of contradictions within activities. That is, it is expressed but in greater or lesser degrees of peripherality in non-economic activity.

Despite, the study’s focused on activity within the sphere of the economy or material production, Sawchuk (2006) provides a useful point of departure for understanding power in activity systems. He outlines three types of “knowledge activities” that occur within the context of the labor process: domination, resistance, and transformation (p. 305). Of these three he writes:

In this typology the first type, domination, involves knowledge activity governed by an exchange-value orientation. Such activity systems rarely resolve internal contradictions. More often than not they result in contracted or degenerative modes of activity system development. In many ways, they exemplify the processes of ‘evisceration’” (p. 305)

Here we can transpose the notion of exchange-value into any of the core values and orientations of dominant cultural-institutional relations within capitalist society. For example, although under capitalism the dialectic of exchange- and use-value is constantly putting pressure on all activities, there are other social relations which serve as cultural mediations for capital that take center stage in different activities. As mentioned previously relations of difference like race, ethnicity, and gender are key. However, there are other class relations that are not readily economic that have to do with the structure of educational processes within activities, and the projective conceptualization of the object
of activity. Put another way, class relations also entail considerations of who has the ability to direct and structure processes of learning within activity systems and who gets to frame the ideal outcomes or what we hope the object of activity will become.

Sawchuk identifies knowledge activities based on resistance as those activities “that skirts the line between use-value and exchange value orientations” (p. 305). Within this context while the core imperative of the activity system is not in alignment with the needs of the particular groups of people within the system there are openings or “interstitial spaces” where these subordinate or minority groups within activity systems can on one hand participate in the normative production processes of the system, while simultaneously appropriating aspects of the system for their own need. Sawchuk discusses this in detail in the passage below:

The forces of fragmentation encourage the development of tactical responses within interstitial spaces, dispersed across a range of locations where working-class groups still exercise bits and pieces of individual and collective discretion. So, it is in these ‘stolen’ moments--during the breaks and gaps within the labour process, in the truck on the way home after a shift, in the easy chair in front of the television where one would otherwise simply rest one’s body, around the kitchen table with family members or friends, in the pub where networks of workers, neighbours, friends, and, in the case below, musicians, gather--that people can cobble together a semi-coherent and ongoing mode of knowledge development. It is not coincidental that it is through these processes that workers first begin to politicize their own knowledge and learning. (p. 305)
Resistance comes from groups’ tacit recognition that their deeper needs are not being met by their dominant mode of participation within the activity system. As such within the context of this activity they find ways to push back against the core imperative of the system and even undermine it in small and temporary ways. Resistance occurs as both individual endeavor, as well as collective.

The third type of knowledge activity is transformational activity. In this case transformation does not refer to the actual transformation of the activity system that people are participating in. Rather, “transformation, suggests the rudimentary formation of not simply a ‘class in itself’ but a ‘class for itself’. That is, the subaltern group begins to engage in activities outside of the core activity system in which they define themselves as a particular social subject in conflict with the dominant modes of being, doing, and thinking that constitute the core activity system in which they are participating. Sawchuk further explain that:

Illegitimate activity passes towards a form that, in the community of workers which mediates it, becomes legitimized. Thus, workers begin to re-assess their lives and their learning which outlines distinct forms of education and development. The central vehicle, in the case of my data set, is of course the trade union. In this third type of knowledge activity, people create systems of activity with developmental trajectories that run parallel to--occasionally violently intersecting with--the dominant exchange-value oriented structures of education, training, work and politics. (p. 305)
As Sawchuk notes the trade union is the most common activity system associated with transformational knowledge activity in relation to economic activity systems. Trade unions have the most intimate connections to the formation of working-class subjectivity, as they are directly involved in the relations of material production. However, other types of organizations like community organizations, political parties, churches, etc. can also serve as vehicles for this kind of development.

We now return to the question of power as dialectical relations of domination, resistance, and transformation within activity systems, with domination representing one pole of power, and transformation its oppositional pole. To recast Sawchuk’s (2006) typology we can think of domination as the generally unquestioned participation in activities and their rationales according to the consensus of the overwhelming majority of community of practice. This pole of power, consists of agents of the status quo’s capacity to limit certain types of learning processes, while often simultaneously promoting other processes that support their rationales for engaging with an object. This is done through their historically institutionally defined means of organizational division of labor, through which a hierarchy roles and positions; each of which has their own particular defined spheres of authority and associated tasks.

For example, certain committees in an organization may be responsible for making rules, which private ownership, are generally respected and assumed to have the right to define the purpose of an organization. Given this hegemony those who participate in the community organization’s activity system typically, without question follow the
rules established by the founders. Over time as more members join from different circumstances more conflict within the organization may occur, as people have different needs. In certain situations, people question some of rules and modalities through which organization business occurs. They may resist through refusing to put forth their best efforts or what not. However, they still take for granted the general rationale for the organization.

At the opposite pole of domination is transformation. In the case of transformation certain groups within an organization begin to see themselves as a particular social bloc or social group. They being to develop clarity as to what they need from their own standpoint, and they begin developing alternative processes as part of a project for re-orienting organizational capacities. This often involves developing alternative activity systems outside of organizational spaces through which people engage in learning processes that can help them develop strategies for change. If they are successful in creating a new consensus among a large enough portion of the people within the organization, they may be able to shift the motives of organizational activities in their favor. In some cases, people abandon one organization to form another. In order to understand power, we have to understand the internal contradictions between the needs of different groups or voices within the activity system(s). Therefore, it is important to understand the modalities in which different groups and voices are resisting and articulating their needs. And lastly, we need to understand what people are doing within and without the activity system(s) to transform their conditions.
Chapter 5: Research Design

Research Approach: Critical Ethnography

Critical ethnographers engage in studies of particular groups of people because they have a vested interest in how the practices of particular groups create or can create opportunities of emancipation (Thomas, 1992). Thomas explains that “Critical ethnography is conventional ethnography with a political purpose” (p. 4). In other words, critical ethnography is no different from conventional ethnography other than the fact that the researcher is not a neutral observer, but one who takes a position in regards to the practices of the group being studied. Whereas, conventional ethnography observes for the sake of interpreting the cultural practices of a group, critical ethnography explores a cultural group in order to “aid emancipatory goals or to negate the repressive influences that lead to unnecessary social domination” (Thomas, 1992, p. 4).

Critical ethnography begins with the assumption that in our present epoch the world is unjust. And that the world is organized in such a way that there are people benefitting from the suffering of others. As Creswell (2007) notes critical ethnography seeks to explore and discover alternatives for groups of people being oppressed within systems in which “power prestige, privilege, and authority serve to marginalize individuals who are from different classes, races, and genders” (p. 70). Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) take things a bit further when they explain critical research must take as their starting point that all prevailing ideas are produced through historical power relations, and as such facts cannot be understood apart from the values and ideological processes that produce them. In fact, all values, ideas,
and conditions within capitalist society are mediated by “the social relations of capitalist production and consumption” (p. 139-140).

In taking Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) seriously I understand critical ethnography to exceed Thomas’ (1992) point that critical ethnography is simply “conventional ethnography with a political purpose” (p. 4). The political purpose of aiding “aid emancipatory goals or to negate the repressive influences that lead to unnecessary social domination” (p. 4), requires an explication of existing social relations and a dialectical analysis of how the practices of an oppressed group are being mediated by those social relations. The traditional reliance on thick and rich descriptions continues to play an important role, as it helps us ground ourselves, and identify potential points of investigation. In order to develop more comprehensive and concrete understanding of the everyday of a particular group, for purpose of supporting their emancipatory efforts it is necessary to seek what is beyond what is perceivable to the eye and ear and uncover the way in which existing social and power relations are being organized (Smith, 2005).

In ethnography the end product is a cultural interpretation or analysis. Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) state that this analysis or interpretation should be a cultural critique. Nevertheless, I think it is important that the end product be something that can as Thomas (1992) notes “aid emancipatory goals” (p. 4). Smith (2005) argues that in order to truly aid people in their struggle against oppressive power relations we have to locate ourselves within the context of their daily lives. Smith calls this taking a standpoint within the everyday of subjects. This means taking on the broad and enduring problem (i.e. the object) of the group as the point of departure for research. It is about locating ourselves as in service to the group and its emancipatory goals, as opposed to thinking of
ourselves as independent outsiders examining the group and doing research that does not aid them in taking on their challenges. Most importantly this means beginning by engaging with people who are taking on or are struggling with a particular problem, and learning about their lived and embodied experiences with the problem. The experiences of real of people determines the direction of further steps in the research process.

I found critical ethnography to be an appropriate approach for this study, because I not only wanted to understand how social justice activists become Left organizers, but also because as a Leftist I was interested engaging in research that could provide intellectual assistance to Left organizers and activists in social struggle. As Foley (1999) explains there is a lot of unrealized learning produced through social struggle, because activists and organizers are rarely exploring the subtle aspects of their practice. Often times critical reflection is limited to focus on strategy and tactics. This research is not neutral. It is rooted in a Marxist theoretical perspective, itself political in nature. However, what makes this study a critical ethnography is that it seeks to contribute to the capacity of Leftists to develop skilled organizers who can build working-class political organization.

The Research Site

This study was conducted in Grit City, a large eastern U.S. city. The city is one of the largest cities in the U.S. and has a population that is overwhelmingly working-class. The city is primarily a city of retail workers, health-care aides, medical technicians, communications workers, transportation workers, maintenance and constructions workers, waiters, and waitresses, nurses and office administrators, fast food workers,
janitors and auto-mechanics, and grade school teachers. Together these workers make up roughly 62% of the city’s workforce. If police officers and security workers are included that percentage jumps to about 65%. The 65% of the population consists of self-identified people of color, among which Afro-Americans make up nearly 45% of the overall population and Latinos make up nearly 15% of the population. The median income of household income in the city is approximately $65,000 with poverty rate of just under 29% and a deep poverty rate (½ the federal poverty line) of 13%. The city is a segregated such that working-class people of color and working-class whites rarely share the same neighborhoods. The overwhelming majority of white working-class people live in the furthest reach of north eastern part of the city, and in the far southernmost part of the city.

Research Questions

**Primary question:** How do Grit City Left organizers learn through social movement organizing?

**Secondary research questions:**

How do Left organizers go about engaging in movement organizing?

a. What are the activity systems that constitute these organizers social movement organizing?

What are the different contradictions embedded in movement organizing activities?

b. How are the manifested in these organizers’ activity?

c. How do these organizers perceive and engage with the products of contradictions and the contradictions themselves?

What are the forms of learning that occur as a result of engaging with contradictions?
Data Collection

Participant Observation & Sample Selection

I used participant observation as the dominant method of data collection for this study. Drawing on Dewalt and Dewalt (2011) I understood participant observation to consists of several iterative or ongoing processes. The first aspect of process is that of prolonged engagement within the group being studied. Second, it involved becoming familiar with and proficient at using the cultural tools, which includes communicative tools (language and concepts) and technical tools (methods of doing tasks). Third, the researcher needs to participate in the cultural life of the group along with everyday participants or members of the group. In this study these included the different activists, as well as the Left organizers, involved in organizing work.

Fourth, participant observation relies on the use of informal conversations or informal interviews with members of the group throughout the course of formal and informal aspects of group activities (Devault & McCoy, 2006). Fifth, the method requires the researcher to be spend time with members of the group even if such moments appear outside of the boundaries of the group's formal activity. This includes moments of leisure, and casual interactions. In the case of this study this included spontaneous meet-ups with organizers, getting food and coffee with organizers, and unstructured phone calls and online messaging that ran the gamut of conversations about life in general, to venting sessions about political matters. Lastly, the method requires the use of tacit and explicit information as important sources of data for analysis and findings (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011; Smith, 2005).
Initial Entry into the Field

I consider the beginning of this study to occur May of 2013, because it was at that point I established the focal research questions and at that point. However, the basis of this study began as early as October 2011 during the emergence of OWS. I conducted a five-month pilot study (October, 2011 to March, 2012), which was designed to examine the different anti-austerity organizations and groups involved in sustaining the mobilization in two major cities on the east coast of the U.S. One of those cities was Grit City. I placed greater emphasis on Occupy Grit City (OGC), because it was most convenient. I had already developed deep political relationships with other Leftists via my position as Socialist Party chair. A second reason was that I had a personal interest in understanding the potential of a radical movement center forming in a city like Grit City, which was not only predominantly working-class, but had an economic base of low income, and Afro-American and Afro-Latino people.

During my participation in OGC I started to narrow my focus on Left organizers who participating in the protest mobilization. I was attracted to them because they were discussing the question of sustaining OGC by building mass-based organizations in working-class neighborhoods. This appealed to me as a Socialist. But it also appealed to me as social movement scholar trying to understand how people build social movements. It was through my deep participation in this Left organizer sub-group within OGC that I became familiar with many different Leftist organizers in the city.
Re-entering the Field

My re-entry into the field began in May of 2013. The last bit of data for this study was collected in August of 2017. This time it was to conduct this very study. In a way I had not actually left the field because I was deeply invested in the political work in Grit City. However, I had stopped doing systematic data collection. I had two reasons for conducting this study in Grit City. The most basic reason was that I had already established deep relationships and rapport with a broad sweep of people in the Left network in the city. Second, I was politically embedded and committed to assisting in the advancement of Left movement-building in Grit City. The depth of my political involvement in the city provided me with broad and deep access to political organizing discussions and debates. My involvement consisted of being in leadership positions of three socialist organizations in the city. I had spent nearly a year doing public school organizing. I was a member of the young workers’ executive committee for the local AFL-CIO.

I entered the field this time, with a clear theoretical perspective about organizers. The assumption anchoring this study is that Left organizers are absolutely necessary for the development of emancipatory working-class movements. The second assumption is that people learn to organize through the activities of organizing. Given my subscription to these two assumptions I saw it as necessary to focus my study not simply on activists in general, but on Left organizers and organizing activity from their standpoint. In terms of access, I had important advantages. Not only did I establish rapport and political
relationships with many organizers and activists of the Left in Grit City, I was also continuously engaged in working-class organizing projects with Leftists.

During my time in the field (May 2013 until August 2017) used the tactic of periodizing participation in one group over the other. This entailed alternating the depth of my participation and observation in each group, so that during one period of time my put most of my focus on one group. At the same time, I maintained a more peripheral level of participation in other groups and maintained close contact with the organizers of all the groups. From May 2013 until July 2013 I was involved in South Point Community Council (SPCC). June 2013 until February 2016, I spent the bulk of my time with the organizers from The Rights of People (TROP) as an organizer working on their health care campaign. Throughout that time, I was active in leadership positions within the base-building team, the political education/leadership development team, and the campaign design team.

I conducted the bulk of fieldwork for Organization for Popular Power (OPP) between the months of November 2015 and November 2016. This period of fieldwork overlapped with the period of work with TROP. My fieldwork with OPP also overlapped with the fieldwork with No to University Gentrification’s (NUG) anti-stadium work, which consisted of the period of time from January 2016 to until February 2017. During my time in the field I engaged in 253.5 hours of event-based participant observation* (these consists of meetings, protests, workshops, etc. The amount of time spent engaging in informal discussion is not included) (see Tables in App. 2.1 through 2.4).
Being an Insider & Outsider

Participant observation can be conducted as an outsider or as an insider-outsider. In both cases the researcher is involved the life of the group being studied. However, as an insider-outsider there are particular advantages, as well as unique problems that arise in the course of conducting the research. I experienced both throughout this study. An insider is someone who comes from the culture group, and is intimately tied to the activities and interests of the culture group (Couture, Zaidi, & Maticka-Tyndale, 2012). Dwyer and Buckle (2009) note that there are some scholars who consider being an outsider as advantageous, because they perceive such a position as objective. However, Dwyer and Buckle also note that this is not necessarily the case, as insiders have access to greater sources of knowledge. Furthermore, given the critical/political nature of this research I have a particular interest in understanding organizing work from the standpoint of an insider, which as Frampton, Kinsman, Thompson, and Tilleczek, 2006, argue is beneficial for those generating critical knowledge for those they are studying.

Throughout this study my insider position has allowed me first person experience with different aspects of organizing work. I worked alongside of the organizers in this study, I experienced many of the constraints and contradictions of doing organizing work. It also meant I had good grasp on the culture of the Left organizing spaces, which was important for being able to identify key concepts and aspects of organizing activities. At the same time, being insider doing research on my own group also encouraged a high level of discipline. I needed to also provide an account of other organizers’ participation.
To do this required me to be able to bracket my personal thoughts about organizing activities and other’s actions from what I was actually observing (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 59). Being an insider also means always being seen as an insider. In this case, being an organizer meant being open to culturally normal engagement with organizers. For example, there were times when another organizer would call me and start talking about strategy without me initiating the conversation. On one hand this was great because I was being provided information that was rich, naturalistic, and important to my research. On the other hand, since I was not the one initiating these exchanges I had less control over the exchange, and that made data collection even more messy. The data I had from those conversations were more or less strategic notes, and partial ideas that me and others would work on at another point. I found that I needed to set weekly times to pull myself away from the “the work” in order read through my various notes, organize them, and Link them with my more organized field notes.

Being an insider doing this research was not completely positive. There were some negatives. One negative of being an insider was that conflict around political ideas, and strategic considerations meant diminished access to certain information. For example, political disagreement related to recruitment into an organization I was a part of resulting in one of the organizers in the study not speaking to me for over seven months. We eventually reconciled. However, the point is that as an insider I was part of the movement work, which entails engaging in conflict over ideas and strategy. And that is not always advantageous for the research.

The other negative about being an insider is that being someone who is not only an insider within the general Left activist network, but someone who has been in and is in
leadership positions of organizations it was extremely difficult to know when to pull back
from the field. Being in a leadership position meant doing the work that was needed to
move the work forward. When needed I was expected to perform my duties. At the same
time, I needed to be sure to carefully collect data, analyze it, and reflect on it. On many
occasions I felt pulled in two directions. On one hand I needed to do what was necessary
for my dissertation. On the other hand, those who graciously provided me with rich
information for the study needed me to act as a leader in the work.

In CHAT terms, I was experiencing the contradiction between the competing
logics of organizing work, and academia. As an academic my interest was to collect data
that could be analyzed for my research. At the same time as a Left organizer, engaging in
conflicts over strategy and political practice can also lead to personal conflicts. And
political and personal conflicts can temporarily, and some cases permanently result in the
withdrawal of access. This creates an ethical dilemma, in that as a Left organizer working
on Ph.D. I need to generate quality knowledge, which require access. But at the same
time I need to be grappling with other organizers who are participants in this study
around how we do our work as Leftists. I have also had to make ethical decisions to
exclude, what I consider to be rich and important information about the inner tensions of
movement work, because discussing them could damage the relationships between
organizers doing this work. It is my belief that we need to be healing and building
stronger relationships if the emancipatory dreams of Leftists are to be realized.

Sample Selection

As mentioned, my time in the field was as both a working-class organizer and
academic. As a working-class organizer I not only participated in different kinds of
protest activities; I was also a member of several different organizations or movement groups involved a different kinds of working-class organizing. During my time in the field I started exploring different theoretical perspectives on social movements to help me make sense of my observations. For one, I noticed that while there are different organizations in name and governed by different formal institutional rules, there a very high degree of porosity and mobility between these organizations. Organization A at one time employed organizers and activists from organization B. Organization C was led by a formal volunteer of organization A.

Organizations A, B, C, D, and E, had all been working in coalition with each other and shared resources and members in varying degrees over time. It also became clear to me that members of one organization were also members of several other organizations, which facilitated the Linkages between groups. As a Marxist and working-class organizer/activist I was specifically interested in exploring and participating in organizing work in which Leftists specifically worked to build a working-class membership. To do this I reached out to my friend and fellow organizer Bishop. Bishop had been doing organizing work in the working-class neighborhood of South Point. He was the first person to be part of the study. Through my participation in South Point I connected with Zaria, an organizer working on a project to organize working-class people across the state. After meeting Zaria, I started organizing with TROP. I also organized with JustWages a local organization working on a city-wide campaign to win a living wage. Three of the organizers went on to initiate No to University Gentrification (NUG). NUG was initiated as an organizing against the stadium after two of the organizers, who were students at North Corporate University, became aware the university’s proposal to
build a stadium in the historic African-American neighborhood. Through my participation in these three different setting I started to identify organizers who fit the criteria of being Leftist doing working-class organizing.

In total I relied on the assistance of 27 Left organizers to help generate data for this study. Using purposive sampling, I selected 12 Left organizers as to be the key informants for this study. I intentionally selected organizers that had a wide range of experiences as organizers, and diverse level of experience of organizing. Organizers in the study ranged from just over one year of organizing to over 20 years. In addition to the 12 leading informants I also relied on the expertise and help of 15 other Left organizers who are actively involved in the movement organizing work along with the lead informants.

In this study the leading informants/lead organizers were those organizers whose involvement in organizing work was consistent and directive. I judged consistent organizing work to be when a person did organizing work at least twice per week. Organizing work refers to having meetings, attending protests and other demonstrations, doing preparation for meetings and events, and having formal and/informal conversations with others involved in the organizing work, about the work. I use the term directive to refer to those individuals whose consistent participation in organizing work entailed in directing strategy, meetings, tactics, and other aspects of organizing work.

The secondary informants/organizers in this study were those organizers I met through the course of participant observations with the lead organizers. These organizers were also secondary in that I had not established the kind of rapport with them that I established with lead organizers. Nevertheless, these organizers provided important
information that helped me understand my context and the activities that constituted movement organizing.

Eight of the organizers were involved in militant particularist defensive struggles against a major university in the city, North Corporate University (NOCO). Seven were involved in developing a universal health care campaign with an organization called The Rights of People (TROP). Four of TROP’s members were also members of OPP. And 12 (not counting the four members of TROP) were members of Organization for Popular Power (OPP). OPP was an organization consisting of organizers from different kinds of grassroots (mass) organizations. These included trade unionists from a progressive teachers’ caucus, land-based organizers, neighborhood and education organizers, and anti-mass incarceration organizers. This study is not concerned with the development of any particular organization. Rather, the focus of the study is movement organizing praxis and learning of these particular organizers. This means that while organizational processes of each organization mediate the activity of organizers, it is from the standpoint of the organizers’ activity that they enter into view in this study. I selected Left organizers involved in different groups as a means of increasing the diversity of perspectives in the study. Each organizer comes with their own past experiences with organizing and also being organized, which could provide rich data. However, I wanted to maximize the diversity of perspectives by selecting organizers currently or most recently involved different organizing projects.

Given my Cultural Historical Activity Theory framework, one of the assumptions I made was that different organizing projects may have different challenges, conditions, and goals and objects, which may require different processes and modalities for carrying
out those processes. This could also mean different forms of learning are embedded within. By making a conscious effort to have sample consisting of people across different organizing contexts within the Left network of organizers in Grit City, I attempted to increase the depth of information I could collect through the study (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, et. al., 2002) (See Fig. App. 2.5 and 2.6 for organizer profiles)

**Informal Interviews**

Rich source of data for me throughout my research was the use of ethnographic interviews (Spradley, 1979). Spradley describes ethnographic interviews as being similar to “a series of friendly conversations” (p. 58). These informal/ethnographic interviews consisted of the three elements outlined by Spradley. They consisted of “explicit purpose, ethnographic explanations, and ethnographic questions” (p. 59). Spradley’s guide for ethnographic interviews was a useful tool for me, however, the guide seems to be more for researchers who are not part of the cultural group. For example, he spends a significant amount of time discussing how to get informants to interact with the researcher in a naturalistic way within the setting. I did not have this problem, because of being an insider. On the other hand, I found that it was important to provide ethnographic explanation to my collaborators. I explained the general nature of my research, which was to understand the different aspects of organizing, and what goes into organizing people in movement work. As suggested by Spradley, I avoided talking about the study in technical terms, not because I did not think people would understand, but because I did not want collaborators to be focused on the nuts and bolts of the study. Instead, I wanted to learn from them about organizing.
Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were a second approach to data collection that I used in this study. Semi-structured interviews had two purposes. One purpose was to collect data about social movement organizing directly from Left organizers who were the leading collaborators in this study. The second purpose was to increase the integrity and trustworthiness of the study by providing another source of data. Although the overall sample for this study consisted of 20 organizers, I conducted semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample of 11 organizers, which I identified as the leading informants/organizers. I identified them as based on (1) they were playing leading and consistent role in ongoing organizing work, and (2) I had the strongest rapport with them at the time I started the study. The other nine organizers in the study provided me with rich information through informal or ethnographic interviews.

The first three interviews I conducted were pilot interviews through which I tested out the approach to interviewing. I began with the least possible structured interview. Interview 1 I conducted with Rachel in October of 2015. The interview consisted of just five core questions:

Tell me about where you grew up?
Can you recall how you got involved in social movement activism?
What are some key organizing projects you are currently working on?
What has been the most challenging about organizing?
What are some things that are important for organizers to do?

The first two questions were meant to warm up the interview. The last three were meant to get the interviewee to talk about organizing work. I chose to have few questions and to avoid using specific organizing terms, like “base-building”, because I wanted to see if
interviewees used those terms without me bringing it into the interview. I was concerned that by bringing in terms and language that came from my participant observations and conversations with other organizers I would lead the interviewee away from what they felt was important to share with me; consequently, I thought that would result in missing important variations in thinking about organizing. I thought having a loose guide would allow me to get to get rich data in the form of stories about organizing work and experiences.

The problem with my approach was that while I got data that turned out to be important for my research I left a lot of things under explored. For example, the terms leadership development came up during my participant observations. But the term was not raised in my first interview with Rachel. Rather, than ask Rachel about it I let it go, because I thought I would take her away from her way of thinking. After reviewing the interview, I realized that she had been mentioning aspects of what others referred to as “leadership development”, but I she never provided much detail about it. And I was too laissez faire to probe.

I came in my second interview I decided to create an extensive interview guide to make sure covered all the topics I wanted to cover. This interview was with Linda back in November of 2015. In this case I made the mistake of over-using my interview protocol to direct the interview, which Seidman (2006) cautions against. The responses I got were sort of tight lip responses. It seemed like she expected me to manage the interview. I could tell that she was much more focused on anticipating what I might ask, and how she was going to provide a response. She was more interested in figuring out the larger picture of my research. There were a lot of long pauses in this interview.
After reflecting the interview, I realized that I needed to provide more ethnographic explanation (Spradley, 1979). That is, I needed to help people I was interviewing understand what the type of information I needed from them. Part of my reflection process was to go back to my research question to clarify to myself what I was trying understand. I wanted to understand how Left organizers learn to do movement organizing. And given my CHAT framework for learning that meant I needed to understand what activities Leftists engaged in as organizers. In other words, what were the activity systems? I needed organizers to provide me with rich stories about what they did and what they do as organizers. I constructed a new interview protocol (See Interview protocol in Appendix 1), which I found to be more useful for the study.

The revised approach to interviewing consisted of open-ended questions. In addition to those questions I developed follow-up and probing questions to help keep the interview moving along and providing me with data that I thought would be useful to the study. I memorized those questions so that I could ask them if the participant did not address them without my me prompting them. An important part of the interview process was listening carefully. It was common for organizers to answer multiple questions while responding to a question I posed. In order to keep the interviews naturalistic and comfortable for organizers I was sure to make sure not to ask a question that had already been answered. Rather, I would ask follow-up or more specific questions related to what the interviewee already stated.

Another tactic I used in my interviews, was the use of culturally specific terms. For example, terms like base-building, leadership, mobilization, organizing. Through active and prolonged participant observation, I became well-versed in the language
organizers used to discuss aspects of their work. I would inquire about the significance of these terms as a means to discerning how they related to each other. Although, I was initially hesitant of bringing in terms in such a forward way for fear of being leading questions, I felt it was justified to do so in order explore continuity and divergences between my data sources. Furthermore, Leech (2002) and Spradley (1979) explain that within ethnography the researcher can and should share with members of a culture group different terms and insights he or she derives from being the field. Doing so allows for a richer dialogue with the informant, and can be particularly rich for the researcher, as he or she may learn that the multiple meanings of a term, concept, symbol, gesture or act.

Smith (2005) explains that when we enter into an interview with someone we are entering into a dialogue. And they tell us stories based on their own interpretation. The experience they share with you is in fact a particular story of the path they took according to how they see the world in that particular moment. The interviews included questions that were designed to get a sense of how the organizer continued their work after their entry into movement work, as well as what they were currently doing. I expected to organizers to tell me how their work differed and more specifically what about the way they participated and thought about movement work changed. Lastly, the interviews were designed to directly engage organizers about the practical aspects of their work. Although the interviews were flexible, I was careful to make sure these different elements were present throughout each. By using this structure throughout the remainder of interviews it also made it easier for me to find information about activities, when it came time to do CHAT analysis.
Data Analysis

Coding the Data

First it is important to note that data analysis is an iterative process. That is, analysis of data continues throughout the research period, and in fact shapes the direction of research. I familiarized myself with each piece of data by first reading it closely. I had four types of data: interview transcripts, audio recordings of interviews, documents from meetings and events, and notes from participant observations. I personally transcribed each of my interviews within a week of conducting the interview. I made it a point to transcribe my own interviews so that I could have a more intimate connection with the data. I also made it a point to transcribe within a week of conducting the interviews so that if I had specific questions about the interview the context of the interview would still be relatively fresh in the mind of the participant.

Initial/Open coding

For the second phase of data analysis I engaged in open-coding of all written data, which included organizational documents, participant observation notes, and transcripts. Performed open coding on each transcript first. After coding each transcript, I performed open coding on the documents and notes. To code I used hard copies of all documents, notes, and transcripts. As Dey (1999, p. 251) writes: “There is a difference between an open mind and an empty head”. The point here is that when I began this study, and when I began coding the data I did not begin without a concept of organizing. My own experience as a movement organizer, and the particular Marxist theoretical perspective that framed my understanding of social movements were present throughout each step of
the research process. In order to avoid stymying the emergence of new data my initial coding phase for each set of data consisted on word-by-word coding, line-by-line coding, and then sentence by sentence. The purpose was to break up the data into the smallest piece possible, and then progressively code in larger data chunks. I found that doing this made it difficult for me to make mental and conceptual jumps about the data. When I coded I kept in mind certain keys to help me identify significant terms, and phrases. For example, if an emotion was described, a bodily sensation, indicators of the deployment of human agency (I went; I did;) (Charmaz, p. 120). I generated a combination of in vivo codes, such as “Organizing made it ok for me to stay” and descriptive codes such as “participating in civil disobedience”. Tables 5.7 and 5.8 are examples of open coding from the data.

### Table 5.1: Example of Open coding a Document

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The survival of the organization depends on our creating a system and culture of recruiting, developing and uniting new leaders.</th>
<th>Organizational viability requires skilled recruiters and leaders, and leadership process</th>
<th>Leadership Development is a core system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In other words, leadership development is not another thing on the list, it is the list.</td>
<td>Leadership development is central to the organization</td>
<td>Leadership development is the driving process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is how we are building a movement. It is how we move from being a staff led to a member led organization.</td>
<td>Leadership development expands collective capacity, which builds movement</td>
<td>Leadership determines movement capacity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.2: Code Example of Interview from Vera

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I think to help develop leadership, it was building a relationship of trust with people. As an organizer that’s one of the priorities in the beginning</th>
<th>Connecting with people; establishing trust is necessary to helping people develop leadership</th>
<th>Building trust is necessary for being able to build leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think some organizers are ok with not having a super personal relationship with people. But I need to have that.</td>
<td>Distinguishing her preference for building personal relationships with people from other organizing</td>
<td>Building personal relationships are necessary to her organizing approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For me to help people build their leadership I need to know them first as people.</td>
<td>Building people requires knowing them as people</td>
<td>Knowing people as human beings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like I need to know what’s going on in their lives; I need to know what they like to do; I need to know what they’re challenged by</td>
<td>Becoming familiar with people’s everyday interests and challenges</td>
<td>Understanding people’s daily lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and what their family is like, and what their upbringing was like;</td>
<td>knowing about their family dynamics</td>
<td>Understanding person’s history;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focused Coding

Charmaz (2006) states that focused or selective coding requires the researcher to make critical decisions regarding the relevance of initial codes to helping answer the research questions guiding the study. For example, throughout my research I collected data not directly related to organizing. I collected a lot of data about the backgrounds of organizers, where they were from, their family life, and other information related to their identities. A case can be made that all this is relevant because it shapes the consciousness of the organizers. However, much of this information is not directly relevant to the study, because they do not contribute to answering my research question. While my theoretical framework informed the questions I asked participants during interviews, I took a more inductive approach to analysis during the open/initial coding process. However, as
Boyatzis (1998) suggests a theoretical approach or a theory-driven approach is appropriate for focused coding processes.

The purpose of focused-coding was to identify from the initial codes the codes that “appeared the most frequently” and/or had “more significance than other codes” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 138). Following Charmaz I used these codes “sift, sort, synthesize, and analyze” my data. During the focused coding phase, I developed 12 focused codes that based on the frequency of the codes, and also the analytical significance of the codes. I considered a code to be analytically or theoretically significant for me when I identified the codes as being potentially explanatory or descriptive of some aspect of social movement or organizing praxis.

For example, three of the focused codes, which I eventually interpreted to be activity systems were both frequently discussed, and theoretically meaningful because they described aspects of organizing work. “Building a base”, “build people’s leadership”, and “mobilizing the base”, were in vivo codes that I developed from phrases organizers in the study used to describe aspects of their work and create points of reference about how they do their work in contrasts to how other organizers do organizing work. As I continued to participate in organizing activities different variations of “building a base”, “building people’s leadership”, and “mobilizing the base” were mentioned by nearly all (23 of 27 organizers) in the study, as distinct aspects of their work, which together made up what they considered to be organizing. Similarly, there were other focused codes that I developed, such as “exercising leadership”, “building relationships”, “having meetings”, etc. Table 5.9 provides examples of focused codes,
Table 5.3: Example of Focused Codes from the data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focused Codes</th>
<th>Code Meaning/Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Building relationships           | -efforts to connect with people on a personal level  
- to establish an emotional bond  
- efforts to establish mutual familiarity  
- establishing open communication between people about organizing work. |
| Doing Outreach                   | -efforts to persuade people to get become part of the base of the organization  
- inviting people to participate in the organization  
- recruitment |
| Building a base of the oppressed | - persuading oppressed people to get involved in organizing work  
- building cooperative relationships between a particular community of oppressed people in order to do political work  
- developing strategy for a campaign with close consultation with the base  
- creating a participatory democratic environment |
| Building Leadership Capacity     | - efforts to teach members of the base how to perform needed tasks within the organization  
- teaching members of the base how perform organizing tasks  
- teaching members how to do political analysis  
- teaching political discourse & theory |
| Mobilizing                       | - variety efforts having to do with confronting authorities directly or indirectly through policy challenges  
- efforts to rally members of the base and outsiders to support a particular political proposal or to resist some process  
- involving public forms of collective protests against or for some particular political outcome |
| Political Education              | - any effort a person makes to consciously gain political understanding or awareness of movements and power structures  
- anything an organizer does to teach, expose, or demonstrate or facilitate thinking about politics |
<p>| Organizer Identity               | - Anything having to do with how an organizer understands themselves in relation to the people they are organizing (e.g. race, class, gender, ethnicity, culture, etc.). |
| Division of labor                | - Anything having to do with distinct roles for carrying out aspects of work |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constraints &amp; Barriers</td>
<td>-Anything that prevents certain aspects of the organizing from being done or that severely limits ability to do what an organizer intends to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory Capacity</td>
<td>-having to do with the collective’s ability to carry out tasks they consider important -having to do with an individual’s ability to participate in collective work in different ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-determination</td>
<td>-the notion that those confronting a particular crisis should be the leading edge of resistance to that crisis and should develop the strategy for transformation in their community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Oppressed</td>
<td>-social groups that collectively experience chronic and harsh social and economic crisis, and marginalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>-When two or more people come together to discuss participation, strategy, tactics, or ideas about organizing work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I used focused codes to eliminate codes that had the same meaning, and to create code clusters as I saw different codes closely linked to the focused codes. Once I created tentative code clusters. Then I began to scrutinize the codes to develop categories and subcategories. The last phase of coding consisted of axial coding, with Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). This involved me considering the different components of human activity as conceptualized in CHAT.

From the data I identified eight object-motives, that organizers in the study shared. They were as follows: left self-development activity, personal life activity, employment activity, base-building activity, identity activity, leadership development activity. All of these activities were connected to the study of learning in social movement organizing. However, this study focused on Leftists and their learning through
social movement organizing. As such, despite the relevance of these activity systems, I focused only on the three object-motives that most closely connected to my research questions.

One object-motive was building a base of activists in order to have the capacity for community self-determination (base-building). The second object-motive was developing members of the base’s capacity to exercise political leadership for their community (leadership development). The third object-motive was mobilizing for political change (mobilization). I then went on to identify conscious actions (i.e. goal-oriented actions) related to each of the object-motives.

The themes were the activity systems I identified, and the sub-themes were the different components of the activity system. I further broke up the sub-themes into particular categories, and then the categories were broken up into sub-categories and codes (See table 5.10).

Table 5.4: Translating axial codes levels into CHAT concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Activity System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-theme</td>
<td>Component of the Activity System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Type or Category of the Component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-category</td>
<td>Particular form of the component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Code for the particular form of the component</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.5: Example of axial codes from the data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Base-building Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-theme</td>
<td>Mediating Artifacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Outreach Tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-category</td>
<td>Canvassing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Code               | - “Hitting the doors”;
                    | - face to face outreach
                    | - Door knocking
                    | - “Going to the people” |

Table 5.11 illustrates axial coding using themes and codes from the actual data. In chapter six, I discuss in depth the different themes (activity systems), sub-themes (mediating artifacts), and so on.

**Trustworthiness & Ethical Considerations**

Qualitative research is messy by nature. It relies on the researcher’s interpretation of data. One of the questions that arises is how to ensure trustworthiness of the data. Drawing on the works of Guba (1981) and Lincoln and Guba (1985), I employed several techniques to ensure trustworthiness in this study. First, the use of prolonged engagement along with multiple observation of different aspects of the organizing work was used (Guba, 1981, p. 83). In addition, I used a multiple forms of data (triangulation) to aid me. Throughout my research I consistently engaged in follow-up conversations with participants to ensure I was capturing what they were trying to convey to me at the time (Guba, 1981). Within the context of prolonged engagement, I also took copious field notes in which I separated out, but noted the meaning I took from observations, and descriptions of the observations (Charmaz, 2014).
One of the dangers of doing ethnographic research is that so much of the research requires collecting and analyzing implicit/tacit information within a naturalistic environment. This means that despite asking and receiving consent for collecting data, there are times when a participant may not be aware they are providing data for the study. It is easy for a participant to recognize this when they are being interviewed as part of a planned interview session. But in time when I am observing (which includes listening, as well as seeing) people’s as they participate in organizing work they may say and do things that in a planned session they would not. As an insider this also means other organizers are having conversations with me that they would not have with an outside investigator. There have been times when I have made the judgment that what was being said to me was rather sensitive. So, I stopped and asked the organizer if I could include what was being said in my research. More often than not the answer was yes. In some cases, the answer was no, and I elected to not use the information provided. One of the counter measures I took in this study was to conceal the true names of all the organizations of which individuals were a part. I also created pseudonyms for all participants in the study.
Chapter 6: Findings

Introduction:

In this chapter I discuss activity systems that constitute social movement organizing activity. Throughout the chapter I provide examples of contradictions and learning by specific organizers and organizing groups, that best exemplify the contradictions and learning that all of the organizers encountered at one point or another in their careers. Lastly, the I discuss more broadly contradictions and forms of collective learning.

Social Movement Organizing as an Activity Network

In this study I identified three main activity systems that together formed the activity network that constitutes social movement organizing. An activity network consists of two or more interacting activity systems (Engestrom, 1987). Engestrom uses the word adjacent to indicate that the activity systems directly interact with each other and share a combined object-motive. My experience in the field and through the process of discerning different activity systems was that “adjacent” may be a misleading word, since the activity systems were not neatly arranged side-by-side.

Rather, the activity systems were significantly overlapped and nestled so that in an abstract sense, one had to disentangle them in order to identify their parts. Nevertheless, I identified three core activity systems. These activities were: base-building, leadership development, and mobilization. Together, these activities constituted social movement organizing, the object of which is to establish a collective protagonist or
social force capable of bringing about social change. Figure 6.1 illustrates the activity network of social movement organizing.

Each activity system relied on the other activity system. In essence generating different means or tools for the other activity system. None of these activity systems occurred in isolation of the other. Organizing always entails the construction of base or
core of people (base-building) that can engage in collective action to bring about some kind of change (mobilization). In order to mobilize certain skills, and knowledges are needed, so that the base can act together (leadership development. Organizers did not engage in building leadership capacities without putting that leadership into action for change. Mobilization did not occur without some sort of base and some degree of leadership.

Base-building Activity

The first activity discussed here as part of the movement organizing activity network is base-building activity. The object of base-building activity is to build a base of activists with a shared political purpose. Embedded in the object of base-building is the deeper motive of enabling people to fight and defend their dignity as human beings. In my time in the field, organizers have described a base as a core set of people that worked together on particular political projects or campaigns. As I continued to talk with organizers, I found that organizers often distinguished between “the base”, and those who had specific leadership functions within the organization. In my conversation with Bishop Mirand, he provided a useful way for me to understand the meaning of “base”.

A lot of times people see an organization and say look at this organization that’s always out there. Such and such organization is always in the news and always on the streets. But then you look closer and you see they have no people---they have no base. You don’t have a base if you’re just telling random people to come through for this rally or action, and your organization is basically the people who
work there. These organizations are basically advocacy organizations. An advocacy organization has constituents on whose behalf they work. So, the organization basically acts as a service provider. That’s different from how I think of organizing. In organizing one of the things you are doing is helping people fight for themselves. So, yeah, technically you are fighting on behalf of people, but at the same time you are intentionally working to bring those people into the fight. Essentially, you have a base when you have members from the community you are representing. Otherwise, you aren’t really doing anything.

In the excerpt, Bishop distinguishes between organizations that have constituents on whose behalf they advocate, and those organizations that are composed of members who come from the ranks of those being represented. In this distinction he provides a useful understanding of a base that captured the broadly shared meaning of “base” among organizers in this study. A base refers to a network of people who advocate for their own interests as well as the interests of those from their community or social group. Leaders are those members of the base who take upon themselves particular roles and responsibilities in cohering the base and expanding the base. Figure 6.2 is a depiction of base-building activity using Engeström’s (1987) triangular heuristic of human activity. The top of the triangle is the mediating artifact or tool used by organizers to carry out the various aspects of their activity. The left side of the triangle is the subject (organizers). The right side is the object orienting the collective activity of base-building. At the bottom left corner are the rules governing the system. The center base of the triangle is the community and the right bottom corner is the particular division of labor of those
involved in the activity system. Each of these will be discussed in detail. In figure 6.2 the dual-arrow Lines represent the dialectical (mediational) nature of element of the activity. That is, each element influences the other, albeit in different ways, creating a totality that is activity.

**Figure 6.2: base-building activity**
Community & Division of Labor of Base-building Activity

The community of people involved in the base-building activity consists of the organizers, the base, and the organic base. The organic base refers to the people who are not part of the organization, but share common objective interests and conditions of the base, and thus are the target of outreach and recruitment efforts. The different sections of the community are arranged in differing positions within the activity system. The division of roles and responsibilities in base-building activity are as follows: organizers, the base (subdivided into core activists and general members), and the constituent base.

Within base-building activity, organizers play the role of architect of the organizational formation and/or expansion process. As the architect, an organizer is responsible for leading the processes or actions associated with developing a campaign. By campaign, I am referring to the articulation of grievances, oppositional targets, and the remedial demands that mediate the rest of base-building processes. The organizers are people within the activity system that identify specific goals for base-building activity. Organizers identify, plan, and coordinate the execution of specific tasks to other activists within their organization related to base-building goals. They also take the lead in figuring out which tools or means are most appropriate for performing the tasks associated with particular base-building goals. For example, in regards to meetings, the organizers are the people who are responsible for setting up the meetings, and figuring out the logistical concerns related to the venue, transportation, and materials.

Within the organization there are those who I refer to as the ‘activists’. These are the most consistent and active members of the organization. They play important roles in
mobilizing their immediate networks, and they also play pivotal roles in carrying out the particular operations outlines by the organizers. Activists also participate in base-building work by providing technical support, artistic skills, culinary skills, etc. The third layer of participants in base-building activity are the general members. General members participate more as spectators in base-building activity. At times, general members may ask questions or make comments during the meetings, but they are not consistently involved in leadership of organizing work.

**Rules of Base-building Activity**

CHAT holds that every activity system is governed by a set of rules that emerge from the community involved in the activity. Rules include both formal rules, and informal rules. The formal rule is those which are usually written out and codified for organizations. The informal rules are those that are usually unspoken, embedded in interactions, and assumed by people. In different activity settings the distinction between formal and informal rules can be quite clear. In formal workplaces and organizations, delineating between the two may be useful and easier to do. However, in informal organizational settings this can be challenging. In this study, formal rules are those conventions and rules that community members explicitly articulate to each other and agree upon. Informal rules refer to those conventions and assumptions that have not been explicitly articulated and agreed upon in clear deliberative manner.

Base-building activity has five rules: cordial interactions, organizational transparency, respect for people’s cultural and lived experiences, deep participation (leadership) of the base, and base members mainly constituted by those most affected by
the struggle. Cordial interaction is a formal rule that refers to people having sincere concern, interest, and treatment of each other involved in organizing work. In addition, it requires people to make a sincere effort to assume the best intentions of other people in organizing contexts. The second rule I refer to as organizational transparency. Having organizational transparency is a formal rule having to do with making clear how decisions within the organization are supposed to be made, and how to access different resources within an organization.

The third rule in base-building activity is having respect for people’s culture and lived experiences. This refers to people creating a non-hostile environment for people to share elements of their traditions and experiences that connect to organizing work. For organizers it also means making an effort to connect the struggle to people traditions and lived experiences. The fourth rule of base-building is the notion of deep participation of the base. Deep participation means the base is involved in all aspects of the base-building. They are involved in the strategic processes, and the organizational development aspects of the organization. This rule can alternatively be understood as the self-emancipatory rule. Which is the notion that those who are facing a crisis ought to be the one directing their victory over the crisis. In the study, some organizers refer to this as self-determination (Bishop, INT. 1, p. 9). The fifth and final rule of base-building is that the base needs to consist predominantly of members from the most affected constituency. This was an informal rule in that it was generally assumed that the base of the organization would consist of those with the most to lose in struggle.
Goals of Base-building

Goals are an intermediate object that is driven by tactical considerations for achieving the motive embedded object of activity (Youn & Baptiste, 2007). I identified four core goals within base-building activity. These goals were: build support among the organic community base, increase the membership of the organization, establish trust-based relationships between base-members, and establish trust-based relationships between the organizers and base-members. Throughout the study I observed organizers engaging in two core actions in order to achieve the four aforementioned goals. These actions were community outreach and relationship-building. An explanation of each of these actions is provided in the following sections.

Community Outreach Tools

Community outreach refers to the sequences of steps, acts or operations (Youn & Baptiste, 2007) that organizers engaged in as a means of making contact with people from the organic base of their organizing site. Community outreach action was directed by two goals. One goal was to build support among members of the organic community. Building support was described by organizers as getting members of the community (neighborhood) in which they were organizing to provide material assistance in the form of providing space for meetings and events, donating money, and other resources (e.g. food, water, sound equipment, etc.) to aid the organizing work. Support also consisted of members of the community sharing information about their neighborhood, the conditions they and other residents faced, and also providing access to existing social networks that would allow organizers to connect with more residents in a more efficient manner. The
second goal that directed community outreach was the goal of increasing membership of the organization, specifically from members of the organic base within the community.

**Canvassing as a Community Outreach Tool**

For the organizers in this study, canvassing began before people start knocking on doors. Canvassing is operationalized through a series of operations. Some of which organizers are aware they do, and many of which they simply just do without any thought. One thing organizers do is “cut turf”. The operation of cutting turf is simply organizers charting where they are going to perform door knocking that day. For people who are brand new at doing organizing work, cutting turf may not be an operation but an action. The difference is that operations are not oriented by conscious goals, but by conditions. For people who are cutting turf for the first time, cutting turf is a goal in itself. The reason for that is because cutting turf is important for assuring the most efficient use of time. The purpose of cutting turf is to allow organizers and activists to make as much face-to-face contact with people in a neighborhood as possible. Moreover, the people need to be part of the target groups. Knowing where your people (the target groups) live is important.

For example, in my time in the field when canvassing with TROP, we were canvassing in the vicinity of my home in Upper North Grit. I had just moved to this particular area of North Grit, so I was not familiar with the comings and goings of people in the neighborhood. For that canvass session we established a two-hour time block to canvass. There were six of us: me, Vera, Zaria, and three other activists from TROP. The three of us were veteran organizers; however, canvassing in a new area meant not
knowing the terrain. So, we cut turf out of convenience because we needed to see what it was like canvassing in the area. In total we talked to eight people, which to us was not a very productive canvass session in terms of making contact with people.

On the other hand, it was productive because we found that Saturdays at 11am were not good days to canvass in the particular area. People in this neighborhood were out of the house much earlier than people in other neighborhoods that we had canvassed. We also learned that there were a lot of homes that had been renovated for the purpose of renting, and they were vacant. One way we figured this out was that we counted 23 homes on my street that had new green doors, with keypad locks. And each of these doors had accumulated a lot of grocery store circulars that were wedged in between the bars of the glass safety door. Initially, I noticed the different color doors, the newness of the doors, and the circulars. But I had only seen five doors like that.

When we came back together to talk about our experience, Zaria and Vera noted that they had seen the same thing. The significance of the doors is that on M street the doors are generally brown or white. And all of the doors have regular key locks. Furthermore, people on the street are very diligent about removing circulars from their doors. All this new knowledge was important because when we cut turf the following time, we knew not to spend time knocking on certain doors and waiting for a response. We also knew we needed to go canvassing at a different time of day on Saturdays. The experience also led me to pay more attention to neighborhood activity. For example, when I drive or walk through my neighborhood, I pay attention to the time of day and day of the week, in relation to how active people are in the neighborhood. This informs canvassing in the future.
Another example, of the significance of cutting turf, is a canvassing session I did with another organizer named Beato. We decided to canvass in South Grit, because we were meeting another activist who had recently moved there. Neither of us knew anything about the area, other than it was being gentrified by white middle class people. The neighborhood was historically Afro-American working-class. A big land developer had been buying up property and building $300 and $500 thousand dollar homes. Local public schools in the area had been closed down. We were canvassing to specifically reach out to longtime residents to build a campaign against gentrification in the area. However, not knowing the area we wasted a tremendous amount of time knocking on the doors of gentrifiers who often yelled at us to go away or opened the door and told us they were making the neighborhood better and then slammed the door in our faces. In that situation, the turf we cut was bad turf.

**Communicating the Frame**

Another operation that organizers and activists perform while canvassing is communication of elements of the organization's frame for social change. For organizers who have a deep understanding of the organization’s short, medium, and long term goals for social change, this flows out as part of explaining why they are knocking on the door. For new organizers and activists communicating elements of the organization’s frame can be more of a challenge. To be clear, organizational frame refers to a group’s framework for explaining why a problem exists, who and/or what is perpetuating the problem, who can fix it and how (Morris, 2010). Eyerman and Jamison (1992) refer to this as the technological dimensions. This communication of the organization’s framework occurs
as the organizer engages in conversation with an individual at their door. Below is an example of exchange Zaria from TROP had with a man while canvassing in an apartment building in North West, Grit City, back on July 24, 2015. At this point we (TROP) were surveying people about their health care access and quality.

Zaria: Hi we are with TROP, we are a human rights organization and we’re doing a survey on people’s access to quality health care in Eastern State. Can we take a moment of your time?

Man: Ok….

Zaria: So, before we start I just wanted to tell you a bit about what we’re up to. You know we’ve been traveling all across the state, because politicians don’t understand and don’t seem to care what regular people really need. So, we’ve been asking people what they need. And among the main important issues like housing, education, wage, and the environment, health care has been the number one issue. Do you think everyone needs health care?

Man: Yea. We all need to see a doctor when we’re sick…. I have a lot of family members who really need it. But they would rather wait until they can’t move to spend money at the doctors hahaha.

Zaria: Ahuh. That sounds right. That’s a common story we hear wherever we go. Do you mind if we ask a few questions?

Man: Sure.

Zaria: [Proceeds with survey questions]

Zaria: Thank you for your time. As members of TROP we think that everyone
should be guaranteed health care, because it’s such a basic and universal human need. As we build this movement of regular people we’d like to stay in contact with each person we meet. What’s the best way we can stay in touch with you?

**Man:** provides info.

**Zaria:** Great! We will be in touch with you soon to let you know how you can get involved.

First, she communicates that the organization is a statewide organization. Second, she offers a short critique of the current political establishment, while drawing a clear contrast between politicians’ concerns for people’s needs and TROP’s concern for everyday people’s needs. Third, she emphasizes the participatory ethos of the organization, by explaining that TROP is an organization of regular people talking to regular people about needs of regular people. As such, we can infer from this that regular people are getting together to make change. At the end Zaria states TROP’s remedial stance, which is that everyone should have the health care they need, and lastly, she emphasizes that TROP is building a grassroots movement consisting of regular people.

As I watched Zaria do this over and over again I observed that she did it almost effortlessly. At the time I had not done much talking while canvassing so for me I found it difficult to talk about the organization in a concise, yet clear and substantive way. For me, communicating the frame was an aspiration or a goal of mine, whereas for Zaria this was something she had mastered.

The problem I had when I first started canvassing with TROP was that I gave a very long and drawn out explanation of the organization, and people would patiently let me talk,
but by the time I had finished they had forgotten some of the core points about the organization. So they would ask me at the end what kind of organization I was a part of. Then when I resorted to shortening my explanation people usually were left asking questions about the purpose of the organization. More specifically, people would ask me if the organization was signing people up for health care. I learned to communicate the frame well by observing how people responded to the way the organization was pitched to them.

Something else that was helpful for me was the debrief with Zaria and others after a canvassing session. We discussed the key points that seemed to excite people, and get them talking. We always talked about how the purpose of outreach was to get information, and more importantly connect with people so that we could get them involved. After that I would refine what I would say and rehearse it until I felt comfortable. I kept in mind that outreach was about pulling people in, which made me reflect on how the way I talked about the organization and its work had to make people want to get involved.

To improve my performance, I started reviewing organizational documents that explained the vision of the organization and the organization’s perspective on health care. I also read through documents listing what we had done as an organization (e.g. organized town hall in Quarryville, participated in MLK Day rally, etc.). Then I started to outline what my door speech would be, and then I rehearsed it. Eventually I put everything into action when I went canvassing. I knew I had perfected my door speech once I started consistently having good conversations with people, in which most people were either interested in seeing what the organization was about, or were eager to give me their information to get involved. Over time what was once a goal of mine became something I did not think about much because I had mastered it. I think it is important to highlight that
my ability to learn to communicate the frame required the help of more experienced members in the organization.

I relied on prior knowledge as an organizer, in that I knew I needed to have a better grasp of how TROP framed its work. This is why I went looking for organizational documents to study so that I could feel comfortable at the doors. Being that I had done a lot of canvassing in the past, I was able to recognize the problems I was having at the doors. It also allowed me to push through my emotional frustrations and insecurities related to talking to people at the door, because I knew what I needed to do to get better. In this way prior knowledge played a major part in helping me to learn my part at that particular point in time. Another important point is that this experience highlights the importance of being able to navigate the organization in order to access those resources, such as the documents.

**Relationship-building**

The relationship-building is the second core action that organizers engaged in as part of their base-building activity. The term relationship-building was derived from the organizing terminology of the organizers. Organizers frequently spoke of the need to build relationships or do relationship-building with members. On the surface the term does not explain much, as there are many kinds of relationships that can be built or established between individuals. Relationship-building, is an organizing term. Which refers to organizers’ conscious efforts to facilitate the kinds of environments and interactions that would yield connections, and familiarity between people involved in organizing work. Organizers, often tacitly, but on occasion explicitly, recognized trust between people as a potential resource for carrying out organizing work based on three
reasons: (1) it builds emotional connection to the work via developing strong human connections, (2) this connection and these relationships can be converted into tools mediating elements of movement organizing work. (3) These relationships allow for organizers to engage in critical discussion to advance the work, as trust promotes greater willingness to try out different ideas and practices, as well as accept different critique while in struggle.

1-on-1 Meetings as Relationship-building tools

1-on-1 meetings are an important tool that all the organizers in the study identified as necessary for building relationships with people. 1-on-1s are exactly what it sounds like: one-person meeting with one other person. The structure of these meetings range from very loose to very tight, but at all times the organizer is the one who initiates the meeting, and has a particular rationale for asking someone to have the meeting. Throughout the study I found that 1-on-1s were one of the most used and most flexible tool out of all of the organizing tools.

As with any tool, the skill with which an organizer executes 1-on-1 meetings varies according to experience with it. The particular techniques used to perform the 1-on-1 varies, not only according to specific purpose for a particular meeting, but also according to the organizing philosophy of the organizer. The use of 1-on-1s is also used in accordance to the available information the organizer has about the person with whom they are planning to meet. I illustrate some of this in the following excerpt from Lin a member of the OPP:
Some organizers don’t like to do 1-on-1s. I mean they do them because it’s something that they know they are supposed to do. Or they do them as a way to get a general sense about you so that they know what to say or do to get you to come to a meeting, invite others in your network to a meeting, or maybe get you to go to a protest. That doesn’t really work for me. When I meet with a person I want to give them a sense of who I am and why I do this work, and I want to understand where they are coming from and how they want to be involved in this work. I need to know the personal. I don’t work well if I don’t build personally with people. I think it really comes down to your philosophy of organizing. Some people feel that they just have to get people involved by making the message fit their interests and then that person will come out and discover they love doing this work. That happens sometimes. But a lot of times working-class people, poor people, who have not been involved in this kind work may get in and just be lost. To me, 1-on-1s should be an ongoing thing that we do with our people to keep building connections between them and others, and also to figure out how to build them (p. 2).

In the excerpt Lin describes two main ways that organizers may use 1-on-1s. One way that organizers may use this tool is as a means to quickly gather intel about an individual in order to figure out how to quickly get them involved in organizing work. The second approach involves using 1-on-1s as, what some organizers like Bishop and Vera refer to as “deep relationship-building”. That is, the tool is used much more dialogically with the expectation that organizer is educating the individual about the work, and individual is
educating the organizer about what they need to connect with others and participate in the work of the organization.

Lin also notes that she personally does not do well without having a personal relationship with the people she is organizing. This is important because her need to build personal relationships with people reflects a difference in organizing philosophy. While some organizers think of their roles as professionals driven by the goal of winning campaigns, she sees the role of organizing as personal as well as political, because as she told me on a separate occasion, “organizing is not about campaigns, but about building new ways of connecting with each other. Campaigns and projects are about getting that started and making that happen” (Lin, INF. 2, p. 1). This suggests a much more fluid and continuous view of organizers, which differs from those organizers who see organizing as discrete moments defined by particular issue-base and policy-based mobilizations.

**Meetings as Mediating Apparatuses for Relationship-building**

Meetings are a very important part of achieving the goal of building productive relationships in organizing. Meetings are actually an apparatus in that they consist of multiple tools or instruments that mediate each other in order to realize the goal of relationship-building. For that reason, I refer to meetings as a mediating apparatus. Meetings consist of the following tools: appropriate meeting space (including symbolic dimensions, geographic situation in relation to transportation and parking, and spatial dimensions), meeting management methods (facilitation or Robert’s rules, etc.) agenda, material (writing utensils, paper, something to write on, possibly a projector, etc.).
Symbolic & Material Mediations of Meeting Space

In order to use meetings as a means of following-up organizers have to first set up the meeting. Setting up a meeting is labor intensive, involves several different parts, and tacit knowledge. First, organizers find a location for the meeting. Selecting a location for the meeting is not always that straightforward. There are a range of considerations that organizers take into account. Organizers consider who they think is most likely to come to the meeting. If the meeting attendees are going to be coming by way of public transportation, then the meeting location needs to be close to public transit. If a large portion of the attendees are not able to walk far than it needs to be as a close as possible to transportation. Having meetings close to transportation allows those who do not have access to their own automobile to attend. It also means those who are low income have a better chance of affording the commute to the meeting, since public transit is cheaper for many. Another logistical consideration is whether the meeting space is accessible for those with walking disabilities.

The other consideration is the cultural historical and symbolic meaning of the space in which a meeting is held. Given NUG’s placed-based anti-gentrification framework, NUG meetings were ideally located in a North Grit church within a block of the area where NOCO planned to build the new football stadium. The church is also located just four blocks from a major subway line. Furthermore, the church was the historic meeting site for a major Black power meeting. Moreover, the church occupies one city block. The east end of the church sits on a corner just across from the university driven gentrifying North Grit. And the western corner of the church is situated in and the part of North Central Grit, which remains overwhelmingly Afro-American, low-income,
and neglected by the city. Lastly, the church has been neighborhood food service hub for over 30 years. All these elements combined made the church a key place for inviting people to meetings, and holding meetings to fight against the stadium, as a process of neighborhood dispossession.

For example, I noticed that when people from neighborhood came into the church they were fairly comfortable with the space. The neighborhood members, all of whom were Afro-American, were older ranging from their late 50s to their mid-80s. No matter how many meetings they attended, a group of six Afro-American women over the age of 65 (I hear them talk about their senior citizen bus passes, which you get when you are 65) would walk about and look at the mural in the church. The mural chronicled Afro-American struggle from peaceful existence in Africa though enslavement, and through struggle for abolition and civil rights up until now. The mural generated conversation among the elder community activists, as they waited for the meeting to begin. I understood this to be an indication of people’s comfort with the space, as well as the recognition of the space as a place of historical significance. Eliza who was responsible for helping NUG get access to the church explains why they chose the space:

NUG ended up meeting in the church, because I had overheard Amelia and Ingrado trying to figure out where they should have the first anti-stadium meeting. At that time, I was not in NUG. But I sort of barged my way in and suggested they meet at the church. I knew Pastor Madison, from a conference on Black Liberation and theology. So, I had the relationship. I liked that they were fighting the stadium and were wanting to get the community involved. So, I thought what
better place than the Church given its history, and location. And also it provides a
spiritual dimension often missing from organizing. We Black people, are a
spiritual people. The Church despite its troubles has also been a place where we
have organized for our freedom (INT., p. 13).

In the excerpt from an interview with Eliza she notes that it was her awareness of the
church’s history that made her think it was a good place to build community
organization. Another important point that she raises is the importance of the Afro-
American church in being a center for political organization and struggle. “The Afro-
American Church” is more than a religious institution; it is a politico-cultural symbol
within working-class Afro-American communities in North Grit (Morris, 1984). As a
cultural artifact it can be used as a means of facilitating certain collective experiences
among particular groups of people. The spatial dimensions of the meeting location can
signify certain meanings and shape people’s ideas about the nature of the political work.

Table 6.1: Base-building Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions &amp; Goals</th>
<th>Tools</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Community Outreach</td>
<td>● Canvassing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Build support among the organic base</td>
<td>● 1-on-1 meetings with new contacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increase membership of the</td>
<td>● Public Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
<td>● Tabling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Relationship-building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Establish trust between base-members</td>
<td>● 1-on-1 meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Establish trust between base-members</td>
<td>● Community meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>and organizers</td>
<td>o Meeting space</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Meeting location</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Agenda structure</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Skill and preparedness of the</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>organizers</td>
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Meeting Agendas & Their Discontent

Another important aspect of setting up the meeting is the creation of the agenda and preparing the material for the meeting. Meetings, at the request of Quinnie, always began with the Black national anthem (“Lift Every Voice”) as “a way to ground each meeting in the experience of Black people in struggle” (Quinnie, inform. INT. June, 19, 2016). The amount of thought put into agenda varied among the organizers. When Eliza and I would be in charge of putting the agenda together for NUG meetings, we would develop the agenda and send it out for comment at least one day prior to the meeting. But prior to sending out the agenda there would be at least one conversation between the lead organizers who made up the organizing committee. Eliza and I approached agenda setting from the perspective of creating an orderly flow to meetings that more directly pushed for discussions of how to build NUG as a community institution. Our agendas included allotted times where we did “visioning”. During the “visioning” portions we would either do a brief (20 minute) activity in which we asked people to think about what it would be like to have community control in their neighborhoods. When Eliza did the agenda she allotted time to do “cultural organizing”, which entailed her cultural workers coming in and teaching us the significance of music, song, and rhythm in social movements. At one point we developed the our own NUG protest song.

When Amelia and Quinnie set up the agenda, they usually did it in the few minutes before the meeting. The agenda focused exclusively on updates from the stadium fight, and discussions on what types of tactical actions we should engage in around the stadium. One reason for the difference is that Badia, a longtime community activist held a lot of influence in NUG. I learned from Joy that community members looked to her as
the expert on political affairs, because she had been involved in city politics and protest against university expansion in the past. People knew her as the resident activist who would travel to Hairstonville to protest state issues that affected the community. Quinnie, despite being “Left” in political views followed Badia’s lead when it came to community organizing matters.

I noticed this dynamic especially in meetings, when Quinnie would put forward an idea for organizing. Badia would express disapproval and Quinnie would quickly say “Oh. Oh. You’re right Badia. That wouldn’t make sense just yet”. Badia explicitly stated that: “We don’t need to be having meetings about movements, economics, and all that. We need to be focused on stopping NOCO and what they’re doing in our community” (FN. July, 2016). Joy explained to me that Quinnie’s reluctance to openly oppose Badia, was a sign of deference for Badia’s work as a community activist. And for Amelia and other student activists in NUG who were particularly sensitive to not being perceived as “taking over,” following community elders made sense. For that reason, most meetings were strictly focused on tactics and confronting the university directly. This generated contradiction within the rules of base-building activity and within the division of labor in base-building activity.

**Leadership Development Activity**

Another core activity that organizers participated in was the activity of leadership development. The object of leadership development activity was to develop members’ capacity to engage in leadership within the organization or the group. Organizers believed that by developing members’ capacity to lead they would ultimately be
increasing the collective capacity of the organization. More people would be capable of making high-level strategic decisions, as well as be capable of carrying out day to day technical tasks of building the movement organization. Put another way leadership development was understood to be important to improve and sustain the viability of the organization. It also meant making it possible for the organization to be more efficient at performing the different tasks needed to do base-building. Organizers saw both the size of the organization’s base and the number of leaders within their organization as important factors in the ability of the organization to mobilize for change.

**Figure 6. 3: Leadership Development Activity**

- Skill-training workshops
- Task delegation
- Established trust-based relationships
- Political study
- Political events (e.g. marches, rallies, panels, etc.)

- Self-emancipation
- Participatory environment
- Link experience & structure
- Mutual Respect
- Start where they are & pull them forward

Object: Develop protagonism of base-members

Organizers

Base-members

Organizers

Core Activists

General base-members
**Community in Leadership Development**

The community within leadership development activity consisted of all members of the organization, and also other Left activists from other groups within the broader Left activist network within the city. Within the community, the division of labor was structured such that organizers played the role as pedagogue or educator, and the activist base and the general members of the organizations played the role of students. As pedagogues, organizers had the responsibility for making sure people in the organization did in fact undergo the types of learning necessary for them to be leaders within the organization, and by extension generate the collective capacity of the organization to act as a political leader.

**Rules of Leadership Development Activity**

Leadership development activity consisted of five rules that governed organizers’ participation. The first rule was to create a participatory environment. Creating a participatory environment had a broad meaning. On one hand this meant making sure the organizer was not killing people’s creative capacity by not allowing them to share and try out their ideas, effectively limiting their substantive participation in their own development. The second part to creating a participatory environment was eliminating barriers to people’s development. As Vera explained: “barriers to participation can come in different forms. Sometimes it’s the dynamics between people in the space…. maybe somebody talks all the time, and others don’t feel like they can speak up in the space” (Vera, Informal 12-2016). For example, organizers in TROP explicitly outlined creating a
participatory environment as a rule for conducting leadership development. In NUG and the OPP it was not explicitly established as rules, but it was talked about from time to time and assumed to be a normal part of leadership development.

The second rule of leadership development was to encourage people to link their experiences to social structure. This was an informal rule that organizers assumed to be good practice. Organizers considered the process of developing people’s leadership capacity to be rooted in their particular experiences, and therefore they encouraged people to see how their experiences were being influenced by broader social processes. Accordingly, organizers described a key task of theirs as making sure people developed a systematic understanding of their circumstances and how they were tied to capitalist cultural processes and political economy.

The third rule was the rule of fostering respect for each other. This rule relates to the requirement for organizers to create an environment in which the individuals in the organization interact with each other in nonviolent ways. This would mean not berating people when they have differing and/or unpopular opinions. It also means not shaming people for what they do not know or are uncomfortable doing. The rule also included being willing to engage with others around their experiences. The fourth rule of leadership development activity was to “meet people where they are and pull them forward” (Bishop, Formal Interview, 5/20/2016, p. 7). The rule captured in Bishop’s remark speaks to the typically tacit rule that it was good organizing practice to assess the individual needs of base-members in relation to the overall needs of the organization, and address those needs accordingly.
Goal-directed Actions in Leadership Development

Organizers engaged in three main goal-oriented actions that worked towards achieving the desired outcome of leadership development activity. The first action was to do political education. The purpose of doing political education was to develop a shared understanding of the root causes of oppressive social conditions, how conditions can be improved, and who can make change happen. The second action organizers engaged in was building the technical capacities of base-members. Here, technical capacity-building (capacity-building for short) refers to the specific acts organizers engage in as a means of facilitating the necessary conditions under which base-members learn to carry out and fulfill needed organizational tasks and roles. The third action was to get members involved in broader movement work, the purpose of which was to connect local leaders to broader social movement struggles.

Doing Political Education

The purpose behind the action of doing political education was to establish a shared political framework. Zaria (9/2015 informal interview) referred to this as “the theory of change”, which she elaborates on in the following excerpt:

Um. Hmm! I would say that the story of how we make change, the theory of change has to talk about who the enemy of poor and working-class people is. And it needs to also spell out how we can build our own power to make change. Every organization needs a framework. Every organization has to operate with some theory of how social change happens. And I don’t mean a theory in the very
particular and technical way that’s used in academia. I’m talking about a very clear story that explains why we think we, as ordinary people can not only change our immediate situation, but how we change the world. I think that organizers need to be able to tell this story. And they have to believe it themselves to tell it convincingly.

The notion of political framework as described by Zaria is a particular product that serves as what Sawchuk (2013) refers to as a key mobilizing artifact.

Such a framework does not emerge spontaneously. And although the basis of the framework can be constructed among a particular group of people, the task/goal of an organizer is to convince or persuade those they are organizing and organizing with that the framework is valid. As Vera, one of the organizers from TROP explained: “people have to make the framework theirs; they have to see our politics as genuinely in alignment with their deeper experiences of daily resistance” (informal INT.; 4/2016). In observing and talking to organizers, I found that they did political education as a means of helping people see the usefulness of a political framework for conducting social struggle.

Organizers saw having a political framework as an important tool for people to be able to situate their own daily struggles within the broader socio-economic and political context. The framework provided the psychological or intellectual tool through which people could actually engage in the process of conscientization (Freire, 2010). I use the following excerpt from Eliza, because I think she adequately captures the conclusion that all of the organizers shared:
Like I mentioned before, the idea of limit situation is important. I think once people really understand the political forces at work in shaping their lives they can begin to develop their own perspective and analysis. They can start to organize their actions in accordance to their own theory of change which comes out of their analysis of what is keeping them down. I am a staunch believer that people have experiences, and those experiences are essential to doing social transformation. But people need to have analysis so that they can see beyond their immediate experiences in life. My experience is that when people can’t analyze their immediate experiences, they end up letting them dominate them. And that can be disempowering.

In the excerpt Eliza speaks to a consensus among organizers in this study, which is that people’s perception of the possibility of social change from below, is partially rooted in their ability to understand how their circumstances have been created, and the mechanisms through which others are able to oppress them.

For the majority of the organizers in this study political education took different formats and entailed the use of a broad variety of tools. One tool for political education was political study. Political study as a tool had two different variations.

**Literature Study**

The literature study tool refers to organizer’s use of literature as a means to facilitate political education. Organizers would carefully select reading materials from which they would develop a curriculum related to specific topics they thought were most
closely related to the experiences of the people they were working with. The nature of the format of the literature ranged from book chapters, news/magazine articles, quotes, paragraphs, and sometimes poems and song lyrics. One thing I learned from the organizers was that they were very cautious about how they used literature study to do political education. There were two concerns that organizers consistently had. The first concern was that some of the members of the base had literacy challenges that could lead them “to feel intimidated and discouraged” (Rachel, INT. 10/2015).

The second concern was that literature study may not be the best means for people to learn, because they may have a hard time connecting certain types of reading to their experiences. In the follow excerpt Vera provides an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of literature study:

For example, reading a passage or something can help with language or something. Sometimes the whole passage may not stick but it can really help to create language to make sense of certain things. And we can even have discussion about the language, and what that language means. And that’s one of my favorite things about TROP; people don’t take passages and things they read for granted. And people may go back and forth debating it. But not everybody engages in that way. It can differ according to education level and experiences.

One point I find important to elaborate on is the pedagogical role of the organizer in helping people engage with the material they read. As Vera notes in the excerpt, one of the challenges is that not everything that people read will stick. Vera hints at the role she
plays in making sure people are able to leave discussions of readings with key points that builds their political vocabulary, when she says “we can even have discussions about the language….”. Embedded in this simple sentence is an ideal example of the significant role some organizers played as educators who not only expanded people’s political knowledge, but their broader capacities, such as literacy. For Vera and 3 other organizers (Zaria, Bishop, and Eliza), political education also meant addressing underlying barriers to political learning.

**Storytelling as a Tool**

A second tool used by some of the organizers in this study was storytelling. Storytelling was used in conjunction with other accessory tools such as websites, and film. Vera describes significance of storytelling as a tool:

People tell stories and people can find themselves or find meaning, or even start to make sense of the system through these stories. Maybe, someone tells the story of being in prison; another tells a story of being in a raid. And that creates a connection or feeling. That’s the kind of education that I think people remember the most. Which is why I am really interested in using film for political education, because I think people can feel and remember more from film than from reading.

Embedded in Vera’s description of how storytelling functions as a political education tool is the notion of lived experience, which came up explicitly and implicitly in all of interviews with organizers. All of the organizers expressed the idea of basing political
education in people’s lived experience as essential. However, few of the organizers described clear ways in which they could do it. Rather, most of the organizers seemed to separate lived experience from the actual practice of political education. Vera and Zaria were significant exceptions, as their use of storytelling as a pedagogical tool allowed for fusion of personal life circumstances and political analysis. For example, in Vera’s description of storytelling she says: “Maybe, someone tells the story of being in prison; another tells a story of being in a raid. And that creates a connection of feeling something that people would remember”. The core point here is that stories permit people to suspend their particular preconceptions, as they step into a constructed moment created by another person. And in stepping into the story of another they may be able to find similarities or commonalities that emotionally opens them up for further dialogue. Emotion then becomes a quiet helper in this process.

**Political Workshops**

The third tool used for doing political education was political workshops. Workshops took two main forms: short workshops that were embedded in general/community meetings, and retreats which combined several political workshops into all day or sometimes two day events. Workshops combined different tools such as literature study and storytelling along with using presentations as a means of developing people’s political knowledge.
Doing Capacity-building

The second goal that organizers worked on was building member capacity. As mentioned previously, capacity-building refers to the things organizers do in order to develop or facilitate the learning of skills, and knowledge needed for base-members to carry out necessary aspects of organizing work. Organizers such as Jane and Vera specifically pointed out two important reasons for doing capacity-building. First, they noted that when people feel that time is being carefully invested in them it generates greater trust. Second, capacity-building is actually a way of not only preparing people to participate more fully in political work, it is also inviting and encouraging them to do so. Similarly, a newer organizer Anaiz described capacity-building “important because by helping people take up the work you are showing them that you are being genuine about people’s development” (Inf., p. 2, 3/2016). The third reason is that capacity-building spreads out the burden of doing organizing work and also allows for greater efficiency in doing political work. Four key tools were used in the process of doing capacity-building: skill-trainings, delegation, relationship-building, and critical reflection.

Skill-trainings & Task Delegation

Organizers used a variety of different kinds of skill-training workshops to do capacity-building. Skill-trainings were used to teach members of the base basic tools of organizing. Organizers identified the specific skills that they considered to be important for advancing organizing work, and then they developed a curriculum around each of those skills, which they taught in the form of workshops. Workshops were a common approach to operationalizing skill-trainings among the different organizers and across
their different organizing contexts. Amelia described NUG skill-trainings in the excerpt:

We started the doing skill-based workshops, because it was clear to me and others that people had a lot of energy and desire to take action. They were coming out to the meeting. But they weren’t really being active in the outreach and stuff…. A lot of times we will have one part that focuses on a particular skill, like door knocking, or public speaking. A lot of times people are scared to talk about controversial things with their neighbors. So, they may not be good at canvassing, because canvassing is all about knocking on doors and making your case. Um...so yeah and public speaking is important, because we want people to be able speak out about things. We don’t want the same person representing the group. Then it looks like maybe not everybody is in agreement….

In the beginning of the excerpt Amelia touches on one of the underlying tensions related to people’s capacities: the issue of having the necessary skills to participate. More specifically, the passage illustrates how Amelia’s, as well as other organizers’, awareness of people’s lack of skill in organizing kept them from being more active in doing organizing work. This coincides with my observations from different community meetings that attended with the organizers in the study. I observed that the people who engaged in the meeting, by sharing information, suggesting ideas for the campaign, or volunteering to go canvassing, and other aspects of the work were those who felt comfortable. And those who felt comfortable were people who had used these different
organizing tools and participated in the work in a deeper way.

A second tool used by organizers was that of task delegation. Organizers thoughtfully delegated or requested that people take on specific tasks as a means of getting them more involved in the work. Although organizers understood the importance of having people know how to use specific tools they also felt it was important to make sure people were applying what they learned in the service of the collective. There was a general sense that encouraging people to take on specific tasks was helping to “build their leadership” (Bishop, 5/2016), which in turn would contribute to a person’s capacities. I found that organizers understood participation as a gateway into grappling with the specific challenges and questions of organizing. There were two deeper assumptions about why task delegation would contribute to building capacities. The first was that by attaching people’s use of organizing tools to actual tasks that would benefit them in the real struggle they would be more motivated to understand how to use the tools more effectively. The second rationale was that if people are more motivated to effectively use the tools, they would come to see how their participation was essential to building their organization and making social change. Another way to look at it is that organizers were trying to connect to people’s deeper human value for self-development to the deeper participation in organizing work, and ultimately developing their capacities.

**Trust-based Relationships as tools**

Organizers also identified relationships as an important mediating artifact for helping people develop their capacities. In base-building activity relationship-building was a goal within the activity system. Within leadership development activity the
relationships that have been produced are used as tools for building capacities, and also for assisting organizers in their use of tools such as skill-training and task delegation. As a tool, trust-based relationships were used to produce deeper knowledge of people’s needs. In this way relationships served as indispensable tools for helping organizers identify a range of skill needs, and other barriers to people’s participation and capacities. Here I cite an excerpt from an interview with Vera who provided a rich example of the use of her relationship with a member:

I think it is really important to build wholesome relationships with people because then that allows me to know when to bring people into a situation. And if their challenged by…. Like with Sam for example. I think it was a couple months after I came to TROP. Sam and I had worked closely canvassing, facilitating organizing committee meetings. We talked a lot. And he’s very sharp and clear about why he does this work. Anyway, we had this meeting with this foundation; and in the meeting he choked. He literally choked. He couldn’t speak he was coughing the whole time. And I was like “Whoa! This is not the person I had known since I came to the organization. You know Sam. He’s always very talkative. Full of energy; full of ideas. I realized that he had this thing with authority figures. I, uh, I’ve seen a lot of working-class people struggle in those contexts. But he and I were close enough that I could really talk to him and check-in with him about what happened. It came down to he had a hard time speaking and being himself when he was put on the spot.
In the passage Vera illustrates part of the use of trust-based relationships within leadership development activity. In particular she describes how her relationship with Sam, one of the activists in TROP allowed her to notice how Sam was reacting to speaking in front of institutional authorities.

First, Vera was only sure that Sam was struggling because she had many conversations with him and through working with had developed a close relationship, which is to say she knew how he usually handled organizing work. This made it possible for her to interpret his behavior at the meeting as odd or different. From there Vera explains that she had conversations with Sam about that meeting from which she identified the barrier for Sam. The significance of this is that if Vera is not able to use her relationship with Sam as a tool to diagnose the problem, it is possible that she keeps placing Sam in a difficult position in which he becomes frustrated and embarrassed, which results in him retreating from certain aspects of the organizing work. If Sam were to retreat from the work it would diminish the organization.

After identifying the problem Vera then began to address the problem with Sam by carefully using task delegation to build Sam’s confidence and skill. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

I slowly introduced him to public speaking. Like I started to make more space for him to take up MCing roles, stuff like that within our group so that he would feel more comfortable speaking publicly. So, after a while when he felt comfortable speaking, like at the insurance commission meetings, I had him MC this town hall meeting after the insurance commission hearings and that was the first time he did
a really good job, which was like 8 months after he just like completely choked at that meeting…. He’s been solid whenever he’s called upon. And he’s one of those people you can look to whenever you need someone to represent the organization…. in that way I think it was about recognizing what his weaknesses were and also what we needed at the time; we needed people who could do that.

Here, Vera describes how she intentionally worked to create environments specifically for Sam’s skill development. Then she delegated the task to speak at hearings with the East State Insurance Commission, and based on her evaluation of his performance and how he felt about his performance, she encouraged him to be the M.C. for a town hall. In other words, she progressively increased his speaking roles in progressively high pressure situations. I highlight this particular part of the excerpt: “I think it was about recognizing what his weaknesses were and also what we needed at the time; we needed people who could do that”. I found this remark important because it shows how Vera related Sam’s skill development to meeting the broader collective need of the organization. More broadly, it captures how the organizers in this study think about the inter-relation between individual’s development and the development of the collective.

**Campaign Mobilization Activity**

The third activity system that completes the activity network is campaign mobilization. The object of campaigning is to mobilize the base for social change. The motive driving the activity is to exercise collective agency. Campaign mobilization activity is internally constituted by three main goal-directed actions: campaign planning, consciousness-
Campaign planning refers to organizers’ effort to create a guide for using different repertoires to win their campaign. This included developing what organizers referred to as an escalation map, which consisted of timelines of when thought they should have certain elements of the campaign completed, the map also included rough ideas for the types of ‘actions’ or tactics they would use to advance the overall campaign. For example, in NUG the campaign plan consisted of a timeline based on their knowledge of when the university planned to break ground on the stadium and when big events were expected to occur at the university (e.g. home-coming, campus orientations, zoning board meetings, etc.). Figure 6.6 depicts campaign mobilization activity.

**Figure 6.4: Campaign Mobilization Activity**

- Canvassing
- Issue specific workshops
- Street demonstrations & rallies
- Mass meetings/assemblies
- Canvassing

- Issue specific workshops
- Street demonstrations & rallies
- Mass meetings/assemblies
- Small-scale targeted demonstrations
- Large scale public actions

Object: Concentrate collective resources, and capacity towards bringing about specific political outcomes.

- Encourage collective empowerment
- Resonate with organic base
- Be winnable but challenging
- Facilitate self-emancipation

- Organizers
- Core Activists
- Peripheral members
- Other Allies

- Organizers
- Core Activists
Political Investigation as Campaign Planning Tool

An important tool for campaign planning was the tool of political investigation. Political research entailed study of existing policies, which representatives of authorities supported the policies, as well as which ones did not. The research also consisted of historical investigation into past efforts by other activists to push policy change of some sort. To be more specific, I draw on the example of organizers in TROP. Taylor was one of the leading members of the campaign development committee. Below he describes the usefulness of political investigation in developing a strategy for the organization:

In a way, analyzing the existing political forces and how they were allied, began before we even voted to take up this campaign. You remember, when we were trying to figure out which struggle to take on as our first one, we had already started to look at which elites might support us and which ones would be against us. But after we chose the campaign, we really started to dig deeper…. we started out by reaching out to Cherry, who is a political director in a [major union], and we reached out to a couple of single payer advocacy organizations that have been active in the state for a long time. They had pushed to get several single payer bills sponsored, but those bills never made it out of committee. So, between them there was a wealth of information about where different politicians and other health organizations and union leaders were positioned on the issue. We also reached out to our allies up north who were able to get legislation passed. We figured that many of their enemies would also be ours since the healthcare industry is not limited to state boundaries. Yeah. Listening to their
account of their struggle was really informative (Interview, p. 10, 5/2016).

In the preceding excerpt Taylor starts off explaining the importance of using political investigation in order to realize the goal of developing a campaign strategy or tactical plan. Taylor describes how one of the first things he and TROP organizers did was reach out to individuals that had key knowledge related to the politics of healthcare. This stood out to me, because it was another example of how previously established relationships with other people within an activist network could be used as a tool to realize a goal. In this case, these relationships with other activists served as an important resource for TROP organizers. In the following paragraph Taylor continues to describe the use of political investigation:

Once we got the information we needed we started to look at other available sources. For example, we looked at the voting records for members of the state legislature. If they were supportive of older single payer legislation, then we said they were an ally. If they voted against legislation, but gave some reason like they didn’t see how they could fund it, then we said they were against us but could be potentially moved. They seemed open to it if we could show them the numbers. And then there were those who were actively working to stop any kind of progressive healthcare legislation from moving forward. These were staunch enemies. So, we created this chart that was based on this information.
In the previous paragraph, Taylor further elaborates on how he and others fused together the tool of relationships, which had been established through base-building activity, with political investigation to synthesize a new mediating artifact. This mediating artifact was a map of where key organizations and individuals stood in relation to the campaign universal healthcare. This tool was used to do further tactical planning/strategizing. Taylor mentioned that the map was used to start devising different tactics (public actions) that they thought would have the most impact on different individuals and organizations.

For example, a militant protest action could be used to target and pressure politicians that were opposed to the campaign. On the other hand, demonstrations and rallies for healthcare as a human right could be used to invite political allies to publicly voice their support for the campaign. These public actions were meant to wrap the political allies in the framework of the campaign. That is, to develop a more public connection between the campaign goals and political allies, thereby setting up conditions whereby the political ally could be held accountable later on (FN, 11-16-2015).

**Doing Consciousness-raising**

One of the things that became clear over the course of time is that organizers used many of the same type of tools to achieve different goals within different activity systems. The difference was how they applied or wielded the tools. In CHAT terms, the subtle differences in the ways tools were operationalized. In order to do consciousness-raising, organizers employed the use of canvassing, workshops, and protest action.
Canvassing

Canvassing was used to do community outreach within base-building activity. In base-building, organizers used canvassing to introduce themselves to people and to get a sense of people’s needs, how they felt about certain problems and issues, and if they were willing to participate in the work of the organization in figuring out what to do. However, within campaign mobilization activity, there is a specific campaign artifact that governs or mediates the use of tools. As such, there is a much narrower purpose for using canvassing. When in the process of campaigning, organizers used canvassing as a means to enlist people in the struggle to achieve a particular outcome. Organizers were less open to seeing where people were on the issues, and more focused on convincing people to support their stance and take action with them.

Workshops:

Like canvassing, workshops were used by organizers for different goals. In leadership development activity, workshops were used as a means of doing political education. Within base-building, activity workshops were sometimes fused with other tools, such as community meetings to help build relationships between members. Organizers used workshops as a means to do consciousness-raising for the public as means of facilitating mobilization. One of the most common types of workshops were “know-your-rights” workshops. In the course of my time in the field I attended fourteen know-your-rights workshops. I attended four of these workshops with TROP organizers, two with organizers from the OPP, and one with organizers from NUG. I attended 7 other
know-your-rights workshops on my own, because I was interested to see how other activists from the broader Left network in the city operationalized them. I found that know-your-rights workshops are some of the most well attended events, and have also served as a potent means of recruiting people to do campaign specific work.

These workshops combined a critical analysis of how ruling institutional practices negatively impacted the people invited to the workshop. Organizers followed this up with clear ways to engage in collective resistance to institutionally generated threats. One of the points I noted in my field journal was the use of emotions as supporting tool in these workshops. For example, organizers talked a lot about “community defense” and “empowerment” in these workshops. When they talked about defense it was always in the context of defense from or against an active and personified threat. For example, in the health care campaign organizers talked about defense against insurance companies, and the for-profit medical systems that prey on working-class and poor people. In the stadium fight it was defense against the University and other developers preying on working-class and poor Afro-Americans and students. And in the OPP it was defense against white supremacist and patriarchal ruling class forces. Beneath this notion of defense were core human emotions: fear, anger, and hope. A potent effect of the workshops’ and their use of defense was to agitate or draw to the surface fear, anger, and hope. In trying to bring fear to the surface, organizers were not trying create panic.

Organizers held an assumption that fear had a double life. On one hand, fear could be a barrier to moving people into action. On the other hand, fear could be a potent force that primes people to take action. I found that a lot of the organizers did not like to use the word “fear”. Rather, than fear they used terms like “sense of urgency”, and “sense of
crisis”. However, when digging deeper into the contexts in which they used these terms I interpreted them as rhetorical devices to mobilize people’s fear. I think one of the reasons organizers were averse to using the word fear, was because much of their messaging was about hope, empowerment, power, and rejecting victimhood, and they saw “fear” as the opposite. For example, Linda had this to say about fear and its relationship to movement-building:

I think fear leads to cynicism. I think when fear is center stage it shuts down our ability to imagine better. And then there’s cynicism and pessimism. Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin say that pessimism and cynicism are the enemies of socialism…. I think it means a lack of hope is the enemy. And a general sense of hopelessness pervades throughout our society and the Left and that’s one of the biggest barriers to building (Interview, p. 7. 11-25-15).

In the excerpt Linda associates fear with the path to cynicism, which she describes as the lack of hope. In other conversations with Linda she explained that she thought fear was “a normal thing. But we should try to inspire hope” (INF. 5-22-16). The point is that Linda’s wariness of explicitly engaging “fear” as an element of generating hope is representable of nine of the 10 most experienced organizers in the study. A different view of fear was discussed by Joy one of the newest organizers from North Grit.

A lot of time people have gotten so used to their fucked up situation that they aren’t afraid anymore. Or at least the fear is down below deep down. So people just play
cool and they stay in their lane. But the moment you tell people things could get worse then that fear of the worst can make them get off their asses if they see an opportunity to take action So, I don’t think fear is what makes people receptive to do something. We have to have hope and all that, but sometimes people are so beat down that they can’t be inspired by hope at first, because they are afraid to hope. But when they fear the worse they might feel motivated to defend what little they believe they have…. what I liked about the first workshop I went to. I really started to understand how things could get worse if the university builds that stadium. And then Amelia and Jane presented the idea of us getting together and organizing as a step to prevent it…. I saw that we were the hope.

In the excerpt for Joy she provides an illustration of fear, as an emotion that could be used as a tool to get involved in the campaign against the stadium. The essence of her understanding of fear is that fear can generate the motivation to struggle when people fear NOT doing something, or when they are afraid to not defend themselves. Such fear can get people to come to trainings, workshops, and meetings, which turn can lead them to be more receptive to messages of hope.

The second emotion that organizers mobilized during community defense/know-your-rights workshops was anger. Anger was mobilized in the way organizers explained who was attacking the community and how they were executing their attacks on people. Organizers always described these processes in a way that connected with widely held values of fairness, or what E.P. Thompson (1966) referred to as moral economy. When certain events or processes disrupt what people view fair within the particular socio-
historical context in which they live, they feel the need they become receptive to collective action. An observation that I made through participation of 14 different kinds of community defense/know-your-rights workshops (including two workshops I co-planned), is that stirring people’s anger or moral outrage was easiest when we explained that the conditions that oppress people were not simply the result of neglect or politicians not caring about them. People had long accepted that politicians did not care about them. Rather, people became more outraged when organizers illustrated the specific ways in which politicians and institutions consciously took action to marginalize people.

One way I gauged workshop participants’ responses was by observing body language, and utterances. For example, I attended a workshop on health care in June 2014. I counted 30 members at the start of the workshop. At the end I could not get a clear count, because people were moving around. But it was roughly the same number of people. When the facilitator of the workshop began she started off by describing the health care crisis as more than an issue of insurance coverage. She described health care as a “life or death issue that has been and will continue to wreck families for generations to come”. That opening line and the level of intensity in her voice and face made the once buzzing room go silent. I looked around the room and I saw every single eye focused on her. People who were slouching before were suddenly sitting upright and some leaned in a bit more to hear. I interpreted this first change in people’s attitude to be a stirring of fear.

Towards the middle of the workshop, we broke into smaller groups. We listened to presentations about the ways the healthcare industry used insurance premiums to live lavish lifestyles. We also learned about how insurance companies spent exorbitant
amounts of money to lobby against any reform efforts that would reduce their profits. At this point you could hear people grunting, murmuring, and shaking their heads to indicate that they were angry and disapproved of what they had heard. I could hear people in the different small groups starting to elevate their voices when discussing what they had learned about the health care system. Here the workshop stirred the anger of people. The third part of the workshop focused on ways people could maneuver through the healthcare system as it is. It showed people how to advocate for themselves when talking to doctors; it showed people how to sign up for the Affordable Care Act, and it offered people free medical checkups, blood pressure readings, and also a network of people confronting chronic health issues. This was a means of providing people with some sense of empowerment and hope. The last part of the workshop entailed doing a compare and contrast of the for-profit health care system under the Affordable Care Act, and TROP’s proposed universal single payer health care system. When Zaria talked about universal healthcare, she did so by first presenting the human rights framework.

The principles discussed were: Equity, Accountability, Transparency, Universality, and Participation. The principle of equity means that everyone gets what they need out of the system. The second principle, accountability, refers to the establishment of key systems for examining health care provisions, and assuring that all people have their needs met. Principle three, transparency, means that the processes through which the system is managed needs to open for the public to observe and understand. The fourth principle, universality, simply means that all people must be able to utilize the health care system regardless of citizenship, employment, money, etc. The last principle, participation, means that regular people need to be able to participate in
making decisions about their own care (TROP Core Document, 2013).

Making a Political Intervention

Another goal within mobilization activity was to intervene in the political process (make a political intervention). Organizers utilized various forms of collective action as a means of intervening in the political process. There are two types of collective action that organizers described: public action, which includes rallies, marches, and protests. The second is group lobbying with institutional authorities. Organizers and activists use public demonstrations to transform public space into a politically charged spectacle. I use spectacle here to refer to an environment, scene, and moment that is starkly different from the normal or everyday happenings in a place. Organizers described rallies as means of “disrupting life as usual” in order to bring awareness to an issue” (Elza, informal interview).

Organizations rarely engaged in public actions as solo organizations. To generate the spectacular effect that organizers and activists want, a large number of people is needed. The small scale ‘actions’ that solo organizations engage in, were effective when they directly disrupted transportation ways and meeting procedures. For example, NUG started doing small 30 minute actions on select Fridays in which roughly 15-20 people would fan out across Major’s Drive (one of the longest, widest, and most travelled streets in the city). For 30 minutes they caused major traffic disruption as a means to illustrate the type of traffic congestion and disruption that would occur should a stadium be constructed in the nearby location. I attended one of these actions. It was a bitter cold day. We were able to get 20 people out that day. We huddled up on the corner armed ourselves with neon green leaflets to give out to people in their cars. We had four people
speak to describe the concerns of NUG members.

While we were Lined up across the four lane street a woman from the local news came up to us and asked what we were doing and why. Ms. Quinnie said to her: “We’re doing a traffic study. We want people to know what it will be like when there are events at the proposed stadium”. The news reporter then stated that she had been informed that the University was going to spend significant money to do a study. Ms. Quinnie came right back and said: “Well, I don’t know why they are spending all that money. We have a cost effective study right here, and we will be conducting quite a few”. During the action we gave out leaflets to drivers and people walking by that explained the reason behind NUG’s protests. On the leaflet people were advised to use the numbers for the office of the NOCO’s president that were provided in order to let them know they did not want a stadium, because of traffic congestion.

**Large Scale Public Action as a Tool**

The first example I described was of a small scale public action. There are also large scale public actions. For organizers these types of actions are the most powerful because they really demonstrate the potential power of the group. Organizers also saw these actions as a way to generate excitement and encouragement among members. Organizers saw large scale public actions as important weapons of struggle for several reasons. One reason was that when a well planned and executed public can able to draw substantial media coverage.

Media coverage can effectively amplify the message of the group. It can also lead to the perception that the group is bigger and more powerful than it is. This amplification
of popular voice can create a mainstream point of reference for organizers as they continue other facets of their work. For example, after the media reported on a large scale action with the theme of “Racial Justice and $15 Minimum Wage” back in April of 2015, myself and some of the organizers in NUG who were active in the minimum wage campaign, were able to use that event when knocking on doors. We would knock on people’s doors and mention $15 minimum wage, and before we could finish a full sentence, people would respond, as one woman did: “Oh yea! I heard about that on the news! We need $15! Really, we need more than that!” (4/20 15 Canvassing in North). After that day of canvassing we walked away with a better sense of the role of media in complementing different aspects of our organizing work. The utility of the media is that it can reach the ears and eyes of more people than a large scale action in a particular place in the city.

Table 6.2: Campaign Mobilization Activity Actions & Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions &amp; Goals</th>
<th>Tools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Campaign Planning/Strategy Development</td>
<td>• Political investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Develop a cartography of struggle</td>
<td>• Established relationships with experts in the field</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Tools that show possible opportunities and openings for leverage</td>
<td>• Internal organizational capacity assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Develop assessment of needs for carrying out different tactics</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Consciousness-raising</td>
<td>• Canvassing</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Present the collective action as a viable means to address social problems</td>
<td>• Issue specific workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Frame the nature of a problem or problems in a way that permits of</td>
<td>• Street demonstrations &amp; rallies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mass meetings/assemblies</td>
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mobilization of the broader public, in particular members of the organic base.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Political Intervention</th>
<th>Small-scale targeted demonstrations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Large scale public actions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Group meetings with authorities</td>
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Contradictions in Using Large Scale Public Actions

One of the challenges of doing large scale street actions is that an organization without a large base with high capacity to mobilize cannot pull this off by themselves. They have to enter into a broader “coalition” in order to do it. One of the issues with an organization like NUG which has a much smaller and low capacity base, entering into coalition with other groups like the North Grit Clergy Association is that the imbalance in power means the particularities of the less powerful group’s messaging may be lost. Members of the clergy association had the ability to mobilize large congregations. On any given day of the week (except Sunday) they were able to get at least 50 people to hit the streets. And with any longer term planning they have been able to bring out 100 or more people.

Organizations, like the Clergy association, with these large bases the clergy were able to wield considerable influence against a local politician, which allowed them to get meetings with city council members and with university officials. NUG had to actually use a series of street actions and disruption just to get a meeting with any council member. With such power differentials, it made it difficult for NUG organizers to
negotiate on the particular messaging for events. For example, the Clergy’s messaging in relationship to the University was the stadium would cause significant traffic congestion and would reduce available parking in the neighborhood. NUG on the other hand held those concerns, but were more concerned about the long-term consequences of the stadium. These concerns are best captured in an interview I had with Joyce a new organizers and neighborhood community activist:

I think the Clergy have their own concerns. They want to know how people are going to get to church. They want to know how the taxes on their property is going to be affected. But you know for us, the community, we have to worry about them building a stadium right there next to the community rec center, and the daycare. What’s going to happen to those places and the people who rely on them? It’s not just about congestion and parking. It’s about what having more students walking through our neighborhood is going to mean for the people who live here. They (the students) already leave beer bottles, and garbage all over the sidewalk. They urinate on the streets. A stadium means more of that. And if we want to talk about the parking issue. I have a neighbor with four young children. On days when they university has an event she has to park three or four blocks away while she carries grocery and manages four young kids. Add a stadium and how much worse will it be for her? And, and the other thing is that when that stadium comes the rest of our neighborhood will be taken. The neighborhood businesses will be closed and then their businesses will be put here. And then we will be taxed out of our own homes. This is the message we need to be putting out here. Not this other small stuff. We
In the excerpt Joyce illustrates the difference between NUG’s reasons for resisting the stadium and the Clergy’s rationale. Embedded in Joyce’s remarks was a more comprehensive concern. She was not simply concerned about the inconvenience of the stadium; she was concerned about the stadium as another step in the breaking up of her community. However, the general messaging of the Clergy was not about the breaking up of the community. It was about specific inconveniences. And NUG organizers did not have the base to push the Clergy to adopt their messaging. Entering into coalition with the Clergy created the capacity for large scale street actions, but they had no means to assure their perspective was represented.

A second problem that organizers identified was that because activists and organizers learned that they could garner substantial media coverage after coordinating and carrying out large-scale public actions, they began to rely on that tool for developing their base, as opposed to canvassing and meetings with people to build their membership base. That media started to displace some of the harder, more tedious to use on-the-ground organizing tools, as the dominant tool. Amelia and Rachel both noted that they considered public actions to be important, so long as it was used strategically. Both of them noted that actions cannot be used as a substitute to building the base. Amelia shares her thoughts on this in the follow excerpt:

I feel like, as I’ve gotten more into actual community organizing I’ve moved away from actions as the end all be all. I still like doing actions. And um, I feel like they
are important. But if you have a tiny organization and you can’t get more than like 10 people out then the action isn’t going to be as effective. So, um, I feel like you have to build your base first. And doing actions doesn’t do that. I’m not against actions. I think people can get a lot out of being involved in them. I think it can boost morale to see so many other people around you fighting for things like you. But that doesn’t translate into a bigger membership that can do more things. The people who go to demonstrations, rallies, action and stuff are people who are already in. We need to keep reaching out and bringing new people in. …. The Bernie campaign work is an example. We’ve been doing so much work pulling together actions that a lot of us are really just burnt out. And that’s one of the problems with actions. And it feels like people don’t have the energy to do the building part.

Amelia’s statement contains two important points. One point is that doing public actions can be beneficial for members. They can develop members’ sense of being part of a larger struggle along with other people. Throughout the study I found that each of the organizers described being part of public actions as being positive and motivating experiences for them. For example, Bishop stated in his interview that: “being out in the large scale mobilizations back during Occupy really helped me feel like there was a movement happening. I felt that for the first time real change was possible”. Amelia also describes the way in which using public actions as a primary tool can result in less capacity to achieve the object of base-building.
Overview of Key Forms of SML & Contradictions

Throughout the study I identified three types of learning among individuals participating in organizing activities. The first type of learning is learning to use organizing tools. This type of learning has different levels of learning associated with it. The most basic level of learning to use a tool is becoming familiar with organizing tools. Organizers in the study described how when they began doing organizing work they were exposed to specific tools that they had not used before. Level two learning of tool-use is becoming proficient with tools. The third level of learning to use tools was tool appropriation and construction.

Learning to Use Outreach Tools

An example of an organizer’s process of learning to use a tool comes from the experience of Amelia, Rachel, and Jane who were involved in several organizing projects, one of which was the anti-stadium campaign with NUG. One of the commonly used tools for community outreach by three of the organizers in the study (Amelia, Rachel, and Jane) was “tabling”. Tabling was an outreach tool that involved finding a high traffic area and setting up a table with informational materials and contact sheets. The idea of the tabling was to catch people coming by and to engage in conversation with them and convince them to share their contract information with them. The approach was the most convenient for college campus, because on campus it was common for student groups to have table for people to stop at and read through an organization’s materials. These three organizers had had relied on tabling as a primary means of doing community
outreach. Over time Amelia decided that canvassing was a much more effective tool for community outreach. Amelia explained to me that when she first started doing organizing work she did not like tabling, because she was very shy. But over time she started to overcome her shyness because she started to get comfortable with the people she was tabling with.

When I first started organizing I just watched people. Like, I would come out and table. But I always felt really awkward just standing there. And I’m a really shy person. So, I didn’t like doing outreach. I didn’t like being at the tables because you had to try stop people walking by and talking to them about socialism, or $15, or whatever. But every Saturday Rachel, Ellen, and Jane would call me up to go tabling for TAC and $15. In the beginning I really just went because I would hang out with Jane and Rachel at Ellen’s house. I went a couple of times with Betty and Harry. They’re really nice and dedicated. But when I first started I just didn’t want to do it. I really got used to it because Jane, Rachel, and Ellen made it fun. And they would be there next to me while we tabled. We would joke and laugh and it just became a thing we did together. Hahaha (Interview)

In this excerpt Amelia describes how her personal shyness was a barrier to her doing outreach and in particularly using tabling as a tool for outreach. Amelia states that she “really only got used to it” because of her good mentoring relationship with Ellen, Jane and Rachel. From a CHAT perspective Amelia’s participation in outreach efforts when she first started organizing was driven more by her relationships with Ellen, Jane and
Rachel, and less so because she liked outreach. Her participation in outreach actions was mediated by her good relationships with co-organizers. Amelia goes on to explain that as she became more accustomed to doing tabling, she started to think “tabling was not only weird and awkward; it wasn’t really that effective, but it was easy…. but canvassing is much better for doing community outreach”. As a follow-up question I asked Amelia how she came to the conclusion that tabling was not as effective as canvassing. She began by talking more about the problem she had with tabling. The following paragraph illustrates her thinking:

Um. I don’t know. I guess, I had been doing a lot of tabling with TAC. And I saw that some people would sign up but a lot of times people just walked on by. I remember, like, for me, I wouldn’t go up to a table with people standing there. That’s not just what I would do. So, I understood why people wouldn’t come up to our table. I noticed that people were actually kind of nervous about us being there at the table. They would walk faster, or look at their phone when they got near the table. And as soon as they passed us they walked normal and put the phone away. Hahaha. The other thing was that people were always on the way somewhere. I mean, there were some places we would set up like at a bus stop and we could have better conversations, so long as it wasn’t too crowded. But even then people were not generally in the listening mood. They didn’t really engage.

In this example with Amelia there are two forms of learning that occur. The first comes
from Amelia, Jane, and Rachel’s use of their good relationship to each other which allowed them to create bearable experiences for Amelia during her initial participation in outreach actions. Through participation Amelia initially overcame her anxiety about doing outreach by relying her friendship with Rachel and Jane.

In this example tool learning occurred in stages. In the first stage Amelia became familiar with tabling as an outreach tool. However, she was not particular good at using the tool. And she had yet to internalize the object of base-building activity which provided rationale for doing outreach and using tabling. The mediation of good relationships with other organizers provided her with comfort and a reason for continuing to participating in outreach efforts. The fact that it was her positive relationships with other organizers that providing the initial basis for her to get involved in the outreach efforts is important; Amelia and other more experienced organizers mutually appropriated their relationship to help Amelia learn to use outreach tools. During that time, she was mentored by the organizers who showed her how to table. As she became proficient and comfortable at tabling she began to internalize object of base-building activity.

Internalization of the base-building object meant that questions pertaining to the best means of building the base of activists involved in organizing projects took center stage. This raised new questions about the effectiveness of different tools for outreach, which revealed a contradiction in the use of using tabling for doing community outreach. She explained that it was in working on the $15 campaign with Jane, a seasoned community organizer that she came to see canvassing as a superior tool for outreach. This is captured in the following excerpt from my interview with Amelia:
But then when I was doing work around the 15 minimum wage stuff Jane made the point that we should go door-to-door. I was terrified. But we did it and I saw that people really responded. Like we had more rich conversations with people. And whenever we would be on the block knocking on doors or just walking through, people we met remembered us and would ask how things were going. I took it as it’s better to meet people at their doors than trying to catch people walking past your table. When we started NUG I brought that with me. And that’s basically what we’ve been doing for outreach.

The contradiction here was a contradiction between the tool (tabling) and the goal of outreach. Organizers describe the goal of community outreach as deep engagement with the community in order to establish a meaningful political relationship with community members. However, tabling was not allowing for such relationships to be established, because people did not want to engage beyond a superficial level at best. I had participated in six hours of tabling over the course of four different sessions. And one of the issues I noticed was that the people walked by the table would glance at the socialist newspapers, the white petition lists and signup sheets and then keep moving.

I noticed that people were more focused on the table then on the people behind the table. I was positioned such that when people walked past the table I could see their eyes looking down at the papers on the table. Some people slowed down as passed the table to get a look at the materials and then kept moving. They generally moved too fast for us to get a word out to initiate a conversation. I concluded that when people saw the
table they assumed we were trying to get them to buy something. At all of the tabling sessions I participated in people who looked at the table and walked by would shake their head and wave their hands to gesture that they did not want anything. Eliza a veteran community organizer of over 30 years shared this criticism of tabling:

The reason that tabling doesn’t work is that people in Grit City equate tabling with street vendors. So, people just look and if they don’t see something that immediately interests them they keep on moving. It’s kind of like you are expecting people to interrupt their commute to learn about something. If they have no particular place to go and are just curious people, then will stop. If not, they’ll keep it moving.

In Grit City street vendors are very common in the heart of North Grit where the organizers were doing tabling. And while it is a high traffic area there are particular to cultural-spatial dynamics of the city that mediate interactions in this area. For one, everyone is trying to sell something to someone. If they are not selling a product, they are promoting religious and other political discourses. For example, a common staple of the area are the Muslims who sell oils and the Black Israelites preaching about the tribes of Israel. The other problem with tabling is that someone needs to be at the table at all time to make sure material do not blow away or things are not stolen. This keeps the organizers more or less fixed to the table, which means people have to be convinced to come over to the table. This requires people to have time to talk, and be interested in what they see at a glance. It also hard to get people’s full attention, because of the amount
of ambient activity in terms vehicle traffic, and pedestrian traffic.

**Learning from the Past**

In this example I discuss a particular type of higher level leadership learning that organizers see as central to their work as organizers, and their development as organizers. This is learning to do higher level leadership development. I have already touched on the fact that leadership development activity consists of a variety of tasks, some of which are developing political analyses, and building their skills. However, some organizers, even when formal division of labor does not mandate it, get caught up in developing those particular capacities, while also performing all of the higher level leadership work. Again, it is an example of over centralization of higher level leadership, albeit unintentional. As Vera notes: “Often time I didn’t even realize all the things I was doing” (Vera INT. 1, p. 16). The outcome is still under-development of the base, because by not doing it they did not understand what went into the work she did. And this under-development means dependence on the organizer for doing the work. In the following paragraph Vera explains the situation that led her to start reorganizing the division of labor of the base-building committee she was in charge of:

I’ve been trying to organize myself out of the base-building team. Well, I was gonna, you know, I was leaving the base building team, and we have this one new member who was very willing but also very clueless, and the other members in the team were feeling some way about him. And they were like “But you’re leaving and like” ...Like people were not feeling very good about the team; both because this one person and also other dynamics. And I ...it made me think the about the
way I left the organizing work in Cory County. I didn’t want to leave the team in a
bad situation. I was like “Well, it would not be good for me to leave and people
not feel good about the team”. It’s kind of my responsibility to make sure there is a
sense of collective responsibility for each other and the development of each other
(p. 17).

In the excerpt Vera explains that she was leaving her role as the organizer within the
organization, and with that she was also leaving her leadership post as the head of the
base-building committee. Vera goes on to describe a somewhat tense situation within the
committee partially as a result of people feeling uncertain about what to do after she left.
Vera then referred to trying to “organize herself out” of her position, which is the second
time she used this phrase. In an earlier portion of the interview she used the term to
describe something she wished she had done in a previous experience. Later in the
excerpt she references that experience when she states that “it made me think the about
the way I left the organizing work in Cory County. I didn’t want to leave the team in a
bad situation” (p. 17). In order to provide more context, I quote at length Vera’s
description of the previous experience that she references in the preceding passage:

The people were really good self-organizing in many ways. They knew how to get
together, make sure we had good food and things. But I did a lot of the other stuff
like planning out things for actions, and strategy. So, when it was my last two
months of senior year I couldn’t do anything; like I had to focus on finishing. And
I was not able to pick it up after that. So, I think I could have…I really regret not
organizing myself out of that position and I just had to stop. People kept meeting a
few weeks after I left, but it wasn’t—I think people were feeling abandoned….to have the fight be hard, and for me to not be able to go anymore was just—and I didn’t really try to pick up again after I graduated because I had just gotten a job and all this other stuff; I feel like I learned a lot from that experience; from like losing it essentially; losing the committee….some of them stopped answering my calls after; and I talked to a few other people and they were like “no one is coming to support us”….People didn’t feel supported. And they didn’t feel like they had enough direction I really regret not organizing myself out of that position (p. 8-9).

In this lengthy quote Vera describes a situation in which she forced to abandon working on a particular organizing project because of school and then a new job. Consequently, she describes how she “lost the committee” because they felt abandoned, and left without direction. She ends with “I really regret not organizing myself out of that position”.

Embedded in Vera’s remarks is a subtle recognition of how her approach to organizing was generating an underlying contradiction. The contradiction was between the division of labor within base-building activities, and the object of leadership development activity. This contradiction was a manifestation of the over-centralization-under-development relation, which extends from the hierarchy of leadership within organizing activity. Vera had provided much of the core labor in the project. And her exodus from the project meant that while the members were great at getting together for the meeting, they did not have Vera to provide strategic and tactical guidance. Thus, they were left without adequate leadership to continue the project without her. They were dependent on her.

Vera’s experience of losing her committee and feeling like she let them down stuck with her. However, that past failure was also a lesson that informed much of
organizing. In particular, it made her realize that she needed to organizer herself out of her position in TROP. That is, she needed to make sure the members of the base-building committee knew how to perform all of the tasks that she did. More importantly, she wanted to make sure they internalized the object of leadership development activity: to develop the collective capacity of the members. She developed several processes, which were directed by the goal of developing collective responsibility for the leadership of others.

I couldn’t just leave with things not being set up right. So, I put my plan into action. We did a lot of collective thinking about what are some of the things that we’re good at. And what are the things that we like? And what are things we need to work on. Like Rubia was bottom-lining one of the things she thinks she’s really good at, which is creating know your rights workshops, and things she enjoyed doing. But it was also her responsibility to bring along someone that felt challenged by making the workshops, but who wanted to take a step and learn how to do them. She was to partner with them and doing that to build capacity, but also to feel a sense a responsibility for teaching each other; and also to feel a sense of understanding each other’s strengths and weaknesses too (p. 18).

The first action she took was to create a tool to help organize her approach to “organizing herself out” of her position. Second, she got members of the committee together to catalogue the strength and weaknesses of skills and knowledges. Third, Vera implemented a mentorship practice where those good at doing certain things would be
responsible for making sure they developed others who lacked this skill and had interests in learning it. This also meant being able to identify the need in other people.

Vera’s goal was to get members of the base-building committee to not only feel a sense of responsibility for each other’s leadership development; she also wanted them to be able to identify the participatory needs and capacities of other members. From her past experience she internalized the idea that it was her “responsibility to make sure there is a sense of collective responsibility for each other and the development of each other” (p. 17). This was externalized in new actions oriented by the goal of taking collective responsibility for the development of others. Given Vera’s role as organizer, which is a leadership role, when she made changes they were not only individual changes, but collective changes. The entire division of labor within the committee was being transformed so that all of the base-building members were learning to perform Vera’s leadership tasks.

**Adopting a Political Ideology as a form of Social Movement Learning**

As mentioned previously organizers described developing political perspective as an important part of developing leadership capacity of members of the base. Part of developing a political perspective was the adoption of a political ideological framework as a mediating artifact. The political ideology of organizers not only consisted of their ideals for what social change should be, but also repertoires of contention (Tarrow, 2011). Part of the repertoires of contention are perspectives on organization and leadership. Organizers in the study underwent transformation of their perspectives on leadership and organization as a result of encountering contradictions throughout their
organizing work. As a result of these contradictions they developed new approaches to organizing and appropriated new tools to assist in their new approach.

One example of this Bishop. The time of my field work overlapped a significant period of transformation for Bishop, which made it possible for me to develop a detailed account of this cycle of learning. Bishop’s learning occurred as a result of the emergence of a tertiary contradiction. Engestrom (1987) states that tertiary contradictions emerge as a result of a new cultural elements being introduced into an activity system. The new element has a different logic that conflicts with the old. In this case, major crisis erupted within the organization as a result of many underlying contradictions. The crisis erupted after Bishop had taken over the lead organizer/organizing director position in a working-class grassroots organization in North Grit. The base of the organization consisted of public education activists from the neighborhood and other nearby neighborhoods. The organization had been around for over twenty years and was run by the same executive director for all of that time. Bishop was the organization’s second leader. The organization had a good reputation for being able to mobilize around a variety of issues connected to public education and school building conditions. And it particularly had a good reputation for being able to put people into the streets to lead spirited marches and rallies, which generated significant visibility for the organization. Bishop explained:

Visibility was a major way that the organization was securing its funding. Funders like to see the organizations their funding out and in the streets doing things. It’s how they’re accustomed to gauging the value of the work. And, and you know it’s fucked up because for all these years the org gets all this publicity. And all this love. And in particular the leadership really benefits in terms of their career. That’s
what’s happening with all of these nonprofits. They’re just engines for the executive directors that come in to add something to their resume. And while they are building themselves up, they aren’t really developing people from their base to take up leadership. But that’s not me. I’m not here for simple visibility. Like, I don’t feel like I need to be here to advance my career. I’m here to build our people. To build their leadership. To build their ability to lift up their communities.

From the excerpt it is possible to see the beginning of the nature of the contradiction. Bishop as the organization’s new leader has a different rationale for becoming the leader of the organization. And his perspective is at odds with the logic that has dominated organization for many years. One tension that Bishop discussed with me was the lack of preparation the base had for taking the lead for projects. They had not been prepared to take on that level of organizational responsibility. He elaborates on this in the following excerpt:

She told me when I first came on-board that she really liked how I was providing the space and opportunity for everyone to take the lead on projects. The previous leadership never really let them plan things. So, they never got to develop their leadership beyond a certain point…. Like, she was great at rallying the members and getting them to turn out for rallies, marches, and all that. And she was great at getting them into the organization and into the space, but she never learned how to really develop them. It was really clear to me that she was never being groomed to assume leadership of the organization. And that’s a shame, because she came up through the organization; she’s been active and working with the organization for
so long. Anyway, so I really wanted to elevate the leadership of Black and Brown people. I wanted to give her the chance since she been there for a minute and she said she wanted it. But she just keeps on letting me down…. Dude she was supposed to be on the plane and she missed her flight…. She just hasn’t been showing that she’s dedicated to building her leadership (Bishop, Black/Brown Leadership Memo 2, 2015).

The preceding excerpt Bishop provides his interpretation of what he perceives to be the underlying problem. The problem from his perspective was that the staff organizers, and in particular the lead staff organizer had been trained very well to perform certain basic organizing functions. She was able to use outreach tools. She was able to connect with the members and establish relationships that were useful for mobilizing them into action and generating visibility for the organization. However, implies that there is higher level of leadership capacity, that she and others did not have, this involved the ability to design projects and campaigns, and carry them out. In addition, he explains that she did not know how to develop the skills of the members, despite having strong relationships with them.

On another occasion, Bishop described to me his frustration with his lead staff organizer, after the project she was tasked to lead went awry:

She won’t admit that she didn’t do the work. She wanted to lead the project. I told her it was a bad idea to do the WSF. But she kept on saying we should do it. So, I told her o.k. But you have to do the work. I will give you whatever budget you need. I will assist you however, you want. Dude! Do you know, when things went
bad she blamed me and said that I didn’t support her?!?!.... She didn’t feel supported because I gave her complete control and I wasn’t standing over her telling her what to do. But she didn’t even ask for help. She said she had it. And I mean, failure is part of the growth. I’m not going to give up on you or shame you because it didn’t work out. But you have to be accountable for your errors and commit to working on it. The rest of the staff wasn’t much better (Bishop, Under-development Memo, 2015)

After a series of other disciplinary problems related to how staff interacted with members, and also tardiness and not completing projects Bishop explained to me that he had multiple conversations with the staff about what he expected of them. He found that he had to come up with new work rules and implement them in order to establish clarity of duties and conduct in the workplace. He explained that all of the disciplinary problems and lack following through on tasks made him realize that the staff and he members had been really “under-developed”:

So, I had to start cracking down and implementing new practices, because things that should be expected of anyone working in any normal workplace were just not being done. Like, we had people chronically coming in late, skipping meetings, not doing their tasks. I realized that they were taking advantage of my desire to have an egalitarian workplace. But at the end of the day I’m responsible for the development of this organization. So, I had to start laying the line. Like, I’ve been reading a lot of 3rd World Marxist literature, like Sankara and Cabral. And I started to see the relationship between my situation and what they were dealing with. They
had to confront all the underdevelopment and colonization of the masses’ consciousness. So, they had to really have strong leadership. They couldn’t just have a horizontal, everybody is the leader thing. They had to be clear about the direction they were moving things and they had to develop the discipline of their people. I feel like that’s what I have to do…. (Bishop, Exposing Contradictions Memo, 2015)

After the implementation of new codes of conduct and practices the staff organizers accused Bishop of trying to change their culture and the feel of the organization. They accused him of being an outside trying to come in mess things up. As Bishop assumed greater direct leadership or control of organizational processes staff refused to following the rules and when he attempted to discipline them they tried to have him fired. However, the board of the organization had been aware of these tensions and supported him throughout the process. Things eventually escalated to point that he had to fire the leading staff organizer who had threatened him for disciplining her. Her firing led to members and other staff organizers demanding she be rehired. He refused. And this led to them attempting to have him removed from leadership of the organization. During that they refused perform their duties, which led to them being fired.

During this period of time I had many conversations with Bishop. He had been distraught over the fact that he could not develop the staff into leaders. He was hurt that they had tried to sabotage the organization even after he trusted them with more power than they ever had. Over the course of weeks, he collected himself and re-grounded himself. He told me he really dug into more of the third world Marxist literature and began to model his new leadership on it. In particular, he realized he needed to develop
the framework for the organization and anyone coming into the organization would already know the vision and direction. He ended up hiring staff organizers that fit with the vision of community control, socialist transformation, and Black Liberation.

He developed clear codes of conduct and expectations. He developed a rigorous organizer/leadership development program for new staff. And since then the organization has blossomed in terms of core membership (the base). He had also worked to correct what he saw as the errors of the past leadership by creating a rigorous political education program and leadership development system to train the members. Members also had a clear and consistent rules or “community agreements” that needed to be followed in order for them to participate in organizational activities.

At this current moment, the organization has completely transformed from an after-school drop space for young adults into left mass-based leadership development organization that is capable of mobilizing around school campaigns, and statewide campaigns. All of these processual changes were forms of learning. To provide a clearer picture of the learning I have provided table 6.3 to list the learning that occurred. In the left side of the table I listed the eight different forms of learning that occurred as a result Bishop’s grappling with contradictions that emerged as conflict within the organization. The right column are notes from I provided to help elaborate on the learnings presented in the left column.

**Table 6.3: Bishop’s Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questioning Method of Leadership</td>
<td>• from accepting a particular form of leadership to active reconsideration of leadership models constitutes movement in thinking and actions that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the table 6.4, the left column consists of the contradictions Bishop had to confront. The right column lists the specific effects of the contradiction. Put another way, the right column provides a brief description of the particular form these contradictions took.

Table 6.4: Contradictions & Learning in Bishop’s Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contradictions</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary contradiction: use-value vs. exchange value; contradiction between</td>
<td>• Previous leadership limited leadership development to preparing organizers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the logic of non-profit funding and the logic of movement organizing.

| to use outreach tools and mobilization tools in order to generate high visibility. |
| • High visibility was part of the means to generate financial support from wealthy donors and foundations. This generated secondary contradictions |

| **Secondary contradiction:** Over-centralization of higher leadership functions vs. comprehensive leadership development of staff organizers |
| --this is a contradiction because learning requires grappling with the contradictions of a specific activity system. If a person is not tasked with higher level leadership roles and responsibilities, then they cannot confront those contradictions and cannot learn from them. |
| • Logic of non-profit funding resulted in executive leadership assuming control and directive leadership overall program design, campaign design, and organizational initiatives; |
| • Logic of non-profit funding also put pressure on the old leadership to tailor organizer leadership development to performing tasks of outreach and public actions resulting in a division of labor that alienated organizers from learning to govern the organization |
| • Staff organizers not equipped to perform leadership functions |
| • Underdeveloped staff meant under-developed members |

| **Tertiary Contradiction:** Implementation of a new organizational purpose that conflicted the historical development of the organization |
| • The new logic conflicted with the historically established division of labor |
| • New distribution of responsibilities did not match level of political and skill capacity of staff organizers. |
| • Leadership model accompanying the new vision was inappropriate for level skill and knowledge of staff organizers |

| **Tertiary Contradiction:** implementation of new policies and codes further exacerbated the tensions between expectations and leadership capacity of the staff organizers |
| • Open conflict |
| • Insubordination |
| • Staff-firing & core membership loss |
The different forms of learning that occurred as a result of Bishop’s contention with contradictions raise an important point about learning. Learning is always a product of collective processes, even when it is individuals that experience it. For example, in this case Bishop, as an individual within collective activity systems interpreted the interactions and processes that constituted this particular cycle of learning. Through his interpretation, he internalized what was happening within the activities of the organization as an individual. His new courses of actions were forms of externalization of the information he took in. These practical externalizations are processual challenges that improved his ability to operate as a Left organizer. Although these changes in process and action most directly had to do with him, they also established the new framework that became the collectively shared mediating artifacts for all members and staff organizers in the organization.

Bishop was contending with was a contradiction rooted in the historic development of the organization’s division of labor. The previous leader of the organization had over the course of 20 years continued to maintain control of all executive leadership functions and tasks associated with them. She and the board had limited organizer training to the role of doing outreach, getting members to turn-out to meetings and public protests and demonstrations (FN. from Bishop’s reflections). Consequently, the old staff organizers and the members were under-developed by the leadership. However, the dialectical relationship between over-centralization and underdevelopment was a common experience for organizers in this study.

**Leadership Hierarchy, Over-centralization & Underdevelopment**
In this study of learning and social movement organizing I found that social movement leadership consisted of a tri-level hierarchy of roles and responsibilities. At the highest level were those organizers who occupied formally established positions, which authorized them to make decisions pertaining to the structure of division of labor, organization-wide policies, and establishing the political orientation of the organization. The second or middle-level leadership consisted of those organizers who were not positioned in established directive positions; instead they were in charge of directly working with the base membership. These organizers were specifically in charge of leading base-building, leadership development, and mobilization activities. The level of leadership consists of those activists that consistently participate in organizing activities, and carry out key aspects of the work.

Hierarchies of Leadership & Staff Organizers

In many cases, organizers play a subaltern leadership role. This is particularly the case with organizers who are employed to perform their work. They lead and carry the burden of the organization, but they may or may not be granted directive authority within the organizations. The degree of autonomy that they have over their work is determined by their boss. In cases where the boss does not relinquish control of higher level leadership tasks to the organizers the organizer’s skills can be underdeveloped. In situations where the organizer has significant autonomy and is tasked with executive (directive) level leadership tasks, they at least have the opportunity to confront the contradictions of higher level leadership, and therefore may undergo learning corresponding to that level of leadership.
For example, Gabriel, an organizer doing work with campaigns for affordable quality housing expresses frustrations about his own experience as an organizer:

I’ve been here doing this work for three years now. And I feel that it is really good work. It’s needed work. And I enjoy my work most of the time. Sometimes, you have your ups and downs. It can be hard to build the leadership of members. Like, you want to build them and help take leadership. But a lot of times the pace of the campaign and the complexity of policy issues and stuff make it difficult for me to spend as much time with people to prepare them for more responsibilities. It takes a lot of patience…. It’s constant struggle to center leadership development when the organization’s leadership sees itself as having all of the skills needed. You have to always make the case for why it’s a good investment do more in depth leadership development (INT. 1, p. 5, 4/2017).

Here Gabriel discusses how the leadership in the organization does not prioritize developing leadership of members of the base beyond the bare minimum. One of the reasons he gives for this is that the leadership of the organization considers itself to be sufficient in capacity and skill to perform the higher level leadership tasks. Consequently, he finds it hard to push other work to the side in order to spend more time developing members. He continues to describe the problem in the following paragraph:

I recently got the point where I realized that there’s really only so much leadership they can do. At a certain point they don’t get to really participate in the big decisions. So, that’s frustrating for me on that level. I mean our leadership is white. And the membership is Black and Brown. Working-class people. I see it as
important for me build their leadership. But how can I if the only leadership opportunities they have is to do petitioning, and go to meetings and actions? But on another level it’s frustrating because I’ve found that the structure of the campaigns doesn’t really allow for my own leadership development beyond where I am. For example, the higher ups--the directors decide the campaign and all the other decisions. But we do the work. We carry out all the plans. They lay out the policy plans, analyze the political landscape, and stuff. In my opinion, I just don’t think they trust working-class Black and Brown people to make significant decisions.

In the excerpt Gabriel describes how the base or rank-file members of the housing activist organization does not get opportunities to develop their leadership beyond a certain point, because they are not invited by the leadership to participate in “the big decisions”. Furthermore, Gabriel expresses his frustration in regards to this because he feels that a significant part of his role as organizer is to develop working-class people of color’s leadership, but because they are not even invited to engage in that level of decision-making and planning he is prevented from helping them develop in that way.

In this example from Gabriel at work in limiting the potential learning of members of the base and the organizer is the division of labor of the organization, in which directive level leadership functions are overly centralized among the directors of the organization. Jane also experienced significant limitations in her ability to develop her leadership capacities, as well as facilitate the development of rank-in-file union members’ leadership capacities. In an interview with Jane she describes her first
observations when she first started as an employed organizer within a labor union in the western U.S:

I think coming in at first I observed the weird bureaucracy of it all. I was used to having a lot of autonomy. I mean I had basically been running my own organization in college. And my college was like “here’s $25,000. Run this symposium thing I had planned (p. 5).

In this short excerpt Jane identifies a significantly different organizational division of labor. She refers to it as a “weird bureaucracy”. However, as she continued to describe her experience it was clear that she was referring to the overly-centralized nature decision-making and planning within the union.

In the following excerpt she compares her experience with the first union she worked for with her experience as an organizer with a community organization called ATLAS:

With the union I learned a lot culturally I think. But I didn’t really get any hands on organizing experience. I mean I got trained on the outlines of having an organizing conversation, but was I working with people who really wanted to build something? No. Absolutely not. At ATLAS, it was a small organization. There was only three other people and a staff organizer. So, they basically gave me a whole turf and told me go organize (p. 12).

Jane describes her experience with the union as a frustrating one. She was not able to really take the lead as an organizer. She received basic training in order utilize key tools
that organizers do such as the “organizing conversation” (one-on-ones). Throughout the interview Jane also explained that “90% of the work” she did was outreach by way of canvassing (p. 7). She felt that she did not really develop as an organizer even though she was employed as an organizer. Jane explained that she could not develop as an organizer, because she never had the opportunity participate in strategy development for the campaign. Her role was to execute the different aspects of the campaign.

Rather, it was during her work with ATLAS that she learned to organize, because she had significant autonomy and control over how she did the work. In the following paragraph Jane continues to describe the multiplicity of things she did as a community organizer:

I mean I learned so much more. It was just better all the way around. I was doing a legit listening campaign. I was in at least 20 often more conversations with people trying to identify leaders. And like teaching them skills, forming organizing committees, doing weekly trainings on how to talk to politicians, how to do research, how to have organizing conversations. And we were actually working on projects. Like I did most of the policy research. We were trying to get the abandoned properties act enforced in Camden. Listening, research, reflection, action. So, basically I would have a turf. I would do a listening campaign, put together a team, and they would often time end up broadening the listening campaign (p. 12).

Although it can be hard to get a sense of Jane’s expression from the texts, it is possible to see how much more accomplished Jane felt as she described her work as a community
organizer. She states that she “learned so much more” from community organizing and then she went on describe all of the different responsibilities she had. Although she was still employed as an organizer, the division of labor was such that she had a significant degree of autonomy. Essentially, she had free range to develop a campaign, direct base-building, leadership development, and mobilization activities.

The distinctions between different levels of leadership within movement organizing groups was much easier to see within organizations that had a stable formalized bureaucracy (TROP and OPP). In organizations like NUG, which had greater fluidity and horizontality in terms of its bureaucracy, the distinction between executive level leadership and mid-level leadership collapsed into each other. And the lowest level leadership had significant influence on the overall direction of NUG. However, these distinctions did exist, albeit, informally. Along with this informal hierarchy came the same kind of contradictions generated by over-centralization and underdevelopment of particular leadership roles. In some ways this informality meant that it was more difficult for NUG organizers to take systematic account of the needs for collective development.

This is a point that is exemplified in the excerpt from Elza from NUG:

We try very hard to uphold our commitment to participatory democracy. So, we don’t have presidents, executive boards, and what not. We have open community meetings and that’s where decisions are made. We just let our work speak for itself. We lead by doing. If I’m good at making art, then that’s what I do. Jane is great at doing strategy workshops and stuff like that. So, she and Amelia do those…. I think the of drawback of our “get in where we fit in” approach is that things seem to just be happening all the time. People are doing things. And
sometimes there are people who don’t know where they fall in. I know that’s been some of the challenge with our older members who aren’t really into the art stuff, and do a lot of marching and stuff. I mean, some of them do. And they love it! But I think the majority are still trying to figure out how to get involved beyond the meetings (INF. 6/2016).

In the excerpt she notes that NUG does not have established formal leadership roles. Rather, they take a more haphazard approach in which people perform organizing work according to their strengths and affinities. She also acknowledges that this does leave out some people. Those that are left out are the older members. The older members are also the members from the working-class Black neighborhood in which organizing is occurring. This has major implications for the development of collective development of NUG and the composition of leadership.

**Contradictions of Outside Leadership**

Diffused throughout chapter six are examples of kinds of learning that organizers experienced. I elected to use individual organizers as examples of the types of learning that were common to all of the organizers in the study. Here I discuss in more detail core contradictions within the social movement organizing activity of these Left organizers, and specific transformations in their activity that constitute forms of learning. It is important to consider that in CHAT a dialectical contradiction is a historically produced relationship consisting of the mediated unity of antagonistic elements (Allman, 2001). I must reiterate. CHAT is a micro-level theory, as such it examines interactions between individuals within the context of activity. While the contradictions in CHAT are related
to, and rooted in the macro-level contradictions of capitalism (e.g. use-value/exchange-value contradiction; Labor/Capital contradiction, etc.), the contradictions of concern are between different constituent elements of the activity system (e.g. specific rules vs. the tools used to carry out an operation, etc.).

Contradictions are not just problems that emerge: they are conflicts between the logics and structure of different components of activity. The core leadership functions of organizing work as expected are performed by organizers. The findings from this study indicate that organizers constitute a layer of political leadership. For example, organizers set outreach goals, and direct approaches to doing outreach. They set up different kinds of meetings to establish trust between themselves and members. Often times, organizers lead training programs, or at least set up trainings for the base, in order to, build collective capacity for organizing work. They also develop campaign strategy and tactics around which the base mobilizes.

A persistent struggle for organizers in this study was the lack of capacity. One underlying factor was that few members of the base were able to engage in higher level leadership aspects of organizing (e.g. political analysis, strategic development, designing outreach plans, etc.). This was partially because of work schedules, which did not permit them to take on the more time consuming aspects of organizing. It was also partially because of an insufficient number of organizers to perform key leadership functions. But the issue of capacity was an effect of a deeper contradiction between two key constituent elements of organizing activities: the division of labor and the rules governing the three activity systems. One of the rules that governed all three activities, was the self-
emancipation rule. This meant that members of the base (i.e. those who represent the community-base) must lead their own struggle.

This rule was in conflict with the composition of leadership in which outsiders constituted the leadership of organizing work. This contradiction did not necessarily itself in explicit disruptive ways. However, it generated other contradictions, which ultimately generated inadequate capacity. De Smet (2015) refers to this contradiction within movement organizing as substitutionism. He describes substitutionism as a contradiction or “movement pathology” (p. 118-119). At the heart of substitutionism are two poles; at one end there is a relatively skilled and politically astute group of people who are usually from a more privileged social group. On the other end there are those members who come from the local community who have less biographical availability, less access to resource rich networks, and have less political training (De Smet, 2015; Morris & Staggenborg, 2002). De Smet explains that the more advanced grouping displaces or substitutes itself for the subordinate group, because it perceives that group to be politically and organizationally inadequate for the task at hand.

**Mediations of Leadership Composition**

**Organizing/Political Frameworks**

In this study I there were two key conceptual elements that mediated and supported the production shared among all of the lead organizers with the exception of Bishop and Vera. I refer to this conceptual framework as the multi-racial populist framework, or multi-racial populism (MRP). MRP as a political framework is rooted in
the notion that defeating capitalism requires a multi-racial alliance between the victims of capitalism. I use the term populism, because while some organizers use the expression “working-class” and others refer to “the poor and working-class” (Zaria, 2/3/2015; Personal communication), the concept of class being described is often quite broad and includes everyone who works for a living, and is not working directly in support of Capital (e.g. Wall Street bankers, etc.).

Organizers included university students, doctors, artists, security guards, professors, and other kinds of workers, regardless of their family backgrounds and specific relationships to the means of production. In essence, the division resembles the populism expressed by OWS’ slogan: the 99% vs. the 1%. The significance of this framework is that it de-emphasizes the significance of a predominantly white middle class Left leadership of predominantly Black working-class community members in engaged in struggles preserve and improve important services, and local institutions that primarily affect working-class Black communities throughout the city.

The multi-racial populist (MRP) consists of political/organizing discourses that emphasize the commonality of diverse groups, and seeks to use those discourses as a narrative to describe the group. This was most prominent in TROP and NUG. In both of these organizations the organizers were very much focused on articulating a message of cross-racial unity and alliance against oppression. In TROP the frame was articulated as an effort to develop “leadership across difference” to take on the rich and powerful in order to meet the needs of the poor and dispossessed (Core Document; p. 1). In NUG it was articulated by the organizers and core activists as the narrative of the origin of NUG.
NUG was described as “a coalition of university students and community residents to stomp the stadium” (Amelia, 6/2016).

The MRP framework was not only a set of tactical discourses. It was also a political/organizing strategic orientation. As a strategic orientation, it provided core organizing imperatives that privileged multi-racial and cross-class approaches to carrying out different aspects of organizing activities. For example, in TROP, the organization as a whole dedicated much of its resources to organizing across Eastern State from the very beginning. A core message articulated within TROP along with its cross-racial populist message, was that the organization was a statewide organization that organized in small-towns, big cities, and rural and urban environments (Zaria, 9/2013, INF). The emphasis on statewide was directly related to challenging the perception that social movement activity only happened in major cities.

At the same time, within the state, the largest city (Grit City), was majority African American and Latino. The aggressive push to establish to committees in predominantly white small towns was meant to jump start efforts to build political solidarity across racial lines. Interestingly, enough, this aggressive push also had some consequences. First, the core of the organizers and activists in TROP lived in Grit City. Most of them could not consistently travel out to the different locations across the state to organize committees. To overcome this initial barrier, TROP’s executive body hired a full-time organizer (Tom) for the smaller towns and cities in the state.

Tom was a white working-class man in his early 30s. I talked to Tom back in September of 2014 to learn about his experience organizing out in the small towns in Eastern State. He told me that it was difficult for a number of reasons. But two reasons he
mentioned were lack of support, and also the fact that when he was organizing committees there was not a developed campaign to get people involved in. On the first point, the lack of support, he explained, came from the fact that he was organizing committees, but he was moving too quickly to establish as many as he could.

Consequently, they would fall apart, because there were not sufficient leadership development processes had not been established to make sure someone could do the work of the organizer when he was not present. Tom raised noted that he often felt like he was on his own. And this was in fact the case, because he was hours away from where the core of TROP organizers and activists were living. The combination of Tom’s organizing practice (moving too quickly to set up committees) and the barriers of distance, which prevented consistent support from TROP organizers and activists in Grit City, constrained progress on the construction of organizing committees.

A second negative effect of operationalizing the state-wide cross difference approach was that it led to the organization’s use of significant resources in the early phase, to launch committees in different places. During strategy meetings TROP organizers discussed a possible alternative approach to organizing. It consisted of shifting the focus away from the organizing in the rest of the state until a large and solid dues-paying base of activists in Grit City could be established. Organizers, such as Anaiz and Linda reasoned that it was less costly to organize in Grit City, because that was where core of the membership was located. This would allow more people to be involved in the early part of setting up the organization. A large dues base could then be used to support statewide expansion (FN, 10/2015). However, Zaria and other executive level leaders in the organization felt that such an approach would lead to the perception that TROP was
“an urban social movement organization, reproducing the divisions of geography and race” (Zaria, 10/2015, INF). Going forward TROP used financial resources to hire additional organizers across the state. Similar problems occurred resulting in dismissal of a part-time organizer (Jill) who had conveyed to me a sense of abandonment, because she was the only organizer in her area. Jill had also expressed that she felt under-prepared to organize a committee. Another issue that came up for her during her organizing efforts, was her members’ desire to organize around local issues, as well as health care. For example, some people wanted to address housing issues. Jill explained that she did not know how to keep them new members involved in the organizing work (Jill, INF, 11/2015). Out of my conversations with Jill, made it clear that she needed more training, and also support in establishing her committees. However, that support was limited and sparse.

Contradiction within Community: Dominant & Subaltern Frames

Another example in which outside leadership can affect the development of movement activity, is in the case of competing contradictory frames being promoted from within the community of the activity systems. To reiterate, the community of these activity systems consists of: the organizers, core activists, and the general members of the base. I use NUG to illustrate this tension, because it was more pronounced. In the case of NUG, the composition of the core activists and general membership consisted of predominantly white university students of varied class backgrounds and Black working-

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2 I define class not on the basis on educational attainment. Rather, through a series of short conversations with students over the last year or so, I was able to discern the class backgrounds of 17 of the students that consistently attended meetings. 10 of the 17 core student activists at the time of the students involved. Those who come from backgrounds in which formative years well financially stable, and parents were
class neighborhood residents (non-students). The student-activists, and the majority of the organizers in NUG shared a clearly articulated multi-racial populist (MRP) framework. The Black working-class neighborhood residents generally supported this framework, but also expressed an alternative logic of community self-determination. The organizers and many of the activists also expressed approval of the notion of community self-determination, however, the frame was not “lifted up” (Morris, 2000) as there was no clear articulation and promotion of it.

At a strategy meeting in August, 2017 there were eight community residents all of them Black. There were twelve non-community members. The meeting was facilitated by Eliza, Jane, Amelia, a young Afro-Latino man named “Castillo”, and a young white woman named “Alexa”. Castillo and Alexa both came to the city over a decade ago. During the session, a Black woman, in her late 30s or early 40s named “Tina” stood up and began to share her perspective on why NUG should make the stadium part of a bigger fight about the community taking back control of the neighborhood. During her testimony she began to vent frustration. Below is an excerpt of her statement:

You know what really irritates me is that when it was just me and a few other Black people from the area talking about the sins of NOCO nobody listened. But now that there are white students and a white women talking about this now, everyone is paying attention. It’s just sad how in this fight for our community we need to people from outside to tell us we need to fight (FN, 8/2017).
Tina implies that Black community members are less receptive to taking leadership from other Black people. Furthermore, what was interesting to me was that this was the fifth time that a community member has raised the question of Black leadership and ownership of the organizing work. During a break in the strategy session, I talked with Tina about her comments and she went on to say:

I think what the students are doing is amazing. I am grateful for them, but this is not an equal burden. We lose we lose our community and our history. They will still be here. If we can’t come together as Black people for Black people, then we will always need somebody else to come in and save us. If you look around the room how many young people from our community are here? Do you think there are no childbearing age women in our neighborhood? Are there no young fathers? We have to do better outreach to our community (Tina, INF, 8/2017).

Prior to hearing Tina’s perspective, Joy had also voiced concern that the goals of the community and the goals of the students coalesced around stopping the stadium, but were not one and the same. In an interview with Joy, she articulates what I refer to as a community self-determination framework and orientation. Here I cite her at length. The bold text are phrases, and words that key the community self-determination frame.

You know **if we want to get more of our people** (Black North Grit residents) involved, we have to ask them what they need. And you know I realize that we
are trying to do this thing with the stadium. But, sometimes I think we (NUG) are getting in our own way, because we aren’t showing the people that we care about what they really need. Does that make sense? I don’t know if that really came out right, but I feel like we have to show our hand and that one hand washes the other. If I want support from you I have to give you support. So, if I come to you and you don’t care about the stadium, then we don’t get anywhere. But if I come and say: “hey look, I’m trying to build the community, and part of my concern is the stadium that they’re building then you may be more interested, because it’s not just about stopping something: it’s about building something for our community. But before we even go there, we have to stop ask them: “what do you need in this community to take care of yourself before you can even think about or worry about a stadium?” Does that make sense?

In this excerpt Joy begins by stating, in a hypothetical fashion, that “we” need greater involvement of “our” people. As Riesman (2008) and Smith (2005) note, dialogue is always based on who is present in the communication. In this case Joy is talking to me (a Black person from North Grit). In that, “we”, not only referred to she and I, as particular individuals, to the specific social group of which we are both a part. In that context, the use of “we” and “our people” are used in reference to Black people from North Grit. Her use of “the people” is used to reference Black people from North Grit as concrete individuals. “The community” refers to concrete whole of people, and material space. It also includes the cultural-historic significance or meanings embedded in the material
space and the movement of people within it. In essence, the community is a reference for
a particular way of life.

At first glance, it may seem that Joy is expressing a form of nostalgia. However,
she is not only longing for things that have been lost, she is expressing the need to
address existing problems within the community, and “to build the community”. The
process of building or constructing is a highly agentive process, in which one is the
driver, or protagonist. It implies control or the ability to determine the course of things,
and the forms they take. In this sense Joy is referring to the need for “us” as individual
components of the community, to build our community (our collective selves) into a
force that can determine our own needs (i.e. community self-determination). This is
further articulated in Joy’s critique of NOCO in the following excerpt:

So, right now, the stadium is our main issue, but the real problem is with North
Corporate and taking back our community. I’m talking about North Corporate
as a gentrifier with the help of our public officials, and developers. I’m talking
about NC as an antagonist to the community, when they tell the students
that this community is dangerous, and that the people in this community are
dangerous, and don’t want to work, and are educated, and are on drugs. I’m
talking about NOCO sitting in the community where the school district closed
10 public schools. The largest number of public schools closed in any area of the
city, and NOCO as an institution of higher learning sat here in this community
hasn’t done anything. Hasn’t tried to create a program to work with the
elementary schools to give the kids the education that they need. How are we
going to build ourselves with proper education for our kids? If you take away the schools, and uproot the homes what do we have left? They want to wipe out our community.

What is important here is that Joy views NOCO as a systemic problem, and a threat to the community. For her NOCO is an enemy to the community, and is connected to corporate and political forces trying to destroy the community. Specifically, Joy ties NOCO to the public school closures, which in her view is key to the development and flourishing of the community. It is also important to note that she separates out “the students” from “the community”, which goes against the multi-racial coalition frame that is dominant in NUG. In fact, a central part of the MRC frame is that “the students” are part of the “community” (Quinnie, 11/2016).

Conceptual Mediations of Leadership

Aside from the MRP and MRC frameworks, there was also horizontalist notion of collective leadership shared among TROP and NUG organizers and activists. From their perspective coming to meetings, participating in discussions, and going to actions all constituted people being leaders. In this sense leadership is a mode of being. Being a leader means participating in organizing activities. But this concept of leadership is in contradiction with the rules of leadership development. One of the rules of leadership development is that the organizer is to diagnose the leadership needs of the base in order to increase their capacity to exercise leadership. The notion of leadership as participation or being present obscures the specific skill needs of members of the base. This can have
the effect of under-developing the base, because those with the skills continue to perform those key leadership roles. On the other hand, those not sufficiently skilled continue to take on subordinate positions. I do not mean to suggest that members cannot learn through their participation. But learning to wield different tools of organizing requires people to try them out in efforts to meet concrete needs.

Without a concept of leadership as skilled practice then it is difficult to make intentional efforts to develop leadership capacity of individuals, and by extension the collective. In short, the contradiction between the conceptual artifact (leadership as participation) and the rule of diagnosing leadership needs has three potential effects. One, it may reinforce outside leadership, thereby supporting the contradiction of division of labor and the self-emancipation rule. Two, it may limit overall collective capacity, as the higher level leadership continues to fall on those with the skills. Three, it may limit the articulation and operationalization of alternative organizing/political frameworks, which may be more organic to the particular place of organizing. Organic frameworks can bridge political projects to the everyday emancipatory tendencies of a group of people in a particular place and time can resonate with more people in that place.

Technical & Structural Mediations

Technical Capacities

The production of outside leadership is mediated by technical capacities. By technical capacities, I mean the availability of skills and knowledges needed to lead movement work. These include advanced literature skills, public speaking, and advanced
analytical and research skills. These skills provide the foundation for performing important aspects of movement work, such as framing/messaging, symbolic construction, synthesizing information, and political strategy development (Morris, & Staggenborg, 2002). Technical skill development is also mediated by racialized class relations\(^3\). Racialized class relations are expressed in many different ways. But, for this study, the most pertinent ways they showed up was in the different levels of advanced formal schooling. Advanced formal schooling matters to movements, because universities provide training in key technical skills and knowledges that are essential to the development of movement organizational structures (Morris & Staggenborg, 2002).

Historically, the university was not the only site of training. Working-class people had access to their own institutions, through which they underwent training (Schied, 1993; Thompson, 1966). Spencer (2006) explains that trade unions have played an important role as educational centers for working-class members. In trade unions, labor educators provide training in public speaking, political economy, and technological training in varying degrees (Sawchuk, 2006). Morris and Staggenborg (2002) note that post World-War 2, along with the decline of trade unionism, less and less movement leaders have come from the working-class. For Black working-class people, the union was less central to their political development. As Morris (1984) notes, Blacks relied on churches, community organizations and a variety of informal networks to provide sites of leadership development\(^4\).

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\(^3\) I view class as being mediated or composed of the social relations of race and gender. I use the expression “racialized class relations” to emphasize the co-constitutive relationship between race and class. In this study race and class were the most salient social relations, in terms of the mediation of outside leadership.

\(^4\) The particular history of the U.S. is such that trade unions have not been the dominant institutions for the development of working-class Black people, and other People of Color. The class structure in the U.S. has been, and continues to be, mediated by white supremacist cultural-politico-institutional frameworks. This framework has limited working-class Black people from the protections of unions, and has positioned
Outside of working-class institutions, formal schooling, in particular the university, serves as the dominant site of leadership development for activists. Without working-class institutions to organize and facilitate leadership development processes for working-class people, there is a skewed production of social activists and organizers coming from the middle class, because the university is primarily a site of training for the children of middle class families (Croteau, 1998; Morris & Staggenborg, 2002).

University as Sites of Activist Production

The university is often a site of activists’ first protest activities (Chovanec, 2009; Morris & Staggenborg, 2002). In this study all of the lead/primary organizers had a university degree. All of the lead organizers, with the exception of Joy, pointed to their experiences in the university as critical for their engagement in movement work. The two most common ways the university facilitated their participation in movement work was (1) through campus-based activism and (2) through university facilitated activities (e.g. service learning projects, social studies courses, and study abroad).

In the university students learn to conduct research, and critique information in systematic ways. They also develop skills of doing public speaking and creating presentations, as well as writing. All of these skills are essential to carrying out different aspects of organizing work. For example, prior to selecting universal health care as their campaign issue, the organizers in TROP spent over four months doing research on

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Blacks in more exploitative and oppressive socio-economic positions within the generally exploited working-class (Du Bois, 1998; James, 1989). For Blacks, religious institutions, specifically Black Christian churches, have been the primary organizational sites of Black working-class movement leadership development. Community organizations, often linked to churches, have been the other sites of leadership development.
different social issues (e.g. health care, housing, wages, education, etc.). They examined past efforts to make substantive change in each of these policy areas. They also examined how different activist groups in the past went about organizing around different issues. In the process of researching the issues, the organizers also developed in depth surveys, which they used during their outreach efforts to collect data about which issues had the greatest resonance for their target base.

Another important technical and structural mediation of leadership composition are the networks of which organizers are a part. These networks are important because they consist of connections to universities, which are rich in resources and experts that can provide assistance to different aspects of movement work. They also consist of professional associations and other activist organizations that can provide strategic and financial support (Liberato, Memo on Activist Networks). In NUG organizers used their connections to the university to set up presentations with urban planning students who set up presentations. The presentations illustrated the effects of stadium construction in other cities, which helped the organizers to frame NUG’s opposition to the stadium. In NUG, TROP, and OPP, the production of protest materials, leaflets, and newsletters were all co-produced by members of the base with heavy assistance from leadership via their connections and know-how.

**Time and Working Conditions**

There were also structural barriers to participation that limited the participation of working-class people. In TROP organizers set up key strategy meetings to discuss campaign plans. All of the organizers had work schedules that permitted them to attend
meetings throughout the day. Organizers, which were employed to lead the campaign had
the greatest flexibility. But all of the core activists and unpaid organizers had substantial
flexibility, because their jobs were typically non-profit social justice positions or as
independent consultants.

In both of these situations the organizers’ daily occupational work was project-
based and not hourly in nature. Not only did they have more control over how they
engaged in their work activity, they also had more control over their time. This time
control/flexibility meant being able to set up and attend strategic meetings for different
committees. There is an advantage of having people who can meet frequently and
promptly. Such availability allows a movement group to respond to new developments in
the activity of an oppositional group. For example, in TROP, when insurance premium
increases became a public, organizers in TROP were able to hold impromptu meetings
and generate a quick public response. When special public hearings were being
conducted during the morning hours while most working-class members were working,
organizers and other activists were able to attend the hearing to represent the
organization. However, it is typically the same people who can do play these roles. In this
way there is a bias in movement work that tends towards those individuals who have
occupations that give them considerable autonomy and flexibility. Such occupations tend
to be middle class jobs (Croteau, 1995; Ehrenreich, 1992).

Employed members within the working-class base of TROP typically had hourly
jobs, which did not permit them to attend key strategy meetings, because they could not
get away from their work duties. Organizers made efforts to accommodate in several
occasions, by having meetings at 7PM. The problem was that at that time most members
were tied up tending to family needs, and preparing for sleep, as they had to wake early for work.

*Specialized Training*

Another key mediation of leadership is the availability of systematic and on-going political/organizing training. Although organizers in this study facilitated trainings and workshops to develop the skills and capacity of members, the kinds of trainings were less comprehensive and less continuous than the training they received. In most cases organizers facilitated trainings for members of the base within the context of trying to win a specific campaign. Training was very much tied to the needs of the campaign. This was especially the case in NUG where organizing activity was dominated by mobilization against the university. The consequence of this was the subordination of leadership development activity to mobilization and base-building. Along with this subordination came less consideration and investment in the development of comprehensive training processes. I observed this as a problem for many of the organizers in TROP and OPP in earlier stages of this study. Some of the OPP organizers have since begun to address these concerns. This is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

The majority of the organizers of this study had attended at least 40 hours of professionally developed and facilitated organizer training in their organizing careers (FN, Organizer Readiness, 12-2016). Those organizers who were employed as

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5 The typical member had to wake up between 5 AM and 6 AM to make the commute to work. TROP organizers had conducted a survey of the membership which discussed the demographics, occupations of members.

6 Training refers to workshops, as well as more prolonged training retreats that organizers attended through the course of a year.
organizers had more training, as they underwent training throughout the year in addition to any other initial training they had as organizers. Trainings covered much more than nuts and bolts of organizing (e.g. one-on-one conversations, canvassing, etc.) They consisted of analyses of power, tactics, and strategy development (INF. Jane, 2-2017). Training for members of the base tended to be (a) more instrumental and tied to campaign work. (b) Trainings were more sporadic, and (c) the total hours of training for base-members did not exceed 10 hours in a year. Furthermore, members of the base were generally not part of the broader Left activist network, and did not receive the kinds of support available to organizers.

**Activist Networks & Cadre Organizations**

In addition to training, organizers were all part of a larger network of Left activists. This network provided organizers with additional resources for their own self-development. For example, organizers routinely received invitations to training camps, workshops, and panel events designed to help them hone their social justice craft. The Left activist network also provides ample opportunities for organizers to find different organizing projects, through which they gain new experiences. For example, in this study all of the organizers have been engaged in a variety of different organizing projects within this network. When organizations are in need of organizers, they seek referral from other organizers and activists within the network. There is frequent movement within the network.

The Left activist network consists of a variety of social justice affinity groups, and cadre organizations. Nearly all of the organizers in this study belonged to a Left cadre
organization. The significance of the cadre organizations is described by Amelia in the following excerpt:

You know, the day to day of organizing can really be disorienting and wear you down. You really get stuck in the day to day questions of what do you do about this politician? What do we do about this and that thing and this person who is fighting with this person, and canvassing and data entry. So, it provides the larger context. You have to have a larger understanding of why we do this work. You know we do a lot of history reading and stuff. And sometimes it seems really random but I don’t know I like learning new things, Organizing is so important, but doing good organizing work is not enough. There has to be more than canvassing, collecting signatures, and meetings. The bigger picture provides the strategy. The big picture influences my organizing because I mean, if you don’t know what the goal is than how do you know what you are building? We fight for things that will make it easier for working-class people to fight.

In the excerpt Amelia states that he cadre organization helps her to ground her organizing efforts in a larger socio-political vision. It creates a point of reference for her that she uses to inspire herself to continue doing the hard work of organizing. She also notes that the cadre organization provides her with additional political education. In this sense the organization serves as a kind of pedagogical space. Similarly, Linda describes cadre organizations as important pedagogical spaces for Leftists:
I noticed that a lot of people enter the Left through social services and then realizing that that's not enough search for other ways to make change. I’ve always seen the bigger picture need for a movement strategy. I’ve seen and felt that the most effective Leftists were often members of left organizations that helped develop them politically and help them think about strategy and really organizing in the world. When they are in a Left organization they start to learn how to organize people according to a particular vision. I’ve seen a lot of people who are Left in their views, but when they organize they are not transcending pessimism. They organize in ways that do not build our transformative power. We need organizing that sets us up for bigger victories. (11-2015, p. 10-11).

Like Amelia, she sees cadre organizations as sites of development for the organizers. She also shares Amelia’s perspective that cadre organizations provide vision. In addition, she specifically identifies cadre organizations as places where organizers learn to organize in alignment with the particular shared vision of the organization. She notes that there is a distinction between being Left in mind and practicing a Left politics through the particular way organizing is done. For Linda, cadre organizations are meant to teach organizers how to organize to build transformative social power.

The nature of the Left activist network is such that only progressive social justice activists are part of the network. Left activist networks are rich sites of political socialization (Chovanec, 2009). However, those who are most likely to be involved in this network are those social justice activists, who have passed through the university. These tend to be activists who are white and come from middle class backgrounds. To
become a social justice activist, the previously discussed criteria for skills, knowledge, and personal participatory capacity must be met. This has important ramifications on the composition of leadership, because Left organizers are socialized and developed through the Left activist network, as well as through their organizing with working-class people.

**Oppositional Activity**

Another source or mediation of the contradiction of outside leadership in movement organizing activity, is the activity of an oppositional group. Movement organizing does not happen in a vacuum or within a static space. At all times, oppositional groups are engaged in their own projects. The pursuit of these projects can create an emergency situation for different groups, as certain projects pose direct threats to social groups. In these situations, the activity of an oppositional group, can stimulate or provide the basis for taking up certain kinds of organizing activities. At the same time, the nature of an oppositional project or campaign can pressure groups into forms of organizing that restrict their long-term development and growth.

For example, in the case of NUG, the university’s new project catalyzed the formation of NUG. NOCO had already been engaged in a series of conflicts between students’ groups fighting for minimum wage increases, tuition decreases, and collective bargaining fights from faculty and security guard unions on campus. Off campus, NOCO was in a long-standing conflict with neighborhood residents who wanted the university to stop expanding and taking land. NOCO’s new stadium construction project intensified the existing conflicts with student groups and community members. This led to the formation of NUG in December of 2015.
The university’s stadium project can be thought of as a project of dispossession and capital accumulation (Harvey, 2004). It entails the use of various institutional processes to increase its land holdings, and to transfer money from needed social programs to the construction of the stadium (over $130 million in state tax money to be used subsidize stadium construction). Through changes in zoning, working-class residents, the vast majority of whom are Afro-American (94% according to 2010 census), would have to pay exorbitant property taxes and rents, which force them to leave the neighborhood in high numbers. This process has played out over and over again in adjacent neighborhoods on the eastern side of the city divide. Those neighborhoods have been transformed into campus housing, and athletic fields for the university.

The object of NOCO’s activity was an immediate and direct threat to well-being of the neighborhood community members. The object of building the stadium had embedded within it a particular time aspect. NOCO wanted to break ground on construction sometime in the summer of 2016. This placed pressure on organizers in NUG to take advantage of as many moments to engage in protest actions, as possible. A consequence of this was that base-building and leadership development activities were under-developed. Base-building activity was limited to outreach actions. However, outreach actions were mainly directed towards on-campus activist groups, faculty unions, etc. Given the emphasis on mobilization, organizers focused on these campus groups, because they have organized structures that could be mobilized for public actions. Organizers also focused more broadly on students on campus for two reasons. The first is that the organizers with the greatest personal participatory capacity had only recently graduated from the university. Hence, they had a very good understanding of
when, where and how to approach students. (e.g. class schedules, student walk patterns through campus, etc.). The second reason was that students had greater personal participatory capacity to participate in actions, because the structure of their days. At one of the community meetings Amelia noted that:

> We have to reach as many students as possible. Especially the newer students just coming in. If we educate them about what NOCO is doing and sits on that board of trustees, then they will be more likely to join us and fight the stadium. Like, the key right now is to win this fight against the stadium. So, we have to use what we have. I want to see us build up a strong base of working-class African-American people. We can only do that if we stop NOCO from devastating the community (INF. 8-2017).

I understood Amelia’s remark at the meeting to reveal the general logic shared by the organizers in NUG. The logic was one based on a “step-by-step” pragmatic approach to organizing in the neighborhood. The idea embedded in this excerpt is that given the emergency conditions faced by the community, whatever means is available for bringing relief, should be the tool used. This is consistent with Amelia’s remarks from an earlier interview. Here’s what she said in response to me asking about the future organizational structure of NUG:

> I want it to continue. I want people to stay organized. I think it partially depends on the organizing and partially on the mood. I mean if we win then great. But if we lose it’s gonna be hard to be like “So, now that we’ve lost this battle, let’s stay organized”. You know? Also people may have to move or be trying to move,
because no one wants to live next to the stadium. We’ve talked about doing a member-based thing, but we need more people from the neighborhood to get involved. We need more people from the periphery to come to meetings and get more involved. And we need younger people. Most of the people here are older, and sometimes I don’t know if I can ask them to do certain actions because of their age you know (INT. 7-2016).

I shared this excerpt, because it captures the general thinking of the organizers in NUG. As is the case with Amelia, all of the organizers in NUG expressed a deep interest in NUG being an organization that does more than stop the stadium. All of them saw it as the basis for a new political instrument for the neighborhood. However, the common thinking was that The formation of such an instrument was something that had to be built after they beat the stadium.

The thinking is based on a linear step-by-step logic, in which victory will provide the psychological means to encourage people to continue to organize for other issues. On the other hand, embedded in the excerpt from Amelia, is the assumption that a loss (i.e. NOCO builds the stadium), means that building working-class organization in the neighborhood is no longer plausible. Given this logic, organizers opted for a mobilization heavy approach. Such an approach relies on concentrating base-building activity on networks that are considered to be easier to mobilize. In this situation, students at the university are more easily mobilized, because of they lack the level of constraints on their time posed by conditions of employment and family commitments. Consequently, while organizers engaged in base-building activity within the neighborhood, their efforts were more consistent and rigorous when it came to on-campus networks. Furthermore, base-
building work centered on student groups, which made it easier to mobilize broader networks. Leadership development within this approach was limited and fragmentary.

This resulted in a larger student-activist presence in NUG strategy meetings, this also meant that when it came to tactics and strategy for the campaign, student-activist ideas dominated. This was not received negatively by core activists from neighborhood. In fact, they appreciated the students’ energies and supports. However, out of a total membership of nearly 200 neighborhood members who support the campaign it was rare to see over 10 in a strategy meeting.

The vast majority of members remained mobilized and dis-engaged from the strategy work. At one point NUG had consistent core of 30 community members that attended strategy meetings, and roughly 50 that consistently attended protest actions and events. A possible explanation for this is that organizers’ base-building activity have focused on campus work. But perhaps even more is that mobilization activity has overwhelmingly focused on campus activities and this has kept community members uninvolved. In any case, this perpetuates the contradiction of white and middle class leadership over working-class Black membership base.

**Cultural Mediations**

Another kind of mediation of outside leadership is culture. Cultural mediation has to do with the particular feel of organizing spaces produced through symbolism, tradition, language, and geography. The culture of an organizing space is mostly shaped by the prevailing culture of the leaders in the space. The organizers/leaders are responsible for crafting the agendas for meetings. They also set up the room. In controlling the agenda of
a meeting, organizers tell the participants what is important to the space, and also what
they should expect out the space. Meetings are by far are main artifact mediating
organizational activity. In other words, people understand their membership to a
collective by what they do with other members. Meetings occur much more frequently,
than collective actions and protests. In meetings is where individuals gain a feel for their
work (Haluza-DeLay, 2006). As such, the prevailing culture of meetings, also become the
prevailing culture of the organization. People’s feelings about the meetings they attend
can influence the degree to which they are willing to engage in other aspects of
organizing work, and whether or not, they are able to connect to other members.

Eight of the 12 lead organizers in the study explicitly discussed the importance of
“culture” in their work. All of these organizers were organizers of color. Three of the
eight were lead organizers in the study. These organizers also accounted for all of the
organizers of color except for one. An observation that I made was that white organizers
in the study did not describe culture as a tool or means for them to do political work.
Rather, culture was always described in terms of cultural difference. And cultural
difference was seen as a barrier to their ability to do work.

*Culture as a Barrier for Outside Organizers*

The main issue for the white organizers was that the people they were organizing
were predominantly working-class Afro-Americans. The communities in which they
were working were working-class and predominantly Afro-American. As I talked with
the organizers I found that central to how they understood “culture” had to do with their
racialized and gendered class identities. Here, I use identity to refer to both the ways
individuals conceptualize their own relationship to social groups, and also the way other social groups identify and relate to them. Put another way, Identity includes organizers’ understanding of how they should interact with people given the social differences between them, and those they are organizing (the base and base community). These differences consist of distinctions within the social categories of race, class, and gender. To illustrate, I include an interview exchange between me and Jane. Jane is a self-described white organizer from an affluent middle class family. In the follow exchange she describes a previous experience as a union organizer:

It was a whole different world. I had no idea how to interact with people…. I came into this world of middle aged men who had been through protracted organizing campaigns, working in factories, and stuff. And they were from a totally different cultural and racial background from me. And here I was this lily white girl like “I don’t know what’s happening! Let’s change the world!” I was wrung mercilessly through the wringer about the everything. The way I talked, the way I dressed what I read, things I talked about. I just culturally did not know how to interact with them. They went to BBQs and drank Bud Light. There we go to baseball games and WWE things. The campaign was a disaster but probably the most valuable thing I learned was how not to be a stupid white girl.

I quoted this lengthy exchange because I thought it provided one of the clearest examples of culture as barrier. In the first paragraph of the exchange Jane begins by stating that she did not know how to interact within the organizing setting. She notes gender difference
was part of the issue when she describes being in “a world of middle aged men”, and she invokes racial and gender difference when she described herself as a “lily white girl”. However, despite not using the language of class, class difference was a significant part of this cultural barrier as well. For example, as she described how they were culturally different from her she mentions their occupation as factory workers; she mentions that they read different things than she read; she notes they entertained themselves differently from what she was used to (e.g. going to baseball games and wrestling events); and she notes that they had different preferences for social gatherings and alcoholic beverages than she (e.g. BBQs and drinking Bud Light). And I think was really significant about the first paragraph was that she notes that they (the workers in the union) recognized and pointed out differences about her and made those differences a point of humor. Through their humor, which was directed at her difference she states that she learned to not be a “stupid white girl”. When Jane referred to herself as a “stupid white girl” I was curious as to what she meant by that. So, I asked her: “What does it mean to you to be a stupid white girl?” to which began to recount specific moments of this:

So like one time, I made this joke about one of my co-workers having a poster of sanitation workers on his wall; and he turned to me and said “hey you know Martin Luther King was killed while in Tennessee to support the sanitation workers”; and I felt so stupid like things like that would happen all the time. And I'm like “why don't I know anything!” But there were cultural things like showering. I remember one time some young workers came in and they thought that we were dirty because we didn't shower enough we showered every other day
instead of every day. And one time my foot was dirty from the previous day and one of workers noticed and said “Ill”. and then one time one of my old coworkers just called me up the other day and was like remember that time when your foot was dirty, and we just started laughing hysterically.

In this excerpt Jane describes two specific culture clashes. The first had to do with her lack of cultural knowledge. Because she was not aware of Martin Luther King’s connection with the labor movement (specifically the sanitation workers) she was not able to understand the symbolism of the poster of the sanitation workers. This highlighted her racial and class difference. For Afro-American labor activists, Dr. King’s speech to the striking sanitation workers represents a key historical moment in which Black Liberation struggle and Workers’ Rights were united.

The second example, relating to hygiene is important as well, because it illustrates that people observe physical difference and depending on their cultural practice and make inferences about them. In this case, the workers noticed that she had dirt on her foot from the previous day. To them this implied hygiene problems, which they saw as another example of how Jane was different from them. But even more so they saw Jane’s hygiene practice as part of another cultural group. In the excerpt states that: “they thought that we were dirty because we didn't shower enough we showered every other day instead of every day” (p. 6). This is important, because here Jane implies that she did not think there was anything abnormal about her hygiene practice. This is because she and the other organizers in her cohort shared similar cultural practices. I asked her if she was the only one experiencing the culture clash:
No. It wasn’t just me experiencing this. They thought all of us were weird culturally. I came into union organizing as part of a cohort of middle class white women... I think the union was looking to hire mainly white women with college degrees who spoke Spanish and I fit the description (p. 7).

Jane’s response indicates that the culture clashes she experienced, were tied up in racialized and gendered class differences. Cultural differences can be subtle, and yet they can be a significant factor in how people connect to one another. Such interpersonal connections are the basis upon which trust-based relationships are built. The point here is not that cultural differences inherently limit the ability for trust and solidarity. At issue is the lack of mutual exploration and understanding of these differences, which can lead to misperceptions of others.

Another aspect of culture as a barrier for outside organizers was as a tension between white organizers’ ideal of supporting the emancipatory struggle of Black and Brown people while also being white. White organizers in the study shared the perspective that when organizing with in communities of People of Color they needed to be careful in “how they took up space, which was to say they needed to consciously make sure they were not being perceived as using their “white privilege” to dominate over people who are socially oppressed. Here Linda speaks to her own struggle with this:

I was definitely grappling with, as a young white organizer, doing work in Black working class neighborhoods. And me and my crew, my comrades, were all really
committed to anti-racism: but that can look a lot of ways. And I was around people who were really paralyzed by their guilt, both class and race guilt. And I was like “That’s not really helping us”. but I have all these questions and I don’t really have role models right now. So, on a whim I signed up for this anti-racist organizer training program in the Bay…. I continued to work with the anti-racist program. I became staff, which taught me a lot about the importance of unlearning privileges so that we can be accountable and effective in movement work that we do (p. 6).

In the excerpt she describes herself as “grappling” with her social identity as a young white organizer in Black working class neighborhoods” (p. 6).

In other words, Linda’s political perspective was based on not assuming dominance when working with groups of people that have historically been politically and economically marginalized. As such, the contradiction she was coming up against was her political identity as an anti-racist radical Leftist. Her view that there was need for her organizing skill in working-class communities of color, and her white racial identity. In the except she mentions a specific form this tension takes, which is as racial and class guilt. I asked her to explain what she meant:

I was really aware of the history of white people doing working in Black and Brown communities. And they assume leadership and they don’t listen to the needs of the people. And a lot of times those people end up getting credit for building movements that oppressed people actually built. A lot of us in the
collective just didn’t want to replicate that practice. And a lot of times what happens is, as a white organizer on the Left, you can be so sensitive to the history of oppression and racism that you don’t want to do anything. You feel guilty for being part of a privileged group. That guilt leaves you in a situation where you just don’t do anything. And it was clear that we had skills and perspective that we could contribute to building the overall movement, so to not use them just didn’t seem productive (p. 7).

After hearing and reading through her response, I interpreted the specific nature of the contradiction she and other white organizers were grappling with to be a contradiction between their particular concept of anti-racist praxis, and their desire to organize working-class People of Color. Furthermore, connected to their concept of anti-racist praxis is Linda’s own moral identity, as an anti-racist white Leftist. If she had maintained the concept of anti-racist praxis based on not assuming the leadership responsibilities inherent in organizing than she would be negating her identity as a Left organizer. At the same time denying the significance of race in shaping her relationship to the people she wanted to organize, would negate her identity as anti-racist white Leftist. For her the anti-racist training program, which she went on to work with as a trainer was a useful tool in helping her negotiate these tensions and transform her conception of anti-racism to one that aligned with her need to organize.

In a conversation with Linda after the interview she explained that she came to understand anti-racism as a positive or proactive practice in which she was organizing to build the leadership skills of working-class People of Color, and to create conditions for
working-class People of Color to thrive politically (FN). In this way Linda’s use of anti-racist training, and also work in a Marxist-based non-profit aided her in re-conceptualizing her anti-racism, which in turn mediated her new approach to organizing with People of Color neighborhoods. Together, these processual changes are an expression of her learning through the contradictions of cultural difference.

*Culture as a Weapon of the Oppressed*

For white organizers in this study culture was a barrier for them. However, for the organizers of Color, culture was understood to be a subtle, but important tool for organizing, as well as, a barrier at times. The organizers of Color tended to see themselves as much more connected to their base. It was common to hear these organizers refer to their base as “our people”, whereas, I never heard white organizers use this phrase in reference to the membership base or the broader community base. I found this to be significant. The use of “our people” indicates a more intimate connection between organizers, members, and the base community, than phrases like: “our members”, “the members”, “the people”, etc.

“Our people” indicates a personal identification with the experience, conditions, and potential future of a group. This identification also grants organizers a different kind of moral positioning for engaging in organizing work. They position themselves, as insiders who share the same interests with those they are organizing. I found that organizers who shared deeper cultural affinities with those they were organizing, invested more time and energy into fusing cultural practices with organizing activities.
In the following excerpt Vera briefly mentions the use of cultural production as a tool for providing opportunities for people to participate. This was also a means of building leadership capacity since participation is a precondition for learning to lead.

Um…there were people who didn’t feel comfortable doing that, so they would prefer to bring food; so they would cook for everybody and we would have food at all of our meetings. That’s one of the things I really love about our meetings with immigrants is there’s always really good food! And I think food on a basic level is important because we need it to stay alive. But when we eat together--when we share a meal together we are kind of sharing our humanity. I think that can be very powerful when we are building together to survive and make change.

Moreover, having people participate in organizing work by engaging in productive activity, such as, making food for the collective, was understood as a way of establishing a deeper sense of ownership. The labor of producing food was directly linked to making it possible for working-class immigrants to attend meetings. The cultural element was embedded in two ways. The first, and most obvious way was the type of food, that was made. The second aspect was the assumption that providing food was a necessary part of organizing.

Culture is also embedded in people’s spirituality the institutions that bring people together around a particular code spiritual understanding or religion. For organizers of Color it was important to be able to understand the connection between spirituality, religion, and culture in order to be able to organize with people. This can sometimes be
difficult for Leftists who have developed a critical orientation towards religion. However, the significance of religion, and spirituality is articulated by Vera in the following excerpt:

As an organizer you have to be able to understand people. And that means you have to be willing to go where they are, even if it’s not a place you’re used to going you know? I think you have to really understand their culture, their upbringing, what they like to do when they’re not just trying to survive. For some people, that means understanding their spiritual life. I’ve really struggled with religion, but the first day I had to show up to this mass...with this really big congregation with like hundreds of people and like my body just remembered everything! I remembered the songs, the prayers, the rituals; and just, like all of these beautiful memories from childhood came back to me---memories that I had not accessed since I came to the United States. Like, for me, it’s not about being Catholic at all. But religion in my community, and for me, has all of these cultural connotations; it has all of these lived experiences that are more about how we spend times together. I think that’s really necessary for organizers. We have to really understand and appreciate how people exist together outside of the work

(INT 2, p. 4, 3/2017)

Here she describes how culture was tied to going to mass. But she is clear to point out that mass is a cultural practice of sociality. It is a particular way in which people organize themselves in their everyday non-work lives. Vera also makes the point that in order to
really understand people it is important to be able to be a part of these modalities of togetherness that occur beyond work, and also beyond the work of organizing. This also connects with base-building goal of building relationships, which is discussed in the section of this chapter on base-building activity.

An important point that Vera highlights in this excerpt is the notion of culture as embodied. That is, people not only act out their culture in terms of how they do things, but they internalize class in the way they feel and respond to the world around them. Vera continues to describe her understanding of culture in the subsequent excerpt.

It’s crazy. There’s like things you know that you don’t realize you know. Also, like your body just remembers. So, when I talk about culture it’s not just the things you see, but what’s in ingrained in your body. So, like utterances, the way we talk, the way we move, the way talk to each other, and tone, and just like all of those things that are so ingrained; those habits that make us who we are. We learn to put them aside; to be professional; I’ve been thinking about these things for so long now; and I’ve felt like I haven’t been able to access these things for so long. I was at University of Eastern State, which was not that kind of environment* (a predominantly white middle to upper class university), and then I was organizing in TROP, which is not an organization that has a lot of people that don’t reflect the way I grew up….. You know it’s more about the culture than religion (INT 2, p. 5, 3-2017).
Another point is that culture is classed and class culture has implications for how people interact with each other, which again implications for the quality of relationships that can be built for the purposes of organizing.

**Middle Class Culture as a Barrier**

In the preceding excerpt Vera specifically mentions that she had not been able to “access” her cultural roots because of the “professional” environments she had had to be in. In particular she mentions the environment of the elite university she attended. She also mentions a similar dynamic within TROP, which she states differs from her upbringing. In an informal conversation with Vera she noted that TROP’s “political focus is on organizing working-class and poor people”, but a lot of the core leadership had culturally come from more middle class professional backgrounds that made them culturally different from a lot of the people we were trying to organize” (INF.). Given this information I understood this to implicate a class dimension in her notion of culture. Vera continues to describe her own feelings about middle class culture within “movement spaces” in the following excerpt:

I’ve been thinking about the feel of movement spaces. We [working-class Black and Brown people] have to fraction ourselves in order to be in all these different places…. In terms of movement spaces, I’ve only ever felt that way in TROP. And that’s why I really felt such a need to get back to organizing with immigrants--working-class immigrants. Like, I would be the only one cursing in meetings; or I would be the only one to look at something and laugh hysterically. So, I would feel
a little out of place. Unless when Ms. Samson, and the South West committee were around. So, like poor working-class Black South West members, would be the ones I felt most at home with. They would laugh, and joke, and break up that isolation for me (INT 2, p. 6, 3-2017).

Vera specifically describes how middle class cultures within movement work can affect working-class People of Color. She specifically described feeling a sense of “isolation”. For Vera, this feeling of isolation was a major reason she chose to leave TROP. She explains that she needed to be in a working-class immigrant environment. This was an environment where she felt most emotionally connected to the people she was organizing.

Vera was not the only organizer to describe class cultural antagonism as a problem or point of discouragement for their participation. Anaiz, a new organizer and new-comer to the Left also described class culture as a significant barrier to her ability undergo social movement learning. In a conversation with Anaiz, she stated that she had a hard time buying into the OPP she felt “alienated” whenever she was in the meetings. At first she described her alienation as stemming from not knowing all the political facts that others knew. As I dug a bit deeper she revealed that it wasn’t the knowledge. She felt confident that she could learn the material from reading. But she was just culturally not comfortable. She stated that she felt could not be part of the “clique” because she had a regular job, as opposed to a movement job in a non-profit.

Furthermore, she explained that she felt that nonprofits had a “middle class feel to them”, which she thought was generating a middle class culture in Left organizations.
She expressed her hope that the culture of the organization would change after “more working-class people joined”. I asked her what she meant by “working class”, and she responded “people with limited resources and time” (Anaiz, Informal). On another occasion I asked Anaiz what she meant by “middle class culture”. Here’s what she had to say:

It’s not a thing; it’s more of a feeling that happens sometimes we don’t have the same interests, humor, run in the same circles...certain interactions are forced; an uneasiness being with people vs. a freedom you feel in working class spaces where you just say what you really want to say; feeling like you have be tight lip keep your thoughts to yourself; doesn’t feel like it’s open for all different kinds of personalities and perspective; seems suitable for people who are comfortable in these circles...like leftist circles in Grit City. It’s the same people you see at things like over and over again There are people who are continuously finding each other. Then there are people who are the strays. For example, when I came in one the other day you say hello to everyone but only one or two people will say hello back...and the way they say it is like they are hesitant. Like they feel forced; they don’t have like black working class etiquette. Like they don’t feel that it’s important to greet you and recognize each other in the space…. it’s little things that make up that feeling. It’s a cold feeling.

In this excerpt Anaiz defines middle class culture and through negation she defines working-class culture, specifically what she refers to as Black working-class culture. In
defining middle class culture Anaiz states middle class culture as different from hers. She points to her perceived differences in “humor”, not having “the same interests” (casual social), and being part of “different circles”. I asked Anaiz what she meant when said that the members in the OPP did not have “the same interests”? She explained to be that for her having meaningful relationships with people outside of political work was important. And for her giving up time to go to meetings needed to yield some sort of reward. The reward she was looking for was in the form of enjoyable social experiences and bonding with others. However, for her this could not happen because she did not share similar life experiences that could serve as points of cultural reference.

Similar to Amelia who initially got into organizing because wanted to enjoy time with her friends, Anaiz found moving past peripheral involvement in the OPP to be difficult because she was not developing friendship with the other members. Anaiz’s statements about the incongruity between her working-class culture and the “middle class culture” of activists she describes are also similar to the Vera’s statements about her experience with being alienated culturally by the class culture in TROP.

A lot of times the organizers talk about their commitment to organizing as part of their commitment to building a social movement, however, the organizers’ identity mediated their emotional connection to the work. In the case of Vera her identity as a working-class immigrant provided an emotional connection to immigrant community organizing groups. As such she drew strength from working with working-class immigrants. On the other hand, the inability for an organizer to fully express their cultural identity through their work, can lead to a sense of alienation that inhibits the organizers long-term motivation to continue organizing in a particular context. Furthermore, we see
that not only is culture classed, it is also promoted, often incidentally, by those in leadership of movement work. Furthermore, different cultures attract and also repel different groups of people, as it is embedded in the very mode of doing political work. In this case, middle class culture can repel working-class people (Croteau, 1995; Stout, 1996)

**Confronting the Contradiction of Outside Leadership**

Throughout the study, few organizers viewed class culture as a mediation of production of the outside leadership. However, those that did recognize the existence of a middle class culture saw it as coming from the lack of available working-class Black and Brown leaders involved in Left political work. Among OPP organizers the solution to this problem was the construction of a different political/organizing framework that was grounded in the ability to turn Black and Brown working-class communities into political/movement centers (Liberato, 2017b). OPP organizers referred to this framework as the “community control frame” (OPP doc. 1, p. 1). In my view the production of this framework represented a major form of collective learning, because it entailed a radical re-orientation of collective practice, and a new reconceptualization of the combined object of movement organizing (Engestrom, 1987; Kim, 2012).

The production of the community control master frame. I refer to community control as a master frame, because it mediates all aspects of organizing activities. As a key mediating artifact, it orients the ways organizers perceive the object of organizing activities and the relationship between each of the organizing activity systems. It redistributes organizers’ sense of importance of different aspects of organizing. For
example, as mentioned previously, TROP and NUG organizers shared what I referred to as a multi-racial populist framework (MRP).

This framework mediated organizers’ views of who can and should constitute the leadership of organizing projects. The framework de-centers the political concerns of race and class composition of leadership of organizing projects. In TROP this was expressed as resistance to targeted focus on the development of Black and Brown working-class leadership. The general thinking of organizers in TROP is that this encourages division.

To be clear I am not saying that TROP organizers do not recognize racial difference, racism, and the need for Black and Brown leadership. I am, however, saying that the political frame of the organization does not make this the priority of their organizing work. The priority is on building organizational mass through broad-based organizing across the state. There is also a premium on depicting the organization as racially diverse.

In NUG the focus is on achieving sufficient density to carry out powerful mobilizations to stop the construction of the stadium. However, what has been missed is that the framework does not appeal beyond a certain sector of working-class black people in the neighborhood. In fact, Eliza noted that those in the community most involved are those who are older women and homeowners. Working-class Black youth from the neighborhood are nearly non-existent. Several members of NUG have suggested the self-determination framework, which closely linked to community control. However, NUG organizers appeared reticent for fear of alienating students.

This reticence was also tied to concerns about how to make such a transition while the stadium fight was in full force. However, one of the members made an interesting remark when he remarked that “We (NUG) have already forced NOCO to
back-off from building the stadium for a whole year. Right now all we are doing is
pouring our energy into delaying its construction. At some point they will build that
stadium if we do not get bigger and stronger” (8-2017; FN). Quinnie responded the man
that “we (NUG) were going to win” (8-2017 FN). Nevertheless, the point the man made
is important. The point is that dominant framework supported by the organizers limits the
ability to ground the stadium struggle in the needs of the broader sections of the working-
class community.

**Components of Community Control Frame**

The community control frame as produced by organizers in OPP consists of four
directive mediating artifacts, three of which are associated with each of the organizing
activity systems. They are as follows: self-determination, building in place, and re-
appropriation of institutional space. The last mediating artifact was community as
movement center, as a new articulation of the object of movement organizing. The
production of the community frame emerged directly out of OPP organizers perspective
that the reason that their campaign mobilizations were not able to win durable and
transformative victories had to do with the lack of long-term leadership rooted in the
social base of the people their organizations represented. In other words, these organizers
recognized that in general they were not of the communities of people whose behalves
they were fighting.

They saw this as a historical contradiction of Left organizing work that had to be
corrected if they were to be able to mount more efficacious campaigns around more
radical demands. OPP organizers reasoned that sincere commitment to the self-
emancipation of working-class Black and Brown people in Grit City, required not only more extensive base-building in those communities, but also a wellspring of Black and Brown working-class leaders. The thinking was that Black and Brown working-class leaders were needed, because they maintain an organic connection with their people. They understand the language of the base, and they understand the cultural nuances of the base. Furthermore, OPP organizers reasoned that Black and Brown working-class people would be more committed to the social uplift of other working-class Black and Brown people, because they had similar social experiences, and shared material interests. Second OPP organizers reasoned that organizations without Black and Brown working-class leadership were perpetuating notions of Black and Brown superiority, and undermining the self-emancipatory ethos of their work.

**Space/Place-based Orientation to Base-building**

All organizing activities occur within a particular place. However, the notion of place-based orientation has to do with making the particular place in which people live, a central rationale of organizing work. It is specifically the case with base-building activity. In TROP and NUG the actual place where base-building occurred had less to do with the historic organization of social relations and social conditions of the place. In NUG base-building was directed by the need to mobilize against the construction of the stadium. Only indirectly, did base-building have to do with bringing people together around a vision of transforming the space/place to serve the needs of the residents. In TROP, the transformation of space and place were not part of the agenda at all. Rather, space/place was of importance mainly from a logistical perspective (e.g. who can attend meetings in
different locations; search for cheap meeting space, etc.). Space also had a
representational purpose. Organizing in rural and urban spaces, was important to
supporting TROP’s claim that it was an organization for all working-class and poor
people. It specifically, supported TROP’s stated mission of uniting people across racial
lines, which are embedded in the state’s geography.

In OPP space/place was a project tied to the notion of controlling the production
local social life. In an exchange with Bishop (9-2016) this was articulated:

**Bishop:** I think we need to root our politics in particular places. It has to be place-
based. Because that’s material for people. Our people aren’t in the factories. So,
organizing around economic production at work isn’t necessarily the best way to
organize.

**Liberato:** Yea. I see where you’re coming from. And I think you’re on to
something. Socialist organizing shouldn’t be limited to the workplace. Material
production happens at home in the neighborhood.

**Bishop:** That’s exactly my point. These neighborhoods are sites of production.
They are places where people are being produced or reproduced by virtue of their
material conditions and the things they see every day. That’s why it’s so
important for us at Youth Community Builders to really ground our base-building
in envisioning how people want to change their neighborhood. This is how we are

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7 Across the state small towns and rural areas were predominantly white, while the major cities and urban
areas were predominantly Black.
going to build the political base needed for governance and working-class-led social transformation.

In this exchange Bishop describes the rationale for making place and space central to organizing work. Of particular interest is the notion that where people live (the neighborhood) ought to be thought of like the shop-floor in a factory or workplace. In a union organizing drive wages, and benefits are often secondary issues for workers. More often than not it is the conditions of work (e.g. pace of work, treatment by management, workload, and the health of workers) (Aronowitz, 2014).

Similarly, in equating neighborhoods to the workplace, Bishop is also extending the logic of organizing around workplace conditions to the neighborhood. To organize in the neighborhood is to confront the conditions of neighborhoods (e.g. production and distributions of city resources, housing, public health, etc.). Furthermore, organizing in such a way also means confronting the racialized nature of class social organization in the city. Bishop partially touches on this when he refers to the lack of union membership among working-class Black and Latinos in the city. The city has a long history of unions, specifically craft unions like the carpenters, electricians, etc. of barring Black and Latino working-class people from being in the union.

Re-appropriating Institutional Space

The second aspects of the community control frame are the re-appropriation of institutional space. This artifact mediated mobilizing activity organizing. As a directive artifact it served to orient the kinds of campaigns to efforts to gain control of institutional
space. Institutional space refers to land. It also referred to public schools as both physical spaces and as social organizations that serve specific neighborhoods. Bishop during an OPP meeting stated that “community control had to be tied to the land”. Similarly, Parsons at the same meeting discussed the significance of tying community control to the land:

In the land struggle one of the issues that comes up is this idea that land is a resource for producing goods that can be distributed. That’s part of what we need to do. But the deeper part of what we need to do is recognize the land as a means of bringing people together as direct producers and in the process, we can develop democratic practices and community stewardship (FN 10-2016).

Based on Parson’s statement land is a means for producing not only goods (e.g. food, housing, etc.); land is kind of mediating tool for the production of social practices or social relations necessary for building solidarity between people and working-class leadership.

Another example of re-appropriation of institutional space was OPP organizers focus on schools as material spaces that mediated community relations and housed the processes through which “working-class Black and Brown people are produced” (Bishop, INF, 4-2016). At an OPP community control meeting, one organizer from OPP referred to schools as “crawl spaces for liberation” (Malcolm, FN, 10-2016). After the meeting I asked what he meant by his comment. He explained that he viewed schools as institutional spaces that contained within them small spaces or opportunities for
providing emancipatory education, “even though they were designed to produce people to be exploited” (INF, Malcolm, 10-2016). Similarly, Bishop understood schools as “sites of reproduction for capital” (INF, Bishop, 11-2016).

Part of Bishop’s and Malcolm’s views on schools is that generally they are site of societal reproduction. This is a point made by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990). However, Bishop and Malcolm also articulate a broader view of schools as sites of production in general. In my view, their focus on schools indicates a shared view that since schools are sites of production in general, it is possible to seize control of that particular production process and reorganize for the production of emancipatory subjects. At the heart of the use of schools as site of working-class struggle, was the notion that through gaining power over the processes educational production (e.g. curriculum, classroom environments, funding for schools, and programming), organizers were vying for control of the developmental processes of working-class Black and Brown youth. More specifically, the rationale was to transform those processes such that working-class Black and Brown youth were prepared to govern society.

Schools are also physical places. Their materiality provides the basic perceived space (Lefebvre, 1994) in which social relations, such as race, class, and gender are embedded. Historically, schools in the city have been neighborhoods schools. As such they serve as an artifact of centralization, as they facilitate the concentration of neighborhood students into one physical place. Bishop and other OPP organizers like Clarkson also view schools as strategic sites of organizing parents, teachers, and students for not only school needs, but for the community needs. Interestingly, enough public schools were modelled after industrial factories, and neighborhood schools were intended
for the children of industrial working-class people. It could be argued that, in a sense, that
the logic of industrial working-class organizing has taken a new form. In any case, the
physical space of schools was considered a key site of organizing because its geographic
role within working-class neighborhoods. OPP organizers also considered school
buildings as a target of transformation. By organizing students, parents, teachers, and
principals around a community control agenda, the school could be turned into a center of
broader neighborhood organizing (Fernando, INF, 1-2017). In the sum, the idea was to
transform neighborhood public schools into movement institutions that could serve as
political mobilizing structure.

**Self-determination**

The third aspect of the community control framework is the notion of self-
determination. Self-determination is a core mediation of leadership development activity.
Among OPP organizers the concept is directly tied to leadership and processes of
leadership development. I understood self-determination to mean a specific group of
people is leading or in charge of their own collective development. OPP’s concept of
self-determination was specifically in reference to the collective leadership of Black and
Brown working-class people (Bishop, INF, 4-2017; FN Community Control Meeting, 10-
2016). This meant squarely confronting the contradiction of middle class white leadership
in Black and Brown working-class communities.

Vera an organizer in TROP and also a OPP organizer said this about overcoming
the contradiction of outside of leadership in working-class Black and Brown
communities: “Our work is about building that space for the development of organic
working-class leadership. To do it we have to be transformed as well. But to be transformed we have to consciously take it up as our priority. We have to know how to build ourselves so that we can build leaders” (INF. 3-2017). In Vera’s short statement, she acknowledges that there is an imbalance in which those who are leading movement work are not from the base. To overcome this contradiction, she essentially proposes the need to work through the contradiction by changing the orientation of the existing outside leadership so that they become focused on “organizing themselves out” of their leadership (i.e. developing organic working-class leaders).

This issue of moving from a leadership of outsiders to a leadership rooted in the base of working-class Black and Brown communities came up in Parson’s and Lin’s land organizing. To talk about using land, even vacant or abandoned land, entails understanding zoning classifications, chasing down previous legal owners, paying back taxes etc. Then after securing the land, community members via a formal organizational entity need to figure out how to raise funds to pay for remediation of the soil in order to make the land arable. One of the obvious challenges embedded in these processes is, the unavailability sufficient numbers of working-class people with the skills and knowledge to carry out these tasks. Lin, another organizer doing land-based organizing, notes that “while it is extremely difficult to balance between the infrastructural aspects of the work and the soul of the work, it is not impossible…. we realize that long-term our people need to be able to lead on the infrastructural front, but for now we need to stabilize things and then we need dedicate our energy to teaching” (INF 3-2017).

I brought up the conversation I had with Lin in a phone conversation with Parsons. She concurred with Lin’s remarks. She then told me about her plans to develop a
leadership development process for members of organization’s board, and the staff. The process was embedded in the restructuring process she initiated. She intentionally developed a series of committees and subcommittees, for different board members to join. Each committee was tasked with developing a specific set of knowledge dealing with vital organizational functions. This had a dual purpose. One purpose was to help build the capacities of board members and staff to take up important aspects of the work. The second, was that through this process of capacity-building board members would “develop a deeper sense of ownership and commitment to the work of the organization” (Parsons, INF, 5-2017). In terms of developing community members’ capacities to run the organization, Parson noted that in developing the leadership of the board and staff to take care of these organizational needs was important because “it would create the necessary space and capacity to focus directly on training members” (Parsons, Strategy Meeting FN, 7-2017).

In essence what Parsons did was focus on developing collective capacity by dedicating existing resources towards training up staff and board members. Parsons approach to leadership development centered on teaching the board and staff to perform key aspects of what she did as organizing director. This differed from simply teaching people to do some of the nuts and bolts of organizing work (e.g. knocking on doors, doing 1-on-1 meetings, etc.). She was teaching people to lead and run the organization. This was her way beginning the process of, as Vera put it “organizing her way out of her position” (Vera INT. 1, p. 8-9). This is an implicit recognition of hierarchy of leadership by virtue of uneven knowledge, skill, and responsibility. The notion of “organizing” oneself “out of” the position of organizer refers to a redistribution of knowledge and
capacity to a broader pool of people; this redistribution decreases the dependence on an individual or smaller group of individuals and thereby creates the means and conditions to have a less hierarchical organization. At the same time the collective undergoes an expansion of leadership and capacity.

**OPP Organizers’ Expansive Learning: The Formation of Rebuilding the Left**

The most dramatic form of learning was the formation of the Grit City branch of Rebuilding the Left (RBL). OPP organizers through many discussions, debates, and frustrations in their organizing came to the conclusion that there was a need to establish a cadre organization. The national RBL had one other branch in the western part of the country. Grit City was its second branch. OPP organizers’ decision to found a Grit City RBL branch came out of their efforts to confront the lack of Black and Brown working-class people within the Left (FN, Bootcamp session, 1). Bishop articulates some of the core critiques and frustrations shared by OPP members that prompted their construction of a local RBL:

The Left is segmented. And folks think it’s ok. But that shit is whack! You know, it’s like you said before, everybody wants to do their own thing. Each group is working on their own thing. And there needs to be a line drawn that says: “this is how we’re moving, and if you are not down to struggle together then you are in the way along with our enemies”. People are afraid to draw that line. They don’t want to exercise that leadership. The reason things are not shifting is because there is a lack of real leadership that says: “we are going to move this way”. All these different groups are doing their own little projects.... we need a leadership
that is not into some sectarian nonsense, but that is clear theoretically, strategically, and in practice. That says: look we cannot win if everyone is doing their own little side projects. You have to be part of this larger thing”. I mean, cause the Right doesn’t need a political party. We need a political party. We need a political party, because the ways we are thinking about liberation are diverse, but at the same time we’re dealing with this huge monolithic force that is oriented towards totalitarianism and destroying human beings (INT.1, 11/2016. P. 12-13).

In this passage Bishop describes the Left (the left activist network) in the city to be fragmented. The Left in Grit City is a loose network of Leftists groups and individuals who know each other, and share space with each other, but it is not organized into a coherent political force. As Bishop notes, the Left activist network is organized around a plurality of different projects, and campaigns that are not coordinated with each other. There is no “leadership” of the Left as he puts it. Here, he uses leadership to refer to an organization that provides coherent plans and direction for doing movement work in a way that brings about social liberation (i.e. social revolution). These sentiments are expressed by Lin another organizer from the OPP:

We’re all doing important work. It’s all necessary work. But the way we do things as a Left is very fragmented and out of sync with each other. We work in silos. Each organization does their own thing. And we win important things. But at the same time we just don’t have the ability to make big change. I think there has to be a way for us to work together. To start figuring out the ways the work we do in our


organizations can reinforce the bigger picture. That’s why I think the RBL is really important. I think it has the potential to help use develop local strategy so that we can align our work for the long term. If we are all doing our work with the other in mind we may be able to do more (INF. 4/2017).

A key feature of RBL that Bishop and Lin mention, is this notion of “aligning” their organizing work and using the cadre organization as an instrument for developing the shared strategy needed to align their work. Lin also notes that aligning of work can generate the ability to do more. I interpreted this as a reference to the issue of capacity that chronically constrains organizing. Lin sees RBL as an instrument for generating greater capacity for different organizing projects, because it increases communications, and resource-sharing. In essence, it generates politically supportive relationships between groups, and individuals. In other words, RBL is meant to foster solidarity.

I consider the formation of RBL a form learning, because from the standpoint of the organizers, this new formation was a tool or instrument that could improve their work. The formation also came out OPP organizers’ efforts to overcome contradictions within their organizing activity. More specifically, the formation of RBL is a form of expansive learning in that it was based on the construction of a new object (Engestrom, 1987). The object of RBL is to develop a unifying transformative strategy for the Left. This entails a range of different activity systems, which are beyond the scope of this study.
TROP & NUG Organizers Confront Learning

Organizers in TROP and NUG also underwent collective learning. TROP and NUG organizers began to confront the contradictions of outside leadership obliquely, because they did not perceive them directly. It was specific negative effects of those contradictions. The most overt effect was on the organizers themselves. Organizers described themselves as feeling “overtaxed” (Amelia, personal communication, 8/19/2016), “stretched” (Linda, personal communication, 4/29/2016), and “burned out” (Jane, personal communication, 7/30/2016). Organizers at different times noted how they felt that if they were to take time away from organizing, their organizations would suffer significantly. TROP burned through seven different staff organizers in a four-year period.

In NUG for organizers did not leave, but they reduced their neighborhood outreach work, and focused on outreach to students on NOCO’s campus. This was because they were more knowledgeable about the existing campus networks, and they could navigate them more efficiently. This contributed to an increase in student members in NUG, but no increase in membership of working-class Afro-American people from the neighborhood, which exacerbated the contradictions of outside leadership. In the following excerpt from my interview with Joy from NUG she highlights the problem:

What we’re realizing is that a lot of the students involved are getting ready to graduate. So, Quinne went to one of them and told him “look you need to get us some folks who can help us out”. That screamed to me that our problem is that we don’t have our own resources. We don’t have our own money. We don’t have our own leaders. We don’t have anything. We’re dependent on these students. Like, I
don’t even know where we got the money to do what we do. I know we got this 
grant from somewhere. But we need our own (p. 7-8).

In the excerpt Joy articulates a frustration towards the lack of neighborhood leadership in NUG. She also connects the lack of neighborhood leadership to dependency on outsiders. She sees this relationship of dependency as problematic because students are temporary and not rooted in the community. She implicitly argues that NUG needs to be led by the working-class Black people from the neighborhood. She also implies that the building of the necessary structures for that to happen should be the focus of the work in NUG. This is connected to the emergence of the self-determination framework discussed previously in this chapter.

In sum, these problems indicated that leadership development processes in TROP and NUG were not producing adequate leadership to sustain their organizing projects. This indicated the need to increase focus on leadership development. In TROP this form of learning took the form of changing the division of labor by creating a leadership and political training committee. The committee designed political curriculum, leadership assessment tools, and systematic training programs to support the development of leaders. In NUG organizers restructured the steering committee and included a training sub-committee that engaged in discussions about the kinds of skills, and training neighborhood members would need, in order to, take up greater leadership within NUG. NUG also initiated a political study group to start thinking through useful political frames for inspiring greater participation.

Although the processual changes among TROP and NUG organizers were not as dramatic as among OPP organizers, they were important pivots and forms of learning.
Organizers began the process of developing more systematic political study processes. They expanded skills training to include strategic planning trainings. An unintended consequence of this was more precise base-building work, and more strategic mobilization activity, as organizers wanted to assure that they were adequately developing leaders who could be organizers. Another unintended consequence was the development of accountability systems within base-building and mobilization activities that went along with more use of task delegation. As organizers invested more in leadership development they also started delegating more critical roles to other members. Because these roles and tasks were viewed to be very important organizers started doing more one-on-ones with members as part of their base-building work as a way to (a) keep members on top of their responsibilities and (b) to see what kind of assistance members needed in order to do their work well.

In addition to the reworking or reconceptualization of the leadership development object, significant collective learning took the form of transformations within the division of labor of activities, and the production of new mediating texts. I borrow the term mediating texts from Smith (1990; 2005) to refer to a particular kind of mediating artifact that serves to coordinate and systematize operational practices within and across activity systems. These texts are designed to create a unified interpretation of the rules and conventions of the activity systems and to provide guidance for the overall community in terms of how to carry out the work of the collective.

These texts also aligned with the base-building rule of organizational transparency and also supported maintaining a participatory environment as the text provided all members with a concrete understanding of what was needed to advance the collective.
This shared understanding allowed organizers to delegate important tasks and to members and to hold them to fulfilling their roles. At the same time, it also allowed members to take on different roles and tasks without the direction of the organizers, because the texts provided guidance. These forms of collective learning are outlined in Table 6.5.

**Table 6.5: Collective Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Changes in Division of Labor</th>
<th>Production of Mediating Texts &amp; Tools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• develops political education curriculum</td>
<td>• Defines key needs and markers of leadership as references to guide leadership development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• develops membership capacity assessment tools</td>
<td>• Production, dissemination, and presentations on the <em>TROP Core Document</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• developed leadership training programs</td>
<td>• Describes the organizing/leadership development philosophy of the organization</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The Leadership Institute</td>
<td>• Centers leadership development as the driving force of organizing</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPP</td>
<td>-Member Outreach &amp; Support Team</td>
<td>- <em>Measures of Leadership</em> document (2016)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Praxis Committee</td>
<td>- <em>Bylaws</em> (2017)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Formation of RBL</td>
<td>- New Members Mentor Program (2017)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Praxis Committee</td>
<td>- Organizational Praxis Program</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Formation of RBL</td>
<td>- Community Control Master frame</td>
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<td>NUG</td>
<td>-Political Study Group</td>
<td>- Strategy skill-building workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Reconstituted Steering Committee</td>
<td>- Stand-alone political education workshops</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Training Sub-committee</td>
<td>- Merging strategy meetings with general/community meetings</td>
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<td>-Merging strategy meetings with general/community meetings</td>
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Chapter 7: Conclusions & Implications

This study is a contribution to burgeoning field of social movement learning, and social movement studies. Within adult education social movement learning is a broad concept that encompasses all forms of knowledge people develop through participating in social movements and being around social movement activity (Hall & Turray, 2006). It also encompasses practices, such as popular education, knowledge production, changes in people’s perspectives on issues, etc. The consensus by scholars in this field is that social movements are sites of emancipatory learning. I am in agreement with this consensus. Nevertheless, there are two critical gaps within the literature. The first, is that scholars have not articulated the different aspects of social movement activity. Rather, the concept of social movement is more or less an empty term that can refer to any kind of collective contentious activity.

The literature scarcely considers how movements are formed, which is to say they do not consider how people organize others to form social movements. The second problem is that the literature is very clear on the fact that participation in social movement activity is the source of movement learning, however, it is less clear about the mechanisms of learning through participation. Rather, this literature assumes that participation necessarily results in social movement learning. However, I argue that although participation is a necessary precondition for different forms of social movement learning to occur, participation does not necessarily result in social movement learning. This study makes its intervention on these two points: (a) there is a need to focus on social movement organizing, and (b) there is a need to understand the specific
mechanisms through which people learn through participation in the activities of social movement organizing. I used two theoretical tools to frame this study. One is Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), provided me with the analytical tools to understand the learning through practice. The other is Marxist theory. In particular, I looked to Marxist theory to inform my understanding of the “organizer” as a specific subject standpoint within social movement activity. Marxism also informed this study in that it guided the focus of the study on organizers involved in organizing projects that centered on organizing working-class people in Grit City.

**CHAT & Learning**

This study supports the notion that learning is fundamentally a social practical process that at all times entails cognitive change along with practical change. Learning entails dialectical (i.e. mediated) processes of internalization of cultural knowledge and externalization of new modes of carrying out goal-oriented actions by individuals and groups. Learning also consists of transformation of the object-motive that orients the activity of a collective of individuals. Put another way learning is an improved practical or operational product created by the subjects of activity systems through their efforts to resolve contradictions within those activities (Kim, 2012; Youn, 2007). Given this concept of learning, I crafted my research questions in order to (1) identify activity systems that constitute social movement organizing (2) identify the contradictions organizers had to grapple with, and (3) identify possible processual improvements (i.e. the learning) that may have occurred as a result of grappling with contradictions.

As discussed in chapter six social movement organizing is a network of activity
systems. Social movements consist of many different activities that include scholarly and academic activism. For example, scholars generate a variety of social theory and critique that provide organizers with politico-intellectual tools to inform their organizing. Some of this material serves as the basis of ideological frameworks within social movements. And other material serves as important analysis of the workings of social institutions, which can inform organizing strategies and tactics. There are also movement activities that center on counter-hegemonic media activism. These consists of a variety of ways in which people provide means of communication, as well as different frame-mediated content that aids in the critique of dominant social structures, as well as projecting the perspectives of social movement protagonists. In my time in the field some of the organizers referred to people engaged in this particular kind of movement work as media support workers (Liberato FN, 2013). Media support workers also include public intellectuals.

Nevertheless, social movement organizing is a distinct activity network within social movements. The object of the network is to develop a social movement organization that can provide leadership for a particular community of people. As social movement studies have long established, social movement organizations are the bedrock of social movements (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). As such, social movement organizing is thus foundational for social movements. The network consists of three interlocking and overlapping activities. One activity is base-building activity. Base-building activity consists of actions directed by specific goals that together make it possible to achieve the object-motive of developing a base of community leaders. In this study community leaders are all people consistently participate in organizational activities in a
cooperative/supportive way. From the perspective of many organizers in the study anyone who was willing to take some step or action to contribute to improving the circumstances of their community and themselves was leading the way, and therefore, was a leader. For organizers, building the base meant establishing unity in action between individuals that wanted to contribute to making change.

The second activity system within the social movement organizing network is leadership development activity. The object of leadership development is to build the leadership capacities of members of the base. Put another way the object of the activity is to improve members’ abilities to take on more of the responsibilities of building and sustaining their organization. The more people who could perform the different tasks needed to achieve the object of activities, the more efficacious the organization in terms of meeting specific goals. Another important point about this activity is that organizers in the study were aware that having a lot of members was important; however, quantity of members does not directly translate into increased collective capacity. People have to have the appropriate skills, knowledge, and commitment to the work in order to participate in needed ways.

The last activity system of the social movement organizing is mobilization. The object of this activity system is to engage the membership in a particular struggle for change. It is in this activity system that specific action frameworks for demands/grievances are constructed into a specific kind of coordinating artifact referred to as a campaign. The campaign as an artifact directs the collective attention and capacity of the organization for a period of time in order to achieve specific political outcomes that the collective had deemed to be necessary and/or politically advantageous. Within
social movement learning and social movement studies literature it is heightened periods
of mobilization that receive the most attention from scholars, because aspects of this
movement activity is made visible by media (Gamson, 1995). Furthermore, it is during
this period of activity that movement protagonists are openly engaged in conflict with the
institutions of the state. This includes not only conflict with various aspects of the
government, but also conflicts with privately owned corporations, whose claim to private
property is a direct product of the state.

**Learning in Social Movement Organizing**

Base-building, leadership development, and mobilization, together constitute a
practical totality that I call social movement organizing. These ongoing systems of
human actions and interactions are similar to an ecosystem in that the product of each
system has vital importance for the development of the other. As such, the learning that
individuals and collectives undergo within one system affects the development of other
systems in different ways. For scholars of social movement learning the particular ways
in which learning within, and across the distinct, but interlocked systems of social
movement organizing occurs would greatly further the development of what Dixon and
Bevington (2005) refer to as “movement-relevant knowledge”. This is the kind of
knowledge that can inform emancipatory social movement praxis. Throughout this study
I found that learning within social movement organizing occurred at the level of
individuals and at the level of the collective.
The Learning of Individuals

Tools within social movement organizing are not only tools in the physical sense. Tools are practical and ideational means of achieving a goal. Central to movement organizing is participation. From the perspective of organizers everything is about getting more people with common interests to participate in the work of social change. In Lave and Wenger’s (1998) theory of situated learning within communities or practice they make an important point about learning as the change in the participation of members within a community of practice. Specifically, they describe the movement of people from the periphery of the community to the core. Similarly, I found that individual level learning in a more general sense had to do with movement from the periphery or surface of movement work to the core or depth of organizing. That is, learning was about become in depth in terms of participating in organizing work. This meant taking on greater leadership roles and responsibilities. In order for individuals to move from the periphery to the core or from the surface to the depths of organizing work, or to take on greater leadership, they had to become skilled in the use of tools needed to perform the labor of organizing.

The first level of tool usage was becoming familiar with different tools. For example, individuals under the guidance of an organizer perform certain tasks or actions using the tool provided by the organizer. One example, is canvassing. In the study the organizer introduced new members to different organizing tools for outreach. When organizers went out to do outreach they brought with them those members of the base who were most interested in actively performing important organizing functions. Organizers acted as mentors for them providing examples of how to perform the work as
well as providing active support as members engage in the particular steps of canvassing. Through this process members developed basic capacity to use canvassing as a tool. Through consistent usage and evaluation of tool usage people developed increased comfort and ease of use. At the highest level of competency is tool mastery. At this level an individual is not only comfortable with using the tool, but has also developed the ability to appropriate the tool for multiple purposes, and use it in different ways. This process of learning occurred with all of the different tools used in movement organizing. The significance of tool learning is not only that the individual is able to contribute more to the collective. The other significance is that as an individual becomes more skilled within the context of a movement organization they also internalize the object of movement organizing and take greater ownership of the work. They move from the periphery towards the core of the work and thus develop as one of their drives the desire for greater leadership responsibilities.

**Collective Learning**

Collective level learning or collective learning occurred when structural elements of an activity system itself changed. When organizers developed new knowledge and developed mastery of different tools they externalized that knowledge in the form of new goals, operations, division of labor, and mediating artifacts. For example, in TROP organizers developed several documents that were used to formally frame stages of leadership development. This referential document created clear benchmarks that organizers could use to inform whether or not they were thoroughly preparing members of the base to assume greater leadership functions. Without this document (artifact), there
were only informal notions of benchmarks that varied from individual-to-individual within the organization. This is illustrated in the following statement from one of the newer organizers in TROP remarked:

Before this document it was hard to hold higher level leaders accountable for making sure members were on the pathway to leading. And when you don’t have this what happens is leadership can stay stagnate. The same people stay control because they have all the knowledge. The rest of us just do what we’re told because we don’t know or we feel like we don’t know (Liberato, FN.).

The organizer’s statement describes the document as a collectively shared tool that can be used by members in the organization to (1) measure whether higher level leaders are living up to their commitment of developing people’s leadership, and (2) it acts as an instrument for members to use to demand improvements to leadership development activity, and thereby indirectly demanding redistribution of power within the organization. The development of the document was the result of collective collaborative processes in which the organizers in TROP got together with other organizational leaders to craft the document. The document was then presented to the broader membership during the general assembly where it was voted on and adopted.

In the example I just provided collective learning was initiated by a group of organizers that had had undergone similar past experiences that resulted in shared learning in the form of a shared perspective on the need for transparency in leadership development processes. However, collective learning can also be initiated by one
individual who, because of their position within the existing division of labor grants them the authority to implement structural changes to activity systems. This was the case with Bishop in his role as lead organizer and director of community organization. His formal position as director meant he had the institutional authority change organizational policies of conduct, establish the vision, mission, and political direction of the organization, as well as the process through which he recruited people to be staff/organizers within the organization.

In a similar case, as described in depth chapter six, Vera in her formal capacity as the head of the base-building committee in TROP was able draw on her past experiences of building and losing an organizing committee, to implement a new set of practices within the committee, which the rest of the committee took up resulting in a new division of labor within the committee. This also suggests that who learns what matters. The learning of those individual with greater authority within the division of labor of an activity system and/or activity network can have greater implications or the collective, because the wield the institutional power to implement changes that affect everyone.

**Leadership Contradictions: Implications for SML & Left Praxis**

Morris and Staggenborg (2002) argue the social movement leaders are essential to the development of social movements. They not only make key strategic decisions; they are also responsible for facilitating processes through which people perceive possibility making social change. Put another way, they facilitate the production of hope. Morris and Staggenborg (2002) recognize the multi-leveled and diverse nature of leadership within social movements. They write that leaders: “are found at different levels, performing
numerous and varied functions” (p. 7). However, they suggest that the concept of leadership be primarily limited to the formal decision-makers, and organizers who play a significant and central role in developing organizing processes. They further state that scholars should not “automatically” consider all active members in a movement organization to “be leaders if we want to retain any analytic meaning for the concept of leadership”. I am sympathetic to this statement, and in particular to the qualification “automatically”.

In this study of learning and social movement organizing I found that social movement leadership consisted of a hierarchy of roles and responsibilities. At the highest level were those organizers who occupied formal positions, which authorized them to make decisions pertaining to the structure of division of labor, organization-wide policies, and establishing the political orientation of the organization. The second or middle-level leadership consisted of those organizers whose formal organizational position was not that of an executive or director of the whole organization, but instead was in charge of directly working with the base membership. These organizers were specifically in charge of leading base-building, leadership development, and mobilization activities.

The division of labor between the organizers/leaders in the first two levels was much more porous and flexible in most cases. The mid-level leaders often engaged in deep collaboration with upper level leadership. The executive level and middle level leadership together constitute what I refer to as the higher leadership functions. The lowest level of leadership consists of those active and core members who not only carried out tasks set before them by the higher leadership, but also engaged substantive on-going
collaboration with higher leadership about how organizing work should be done.

Throughout the course of this study it was common for organizers to speak everyone who was active and performing needed tasks as leaders. They were considered leaders because they were viewed as important advancing the overall organizing work. However, I observed that some of the people who were considered leaders had very little say in how their tasks were operationalized. They were good about attending meetings, participating in canvassing, and taking up other tasks put forward by leadership. They provided leadership with information when asked, but they did not actively participate in strategy work, coordination, and planning of organization work. The fact that there is a hierarchical division of leadership is important because it also means that there is a hierarchical distribution of power to direct the development of a social movement organization.

**Hierarchy, Over-centralization, & Under-development**

One of the interesting things that organizers in this study shared was a dual conception of leader and leadership. Most of the organizers were averse expressing their view of leadership as hierarchical. Hierarchy implies power and power implies inequity. Most of them talked about leadership as a collective, by which they meant shared in an egalitarian manner. As such they viewed leadership as a horizontal structure in which decisions were made with everybody involved. They strove for consensus-based decision-making. However, in practice this was rarely the case, because (1) not all members were as engaged in organizing activities equally, (2) there were real inequities in terms of organizing experience and knowledge, and (3) members experienced different
barriers to participation, such as the structure of their work day, family dynamics, and health issue (biographical availability) (McAdam, 1986). All of these factors shaped the level and mode of participation of different members. Nevertheless, organizers saw all people who gave effort to organizing as people exercising leadership because they were actively pursuing the development of collective power to better their communities.

Organizers thus held an expansive notion of leadership to honor all those who work towards building movement organization. At the same time, the fact remains that there is a hierarchy. I refer to it as a hierarchy of leadership in which all people involved are leaders, but not equally leaders. Leadership authority is differentiated by levels of skill, knowledge, and participatory capacity. Those with more skills, knowledge, and personal participatory capacity are able to take on higher level leadership responsibilities. Higher level leadership responsibilities consist of making strategic decisions, designing the division of labor, developing key artifacts to coordinate organizing activities (e.g. campaigns, codes of conduct, tactical escalation plans, leadership development documents, meetings, etc.).

Because hierarchy of leadership is an unevenness in leadership capacity, and more specifically, an inequity in power, organizers who by virtue of their role perform higher level leadership functions must be particularly conscious of how their practice generates environment favorable for progressive development of leadership of those engaged in lower level leadership. On the other hand, they need to be aware of how their practice may be inadvertently inhibiting leadership development beyond a certain level. When this occurs individuals are limited performing certain functions, which they have developed the skills to perform, but they remain dependent on others to perform the higher level
strategic operations, because they have yet to engage with the objects of organizing from that particular level. I refer to this as underdevelopment. One of the ways in which underdevelopment occurs is through over-centralization of the higher level of leadership roles and responsibilities.

In movement organizing I observed the tendency of those who feel confident or more confident than others in their ability to take on the tasks associated with higher level leadership roles and responsibilities. One of things that can happen and did happen in the study was that the most confident people, often out of dedication to the people they were organizing, took care of the higher level responsibilities. Part of the reason this happened was because the organizers understood that their role was to set things up for members so that they could have a good and positive experience while struggling for change. The problem was that some organizers, because they were more concerned with mobilization, on-going leadership development activity was limited to developing specific skills that they considered to be most appropriate for the campaign (e.g. teaching people to use canvass, organizing conversations, etc.), while strategic conversations, debates and proposals around organizational structure happened at the higher level between organizers. In some cases, these higher level conversations occurred in general meetings as a means of including members. However, those most engaged in those discussions were the people with the skill and experience. Moreover, despite horizontal meeting formats, strategy and tactics still fell to the organizers.
Leadership Composition

Another key finding related to leadership was the issue of class composition. A key principle of Left movement organizing is the notion that the oppressed must lead their struggle for freedom. This concept comes from the Marxist concept of self-emancipation. By self-emancipation, I am referring to a process of external and internal struggles to develop into political subjects capable of advancing the socialist project. As a Marxist, this transformation into revolutionary subjects is the most important kind of social movement learning to consider. Given the findings, social movement learning can only occur through participation in movement activity, the question that must be asked is what kind of activity do people need to participate in order for transformation to occur?

To become a revolutionary subject is to lead in one’s own self-emancipation. From this perspective working-class people need to be engaged in the activities of leadership in order for them to be presented with the opportunity to become revolutionary subjects. Part of the problem has already been addressed in the discussion of hierarchy of leadership. But the other problem is that those who are most engaged in leadership activities, such as directing organizing processes (i.e. the organizers) have not organically emerged out of the working-class and working-class struggle.

Rather, they represent more privileged class and racial groups who through their own sense of urgency and life circumstances have found the drive to take up organizing. This is to be commended. However, the contradiction remains that those organizing in Black and Brown working-class communities are not of the social groups represented in those communities. As such they represent an outside or external leadership in substitution of the working-class base. As a practical-developmental matter, those
organizers that have taken on the core leadership activities of movement organizing, are in fact under-developing the working-class bases with whom they are organizing.

The formation of a predominantly white lead middle-class Left is not random. Rather, historic racialized class relations, along with the dismantling of trade unionism as a social movement project, have left the university as the dominant site of activist formation. The trade union provided key working-class leadership development opportunities for working-class people. The dismantling and self-inflicted evisceration of unions, has meant the loss of such opportunities for newer generations of working-class people. On the other hand, the university provides advanced training in key communication skills (writing, reading, speaking, technology, etc.) (Morris, 2000; Morris & Staggenborg, 2002).

Universities serve as key facilitators of the development of social activists. These processes typically occur through campus conflicts and through programs (classes and trips) that politicize students (Chovanec, 2009). Universities have a white middle class bias (Merolla & Jackson, 2014; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell. 1999). Consequently, those who are most likely to have undergone political conscientization through campus activism, and through sustained and systematic political study (e.g. courses in history, sociology, political science, woman’s studies, etc.) are likely to hail from middle class backgrounds (Bourdieu, 1977; Sullivan, 2001). I am not suggesting that (a) working-class people should attend the university in order to develop the capacity to lead their struggle.

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8 Bourdieu (1977) argues that cultural capital is heavily determined by social class membership. He argues that university is primarily a site of development for middle class (petite bourgeois) families. Sullivan (2001) through empirical quantitative studies supports Bourdieu’s claim. Sullivan finds that parental cultural capital has a strong effect on the level of educational attainment. The study also finds that social class strongly determined educational attainment and cultural capital. Furthermore, middle class families possess the highest levels of cultural capital and levels of educational attainment.
Nor am I suggesting that middle class activists and organizers should refrain from taking up key tasks in movement organizing. First, the current social organization of society makes it impractical and unlikely for the university to be the primary site of political development for working-class people in general. In fact, struggle for quality elementary and secondary education is a persistent need for working-class people. The ability to attend university and other institutions of higher education remains an elusive, albeit sought after dream for many working-class people. Second, the notion that middle class activists and organizers should ignore the fruits of the privilege is simply an externalization of class and racial guilt. The contradiction of outside leadership of working-class struggle is not resolved by this kind of restraint of assistance. I point of this contradiction, because it is necessary to understand the nature of it, in order to chart a new course of action to overcome it. I propose the concept of class suicide as a means to consider how activists and organizers might begin the process of unraveling this contradiction.

**Class Suicide: Centering a Pedagogy of the Working-class**

I extend the concept of “class suicide” to help grapple with this contradiction. “Class suicide” is an expression used by Amilcar Cabral (1979) to describe the role of middle class political activists during the anti-colonial and socialist liberation struggles in Guinea Bissau. The concept emerged out of Cabral’s concern about the kind of leadership that middle class activists exercised throughout the struggle. From his perspective the working-class is the organic/authentic revolutionary protagonists for socialist liberation. However, he also recognizes the uneven leadership development among movement
participants. This unevenness is expressed in the formation of a middle class that has been trained to maneuver the institutional systems of society, and who by virtue of their access to these systems may become politically aware quicker than the working-class masses. Nevertheless, the crux of the problem is that from Cabral’s perspective is from mine and other Marxists, the working-class is the organic (read: authentic) revolutionary subject of the human liberation movement. Nevertheless, Cabral insists that those who are from without the working-class have a crucial role in the development of the movement. For Cabral, the role of the middle class is to use its relative privilege to prepare the way for the emergence of the revolutionary working-class subject. This entails the assumption of directive leadership in certain aspects of social struggle, where there is inadequate working-class leadership. For example, middle class activists and organizers tend to be better positioned within resource rich-networks from which they can recruit support for organizing projects. Such support can consist of money, logistical support, technological and media support, meeting space, etc.). In some cases, they may take on key roles as the facilitators of leadership development, base-building, and mobilization activities. Class suicide occurs when middle class activists and organizers engage in these activities with the intention of building the leadership of working-class members. Other hand, is done through “class suicide” which he describes as the process through which the politically conscious (Left) middle class activists and organizers, become “completely identified with the deepest aspirations of the people” they are organizing. The process of identifying with the aspirations of a people is not synonymous with displacing the people. Rather, it means having a deep understanding of the specific needs of the group of people being organized. It also means orienting organizing work to
those needs.

While the notion of class suicide cannot possibly be identical to that of Cabral’s context, in essence it means that those of the more privileged groups must work to undermine that which makes them the privileged group within the context of political struggle. I extend the concept of class suicide in two ways. First, in my view class suicide occurs when a privileged social groups directs their knowledge and skill to political projects that have the potential of dismantling systems of domination upon which their privilege rests.

The second aspect of class suicide requires activists and organizers to direct their knowledge, skill, and capacities to the development of working-class people’s ability to take up directive leadership within movements. The latter aspect of class suicide requires activists and organizers to learn how to be movement pedagogues. I use the term pedagogue to refer to someone whose focus is the development of processes or systems that promote specific kinds of learning. In this sense, a movement pedagogue is an individual who makes their primary concern the development of organic working-class political leadership.

De Smet (2015) refers to this kind of leadership from outsiders as proleptic assistance. In this context, proleptic assistance refers to the practice of identifying contradictions, explicating the historical roots of contradictions, anticipating the problems that may emerge as a result of the contradictions, and developing processes to resolve

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9 I use the expression directive leadership to refer to the kind of participation in movement work in which a person or group takes up the labor of proposing, constructing, and making decisions about how the work should be carried out. Directive leadership includes the work of developing or at least facilitating the framework used by a group. It includes developing strategy, tactics, and coordinating meetings and other aspects of the work.
those contradictions (De Smet, 2015). In this case, there is a recognition that members of working-class Black and Brown communities have been systematically denied key tools, knowledge, and resources that would permit them to develop coherent directive political leadership. Given this, an essential role of activists and organizers who originate from outside of Black and Brown working-class communities is to provide the kinds reflexively provide the kinds of assistance needed for these communities, while always centering the object of developing systematic pedagogical processes to develop organic working-class leadership.

This pedagogical orientation was most evident with the organizers that have taken on a community control framework have begun to address this problem head on. Specifically, it is their focus on developing rigorous systems of leadership development activity systems as a means of training working-class Black and Brown people to assume political leadership and develop the capacity to govern, that is most hopeful. In taking up the community control framework, OPP organizers not only committed to developing rigorous leadership development activities, they also recognized the need to work through their contradictions by providing the kind of direction needed in the short term, while building leadership development structures for the long term. This orientation was also evident with Vera who organized with TROP and later went on to be part of OPP and RBL. This pedagogical orientation was encapsulated in Vera’s notion of ‘organizing one’s self out of the organizer position”. This simple expression embodies an entire organizing philosophy that centers the development of the working-class base’ ability to not only contribute their labor to a campaign or project, but to assume the labor of proposing, constructing, and directing a campaign or project.
Connecting to Social Movement Theory

This study contributes to, unfortunately, two fields of literature: social movement learning and social movement theory. In my view this is unfortunate because the focus on learning, pedagogical relations, and knowledge at the heart of social movement learning literature, is vital to understanding how people make history through social struggle; and the theoretical debates pertaining to the relationship between strategy, social conditions, organization, and leadership ought to be of concern to scholars who seek to understand emancipatory learning practice within social movements. Nevertheless, both fields have developed separately, which has resulted in theoretical insufficiencies in both. It is in this epistemic gap that this study fits. In particular, this study contributes to social movement learning by exploring a particular linkage of social movement activities that I argue is foundational to the development of social movements, and by extension social change. These are the activities that constitute social movement organizing. At the heart of these dialectically internally linked activities are organizers.

In focusing on the social movement learning of organizers through social movement organizing activities, the study also contributes to the study of social movement leadership within the broader field of social movement theory, because movement organizers represent particular level and form of movement leadership (Morris & Staggenborg, 2002). This contention was supported in the findings. In the next section I illustrate how this study contributes to the development of Marxist movement theory. Specifically, I show I how the leadership of organizers play an important role in the transition from different modes of social struggle.
Contributions to a Marxist Theory of Struggle

Marxism takes as its central assumption that the world as we know it is product of class struggles. Class struggle in Marxism is not limited to the struggles between the working-class and capital. Class struggle also occurs within social classes among different social groups which hold relative dominance within their respective class categories (Barker, 2014). Social change is the product of struggles in which distinct projects among social groups within, and across social classes are constructed (Barker, 2014; Eyerman & Jamison, 1992). Such a perspective makes two apparently contradictory claims. The first is that social movements are essential processes of social change. Second, powerful and coherent social movements are historic achievements.

In order to concretely understand social movements, it is important to consider a social movement as a particular form of social struggle. This allows recognition of the continuity between different forms of social action, while also recognizing the distinctions between different modes of collective struggle (Liberato, 2017). The importance of this is that in recognizing the continuity the relationship between the particular activities of one mode and moment of struggle can provide insights into the historical development of the other. For example, a neighborhood conflict can become a broad-based campaign, and campaigns may in fact congeal into a much broader challenge against social structures. In other words, by making sure we can see the historical continuity between different modes of struggle the following question is enshrined in the conceptual framework: how does one mode of struggle become another? And because we are dealing with human beings we are simultaneously asking how do people move from the most basic forms of individual daily resistance to the most dramatic forms of social
struggle, which from this perspective is the social movement? How do people move from learning to acquiescence to learning to revolt? These questions are important questions for guiding the development of dialectical theory that can guide Left political praxis.

The Everyday/Local Rationality & Social Struggle

This perspective sees social movements and social struggle more broadly as having continuity with the essence of people’s daily activity or what Flacks (1988) refers to as life making activity. Human activity is in essence the use of human agency to meet human needs. As Nilsen and Cox (2013) note these needs are always mediated by concrete circumstances, within a particular geographic place, and in relation to particular problems that emerge within those contexts. Together, these aspects make up what Lefebvre (1991) refers to as “the everyday”. Social struggle begins with the defense of what people treasure in their everyday lives. And what they treasure is always situated in their particular class standpoint, which itself is shot through and mediated by race and gender make up the specific standpoints from which the everyday is lived (Bannerji, 1995; Liberato, 2017; Sawchuk, 2006).

Militant Particularism

Every mode of collective struggle is organized around a particular kind of political object. In the case of militant particularism, the kind of political object orienting struggle is often an immediate material condition (e.g. trash on the streets, poor quality drinking water, homelessness, vacant lots, etc.). Other objects of organization have to do with the specific actions or activities undertaken by other groups (e.g. plant closures, new
city policies, zoning changes, etc.). In the case of this study, it was NOCO’s plan to build a stadium and seize more land in a historic working-class Afro-American neighborhood. This neighborhood had been undergoing thorough gentrification, and developer land seizures for decades. Many of the residents had more or less acquiesced to what one organizer referred to as “the loss of their homes and community” (Joy, Formal, p. 3).

However, as NUG organizer Amelia explained: “the idea that North Corporate was going to build a new football stadium in the middle of North Central was just too much! The community saw it as a blatant message that they were irrelevant” (Amelia, Formal, p. 5). Another organizer, Ms. Quinnie, stated that she had held several meetings with other long-time residents of the neighborhood, and they felt that “the stadium was a disgrace”, because it meant that the university would take people’s homes, and “overrun the neighborhood with people that saw the community as nothing more than a playground” (Quinnie, INF, 1). Amelia further described how she understood the emergence of the community fight back against the stadium:

I think people just felt like this is the last straw. North Corporate has been building things for a long time and people have been fighting for a long time. But I think we’re in a special moment. This is just such a big attack on the community. It’s right next to the school. It’s right next to the community rec center. The city has already closed neighborhood high schools. They closed Wellington High and North Corporate bought it and knocked down the building for their center. They’re [the residents] like: “I didn’t want any of this to happen but it did”. So, I think it’s partially the moment we’re in and that it’s a stadium. People just won’t stand for
them building a fuckin’ stadium…. We called for the meeting, we went door to door and did a little flyering. We didn’t do as much work as we usually do for turnout. And then like the day of the meeting 100 people showed up (Amelia, Formal, p. 10).

The point here is that despite having suffered many oppressive changes in the neighborhood, members of this historic Afro-American working-class community began to mobilize against the stadium, which they saw as further encroachment on what they valued.

Embedded in this example of militant particularism is also the local rationality rooted people’s everyday needs. The need for schools, the need to preserve a day care. As Joyce another member of NUG noted:

…. We have to worry about them building a stadium right there next to the community rec center, and the daycare. What’s going to happen to those places and the people who rely on them? It’s not just about congestion and parking. It’s about what having more students walking through our neighborhood is going to mean for the people who live here. They (the students) already leave beer bottles, and garbage all over the sidewalk. They urinate on the streets. A stadium means more of that. And if we want to talk about the parking issue. I have a neighbor with four young children. On days when they university has an event she has to park three or four blocks away while she carries grocery and manages four young kids. Add a stadium and how much worse will it be for her? (p. 13).
In this excerpt from Joyce she identifies the everyday concerns that motivated people to organize and engage militant particularism. She does not talk about grandiose social transformative change. She does not reference political power or class struggle. Rather, it is about neighborhood cleanliness, noise, parking, and the safety of a neighbor who has young children that will have walk far with groceries and kids. At the same time, it is not too far of stretch of the imagination to see how this form of militant particularism could develop into a broader campaign struggle over city-wide and even state-wide policies about land use and development. Furthermore, the issue of public of school closure, the educational needs of working-class young people, and spaces for Black working class recreation are also connected to this fight against the stadium.

‘Translation’ from Militant Particularism to Broad-based Campaign

The question of organizational form and leadership is central to the translation or the shift from this form of militant particularists modes of struggle to more coordinated broad-based modes of struggle. Militant particularist struggles, such as the fight mounted by NUG, tend to emerge out of a combination of extant disparate organizations and loose local networks. Consequently, internal organizational structures tend to be informal and established on an ad hoc basis. This mode of organizing privileges mobilization activity over base-building and leadership development activities. Leadership, thus, falls to the most skilled, knowledgeable, and available individuals. In the case of NUG, those individuals tended to be the student-activists and lead organizers.
Although, the student-activists and lead organizers in NUG have, for the most part, made conscious efforts to take their lead from neighborhood residents, the fact remains that the key strategic knowledge, the resources, the activists’ connections, and the bulk of labor power for organizing against the stadium came from the student-activists and the lead organizers. This led to the favoring of an organizing framework and a narrative that centered on the stadium as an example of the university’s abuse of its power. The target base is set by the boundaries of this framework/narrative\(^{10}\). This narrative centered three groups: the university leadership, members of the university (students, workers, and faculty), and homeowners in the immediate vicinity of the proposed stadium.

Translation from militant particularism to a broad-base campaign mode of struggle requires the construction of a new organizing framework (master mediating artifact) This framework has to be tied to the organic needs of the working-class residents of North Grit neighborhoods. The issue of stopping the stadium, need not be dismissed. However, organizers/leaders in NUG would need to develop a new framework, which re-contextualizes the anti-stadium as part of a strategy for change within the city. As mentioned in chapter 6, Joy had already begun to articulate a community self-determination framework, which connects to a broader framework of community control. Shifting the framework shifts the organizing base from the university to the neighborhoods.

\(^{10}\) The organizing framework that organizers use is a specific kind of tool that trains the thinking of organizers and activists to perceive specific kinds of opportunities for building capacity and mobilizing people. Organizing frameworks can also obfuscate different kinds of opportunities for building and mobilizing people.
It privileges everyday issues of the working-class residents in North Grit more broadly, which makes it possible to build a broader base to confront the university. This would entail the expansion of base-building activity to other North Grit neighborhoods, as well as a deepening of such activity within the neighborhood nearest to the proposed stadium site. Such a pivot would require skilled leadership that could begin to reorient the struggle and convince people to move beyond their particular limit-situation (Freire, 2010). The role of leadership would be to facilitate the kind of learning needed for the base to see their needs as being tied up in translocal ruling institutional systems (Smith, 2005) that could only be defeated through broader struggles.

Furthermore, it would require a leadership that had the ability to connect with other leaders to generate resources to develop greater organizational stability. One of the challenges of community-based militant particularisms like NUG is that those who have the particular skills and capacity to provide strategic leadership are in short order, which means the capacity for performing many of the vital tasks of social movement organizing fall on the shoulders of the few leading to emotional and physical exhaustion or the organizers. Furthermore, lack of leadership capacity pushes the few organizers available to focus energy on mobilization activity to stop the eminent threat. An unfortunate consequence of this is that the rigorous performance of the tasks needed to achieve leadership development and base-building remain underdeveloped, and unsystematically treated.

**Broad-based Campaign Struggles**

Nilsen and Cox (2013) articulate a second more complex level of social struggle,
which they refer to as campaigns. I refer to this level of struggle as broad-based campaigns in order to avoid confusion, since many forms of militant particularisms can be considered to be oriented by campaigns. Broad-based struggles are oriented by campaign artifacts that unite people across distinct geographic boundaries, specifically, because they target various levels of social institutional processes that affect a broad array of people. In this study TROP was an example of an organization that had established itself for the purpose of transcending militant particularist struggles. Zaria, a lead organizer in TROP, explained how she along with others who founded the organization did so, out of previous experiences of victory and losses from “fragmentary localized struggles”.

We had done a lot of good work over the years. We won important local level battles, but in the end we were all fighting our own fight in our different neighborhoods. And as soon as we won something we lost something. So, we got together and started talking about a new project that would allow us to work across the differences of our bases and move beyond hyper localized struggles. To do that we had to come up with a different kind of organization that could work on strategic campaigns that unite people across the city, and across the state (Zaria, Informal, 9/2013).

In the quote from Zaria she describes how through victories and losses from militant particularist forms of struggle she and other movement activists realized or learned that they needed to develop a new way of organizing that transcended their local contexts.
More transformative victories require broader popular bases, which require different types of campaigns to mediate those organizing processes. She also notes that the organizational structure needed to be different from the structures used for militant particularisms. One of the most significant observations I made about the organizational structural differences between NUG and TROP was the division of labor. Whereas, NUG had emerged as an emergency response to news of the new stadium, TROP was carefully constructed to be an offensive broad-based campaign organization. The leadership of TROP consisted of more experienced organizers who had been part of different militant particularist struggles, as well as nonprofit organizations, which provided them with substantial knowledge, which they used to develop the foundation of the organization.

Our experiences had taught us that leadership development had to be a much more intentional process. It had to be the core thing we did, because without it we wouldn’t have the capacity to do the work that we needed to do. So, from the beginning it was important to make sure that we had clarity around how base-building and leadership development supported each other. That’s why we mapped out how we expected them to work.

The preceding excerpt illustrates the level of intentionality and strategic consideration that went into establishing TROP. This level of leadership skill and knowledge was not present in NUG. The point of departure for NUG members was one of immediate defense, whereas, TROP’s was strategic offense. Another difference was that NUG’s leadership did not have the same level of prior experience with organizing victories and
losses from which to draw on. TROP’s leadership also had knowledge and experience developing nonprofit organizations, which prepared them for organizational planning and governance in ways that NUG organizers were not. This translated into TROP’s ability to cobble together financial resources from broader movement connections that had been made by veteran movement organizers, as well as from sympathetic foundations. NUG organizers did not have strong relationships with many movement groups and individuals who could provide support like TROP organizers did. However, through the NUG’s struggle they did begin to develop some relationships, but those relationships were new and not particularly strong.

**The Social Movement Project**

Social movements projects are specific forms of social struggle that have to be constructed, not only in conceptual terms, but also in organizational/practical terms. Movements exist when there are distinct projects for some kind of social change. A social movement project serves as the intellectual, politico-strategic, and practical framework by which other forms of social struggle are cohered. In social movements militant particularisms, campaigns, and even daily life (local rationality) of social groups connected to the movement project reflect the core logic of the project, and serve to advance the project by transforming the socio-political conditions into more fertile grounds for movement protagonists to bring about the desired change.

**Social Movement Centers**

Social movements exist as a multi-organizational fields. That is, it consists of
different organizations, which together constitute an ecosystem of struggle. The movement ecosystem consists of a range of different organizations including community organizations, churches, local associations, and social movement organizations. Social movement organizations are vital to the formation of a social movement project, but they alone do not make movements. Rather, movement organizations contribute to the building of local institutions and community-based organizations. And local institutions and community-based organizations contribute to development of the social movement organization. Movement organizations also establish relationships between other local organizations, facilitate dialogical spaces to develop political leadership among those organizations. Movement organizations also work to convince other organizations to mobilize.

There are also different kinds of social movement organizations that play distinct roles. There are mass-based organizations which include some trade unions, worker centers, and grassroots community organizations, etc. There are movement support organizations, or what Morris (1984) refers to as “movement halfway houses”. These include organizations that do grassroots media work, and organizations that specifically train people in organizing skills and techniques. And there are cadre organizations, which are organizations of organizers and activists (Piven & Cloward, 1988). The networking of local cadre organizations, activist support organizations with local institutions and community-based organizations constitutes a politicized social base. Morris (1984) refers to such as a base or social organization, as a local movement center. Morris describes local movement centers in the following excerpt:

A local movement center is a social organization within the community of a
subordinate group, which mobilizes, organizes, and coordinates collective action aimed at attaining the common ends of that subordinate group. A movement center exists in a subordinate community when that community has developed an interrelated set of protest leaders, organizations, and followers who collectively define the common ends of the group, devise necessary tactics and strategies along with training for their implementation, and engage in actions designed to attain the goals of the group (p. 40).

I wish to make Morris’ concept of local movement center more specific. A movement center should not be conflated with an activist network or with the visibility of public expressions of mobilization. Rather, I use the term in a more restrictive way to refer to the development of strategies, organizations, leaders, community support, etc. around a particular local transformative project. One historic example, is the Paris Commune. A second, currently evolving example is the Jackson Plan. Both of these examples, are specific to the aims of a broader movement, but the point is that Paris in 1871 and Jackson, M.S. currently, are movement centers because they are localized manifestation of a broader social movement project.

It extends beyond any activists and takes root in the everyday lives the people a movement claims to represent. This network is visible and felt within the actual material space/geography. In other words, a movement is only real when it takes up material space. Once a local movement center becomes fully mobilized around a particular local transformative project (e.g. The Jackson-Cush Plan, or The Paris Commune, etc.) Such projects, serve as the wellspring of national level movement projects. Each of them
contribute to social movements the way tributaries feed into large bodies of water.

**Cadre Formations**

The development of a healthy movement ecosystems is not an act of magic. It is the product of work and learning. In this study the formation of Rebuild the Left (RBL) represents an example of expansive social movement learning. Organizers, through their own frustrations and engagement with contradictions in their work, directed their attention and their efforts to the construction of a cadre organization that may in the future provide the necessary center to reorganize the Left movement ecosystem, so that a social movement project can be constructed.

Such an organization will undoubtedly be confronted with similar racialized and class contradictions, because cadre formations seek those who are already Leftists engaged in mass-based activism. In doing so, cadre formations are likely to attract those who have similar racial, cultural and class backgrounds not common to working-class masses. The obvious conflict is the absence of the working-class in Left political spaces. Although there are organizers, especially those in OPP, that have made working-class leadership development their priority, they are faced with certain organizational limitations established by the broader non-profit industrial complex (NPIC).

Harris (2011) specifically studied these limitations on the kinds of political activities in which nonprofits can engage. In his efforts to develop revolutionary subjects through a social justice youth program he found that while the members developed politically, they were unable to make the next step in their political development, because nonprofits could not engage in more radical political activity. This then places the charge
on cadre formations to not only develop strategy for external political struggle, but to develop pedagogical strategy for developing working-class leadership from the ground up.

If cadre formations are not able to assist in developing pedagogical strategy for working-class Left political development, then they run the risk of becoming middle class spaces. The danger of becoming middle class spaces is that on one hand, they inhibit the development of working-class Left political subjects that can provide left leadership for mass working-class organizations. On the other hand, these activists and organizers may become detached from working-class communities. The absence of working-class Left leaders within mass working-class organizations results in a lack of organic connection between cadre formations and working-class organizations, and a collapse of the Left project (De Smet, 2015).

**Rethinking Social Movement Learning**

Lastly, this study contributes to social movement learning by suggesting a reconceptualization of social movement learning. Within the existing literature on social movement learning the concept has been used as a catch-all for any sort of new knowledge, perspective change, and participation in social movements. Drawing on the findings from this study I suggest a two-level conceptualization of social movement learning. At the individual level social movement learning consists of changes in the praxis (thought and action) of individuals that improve their capacity to take on greater leadership responsibilities.

At the collective or organizational level social movement learning refers to
changes in the internal structure of social movement organizing activities. These changes can be considered forms of social movement learning when they enhance a groups’ ability to achieve the objects of their activities. From the perspective of organizers this means improved base-building operations, improved leadership development processes, and increased capacity to mobilize for political change. The relationship between individual level social movement learning and collective social movement learning is a dialectical one in which the development of individual capacities is necessary in order to improve collective capacity. At the same time, the infrastructure of social movement organizing activity determines the types of opportunities for different individuals to learn.

**Implications for SML & Adult Education**

This study found that not all participation leads to learning, and that learning should not be assumed to be a given solely because people are engaged in some form of work. Furthermore, this study also supports Baptiste, Nyanungo, & Youn’s (2009), Gnanadass and Baptiste’s (2011) perspective that learning is not an activity or practice in itself. Rather, learning is a particular kind of outcome that may occur or be produced as a result of contending with contradictions within human activity. The findings of this study suggest that learning can and may occur only through modes of participation in which the individuals and groups are forced to contend with the contradictions embedded within the activity systems in which they are involved.

The study challenges the existing literature on social movement learning in that it not only narrows the view of learning to processual products of activity that improve the operations of activity (Baptiste, Nyanungo & Youn, 2009; Gnanadass & Baptiste, 2011;
Youn, 2007), it also illustrates that in order to have a concrete understanding of activity and participation we need to recognize that every activity is organized by a collective of people and consists of historically developed tools, artifacts, rules, and division of labor, which gives the activity its real existence. As such, activity is not simply a placeholder term to convey a vague sense of human interactions and expression of agency. Rather, it is organized, coordinated, and itself the product of collective historic human development.

This has important implications for scholars of social movement learning. The first is that in order to develop a deeper understanding of what people learn as a result of their involvement in social struggle, we need to know the mechanisms through which they learn what is that they learn. To know the mechanisms through which people learn in struggle, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the different activities that constitute the different modes of social struggle that people are participating in with others. Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is useful for not only conceptualizing activity as a concrete social phenomenon, but it also provides the theoretical tools to understanding the link between human action and the production consciousness, which is itself a form of learning (Allman, 2001; Sawchuk, 2006).

For adult educators, in particular those aligned with critical and radical adult education, this is important. From this perspective, emancipatory learning must come from emancipatory activity. Second, the emancipatory ethic of radical adult education requires educators to intervene in the hegemonic everyday ways of thinking and doing in order to offer assistance to oppressed social groups so that they might not only interpret their circumstances, but also learn to struggle against oppressive conditions and the
sources of those oppressive conditions (Foley, 1999). This study further suggests that social movement organizing activities are potentially rich sites in which participants may develop skills, knowledge, and relationships with other people in struggle, which can improve their ability to participate in emancipatory activities. Put another way, movement organizing is rich in potential for developing emancipatory consciousness.

A consensus among radical adult educators is that the role of adult educators is to facilitate emancipatory pedagogical praxis within social struggles (Allman, 2001; Foley, 1999; Freire, 2010; Gramsci, 2010; Holford, 1995; Holst, 2004; James, 1989; Sawchuk 2011). To develop a deeper and more useful analysis may also be achieved as a result of adult educators learning through their struggle alongside the people they seek to support. To borrow from Marx’s (2010) *Theses on Feuerbach*, (1978), I am suggesting that “the educator must be educated”. (p. 144). Many of the scholars of social movement learning, and social movements, more broadly have been activists and participants in movements in varying degrees (Hall & Turray, 2006; Haluza-DeLay, 2006; Harris, 2011; Holst, 2004; Brookfield & Holst, 2010; Walter, 2007 to name a few). I am suggesting that those who have been connected to movements continue to deepen their participation in movement organizing activities (e.g. leadership development work, mobilization work, and base-building work) to better assist in developing emancipatory pedagogical tools. Given the implications of this study, the particular ways in which adult educators participate in the activities of social struggle, will determine the kinds of opportunities they have to grapple with different kinds of contradictions. Engagement with different kinds of contradictions means that adult educators may undergo valuable forms of learning that make them better resources for organizers and activists.
The findings of this study supports the argument that social movements ought to be a focal point for scholars interested in emancipatory learning (Allman, 2001; Foley, 1999; Hall & Turray, 2006; Holford, 1995; Holst, 2004). First, I do not reject the idea that it is possible for people to be exposed to different ways of thinking about their circumstances through study. In fact, the classroom, whether it is an adult basic education class, a literacy class, English as Second Language class, etc. if led by an educator with a radical or critical perspective can be, and have been powerful interventions for working-class people and others (Freire, 2010; Kane 2010). If done well people not only leave the class with the technical skills they need to participate in the workforce, they also leave with a critical perspective or at least questions about their conditions and the processes organizing their lives. Nevertheless, I contend that a deeper emancipatory learning occurs when non-formal educational practices are part of a larger eco-system of struggle. That is, the ability for people to learn critical perspectives is at its peak when such knowledge is actively being put to work in the process of bringing about some form of social change.

Lastly, this study centers on a particular set of processes or activities within social movements, which constitute organizing. The subject standpoint was that of the organizers, as opposed to activists more broadly. A critique of social movement learning literature is that the distinction between organizers and other activists is, generally, not acknowledged. This has epistemological and pedagogical implications for understanding SML, and developing improved assistance to emancipatory struggles. First, in simply referring to movement participants as activists, scholars overlook the work of organizers, who are the people responsible for leading or taking charge of the actual work of building connections between people, preparing other people to carry out the specific day-to-day
work of struggle, and also taking to the streets. Anyone who is passionate about an issue or even social transformation, and is willing to put that passion to work within a group is an activist. However, not all activists are engaged in the leadership activities of organizers.

As it pertains to the role of organizers, this study supports extant perspectives on organizers as individuals who play a special leadership role within groups. Payne (1995) states that organizers are the backbone of any movement group, and that inadequate organizers translates into a weak movement. Epistemologically, what is lost when all movement organizers are simply coded as activists is the recognition of the practice of leadership exercised by specific skilled individuals within groups. Furthermore, not recognizing the leadership of organizers and the learning of organizers as a specific pedagogical concern, limits adult educators’ and movement scholars’ ability to provide appropriate assistance to the development of emancipatory struggle. Just as joining a struggle or becoming an activist is a significant form of learning (Foley, 1999; Walter, 2007), becoming an organizer marks another epistemological transformation in people. A potent way for adult educators to support emancipatory struggle is to focus research efforts on the mechanisms of learning to organize in social struggle.

**Limitations & Future Research**

People do not learn to be organizers, which is to say be leaders within the work of organizing, until they have taken up the work of organizing. This mimics E.P. Thompson’s view that “the working-class was present at its own making” (1966, p. 9). Which is to say that people engage in class struggle even before they have come to
understand themselves as a coherent socio-political subject. And it is in the process of contending with the contradictions and barriers of their struggle that they may become, what Marx (2010) referred to as a complete or true social class or a class for itself. Similarly, it is not until people take up the challenge of organizing and confront the inner barriers and inner contradictions of organizing that they are presented with the opportunity to learn to become organizers. Given this the implication for radical adult education practice is that there is a need to focus specifically on the pedagogical relationship between organizers and other activists, and how activists learn to become organizers.

This study is an entry into that field of inquiry, however, much more depth exploration is needed, as this study was quite limited. One major way this study was limited in that it centered on the subject standpoint of those individuals I identified as Left organizers. This means that while I took into consideration the perspectives of those who were not organizers, I privileged the learning of the organizers at the time of the data collection phase of the study. This meant that while I observed changes in people’s participation within organizing activities, I also missed the development of others, as this study focused specifically on the learning of a particular group of Left organizers in a particular city. To deepen our understanding of how people, learn to become movement organizers I suggest exploring organizing work from the standpoint of other Left organizers in different geographical contexts (e.g. other cities, and rural environments).

A second suggestion for future research is to explore movement organizing from the standpoint of people who are new to organizing work. As I mentioned elsewhere in the study, the base of these movement organizing projects consisted of Black working-
class people. Selecting the standpoint of members of the base may have brought to the
surface of the analysis more forcefully the contradictions of race and class relations in the
mediation of organizing processes. In opting to focus this study on the activity of
organizers I marginalized the perspectives of members of the base. Even still the question
of race/racial difference manifested itself. In future studies I intend to make the
exploration of race in organizing a priority. I believe race is a social relation that mediates
and organizes class and gender relations in society at large (Bannerji, 2011; Carpenter &
Mojab, 2011; Roberts, 1997), and consequently, it significantly shapes the field of
organizing and political struggle in ways that are often felt, but little explored.
References


Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

1. When was the first time you got involved in activism?

2. When you first got involved in movement work what was most helpful to you in terms of learning about the work?

3. Can describe if any, the strategies, tactics, and practices that you think are important to apply in your current movement work?

4. What led you to get involved in the current work you are doing?

5. Based on your experiences, what are things that organizers need to be able to do?

6. In conversations with others I have hear the terms leadership and leadership development used a lot. How do you make sense of these terms?
   a. If so, how do they fit into your view of organizing?
   b. Can you give me an example of how you do leadership development?
   c. What are things leaders do? Do you have examples of leaders from your work?

7. What are other aspects of organizing?

8. What are some of the most difficult and challenging moments you’ve had as an organizer?
   a. Have they impacted your practice?
   b. If so, how?

9. Can you describe some of the challenges that you’ve consistently faced as an organizer?

10. Can you describe some of the difficulties that you’ve seen other organizers face on a consistent basis?
Appendix B: Data Collection & Sample Information

Total Hours of Observation: 253.5 hrs

Table B-1: Participant Observation with organizers in South Point Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canvassing</td>
<td>12 hrs</td>
<td>5/2013-6/2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing Committee Meetings</td>
<td>9 hrs</td>
<td>5/2013-9/2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Defense panel</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
<td>6/2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning Board action</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
<td>7/2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B-2 Participant Observations with organizers in TROP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 general meeting</td>
<td>30 hrs</td>
<td>(9/5/2013-3/4/2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public hearing w/ health care commission</td>
<td>2.5 hrs</td>
<td>(8/2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 organizing committee meetings</td>
<td>44 hours</td>
<td>(9/5/2013-3/4/2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership Assembly</td>
<td>8 hours</td>
<td>9/2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership Assembly</td>
<td>9 hours</td>
<td>9/2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership Assembly</td>
<td>12 hours</td>
<td>9/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLK Day Rally downtown</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public hearing w/ health care commission</td>
<td>2.5 hrs</td>
<td>8/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor candidate forum</td>
<td>2.0 hrs</td>
<td>11/2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health care as a human right convening</td>
<td>8.0 hrs</td>
<td>7/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACA workshop @ Library in North Grit</td>
<td>2.0 hrs</td>
<td>5/2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor outreach @ Workers’ memorial</td>
<td>3.0 hrs</td>
<td>4/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Outreach @ May Day picnic</td>
<td>1.5 hrs</td>
<td>5/14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table B-3: Participant Observations with organizers in NUG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 community meetings</td>
<td>29 hrs</td>
<td>1/2016 to 10/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 steering committee meetings</td>
<td>9.0 hrs</td>
<td>2/2016 to 8/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Town Hall</td>
<td>3.0 hrs</td>
<td>7/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizer training</td>
<td>3.0 hrs</td>
<td>4/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Street actions</td>
<td>1.0 hrs</td>
<td>12/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Trustees action</td>
<td>1.5 hrs</td>
<td>1/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street action</td>
<td>0.5 hrs</td>
<td>1/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15 minimum wage rally</td>
<td>1.5 hrs</td>
<td>4/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizer training</td>
<td>2.0 hrs</td>
<td>6/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural organizing training</td>
<td>1.0 hrs</td>
<td>9/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 weekly canvass sessions (each Thursdays)</td>
<td>10 hrs</td>
<td>5/2016-7/2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B-4: Participant Observations with Organizers in the OPP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Control Roundtable</td>
<td>2.5 hrs</td>
<td>11/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Boot-camp sessions</td>
<td>28 hrs</td>
<td>4/2016 to 6/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Control Collective Meeting</td>
<td>4 hrs</td>
<td>9/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Control Collective planning session</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td>10/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Control Follow-up Meeting</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td>11/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potluck</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td>1/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolutionary Thanksgiving</td>
<td>4 hrs</td>
<td>11/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Political Training committee meetings</td>
<td>8 hrs</td>
<td>7/2016 to 10/2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table App. B-5: Lead Organizers Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizer (n=12)</th>
<th>Organization &amp; employment status as organizer</th>
<th>Time Active in Left organizing work</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>TROP/OPP</td>
<td>13+ years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop</td>
<td>OPP</td>
<td>10+ years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaria</td>
<td>TROP</td>
<td>20+ years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Of Color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vera</td>
<td>TROP/OPP</td>
<td>6+ years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor</td>
<td>TROP</td>
<td>9+ years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>NUG</td>
<td>1+ years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elza</td>
<td>NUG</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>OPP</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Of Color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>NUG</td>
<td>4+ years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>NUG</td>
<td>8+ years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>NUG</td>
<td>4+ years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliza</td>
<td>NUG</td>
<td>30+ years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table App. B-6: Secondary Organizers Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizer (n=15)</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Time Active in Left organizing work</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>OPP</td>
<td>2+ years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beats</td>
<td>OPP</td>
<td>10+ years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaiz</td>
<td>TROP/Opp</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin</td>
<td>OPP</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>TROP/Opp</td>
<td>3+ years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Of Color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsons</td>
<td>OPP</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matsuda</td>
<td>OPP</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Japanese/White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinnie</td>
<td>NUG</td>
<td>1+ year</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Betina</td>
<td>NUG</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agosto</td>
<td>TROP</td>
<td>6+ years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Mexican/of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm</td>
<td>OPP</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>OPP</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>OPP</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarkson</td>
<td>OPP</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelo</td>
<td>OPP</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table App. B-7: Organizers Employed in as Organizers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizers (n=11)</th>
<th>Employment in Non-profit Social Justice Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agosto</td>
<td>Full-time organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop</td>
<td>Full-time organizing director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vera</td>
<td>Full-time organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Full-time organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaria</td>
<td>Full-time organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>Full-time organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsons</td>
<td>Full-time organizing director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin</td>
<td>Full-time organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelo</td>
<td>Full-time organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Full-time organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beats</td>
<td>Full-time organizer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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2010-2011 Helmut G. Golatz Labor Scholar Award
2011-2015 Bunton-Waller Graduate Fellowship Recipient