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From consciousness to action : are there common identifiable life experiences among people who actively organize against oppression

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the question: Are there common identifiable life experiences among people who actively organize against oppression? This qualitative study included demographic as well as open and closed survey questions. The research explored seventy-one participants' interpretations of how they came to take action. The study explores how these participants first developed political consciousness, political efficacy, and the motivation to organize against oppression. Those identifiable life experiences that precede people taking action to organize against oppression are reviewed. This researcher found that there are common life experiences among people who are empowered, have political efficacy, and are taking action to organize against oppression. Participants reported that education, family, witnessing oppression, and experiencing oppression were common identifiable life experiences that influenced individuals to develop a political consciousness that oppression existed. Participants also reported that developing a historical perspective, political victories against oppression, participating in demonstrations, experiences with important individuals and role models, and family and religious experiences influenced them to believe they could fight against oppression. Participants reported believing that they could fight oppression in a group context, but not alone. Participants reported that educational, family, experiences with role models or important people, experiencing oppression, and witnessing oppression influenced them to take action against oppression.

FROM CONSCIOUSNESS TO ACTION: ARE THERE COMMON IDENTIFIABLE

LIFE EXPERIENCES AMONG PEOPLE WHO ACTIVELY ORGANIZE AGAINST

OPPRESSION?

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This thesis is dedicated for all those who have sacrificed fighting against oppression in the past and for those who will do so in the future.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this study is to identify trends of past life experiences among people who organize against oppression in the United States. This study focuses on individuals who actively organized against oppression in the year 2006. The research explores trends of life experiences that led these same individuals to develop a political consciousness and understanding that oppression exists. In addition, the research investigates those life experiences that enabled them to develop their political efficacy and belief that they could take action to organize against oppression.

The impetus for this study originates from social work's commitment to social justice and the theory that clients can organize for their own liberation:

> Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people. (NASW, 1999, p. 5)

The web of oppression which includes racism, sexism, heterosexism, and poverty, just to name a few, has infected the United States in such a systemic way that few can escape. This system of oppression is perpetuated by individuals with power who continue to oppress those with less power and while there has been struggle against the system it has not be strong enough thus far to change the structure of the oppressive system. This

system of oppression not only lowers the quality of life for people in the United States but also can have devastating consequences such as those seen after hurricane Katrina, which occurred not primarily because of the hurricane but due to the lack of a swift response by the US government. Why in a world where there is more than enough food, housing, and goods to go around, can something like the slow response to Katrina victims occur? Some would argue it is because of capitalism, and the emphasis on the profit system as opposed to a system based on human need. Many examples show that this capitalist system is leading our society toward self-destruction. One example of this is our lack of an urgent response to global warming and its accompanying threat to life on our planet. In order to change the direction this society is heading, mass movements made up of individual anti-oppression fighters must be built. It is therefore essential to understand what experiences influence people to fight oppression.

Individuals have organized against oppression throughout history. The number of individuals involved in organizing against oppression at any give time or place depends on a variety of historical factors and the political climate. Each individual's life experiences inevitably affect whether an individual develops the political consciousness of understanding the system of oppression. The individual's life experiences also inevitably affect their political efficacy and motivation to organize against oppression.

This research study begins with a literature review examining the meaning of oppression; theories on how individuals develop an anti-oppression consciousness; how individuals develop the motivation to organize against oppression; and theories around life experiences that influence individuals to organize against oppression.

The research focuses on individuals who self-identify as actively fighting against oppression. It looks at their interpretations of how their life experiences contributed to their current active organizing. It further examines those experiences that influenced their political consciousness, political efficacy, motivation, and empowerment to take action against oppression. This qualitative study derives its findings from multiple choice questions, "yes-no" questions, and open-ended narratives collected anonymously through a survey. Seventy-one individuals responded to the survey, although thirty-four skipped one or more question.

The fourth chapter reviews the findings. The main goal of this study was to gain insight into what life experiences influence an individual to develop into an anti-oppression organizer. Understanding those common life experiences may provide social workers and other anti-oppression organizers with tools to create ways to challenge oppression. Clients, who are empowered may gain a sense of political efficacy, motivation, and a political consciousness that will benefit them emotionally as well as contribute to their organizing to oppose oppression. Social workers should support clients that are interested in organizing against oppression. Supporting clients in developing these qualities may have the potential to benefit the client as well as the greater community.

The fifth chapter discusses how the findings relate to the literature, the limitations of the study, and its connections to social work practice and policy. One of the National Association of Social Workers' six codes of ethics is social justice. It is vital for social workers to understand the life experiences associated with people who become active

organizers against oppression. Organizing against oppression may reduce prejudice and increase feelings of political efficacy and empowerment.

Social workers who work with oppressed individuals are a particularly important audience for this study. Little research has been completed relating people who organize against oppression with their life experiences. Therefore, this study will hopefully contribute to a potential body of research relating social work and organizing against oppression.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This thesis asks the question, "Are there common identifiable life experiences among people who actively organize against oppression?" In order to adequately address this question it is important to examine what oppression has looked like in the United States and exactly what we mean by oppression. Literature concerning what motivates individuals to take action, as well as how individuals develop an anti-oppression consciousness is explored. This researcher reviews a number of theories about the identity development of an anti-oppression organizer and literature exploring life experiences among some people who have fought oppression is analyzed in a historical context.

This researcher uses germane literature to examine associations among people who actively fight oppression and related specific identifiable life experiences among this group of people. The primary question of this study is to identify those life experiences among such persons as they relate to their activities to fight oppression. While the participants in this study organized against a variety of oppressions the literature review will focus on life experiences among people who have organized against racial and economic oppression, as these two types of oppression are particularly central to the foundation of the United States. It is not that other forms of oppression are not important, but to address anything more than these two types of oppression is beyond the scope of

this thesis.

Oppression

Oppression is difficult to define: there are many variations on the definition of oppression and a variety of types of oppression. In order to begin, oppression will be defined as:

> the act of subjugating by cruelty … the state of being kept down by unjust use of force or authority… a feeling of being oppressed…. Oppression is the arbitrary and cruel exercise of power. While the term is usually used to describe wrongful acts of government, oppression is rarely limited solely to government action. Oppression is most commonly felt and expressed by a widespread, if unconscious, assumption that a certain class of people are inferior… and has been referred to as "systematic oppression." (Dictionary by Labor Law Talk, 2006)

Oppression has existed in every class society, throughout history. Oppressive societies frequently oppress people by demonizing them in history books instead of telling the true story.

Historical Context of Oppression in the United States

Throughout history and around the world, people have risked their lives to fight against oppression. Since the history of struggle for justice is so vast, this review will be limited in scope. With this said, it is important to note a few infamous historical events that are key to the legacy of oppression in the United States. These events show how the United States was not founded on democracy, but on injustice, including racial and economic oppression, which is often left out of history textbooks.

The history of oppression in the United States begins in 1492 with the attack and massacre of the Native Americans followed by the theft of their land. Many of the Native Americans, such as the Arawaks, greeted the European explorers with gifts and open arms. The Europeans, on the other hand, were in search of riches, such as gold and

slaves. They captured the Native Americans and used them as slaves and were willing to do whatever necessary to obtain other valuable possessions from the native populations (Zinn, p. 1-4 1995):

> When the pilgrims came to New England they too were coming not to vacant land but to territory inhabited by tribes of Indians. The governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop, created the excuse to take Indian land by declaring the area legally a "vacuum." The Indians, he said, had not "subdued" the land, and therefore had only a "natural" right to it, but not a "civil right." A "natural right" did not have legal standing. (Zinn, 13, 1995)

The racial and economic oppression of Native Americans continues to this day, with oppressive reservations and government corruption that continues to financially cheat Native Americans.

Ironically, the European settles, while running from oppression in Europe themselves, thus began the legacy of oppression that continues to plague the United States to this day. As capitalism began to take hold of the US economy, the use of free labor became extremely important to economic competition. The Native American slaves that had been taken, frequently died from the abuse by their masters. As it became apparent that the Native American could not be used as slaves, their lives became valueless to the Europeans and the genocide of an entire people continued at an even faster rate. The European settlers didn't give up the idea of having slaves and Africans were captured and brought to the United States to replace them. The Africans who survived the treacherous trip over to the Americas could withstand the difficult labor that slaves were forced to perform. Another reason the Europeans were better able to control the African slaves was because they were not familiar with the terrain, which made it more difficult for them to escape.

Ahmed Shawki (2006) discusses the hypocrisy of the formation of the United

States' democracy:

> It is the paradox of the American Revolution that it cast off the chains of colonial rule, but shackled one-fifth of the population of the newly independent states in the chains of slavery. Thus American democracy and American racism emerged as "Siamese twins," as Fields described them. In feudal societies of kings, lords, vassals, and serfs, slavery did not demand an elaborate justification, as it seemed to fit with the natural, hierarchical, and unequal order of things. But in a society that proclaimed, "All men are created equal," a systematic explanation for why people were denied rights that others were entitled to needed to be developed. "That is why the slave society of the United States was the only one in the hemisphere that developed a systematic pro-slavery doctrine," Fields concluded. "You don't find that anywhere else. *Bondage does not need justifying as long as it seems to be the natural order of things. You need a radical affirmation of bondage only where you have a radial affirmation of freedom* [italics added]*"* (p. 24-25).

> Shawki (2006) goes on to describe how the US government supported slavery

while trying to disguise its support:

> The prohibition of Congress against the importation of slaves after 1807 could not slow the expansion of the cotton plantations in the fifteen Southern states. Slavery had become too entrenched. In any case, the prohibition of the importation of slaves was quite different to the prohibition of slavery. Even pro-slavery advocates supported an end to the slave trade as a prudent measure to reduce the possibility of slave rebellions. The slave system would instead rely on the internal reproduction and trade in slaves. (p. 30)

In addition to the US being founded on racial oppression, it was also grounded in

economic oppression that included: the use of black slaves, white indentured servants,

and low wage white labor. This oppression was disguised under the guise of *freedom* of

enterprise and while the new government of the United States stated, "all men are created

equal" what they really meant was, *all white property-owning men were created equal*

(Zinn, 1995). The capitalist economy ingrained economic class and oppression into the

young country. Many poor whites that lived in the south gained nothing from the

continuation of slavery but took on the racist ideology of the slave masters. Fredrick

Douglass (as cited in Shawki, 2006) reflected on this:

> The slaveholders…by encouraging the enmity of the poor, laboring white man against the blacks, succeeds in making the white man almost as much a slave as the black slave himself… Both are plundered, and by the same plunderers. The slave is robbed, by his master, of all his earnings, above what is required for his physical necessities; and the white man is robbed by the slave system, of the just results of his labor, because he is flung into competition with a class of laborers who work without wages… At present the slaveholders blind them to this competition, by keeping alive their prejudice against the slaves, as men – not against them as slaves. They appeal to their pride, often denouncing emancipation, as tending to place white working man on an equality with Negroes, and, by this means, they succeed in drawing off the minds of the poor whites from the real fact, that, by the rich slave-master, they are already regarded as but a single remove from equality with the slave. (p. 34)

Just as the racial and economic oppression of Native Americans continues today

so does the racial and economic oppression of African Americans. We see it in the poor

quality school systems in areas where African Americans live, as well as other poor

communities, we see it in segregated communities, we see it in the justice system which

locks up more African Americans than ever go to college, we see it when black unarmed

men are shot in the streets, we see it in the death penalty. Systematic racial oppression,

also known as racism, can be seen everywhere in the United States and often goes

unacknowledged (Kozol, 2005).

Economic oppression also continues today and can be seen in the over forty-five

million people without healthcare and thirty-nine point five million people living under

the poverty line. Thirteen million of them are children with ($16,660 being the poverty

line income for a family of four). Ten million people including 3 million children

frequently must skip meals and go hungry (Siddiqi, 2007). Thirty million people in the

United States are working forty hours a week and still live in a poverty state, if not below

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the federal poverty line. The growing gap continues between the rich and the poor, and all of this in the richest, most powerful country in the world (Oleck, 2003). Despite this oppression based on poverty, people have continued to stand up and fight it.

Just as the ruling class wanted to keep oppressed groups divided in the past, they continue to use the divide and conquer strategy. Tait (2005) explained how this is a key strategy for keeping unions down:

> Management's attempts to divide workers along race, gender, ethnicity, or citizenship lines undermine broader labor solidarity and lead to low wages for all workers. This is particularly true in areas where undocumented immigrants make up a large portion of the workforce. (p. 142)

In the last hundred years there have been many struggles against oppression in the United States. The struggles have been by a wide variety of oppressed groups including people of color, working class people, and women. Many struggles were able to unite different groups of oppressed people to fight against the oppression of all. Some of the movements in the last century include the suffragette movement, the International Workers of the World unionist movement, the socialist movements, the communist party in the 1930's, the anti-racist struggle to save the Scottsboro boys, the strike wave and union movement after the great depression, the Civil rights movement, the anti-war movement against the war in Vietnam and the GI resistance. More recently in the 1970s, there were a number of new movements. These included the women's rights movement, the gay and lesbian rights movements, the moratorium on the death penalty, the passing of Roe vs. Wade, the black power movement, and wildcat strikes.

During Clinton's administration there continued to be attacks on the middle and working classes:

Even [Clinton's] progressive measures were severely limited by his apparent
desire to woo conservatives, his fear of offending corporate interests, and the
limits set by huge expenditures for the military budget.

Clinton's economic program, at first announced as a job-creation program,
was soon to change direction and concentrate on the reduction of the deficit
(under Reagan and Bush the national debt had grown to four trillion dollars). But
this emphasis meant that there would be no bold program of expenditures for
universal health care, for education, for childcare, housing, the environment, the
arts, or job creation.

Clinton's small gestures would not come close to what was needed in a
nation where one-fourth of the children lived in poverty, where homeless people
lived on the streets in every major city, where women could not look for work for
lack of child care, where the air, the water, were deteriorating dangerously, where
35 million Americans -10 million of them children – where without health care.
The United States was the richest country in the world, with 5 percent of the
earth's population, yet consuming 30 percent of what was produced worldwide.
Wealth was polarized, with 1 percent of the population owning 35 percent of the
wealth, approximately $5.7 trillion. In its poverty-ridden cities babies died at a
higher rate than in almost every other industrialized country in the world. In one
year, 1988, 40,000 babies died before their first birthday, with the morality rate
for African American babies twice that for whites. (Zinn, 1995, p. 632)

Welfare was cut in the 90's; a direct attack on the poor that drove more people into

poverty and homelessness (Anelauskas, 1991). The global justice movement (the

movement against corporate globalization) rose only to be halted after the 9/11 attacks.

The anti-war movement against the second war in Iraq rose up as did the enormous

immigrant rights movement of 2006 where millions workers, immigrants, and allies

marched in the street for immigrant rights on May 1st, international workers day. When

one examines the fight against oppression in the US during the past century, people have

always fought for justice, sometimes they win, sometimes they lose, but they continue to

organize against oppression, just the same. The question is why?

People organize against oppression

There is little research that examines whether there are any identifiable life

experiences among people who fight oppression. Therefore, this sample of the literature

will come from theories on political consciousness, theories on political efficacy, social movement theory, motivational theory, activist autobiographies, and historians' ideas about why people fight oppression.

Oppression has an impact on all of society, not on just those who are oppressed. There is no question that oppression hurts not only those that are oppressed, but also those who are not, albeit in different ways. Freire (1970) who emphasizes the dehumanization that occurs due to oppression, describes this idea well in his *Pedagogy Of The Oppressed*: "dehumanization, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human" (p. 44).

The United States, a country whose constitution says "all men are created equal" and who prides itself on its freedom, has not yet come close to extinguishing oppression. Part of the reason people do not fight oppression is because they do not understand exactly what it is or how to identify it when it rears its ugly head. There are those who believe oppression only occurs in underdeveloped nations and do not see how they are affected by oppression. Many people do not see how different forms of oppression are connected or how oppressions negatively affect them so they choose not to do anything about it. Others see that it negatively affects them but feel powerless to effect any major change. These misconceptions have made it difficult to organize effectively against oppression.

Despite the enormous weight oppression places on the shoulders of the human race, many individuals have joined together in organized groups and mass movements to fight oppression and to change history. The question is, with all this confusion about what

oppression is, whom it hurts, and the amount of energy and bravery it takes to fight

oppression, why do some people choose to stand up and fight it? Is there something in

their lives that inspires them to find new meaning in a just society? Is there an event in

their life that empowers them to believe they can make a difference? What inspired Ani

Difranco, singer, songwriter, and musician to stand up and say:

> I know the biggest crime is to throw up our hands say this has nothing to do with
> me; I just want to live as comfortably as I can. You got to look outside your eyes,
> think outside your brain, you got to walk outside your life until the neighborhood
> changes. (Difranco, 1997)

Everyday in the news the effects of oppression are recorded, the murder of an

unarmed black man by police, the execution of yet another poor, black man, the miss-

education of the poor children across the United States, the anti-Arab racist war for oil

and empire in Iraq. Oppression results in the mistreatment of people in many different

ways and occurs all around the country and the world. Oppression not only includes acts

of violence towards oppressed groups of people but it can also be seen in the eyes of the

poor children that go hungry in the richest nation in the world. It can be seen in the

homeless and mentally ill who are not taken care of, despite the fact that there is housing

standing empty. It can be seen by the lesbian couple of ten years that cannot get married

or share healthcare. It can be seen in the over forty-three point six million people who do

not have healthcare, again in the richest nation in the world (More Americans, 2003).

These oppressive realities often go unnoticed by people who do not suffer

directly, but some people do notice, and make an effort to do something about the

oppression. As the globalization and advanced technology increases, individuals are

exposed to and begin to interact with more diverse groups of human beings. This

undoubtedly is part of the reason why it appears that more and more people are less able

to continue with their daily lives without noticing or experiencing the oppression around

them. As the world becomes smaller, the evidence of oppressions has become

increasingly apparent and more difficult to ignore.

It is important now to further refine the definition of the term oppression.

Oppression is made of up of a number of societal components and material circumstances

and this must be explored more deeply in order to have a fuller understanding of

oppression.

Defining Oppression

Some people believe that everyone is oppressed, and that the term "oppression"

has accordingly lost much of its meaning. Others reserve the world "oppression" only for

slave/master relationships. Oppression is also used interchangeably with certain words

like prejudice or discrimination.

Since many people have written about the nature of oppression, it is important to

have a clear definition of the term. There are many different definitions for the word, but

the following is a detailed version that will be used for the purpose of this thesis. From

definitions by Frye (2004), Young (2000), Freire (1970), and Yamato (1998), this

researcher developed the following definition that incorporates power, systematic &

institutionalized methods of mistreatment, and a cultural consciousness, which creates

internalized oppression. Oppression is not simply prejudice and discrimination, which

anyone can act upon, but the systematic institutionalized exploitation, marginalization,

cultural imperialism, and/or violence directed toward a group of people.

Oppression Must Be Systematic And Institutionalized Oppression

All oppressed people have three things in common. First, they are all systematically mistreated, second they are considered subordinate to the group that is the dominant group and therefore lack power, and third, their options and rights are limited in ways that the dominant group's rights are not. (Young, 2000 & Frye, 2004) All of these lead people to believe that oppressed groups are less than fully human.

Oppression is not simply defined as prejudice and discrimination, because anyone can be prejudicial and discriminatory. Gloria Yamato (1997) included this in her definition of oppression: "When I speak of oppression, I'm talking about systematic, institutionalized mistreatment of a group of people by another for whatever reason" (p. 8). Oppression of a group must be systematic and institutionalized because without this component we cannot distinguish it from random acts of discrimination, prejudice, or violence that occur against all people, even those that are not oppressed. For example, some African Americans may be prejudiced and discriminatory against Caucasians, but since this act is not systematic or institutionalized, it cannot be said that Caucasians are oppressed. Of course an individual can mistreat another individual, but the larger picture must be investigated to determine if it is systematic or institutionalized.

Capitalism: A Component of Institutional Oppression

According to Marxists, class society, which today takes the form of capitalism, plays a crucial part in creating and continuing oppression, as we know it. Capitalism not only exploits the working class but also systematically divides workers based on race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, and so on, in order to maintain control of workers and keep them from uniting and organizing against the ruling class. If workers united

they may be able to overthrow the capitalist system, which the ruling capitalist class does not want. According to D'amato (2006) capitalism is key in maintaining oppression:

> Today, scarcely a few hundred years after the rise of industrial capitalism, the market has become such a normal feature of economic life that it is hard to conceive of any other economic mode of existence. Yet on the scale of human history it is a recent phenomenon…. Goods can be collectively or individually produced, and they can be shared in common rather than exchanged…. Bourgeois economists also try to argue that the purpose of the capitalist market is simply to facilitate the distribution of products…The most important thing that distinguishes capitalism from all previous forms of production – that it is a system whose main drive is profit-making. (p. 53)

D'amato's (2006) definition of exploitation does not have to do with extreme conditions but the normal operation of the capitalist system. He explains how workers are exploited because they produce enough money to pay for their labor in only part of their workday. Workers continue to work after they produce their wages, this "surplus" labor goes to profit for the capitalist. Marxists do not believe that there can be a true democracy under a capitalist system. Capitalists have more power over the government due to their wealth. D'amato (2006) explained that while the capitalist system has created the surplus needed to provide for all humans, it has not and will never meet human need; it is fundamentally flawed:

> Capitalism creates tremendous wealth unheard of in previous times, but it does so in such a way as to deny the wealth it creates to the majority it exploits…. Unemployment is an inbuilt feature of capitalism one which capitalism, one which capitalists depend on to discipline workers who have jobs. Instead of lowering everyone's hours and providing jobs for all, capitalism maximizes the hours and intensity of work, using the treat of unemployment, or the threat that other workers can always be hire fro less, as a means for keeping the working class in check. In other words, the very processes that improve productively, and therefore the potential for a greater standard of living and less work for all, becomes under capitalism a means to increase exploitation at the workers expense. (p. 60-61)

D'amato (2006) explained how a different system, based on human need would create

real democracy, without classes:

> A rational system based upon planned production would make use of tremendous advances we have made in science and technology to first ensure that food, shelter, clothing, and adequate transportation were provided for all. As long as people need such things there cannot be, in rational terms, "overproduction." But capitalism is anything but rational from that standpoint. (p. 62)

Marxists are not only concerned about economic oppression but also about the

necessity of fighting against oppression, such as racism and sexism, which segregate

workers. D'amato (2006) explained this, "Marxism seeks not to separate exploitation and

oppression, but to show how they are connected, and how the solution to one cannot be

separated from the solution to the other" (p. 177). While ending capitalism will not end

racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression, Marxists believe that oppression will

never be able to be ended under capitalism as capitalism perpetuates oppression, as it

needs it in order to survive. D'amato (1999) quoted Marx on how essential it is for

workers to fight not only exploitation but oppression as well:

> In the United States of America, every independent workers' movement was paralyzed as long as slavery disfigured part of the republic. Labor in a white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in a black skin…. This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short, by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes…. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. And that class is fully aware of it. (p. 30-31)

Marxists offer a socialist economy as a solution to the exploitation and oppression

of capitalism. D'amato (2006) explained, "Socialism is not only a theory of the liberation

of the working class. It is a theory of the liberation of the working class as the foundation

for the liberation of all humanity- and not only from class exploitation, but all forms of oppression" (p. 177).

Oppression Requires A Power Imbalance

Lack of power is a key component of being part of an oppressed population, which is often unacknowledged. "'To press', says Webster, is 'to lie heavy on, to weigh down, to exercise harsh dominion over'" (Bartkly, 1996, p. 127). The oppressed are always the subordinate group while the oppressive group must be the dominant group. Without this power it is impossible for a group to be oppressive. In this same light a group cannot be oppressed by a group that it has power over. Groups with power can also experience limitations, hurts, or negative effects from oppression. It is likely that everyone in the world would benefit emotionally if oppression was ended because the weight of oppression keeps humans from being fully human; even oppressors have to live in a false consciousness justifying their exploitation and oppression of others (Freire, 1970); Yamato (1998) describes how power is often overlooked in the definition of oppression:

> It's true that the various elements of racism, while repugnant, would not be able to do very much damage, but for a generally overlooked key piece: power/privilege…. Oppressors are purported to have an innate ability to access economic resources, information, and be respected, while the oppressed are believed to have a correspondingly negative innate ability. (p. 90-92)

In addition, most people would benefit from ending oppression both materially as well. People would benefit materially be ending oppression because the majority of the people in the world, and in the United States, would have a better quality of life if the wealth of the world were redistributed equally.

If the power of the oppressors is not taken into account, it becomes easy for

oppressors to complain of reverse-oppression. One form of oppression is racial

oppression also descried as racism. Yamato (1998) points out how this misunderstanding

can play out within racism if this power is not recognized. "People who have not thought

about or refuse to acknowledge this imbalance of power/privilege often want to talk

about the racism of people of color" (p. 92). When we begin to talk about reverse –

oppression, we are simply misunderstanding the definition of oppression, and the effects

of oppression. For if this was taken into account, it would be obvious why white people

cannot experience racial oppression from people of color, even if we put the word

"'reverse'" before it. Miller (1986) describes the difference between power for oneself

and power over others. In the first sense power is understood as control over others, while

in the second sense power is understood as power for herself that is not restrictive to

others but could even be empowering to everyone.

Oppression Requires A Loss Of Freedom And Opportunity

The third aspect that all oppressed groups experience is limitations on their behavior, in

ways that dominant groups are not limited. Young (2000) agrees that "…all oppressed

people have something in common: they all suffer some inhibition of their ability to

develop and exercise their capacities and express their needs, thoughts, feelings" (p. 271).

Frye (2004) describes these limitations and lack of rights as being 'caged in:'

> The experience of oppressed people is that the living of one's life is confined and
> shaped by forces and barriers which are not accidental or occasional and hence
> avoidable, but are systematically related to each other in such a way as to catch
> one between and among them and restrict or penalize motion in any direction. It
> is the experience of being caged in: all avenues, in every direction, are blocked or
> booby-trapped. (p. 185)

This is the aspect that many people do not understand. These people do not see the toll

that oppression takes on a person every day of his/her life. Dealing with economic

hardship, verbal abuse, unable to find adequate housing, healthcare or a job, the threat of

violence, and lack of freedom all add up to make life an exhausting battle and can take a

serous toll on ones mental and physical health.

Oppression's four methods of mistreatment

There are four main categories that describe the way that people are mistreated in

an oppressive way: economic exploitation, marginalization, cultural imperialism, and

systematic violence. (Young, 2000). Oppressed groups feel oppression in different ways,

even if the oppressive acts develop from the same material gains and skewed logic. For

us to address each of these forms of oppression in the appropriate way, we must be able

to name how a group is being oppressed. Each group is usually oppressed by a

combination of these four categories.

The first method of mistreatment is economic exploitation. This means that one

form of mistreatment that is often systematic and coupled with uneven power relations is

economic exploitation. Exploiting groups of people economically keeps them materially

disadvantaged, often in poverty, and is particularly vicious and oppressive. Exploitation

is most often seen in the workforce, although it can be seen in other settings as well.

Today, capitalism is the root of exploitation and oppression and it continues to perpetuate

and exacerbate all forms of oppression (D'Amato, 1999). Within capitalism, some people

work for the benefit and profit of other people, i.e. the laborers work for the corporation

owners. Young (2000) stated in her theory of exploitation that the:

> …injustice of capitalist society consists in the fact that some people exercise their
> capacities under the control, according to the purposes, and for the benefit of the
> people. Through private ownership of the means of production and through

markets that allocate labor and the ability to buy goods, capitalism systematically transfers the power of some persons to others, thereby augmenting the power of the latter. (p. 275)

Being marginalized is the second category of mistreatment that occurs under oppression. Marginalization is systematic and occurs when there are uneven power relations. One example is that up until recently, people of color have not had access to the publishing world so they are unable to represent their point of view in the libraries and educational systems of the USA. People of color are left out of the history books written predominately by wealthy white men. This misinformation has another causality of the marginalizers goal, to deny the marginalized proper credit for their contributions throughout history.

Another form of marginalization is found in the workplace. To be marginalized in the workplace means that one's labor is not considered as valuable as another's; resulting in lower wages and benefits for the marginalized group. Marginalized peoples must work much harder than those who are not marginalized by society in order to get their needs met. Old people, young people, mentally and physically disabled people; unskilled people are all often marginalized in the workplace. There is sometimes no place for them, and they are left jobless and unable to support themselves. Young (2000) ventures to say that, "marginalization [is] perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression. A whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life and thus potentially subjected to sever material deprivation and even extermination" (p. 279).

Women have been marginalized in a different way. They have their place in society, but it is valued less than the man's place. Although this has changed a lot in the

last few decades, women are still marginalized and isolated in the home doing "women's work" that they don't get paid for. This is also an example of exploitation. Women who do work outside of the home (most working and middle class women) often have to work a "double shift," meaning that they work both outside the home and inside the home (Tait, 2005; Roesch, 2004; Smith, 1997).

The third form of mistreatment is cultural imperialism, which is similar to ethnocentrism. It occurs when a person holds their culture to be better or more important than someone else's. The opposite of cultural imperialism is cultural relativism, which states: individuals outside of that culture cannot judge cultures because the value systems are culturally bound. Cultural imperialism is a total disrespect and lack of understanding for cultural relativism. For example, if a person who looks at a Muslim woman, living in the United States, in a negative light because he thinks her desire to wear a veil is wrong his attitude is that of a cultural imperialist. He is putting his own culture above another person's. The Muslim woman could turn around and say that her veil is better than breast implants, high heal shoes, or the persistent pressure on women to be half naked and sexy. But because she is part of an oppressed group, and lacks power, her views may be discounted.

Lastly, being subjected to systematic violence oppresses some groups. Young (2000), "…also includes in this category less severe incidents of harassment, intimidation, or ridicule simply for the purpose of degrading, humiliation, or stigmatizing group members" (p. 46). Systematic violence is not only oppressive and life threatening to the survivors within the group that experience the violence, but also very oppressive to all those who fear this violence day in and out.

The social context that is created by this systematic violence is often the most

oppressive aspect. Each individual act of violence is horrific. It is, however, more the

threat of violence to the group that is oppressed, which leads people to remain silent. The

fact that the beating of a gay or transman (a transgender person who had transitioned

from being female to male) or the rape and murder of a woman is treated similarly to a

beating of a person for his money is one of the oppressive policies of the justice system:

> Current legislation allows federal prosecution of a hate crime only if the crime
> was motivated by race, religion, national origin, or color. In addition, the assailant
> must intend to prevent the victim from exercising a federally protected right. The
> Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1999, passed by the Senate in July 1999, seeks to
> expand federal jurisdiction over these crimes. (Siasoco, 1999)

All people who are oppressed are susceptible to buying into the ideas of the

dominant group and this is often called internalized oppression.

Internalized oppression

Oppressed groups experience internalized oppression, which is also referred to as

psychological oppression. (Bartkly, 1996. Macomber, 2000. Freire, 1970.)

> Psychological oppression is dehumanizing and depersonalizing; it attacks the
> person in her personhood… to be psychologically oppressed is to be caught in the
> double bind of a society which both affirms my human status and at the same time
> bars me from the exercise of many of those typically human functions that bestow
> this status. (Bartkly, 1996, p. 132-133)

Psychological oppression is very limiting in that the oppressed become confused

as to their own inherent value and often believe they are less of a person than others.

They begin to fulfill the oppressive stereotypes that are expressed about them. If

everyone tells a child that her group is not smart, it begins to sink in. Freire (1970)

describes this phenomenon, "Self-depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed,

which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them"
(Rappaport, as cited in Macomber, 2000, p.14). For example, if a woman believes in the
sexist stereotype that she is not good at science or math, simply because she is a woman
this indicates that she has internalized the sexist ideas of oppression:

> Social control begins to work from within the psyche of the individual. This has
> the effect of creating what appears to be a "natural" order of way of organizing
> one's community and life in the minds of the oppressors and the oppressed. (p. 7)

Hardiman and Jackson (as cited in Macomber, 2000) described a similar process: "kept in
their [role] by the agent's ideology which supports oppression by denying its existence,
and blames the condition of the oppressed on themselves and their own failings" (p.72).
Podgorecki (as cited in Macomber, 2000) went as far as to say that: "Ideological
oppression, understood as a monopoly of accepted beliefs and the practices connected
with them, is the essence of all totalitarian regimes and it is also the most comprehensive
type of oppression" (p. 68).

Bartkly (1996) suggests that when oppressed individuals internalize the ideas of
the ruling class they become psychologically oppressed and become their own enemy:

> The psychologically oppressed become their own oppressors; they come to
> exercise harsh dominion over their own self-esteem…'internalization of
> intimations of inferiority'… it is itself psychologically oppressive both to believe
> and at the same time not to believe that one is inferior – in other words, to believe
> a contradiction… many oppressed persons come to regard themselves as uniquely
> unable to satisfy normal criteria of psychological health and moral adequacy.
> (p.127-132)

Oppressions Are Interconnected

This thesis is about oppression as a whole and not a particular type of oppression
such as racism or economic injustice because different forms of oppression are viewed as
being interconnected. For example, the perpetuation of economic oppression encourages

the perpetuation of racial oppression. This can be seen in many forms but perhaps one example is when employers instigate racism between workers to avoid their creating a union. If the workers were able to unite across racial lines the employers would have a more difficult time exploiting them.

Oppression takes many forms throughout the world. Some of the most prominent and well-known types of oppression are economic oppression, racism, sexism, and heterosexism; (heterosexism is the oppression of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals). Part of the reason oppression is addressed as a whole is because it can help to illustrate how different forms of oppression are connected to one another. Gruen (1994) discusses the importance of understanding the interconnected relationship of different forms of oppression, "Making connections, between the various ways oppression operates and between those individuals who suffer such oppression, will allow all beings to live healthier more fulfilling, and freer lives" (p. 546).

A theory developed by Bartkly (1996) describes how different types of oppression support others, creating a cycle that is difficult to take apart:

> All the modes of oppression – psychological, political, and economic – and the kinds of alienation they generate serve to maintain oppression within the system and has its own part to play, but each serves to support and to maintain the others…class oppression in turn encourages those who are somewhat higher in the hierarchies of race or gender to cling to a false sense of superiority – a poor compensation indeed. Because of the interlocking character of the modes of oppression I think it highly unlikely that any form of oppression will disappear entirely until the system of oppression as a whole is overthrown. (p. 134)

Another example of how one type of oppression hurts everyone is provided by Blood, Tuttle, and Lakey (1998). "Everyone is hurt by gay oppression. The fear of being considered gay limits and distorts everyone's choices and relationships… women's

liberation and men's liberation depend partly on gay liberation" (p. 187). One important

theme that has come up in literature from Marx to Miller is that:

> The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class
> which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling
> intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its
> disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so
> that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental
> production are subject to it. (Marx & Engels, 1932)

> Miller (1986) explains this in more detail:

> A dominant group, inevitably, has the greatest influence in determining a
> culture's overall outlook – its philosophy, morality, social theory, and even its
> science. The dominant group thus legitimizes the unequal relationship and
> incorporates it into society's guiding concepts. The social outlook, then, obscures
> the true nature of this relationship – that is, the very existence of inequality. The
> culture explains the events that take place in terms of other premises, premises
> that are inevitably false, such as racial or sexual inferiority. (p. 8)

Marx also wrote about how many forms of oppression were created in order to

serve capitalism. Therefore, according to Marx, in order to end oppression we would first

need to overthrow the capitalist system, which perpetuates many forms of oppression.

Paul D'Amato (1999) describes how Marx and Marxists think about oppression:

> Various oppressions cannot be understood separately from capitalism because
> capitalism shapes and depends upon oppression for its survival, and 2) the most
> thoroughgoing struggle against oppression cannot be carried out on the basis of
> separate struggles of the oppressed, each unite across class lines. Such a struggle
> will always be limited by the narrow interests of bourgeois and middle-class
> elements within the oppressed group who will seek to limit the scope of the
> struggle within the confines of capitalism. Only the working class (Black, white,
> Latino, gay, straight, women, men) has both the collective power and the common
> interest to fight for complete liberation. (p. 30)

So far it is clear how the system of oppression is harmful to all those that are

oppressed but how does the system of oppression effect those who are in dominant roles,

such as the wealthy? Miller (1986) discussed the negative effects of oppression on those

who do not necessarily think of themselves as oppressed:

> What dominant groups usually cannot act on, or even see, is that this situation of inequality in fact deprives them, particularly on the psychological level… one important result of this indirect mode of operation is that members of the dominant group are denied an essential part of life- the opportunity to acquire self-understanding through knowing their impact on others. (p. 77-78)

An understanding of how oppression is interconnected, and systematically hurts most of society is important to recognize and acknowledge whenever discussing oppression. This understanding of oppression is essential for us to move forward and look more closely at the life experiences of people who actively fight oppression.

In addition to understanding oppression we must also understand how people develop an anti-oppression consciousness as well as how they develop motivation to fight oppression. The literature about joining social movements primarily focuses on the motivation for joining the social movements. Much less literature focuses on the development of an anti-oppression consciousness, which is also necessary for an individual to become an anti-oppression organizer. None of the studies really focused on specific life experiences that lead to either the development of anti-oppression consciousness or the development of motivation to take action.

<div align="center">Developing Anti-Oppression Consciousness</div>

<div align="center">*Marx & Engels' Theory Of Class Consciousness*</div>

Theoretical

Academia has often been bias against Marxist theory. This is not a recent development it was even an issue during Lenin's time. D'amato (2006) quoted Lenin:

> Throughout the civilized world the teachings of Marx evoke the utmost hostility and hatred of all bourgeois science (both official and liberal), which regards Marxism as a kind of "pernicious sect." And no other attitude is to be expected,

for there can be no "impartial" social science in a society based on class struggle. In one way or another, all official and liberal science defends wage slavery, where Marxism has declared relentless war on wage slavery. To expect science to be impartial in a wage-slave society is as silly and naïve as to expect impartiality from manufacturers on the question of whether workers' wages should be increased by decreasing profits of capital. (p. 20-21)

Lenin's observation seems to be an accurate description of today's academy.

Marx & Engels (1932) laid out in *The German Ideology* how class consciousness develops in working class individuals who are also called the "proletariat" or "labor." Their theory includes a combination of the life experiences discussed above and the idea is that people will begin to organize against oppression when they develop a political consciousness that enables them to understand their subordinate position in the capitalist economy, and the role that various forms of oppression have in maintaining that position.

According to Marx and Engels (1932) the process of developing a class consciousness is both caused by struggle as well as supports continued struggle. The working class move from a consciousness where they are only interested in their own needs or the needs of their families, to uniting with other workers; and through struggles, beginning to appreciate the needs of all workers. From this understanding they move on to organizing with other workers to fight against oppression and for economic justice for themselves and for others. Marx and Engels (1932) described this:

Further, the division of labour implies the contradiction between the interest of the separate individual or the individual family and the communal interest of all individuals who have intercourse with one another. And indeed, this communal interest does not exist merely in the imagination, as the "general interest," but first of all in reality, as the mutual interdependence of the individuals among whom the labour is divided. (Marx & Engels, 1932)

Marx & Engels (2005) described how the development of this class consciousness

can lead to the liberation of all people:

> Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers. The union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralize the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes. But every class struggle is a political struggle. (p. 52-53)

Another aspect of Marx's theory is that actually struggling for justice will create a class consciousness and lead to organizing against all forms of oppression. This is described by Bloom (1987):

> One of Karl Mark's greatest insights was that people could not change the world without changing themselves in the process. Marx saw that it was through men's and women's actual struggles that they would grow, develop talents and potentials of which they became aware only in retrospect, and eventually alter even their consciousness and self concepts. (Bloom, 1987, p. 7)

When a person develops this class consciousness he or she sees the connections between herself and her fellow workers. Despite the workers differences in gender, race, sexual orientation, and others she is united with a diverse group of workers to fight against all forms of oppression and the ruling (wealthy) class that exploits them. D'Amato (1999) cited Lenin who:

> Argued that working-class consciousness could not be considered full class consciousness until workers were trained to combat all forms of oppression: "Working –class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter what class is affected." (p. 35)

Smith (2006) showed that the prevailing perception of the United States, the most powerful and wealthy country in the world, is that it is populated by predominantly upper and middle class residents. The culture of the US discourages working class identity.

More and more people are considered by society, as well as by themselves, as "middle class," even though they are in massive debt, experience job insecurity, and are not sure how they will pay for the education of their children, or retirement. The definition used in this thesis of working class includes such individuals. Part of the reason why people in this situation are often considered middle class is because there is a somewhat negative connotation with the identity "working class." As noted before, the majority of the working class in the United States do not have a class consciousness. By Marx's definition individuals who have a class consciousness are against all forms of oppression and see the need for the end to capitalism. Many workers with class consciousness become anti-oppression organizers.

Zingraff and Schulman (1984) described class consciousness in Marxist terms of class conflict consciousness. They also describe four different levels or components of class consciousness:

> The first element, working class identification, involves the decision to place oneself in the working class as opposed to alternative, common class designations (lower, upper, or middle)…The second component, class verbalization, involves one's ability to use class-based explanations for social life…The third component, class action, is defined as the endorsement of collective action on behalf of the class interests as appropriate for achieving specific goals… The final ingredient of class conflict consciousness, egalitarian change, involves positive orientations towards worker's control in the workplace, towards economic redistribution, and towards changing the capitalist system. (p. 104-105)

A slightly different way of understanding this concept is offered by Guest (1974) who quoted Lipset describing how the working class develops a class consciousness:

> The first stage, in which a class is a class "in itself"…occurs when the class members do not understand their class position, the controls over them, or their "true class interests." The proletariat, as long as they are simply fighting for higher wages without recognizing that this is a part of a necessary class struggle between themselves and the bourgeoisie that will end in the victory of one or the

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other, are a class [in itself]. In ideal-type terms the opposite of the class is in itself is the class "for itself"… The class [for itself] is a self-conscious class, a large proportion of whose members consciously identify within and think in terms of the class's struggle with another class. As long as most persons in the lower class think [in itself] terms the behavior of the class members will be characterized by interaclass competition in which individual members of the class strive to get ahead of other members. (p. 496)

There are a number of critiques to Marxist's theory of class oppression. One is that class society is not at the root of oppression. While capitalism is only the latest form of class oppression, exploitation and oppression have been around since the birth of class societies and so have individuals who want to change it. D'Amato (2006) explained:

The idea of socialism is as old as class society itself, So long as there were high priests, kings, lords, nobles, emperors, magistrates, and generals, there were also people who envisioned, and sometimes fought for, a world in which the minority who enriched themselves at the expenses of the majority would fall, and the world's wealth would be held in common and shared by all. (p.12)

The question is, was there oppression before class societies existed? There were numerous examples of classless societies living in relative equality throughout the world. D'amato (2006) gave one example when he quoted Engels:

The Iroquois Indians, who engaged in a simple form of agriculture and hunting, were fairly egalitarian. "All quarrels and disputes are settled by the whole body of those concerned," Engels wrote of the Iroquois. "There can be no poor or needy-the communistic household and gens [clan or group of families] know their obligation toward the aged, the sick, and those disabled in war. All are free and equal – including women. There is as of yet no room for slaves, nor as a rule , for subjugation of alien tribes. (p. 39)

Another critique of Marxism comes from those who point at countries such as the Soviet Union, Cuba, or China and the oppression people face in these societies, i.e. Jews gay men and lesbians. But these societies have little relationship to the type of socialism described in Marxist theories. They would be better descried as state capitalist

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governments; this is because they have the same capitalist dynamic through a government monopoly on industry, which exploits the majority for the benefited of a few (Binns, Arnove, Cliff, Harman, Shawki, 2003).

Others argue that Marxist ideology reduces injustice to economic issues and ignores other oppressions. Marxists respond that this argument can be easily deflated when looking at the actual actions of socialist throughout history. Class consciousness actually expands class concerns from simple economic exploitation to the necessity to fight all oppressions for the liberation of all rather than seeing things as disconnected or arising from innate human nature such as greed, or biological determinism (D'Amato, 2006).

Empirical

One study, in which 1760 respondents were interviewed, found that a pro-working class consciousness was more likely to develop in people who were working class as opposed to the other classes (middle and, upper classes), and that higher income levels led to less pro-working class consciousness (Jones, 2001). This study was specifically on caring labor and found that gender did not have an effect on class consciousness. The study "suggests that for caring labor to lead to class consciousness, it must be commodified" (295). The study also found that workers who care for clients and customers "in high intensity caring occupations, are more pro-working-class conscious than other workers" (p. 296). Two studies found that being white often reduced the chances a person would have pro-working class consciousness attitudes. Other researchers found that gender did not affect a person's likelihood of developing a pro-working class consciousness (Schulman, Zingraff, & Reif, 1985).

Two studies (Schulman, Zingraff, 1986; Schulman, Zingraff, Reif, 1985) from the 1980's, attempted to measure class-consciousness in working class individuals. They looked at class "conflict" consciousness, which is an understanding that the working class is in conflict with the ruling class. The fact that there are no recent studies on this topic speaks to the need and the importance of the studies in this area.

Three studies looked at working class consciousness and its connection to political parties and voting (Brooks, 1994; Weakliem, 1993; Guest, 1974). One study found that:

> class identification, working class or middle class, has a statistically significant relationship with many attitudes and behaviors. Working class identifiers, in contrast to middle class, tend more to support government intervention, to be hostile to big business, conservatives and liberals, warm toward unions, supportive of the Democratic Party both in voting and in offering class reasons for liking it. (Guest, 1974, p. 508)

Another analyzed British working class individuals and his analysis suggested the opposite conclusion:

> A reason why the connection between economic hardship, class polarization, and electoral support for the left, however plausible in principle does not actually exist. It has long been apparent that economic hardship does not necessarily promote revolutionary class consciousness; the present study suggests that it may not promote even reformist consciousness. (Weakliem, 1993, p. 396)

One study had a slightly different analysis of the results. It compared working class consciousness and its connection to politics in the United States compared with Sweden. The researcher's results suggested that in the United States there was little connection between class consciousness and political parties but in Sweden there was a connection (Brooks, 1994, p. 191). These studies are all looking at whether class consciousness is connected to political parties and they display mixed results, which may

be attributed to the nationality of their participants.

Marxist scholars have offered, in a way, a working class identity development model, that includes people of different races, genders, sexual orientations, and leads all of them to fight not only economic oppression, but all other forms of oppression as well.

<center>Freire's Critical Consciousness Theory</center>

Theoretical

Critical consciousness , is a theory developed by Paulo Freire. Sakamoto and Pitner (2005) described critical consciousness below:

> Critical consciousness is the "process of continuously reflecting upon and examining how our own biases, assumptions and cultural world views affect the ways we perceive differences and power dynamics" (Pitner and Sakamoto in press, p. 2)…this continuous self reflection must be accompanied by action to address social injustice. (p. 441)

In order to develop a critical consciousness a person must proceed through various stages of identity development. Freire discussed this theory in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed:* Alschuler (1986) explains Freire's stages:

> In the first stage [magical thinking], people do not recognize their situations as oppressive, and they passively conform. In the naive reforming stage, people assume that problems lie in individuals who are not sufficiently good, intelligent, competent, or law abiding as defined by the system. These individuals need to be reformed. In the critical transforming stage, people realize that they are victimized by a conflict-producing system. They criticize the crucial rules and roles that cause conflictual situations and collaborate to transform the system. (p. 492-493)

Many of today's individuals in the United States are in the magical conforming stage or the naïve reforming stage of Freire's theory.   Discovering how individuals perceive their own development process from passive conformity to the critical transforming stage as well as their development of empowerment and political efficacy is key to understanding why people fight oppression. Freire's theory also states that as

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people move through these stages they move from feeling powerless with little political efficacy to feeling empowered with a sense of political efficacy.

Empirical

Only a few studies that discussed critical consciousness were found. The researchers from one study observed that in a group that was presumed to support empowerment there was a lack of critical consciousness. A number of members noticed that issues around race, class, and sexual orientations were not being discussed. In addition some participants felt like opportunities to create teachable moments were not used to increase the critical consciousness of the members in the group (Champeau & Shaw, 2002, p. 44).

According to Gutierrez (1995), in order for groups to take action to create the conditions of empowerment, they have to develop a critical consciousness. He discusses three steps that take place as a person develops this critical consciousness:

> 1. Group identification includes identifying areas of common experience and concern, a preference for one's own group culture and norms, and the development of feelings of shared fate; group membership becomes a central aspect of one's self-concept.
> 2. Group consciousness involves understanding the differential status and power of groups in society. For members of oppressed groups, this leads to feelings of relative deprivation, power discontent, and a tendency to blame the system for problems related to group membership. This understanding can draw connections between personal problems and social structure.
> 3. Self and collective efficacy refers to beliefs that one is capable of effecting desired changes in one's life. In the literature on critical consciousness, self and collective efficacy is described as perceiving one's self as a subject (rather than object) of social processes and as capable of working to change social order. (Gutierrez, 1995, p. 229)

One study on critical conciseness found that if critical consciousness was encouraged and discussed in a group, the members of that group developed a greater sense of critical

consciousness (Gutierrez, 1995).

<p style="text-align:center">Theories On Anti-Oppression Identity Development</p>

Theoretical

There are a myriad of theories on identity development. The stages usually begin with a naive view of the world and slowly progress into a more educated view of the world with a particular focus on how the oppression effects target groups. The final stage in some of these identity development theories results in a positive self-image and taking action to fight the oppression that this individual experiences. Unfortunately the theories don't discuss in depth what pushes an individual to reach the final stage of their identity development and no empirical literature was found on this topic. In fact, according to the following theories, identity development is very fluid and can stop at any stage, and even go backward. It is fluid in that someone may move from the first stage to the third stage, and then move back to the second stage. Others may start life in the second or third stage because their family educates them about oppression from such a young age there is never any naiveté.

Tatum (2003) laid out Crosses' identity development model for African Americans. This theory of black identity development suggests that for black identity development there are five stages, the pre-encounter, the encounter, the immersion/emersion, internalization, internalization/commitment. These stages are described below.

The first stage is the pre-encounter where "the Black child absorbs the beliefs and values of the dominant white culture including the idea that it is better to be white" (p. 55). The second stage is the encounter. The "transition to the encounter state is typically

precipitated by an event or series of events that force the young person to acknowledge

the personal impact of racism" (p. 55). Anger towards white people is usually present.

Stage three is the immersion/emersion which "is characterized by a strong desire to

surround oneself with symbols of one's racial identity, and actively seek out

opportunities to learn about one's history and culture with the support of same race

peers" (p. 76). Whites are considered irrelevant. Unlearning stereotypes about self and

developing a positive identity are key steps in this stage. The fourth stage is

internalization and is "characterized by a sense of security about one's racial identity.

Often the person at this stage is willing to establish meaningful relationships across group

boundaries with others, including Whites, who are respectful of this new self-

definition"(p. 76). The fifth and final stage is the Internalization/Commitment when:

> the individual has found ways to translate a personal sense of racial identity into
> ongoing action expressing a sense of commitment to the concerns of Blacks as a
> group. Whether at the fourth or fifth stage, the individual is now anchored in a
> positive sense of racial identity and is prepared to perceive and transcend race. (p.
> 76)

As we can see African Americans who reach this final stage of identity development

begin to take action and are committed to fighting against the oppression of African

Americans.

Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, and Crawford (2001) discuss Downing and Rousch's

(1985) theory around identity development stages for women who become feminists.

Obviously not all women become feminists or activists so many women remain in the

first and second stages of this identity development model:

> In the first stage (Passive Acceptance), there is an acceptance of the women's
> traditional roles. A period of Revelation [stage two] follows in which women

recognize discrimination and men are seen as the enemy. Women then enter a [third] stage of Embeddedness/Emanation in which they choose to surround themselves with other women. During Synthesis [stage four], a feminist identity develops and is integrated into the women's sense of who she is. Women are then thought to enter a [fifth] stage of Active Commitment in which they participate actively in the feminist movement. (p.124)

These two identity development models are similar in their progression but they don't address the anti-oppression identity development beyond fighting for one's own needs. For example if a woman will only fight against sexism, a black man will only fight against racism and so on. They also do not discuss how someone from a "dominant" group might become an anti-oppression organizer. Podgorecki (as cited by Macomber, 2000) suggested that:

> Those who find themselves victims of more than one form of oppression (for example black women, or disabled Jews) find that their development process in one area of their social identity may be useful in dealing with their order of targeted identities as well. (p. 84)

While this may lead a black woman to begin to fight against both racism, and sexism, it still doesn't address why she might stand up against economic injustice or heterosexism.

Daniels (2001) described Hardiman's white racial identity model that looks at how someone from a dominant group might develop into an anti-oppression organizer. In addition to being a model for developing an anti-racist consciousness as a white person, this model could be appropriately used for any member of any "dominant" group that develops into an ally of an oppressed group; such as men and heterosexuals. The model has five stages:

> Naiveté: A person in this first stage resembles a child who has little or no awareness of race and racism. This person may have had little contact with people from diverse races or ethnicities, so may come across as curious about racial or ethnic differences. As such, this person is likely to hold negative attitudes and

exhibit racial biases toward people from diverse backgrounds.

Acceptance: The acceptance stage is characterized by the belief that all people have equal opportunities to succeed. When a person or group of people do not succeed, it is seen as a characteristic of that person or group (i.e., lack of motivation or racial defects). Because racism and discrimination are denied, there may be a tendency to blame the victim.

Resistance: The third stage of White racial identity development comes about as a result of an event or events that destroy one's denial system about racial issues. This event may include development of a friendship with an ethnic minority individual or the observance of discrimination. Because of this, the person is no longer able to deny the existence of the realities of racial issues and oppression. The individual also begins to recognize him or herself as White and identifies his or her own racist attitudes. Accompanying feelings may include "anger, pain, hurt, rage, and frustration" (Sue & Sue, as cited by Daniels, 2001, 257). These feelings are likely to be directed toward one's own racial group. This person is also likely to feel awkward around people of color, for fear of saying or doing something that is deemed racist.

Redefinition: Following the pain and discomfort associated with the resistance stage, the individual begins to "confront [her or his] biases and prejudices; and accepts responsibility for one's Whiteness" (Sue & Sue, as cited by Daniels, 2001, p. 257). This person will come to understand how she or he has benefited from being White, and how that has negatively impacted people of color. This person becomes more comfortable interacting with people from different ethnic and racial heritages than the person does in the resistance stage.

Internalization: Once the person has developed a non-racist identity, he or she has entered the final stage of White racial identity. This person is now willing to work to eradicate oppression and racism. (p. 257-258)

Watts, Griffith, Abdul-Adil, (1999) described another anti-oppression identity

development model, which is even more inclusive that is called sociopolitical

development:

The theory proposes five stages of sociopolitical development, beginning with a stage where a person is oblivious to social inequality or views it as a reflection of the inferiority of the oppressed. In stage two, the person recognizes inequality but does not confront it. Instead, she or he obtains what is desired through antisocial means or through seizing and being content with whatever limited opportunities exist – without challenging the system that sets unfair limits. The pre-critical and critical stages that follow herald ways of thinking about inequality based on critical consciousness. The person becomes increasingly aware of oppression and the historical, cultural, and political processes that maintain inequality. The last stage, liberation, involves action or a strong desire to improve social conditions and eliminate oppression. Ultimately, the person becomes an active agent in the

transformation of his or her environment. (p. 262-263)

The development of the political consciousness that oppression exists is an important and necessary step on the way to becoming an anti-oppression organizer. But there are many people who understand that oppression exists that don't organize against it. In addition to an anti-oppression consciousness the individual must also have the motivation to take action and the belief that it will make a difference.

Developing Motivation to Organize Against Oppression

There are very few studies or theories that attempt to find connections or themes between life experiences that lead people to take action against oppression. There are many more theories and studies on why people join social movements. Some studies focus on how personality traits are connected to social behavior (Bandura, 1986, p. 6). Others discuss the group- think or mob mentality where people join protests just because everyone else is doing it. This is sometimes referred to as crowd contagion or system strain theory (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). Other psychological theories purport that:

> …learning can occur only by performing responses and experiencing their effects. In actuality, virtually all learning phenomena resulting from direct experience occur on a vicarious basis by observing other people's behavior and its consequences for them. The capacity to learn by observation enables people to acquire large, integrated patterns of behavior without having to form them gradually by tedious trial and error. (Bandura, 1977, 12)

Bandura cites Freud and Goslin who believe in developmental determinism, which purports that a person's behaviors are based on their experiences during childhood that created distinct personality patterns which last throughout the lifetime (Bandura, 1986, p. 31). Bandura (1986) goes on to state that modeling behavior is one of the most predominate ways that behaviors, values, attitudes are learned (p. 47). Bandura (1986)

cites Bandura, Kaplan, and Philips, "seeing that the actions of others produce good results increases the likelihood that observers will behave in a similar way. But observing modeled acts can in itself, lead others to engage in similar activities" (p. 284). Modeling social action and fighting oppression would be an example of how individuals learn to fight oppression and take action.

Perhaps part of the reason that so few studies and theories have been developed about life experiences that lead to fighting oppression is because researchers believed that motivation came entirely from within the individual:

> Many theories have been proposed over the years to explain human behavior. Until recently, some theorists held that motivational forces in the form of needs, drives, and impulses, frequently operating below the level of consciousness, where the major determinants. Since the proponents of this school of thought consider the principal causes of behavior to be forces within the individual that is were they look for the explanations of why people behave as they do. Although this view enjoyed widespread popularity and influence, it did not go unchallenged. (Bandura, 1977, p. 2)

Theories Of Motivation

Today researchers have numerous theories that move beyond trait theory; inner drives, and crowd contagion/system strain as the main sources of an individual's motivation. Some of these relatively more recent theories include, Social Cognitive Theory, Collective Identity Theory, Interactionist Theory, Rational Choice Theory, Expectancy-Value Theory, Resource Mobilization Theory, Frustration-Aggression Theory, Empowerment theory, Efficacy Theory, (Bandura, 1986; Gamson, 1991; Polleta & Jasper, 2001; Klandermans, 1984; Klandermans, 1986).

Social Cognitive Theory: The Importance of Modeling

In Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, one of the main forms of human

learning comes from vicarious experiences. Vicarious experiences are those that a person

does not experience herself but watches others experience. This can also be interpreted

as modeling. When a person sees another person, perhaps a parent or peer that notices

injustice and fights against it and is successful this modeled behavior will effect the

motivation of those who experience it vicariously. This occurs through two cognitive

functions:

> First, they create outcome expectations that can serve as positive or negative
> incentives for action. However, knowing what outcomes result from a given
> course of action is unlikely to spur observers to action if they doubt they can do it.
> Thus, motivation is also mediated by self-percepts of efficacy, the second
> mechanism. Seeing other people succeed or fail affects observer's judgments of
> their own capabilities (Brown & Inouye, 1978). People mobilize greater effort and
> persist longer on a task if they are confident they can do it than if they judge
> themselves to be inefficacious. (p. 301)

Bandura (1977) discuses how people are motivated by a combination of environmental

stimuli, such as vicarious experiences, and personal determinants. He goes on to say that

"within this approach, symbolic, vicarious, and self-regulatory processes assume a

prominent role" (Bandura, 1977, p 11-12).

Collective Identity Theory & Interactionist Theory: Importance of Group Identity

Collective Identity Theory focuses less on behavioral modeling but instead on the

community that an individual is a part of as a primary reason for motivations. Collective

Identity Theory is described by Polletta & Jasper, (2001):

> as an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader
> community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perceived of a shared status of
> relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct
> from personal identities, although I may form part of a personal identity. (p. 285)

Gamson (1991) studied Collective Identity Theory and reported that if people are able to

incorporate a collective identity in their social movement, the social movement is much

more likely to survive than if no collective identity is formed among the participants. This is especially true if the collective identity incorporates identity of being active and collaborative. (p. 49)

Others such as Olson disagree with the power of collective identity to motivate individuals. They suggest that bonds between individuals often precede the development of a collective identity and therefore collective identity does not motivate participants (Polletta, & Jasper, 2001, p. 285).

An example in support of Collective Identity Theory given by Polletta and Jasper (2001) is that when student's would relay their stories of sit-ins during the civil rights movement this created a collective identity and transformed frightening situations into images of heroic resistance (p. 291). This can also be seen as activists experiencing vicarious learning, i.e. learning from the role modeling of others.

Similar to the Collective Identity Theory are Interactionist theories, which "relate participation to the networks and groups…. Participation is inextricably bound up with group culture, and the individual decision to participate is influenced by the group to which the individual belongs" (Klandermans, 1986, p. 190).

Rational Choice Theory, Value-Expectancy Theory, and Resource Mobilization Theory: The Economic Model

Another theory related to motivation is Rational Choice Theory, which stems from a rational economic model of perceived risks and costs of participation. Wiltfang and McAdam, (1991) explained that in Rational Choice Theory by first defining risks and costs. Risk is defined as the possible anticipated fallout of taking action, such as jail time, state repression, compared with the cost of taking action which refers to the energy,

money, and time put into the activities (p. 989). Passy and Giugni (2001) wrote about

how important the individual's assessment of the risks of participation is in contributing

to whether the individual participates in the collective action. They discuss particularly

how high risks such as repression have a negative impact on an individual's decision to

participate (P. 126). Passy and Giugni (2001) wrote that:

> Participation in social movements…depends on the evaluation of the
> effectiveness of the action. Before they decide to engage, prospective participants
> assess the potential impact of their own contribution as well as that of the group in
> which they are going to be involved. (P.125)

Passy and Giugni (2001) cited a number of studies, which explain that when an

individual feels the authorities are corrupt or illegitimate in some way this will lead that

individual to be more likely to be involved in protest activities (p 126). In addition, a key

component in whether an individual takes action is whether she feels that her

involvement would make a difference (Passy & Giugni, 2001, p143). Others believe that

"Activism for many people is a way to construct a desirable self" (Polletta & Jasper,

2001, p. 290).

A slight variation on Rational Choice theory is the Expectancy-Value theory,

which looks at not risks and costs but risks and benefits. According to this theory an

individual rationally weights the cost of participation in organizing against oppression,

with the benefit she will likely receive from her participation. She will then chose to

participate if the benefits outweigh the costs (Klandermans, 1986, p. 189-190).

Klandermans (1984) explains this theory more extensively:

A basic tenet of the [expectancy-value] theory is the assumption that the
willingness to participate in an activity or an action of social movement is a
function of the perceived cost and benefits of participation in that activity or
action. The perceived costs and benefits can be classified under three headings:

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(a) goal motives are motives related to the achievement of the goal of action; (b) social motives are motives having to do with the expected reactions of significant others; (c) reward motives are motives having to do with anticipated rewards and punishments for participation. The willingness to participate is the weighted sum of these motives, and this implies they can compensate one another. (p. 107)

Klandermans (1984) goes on to explain that this theory incorporates two more basic theories of attitude and motivation. Attitude theory finds that a person's attitude about the idea of organizing against oppression is key in whether that person actually becomes motivated and takes action to organize against oppression. It is also important that the individual believe that the action she is about to take, to organize against oppression, will make a difference. For her to hold this attitude it is essential that she has some knowledge about fighting oppression. As well as strategies and a consciousness of injustice and oppression (p. 108-109).

Related to the expectancy-value theory is the idea of a free-rider. A free-rider is an individual who would benefit from the organized action against oppression, such as a women who obtains an abortion but does not participate in the movement to keep abortion legal. The reasoning is, why should I take the risk of participating in the anti-oppression struggle if I can benefit from it anyway? Klandermans (1984) explains how:

Psychologically speaking, this dilemma can be transcended if three conditions are fulfilled: (a) a person believes that participation is necessary for the success of the action, (b) a person expects that a sufficiently large number of others will take part to ensure a successful action, and (c) a person expects that a successful action will help to achieve the collective goal. Together these factors determine the expectancy that participation in an action or activity helps to achieve a collective goal. (p.108)

Gentry & Johnston (2003) discussed a similar theory of Resource Mobilization:

The resource mobilization paradigm developed in the 1970's and is rooted in an economic model, rational choice theory, put forth by Olson (1965) in the mid-1960's…. While previous work on social movement participation focused

primarily on deprivation and grievance-motivated behavior, RM locates an actor's decision to participate in the analysis of costs and benefits of participation. (p. 9-10)

Frustration-Aggression Theory: Relative Deprivation and Grievance Model

Frustration-aggression theory, suggests that individuals join social movements "as a reaction to frustration, dissatisfaction or alienation…. People and organizations are defined as systems striving for equilibrium. If the equilibrium is disturbed, they attempt to restore it" (Klandermans, 1986, p. 189-190).

Further Thoughts On Motivation

Klandermans (1984) brings together a number of theories and talks about the theory of "willingness." He wrote that:

> The theory of the willingness to participate in a social movement is based on three assumptions: a person will participate in a social movement if he is familiar with the means of action (knowledge), if he is capable of participating (capacity), and if he is also prepared to do so (willingness) (p. 108).

Another important component of motivation to take action to fight oppression is hope. While hope is not a theory per se it is an extremely important element in motivating people to organize against oppression. Bandura (1998) explains how hope is often misunderstood:

> It is often said that hopelessness breeds militant social action. However, the evidence seems to dispute this view. Consistent with efficacy theory, studies of social and political activism indicate that detrimental conditions do not instigate forceful action in those who have lost hope but rather in the more able members whose efforts at social and economic betterment have met with at least some success (Bandura, 1973). Consequently, they have reason to believe that some changes can be brought about through forceful group action. (p. 450)

Political efficacy and Empowerment theory have particular importance to social work and has a great deal of literature written about it.

Political Efficacy: The Importance of Believing in Oneself

    Theoretical.

    Bandura (1995) discussed the importance of efficacy beliefs and how they contribute in a number of ways to motivation: "They determine the goals people set for themselves, how much effort they expend, how long they persevere in the face of difficulties, and their resilience to failures" (p. 8).

    He goes on to explain four categories of experiences, which lead an individual to developing efficacy:

> People develop beliefs about their self-efficacy in four main ways, mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and psychological and emotional states. (Bandura, 1995). Mastery experiences refer to experiences in which a person actually attempts to achieve a goal and either succeeds or fails. Vicarious experiences refer to a person watching others who he/she sees as similar to herself, attempt to achieve a goal and either succeed or fail. Social persuasion refers to being persuaded that an individual can or cannot achieve his/her goals. Physiological and emotional states refer to whether a person perceives stress and tension when attempting to achieve a task or if they feel excitement and energized. (Bandura, 1995, p. 3)

    Political efficacy has at its root self efficacy which can be understood in variety of different ways. Gibson (2003) defines self-efficacy as "an individual's belief in his or her own capability to perform a task" (p. 2155). She goes on to cite Fernandez-Ballesteros et al., "that individual efficacy contributed to a more generalized sense of efficacy to effect social change through united action" (p. 2157). Bandura (1995) describes the importance of perceived self-efficacy:

> People make causal contributions to their own psychosocial functioning through mechanisms of personal agency. Among the mechanisms of agency, none is more central or pervasive than people's beliefs of personal efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations. Efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act. (p. 2)

Gibson's (2003) research continues on to say that "group efficacy, a group's collective belief in its capability to perform a task has a demonstrated impact on group effectiveness" (p. 2153). Finally, Angelique, Reischl, and Davidson (2002) used the definition that connects best with this study, "political efficacy is the feeling that individual action can have an impact on the political process" (p. 817).

A lack of political efficacy can also be seen as a feeling of powerlessness. Pinderhughes (1983) described, "power as the capacity to influence the forces which affect one's life space for one's own benefit. Powerlessness is the incapacity to exert such influences... Lack of power is painful…No one wants to feel powerless; people behave in ways that bring a sense of power" (p. 332). When a person or a group has political efficacy they both feel and are more likely to accomplish their goals. Therefore when someone has political efficacy they are empowered.

It has also been found that:

…the higher the perceived efficacy, the greater is the propensity to social activism (Forward & Williams, 1970; March, 1977; Muller, 1972, 1979). The likelihood of militant action is highest when personal efficacy is combined with political cynicism and distrust of the system, and legitimate means for accomplishing social change are perceived as ineffective. (Bandura, 1986, p. 450)

Perceived collective efficacy is essential for social activism to take place. It "is reflected in judgments about group capabilities to make decisions, to enlist supporters and resources, to devise and carry out appropriate strategies, and to withstand failures and reprisals" (Bandura, 1985, p 451).

The importance of perceived efficacy cannot be overstated in contributing to individuals abilities to organize against oppression: "People who regard themselves as

highly efficacious attribute their failures to insufficient effort or adverse situational conditions, whereas those who regard themselves as inefficacious tend to attribute their failures to low ability" (Bandura, 1995, p. 7). It is clear what an essential component perceived political efficacy for an individual who is actively organizing against oppression.

Empirical.

Political efficacy is a key component that determines whether individuals take action to influence their situation and whether they achieve their desired results. Research demonstrates that when people have political efficacy, they are more likely to achieve their goals (Drury, Cocking, Beale, Hanson, and Rapley, 2005, p. 310). It was cited that "anti-nuclear protestors have higher self efficacy than non protestors" (Drury, Cocking, Beale, Hanson, and Rapley, 2005, p. 310). Whether they had this self-efficacy and that is why they began protesting, or if they developed it because of their protesting, is unclear. Efficacy studies are distinguished in a number of ways such as political, group, and self-efficacy. All of these studies are relevant to the formation of political efficacy, which is what is of most importance here. In fact, it was found that "internal political efficacy appeared to be most related to the broader constructs of self esteem and self efficacy. One's perception of political skills is merely an extension of other perceptions of self esteem and self efficacy" (Yeich & Levin, 1994, p. 265-266). Research also found that as "group efficacy increased, the higher the average level of self-efficacy" (Gibson, 2003 p. 2174) in the members of the group studied. The study also found that "self-efficacy, group affect, and collectivism are significant correlates" (Gibson, 2003 p. 2174) to group efficacy.

Empowerment is a common theme that runs through all of these theories of anti-oppression organizer identity development theories. Empowerment theory is discussed below and focuses on the need for empowerment and political efficacy as necessary components in becoming an anti-oppression organizer and offers, through Freire's theory of critical consciousness, another identity development model for people who organize against oppression.

Empowerment Theory

   Theoretical.

Empowerment theory was developed in the 1990's. It is generally understood as a tool to support racial and ethnic groups to obtain power and self-determination. The theory seems appropriate for generalizations to other groups of people organizing against oppression, such as the working class, because the working class is a large group, it is found throughout the world, and it is diverse. If the working class were empowered to work together to fight oppression, in its many forms, workers would be a powerful force to be reckoned with. The word empowerment itself is used by many disciplines and has many different meanings. Townsend (as cited in Macomber, 2000) identified the many different ways empowerment is defined:

> We talk about empowering students by educating them to think for themselves. Or we say that community residents are empowering themselves if they only open gardens where they can grow their own food. Legislation is said to be empowering if it enables single parents to collect support payments from absentee parents. Employers see themselves as empowering workers when they allow their workers to participate in decisions to make work more efficient. Sometimes empowerment is linked to those identifying as special-interest groups. For instance people with physical disabilities speak about empowerment as a foundation for independent living. Anti-poverty groups link their empowerment to their vision of social equality. Women and men who seek pay equity… talk about differing struggles for empowerment. Experiments with affirmation action are

often described as opportunities for empowerment. Sometimes empowerment is talked about in terms of equal access to employment, housing and other areas of life. Spiritual empowerment is equated with personal enlightenment and transformation. In addition, health promotion experts recognize that empowerment has a major influence on health. [These] diverse views…reveal elements rather than the totality of empowerment. (p. 12)

Townsend's description of the ways empowerment is used is telling in that the meaning of empowerment can be interpreted in numerous ways. Swift, (as cited in Macomber, 2000), gives a more precise definition of empowerment:

> …people making decisions about their lives. How to live, where to live, who to live with, what sorts of rules and laws to be bound by, how to support life decisions – these are some of the issues that empowered people are actively involved in deciding about their own lives. (p. 13)

Gutierrez (1990) offered another description of empowerment, "At the organizational and community levels, empowerment involves increasing the political power of a collective or group, whereas at the individual level, it involves increasing the individual's sense of control without actually affecting structural change" (p. 337). Rappaport (as cited in Macomber, 2000) contributed yet another definition, "Empowerment is defined as a process by which individuals, organizations, and communities, gain control over those issues that are of concern to them" (p. 13).

Watts, Griffith, Abdul-Adil (1999) wrote about how the process of developing empowerment often involves active anti-oppression organizing:

> Critical thinking and psychological empowerment are necessary building blocks of sociopolitical development. However, at higher levels of development there is action as well as change in thinking: "Psychological empowerment is not simply self-perceptions of competence but includes active engagement in one's community and an understanding of one's sociopolitical environment" (Zimmerman 1995 p. 582) empowerment at the psychological level is the cognitive engine for liberation at higher levels. (p. 259)

As discussed in the section on oppression, lack of power affects all oppressed

groups, therefore one of the goals of empowerment is for the oppressed to gain power:

> Social work, community psychology, and health care fields present empowerment
> as a means to address the problems of powerless populations, and as a way to
> mediate the role powerlessness plays in creating and perpetuating social
> problems: (Gutierrez, 2005, p.229)

Swift & Levin (1987) defined empowerment further:

> Empowerment: 1) refers both to the phenomenological development of a certain
> state of mind (e.g., modifying the society's opportunity structure) – in other
> words, empowerment refers both to the subjective experience and the objective
> reality; and 2) is both a process and a goal. (p. 73)

Believing in oneself and actively fighting for power over one's environment is

both part of the process of becoming empowered as well as the end goal of

empowerment. Gibson (1993) discussed this further: "Empowerment theory [assumes]

that the capacity of people to improve their lives is determined by their ability to control

their environment, connect with needed resources, negotiate problem situations, and

change existing social situations that limit human functioning" (p. 389).

Swift & Levin (1987) explained that gaining power is a liberating experience and

can possibly create social change. They explained that empowerment theory was:

> …one which conceptualized the target deficit condition as a lack of meaningful
> control by the poor over their lives. The poor were to be ridded of their feelings of
> social alienation through the exercise of power. They would then, it was
> theorized, acquire a sense of individual worth and become effective actors in
> lifting themselves out of poverty. (Swift & Levin, 1987, p. 72)

When a person is becoming empowered they develop self efficacy, the ability to

make decisions, leadership and problem solving skills. Zimmerman (as cited in

Macomber, 2000), addressed this:

> …these skills…help individuals become more independent, enable them to control events in their lives, and lead them to become their own best advocate. Thus the interactional component provides the bridge between perceived control and taking action to exert control. (p. 589)

Zimmerman (as cited in Macomber, 2000) looked more closely at what specific experiences lead people to become empowered:

> [Experiences] where people create or are given opportunities to control their own destiny and influence the decisions that affect their lives [support empowerment]. They are a series of experiences in which individuals learn to see a closer correspondence between their goals and a sense of how to achieve them, gain greater access to and control over these resources, and where people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives. Efforts to gain control, access to resources, and a critical understanding of one's sociopolitical context are fundamental aspects of empowering process. (p. 22)

Rappaport (as cited in Macomber, 2000) agreed with Zimmerman and explained that:

> …much of the work of social change, organizational and community development in the direction of greater personal and collective empowerment, may be about understanding and creating settings where people participate in the discovery, creating, and enhancement of their own community narratives and personal stories. (p. 26)

Swift and Levin (1987) described three distinct developmental stages that a person who is being empowered will experience:

> In this model the sense of empowerment is made up of three developmental stages. 1. Cognitive awareness of one's self-interests, one's position with regard to the knowledge of the dominant social system's distribution of power, and the position of others relative to oneself in the system; 2. Affective feelings toward that cognitive awareness as well as feelings (especially loyalty vs. disaffection vis a vis one's relationship to others; and 3. Connotative purposiveness toward changing the social distribution of power so as to improve one's social condition and advance one's self interests in great parity. (p. 74)

As the quote above suggests the stages of empowerment are similar to identity development theories, and are unlike the development of class consciousness development. The empowerment process leads individuals to fight for their own needs

and perhaps the needs of their immediate community. It does not however, necessarily lead them to fight for justice for all or to end all forms of oppression.

A key theme that runs throughout all of these definitions and descriptions of empowerment is the idea that in order for people to become empowered they also need to believe in themselves. More specifically they must believe that they can effect political change if they set out to do so. When someone believes this, it is called political efficacy.

Empirical.

Political efficacy is a part of the empowerment process. To be empowered one must also have self-efficacy, and to be politically empowered one must have political efficacy. Without the belief that one's actions will make a difference there can be no empowerment. One study describes the process toward empowerment slightly differently: "Recent research has hypothesized that empowerment can arise from collective action through collective self-objectification (CSO), defined as action that actualizes participants social identity against the power of dominant groups" (Drury et al, 2005, p. 309). The study also concluded that, in fact, collective self-objectification was a major feature for determining empowering experiences.

Three studies on the development of empowerment had mixed results (Angelique, Reischl, & Davidson, 2002; Champeau & Shaw, 2002; LeCroy, 2004). Two studies of groups that encouraged empowerment showed that members felt more empowered after the group (Angelique, Reischl, & Davidson, 2002; LeCroy, 2004). It was found that one group did increase the members' commitment to politics but it did not increase community involvement or activism. Perhaps the most confusing result was that the study noticed a negative effect on political efficacy among the participants. (Angelique,

Reischl, & Davidson, 2002, p. 826-827). One of the studies determined that the group empowered predominately white, middle class, heterosexual women, while disempowering others, particularly women of color and working class women (Champeau & Shaw, 2002, p. 42-43). Zimmerman & Rappaport (1988) found in their studies that: "the results of the three studies reported … support the hypothesis that greater participation in community activities and organizations is associated with psychological empowerment" (p. 745).

Another study by Rappaport (as cited in Macomber, 2000) found:

> That the measure about civic duty consistently contributed to the function in both samples suggests that empowerment is not only a self-perception of competence and control, but includes a concern for the common good and a sense of connectedness to others. Empowerment can now be described in positive terms as more than the absence of alienation, hopelessness, or powerlessness. (p. 14)

Strengths of studies

Generally the empirical research questions and the purpose of the empirical studies were stated clearly, with clear hypotheses. One strength found in four studies, on empowerment and three concerning class consciousness, was that they had very large sample sizes ranging from 450 to 1760 surveys from participants (Weakliem, 1993; Jones, 2005; Guest, 1974; Brooks, 1994). For three qualitative research studies on class consciousness and empowerment the sample sizes ranged from 67 to 127 (Schulman, Zingraff, & Reif, 1986; Schulman & Zingraff 1985; Angelique, Reischl & Davidson II, 2002). Two studies on class consciousness used random sampling (Schulman & Zingraff, 1985; Schulman, Zingraff & Reif, 1986) and five studies, one on political efficacy, two on empowerment and critical consciousness, and two on class consciousness, were described as racially diverse (Yeich & Levein, 1994; Champeau & Shaw, 2002; LeCroy,

2004; Schulman & Zingraff, 1985; Schulman, Zingraff & Reif 1986).

Many different types of research design were used some of which were considered noteworthy designs. Three studies on class consciousness analyzed government surveys in a longitudinal and relational fashion (Guest, 1974; Brooks, 1994; Jones, 2005). Three studies on empowerment and critical consciousness involved experiments that involved control groups (Gutierrez, 1995; Angelique, Reischl, Davidson II, 2002; LeCroy, 2004). Four studies, two on empowerment and two on class consciousness involved interviews (Champeau & Shaw, 2002; Drury et al, 2005; Schulman Zingraff & Reif, 1985; Schulman & Zingraff, 1986) as well as one on empowerment which also involved observation (Champeau & Shaw, 2002).

Limitations of studies

Five studies, one on empowerment and efficacy and four on class consciousness, were particularly limited in terms of sample diversity.   They did not discuss demographics of race or gender (Drury et al, 2005; Weakliem, 1993; Brooks, 1994; Guest, 1974, Jones, 2005). A limitation to this research is that many of the empirical studies on critical consciousness, and especially class consciousness were very old. In fact six of the studies were between eleven and thirty-two years old (Gutierrez, 1995; Brooks, 1994; Weakliem, 1993; Schulman & Zingraff, 1986; Schulman, Zingraff, & Reif, 1985; Guest, 1974).

There were also biases that should be noted in a number of the studies. Three studies on empowerment only used students but hoped to generalize to the rest of the population (Angelique, Reischl, Davidson II, 2002; Gutierrez.1995, LeCroy, 2004). While most studies looked at people living in the United States, three studies, two on

class consciousness, one on empowerment, looked at non-American citizens living outside the United States (Drury et al, 2005; Brooks, 1994; Weakliem, 1993). Two studies on working class attitudes were performed at a company that had struggled to form a union eight years prior (Schulman & Zingraff, 1986; Schulman, Zingraff, & Reif, 1985). One study on class consciousness was biased in that the participants were predominantly high income and highly educated (Jones, 2005) and one study on political efficacy was based on homeless persons (Yeich & Levin, 1994).

Life Experiences That Led People To Take Action Against Oppression

There are many ideas about what life experiences lead people to become organizers against oppression. Most of these ideas are based on anecdotal stories. No studies were found that discussed theories about life experiences that lead to anti-oppression organizing. In order for a life experience to lead an individual to organize against oppression two things must be learned. First, that oppression exists, and second that the individual can and should do something about it. While one life experience may lead to both of these things occurring at the same time, it is likely that these two steps may occur at different times, due to different life experiences.

For the purpose of this study, life experiences are defined in four categories: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion experiences, and psychological and emotional state experiences (Bandura, 1995). While these categories are usually used for experiences that people have had that help them to develop self-efficacy, the terms are appropriate in thinking about what life experiences help people to develop an understanding of oppression, and the motivation to take action to fight that oppression. Mastery experiences are those experiences that an individual personally

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experiences; such as oppression or experience of resisting oppression.

Vicarious experiences are experiences where an individual watches another persons experience resisting oppression, and learned from that experience. An example of this would be witnessing oppression of family and other role models and how they resist oppression. Social persuasion experiences are experiences in which information persuades the individual that, for example, oppression exists and that it can be successfully resisted. Educational experiences would fit under this category.

The last category is psychological and emotional state experiences. These are physical sensations that lead a person to, for example, understand that oppression exists as well as to feel energized to organize against it. An example of this may be a witnessing oppression, or experiencing oppression both of which could cause emotional states that would lead one to understand oppression exits. These categories are not mutually exclusive, but can help to organize our understanding of these experiences.

Other examples of life experiences that may lead to understanding that oppression exists and/or fighting oppression are: employment, being a part of a union, anti-oppression resistance and victories, demonstrations, travel, exposure to media as well as exposure to books, music, film, political news, political meetings or lectures, and mass movements. These examples of experiences have been listed based on preliminary discussions with individuals who organize against oppression.

No empirical studies on this topic were found, which points to the need for a study of this kind. The anecdotal evidence that certain types of life experiences do lead to anti-oppression organizing has been mainly drawn from literature, analyzing historical movements and anecdotal examples from autobiographies of anti-oppression organizers.

Mastery Experiences

One of the most important ways that oppression is resisted is when people who experience it directly stand up and fight it. Fanon (1963) theorizes that when people experience oppression they respond with resistance. He goes on to theorize that when the oppressed fight back with violence they heal the wounds of their oppression. Freire (1970) also theorizes about how oppression can lead to the development of critical consciousness and a clearer sense of the existence of oppression.

Experiencing & Resisting Oppression

There are many people who in the face of this oppression recognize the injustice and begin to organize against it. (Shawki, 2006; Bondar, 1982; Smith, 2006; Dobbs, 1972; Freire, 1970; Fanon, 1963; Cantor, 1969; Haley, 1965). One of these individuals was Fredrick Douglass. Fredrick Douglass (as cited by Shawki, 2006) writes about when he first resisted his slave masters and how this one instance changed his life forever:

> I was a changed being after that fight, I had reached the point at which I was not afraid to die. This spirit made me a freeman in fact, though I still remained a slave in form. When a slave cannot be flogged, he is more than half free. (p. 45)

Perhaps the most important event in many people's lives in 1929 was the stock market crash, which began the Great Depression. This event led to the increase of unemployment and lower wages for workers that were employed. The "Republican President, Herbert Hoover opposed every measure to grant federal assistance to feed the hungry or help the homeless" (Smith, 2006, p. 102-103). During this time, thousands of people were dying of malnutrition, starvation, and exposure to the weather while employers refused to bargain with unions. Clearly economic oppression had become unbearable for many people during this time.

During the 1930's, US citizens began to undergo a radicalization process. The

great depression had left millions of Americans feeling insecure, if not completely

devastated. Hundreds of thousands of people began to organize, unionize, strike, and

protest. Due to mass pressure, the Roosevelt administration proposed the New Deal and

proceeded to put into place a social democratic program to support US citizens.

Bodnar (1982) agrees that massive unbearable unemployment during the early

1930's led to the rise in unionism and strike movement which followed:

> The major stimulus toward a grass-roots labor movement at the local level was
> unemployment. Orville Rice and others were out of work frequently before 1937.
> Moreover, some men clung so tenaciously to their jobs that they would never
> think of taking a vacation. (p. 121)

Dobbs (1972) quoted a worker in the 1930's who was living in practical poverty

when his pay was cut. He discussed why he got involved in his union:

> I could expect to be laid off in the spring like coal drivers generally, since the
> work was seasonally confined to the colder months of the year. And I could be
> fired at any time without recourse merely at the employer's whim. Something had
> to be done to improve the situation, and that's why I told Grant Dunne I would
> join the union. (p. 16)

Bodnar (1982) demonstrated how in the 1930's workers had finally reached their

limit:

> Essentially, however, workers challenged company and community structures
> with organization drives primarily to preserve the integrity of their family-
> community-, and work based enclaves. They had been powerless and treated
> unfairly for years, but they did not choose to move against this system until the
> economic dislocations of the early thirties threatened their community base.
> Workers were now willing to mount challenges to company power and risk injury
> and violence. (p. 122)

Freire (1970) quotes a Brazilian peasant who explains how first the oppressed

must be aware that they are oppressed and once they are aware of this they can fight the

oppression: "The peasant begins to get courage to overcome his dependence when he realizes that he is dependent. Until then, he goes along with the boss and says 'what can I do? I am only a peasant'" (p. 61).

Some believe that the oppressed are the only ones that can free themselves from their oppression: "Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both [the oppressed and the oppressor]" (Freire, 1970, p. 44).

Some historians suggest that when the oppressed are discouraged by the liberal, often middle class approach to change, which is characterized by compromise and being "realistic" and often does not achieve lasting change, they believe it will not be sufficient to achieve their goals. The theory is that this will lead them to become more radical anti-oppression organizers. Cantor (1969) discussed this in relation to the origins of the black power movement:

> In the face of such discouragement the Northern ghettos experienced a sweeping revival of separatist ideology and a militant resurrection of Garvey's "black nationalism." A militant movement had begun in the 1950's when Elijah Muhammad had declared himself the Black Prophet of Islam in America. (p. 258)

Freire (1970) explains a similar pattern:

> Sooner or later being less human leads the oppressed to struggle against those who made them so. In order for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it) become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of humanity of both. (p. 44)

Another idea in the literature is the belief that oppressed individuals must first liberate themselves from their internalized oppression, before they will begin to organize against oppression. Bloom (1987) discusses an example of this:

> Challenging the entrenched system necessitated a self-transformation that involved a difficult struggle both within and between individuals. People had to

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confront themselves and to steel themselves to make it possible to confront white power. It is not surprising that youth played such an important role in this process. They did so not only because they were relatively free of the encumbrance of life – of homes, jobs, families but also because they were still in the process of defining themselves as individuals and had sufficient personal flexibility to attempt the difficult process of refashioning themselves. Standing up to the white power necessitated restructuring the black community: new leaders were required, as well as a new style of leadership. (p. 220)

While these ideas may make a lot of sense, there are many instances in history where severe oppression and harsh repression did not lead the oppressed population to rise up. It therefore would make sense that experiencing oppression is one of perhaps a number of life experiences, that when combined with other experiences, may lead people to anti-oppression organizing.

Vicarious Experiences

A vicarious experience is one that an individual does not experience herself but observes others experiences. Experiences with role models, both inside and outside the family are examples of vicarious experiences. A theory that supports vicarious experiences is that of Social Cognitive Theory. Social Cognitive Theory has at its core learning from modeling the behaviors of others. Bandura (1986) explained that, "throughout the years, modeling has always been acknowledged to be one of the most powerful means of transmitting values, attitudes, and patterns of thought and behavior" (p. 47). In addition, "seeing that the actions of others produce good results increases the likelihood that observers will engage in similar activities (Bandura, 1962; Kaplan, 1972; Phillips, 1968)" (Bandura, 1986, p. 301).

Bandura (1995) went on to theorize that:

Collective efforts at social change are sustained in large part by the modeled successes of other reformers and by evidence of progress toward desired goals.

Long delays between action and noticeable results discourage many advocates along the way. Even the more efficacious individuals, who are not easily deterred, find their efforts blunted by many organizational mechanisms that diffuse and obscure responsibility. (p. 37)

Family Experiences

In the United States families are one of the greatest influences on an individual's development. Our families often teach us about moral principals, religion, as well as how to communicate and behave. Our world view is often created by our families. It only makes sense that the attitude our families teach us about our own political efficacy, power, - our ability to make a difference, - will effect whether or not we become anti-oppression organizers (Payne, 1995; Perry, 2001; Eagles, 1993, Haley, 1965). Our families may even teach us that organizing against oppression is an important value or duty.

One theory that has been studied relates to the influence of family experiences on individuals who organize against oppression. Bandura (1986) reported the results of a number:

> …of comparative studies indicate that people who are most disposed to social action generally come from family backgrounds in which the exercise of social influence has been modeled and rewarded (Keniston, 1968; Rosenhan, 1970). However modeling influences, which serve as a major vehicle of social diffusion, can substantially alter the personal and social correlates of activism over time. Those who initiate collective action usually differ in characteristics from later adopters, who need greater assurance that they have something to gain through militant action. (p. 450)

Payne (1995) reports anecdotal evidence of how families influence individuals to become anti-oppression organizers. He cites many examples like this one:

> When…asked to account for her lengthy activist career, Miss Baker often launched into a description of growing up in rural Virginia and North Carolina just after the turn of the century…She took considerable pride in being from a family with explicit traditions of defiance and race pride, but her reconstructions

of her childhood also emphasized a family tradition of just being concerned about people, being involved in one's community. (p. 97)

Other examples given by Payne (1995) include African American parents who pushed their children to read about the NAACP and about lynching and to stay in school instead of working on the plantations. Other families modeled resistance to the white power system by not stepping off the sidewalk when a white man approached. Payne (1995) went on to describe how many individuals were inspired by their families to fight oppression:

> Ella Baker saw her own activism as part of a tradition of social involvement in her family that went back to slavery. James Meredith, who integrated the University of Mississippi, says that he was taught growing up that the worst thing a Meredith could do was work in white folks' kitchens or take care of white folk's children. Medgar Evers' standard of manhood was set largely by his father's refusal to kowtow to whites. Fannie Lou Hamer says that her mother, a sharecropper known to carry a pistol to the fields in her lunch basket if trouble was brewing, taught her to stand up for herself no matter what the odds. Septima Clark attributed her lack of fear to her mother, raised in Haiti and very outspoken on racial matters; she liked to boast that she :never gave a white woman a drink of water." Visiting Amite County in 1965, reporter Jack Newfield found that one of the young people working with the movement was fifteen-year old Herbert Lee, Jr., whose father had been murdered in 1961. Among SNCC members, John Watkins, Hollis' father had to leave home while still a boy because he fired a shotgun at a white man who was cursing his mother in their front yard… Martha Prescod Norman's parents sent her to school where they knew she would encounter racial hostility, because they wanted her to be tough enough to take it… The people who formed much of the core of the movement in Breenwood in 1962-1963 frequently came from families with similar traditions of social involvement or defiance, subtle or overt. These were people who joined earliest and often the people who worked the hardest. (p. 233-234)

Experiences with Role Model & Leaders

Another aspect of having experiences with role models is that the oppressed are able to connect with each other. When this happens an opportunity is created for the development of anti-oppression organizers. This is because the oppressed gain access to

anti-oppression organizers who act as role models and leaders (Bloom, 1978; Cantor, 1969; Crow Dog, 1990). An example of this is when African Americans began to move from the countryside to cities during World War II:

> The economic and sociological transformations brought to the south by the depression and World War II prepared the basis for the emergence of the New Negro but the war itself was the single most important catalytic event: it opened up jobs for blacks, took them off the farms, and set them in the cities; it put guns in their hands and trained them to use them; the war exposed blacks to education and to the world and made them more cosmopolitan. As a result by the wars end blacks were becoming more self-assertive. Morton Rubin, who did a study of "Plantation County: in the late forties, noted the trend toward a growing feeling of race consciousness and race pride…" (Bloom, 1987, p. 128).

Another example of role models is found in Crow Dog's (1990) autobiography. She writes about how her life experience of being exposed to the American Indian Movement inspired her to become an activist. She describes a meeting she attended where a Chippewa man made a speech about his American Indian pride and how the white man has been beating him and his people down every since they arrived on the Mayflower. He wasn't afraid to talk about the genocide of the Native Americans or tell the true meaning of Thanksgiving and Columbus Day (p. 75). Mary Crow Dog explained how exposure to racial pride led her to join AIM and become politically active.

Cantor (1969) explains how when Rosa Parks refused, protesting her second class citizenship, to give up her seat on the bus she inspired many to join the Montgomery bus boycott that was being organized by Martin Luther King among others (p. 247). This is an example of role models who both resist oppression as well as organize ways for the average person to get involved. These role models and leaders are key in getting people involved.

Another way in which role models and leadership can spur people towards action

is successful resistance against oppression. When individuals see anti-oppression

movements succeeding, they are more likely to be motivated to begin organizing against

oppression. Marable (1991) sites an example of this:

> The second reconstruction actually began in earnest on the afternoon of 1
> February 1960. Four young black students from North Carolina Agricultural and
> Technical College, Joseph McNeil, David Richmond, Franklin McCain and Izell
> Blair, sat at a drugstore lunch counter in the "whites only" section. Politely, but
> firmly they refused to move until the store was closed. The next day about 30
> students joined the desegregation protest, in what became known as a "sit in." On
> 3 February, over 50 black students and 3 white students participated in the
> demonstration. News of this form of nonviolent, direct-action protest spread
> quickly across North Carolina, and then over the country. Within a week, sit-ins
> were begin staged or planned in High Point, Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Elizableth
> City, Concord, and other North Carolina cities and towns (p. 61).

This example clearly shows how witnessing role models and leaders successfully resist

oppression can inspire others to do the same. Another example of how leadership and

anti-oppression victories can lead to someone becoming an anti-oppression organizer

occurred during the struggles of the early thirties. The US Army, Police, and state

troopers were used to attack and fire upon unemployed demonstrators, hunger protestors,

and striking workers, leaving protesters dead and injured (Smith, 2006, pp. 102-103).

Despite this, "the left began to grow during this period. The Communist Party grew from

eight thousand to twenty-four thousand members, and even the Socialist Party

experienced an increase in membership" (Smith, 2006, p. 107).

There were three major strikes that were successful in the spring of 1934, which

appear to have encouraged workers to get involved in fighting against oppression. In

addition, many workers were becoming more and more radical and were able to provide

leadership to workers who had not fought oppression in the past:

> The three victorious strikes in Toledo, San Francisco, and Minneapolis, began
> peacefully, against the conservative Union leaders' wishes. The striking workers
> faced major government repression and violence. The strikers did not stop
> fighting for their right to unionize and keep their jobs despite being fired upon.
> Massive coordination between unemployed workers and striking workers from
> different companies was needed for the success. (Smith, 2006, pp. 109-110)

During the Flint Sit-Down strike, which was perhaps the most important strike of the

century, workers sat down in the plants and fought off the police for weeks. After they

were successful in getting the auto corporations to recognize their union, sit down strikes

became a popular and important technique for fighting oppression in many different

forms. It is clear that when oppressed groups model how to resist oppression and provide

leadership for others more people get involved in anti-oppression organizing.

Leadership that models unity across racial lines has often strengthened oppressed

people's movements, as it did for the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The

CIO opened in 1935 and drew masses and masses of workers to join unions. It was one of

the first unions to openly welcome both black and white workers. The labor movement

had for the first time become multiracial and in the next 5 years 50,000 African

Americans would join the CIO. (Smith, 2006, pp. 116-117). In the end the AFL and CIO,

both unions with conservative leadership, led to the eventual weakening of more left-

wing organizations such as the communist party. The communist party was one

organization that provided leadership based on cross-racial unity:

> At times many people joined the Communist Party. In addition to fighting for
> workers rights they also fought against racism. One of the first major anti-racism
> fights that both blacks and whites participated in was the fight to free the
> Scottsboro Boys. (p. 129)

As we can see through the examples described many individuals initially used

experiences watching role models to learn how to organize against oppression.

<p align="center">*Social Persuasion Experiences*</p>

Educational Experiences

Freire (1970) discusses in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* the theory of how education is the key to developing critical consciousness and understanding oppression. Another type of experience that has clearly led some to become anti-oppression organizers is through education. Learning about oppression in classes, books, meetings, lectures, intercultural experiences, can all lead a person to want to do something about the oppression she is learning about (Fanon 1963; Cantor, 1969; Freire, 1970, Haley, 1995). People also may have educational experiences in which they learn about movements against oppression that may also lead them to want to try to make a difference in the world. Fanon (1963) discussed an example illustrating what a difference it makes when an oppressed persons learns he is valued as much as his oppressor:

> Thus the native discovers that his life, his breath, his beating heart are the same as those of the settler. He finds that the settler's skin is not of any more value than a native's skin; and it must be said that this discovery shakes the world in a very necessary manner. All the new, revolutionary assurance of the native stems from it. For if, in fact, my life is worth as much as the settler's, his glance no longer shrivels me up nor freezes me, and his voice no longer turns me into stone. I am no longer on tenterhooks in his presence; in fact, I don't give a damn for him. Not only does his presence no longer trouble me, but I am already preparing such efficient ambushes for him that soon there will be no way out but that of flight. (p 36-37)

Cantor (1969) discussed how when African American men went to fight in World War I they learned about the hypocrisy of United States' stated mission of bringing democracy to the rest of the world. They knew no such democracy at home, where they regularly feared white lynching attacks on the black community (p. 240).

Freire, (1970) firmly believed that education was a key step and perhaps the most important step on the path to the liberation of the oppressed. He believed that when the oppressed begin to understand that the future is not set in stone and that the oppressed can affect change, this is when they begin to take action:

> It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves…. The instance that the oppressed engage in reflection on their concrete situation is not a call to armchair revolution. On the contrary, reflection, - true reflection – leads to action…. (p. 65-66)

Haley (1965) discussed the reasons Malcolm X became an activist. There were a variety of reasons including family influence, experiencing and witnessing oppression, and religious influence, but perhaps he would not have developed into the activist he was without the extensive education he received in prison, reading history, religion, and philosophy books. This education gave Malcolm X the consciousness and understanding with which he could contextualize his anger and racial pride. Freire (1970) noted that: "A deepened consciousness of their situation leads people to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation" (p. 85).

Psychological/Emotional State Experiences

Witnessing Oppression

Another theory that is often touted is that people, who are exposed to oppression of someone they care about, even if they are not the ones being oppressed, will begin to stand up against it. One example of this was the story told by Perry (2001) about a young girl who's family owned slaves, but when she saw a slave boy who had been beaten with bloody marks on his back she decided that it was wrong and that she was going to fight for justice (p. 39).

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Another population that was affected in this way during the great depression, due to their direct contact with the economically disadvantaged, was social workers. Many social workers were extremely supportive of the New Deal policies of the 1930s while others criticized them for not encompassing broader changes. One such group of social workers called themselves the "rank and file" (Reisch and Andrews, 2002). This group of social workers began to organize against oppression, while the majority of social workers did not. Here again we see that some people who witness oppression become anti-oppression organizers while others do not. There may be other life experiences, that when combined with experiencing or witnessing oppression may lead to the development of anti-oppression organizers. There are a variety of life experiences that lead to anti-oppression organizing and that perhaps a combination of these life experiences is what is necessary.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

This chapter has reviewed some of the literature that defines oppression, including examples of life experiences among anti-oppression organizers, and theories about how these organizers develop. From this literature we can determine that there seems to be a pattern in the development of anti-oppression organizers, and there are many examples of life experiences that led such individuals to organize against oppression. At the same time many people have similar experiences and don't go on to organize against oppression. So the question remains: Are there common identifiable life experiences among people who organize against oppression? The answer to this question is still unclear and that is why this study may be helpful in better understanding this important phenomenon. The next chapter will report the methodology used in this research study and any biases and complications that occurred throughout the process.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Study Purpose and Question

The research question explored is, "Are there common identifiable life experiences among people who actively organize against oppression?" The purpose of this exploratory study was to understand and describe any life experience trends that are identifiable among this population, as perceived by the participants. This question was chosen because there have been no empirical studies of this sort and very little theoretical publications on the topic.

Research Method and Design

The research method used was an exploratory, descriptive study. The exploratory design was chosen because little information is available on about this topic; therefore, a question was posed instead of a hypothesis. The study consists of a literature review and survey.

The study was designed to identify experiences that lead people to become motivated to organize against oppression. The study further described the variety of life experiences, which are common among people who organize against oppression (Steinberg, 2004).

The study includes open ended questions, and utilizes a cross-sectional relational design that asks people in a single point in time what they believe affected their behavior at a previous time in history. Surveys were collected over the Internet using "Survey

Monkey." Demographic information was also collected at the beginning of the survey.

This type of design was used because surveys allow a larger number of responses than interviews. Open-ended questions were used to gain a more in-depth response than closed ended questions.

<center>*Type of Data*</center>

Demographic information included age, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, annual household income, number of members in household, years of education completed, and job title. In addition, information on the types of oppression participants organized against, and the strategies they used were collected. In retrospect, collecting participants' religious affiliations may have been helpful as well. This demographic information was followed in the survey by ten questions addressing organizing against oppression. Four were "yes or no" questions, three were multiple choice, and three were open-ended. The next section of the survey addressed life experiences of the participants. This section consisted of eight questions. One was "yes or no", three were multiple choice, three were open ended and one asked if the participant would be willing to be interviewed. Seventy-one individuals completed the survey and thirty-four participants skipped one or more question. The selection criteria for the participants are described in the sample section below.

<center>*Sample*</center>

A diverse sample of individuals, including people of various races, genders, and sexual orientations was obtained. This data is discussed extensively later in this chapter. In order to obtain the sample, a non-probability sampling technique of a combination of convenience and snowballing was used. Ideally, a random sample would have been used,

but it was not within the scope of this study. The sample was obtained through e-mailing the online survey to a variety of online activist list serves. There were a number of responses that only included demographic information and these responses could not be included in the results. There were also a large number of responses that only filled out the first half of the survey. These responses were used with the information that was provided. Although incomplete, this researcher recognized this as a limitation but felt that the information would still be useful. The reason and limitation for using this data, was that it would be unethical to throw data away when someone had spent time answering the survey and was expecting it to be used. There was another group of respondents that only answered the closed ended questions, such as the "yes/no" questions and multiple-choice questions, leaving all of the open-ended questions blank. These responses were also included in the data analysis.

While no quota system was used, this researcher did attempt to obtain a diverse population of anti-oppression organizers, to respond by sending the survey to list serves that would reach these individuals. The results of this effort were a diverse sample in some areas, and less diversity in other areas. There is great diversity in sexual orientation; there is also some diversity of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

The sample consisted of seventy-one participants who filled out the survey although thirty-four participants skipped one or more questions. Forty percent were between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-nine years old. Fifteen percent were between the ages of thirty-five and thirty-nine, thirteen percent were between the ages of nineteen and twenty-four, and ten percent were between the ages of thirty and thirty-four. So the sample consisted primarily of thirty-five year olds and under. The range was nineteen to

seventy-one, the average age was thirty-three point eight, the median was twenty-nine, and the mode was twenty-seven years old (see Figure 1).

Sixty-one percent of the population surveyed identified as Caucasian or White. Seven percent identified as biracial (Black and White), and another eight percent did not respond. Six percent identified as Asian and the remaining sample identified as Black/African American, Native American/American Indian, Asian-Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino/White, Hispanic/Latino, South Asian, and Mixed (see Figure 2).

There were twenty-seven ethnicities reported, twenty-one percent did not respond, and thirteen percent reported Caucasian/White (see Table 1). Seventy-eight percent of the participants were U.S. Citizens. Other nationalities reported were Canadian, Ecuadorian, Nicaraguan, Scottish, Sri Lankan, and USA/Netherlands (see Figure 3).

The reported gender of the participants was sixty-six percent female, thirty-two percent male, 1% transgender/Gender Variant, and 1% Ambivalent. Participants' reported sexual orientation was fifty percent heterosexual/straight, seventeen percent bisexual, ten percent queer, 6% lesbian, 4% mostly straight, 3% gay, 1% pansexual, 1% celibate, and 1% human. Seven percent did not respond (see Figure 4).

Household income range was from $40,000 in debt with no income, to $200,000 a year. Forty-six percent earned $40,000 or less and ten percent did not respond. The average income was $53,844, while the median was $40,000, and the mode $30,000 (see figure 5).

Figure 1: Participant Self-Reported Age Demographics

Legend:
- 19-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-75
- No response

Pie chart values: 53%, 24%, 7%, 8%, 3%, 1%, 4%
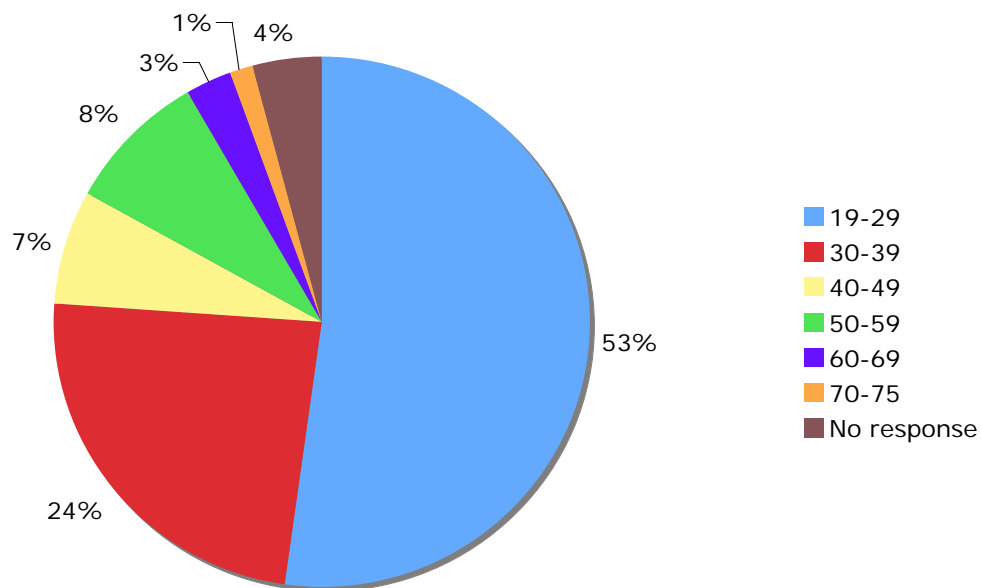
Figure 2: Participant Self-Reported Race Demographics

Legend:
- White/Caucasion
- Black/African American
- Black/White Biracial
- Asian
- Asian/Caucasion Biracial
- Hispanic/Latino
- Hispanic/Latino/White
- Native American/Indian
- No Response
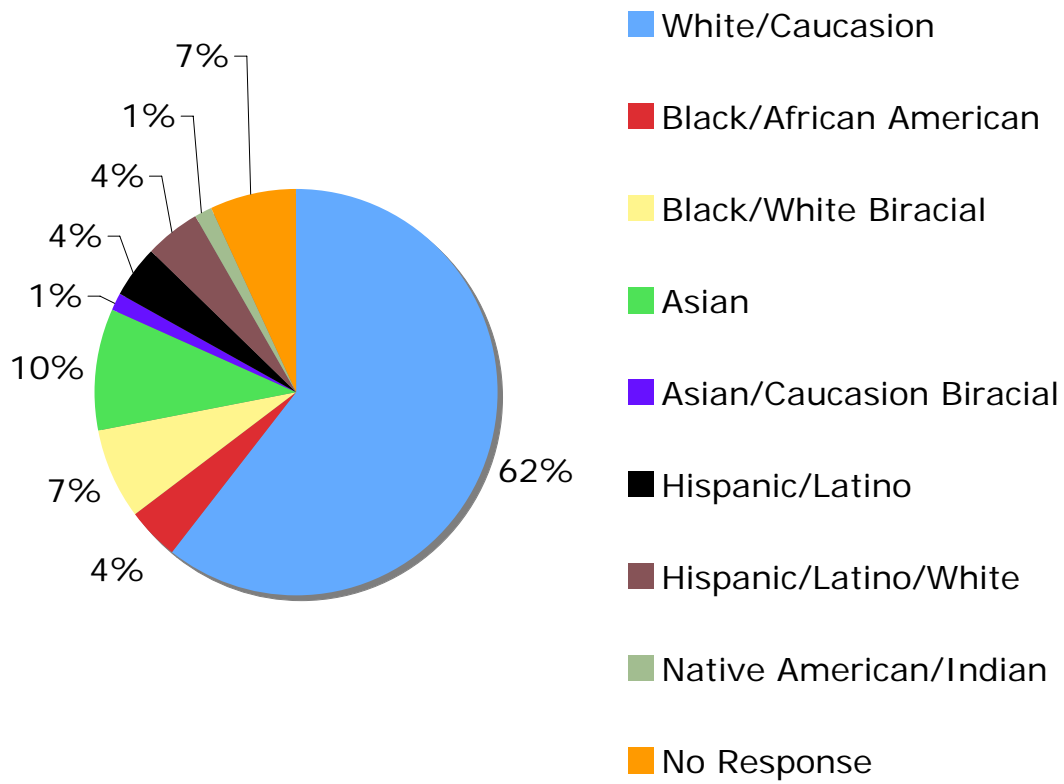
Table 1: Participant Self-Reported Ethnicity Demographics

African	1
African, Dominican, German	1
Asian American	1
Black	2
Cajun French	1
Caucasian/White	6
Chinese	2
European	9
Filipino	2
Greek, Italian, Swiss	1
Hispanic	2
Indian	1
Irish, German	3
Irish, German, French, English, American	1
Irish, German, Italian, Polish	1
Irish, Italian	1
Italian, American	1
Jamaican, American	1
Jewish	9
Jewish, Gypsy, Polish	1
Latino, Eastern European	1
Mexican	1
Mexican, Dutch	1
Mixed	3
South Asian	2
Swedish/Dutch	1
No response	15
	71

Figure 3: Participant Self-Reporte
Nationality Demographics

Legend:
- United States of American
- Canada
- Ecuadorian
- Indian
- Nicaraguan
- Scottish
- Sri Lankan
- USA/Netherlands
- No Response

78%
14%
2%
1%
1%
1%
1%
1%
1%
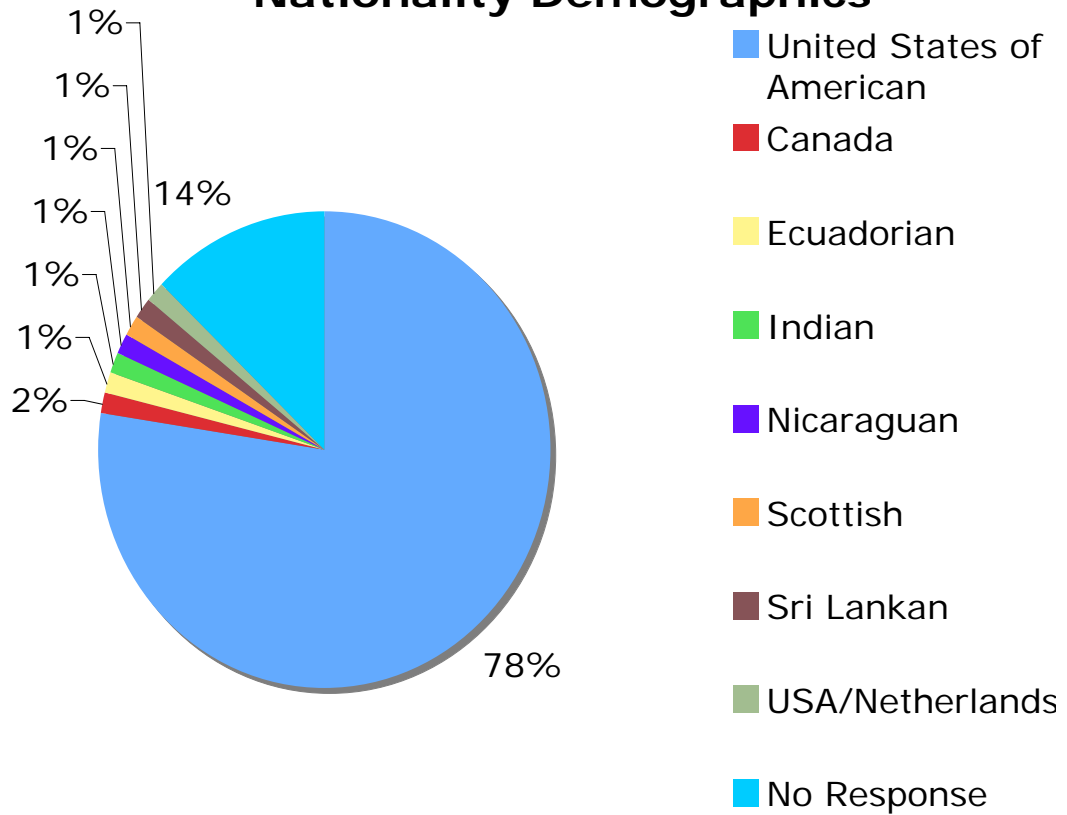
Figure 4: Participant Self-Reported Sexual Orientation Demographics

- Heterosexual/Straight — 50%
- Bisexual — 17%
- Queer — 10%
- Lesbian — 6%
- Mostly straight — 4%
- Gay — 3%
- Pansexual — 1%
- Celibate — 1%
- Human — 1%
- No response — 7%
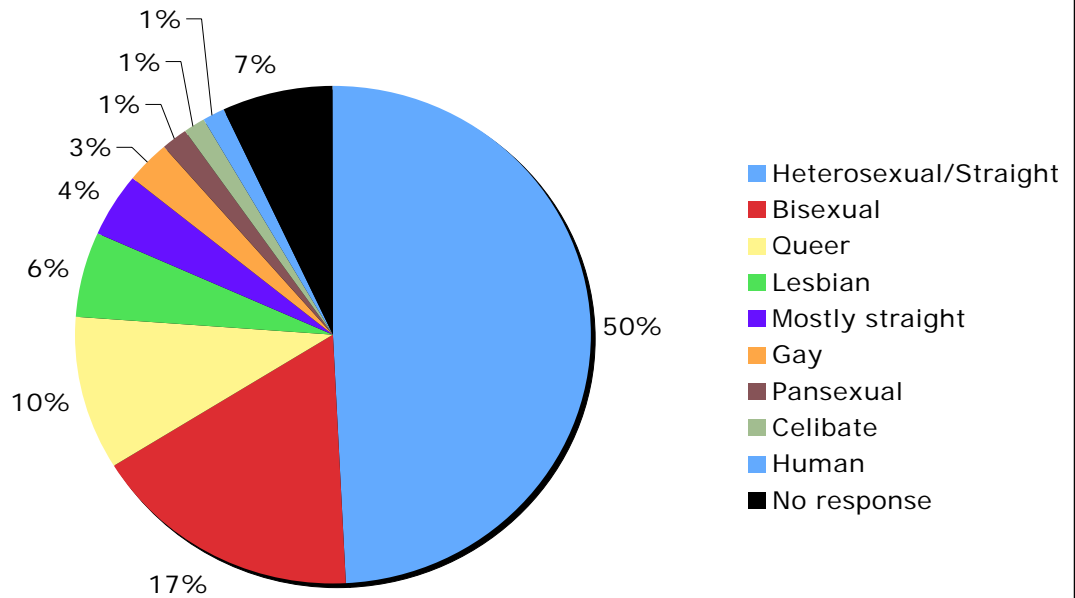
Figure 5: Participant Self-Reported Household Income

- $0-$20,000
- $20,001-$40,000
- $40,001-$60,000
- $60,001-$80,000
- $80,001-$100,000
- $100,001-$200,000
- No Response
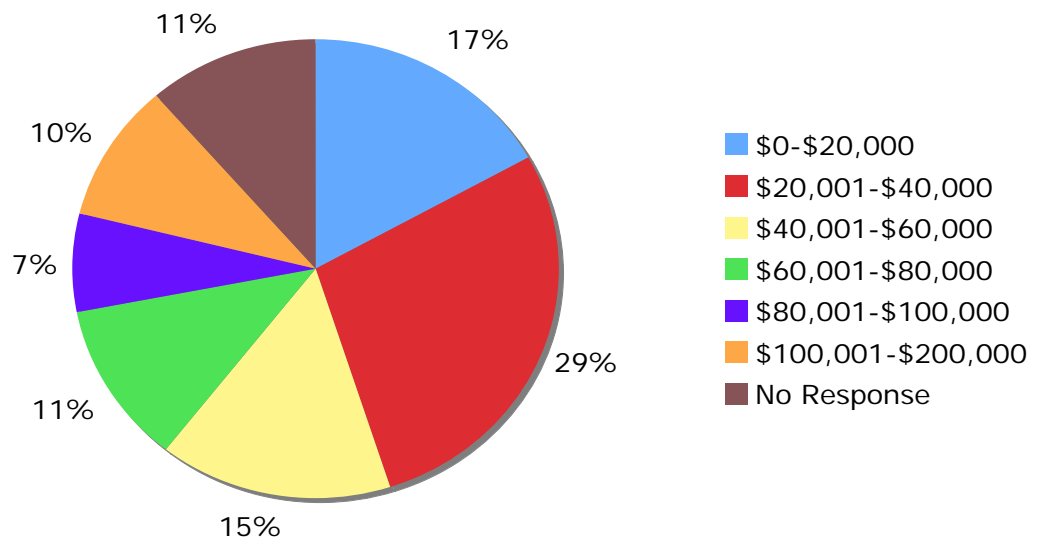
Forty percent of participants reported having a household of one member. Thirty-six percent reported having a household of two members. The range of members in the household is from 1-8 people. Four percent did not respond. The range in number of years of education ranged from 12 years to 23 years. Twenty-four percent reported having a Bachelors degree and another four percent said they had 16 years of schooling. Eight percent reported having had some graduate school. Eight percent reported having a Masters, and 4% reported having a PhD. Thirty-eight percent reported between 17 and 23 years of education and ten percent reported 12-15 years of education (see Figure 6). Job titles were reported and varied greatly (see Table 2).

Anti-Oppression Organizing Areas and Strategies Used by Participants

Ninety-eight percent of the participants actively fought against oppression in the year 2006. One percent reported they had not been doing this and one percent did not respond. The respondents were involved in a variety of anti-oppression activities (see Table 3). They employed a variety of organizing strategies (see table 4).

Seventy-five percent belonged to a political organization including radical organizations, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, political parties, student organizations, cultural/ethnic organizations and solidarity organizations. Other organizations that were added were grassroots collective, revolutionary socialist organization, clown anarchist organization and a political artist organization. Eighteen percent did not belong to a political organization and seven percent did not respond.

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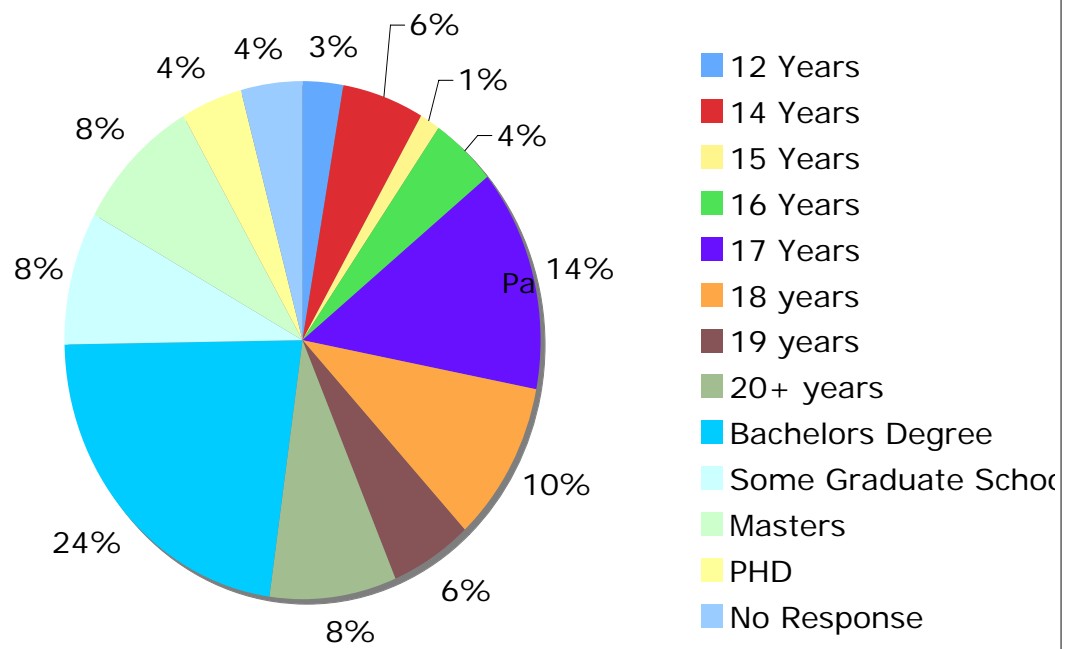**Figure 6: Participant Self-Reported Numbe Years of Education Demographics**

- 12 Years
- 14 Years
- 15 Years
- 16 Years
- 17 Years
- 18 years
- 19 years
- 20+ years
- Bachelors Degree
- Some Graduate School
- Masters
- PHD
- No Response

3%
6%
1%
4%
14%
10%
6%
8%
24%
8%
8%
4%
4%

Table 2: Participant Self-Reported Job Titles

Event Manager	1
Graduate Student	1
Legal Secretary	1
Medical Student	1
Organizer	1
Professor	3
Records Manager	1
Research Analyst	2
Sales Associate	2
Self-Employed Retiree	1
Senior Field Organizer	1
Social Work Intern	3
Social Worker	4
Student	7
Systems and Networking Consultant	1
Technical Writer	1
Videographer	1
Writer, Consultant	1
Freelance Web Designer	1
Teacher	2
Trainer and Consultant	1
Freelance Writer	1
Community Outreach Director	1
Intern	3
Director of Operations of fledgling non-Profit	1
Primary Prevention Specialist	1
Research Associate	1
Teaching Assistant	1
Development Assistant	1
Activity Coordinator, Administrative Assistant	1
Manager	1
Delivery Driver	1
Partner	1
Field Researcher	1
Business Development, Director	1
Self-Employed	1
Peer Career Educator & Student Reader	1
No Response	7

Table 3: Participant Self-Reported Anti-Oppression Causes

Women's Rights	39
Peace & Justice	41
Anti-Racism	40
Immigrant Rights	36
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Rights	30
Workers Rights	27
Environmental	17
Prisoner Rights	17
Drug Legalization	7
Economic Justice	27
Heath Care	17
Homelessness	18
Religious Freedom	10
Global Justice	25
Disability Rights	11
Labor Solidarity	19
Third party candidates	13
Other:	
Reproductive Freedom	1
Youth Rights & Empowerment (Voting)	3
Educational Access	1
Decolonization & Anti-Imperialism	2
Anti-War	1
Civil Liberties	1
Death Penalty	2
HIV/AIDS	
Children's Rights, Student's rights, incest/sexual abuse survivor's Rights	1
Housing	1
Militarization & Public Transportation	1
Wal Mart	1
Iraq	1
No Response	2
	412

Table 4: Participant Self-Reported Organizing Strategies

Political Organizing Meetings	46
Educational Events	58
Demonstration	48
Civil Disobedience	11
Street Theatre	10
Art	13
Letter Writing Campaigns	34
Boycotts	26
Consumer Consciousness	27
Fair Trade	24
Class Consciousness based groups	21
National/Ethnic/Racially based organizing Groups	24
Gender based organizing groups	19
Sexuality based organizing groups	19
Other:	
Political Party, Union	1
Election Phone Bank	1
Support groups, Leadership development	1
Participatory Research Projects	1
Presentation Campaigns	1
Sharing alternate Media Sources and Speaking to Employers	1
Advocacy for Policy Change, Developing Affordable Housing	1
Campaign/Action Organizing, Fundraising	1
Anarchist Groups	1
Religious Community Organizing	1
Legal System	1
Petition	1
Testified at a Hearing	1
Thesis Research	1
Remind Self and others of Their Privilege	1
Professional Organization w/ Political Focus	1
Helping People fill out SChIP applications for their Kids	1
Consciousness raising in individual and group therapy	1
Mentoring Anti-racist strategies	1
Labor Organizing	1
No Response	2
	402

Participants reported using the following organizing strategies: education, protest, art, consumer power, identity based groups, unions, religious groups, anarchist groups, fundraising, advocacy, building political parties and lobbying/campaigns.

Data Collection Methods

The data collection took place exclusively online and primarily anonymously through an online survey run by "Survey Monkey." The survey took about 25 minutes or less to complete. The recruitment process was limited to convince and snowball methods to reach participants instead of the preferred method of simple random sample. All participants were self selected, over the age of 18, and identified as actively organizing against oppression. Informed consent letters were "signed" online by pressing a button that indicated such consent. Signing their name would break the anonymity of the participant filling out the survey. The informed consent letter informed survey participants, before they began the survey, about the nature of the study, the rights of their participation, and that they could withdrawal from the study at any point before submitting the survey.

For the online survey, "Survey Monkey" provided anonymity for the respondents. For those that only filled out the survey online and did not wish to be interviewed, anonymity was ensured.

The information gathered included demographic information. This demographic information was followed in the survey by ten questions addressing organizing against oppression. Examples of the questions in this section are: "Please describe organizing strategies you use and for which categories of oppression." and "Do you believe that you have the power to effect political change with your actions?" The next section of the

survey addressed life experiences of the participants. This section consisted of eight

questions. Examples of questions in this section include: "What types of experiences led

you to initially feel empowered to take action?" and "Do you feel that your life

experiences have been influential in your belief that your actions can and sometimes do

make a difference?" The survey measured life experiences as they are connected to

fighting oppression. Seventy-one individuals completed the survey, while forty-seven

percent of the respondents skipped one or more questions. The selection criteria for the

participants were described in the sample section above.

      The following chapter is the findings chapter that looks at the data that was

reported by the participants. The data collected underwent a content and theme analysis.

Some life experience themes, among people who understand that oppression exists and

organize to fight oppression, are discussed along with themes around political efficacy.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, the findings of the survey are explored. The question raised in this

survey is, "Are there common identifiable life experiences among people who organize

against oppression?" Themes are identified, both within life experiences that led people

to develop a political consciousness, and understanding that oppression existed, as well as

experiences that led to the development of motivation to take action to organize against

oppression. These findings focus on dramatic identifiable themes. There are many more

subtle themes that will not be explored due to the size limitations of this study. This

researcher is committed to the integrity of finding themes that truly represent the

participant's responses.

This chapter is divided into three sections based on examining important

developmental processes that are necessary for a person to achieve if s/he is going to take

action to organize against oppression. Within these sections life experience themes are

explored through the participants' self-reported information. The first section of the

findings concerns developing a political consciousness, which means that a person

understands that oppression exists and has a political understanding of it. The second

section focuses on developing political efficacy, which is a key component of beginning

to take action. The third section concerns a more general view of what life experiences

led the participants to develop the motivation to take the step from simple sympathetic

understanding, to active resistance, to the oppression s/he is aware of.

Many of the experiences that led people to identify the existence of oppression are similar to the experiences that led them to believe they could take action to address oppression. Therefore there will be some overlap within each of these sections. For some individuals it was one experience or a combination of experiences that influenced them to move through all three of these developmental changes, like in the case of this participant:

> Witnessing the poverty of Jamaica, DC, Baltimore… teaching in the criminally under funded Baltimore City public schools, to reading, listening to, and watching media focusing on the struggles of oppressed people around the world – all these experiences have shaped my perspective and galvanized my dedication to resist oppression.

Development Of Political Consciousness: Understanding and Recognizing Oppression

When participants were asked what type of experiences led them to understand that oppression existed, they responded with descriptions of combinations of experiences. There were clear themes that arouse but perhaps one of the most important themes identified by most participants is that they were influenced by multiple experiences and the combination of those experiences was what awakened in them the political awareness that oppression existed and was unjust.

The survey listed the following experiences: family, education, employment, union, important person/role model, political news/demonstration, environmental concerns, poverty, travel, war, books, music, films, political meeting/lecture, religious institution, spiritual (non-institutional), experiences of personal oppression, and witnessing oppression. Categories that were added were community service, solidarity

work, and TV. Political meetings/lectures will not be discussed because even though sixty-three participants reported it was important, they did not describe their experiences.

Education

The strongest identified theme involved education, which seventy-two percent of the participants reported that education led them to understand that oppression existed. Seventy percent said that books played a role in the development of their understanding and sixty-five percent said that films played a role in their understanding that oppression existed. Films, books and education are placed into one theme as they all relate to education.

Education was both a category on the survey as well as a theme that many of the participants touched upon. Many of the participants cited specific experiences while they were in college that led them to understand that oppression existed. One participant reported, "Many conversations, classes, and political organizations that I belonged to in college allowed me to learn about oppression and understand it. I am always continuing my learning." Another participant stated that she "learned about the theories [of race and class oppression] in college." Another wrote that:

> I took a class in college about the causes of hunger – and that solidified my interest in international poverty. After college I was exposed to environmental articles at work and being around Berkeley folks and then I became radically concerned about the need to act to prevent climate crisis.

One participant explained that, "I learned about social justice movements in the US and internationally through political science and International Studies classes in college. I learned more about queer/gender studies/movements in college." Another participant explained that they had learned about oppression by reading: "I read 'Assata', 'A

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people's History of the United States', and writings of Fredrick Douglass, Lenin, Marx, Trotsky."

Some participants learned about oppression through educational travel and others described a combination of school, reading, and travel:

> Education was probably the greatest exposure to the presence of injustice and oppression. I remember reading "Black Like Me" in high school and being profoundly affected…I am an avid reader and began to read about Vietnam, racism, sexism, etc. Travel to South Africa and working in the townships was pivotal. I worked with two communities (Hispanic and African American) in regards to class projects and learned from them.

Family

Seventy percent said that their families played a role in their understanding that oppression existed. Family was a category on the survey, and was also discussed by a great number of participants. Eleven of the participants discussed how their family actually talked to them and taught them about oppression: "I grew up with a single mother who was a product of the 60s generation. She spoke to me often about oppression and taught me to be aware of my language and assumptions about others."

Participants stated that their families modeled anti-oppressive behavior and even activism and this is why they became aware of oppression: "My mom is a feminist and an LGBTQ ally. Mom introduced me to Alice Walker, bell hooks, and Howard Zinn." Another stated: "I am a product of the 1960s, Anti war activist…. Grew up in a family with a father who was a union member and socialist." One participant reported: "My family…joined the antiwar movement, even my Republican grandmother." Participants reported not only having role models in their family but were also pushed to be active by their family: "Watching my mother remake our local school district over two

decades. Being dragged to PTA, school board and city council meetings almost from the time I could stand at a microphone."

Witnessing oppression

Sixty-eight percent said that witnessing oppression led them to understand that oppression existed. Witnessing oppression was another category on the survey and participants reported some instances of this as leading to their understanding of oppression. One participant felt that oppression was a relatively obvious aspect of life:

> Oppression is everywhere, you just need to pay attention .5% of the time to recognize that. Probably the single most influential person in my understanding of oppression is my partner who has experienced oppression on an incredible number of levels – class, gender identity, sexual orientation, gender, political beliefs, etc…

A number of participants described experiences that led them to witness oppression. "When I was in college in Washington DC I got involved with a Youth Leadership Development agency that worked in Southeast DC, a marginalized community and I was exposed to extreme poverty and the impacts of systemic racism." One respondent noted that she witnessed oppression all her life, "I grew up near the Navajo reservation, so I saw racism and oppression from the beginning of my life."

For others it was a combination of both witnessing and hearing about instances of oppression: "My parents are from the Philippines, and so I've heard their stories. I've seen the poverty that so many people in the world drown in." Many participants mentioned traveling and witnessing oppression outside of the United States: "I have spent much time traveling in Latin America. This is a difficult question for me. I do not remember not knowing that oppression existed, though I may not have had the words for it." One respondent clearly summed up the sentiment many participants described, "As I

grew older, I was able to travel to Baja and South America and witness firsthand the poverty and imbalance of resources that gave me a new perspective on international racism."

Experiencing Oppression

Sixty-eight percent said that experiencing oppression led them to understand that it existed. Experiencing oppression was one of the categories on the survey and it was also an experience that many participants cited as leading them to understand that oppression existed. Participants reported the following experiences: "Growing up poor in the US gave me a wide range of experiences that do not allow me to look the other way when I see oppression." Another stated that "From being one of 2 or 3 black students in my elementary school – to getting arrested in high school with another black student despite the fact that a 3rd student, who was white and just as guilty, never got arrested."

Others had more complex descriptions of how experiencing oppression and educating themselves led to an understanding of oppression as unjust:

> First I am half Mexican, which was much more evident when I was younger. I experienced prejudice from other kids and learned more about racism by asking my father. I experienced sexism in my own family and learned more about it through media. Classism was hidden between the lines, and I learned about war and US History. I eventually learned that many types of inequalities are reinforced by our society; they can be seen in areas of environmental concern, war, finances, prohibition, and imprisonment.

One participant reported that she "faced identity, race and class oppressions from an early age… Generally for me it was a combination of personal experience and anger/frustration from them combined with reading and studying."

Several participants wrote about experiencing oppression as children: "The biggest influence on my life as a political activist was my family's experience of

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unemployment [when I was]… a child." Another participant wrote: "I grew up in the south, and experienced discrimination there, being called things like 'chink' and 'China boy', even from teachers and administrators in the schools I attended." One participant simply reported: "Growing up working class; experiences as queer and woman" is what led her to develop an understanding that oppression existed.

Several participants reported continuing to experience oppression: "I'm also from a very conservative community – as a queer woman, I lived oppression. And still do." Another wrote that he is "always in fear that this time will be the last time I can leave the US and come back safely with my VISA." One woman described how building communities that discuss oppression helps her to learn more and teach others:

> As an out bisexual female, I also feel my own personal oppression both in regard to my gender and my sexual orientation. The more I share my experiences with others, the more I learn from hearing their stories. No one I know has escaped experiencing at least one form of oppression.

There were a variety of other experiences including religious experiences that were not as common but ran through participants' stories.

Political Efficacy: Believing You Can Make A Difference

It has been presented in motivational theories that if people believe their actions will make a difference they will be more likely to get involved. Participants were asked if they believed their actions have made or will make a difference. Ninety-one percent of the participants felt that their actions had made a difference. One percent did not feel their actions had made a difference, and eight percent did not respond.

Eighty-nine percent believed that they had the power to effect political change with their actions. Four percent did not believe this to be true and seven percent did not

respond. Understanding what experiences led the clients to feel they had political efficacy is key in understanding what motivates them to organize against oppression. As one participant aptly put it: "You can't effect political change without first believing that you can."

Seventy-six percent of the participants believed that their life experiences have influenced their belief that their actions can and sometimes do make a difference. Three percent said that they did not think their life experiences influenced them and twenty-one percent did not respond. The categories listed on the survey were: family, educational employment, union, political news, demonstration, environmental concerns, poverty, travel, war, books, music, film, political meetings/lecture, religious institution, spiritual (non-institutional), experiences of personal oppression, witnessing oppression, historical perspective, political victory against oppression, mass movement, political analysis, and moral principles. Categories that were added by participants were class/race privilege, struggle against racism, working closely with other organizers, and cultural awareness.

Historical Perspective

Experiences that led participants to gain an historical perspective was chosen the most frequently of all the options. Specifically, when people begin to understand fighting oppression within a historical context. Understanding that people have been fighting oppression since oppression began and there have been many successes was important for participants. Experiences that led participants to gain an historical perspective was chosen by fifty-one percent of the participants who felt that it helped them to believe their actions would make a difference. There are both specific examples of mass movements making change, as well as the understanding that we generally have more rights today

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than we did 100 years ago. Fifty-one percent of the participants felt that it helped them to believe their actions would make a difference.

Experiences that led participants to develop an historical perspective have a distinctly educational component whether the person learned about history through school, books, or stories from others. One participant simply stated that she knows that it is possible to organize against oppression and effect change because: "History and experience have proven it to be so." Others described their process more carefully:

> I…started to read a lot of history – especially on the revolutionary movements in Latin America. My reading plus my lived experiences led me to make more decisions in my life that would allow me to get involved in order to make change.

Other participants reported that: "Studying the history of social change showed me change was possible." And "I think it is seeing things in a systems thinking perspective, understanding it historically, and knowing that it is a paradox."

Several participants decided to quote other social change leaders, which may indicate the importance of being exposed to social change leaders and role models:

> The historical perspective allows me to as Recardo Levin Morales puts it, "I study history because I am interested in the future." Access to education has been the key to my experience of being able to create change both for myself and for others.

A number of participants wrote that there were a myriad of examples of people making change, its just a question of educating ourselves: "Getting a better understanding of how ordinary people were able to make political change possible throughout history helped to form my belief that the activism that I took part of made a difference." And another participant explained: "History is replete with examples of progress arising from organized action therefore it stands to reason that continuing in that tradition will effect

change."

Political Victory Against Oppression

Another important experience was political victory against oppression, which was chosen by forty-four percent of the participants. Perhaps one of the most frequently described experiences found throughout this entire study is the finding that political victory against oppression leads people to believe that their actions make a difference. This was one of the categories in the survey and the participants discussed it at length.

When asked why they believe that their actions of organizing against oppression could affect change, one respondent stated: "We have been able to get a university to adopt policies that support freedom of speech and association. And we stopped the opening of many Wal-Mart stores….if we stop enough they will change…hit em where it counts…in the pocket book." A number of respondents discussed their successes fighting against the death penalty:

> Yes, my actions have made a difference. One example was when I was involved in my organization to stop the execution of an innocent man, Kevin Cooper, on death row. With prior organizing, we stopped his execution by only 3 hours that evening he was scheduled to be executed in Feb. 2004. I believe similar organizing in various movements will lay the basis for successes in the future.

Fighting for a concrete goal seemed particularly empowering to clients because it was clear when they achieved their goals. Another participant reported:

> Years of organizing to abolish the death penalty are showing signs of bearing fruit around the country. The new governor of Maryland, for example, recently stated that he'd sign a bill to repeal the death penalty if one should pass his desk.

Others reported smaller victories which showed them their actions made a difference and can even send a ripple effect so that others also believe they can make a difference:

> I do feel that my actions have and will make a difference since for an example, at

my University, there was a group of people that made racist comments towards Arabs and within a week, I helped to organize a protest to stand against racism. After the protest, more students throughout the community came out to support the fight back against racism and more events were planned to show support.

Respondents discussed how some victories are very visible, while others are barely noticed, but important non the less:

> I took a lot of political science courses, and applied theory to real life successfully. The first time, when I was 17, I talked a friend into running for student body president and created a machine to get him elected, just to see if machine politics worked. They do, and [he] was the youngest student body president in the history of the school…The small victories empower people, and snowball into greater victories. One day you look around and realize that everything is different. As the union people like to point out, we no longer work 12 hour days, 6 days a week. To young women who say they aren't feminists, I point out that they are allowed to wear pants, study engineering, and earn equal pay for equal work. I remember not being allowed those things.

One participant explained a successful organizing experience that she had in the past:

> In the past I created a student peace group which successfully kept ROTC off the… University Campus. I created a website which was used to organize a campaign to keep …from…destroying a large grove of native trees to create a parking lot. I successfully campaigned against many proposed nuclear power plants. Much of the political accomplishments of the past are invisible –they are disasters we prevent from happening.

Another respondent not only talked about how organizing made a difference but how it also affected her and why it was important to her. "[My actions] have changed who I am for the better. My action have inspired others and I have worked with groups that are making changes on a local and national level." Others reported more concrete victories: "I've been a part of successful (local) campaigns that had empowering effects. We've also made multinationals change corporate policies through sustained strategic campaigning."

 Another respondent reported how her organizing was very rewarding and empowering.

She also mentions the importance of being a part of a movement:

> I did a lot of work in my high school about racism, classism, and heterosexism. I saw some serious changes take place in the school while I was there as a direct result of the work that I and other students and teachers were doing – students and teachers became more aware of these issues, new curriculum was added, the school made these issues a higher priority in its policies. This was very empowering. Being part of the gay rights movement in general has been a very exciting part of my life because such large-scale changes have taken place and continue to take place in our country.

One participant wrote about a specific organizing action she took part in that made her

feel empowered and believe in herself:

> One time I participated in a civil disobedience action with Greenpeace. Our action was on TV and we were taken to jail. I felt like I was a part of something really important, (like the civil rights movement of the 60's) and in the end, the company did cave to one of our demands. I would do it again in a heartbeat, because I felt more empowered for standing up for the issue than I ever have before or since then.

Some participants acknowledged that organizing is not always successful:

> Twenty years worth of organizing and activism proceeded by a decade's worth of observation of my mother's activities. You win, you lose (often), change happens, big, small, but the point is that you don't get anywhere without taking the first step, without doing something.

Some respondents compared prior victories with the work they are doing today:

> As an anti-war activist I truly believe we had a great influence in ending the war in Vietnam. Although it took many years of action, our initial actions led to larger numbers and eventually put the Government in a position that it had to act. I see the same thing eventually happening with Iraq.

Another respondent wrote more about changing attitudes than on specific victories:

> In the past, I've done a lot of education about transgender issues within the lesbian community. I've seen a lot of change in attitudes in that community and I think part of it is due to the activism that I and others with me have done. I've also seen a change in attitudes in workplaces over the past decade, so I know people can change.

Demonstrations

Forty-one percent of participants reported that experiences that involved participating in demonstrations made them believe they could make a difference. The description of demonstrations was usually a part of a number of experiences. A few respondents talked about how becoming a social worker led them to believe they could make a difference: "Social work education had a big impact on showing me that my action can make a difference. In undergraduate and graduate school I participated in a number of demonstrations, letter writing campaigns, and organizing projects."

Another wrote, "I've been most empowered by learning about social work and doing my internships and class projects. I've also participated in a demonstration that was very empowering."

Important Person/Role Models

Thirty-nine respondents noted that important person/role model led them to believe in themselves. A number of respondents reported how role models have played a role in their belief that they can make a difference if they organize against oppression. One simply put it, "My role models have [created change]!" Another stated that "I would say that watching one or two really effective advocates get things done that show that change is possible, at least to some extent." One participant discussed how watching the gains of an oppressed community over time can have a dramatic effect:

> The belief that I can make a difference is mainly due to the huge changes I've seen in the LGBT community in my lifetime. They came because of groups of people, or sometimes just an individual, who took action.

And still another stated that even in the dire situation of a civil war hope and belief in change can be instilled. "Civil war clarified the role of the social classes and the role of

the government. Civil war also showed that when people organized themselves they can fight back effectively."

Family and Religion

Forty-one percent of participants reported family experiences as being important to their believing they could create change. Family and religion were two separate categories in the study, but when discussed by respondents they were often connected. For example, one participant stated:

> My family and religion always stressed that action is more important than belief. So I was predisposed to be interested in moral actions. However, I always wondered why most of my community friends who shared that religion (orthodox Judaism) didn't become activists. My parents are active community volunteers. So this helped. They also believed in voting and democracy. I no longer believe that voting is the pure avenue to change, but I think their faith in it instilled in me some need to pay attention to politics. And once I got into politics I changed the tactics.

Another response, which does not explicitly mention family, implies it with the term "raised." She wrote that she was "raised an activist, been involved in religious and spiritual orgs made up of activists, am an artist, traveled and spoken to non USAers about political situations, war, exploitation, us foreign policy, read a lot."

Power in numbers

A theme, that was not specifically asked about but came up, emerged when participants explained why they believed they had the power to effect political change with their actions. This theme was a sense of working in an organized, collaborative way with others. Over fifty percent of participants who responded believed that in order to make a difference they needed to work with others; that they had power in numbers. Throughout almost all of their answers ran a theme about organizing with others,

participants used the words we, our, people, together, collective struggle, etc. The

participants' responses around these themes are explored below. One individual

described it this way:

> My own successes, and the support of others…Maybe more than anything else,
> joining an organization of other social workers who were able to provide a
> political analysis that made sense to me- that described the world I experienced –
> made a huge difference… Success with anti-war and WTO demonstrations was
> influential.

Several participants talked about how organizing in a group was very helpful in

their understanding that they could make a difference. "I do believe the actions of the

group that I organize with have seen real results. I think this is far more effective than

voting or going through the traditional forms of participating in the system." Another

stated he could effect change "not alone, but within these groups… because history

shows that we have and even in the present we've made gains." One participant wrote "I

believe I can only effect political change when I am organized with others on the basis of

similar principles."

The majority of responses focused on how individuals could make very small

changes, but when they worked with others, this created larger change. The participant

said, exactly this "All actions count toward change whether small or large. The more

people who do it may encourage others to stand up as well. Numbers tend to make the

biggest change but it all starts with one." Another respondent reported:

> When my actions are combined with those of others, I think we can affect
> political change. I also know that it is extremely difficult, often unlikely, but to do
> nothing is unacceptable. You have to do it because it is the right thing to do, not
> because it will or will not work.

One respondent reported: "Gathering people is the only way to effect change. One

person cannot represent or try to bring about change for a group of people. Increasing

consciousness is the preliminary step." Another participant wrote:

> I see my work as contributing to a larger effort, to movement building and campaign organizing. By myself, I don't see me making a huge difference, but by adding my efforts to those of many others I think what I do is useful.

One participant discussed how individuals and groups of individuals have more power

now than ever before because of globalization and advanced communications:

> As part of a larger whole, I can make some concrete changes. Nothing is guaranteed but we find ourselves at a pivotal point in history in which, thanks to globalized media, oppression is more public and visible than ever before. Anti-oppression movements are increasingly well-connected and well-informed. The ability for humans to do great harm as well as tremendous good is amplifying rapidly. As an extremely privileged and highly educated American, everything I do has a huge impact on people around the world I'll never meet. I believe that while many of my daily actions may be oppressive, for reasons beyond my control, I can at the same time affect real political change, due to my position within the world's most powerful country as well as my intentions to make something constructive of that position.

One participant who addresses the issue of power in numbers wrote "I definitely think

that the recent elections were reflecting the work of the Peace movement in the country.

It is not just 'my' actions, but I am part of a larger movement, and that is having an

effect." Another respondent described this phenomenon directly: "All social

advancement came from political and social struggle. As an individual we might have

some impact but collective struggle is much more powerful than a personal action or a

personal stand."

Development of Motivation: Organizing Against Oppression

Participants were asked what types of life experiences led them to initially feel

empowered to take action. The experiences listed on the survey were: family,

educational, employment, union, important person/role model, political

news/demonstration, environmental concerns, poverty, travel war, books, music, films, political meetings/lectures, religious institutions, spiritual (non-institutional) experiences of personal oppression, witnessing oppression. The participants did not add any categories.

Education

Thirty-three percent said that education was one of the experiences that led them to initially feel empowered to take action. Individuals reported educational experiences that led them to take action to organize against oppression. One respondent reported, "The galvanizing event is watching the poverty all around, and the onset of war. Without these realities shaking me out of passivity, I may not have been so involved in political organizing." Other respondents talked about attending Quaker school, catholic school or getting a Master's in Social Work as the most important experience. Another simply said, "I was empowered by my education, employment, books, films, and political meetings." Some respondents reported specific educational material. "Books that inspired me – the autobiography of Maria Teresa Tula*, Possessing the Secret of Joy* by Alice Walker, *No more Prisons* by William Upski Wimsatt. Music – youth hip-hop culture in general, DIY punk." Another participant described a specific experience with a professor:

> The first experience I had which truly empowered me to think beyond my little
> bubble was from a professor in an introductory Sociology class. He was an old
> SSDS'r and had a long FBI file that he brought to class. He brought to life the
> profiling that our government does to people who organize around change. That
> sort of injustice was infuriating.

One participant described a combination of experiences of education, family, and religious:

> The school I went to put a lot of effort into giving students a voice and teaching

them about oppression of different kinds. This had a huge impact on me as a young person and stayed with me throughout my life bolstered by my family and my ethnic/religious background that has a strong tradition of protest and activism.

Another combination of experiences was reported:

My environmental concerns pushed me hardest to take action, but a close second would be a book I read, *The Emperor Wears No Clothes*. I grew/grow more enraged and more determined the more I read/hear/learn about atrocities committed on our environment.

Another participant described his complex progression into becoming an activist:

Reading radical politics and history made me feel less alienated when I was in college and all of this came together when I met other political activists at demonstrations. All of these experiences and not any one of them individually, contributed to my becoming an activist.

Family

Thirty-two percent said it was their family that led them to first take political action. Family was not only a category on the survey but an important theme that participants reported having an impact on their becoming anti-oppression organizers.

Several respondents reported their family instilling the value of organizing against oppression in them as they grew up. "My family, specifically my father, made me feel that it was essential that I actively campaign against oppression/injustice." Another respondent wrote about a similar experience. "My family encourages questions and believes in justice. I was raised to fight oppression in every way I could." One participant reported:

My family raised me to believe that I could do anything if I worked at it, and I drew on that when I began to become active. Becoming a social worker was the primary thing that propelled me into activism.

One respondent talked not only about his family standing up for change but also that their struggled economically: "I grew up in a family that struggled economically and were

involved in social and political change. I have organized both in community and labor organization for over forty years."

A number of respondents reported both family and religious experiences that led to their taking action. "My parents escaped the holocaust. My religious tradition coupled with their experiences has created a sense of obligation to work for justice." And "My religious school and family always encouraged me to volunteer."

Some simply said they had activist role models within their families. "Having a mother who was involved in political activism laid the basis." Another participant noted that her "family members who were activists inspired me to take my life in that direction." And another respondent stated, "I have a good family that advocates political activity." Again a participant who stated that he was "raised by activists and organizes" expressed this theme. Another participant wrote "I come from a long line of strong women and hearing stories about their determination instilled the fact that I have those characteristics in me as well." One participant explained: "I was raised in a family with a very politically active mother and sister. I learned from a young age that it is important to stand up for the good of all."

Role Models/Important Person

Twenty-eight percent said it was an important person or role model that led them to initially feel empowered to take action. Role models/Important persons were a category on the survey. In addition to having role models within their families respondents also reported having role models in change movements. Many role models where not people that participants met personally but individuals that they heard about through the media:

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Internet and magazines were really important to this; by reading about other people (particularly other young women) who had organized either to alleviate the symptoms of oppression or to challenge the system of oppression, I suddenly felt like I had some kind of role models.

Others mentioned specific leaders. "Nelson Mandela has shown me we must try, no matter how few our numbers because education and change have to start somewhere." And "Learning about and organizing events for Mumia Abu Jamal was my initiation into activism." Sometimes organizations can act as role models as in this participant's experience:

My educational experience and concern for poverty did not direct me to activism, just professional engagement. Reading about how Rainforest Action Network was able to get global banks to change their policies was a key inspiration to show me that activism can make real powerful changes. Also seeing friends mobilize to vote Bush out of office inspired me to get involved with such mobilization efforts.

Another example is seeing a role model speak in public. This was a powerful experience for one participant:

In junior college when I was 21 I saw Mario Savio, the former leader of the Free Speech Movement in 1964, speak about how the 1950's turned into the 1960's.This was in 1991 and he also spoke about the impending Gulf War. When living in Fresno in 1994 I came across big multiracial demonstrations against prop 187, a racist and anti-immigrant proposal that was passed. These two experiences started making me think I needed to get active in order to change things.

Experiencing Oppression

Twenty percent said that experiencing oppression was what pushed them to take action. While many respondents stated that experiencing oppression was a reason they stood up and took action to fight oppression, only one respondent clearly described this. This respondent also discusses the challenges of being a long-term activist and the belief in change, which keeps him going:

I am from a working-class family and when I was younger, my mom worked long

hours but could not afford to feed us regularly even with welfare. Once former President Clinton restructured welfare, my family was kicked off welfare when my mom made 10 cents over what was prescribed for a family of four. Also as a child I experienced racism because of my racial background and in my teens I faced discrimination, as I am gay. I cannot stand by and see how things are and not fight back against oppression. There have been times when things seemed hard and maybe even demoralizing while organizing with various groups, but I cannot allow myself to not do something. The only way things change is by people organizing together and fighting back, not by sitting around and complaining about how bad things are.

Witnessing Oppression

Eighteen percent reported that witnessing oppression led them to take action against oppression. Some participants became active because they witnessed oppression. "Travel to really poor areas inhabited by native peoples and the sheer arrogance of the US war led to enough anger and despair that I was propelled into action." One participant reported a combination of her temperament and seeing a friend experience oppression:

> I've always had a strong sense of fairness and felt angry when I see injustice. That just seems to be my temperament. I was propelled into taking action mainly by seeing a good friend of mine get expelled from a lesbian event because she was transsexual.

Organizing With Others

One theme that was not asked about in the survey which was discussed by participants was how organizing with others motivated them to get involved. One participant explained that she first became involved in organizing against oppression was because of her peers:

> My peers probably inspired me the most to take action. I met a lot of radical activists engaged in social justice work when I left my small town in New Jersey for Washington, DC. I was politically minded, but had not experienced "activism" until I came to DC at the age of 18. Seeing people my age fighting for what they believed in through organizing conferences, demonstrations, civil disobedience, etc., made me think I could and should fight back through organizing too… The 2001 National BLOC Conference (I was 21) that brought together youth

organizers from across the country, heavily drawing from hip-hop activist networks and trained folks in different aspects of organizing and social justice – was a MAJOR catalyst in my understanding of self as an activist with a responsibility and the power to make change. It was awesome.

Others described similar experiences: "It was immersion in systems of community organizations…watching how community organizations and social action initiatives work and don't work." Another participant wrote: "What directly empowered me was participating in solidarity work with radical African American led grassroots organizing." One participant reported: "Seeing that people are able to work together toward a common goal in the work I do inspired me."

Another participant separated how she learned oppression existed from how she learned to organize against oppression. "My family motivated me to understand oppression exists and support educational pursuits that enable me to find productive ways to fight oppression. Being involved in various political groups has showed me how to organize against oppression."

Another participant noted how important it was to not feel alone in understanding that oppression or injustice was present:

I think the single most important realization was that others were feeling the effects of oppression in similar ways and that others wanted to change this. Simple validation of my experiences mostly through books and conversation with educators and activists afforded me the opportunity to stretch and grow and to eventually move closer to finding my own voice.

Another participant wrote about the importance of being in a political organization: "Mostly I felt empowered by joining a political organization in college. I met people there who were passionate about the same things I was passionate about and I felt empowered by the group process."

There were some participant responses that did not follow these trends and these are explored in the discussion chapter that follows. In the final chapter, the researcher will contrast the findings of this research with the theoretical and empirical literature on this topic. Limitations of the research and areas of further research will be explored as well as the relevance of this literature to social work practice.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

In this chapter the relationship between the literature and the findings of this study is examined. Some of the findings support previous theories laid out in the literature review while other findings do not. The limitations of the study are then discussed addressing the researcher's bias and the limitations in the methodology. Implications for further research are explored, drawing heavily from the limitations of the findings. Finally the implications for social work practice are explored.

In chapter two, literature about oppression, developing an anti-oppression consciousness, developing motivation, and life experiences that influenced individuals to organize against oppression was reviewed. There were clear themes that arose but perhaps one important theme identified by most participants is that they were influenced by multiple experiences. It was the combination of those experiences that encouraged them to develop a political consciousness that oppression existed and was unjust. Individuals often cited different experiences that led them to learn that oppression existed and those experiences that led them to take action. Sixty-seven percent of participants began to believe they could effect change because of learning an historical perspective and fifty-seven believed they could effect change because of previous experiences of political victories.

Development Of Political Consciousness: Understanding and Recognizing

The literature on the development of political consciousness generally does not focus on specific life experiences. Therefore, the findings in this section cannot be systematically compared to prior findings or theories. Freire's (1970) theory of critical consciousness does focus on the importance of education and specific types of educational experiences. The findings of this study, of seventy-one individuals (including thirty-four who skipped one or more question), support Freire's (1970) theory that education is an important aspect in leading individuals to understand oppression exists and to development of an anti-oppression consciousness. Seventy-two percent of the participants reported that education influenced their understanding that oppression existed.

Most of the time anti-oppression education was either informed by a self initiated study or learned in college. Taking this finding into account may prove how instrumental it would be for fighting oppression if high schools, or even young children, to received an anti-oppression education.

One theory suggested by Tatum (2003) is that the "transition to the encounter state is typically precipitated by an event or series of events that force the young person to acknowledge the personal impact of racism" (p. 55). The finding that sixty-eight percent of participants reported experiencing oppression led them to understand that it existed supports Tatum's (2003) theory.

None of the other anti-oppression identity development models discussed how family experiences, which seventy percent of the participants reported, played an important role in their understanding that oppression existed. These theories also did not

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address witnessing oppression as key in developing an anti-oppression consciousness even though sixty-eight percent of the respondents in this study reported it was important.

Political Efficacy: Believing You Can Make A Difference

Ninety-one percent of the participants felt that their actions had made a difference. One percent did not feel their actions had made a difference, and eight percent did not respond. Eighty-nine percent believed that they had the power to effect political change with their actions. Four percent did not believe this to be true and seven percent did not respond. These findings support Bandura's (1995) theory:

> Social reformers strongly believe that they can mobilize the collective effort needed to bring social change. Although their beliefs are rarely fully realized they sustain reform efforts that achieve important gains. Were social reformers to be entirely realistic about the prospects of transforming social systems they would either forego the endeavor or fall easy victim to discouragement. Realist may adapt well to existing realities. But those with a tenacious self-efficacy are likely to change those realities. (p. 13)

Bandura's (1995) theory that there are four main experiences that lead to self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and psychological/emotional experiences, is supported by a number of findings in this study. Thirty-nine respondents noted that an important person/role model led them to believe in themselves. Twenty-eight out of fifty-four respondents reported how role models have played a role in their belief that they can make a difference if they organize against oppression. This supports Bandura's (1995) theory of developing self-efficacy though vicarious experiences. This also suggests that if this society had more role models who organized against oppression perhaps more people would learn from them and also challenge oppression.

Forty-one percent of participants reported that experiences that involved

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participating in demonstrations made them believe they could make a difference. This supports Bandura's theory of developing self-efficacy through mastery experiences. Fifty-one percent of the participants felt learning through an historical perspective helped them to believe their actions would make a difference. This is another example of gaining self-efficacy through vicarious experiences. This finding suggests that if schools focused on teaching the history of social change students would have a better understanding of how change occurs. This historical perspective about how social justice and change has happened in the past can then be related to today's injustices. With this type of education in school more people may believe that their actions could challenge oppression.

Forty-four percent of the participants believed their actions could make a difference because of being involved in a political victory. This relates to Marx and Engels' (1932) theory that individual's consciousness is transformed through struggle:

> One of Karl Marx's great insights was that people could not change the world without changing themselves in the process. Marx saw that it was through men's and women's actual struggles that they would grow, develop talents and potentials of which they became aware only in retrospect, and eventually alter even their consciousness and self concepts. (Bloom, 1987, p. 7)

These findings also support Bandura's (1995) theory of mastery experiences leading to developing self-efficacy. This finding suggests that the more individuals are involved in victorious struggles against oppression the more individuals will believe they can make a difference.

Bandura's (1995) theory on vicarious experiences leading to self-efficacy is supported by a number of the responses. Some examples of this were participants' descriptions of vicarious experiences through family role models. Some of the family experiences were not vicarious experiences though, they would be better defined as social

persuasion as they had to do with family and religious morals and values. Forty-one percent of participants reported family experiences as being important to their believing they could create change.

Gibson (2003) stated that a "group efficacy, a group's collective belief in its capability to perform a task has a demonstrated impact on group effectiveness" (p. 2153). This research is supported by the findings of this study. The finding that respondents overwhelmingly reported they felt they could create change when working with others, but not necessarily alone, supports Gibson's research. This was not a question that was asked of the participants, but one that twenty-one out of fifty-one participants discussed on their own accord. This would also suggest that building organizations for individuals to which, they feel connected, may promote their sense of political efficacy.

Development of Motivation: Organizing Against Oppression

Thirty-two percent of the participants reported that it was their family that led them to first take political action. In addition, twenty-eight percent of the participants reported that it was an important person or role model that led them to initially feel empowered to take action. This supports a number of studies reported by Bandura (1986) who discusses how "people who are most disposed to social action generally come from family backgrounds in which the exercise of social influence has been modeled and rewarded (Keniston, 1968; Rosenhan, 1970)" (p. 450). In addition these findings also support Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, which states that one of the main forms of human learning comes from vicarious experiences or modeling, as a way for individuals to learn to be anti-oppression organizers.

Frustration-aggression theory suggests that individuals join social movements "as a reaction to frustration, dissatisfaction or alienation" (Klandermans, 1986, p. 189-190). Freire (1970) also theorizes that experiencing oppression will eventually lead the oppressed to rise up and take action against their oppressors. The finding that twenty percent of the participants of this study reported that experiencing oppression was what pushed them to take action, supports these two theories. This finding suggests that if organizations that fight against oppression were more prominent in society perhaps more individuals would become involved.

One theme that was not asked about in the survey, which was reported by participants was how organizing with others motivated them to get involved. This is slightly different than the previous finding that people felt they could make a difference when they joined with others. This finding emphasizes how the availability of organizations in their community promoted the participants' involvement. This finding supports a number of theories including the Collective Identity Theory that suggests that an individual is a more likely to get involved in organizing against oppression if there is a collective identity within her community that promotes organizing against oppression. Therefore the primarily reason for an individual to become involved is the community identity or community organizations rather than on behavioral modeling. (Polletta & Jasper, 2001).

Thirty-three percent of participants said that education was one of the experiences that led them to initially feel empowered to take action. This finding is connected to Bandura's (1986) report:

Among the members of dissident groups, those who protest social inequalities, as compared to non-participants, are generally better educated, have greater self-pride, have a stronger belief in their ability to influence events in their lives, and favor coercive measures, if necessary, to improve their living conditions (Caplan, 1970; Crawford & Naditch, 1970). (Bandura, 1986, p. 450)

The current study suggests that providing a better education for all individuals may increase the number of individuals challenging oppression. This study did not find any support for the economic model theory that states that individuals get involved with organizing against oppression based on how much risk or cost is involved and how much the individual will get in return for their organizing. The literature did not discuss how witnessing oppression may lead someone to take action against oppression even though eighteen percent of the participants of this study reported that witnessing oppression led them to take action against oppression.

Clearly there are some trends that participants have reported around experiences that lead them to a political consciousness of understanding oppression; a belief in themselves and others to fight oppression; and the motivation to actually take action. Many of these experiences support theories found in the literature (Gibson, 2003; Tatum, 2003; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Bandura, 1995; Bloom, 1987; Bandura, 1986; Klandermans, 1986; Freire, 1970)

Limitations of the Study

Despite this researcher sending the survey to predominantly anti-oppression organizers of color, the sample was not as racially diverse as this researcher had desired. In retrospect it may have proven better to have only opened the survey to people of color until an adequate number had filled the survey out and then opened it up to white people. While leaving the survey open for two months did increase the number of respondents of

color, the number of white respondents increased at a faster pace. A similar plan was used to get a diverse range of sexual orientations, which was achieved by the researcher.

This study was very small in scope and in the number of participants. One limitation that affected this study was that only people who are able to access the Internet were able to fill out the survey. Another bias was that while this researcher attempted to send the survey out to a diverse group of participants, most of the list serves focused on groups in major metropolitan cities. In addition, the survey was in English, so only individuals fluent in English could respond. Results may have been very different if this study was conducted in a small town, in the countryside or if it was conducted in another country.

One change had to be made on the survey after some responses had been collected. There was a malfunction in "survey monkey" on question number 25: "What types of life experiences led you to initially feel empowered to take action? Check all that apply." This question only allowed one answer to be checked when the participant was supposed to check all that apply. "Survey Monkey" corrected this after they were alerted that it was occurring. Another change was that originally interviews were planned as follow-ups to the surveys. It was determined that considerable information was obtained through the surveys and no interviews were needed. In addition, the demographics of the participants closely matched the researchers. This is a bias due to convenience and snowball sampling.

Implications for Further Research

The fact that there is so little research in this area shows the importance for a study that will look at what life experiences influence individuals to become anti-

oppression organizers. The scope of this study was very small and other studies on this

topic as well as more in depth studies with greater resources could provide larger studies

that involved both interviews as well as surveys. Further studies could also explore

similar questions about why people organize and don't organize against oppression.

There were a number of exceptions that stood out among the results of the study.

These responses open up questions that could point in directions for further study. One

participant reported feeling empowered to organize against oppression because of her

privilege. This was not a common theme and was dramatically different than the other

responses:

> I think that race and class privilege, even though I experienced gender oppression
> and oppression based on sexual orientation, has socialized me in one way or
> another to feel entitled or empowered to raise my voice and make demands. I also
> attended small, well funded schools my whole life that prepared me well
> academically and instilled in me leadership skills - public speaking,
> professionalism etc. I think this gave me a sense of control over my life and in
> turn my social/political context. This combined with having a mom who was my
> mentor – a feminist social worker who played a large role in my politicization –
> shaped my perception of my ability and desire to make change.

In the description above the participant explains how she was empowered due to

her privilege. Further research should be done investigating how being part of a

privileged group empowers and motivates individuals to fight oppression.

There were a small number of individuals that were unsure if they could create

change. When asked if they believed they could create change they stated things like "I

do to some extent," or "Well actually I'm not sure but that wasn't an option." There were

also a few individuals who were unsure if their actions had made a difference. When

asked if their actions make a difference they stated things like: "I am unsure, but they are

still the right thing to do" another participant stated: "I haven't had a lot of personal

experiences 'making a difference,' but I still believe I have a duty to act. As Mother Teresa said, God asks us to be faithful. He doesn't demand that we are successful." Perhaps a study that investigates how religion and spirituality inspires individuals to organize against oppression would be useful?

When asked what experiences led them to initially feel empowered to take action, a few individuals explained how it was primarily for personal reasons, "[Taking action has] changed who I am for the better." Another individual stated, "I think it's almost that I can't not be socially active. I don't think I'd be a very happy person if I didn't work to change what I don't think is right." A study on how organizing against oppression might improve the mental health of the individuals who participate could provide an even better understanding of how organizing against oppression may or may not impact mental health. There may be mental health benefits to organizing against oppression. Finally a longitudinal study that follows individuals, beginning when they are children, before they organize against oppression, and follows them through their lives, measuring their level of commitment over time, monitoring their important life experiences, as well as closely measuring their political efficacy would be useful. The participants could be chosen randomly, and many of the participants would likely not go on to organize against oppression and they would be as interesting to follow as the group that does. A comparison of their life experiences could be explored.

Implications for Social Work Practice

For some social workers, organizing against oppression is the reason they came to this career. In addition to social workers fighting for change, it is clear that creating an environment where clients, who chose to, can become organizers against oppression is an

important social work value. The social work profession has in the past six decades

moved away from social action and social justice (Andrews & Reisch. 1997). The more

recent idea of social work "professionalism" as equal to status is particularly destructive

for social workers and their clients. It directly contradicts the traditional focus on social

and economic justice. This attachment to "status" creates a challenging environment for

social workers to unionize and fight for social justice. This is partly due to McCarthyism

of the 1950's:

> McCarthyism succeeded in suppressing dissent both personally and collectively
> among social workers. The social work profession retreated from social action in
> support of the poor to pursue such mainstream goals as enhanced professional
> status. As a result, core concepts and ideological perspectives on social work
> practice and education were affected. (Andrews & Reisch. 1997. p. 30)

While the individual clinical work that social workers do is very important, it is

not addressing the root of the problem. It is only addressing the symptoms of a society

that is sick with capitalism that prioritiezes profit over human need and it's all too

frequent oppressive outcomes. Without also addressing the cause of the symptoms,

social workers will not effect lasting societal change.

One reason for this study was to support social workers in returning to their roots

that were based in social and economic justice. One way some social workers do this is

by joining the Social Welfare Action Alliance (SWAA). While the SWAA does focus on

social justice issues, unions and a fight for the end of capitalism is also necessary.

Usually professionalism is considered the opposite of unionism. Professionalism

indicates a higher status in society, while unionism indicates a working class status.

Because of this juxtuposition joining unions is often perceived as lowering a social

worker's status. But for the liberation of both social workers and their clients this myth must be dispelled. In order to dispell this myth social workers will need to work through their own feelings for the need of "status" (Andrews & Reisch. 1997). Riffe and Kondrat quote Adams as saying: "The more a group of workers persues policies in conflict with basic capitalistic norms and priorities, the more they need the backing of a strong, politically advanced labor movement" (1997, p. 51). Since social workers persue policies that are in conflict with the capitalist system, promoting human need over profit, social workers will need the backing of a labor movment to effect broaud changes. Unions are key in creating a strong labor movement and without them it will be difficult for social workers to effect social change beyond their indivdiual work with clients.

Another reason social workers must organize against capitalism is because it pressures managed care to emphasize productivity and efficiency rather than quality of care. Therefore the quality of the services are limited and often do not support full healing of the client. This both harms the client and the social worker. In addition, capitalism perpetuates the system of oppresion. There will never be equality as long as there are the rich and the poor, and as long as there is capitalism there will be the rich and the poor. One alternative to capitalism is socialism. With a socialist economy society is run democratically the workers' and goods are produced in order to meet human needs not to create profits.

Reisch & Andrews (2002) cite Reynolds who wrote in 1913: "Social work radicals adopted a Marxist analysis therefore not because of its theoretical elegance but because it appeared to offer the most cogent and comprehensive explanation of the conditions they observed daily in their agencies and communities" (p. 66). While

reforms were considered by some as progress, they were only temporary fixes.

It is essential to recognize the social workers that organized against oppression before us. People like Bertha Capen Reynolds, Mary van Kleeck, Harry Lurie, and Jacob Fisher organized fiercely against oppression and often capitalism and because of people like them we have a less oppressive society today. Bandura described this:

> As a society, we enjoy the benefits left by those before us who collectively fought inhumanities and worked for social reforms that permit a better life. Our own collective efficacy will in turn shape how future generations will live their lives. (Bandura, 1995, p. 38)

A study that focuses on what common identifiable life experiences among people who fight oppression was urgently needed and important to both social work policy and practice. This is important because fighting oppression is an important value for social work, just as empowering our clients to advocate for themselves is. The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics states:

> Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice….
> Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, or mental or physical disability. (NASW, 1999, p. 27)

Social workers must organize against oppression. In this regard, it is helpful to better understand what types of experiences lead individuals to become active in fighting against oppression. One key component to this is political efficacy. Without it

individuals would have a difficult time advocating for themselves and accomplishing

their goals. Bandura (1995) explains why efficacy is so essential:

> Human accomplishments and positive well-being require an optimistic sense of
> personal efficacy. This is because ordinary social realities are strewn with
> difficulties. They are full of impediments, adversities, setbacks, frustrations, and
> inequalities. People must have a robust sense of personal efficacy to sustain the
> perseverant effort needed to succeed. In pursuits strewn with obstacles, realists
> either forsake the venture, abort their efforts prematurely when difficulties arise,
> or become cynical about the prospects of effecting significant changes. (p. 11-12)

It is important to support clients, who are oppressed by poverty, racism, sexism,

heterosexism, etc., in their understanding of how their concerns are connected to the

system of oppression. Their problems are rarely isolated individual problems and clients

need to know this. With this knowledge, some clients may be motivated to become more

involved in organizing for themselves politically, which has a number of benefits. These

are laid out by Cahn & Passet (1971):

> The values of citizen participation fall into three broad categories. It provides: 1.
> A means of mobilizing unutilized resources – a source of productivity and labor
> not otherwise tapped. 2. A source of knowledge – both corrective and creative – a
> means of securing feedback regarding policy and programs, and also a source of
> new, inventive and innovative approaches. 3. An end in itself – an affirmation of
> democracy and the elimination of alienation and withdrawal, of destructiveness,
> hostility, and lack of faith in relying on the people. (Cahn & Passet, 1971, p. 16)

In addition to supporting the general mental health of clients, social workers

should help to instill an optimistic view of the future. Social workers and their clients

need to know how powerful they potentially are. It is often feelings of powerlessness that

lead individuals to become demoralized in the face of adversity. On the other hand,

individuals who feel powerful and have collective efficacy are often able to achieve great

gains while fighting oppression. Clients who have these skills will be more likely to feel

better about themselves and stimulate change. When people believe they cannot organize on their behalf, they usually don't and thus relinquish any power that they may have had (Bandura, 1995). Encouraging clients' feelings of power and optimisms may lead to healthy clients and a healthier society:

> The successful, the venturesome, the sociable, the nonanxious, the nondepressed, the social reformers, and the innovators take an optimistic view of their personal capabilities to exercise influence over events that affect their lives. If not unrealistically exaggerated, such personal beliefs foster positive well-being and human accomplishments. (Bandura, 1995, p 13)

It is essential that social workers address issues of oppression in their clinical work. But when doing this it is important not to discuss it in a way that clients begin to see the oppression as something they alone suffer or for which they believe they are somehow responsible. It is therefore important that social workers facilitate groups that empower their clients to build efficacy, optimism, and connections with others who also have the goal of organizing against oppression. (Gentry & Johnson, 2003). Social workers should provide resources and information about how individuals can get involved in organizing against oppression if they decide to do so.

A better understanding of how and why individuals become anti-oppression organizers will benefit both social workers and their clients. It may also help to teach social workers and their clients how to become anti-oppression organizers. It is an imperative that social workers and others who care about the future of humankind join together and fight oppression at its roots in whatever way s/he is capable of doing so.

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Appendix A

Human Subjects Review Application

Name: Nikita Pion-Klockner

Contact Information: 202-439-5445, npion@email.smith.edu

Project Title: Are there identifiable life experiences among people who actively organize against oppression?

Project Purpose

The research question for this study asks, "Are there identifiable life experiences among people who actively organize against oppression?" I will survey individuals who identify as actively organizing against oppression and its relationship to identifiable life experiences of individuals and groups of individuals. I will then interview a few of the individuals for more in depth discussion of the issues. This study will be qualitative in design and both surveys and interviews will be used.

The following definitions will be used: "Oppression" will be defined as "the act of subjugating by cruelty …the state of being kept down by unjust use of force or authority. Oppression is most commonly felt and expressed by a widespread, if unconscious, assumption that a certain class of people are inferior… and has been referred to as 'systematic oppression'" (Labor Law Talk Dictionary).

I plan to use Angelique, Reischl, and Davidson's (2002) definition of political efficacy which: "is the feeling that individual action can have an impact on the political process" (p. 817). "Empowerment refers to increasing the political, social or economic strength of individuals or groups. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities" (Labor Law Talk Dictionary). The purpose of this study will be to determine if there are identifiable life experiences among people who organize actively against oppression.

A study that focuses on what experiences are associated with people who become empowered political organizers is urgently needed. Such a study is important to both social work policy and practice since it supports the social work goal of ending oppression. The potential benefit of this study is that it may contribute to a better understanding of empowerment, political efficacy and how political organizers are formed. The fact that there is so little research in this area indicates the need for a study that will look at identifiable life experiences among people who actively organize against oppression. The data from this study will be used for my master's level thesis and for possible publications and presentations on this topic.

The Characteristics of the Participants

I plan to obtain 35 participants who will fill out the survey. All the participants will be people who are over the age of 18 and identify as actively fighting against oppression within the last year. I will interview 3-4 individuals, who can meet in San Francisco for the interview, to seek out a deeper exploration of the same questions. Unfortunately I will only be surveying people who speak English, as I am not fluent in another language. Individuals can be of any gender, race, sexual orientation, nationality, and ability. The only people who will be excluded from the sample are people under the age of 18 and people who have not actively fought against oppression in the last year.

The Recruitment Process

 (See attached data collection instruments to be used.)
In order to recruit for the survey portion of the study I plan to use snowball and convenience strategies to obtain my sample. I will post flyers with the survey link in public places, post the flyer with the survey link on the Internet, and "Survey Monkey" will allow my survey to be public. I will post the flyer in the newspaper, and send the flyer with the survey link out to appropriate e-mail lists. I will attempt to create diversity in my sample by posting the survey in different venues to attract diverse audiences. Participants who agree to be interviewed must be able to meet in San Francisco for the interview. Participants who agree to be interviewed will be chosen randomly. No surveys will be discarded from the study.

Once I have identified an interview participant I will call him or her to set up an interview time that is convenient. I will describe briefly the process of the interview, which it will last about 30 minutes, it will be recorded and transcribed and that I have another consent form for them to sign. I will meet in the San Francisco Library downtown. I will have two copies of the consent form and have the participant read, ask questions, and sign them. I will have located a semi private and quiet location in the library where we can do the interview.

Survey participants may withdraw from the study at any point before submitting the survey online. Interview participants may withdraw from the study at any point before March 1st

The Nature of Participation

There will be two types of participation in this study: an online survey group and an in person interview group. All people interviewed will have completed the online survey first.

Online Survey Participants will be recruited to fill out the online survey through "Survey Monkey". The survey will collect demographic information and ask them to reflect on experiences in their life that they believe led them to organize against oppression. Participants will complete a survey of approximately 27 questions. The survey will

contain demographic questions, multiple-choice questions, yes or no questions, and a few open-ended questions.

Participants will be interviewed in person if they volunteered to be interviewed while filling out their survey. The participant will be called and asked to meet me in the San Francisco Library for the interview. I will bring two copies of the in person interview, informed consent form, which is different from the survey informed consent to our meeting and have the participant read, ask questions, and sign both. One copy will be for the participant and one will be for myself. The interview will last about thirty minutes and will be recorded and transcribed. I will do the transcribing. If I hire someone else to do it they will sign a confidentiality agreement.

Risks of Participation

Participants may face a number of minimal risks if they decide to participate in this study. My goal is for the participant to reflect and report on their personal life experiences, which they see as connected to their political organizing. This may be distressing for some participants. I plan to provide a list of referral sources to participants in case they feel that they need assistance as a result of completing the survey and/or participate in the interview.

The participants may choose not to answer questions during the survey or during the interview. If any participants decide they do not want to participate in the study while filling out the survey they do not need to submit the survey. Once the survey is submitted it cannot be withdrawn. Participants who are interviewed may also choose not to participate in the study at any point during the interview or up until March 1st. If they decide not to participate all materials recording them will be destroyed.

Benefits of Participation

The participants may benefit from this study in the following ways: they may gain new insight into their personal development of empowerment and political efficacy and how this relates to their organizing activities. In addition social workers may gain a more general understanding about how people develop into political organizers. Compensation will not be provided for the participants who participate in the study. The study is designed to help social workers learn how to support the development of political organizers who fight oppression, with a particular focus on identifiable life experiences among people who actively organize against oppression.

Informed Consent Procedures

There will be two informed consent procedures. One will be for the online survey group and the other will be for the in-person interview group. All participants will be over the age of 18 and will not need parental permission.

All surveys will be filled out online. An informed consent letter will be "signed" online by pressing a button that indicates such consent. Participants will be encouraged to print the consent from. Signing their name would break the anonymity of the participant filling out the survey. Survey participants will be informed by the informed consent letter before they begin the survey about the nature of the study, the rights of their participation, that they can withdrawal from the study at any point before submitting the survey. If a participant withdraws from the survey without submitting the material the researcher will never receive it.

Interview participants will be given the informed consent in person and will have an opportunity to read it, ask questions and sign it before the interview begins.

Precautions taken to Safeguard Confidentiality and Identifiable Information

For the online survey 'Survey Monkey' will provide anonymity for the respondents. "We offer three ways to administer anonymous surveys. You may use the anonymous survey link under the Collect icon. When you click the Collect icon you have three choices of collectors, Create link for an email message, Create link for a web page, and Send link to your email list. The first two choices strictly produce anonymous results.
The third choice opens our List Management tool, which tracks respondents' results. You can use the list management tool to send out your survey if you need to keep track of when your respondents take the survey. We can then turn off the demographic tracking for the survey you are conducting with List Management, making the results anonymous Chris" (Personal correspondence, 12/04/06). For those that only fill out the survey online and do not wish to be interviewed anonymity will be ensured.

For in-person interview participants I will use a code to refer to participants and remove all identifying information. I will provide confidentiality to the extent possible but not anonymity to any participants who are interested in being interviewed I will keep signed interview consent forms separate from the other materials. In addition my research advisor will have access to my data after the identifying information is removed. All interviewees' identities will be disguised and quotes will not identify them. Any interviews that I do will be recorded and transcribed. If I use another person to transcribe a tape he/she will sign a confidentiality agreement.

I will keep this data locked and secure for three years. Including the notes, data, informed consent forms, and all original notes, according to federal guidelines. After that three-year period I will continue to keep the data locked and secure if it is needed, or it will be destroyed.

Angelique, H., Reischl, T., & Davidson II, W. (2002). Promotion political empowerment: Evaluation of an intervention with university students. [Electronic version]. *American Journal of Community Psychology,* 30, (6) 815-833.
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    23, (5), 569-579.

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    www.surveymoneky.com.

Nikita Pion-Klockner
Student's Signature: Date:

Dr. Alan Schroffel
Advisor's Signature: Date:

Appendix B

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Online Survey Informed Consent

Dear Participant:

My name is Nikita Pion-Klockner and I wish to thank you for volunteering to participate in my research project. I am a student at Smith College School for Social Work located in Massachusetts. I am doing this research in order to write a thesis in partial fulfillment of my Master's degree. The research may be used for future presentation and publication on the topic. The research question I am studying is: are there identifiable life experiences among people who actively organize against oppression?

I am interested in your responses and reflections of how your life experiences affected or led to your actively organizing against oppression? The purpose of this study is to understand and describe this development in a meaningful way as well as to understand the interactions between these issues.

If you choose to participate in this study I will need you to complete a survey that should take no more than 30 minutes. You will be asked to reflect on your life experiences including, family, school, work and politics that relates to your active organizing against oppression. Questions will be yes or no, multiple choice, or open-ended.

Your anonymity is very important to me and the data obtained will not be connected to any identifiable information unless you volunteer to be interviewed and thus provide your name and phone number. In which case confidentiality can be maintained.

You may benefit from this study in the following ways: You may gain new insight into your personal development. In addition, you may gain a more general understanding about how people develop the ability to actively organize against oppression. Compensation will not be provided for the participants of the study.

You may face a number of minimal risks if you participate in this study. My goal is for you to reflect and report on your personal life experiences, family, school, work, and political actions that led to your political organizing activity. Reflection on these topics may be distressing. Because of this risk, I am providing a list of counseling resources for you to access if you do find the interview distressing.

You may choose not to answer any question in the survey. You may decide at any point before or during this survey that you do not want to participate in this study. After you submit the survey online I will not be able to identify which survey is yours, and

therefore would not be able to remove it. If you indicate that you are willing to be interviewed I may call you to set up a meeting depending on how many people volunteer. If you have any questions about participating in this survey you may e-mail me at npion@email.smith.edu. Thank you in advance for participating in this study.

YOUR COMPLETION AND RETURN OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Appendix C

Survey

Demographic Information:

1. Age_____   6. Sexual orientation_____

2. Race_____   7. Annual Household Income_____

3. Ethnicity_____   8. Number of Members in household_____

4.Nationality_____   9. Years of Education Completed_____

5. Gender_____   10. Job title_____

Active Organizing

"Oppression" will be defined as "the act of subjugating by cruelty …the state of being kept down by unjust use of force or authority… a feeling of being oppressed… Oppression is the arbitrary and cruel exercise of power. While the term is usually used to describe wrongful acts of government, oppression is rarely limited solely to government action. Oppression is most commonly felt and expressed by a widespread, if unconscious, assumption that a certain class of people are inferior… and has been referred to as 'systematic oppression'" (http://dictionary.laborlawtalk.com/oppression).

11. Have you actively fought against some form of oppression within the last year? This may or may not be a form of oppression you experience yourself.

Yes   No

12. If yes please check all activities in which you were seriously involved:
Women's Rights_____
Peace & Justice_____
Anti-Racism_____
Immigrant Rights_____
Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Rights_____
Workers Rights_____
Environmental_____
Prisoner rights_____
Drug legalization_____
Economic justice_____
Health care_____
Homelessness_____
Religious freedom_____
Global justice_____

Disability rights_____
Labor solidarity_____
Third party candidates_____
Other(s)_____

13. What are the organizing strategies that you have been actively involved in that you used to fight oppression? Check all that apply:

Political organizing meeting_____
Educational events_____
Demonstration_____
Civil disobedience_____
Street theatre_____
Art_____
Letter writing campaigns_____
Boycotts_____
Consumer consciousness_____
Fair trade_____
Class consciousness based groups_____
National/Ethnic/Racially based organizing groups_____
Gender based organizing groups_____
Sexuality based organizing groups_____
Other(s)_____

14. Please describe organizing strategies you use and for which categories of oppression, as listed in Question #13.

15. Do you believe that you have the power to effect political change with your action?

Yes   No

16. Please explain:

17. Do you feel that your actions have made or will make a difference?

Yes   No

18. Please explain:

19. Do you belong to a political organization?

Yes   No

20. If so what type? Check all that apply:

Radical organization_____
Community Organization_____
Religious organization_____
Non-Governmental Organization_____
Student Organization_____
Cultural/Ethnic Organization_____
Solidarity Organization Political Party_____
Other(s)_____

Life Experiences:

21. What types of life experiences led you to understand that oppression existed? Please check all that apply:

Family _____
Educational_____
Employment_____
Union_____
Important Person/Role Model_____
Political news Demonstration_____
Environmental Concerns_____
Poverty_____
Travel_____
War_____
Book(s)_____
Music_____
Film(s)_____
Political meetings/lecture_____
Religious institution_____
Spiritual (non-institutional)_____
Experience of personal oppression_____
Witnessing oppression_____
Other(s)_____

22. Please describe your experiences:

23. What types of life experiences led you to initially feel empowered to take action? Check all that apply:

Family_____
Educational_____
Employment_____
Union_____
Important Person/Role Model_____
Political news Demonstration_____
Environmental Concerns_____
Poverty_____
Travel_____
War_____
Book(s)_____
Music_____
Film(s)_____
Political meetings/lecture_____
Religious institution_____
Spiritual (non-institutional)_____
Experience of personal oppression_____
Witnessing oppression_____
Other(s)_____

24. Please describe your experiences that relate to your responses to Question #23:

25. Do you feel that your life experiences have been influential in your belief that your actions can and sometimes do make a difference?

__Yes

__No

If yes, please check which of the following types of experiences led you to this conclusion

Family_____
Educational_____
Employment_____
Union_____

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Important Person/Role Model_____
Political news Demonstration_____
Environmental Concerns_____
Poverty_____
Travel_____
War_____
Book(s)_____
Music_____
Film(s)_____
Political meetings/lecture_____
Religious institution_____
Spiritual (non-institutional)_____
Experience of personal oppression_____
Witnessing oppression_____
Historical perspective_____
Political victory against oppression_____
Mass movement_____
Political analysis_____
Moral principles_____
Other(s)_____

26. Please describe your life experiences you checked above that led you believe that your actions can make a difference.

27. Would you be willing to participate in a 30-minute in person interview with me in San Francisco to discuss more deeply these questions? If so please include contact information and I may contact you via phone.

First Name:_____

Phone:_____

Appendix D

Human Subjects Review Approval