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**COLLABORATIVE COMPETENCE AS RELATIONAL PRAXIS AMONG  
COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS: THE REPRODUCTION OF, AND  
RESISTANCE TO, SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION**

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## ABSTRACT

### COLLABORATIVE COMPETENCE AS RELATIONAL PRAXIS AMONG COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS: THE REPRODUCTION OF, AND RESISTANCE TO, SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

by

ERIN ROSE ELLISON

This dissertation is a mixed-method, multi-level examination of relational empowerment processes among organizers of an academic workers' union. Participants were union organizers; 29 organizers participated in the network questionnaire, and a sub-set of 12 participated in semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Using social network analysis (SNA) and qualitative analysis, this study investigated the relational empowerment element termed *collaborative competence*, which attends to the functioning of the organizing group and serves to build power via social support and group cohesion. This research is value-driven, examining, in context, how community organizers address the reproduction of systems of domination (e.g., racism, sexism) in order to build power and make socially just change. Understanding transgressions in a visceral, embodied manner was instrumental for individuals to engage in this process. Additionally, respectful and supportive relationships were required for participants to understand and make sense of their complicity in systems of oppression in proactive and potentially transformative ways. Nevertheless, providing these relational resources requires relational labor, and social network analyses indicate that the distribution of relational labor was inequitable, thereby hampering the union's collaborative capacity to make sociopolitical change. Thus,

two overlapping practices – corporeal literacy and supportive relational labor – form the basis of a praxis model for collaborative competence. This study concludes with implications and future directions.

For Virginia, who always believes in me

For Sam, who was behind the scenes

And for all those who fight against oppression, and their supporters

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

In response to inequality affecting the wellbeing of marginalized communities in the United States, people are rising up. This context of inequality includes, but is not limited to, the state sanctioned murder of young, unarmed Black men (e.g., Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown) increasing disparity between wealthy and low-income people in the United States and globally (Oxfam, 2014), ongoing challenges to reproductive rights of women (Silliman, Fried, Ross & Guterrez, 2004), repeated attempts to legalize discrimination against queer communities and Latino communities (e.g., Arizona SB 1062 and SB 1070, respectively), a widening gap in access to high quality k-12 education based on race and class (Reardon, 2011), the persistent role of racism in higher education (Smith, Yosso & Solorzano, 2011), inequitable burdens of climate change on indigenous and low income communities (Islam, 2013), and attempts to restrict voting rights in the US including voter identification legislation in 11 states (Weiser & Opsal, 2014). To change these conditions, people engage in community organizing through (often overlapping) social justice campaigns including anti-racism, workers' rights, economic justice, and justice for gender- and sexuality- based violence, among others. Empowerment processes are germane to collective work to transform contexts of inequality.

Empowerment has been understood as a key process in community organizing, whereby participants collectively gain greater access to, and control over, resources and decisions that influence their lives (Cornell Empowerment Group,

1982; Rappaport, 1981). Empowerment is a collective and relational phenomenon, thus empowerment can be fostered and/or constrained through interpersonal relationships. Therefore, relationships are central to our understanding of empowerment and social change.

Yet oppression can be reproduced through even our most intimate relationships (hooks, 2000). Within movements for social justice, injustice can be reproduced (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983; Stout, 1996). This negatively affects individuals and groups. In this research, I use empowerment theory, and in particular the framework of relational empowerment to understand the challenges and possibilities of community organizers regarding the reproduction of oppression. Specifically, from the relational empowerment literature, I employ the term collaborative competence to describe the ability to address the reproduction of injustice and create well-functioning relationships of solidarity (Christens, 2012). This is the central phenomenon of concern, and thus I will further elaborate on this theoretical framework in the following chapters.

The goal of this study is explicitly political; it focuses on relationships within groups as a route to build power for socially just change. The role of relationships in building power and making socially just change includes two kinds of interpersonal relationships: relationships within communities or groups, and relationships between communities or groups (Burt, 2000; Coleman, 1988). Both types of relationships are included within the empowerment literature. This study focuses on relationships within settings as a part of empowerment processes. Stated another way, this study

attends to within-group functioning and group-based collaborative capacities to better understand empowerment and the process of building collective power.

The capacity of organizing groups may be constrained by a number of different factors, including the ability to address the reproduction of injustice. Embedded within social networks and organizational structures, interpersonal relationships can be a site for the reproduction of oppression; that is, an individual can carry out or uphold systems of oppression in their interpersonal relationships. Examples include racist microaggressions and/or sexual assault. These acts are symptoms of systems of domination, such as white supremacy/racism and/or patriarchy (Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2014). These symptoms serve to constrain opportunities for individual and group empowerment. Individuals may also disrupt oppression in their interpersonal relationships. This occurs in multiple forms, and may include attempts to confront and address interpersonal violence. The current study examines empowerment through the organizational study of conflict over interpersonally-enacted injustices (e.g., microaggressions, slights, mundane acts of violence, sexual assault, etc.). This study interrogates, on multiple levels of analysis (LOAs), the concurrent processes to resolve such conflicts. On the individual level, this research examines cognitive dissonance and the embodied affective experiences involved in coming to terms with one's complicity with oppression, on the part of the transgressor and bystander. On the relational and setting levels of analysis, this study examines collective approaches to justice, and the role of social networks in the transformation to a more empowering setting. The research questions include:

1. How do organizers confront and process their reproduction of oppression in the organizing setting? How do individuals make sense of their complicity in those systems and take steps to build solidarity? This refers specifically to individuals' addressing *their own* problematic behavior, such as engaging in racial and/or gendered microaggression.
2. How do organizers involved in collective struggle confront the reproduction of oppression within their groups and networks? That is, how do individuals embedded within groups address the reproduction of oppression *among others* within their organizing group? This includes addressing others' problematic behavior, such as racial or gendered microaggressions, as well as group processes and policies that may be considered reproductive of oppression.
3. Is the organizing setting empowering? How equitably distributed is access to, and labor involved in providing networks of support and resolution of oppressive interpersonal interactions (e.g., microaggressions, sexual assault) within the organizing setting? That is, what kinds network structures are involved in collaborative competence and the creation of relationally empowering settings?

It is important to note that this research does not focus solely on targets of interpersonal violence. There is a great deal of research on the effects of such violence; some of this literature is used in this dissertation to bolster the argument that the functioning of community organizing groups warrants examination. This research

focuses on the organizing setting as the site of analysis, and thus although the targets of violence are a part of such accounts, transgressors and bystanders also come into focus when we consider interventions at the collective level of analysis. The intention is to understand how settings can be transformed to become more empowering and socially just.

First, I review some literature relevant to empowerment, with a focus on relational aspects of the processes and contexts of empowerment. I introduce reproductions of systems of domination (e.g. racism, sexism, etc.) as inhibitors of individual and collective empowerment. Next, I briefly address some literature on responses to reproductions of systems of domination, particularly for those who are complicit in such reproductions (e.g., transgressors and bystanders) as a way of understanding how community organizers may work toward a setting that is more empowering for all members. Then I propose a feminist intervention into current conceptions of empowerment theory. This intervention includes an extension of our definition of empowerment to include not only the distribution of access to resources but also the distribution of burdens, as addressing the reproduction of injustice is indeed a burden. In the second chapter, I outline a mixed method design that employs social network analysis (SNA) and in-depth interviews of organizers in an academic workers' union to study this phenomenon. I present the results in two chapters: chapter 3 focuses on the individual- and relational- levels regarding complicity with oppression, and chapter 4 focuses on the setting- and relational- levels of analysis by addressing collaboratively competent empowering settings through SNA.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Extending Empowerment: A Conceptual Framework**

Bridging difference is a central activity in social movement organizing, but at what cost and for whom (Moraga, 1983)? Often in social movement organizing, individuals from diverse groups work together to make change, yet we cannot assume that the experiences of empowerment are monolithic. In this chapter, I review divergent literatures to put forth the argument that empowerment – which is necessary for social change – is inhibited by behaviors that are reproductive of oppression, and relational labor is an integral aspect required to maintain or mend the group when disempowering events or patterns occur. Yet relational labor is under-recognized as an embedded practice that promotes organizational goals and ultimately, empowerment. Thus, we need to pay attention to relational labor to create empowering settings. In the following sections, I first outline the theoretical anchors of this study: empowerment, empowering settings, and relational empowerment, including the relational empowerment element that requires relational labor called collaborative competence. I then outline some literature to argue that microaggressions and other forms of violence are deleterious on multiple levels of analysis and serve to block a social justice organizing group's ability to build power and make change. I then highlight literature that is useful in understanding how a group might address violence within the setting, making an intervention into our understanding of relational empowerment to include a recognition of the activities of maintaining and mending relationships as labor. This intervention is made to promote



recognition of this work in practice, and to build a framework for additional ways to explore and measure empowering settings.

## **Empowerment**

Processes of empowerment are integral to social movement organizations' ability to build power and change unjust social systems (Rappaport, 1981). It is a collective process through which marginalized groups change inequitable power relations, increase access to resources, and promote individual and community wellbeing (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Rappaport, 1981). Social justice, a central goal of empowerment, is understood as the equitable allocation of bargaining powers, obligations, and resources in society (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005, 2010; Prilleltensky, 2008).

**Empowering settings.** The ability to enact social change is intimately related to the setting and the relationships therein. Because of the importance of settings and relationships for empowerment, the literature examines relationships and within-group functioning by addressing the pathways and processes through which community settings influence their members, community, and society more broadly. Interpersonal and intergroup relationships in a setting are important, as “a high quality relational environment provides the relationships and interpersonal resources necessary for substantially increasing control over one’s life and environment” (Maton, 2008, p. 11). On-going relationships with other members, outside of the organizational structure, are integral to the quality of the relational environment (Maton, 2008).

**The importance of relationships.** An empowering setting has been defined as a context in which actors have relationships that facilitate the exchange of resources (Neal & Neal, 2011). Moreover, the distribution of network power (i.e., power over resources and/or ability to connect others to resources) among individuals in the setting is roughly equitable (Neal, 2014).

Relationship building is integral to gaining power and resources (Speer, Hughey, Gensheimer & Adams-Leavitt, 1995). A comparative case study of two organizing groups underscores the importance of relationships and participation in building power. The authors analyzed participant perceptions and archival data. Member participatory behavior was measured by the frequency with which participants engaged in relationship-building interactions, including attendance at meetings, interpersonal contacts outside of meetings, and telephone contacts with other participants (Speer et al., 1995). Archival data were analyzed for groups' ability to influence agendas and public discussions. Of the two groups, the organization emphasizing relationship-building was more successful in wielding social power. Additionally, participants in the relationship-focused organization reported their group to be more intimate, and they had more overall interaction. This resulted in greater levels of empowerment on the individual level, and included larger numbers of participants in their collective actions. This is important to the current study because it supports the notion that individuals are motivated to sustain their engagement through close relationships and collective organization (Coleman, 1988; Speer et al., 1995).

Collective values and goals, as well as a social support system in which members provide and receive emotional and other types of support, are setting-level features of empowerment (Maton, 2008; Maton & Salem, 1995). Connecting with group members – especially through mutually supportive relationships – is central to building power, developing solidarity and enacting collective resistance (Moane, 2003). In a study of an Irish women’s liberation movement group, interviews with women indicated that empowerment was occurring at multiple levels of analysis, including individual, relationship-level, and collective. These findings reinforce a process model of empowerment in which relationships are integral to social change. In this model, relational-level interventions help individuals to overcome the “isolation that is a common feature of oppression, and develop solidarity and support through making connections with others” (Moane, 2003, p. 98). According to Moane’s (2003) model, support, solidarity, handling conflict, valuing diversity, and cultivating community are liberatory practices involved in facilitating social change in the Irish context.

Similar to the Irish context in Moane’s (2003) account, promoting accountability and handling conflict amidst diversity are common themes in many organizing structures in the United States (Christens, 2010; Fuentes, 2012). For example, an ethnographic study of parents of color in the U.S. who organized around education equity outlined the organization “established guiding principles to ensure that this particular process was informed by and held accountable to their beliefs in equity, collaboration, genuine dialogue, trust and sustainability” (Fuentes, 2012, p.

637). In this organization, parent meetings aimed to uncover and make available the resources families needed for students to achieve, and to build community among parents; parents attributed the success of the organization to the relationships they built among parents (Fuentes, 2012). Yet this study did not focus on the processes of accountability. Shared goals and processes to promote accountability and justice may include activities that facilitate working together across social difference, and address behaviors that produce conflict and uphold systems of oppression. Whether and how organizers are held accountable to the shared goals and processes of collaboration is not yet explicated in the empowerment literature, and is a central feature of this dissertation.

**Relational empowerment as a framework.** Community psychologists have known for quite some time that relationships within the setting are integral to empowerment processes and outcomes (Christens, 2012; Speer et al., 1995). Christens (2012) draws this tradition of the importance of relationships together and extends the theorizing of empowerment to include a relational component, which is defined as the “interpersonal transactions and processes that undergird the effective exercise of transformative power in the sociopolitical domain” (p. 121). There are five elements that make up relational empowerment. These include: collaborative competence, bridging social divisions, facilitating others empowerment, network mobilization, and passing on a legacy.

Collaborative competence is defined as “the set of abilities and propensities necessary for the formation of interpersonal relationships that can forge group

membership and solidarity” (Christens, 2012, p. 121). This refers to the ability to act within a collective, for a collective goal, namely for transformative power and social change. Bridging social divisions refers to the capacity to develop “trust and norms of reciprocity across lines of difference” (p. 121). Facilitating others’ empowerment includes individuals relinquishing control and fostering the participation of others, delegating, horizontal decision-making structures and rotating leadership structures. Mobilizing networks involves activities to foster the participation of others. This element underscores that relationships motivate and sustain participation in collective organization and social action. Finally, passing on a legacy requires mentorship, guidance, training, intergenerational relationships, and a commitment to sustainability and longevity of the organization.

The emerging literature on relational empowerment, particularly the element of collaborative competence, can help us make sense of the reproduction of systems of domination, as well as resistance to these systems, as a part of empowerment processes. That is, relational empowerment processes include interactions between multiple levels of analysis (individual, interpersonal, setting and social) to build capacity, power and ultimately affect social change. Because relationships are foundational to organizations and their efforts for social change (Speer & Hughey, 1995), interactions that devalue individuals, acts of violence, and toxic and abusive relationships serve to obstruct individual and organizational empowerment. This leads to conflict, which may or may not be resolved in the community organizing setting. The ability to resolve such conflict over interpersonal acts of injustice is part of the

relational empowerment element of collaborative competence, which provides social support to individuals within the group.

This research provides a basis for understanding collaborative competence as an element of relational empowerment, insight into relationally empowering settings and ultimately offer suggestions for building social power to move toward creating a more just society. Yet we do not have a fully developed understanding of the nuances and complexities; we do not yet have a study of collaborative competence in context. Particularly, what has not been deeply examined in the community psychology literature is conflict, which is an expected challenge within settings (Sarason, 1972), nor the resolution of conflict. With few exceptions (for example, Speer, 2008), the community psychology literature has not engaged with conflict among those involved with collective efforts toward empowerment. Speer (2008) locates conflict as a part of community psychology theorizing when he takes up the call to examine power (Prilleltensky, 2008). That is, if we consider asymmetric power relations as a phenomenon central to any context in which the collective process of empowerment may be sought, we must anticipate conflict within empowerment processes. Yet the lived experiences of engaging in such conflict have yet to be examined.

Conflict resolution is central to relational empowerment, and particularly the element of collaborative competence because it focuses on group cohesion and the ability of people, often from differing social locations, to work together. This research project further theorizes relational empowerment, and particularly collaborative competence. This research examines transgressions that serve to block empowerment

and solidarity, as well as reactions to such reproduction of oppression, including cognitive dissonance and community approaches to justice. The work required to address the blockages is discussed as embedded in social networks and as a devalued, feminized caring labor. The following sections outline disparate yet relevant research to help build an understanding of the relational empowerment element of collaborative competence. Before getting into how we resolve oppressive conflicts, we need to first discuss what the conflicts may look like and their effects on individuals as well as groups.

### **Harm: An Inhibitor of Empowerment**

Acts of violence that create harm in the organizing setting serves to limit the possibilities for empowerment. Power is built and exercised through relationships (Alinsky, 1971; Christens, 2012; Serrano-Garcia, 1994), and systems of domination are often reproduced in even our most intimate relationships (hooks, 2000). Individuals' actions are embedded in, and therefore constrained by, the social relations within which they operate (Granovetter, 1985). Given the power asymmetries and institutionalized nature of systems of domination in the United States, biases and discriminatory behaviors are prevalent (Sue, 2010). Indeed, even the most well-meaning people engage in the reproduction of racism, sexism, transmisogyny, heterosexism, and classism (Sue, 2010). These reproductions can take the form of a number of types of transgressions, from assault to mundane acts of violence. Mundane, everyday acts that cause harm are called microaggressions. It can be assumed that microaggressions are the most prevalent form of violence within a

social justice organizing setting. This is because the goals and values of community organizers for social justice tend to be explicitly anti-racist, anti-patriarchal, anti-classist, anti-heterosexist, anti-genderist, and anti-ableist. Yet explicit goals and implicit behaviors do not always align.

In order to lay the foundation for this study, I define microaggressions as subtle, often automatic or unconscious insults or slights that can be verbal or non-verbal (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). These are interpersonal instances of systemic discrimination that serve to keep those at the margins of society in their place (Solorzano et al., 2000). Early definitions of racial microaggressions, such as Chester Pierce's (1974) conception defined these everyday events as "subtle, cumulative mini-assault[s that are] the substance of today's racism" (p. 516 as quoted in Solorzano et al., 2000, p. 60).

For the purposes of this research, violence is understood as *any* harm visited upon a person or group that may result in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation regardless of intent. Indeed, Patricia Williams (1991) notes the role of intent in eliding responsibility for harm. Harm may be visited upon individuals and groups regardless of intent, through words and actions, and thus discursive violence is assumed as part of this definition. That is, words have the ability to constitute violence (Armstrong, 2001; Corsevski, 1998; MacKinnon, 1993).

**Effects of microaggressions.** The outcomes for individuals, especially those who suffer such indignation, support the argument that these acts are violent. Effects



for those who endure microaggressions include psychological consequences such as depression, decrease in academic performance, anxiety and diminished self-esteem, among other psychological outcomes (Hwang & Goto, 2008; Steele, 1997; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). The outcomes are not just psychological, they can be physiological as well. For example, a study of two spirit (i.e., binary gender non-conforming) American Indian/Alaskan Native found a relationship between the experience of racist and heteronormative contexts with self-reports of negative health, pain and impairment (Chae & Walters, 2009).

Microaggressions also have consequences for those who enact them. Microaggressions have deleterious effects for transgressors in three domains: affective, behavioral, and cognitive (Sue, 2010). Transgressors tend to have a diminished awareness of their involvement in systems of oppression (Hanna, Talley, & Guindon, 2000). To continue their complicity in systems of oppression, transgressors would have to engage in cognitive processes, such as denial or unawareness. Engaging in microaggressions results in fear, anxiety, and apprehension (Apfelbaum, Sommers & Norton, 2008; Spanierman, Todd & Anderson, 2009), guilt (Spanierman & Heppner, 2008), and low empathy (Sue, 2005), which results in behaviors such as avoidance of others, and avoidance of topics related to marginalization or oppression. Germane to this study of relational empowerment is that engaging in microaggressions negatively impact relationships with individuals from marginalized groups (Hanna et al., 2000). Transgressors have a more difficult time connecting with and understanding the struggles of marginalized people. Fear,

avoidance, and lack of empathy “deprives oppressors the richness of possible friendships and an expansion that open up life horizons and possibilities” (Sue, 2010, p. 130). Finally, complicity with oppressive systems denies the transgressor’s humanity and spiritual connection with other humans (Freire, 1970; Martín-Baró, 1994; Sue, 2010).

Microaggressions also harm bystanders, yet this is an underdeveloped area of the microaggression literature. According to Solorzano (2014), bystanders, especially if they have similar group memberships with the target of the microaggression, can experience secondary or vicarious trauma. The literature on sexual harassment may be useful to fill in some of these gaps in the literature, as sexual harassment scholars have found that bystanders experience similar outcomes to those experienced by the target of sexual harassment (Hitlan, Schneider, & Walsh, 2006; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007). Scholars in this field have studied the causes and effects of what they call ambient harassment and hostile work environments (e.g., Glomb et al., 1997; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007). Indeed, situational (i.e., setting-level) factors of sexual harassment, even so-called lower-level environmental offenses such as sexually suggestive posters, create severe outcomes for those who experience them (Langhout et al., 2005). Thus, I include bystanders in the discussion of negative effects for settings and networks, as bystander status is essentially a function of being located within a setting with both transgressors and those who survive such indignations.

Microaggressions are a serious challenge to group functioning, especially when the group purposefully organizes against oppression. Therefore, it is necessary to consider how these individual and interpersonal everyday behaviors are deeply connected to the maintenance of oppression. Similar to the ways in which the objectification of women and media portrayals of violent sexuality are a pillar of rape culture (Cahill, 2001; Herman, 1988), this project situates microaggressive behaviors as pillars of oppression and injustice. In this contextual argument of rape culture, rape is a logical extension of normalized sexual (sexist) behavior, and rapists are not deviant, they are overly conformist (Cahill, 2001; Herman, 1988). That is, a context in which women are seen as objects supports a culture of rape. As objects, women's bodies exist for the pleasure of others and thus their bodies are expected to be accessible (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). Objectification, then, is dehumanization, which psychologically allows the perpetrator (in this example) to rape without dissonance (Freire, 1970; Hinton, 1996; Kelman, 1973; Martín-Baró, 1994; Rudman & Mescher, 2012). Similarly, if one is in a context in which mundane violent practices are commonplace, other types of violence are thus condoned. Gendered microaggressions support patriarchy, racial microaggressions support racism, heterosexist and genderist microaggressive behaviors support discrimination against queer and trans\* folks, and so on. Thus, oppression is embedded and institutionalized (Young, 2009). These intersecting systems, with power operating on interpersonal levels, are thus kept in place, justifying and perpetuating violence against women, people of color, queer and trans\* folks, and so on.

The social context surrounding acts of violence makes violent acts possible, acceptable and a part of the culture of the setting (Young, 2009). The social context contributes to violence in its systematic and psychological nature, that is, the existence of an oppressive context contributes to the everyday fears of violence based on group membership. According to Young (2009):

The oppression of violence consists not only in direct victimization, but in the daily knowledge shared by all members of oppressed groups that they are liable to violation, solely on account of their group identity. Just living under such a threat of attack on oneself or family or friends deprives the oppressed of freedom and dignity, and needlessly expends their energy (p.68).

Microaggressions serve to remind individuals of their group memberships and the violations that accompany them (i.e., microaggressions serve to put marginalized people in their place), and thus, are entangled with other types of violence.

In summary, these behaviors, created by a context of domination, then reinforce and make possible other types of violence. This further disenfranchises people. Microaggressions are prevalent violent behaviors that are indeed related to human rights and wellbeing. The concept of microaggressions as violent acts is evidenced by the psychological consequences of suffering such indignations (e.g., Harrell, 2000; Hwang & Goto, 2008; Steele, 1997; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). Thus, microaggressions are violent in themselves, are related to acts that are easily recognized as violence, serve to uphold systems of domination.

**Addressing (or not addressing) microaggressions.** Attempts to address microaggressions are what Sue (2010) calls “the catch 22 of responding to microaggressions” (p. 53). The recipient of a microaggression must attend to the attributional ambiguity of the event, considering if the event was indeed related to the recipient’s marginalized group membership, they must take steps to protect themselves from the microaggression, critically reflect on the experience, and determine the appropriate action to take (Solorzano, 2014; Sue, 2010). All of these considerations include psychological labor that deplete an individual’s energy and ability to engage in the setting, diminishing capacities such as problem-solving and learning skills (Cadinu, Maass, Rosabianca & Kiesner, 2005; Steele, 1997; Steele, Spencer & Aronson, 2002; Sue, 2010).

Confronting such oppressive issues within the organizing setting may swiftly be dismissed as unimportant in relation to social movement goals (as if these were separate). Attention to within-group power asymmetries has been considered fragmenting of -- or derailing to -- social movements (White, 1999). Additionally, calls for such attention to oppressive interpersonal behavior might result in further acts of mundane violence such as the denial of experience (Sue, 2010). That is, dismissing microaggressions as fantasy, paranoia or oversensitivity may compound the discursive violence experienced.

Lack of attention to microaggressions in a setting reflects a worldview that centers, albeit invisibly, experiences of dominant groups: white, heterosexual, male, middle-class, etc. (Sue, 2003). A dismissal of within-group process or asymmetric

power dynamics may be explained by the socialization of masculinity, which privileges: “strengthening agency at the expense of communion, and encouraging action at the expense of introspection” (Zurbriggen, 2008, p.305). These are masculinized ways of being that create risk of perpetuating violence for everyone in the setting. If one considers microaggressions as acts of violence, as I do here, then the silencing of them perpetuates a masculinist, white supremacist, classist, context which then puts all at risk of perpetuating violence. These kinds of contexts can be considered disempowering settings (Maton, 2008). Thus, microaggressive behaviors serve to constrain social action and power through norms of a setting (Granovetter, 1985; Hayward, 2000).

Finally, concerns may be ignored. Indeed, the realization that an individual or a group is complicit in racism, for example, creates tension for the individual and the organizing group. The concept of psychological tension is taken up in more depth in the following sections, in which I outline cognitive dissonance and its subsequent resolutions (individual level phenomena), and community-based approaches to justice (group level phenomena). This study engages individual, relational and group levels of analysis for the examination of within-group functioning and conflict resolution, as relationships link the two levels of analysis (Neal, 2014).

In summary, microaggressions are assumed to be a prevalent form of injustice that causes conflict within an organizing setting, with well-meaning comrades engaging in the reproduction of racism, misogyny, heterosexism, ableism and classism. It is important to consider microaggressions in context because the social

context makes violent acts possible, acceptable and a part of the culture of the setting (Young, 2009). A context of violence, and lack of attention to the relational work needed to resolve and change violence, can put everyone within the setting at risk of perpetuating violence (Zurbriggen, 2008). A culture of microaggressions within an organization would equate to a disempowering setting, and the ability to hold transgressors accountable, navigate conflicts, and make changes within the group regarding the reproduction of oppression would suggest a collaboratively competent, empowering setting.

### **Resolution of Violence Within the Community Organizing Setting**

It is therefore important to our understanding of empowerment to examine how groups confront conflict and promote justice on the interpersonal and group levels. This call is not new. Noting that empowerment is experienced as process and outcome, Maton (2008) urged the field of community psychology to work toward transforming disempowering and non-empowering settings into empowering ones. That is, the developmental processes that occur among individuals within settings are important to individual and organizational empowerment, and to social change. This research takes up the charge, complicating the analysis of settings and their transformation. An intersectional and contextual approach implies settings are not monolithically empowering, non-empowering or dis-empowering: they can be disempowering for certain groups, and along multiple axes of domination. Thus, setting transformation is multi-faceted. Given this understanding, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of the processes and lived experiences involved in

transformation toward more empowering settings, particularly examining these phenomena at multiple levels of analysis. The following section outlines literature on some of the processes that may accompany addressing injustice within the organizing setting.

**Individual level: Cognitive dissonance processes.** Specifically, for the individual transgressor, cognitive dissonance may be experienced when reproducing injustice. Individuals, especially those working for social justice, would likely feel dissonance if they come to realize that their actions are racist, patriarchal, classist, transmisogynist, ableist, and so on. Cognitive dissonance is generally understood as an individual's conflict between two cognitions, or between cognition and behavior. When two cognitions are known to be in conflict, there is discomfort, and the individual seeks resolution. Accounts of dissonance phenomena tend to focus on the individual level of analysis; dissonance emerges in the conflict among individual's thoughts, feelings, and actions (Matz & Wood, 2005). People generally want to believe they are good, moral beings that treat each other well, so when confronted with evidence to the contrary, especially as related to how individuals treat others, a central element of their self-concept is threatened (Tavris & Aronson, 2007).

When affective discomfort is aroused due to a discrepancy between two cognitions (i.e., between two thoughts or beliefs), in order to resolve the discomfort or negative emotional state that accompanies the dissonance the individual will work to change one or more of their thoughts or beliefs, acquire new information, or dismiss the discrepancies as unimportant. Individuals may avoid the conflict, confess



their transgression, reflect on the discrepancy in values and actions, and/or change attitudes or behaviors (Festinger, 1957; Kenworthy, Miller, Collins, Read & Earleywine, 2011; Stice, 1992).

Cognitive dissonance can have a relational component. If an individual experiences dissonance due to a collectively held belief or a collectively enacted behavior, the process of resolving the dissonance may occur collectively. The seminal study on cognitive dissonance is a good example (Festinger, 1957). For this doomsday group preparing for the end of the world, when the end times did not occur, the group rearticulated beliefs under the leadership of a charismatic guru and through social support of many participants. Thus, dissonance may be resolved through levels of agreement within the group, and may include seeking consensus and peer influence (Matz & Wood, 2005). Reflexivity regarding the discrepancy between values and actions may also occur on the group level (Festinger, 1957). In this case, we might imagine a group revisiting shared values and clarifying norms of behavior.

Cognitive dissonance is one of the main psychological processes involved in the perpetration of violence. In a discussion of political repression and violence in Latin America, liberation psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró (1994) outlines the effects of violence on the transgressor, the transgressed, and the bystander. Cognitive dissonance of the perpetrator of violence is often resolved through the denial of humanity of the transgressed. According to Martín-Baró (1994), this denial, or dehumanization, includes a distancing between groups, thus cognitive dissonance is resolved. In other words, if the transgressor sees the individual as less-than human,

the transgressor may resolve the psychological tension and limit emotional interaction with the transgressed and others of the same group. Yet this is not always the case. Transgressors cannot always devalue those they have harmed, especially when they are in relationship or working in collaboration, and this causes discomfort (Martín-Baró, 1994). In some cases, in light of such dis-ease, the transgressors may turn against the institution that demands or makes possible such violent perpetration (Martín-Baró, 1994).

Bystanders to violent transgressions may also experience cognitive dissonance. In the case of the bystander, the dissonance may be resolved by claiming the perpetrator is a fascist, a racist, a sexist, etc. (Martín-Baró, 1994). Another possibility is that the bystander devalues the person targeted. Yet, like the transgressor, the bystander may also have difficulty dehumanizing the person who was violated (Martín-Baró, 1994). When a bystander identifies in some way with the person who was violated, the bystander cannot create an emotional distance (Martín-Baró, 1994). This distancing from the transgressor and/or the target impedes collaboration (Martín-Baró, 1994). Thus, if we consider the resolution of conflicts such as cognitive dissonance as a part of collaborative competence, bystanders' efforts to counter oversimplification and dehumanization of both transgressor and transgressed may be an important process.

Similar to Martín-Baró's discussion of cognitive dissonance, Tavis and Aronson (2007) provide us with a number of responses from empirical study. The list of routes to resolve the tension caused by dissonance includes: openly acknowledging

guilt, denying, justifying, and blaming others (Tavris & Aronson, 2007). A study of white women who grew up with black maids in the Deep South in the 1960s found a similar list of routes to resolution (van Wormer and Faulkner, 2012). The authors expected that participants would experience a certain level of discomfort when looking back on their own treatment of black servants during segregation. When the participants reflected on their behavior, norms, and laws that kept racial dominance in place, they used the following mechanisms to resolve their dissonance: denial, defensiveness, guilt, providing personal care, gift giving, blaming the victim, defiance of the Deep South's social norms, and becoming an ally through political advocacy (van Wormer & Faulkner, 2012). Similarly, in a study of post-apartheid South Africa, Gibson (2004) suggests dissonance is the first step toward personal and social change.

These studies indicate the potential for cognitive dissonance to spark positive behavior change as related to complicity in systems of domination. Yet these empirical studies do not take the role of settings and relationships into account. That is, cognitive dissonance over injustice, and the resolution of such dissonance have not been explored as practice embedded within relationships, networks and particular settings. Learning more about how dissonance over injustice gets resolved as an embedded practice of a community organizing group would provide information about how to transform disempowering settings into more empowering settings.

In summary, there is research on how individuals respond to cognitive dissonance (Tavris & Aronson, 2008) and how they do it in groups (Festinger, 1962; Matz & Wood, 2005; van Wormer & Faulkner, 2012). This includes cognitive

dissonance over racist behavior that facilitates behavior change (Gibson, 2004; van Wormer & Faulkner, 2012). The research on violence points to the role of the context or setting in perpetration, yet the studies of cognitive dissonance do not consider the role of the setting, and of relationships, in understanding individuals' resolution. The literature can be extended to include responses to cognitive dissonance as facilitated by different contextual factors.

**Interpersonal and group level: Collective approaches to justice.** In contrast to studies of cognitive dissonance, studies of collective approaches to justice, that is, studies of community-based response regarding the reproduction of injustice, tend to include more contextualization. Responses include, but are not limited to, confrontations at the time of the transgression by threatening or using physical force to prevent further aggression (Haaken, 2010; Waugh, 2010); collective 'bashing back' and group confrontations after the transgression, including physical force (Baroque & Eanelli, 2012; White & Rastogi, 2009); "calling-out" and public shaming (Coleman, 2013; White & Rastogi, 2009), engaging in restorative and transformative justice-influenced approaches, including "calling-in" (Trần, 2016) and creating new processes, such as accountability processes (Chen, Dulani, & Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2011), and creating "counter-spaces" where those subjected to mundane violence may heal (Perez-Huber & Solorzano, 2013), among others.

These responses to violence are not mutually exclusive. I focus on calling-in here because of the attention to maintaining relationships, which is consistent with collaborative competence. The process of calling-in is compared to (but not a

substitute for) calling-out in that “it’s about being strategic, weighing the stakes and figuring out what we’re trying to build and how we are going do it together” (Trần, 2016, p. 60), whereas calling-out and public shaming may not include steps to keep a relationship intact and maintain the group. In calling-in, the quality and strength of relationships, as well as shared goals and political projects, are considered as shared resources, and weighed judiciously.

The process of calling-in appears to be an emotionally laborious process used to address problematic behaviors. Calling-in communicates a level of caring and investment in another person, and recognition of the connected struggle. This approach recognizes the multiple positions individuals, embedded in an oppressive set of social relations, might have, such as the position of both oppressor and oppressed, transgressor and transgressed. The kind of caring involved in a restorative approach is strong enough to teach or guide the individual who has caused harm, and invite the individual back into the community.

In this approach to address injustice, acknowledging that mistakes may occur is an integral step: “Mistakes in communities seeking justice and freedom may not hurt any less but they also have possibility for transforming the ways we build with each other for a new, better world. We have got to believe that we can transform” (Trần, 2016, p. 60). Indeed, making mistakes is central to learning (Tavris & Aronson, 2007), and can often be expected in the creation of alternative settings (Sarason, 1972). But it is important to note that the “mistakes” at question here

(microaggressions and other acts of violence) are hurtful to individual others, as well as to the shared political project.

Expecting and perhaps tolerating mistakes is not an excuse for white people to engage in racist behaviors, for example, as the harm caused is too great. There is no obligation to put the hurt feelings of the transgressor above the impact their behavior has caused (Trần, 2016). This disclaimer is necessary; there is a long history of the oppressor relying on the oppressed to teach them about their problematic behavior. Audre Lorde (1984) notes this history, and points out the psychological energy needed to engage in the consciousness-raising of the oppressor:

Traditionally, in american society, it is the member of oppressed, objectified groups who are expected to stretch out and bridge the gap between the actualities of our lives and the consciousness of our oppressor. For in order to survive, those of us for whom oppression is as american as apple pie have always had to be watchers, to become familiar with the language and manners of the oppressor, even sometimes adopting them for some illusion of protection. Whenever the need for some pretense of communication arises, those who profit from our oppression call upon us to share our knowledge with them. In other words, it is the responsibility of the oppressed to teach the oppressors their mistakes. I am responsible for educating teachers who dismiss my children's culture in school. Black and Third World people are expected to educate white people as to our humanity. Women are expected to educate men. Lesbians and gay men are expected to educate the heterosexual

world. The oppressors maintain their position and evade responsibility for their own actions. There is a constant drain of energy which might be better used in redefining ourselves and devising realistic scenarios for altering the present and constructing the future (p. 114-115).

Lorde's (1984) contribution here complicates an understanding of the labor of calling-in, and other approaches. One reading of this excerpt may be a call to separatism<sup>1</sup>, for the energy it takes to educate others (oppressors/transgressors) takes away from community self-determination and social change. The effort described by Lorde (1984) is similar to what Smith and colleagues (2007) call racial battle fatigue. In a series of empirical studies, Smith and his colleagues have documented the effort and the deleterious effects of living in – and fighting against – a racist environment. Racial battle fatigue refers to the physiological and psychological strain involved in coping with an oppressive environment (Smith et al., 2011). For example, one focus group-based study of 36 Black male students enrolled at top tier universities in the US (e.g., Harvard, University of Michigan, UC Berkeley) highlighted the lived experiences of microaggressions (Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007). Participants reported psychological stress responses such as frustration, shock, anger, disappointment, resentment, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness, and fear, which the authors state are symptomatic of racial battle fatigue (Smith et al., 2007). Thus, the

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<sup>1</sup> This project does not engage in arguments for or against separatism. Additionally, this project assumes multiple and intersecting identities; organizing groups are constituted by individuals who exist at intersections of oppression, making (multiple-axis) separatism a challenge in itself.

work of being located within an oppressive setting, much less attempting to transform it, is enough to negatively impact one's wellbeing. Yet in order to make social change, oppressive settings and relationships must be transformed.

An important question provoked by Lorde's (1984) description of the dynamics of oppression is: through a process by which the transgression is addressed or resolved, does the transgressor maintain their position and evade responsibility? This research project may provide insight into whether, and how, a collaborative resolution can hold transgressors accountable and disrupt power relations within organizing groups. The ability to do this would be indicative of collaborative competence.

In collaborative projects, people of color should not be expected to teach white people about racism, but they also cannot be expected to endure the everyday, mundane and often dismissed acts of violence without some kind of resolution, whether internally/psychologically, relationally, or on the group level. Similarly, in this example, white people working in close collaboration with people of color cannot be entirely unaware of the effects that their microaggressions have on others' wellbeing, on their relationships with others, or on group functioning. I do not argue that those who experience the reproduction of oppression (in any of the many forms) should teach those who have reproduced oppression, yet a deep inquiry of collaborative competence can examine how those who transgress, the people they work with and transgress upon, and bystanders involved in the shared setting, approach resolution and create a collaboratively competent empowering setting.



Resolution is hard work. Learning together, the emotional stress of oppressive contexts, and being willing to work through mistakes is collaborative competence, tough love, an enduring project, and an indicator of solidarity.

These examples of collaborative approaches to justice integrate contextual and cultural aspects into understanding the collective processes, yet many of these are theoretical, and/or popular media accounts (with the exception of Haaken, 2010; Waugh, 2010; and White & Rastogi, 2009). Although contextually rich, there is a need for more empirical research on collective responses to violence. Furthermore, even though the framework calls for the ability to work through conflict, responses to conflict, especially over violence, have yet to be included as a part of the emerging relational empowerment literature. Moreover, accounts of collective approaches to justice within community organizing settings (and elsewhere) have not been studied with a social networks approach. This is important to empowerment theory and empirical research because conflicts do not exist in a vacuum, nor are they resolved in one. Relationships, within networks of other connections, are challenged and mobilized in times of conflict and resolution. The following section outlines the importance of a networks approach to questions of collaborative competence and empowering settings.

### **Conflict resolution (or avoidance) as embedded in social networks.**

Resolution of transgressions needs to be explored as practice embedded within relationships and networks if organizations hope to be inclusive and build power. Individual, interpersonal and group levels of analysis are crucial for understanding

and improving not only such settings, but also larger social systems. According to ecological theories of social relations, interpersonal relationships and social interactions are embedded in settings. Therefore, individuals, in relationship with others, are influenced by and influence their contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Neal & Neal, 2011). Relationships, thus, are foundational elements of larger social settings and help us to understand phenomena on the systems level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Coleman, 1988; Granovetter, 1973, 1985; Neal & Neal, 2011). Several studies indicate that levels of analysis are linked, and thus individual change, setting level change and social change are related; individuals interact with social structures such as schools, religious institutions and other organizations (i.e., mediating institutions) that influence how individuals engage with the world and with social issues (Berger & Neuhaus, 1977; Todd & Allen, 2011). Using a relational empowerment orientation, it is thus important to examine the relationships within such settings.

A recent mixed method SNA study provides a good example of examining relationships within mediating institutions. The authors examined the role of friendship relationships in changing recycling and littering behavior among New Zealand high school students (Long, Harré, & Atkinson, 2014). The authors found that littering and recycling were indeed influenced by relationships, and the behaviors showed a clustering effect. Thus, relational interactions created change on a broader level. Peer relationships have also been found to influence smoking behavior, among other public health concerns, and thus complex behavior change requires very strong ties and close relationships (Alexander, Piazza, Mekos, & Valente, 2001; Valente,

2010). Although the behavior change in these studies relate to smoking and other health behaviors, one cannot ignore the possibilities for other types of behavior change. The complexity of changing individual, relational, and setting-level reproductions of injustice would indeed require strong ties and close relationships.

The concept of embeddedness considers the role of personal relationships and networks in facilitating trust and discouraging malfeasance (Granovetter, 1985). Dense networks create strong norms (Coleman, 1988). Additionally, strong ties, particularly friendship ties, facilitate change (Krackhardt, 1992). When it comes to challenging power and the status quo, trust is a significant resource, and change is the product of caring and well-developed relationships (Krackhardt, 1992). Further, relationships between actors in a network determine the exchange of material and non-material resources that animate the processes of empowerment (Christens, 2012; Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010; Neal & Neal, 2011).

In summary, it is essential to this project to note the relationship between individual, community, and social change. Understanding and influencing community and social settings requires examining how individual behaviors shape, and are shaped by their context, which includes relationships. Interpersonal interactions create larger settings and systems (Neal & Christens, 2014). Individuals link the different levels of analysis, that is, individuals link the settings they inhabit, and broader social systems (Neal & Neal, 2011). Although relationships and networks are posited as links between settings and systems (e.g., Neal & Neal, 2011), as integral to organizational change (e.g., Krackhardt, 1992) and as central to mobilizing for

collective action (e.g., Diani & McAdam, 2011), the struggle to disrupt or dismantle systems of oppression has yet to be examined through a network approach.

This kind of research, that is setting-level research that incorporates a network approach, is needed to understand and strategize to create change on the individual, relational and social levels of analysis. That is, if relationships and networks link the levels of analysis and thus are central to social change, networks are an important site of inquiry for the project of collective freedom and wellbeing. Yet it is important to be explicit regarding the phenomena of interest within the network; when examining relational empowerment and particularly collaborative competence in context, we must consider the nature of the relationships that are employed to gain access to resources and work toward social change. To that end, I suggest an intervention into relational empowerment that considers relational labor as an important activity in collaborative competence and therefore community organizing: relational labor.

### **A Feminist Intervention into Relational Empowerment Theory: Relational Labor**

Within this collective project for freedom and wellbeing, care theory and relational labor literature can help us to understand the challenges of working together in a collaboratively competent way. Care theory provides additional theoretical rigor and depth to the relational empowerment phenomenon of collaborative competence, thus bringing a feminist lens to the phenomenon of inquiry in this study; I use the terms labor and work consciously to confer legitimacy. Our western construction of

work is something that is paid, public and legitimate (Daniels, 1987). Private, relational, unpaid work of many community organizers is thus considered less legitimate than more public and/or paid activities in social justice organizing (e.g., giving speeches, leading marches, giving interviews on news programs). Yet, maintaining relationships requires time, planning, and effort (Angus, 1994; James, 1989). Contrary to binary gendered conceptions, throughout this project I refer to caring, relational activities, relational empowerment, conflict resolution and collaborative competence as work or labor. In the following section I use research on gendered processes that enable the functioning of institutions and organizations, yet is often made invisible, to illuminate the concept of collaborative competence. Social reproduction, care, affective labor and emotional labor are some of the terms, used in disparate literatures, that I consider the relational labor of collaborative competence. The following sections point to some of these literatures to build the argument that relational labor needs to be elucidated to understand collaborative competence.

Care has been defined as an “activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible” (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p.40). This work has been naturalized; that is, it is assumed that caring and making emotional connections are activities women naturally do, thereby obscuring the labor involved (Bowlby, Gregory, & McKie, 1997; Fishman, 1978; Luxton, 1997; Shaw, 1995). It has been well documented that women shoulder heavier relational and caregiving burdens than men (e.g., Fletcher, 1999; Yee & Schulz, 2000), and a gendered division of labor persists (Ravanera, Beaujot, & Liu,

2009). The work of care, especially “repairing our world” aligns well with practices of community organizing and relational empowerment, and thus a consideration of feminized labor and gendered distributions of caring work within community organizing is appropriate.

Caring involves physical activity, organizational skills, and emotional involvement (Benoit & Heitinger, 1998). Similar to affective labor, which has been understood as labor done to impact the emotional experience of people, and emotion work, which includes work done to maintain relationships (Hochschild, 1979, 2003), caring labor is something that is done, experienced, and has consequences in the body. For example, women who perform caring labor suffer more from anxiety and depression than men who perform caring labor due to the relative invisibility of their work (Lee & Porteous, 2002; Navaie-Waliser, Spriggs & Feldman, 2002; Yee & Schulz, 2000), report higher rates of chronic fatigue, sleeplessness, stomach problems, and back pain (Lee & Porteous, 2002; Wilcox & King, 1999), and are at increased risk for illness. One study of wives who were caring for an ill or disabled spouse found that caring work was associated with coronary heart disease (Lee, Colditz, Berkman, & Kawachi, 2003). Another qualitative study examined the experiences of elderly Swedish women who had difficulty limiting their care work. The authors found that women often felt a level of responsibility to care, and they found meaning in caring, yet the many years of this labor was physically and psychologically exhausting (Forssén, Carlstedt, & Mörtberg, 2005). Additionally, even though the work was associated with negative impacts on their wellbeing, the

putting the needs of others first was compulsive behavior; that is, they were compelled to care against better judgement (Forssén et al., 2005). Interestingly, one review examining the relationship between the performance of emotional labor and psychological strain or burnout, found that social support and a feelings of control over one's labor within the organizational setting moderated negative outcomes (Zapf, 2002).

Thus, women assume more relational and caring tasks than men, and continue to perform care work over long periods of time, even when suffering from associated negative health outcomes. They often feel less control over whether and for how long they perform caring labor. More control over one's labor, paired with support from others, may mitigate some negative effects. Taking this into account, it is important to consider the labor of care within community organizing because it is likely gendered and may lead to negative health outcomes for those who perform relational work in the organizing context.

Organizational psychologists have considered relational work as important to the knowledge, practice and outcomes of organizations in the formal labor sector (e.g., Fletcher, 1999; Follett, 1924). Yet, relational and caring behaviors are made invisible in business organization contexts because they are associated with femininity, not because they are ineffective (Fletcher, 1999). Indeed, the focus on deliverable outcomes, rather than process, erases relational labor. In a study of women design engineers, the author found the logic of effectiveness actively disappears behaviors that seem inconsistent but are actually in line with end goals

(Fletcher, 1999). Relational labor has also been obscured in community mental health service organizations. An ethnographic study of two mental health service providers in Wales and the United Kingdom examined the trajectories of three clients at each site; that is, each of the six individuals were followed and became the entry-point for an in-depth case study of the relationships and services involved in the individual's mental health recovery (Hannigan & Allen, 2013). The authors found that the relatively invisible contributions made by more peripheral support workers, community members and other unpaid individuals, as well as other service users, were central to the maintenance of health for individuals in need of mental health services. Taken together, these two studies underscore the necessity and centrality of gendered relationship work that has been useful to desired outcomes yet obscured within professionalized domains.

Within community organizing research and practice, the 'women-centered model' values caring, and focuses on building interpersonal, private sphere relationships as a means to empowerment (Stall & Stoecker, 1998). This model extends the 'traditional' caretaking roles beyond the home, thus proponents argue it disrupts the public/private binary (Smock, 2004). It emphasizes the creation of supportive and caring organizing spaces, and brings concerns that are typically constructed as private into the public sphere (Smock, 2004).

Yet there are significant critiques of women-centered organizing. A focus on relationship work reinforces stereotypes and a gendered division of labor (Bartky, 1990). The celebration of women's association with nurturing obscures some of the



deleterious implications of feminized labor and narrows our understanding of women as political actors to caregiving roles (MacGregor, 2004). Such a valorization often constructs relational work as naturalized and maternal practices. Care and motherhood should not be conflated (MacGregor; 2004; Tronto, 1993). To consider relational labor as a part of social movement *work* purposefully counters this conflation – caring does not have to be maternal, and indeed maintaining or mending relationships is integral to social change. It is the labor of repairing our world.

Feminist scholarship has elucidated the gendered invisibility of (paid and unpaid) relational labor and its association with economic disadvantage for those who do it (Crittenden 2001; England, Budig, & Folbre 2002). The majority of this work continues to be performed by women, and care work is devalued because it is associated with femininity (McDowell, 1992). Feminist political economists examine unpaid labor and its implications in the capitalist system that depends on it. This refers not only to gendered, but also raced work – people of color have been constructed as care workers, who earn associated low wages and subsequent economic precarity (Tronto, 1993). Therefore, I use the term feminization to describe the devaluation and invisibility of relational labor within the community organizing setting, and refer to caring as a phenomenon that is gendered, raced and classed. We must recognize that this labor exists, and is inequitably distributed. The work, burden and consequences of caring and tending to relationships is gendered, raced, and classed, and therefore must be examined in community organizing activities.

More specific to empowerment theory and the relational empowerment framework, this labor in community organizing refers to relational work and attention to within-group functioning, that is, attending to group cohesion, interpersonal transactions and relational processes undergirding the organizational ability to exercise transformative power and repair our world (Christens, 2012). Consistent with Neal's (2014) conception of empowering settings and network power, the degree to which the burdens and resources of relational labor, are distributed more equally determine the degree to which the setting is empowering.

Relational and network perspectives allow us to move beyond the individual level of analysis and consider community or organizational phenomena in appropriate ways. This research considers network ties (relationships) as resources and/or burdens involved in processes of empowerment. This serves to make visible the role of relational labor including support and conflict resolution regarding problematic behavior in the organization, therefore it ties the empirical examination more closely with social justice values and definitions of more equitable distributions of resources and burdens. Using a network approach, individuals who provide relational labor are resources, and the process of providing such labor can be considered a burden. I now turn to the method utilized in this dissertation research.

## Chapter 3: Methods

### **A Transformative Ecological Methodology**

In order to outline the methods utilized in this dissertation, it is important to me as a researcher and as someone working in solidarity with people facing and transforming oppression, to be explicit about my paradigmatic stance and values. This study employs a methodology consistent with a transformative paradigm (Nelson & Prolletsky, 2011). The relational nature of oppression and empowerment calls for a way to understand participants' experiences as well as structures of injustice. The epistemological stance associated with this paradigm is primarily participatory and action oriented in nature. Methodologically, both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used in the service of value driven research for liberation and social change. Thus, I employ quantitative methods (i.e., social network analysis) and qualitative methods (i.e., analysis of in-depth interviews), with participatory elements (i.e., issue identification and member-checks) to study experiences and structures of empowerment in context.

It is useful to study the process and mechanisms of empowerment in naturalistic settings (Rappaport, 1987). In this research, I examine relational empowerment in an academic workers' union, focusing on union members who participated in organizing activities. This study includes in-depth interviews and network surveys to examine how the reproduction of oppression is addressed within the union setting. Examining how the reproduction of oppression is challenged and by

whom in a setting is crucial to change disempowering and non-empowering settings to be more empowering settings.

Because empowerment is embedded in social relations and is context dependent (Prilleltensky, 2008; Rappaport, 1981, 1987), participants' understanding and description of the context is crucial. Thus, participants' telling of their experiences, as well as their sense-making with regards to microaggressive events and conflict resolution, and relatedly, relationships with others in their social network, is appropriate. A social constructivist paradigmatic orientation to participants' experiences influences the interview portion of this study.

Moreover, this dissertation operates from an ecological perspective, examining individuals, relationships, and context. Ecological approaches to the human experience endeavor to account for context, including contexts of inequality and power asymmetries, when examining individual and collective well-being and empowerment. Social network approaches are inherently ecological and relational, and thus well-suited for examining context. These perspectives to inquiry are especially useful for community psychology given the interest in understanding the interaction between social contexts and individuals within them (Neal & Neal, 2017).

The following section outlines the study context, research relationships, participant selection procedures, and data analytic techniques employed in this study.

### **Study Context**

This study examined empowerment vis-à-vis relational environments and within-group functioning in a University-located union setting in California. Well before the now (in)famous Occupy movement was in its nascent phase, academic workers on campuses across California were already developing tactics, strategies, and the movement (in itself) of occupations as a part of anti-budget cuts organizing. Many of the protesters and organizers were also union members of the local academic worker's union, the union that represents over 12,000 teaching assistants, tutors and graduate student instructors at multiple campuses throughout California. A caucus of the academic worker's union, the democracy caucus, was formed by graduate students who had been actively organizing against budget cuts implementation in higher education in California.

During the anti-budget cuts organizing, union members grew disillusioned with a centralized, top-down union leadership that did not support the anti-cuts movement. As this caucus formed and subsequently overthrew the centralized leadership (in 2011), rank-and-file union organizers and newly elected leaders encouraged more horizontal, non-hierarchical, decentralized and anarchistic-influenced organizational structures. The use of effective communication networks among campuses and campus autonomy were central values of this new structure of the academic workers' union. These, of course, existed within broader international union constraints, but departed from the previous leadership of the local.

Anti-oppression organizing plans and committees formed during this time, on the campuses, as well as statewide and focused on power asymmetries and within-

group functioning as related to the reproduction of injustice within the union organizing setting and within the workplace. The union setting provides us with a localized, institutionalized, university-based example, influenced by non-hierarchical procedures and practices, to examine collaborative competence in context. To date, the union democratization movement is spreading, and now includes academic workers' unions throughout the country. Horizontality and union democratization assumes a value in anti-oppressive work, and thus collaborative competence – including the ability to address the tensions that come along with difference and the reproduction of oppression – may be a necessary activity in this growing movement.

This study focuses on union members at California University<sup>2</sup>. California University is an elite institution of public higher education, and has one of the largest graduate student populations in the state. California University is one of the multiple campuses that make up the statewide union network; each campus has their own unit which exercises a high level of autonomy, but also works collectively with other units. I chose California University as the site of this research because I have some level of access to this unit due to the overarching organizational structure, but I am also somewhat removed because my activity was concentrated within the unit at my local campus. If I were to examine these phenomena within my own unit, I would run the risk that my level of embeddedness in the organization may prompt participants to withhold some information.

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<sup>2</sup> All proper names have been changed.

Secondly, I chose the academic workers' union at California University as the site of inquiry because in 2013 the union was faced with the report of sexual assault committed by one of the union leadership. Organizers grappled with legal, organizational, and interpersonal issues related to the potential that one of their members had committed such an act. Many organizers at California University stated that they were not comfortable working with this person yet they had no clear and appropriate local process for addressing sexual assault or any other problematic behavior that might be committed by a member. Participant interviews indicate that this event has had lasting effects on the union, including burnout of members due to the conflict, and a change in leadership and participation (queer, mostly white, women took over leadership after this event). Although union membership and participation has a short lifetime in academic workers' unions, as compared to other unions (i.e., graduate students often leave to conduct research and eventually finish their degrees), the institutional memory of this event was still at the fore at the time of this research.

### **Research Relationships**

I was a union organizer in paid and unpaid positions, with most of my organizing activity localized on the Santa Cruz campus. I have been involved since 2009. I attended campus monthly meetings, and sometimes core activist meetings, and have participated in some of my campus anti-oppression committee meetings including an ad hoc committee in the spring of 2013 regarding procedures in response

to the sexual assault report at California University. I also attended a related training on transformative justice in the fall of 2014.

My participation in the union, particularly my anti-oppression work related to the sexual assault case, strongly influenced my thinking about the connections between microaggressions, violence, and systems of oppression. My affiliation with networks of anti-oppression and union democratization activists extended beyond the organizing structure and into close personal friendships. As such, many of my ideas about the reproduction of oppression, social-psychological processes involved in the functioning of the organizing group, anti-oppression political commitments and conflict resolution have been co-created or influenced by my comradely relationships. The inclusion of relational labor in my theorizing around empowerment has been deeply influenced by ongoing intellectual discussions with feminist scholars from this context and beyond. My inquiry is motivated by my relationships and experiences within the social context of union and community organizing.

### **Participant Recruitment and Selection**

In order to gain an understanding of the context of the union and how collaborative competence was enacted within it, the study design included a sociocentric or whole network approach (i.e., data were collected regarding all individuals within the network, rather than on individuals and their own discreet social network). A bounded network is required in this sociocentric network approach. The central tenet is that a boundary is drawn to define all members who are eligible to participate in the study (i.e., a boundary is drawn to determine who makes



up the setting, and in this case the organizing community). Due to the nature of social networks, connections can continue ad infinitum. The concept of a bounded or complete network does not mean that the members have no relations outside the group, but rather data are collected only on the defined group. The bounded network of active union participants was required to construct the different network analyses in this study because it allows us to look at relational and setting-level characteristics that make up the network structure.

Thus, network analyses require careful definition and bounding of the social network. This study defined the boundary of the network as active union organizers. This population was identified in a number of ways. Participants for phase 1, the network questionnaire, were identified and recruited first through my personal network, the union activist listserv, attending a stewards' council meeting, and through the network questionnaire itself; this is considered respondent-driven recruitment (Schonlau & Liebau, 2012). Potential participants were told that the goal of this study was to learn about how people work together to build the power needed to gain greater access to resources, and specifically how conflicts are resolved (or not), and how people who reproduce oppression are held accountable (or not). The recruitment email can be found in Appendix A. Participants were paid a small incentive for their participation.

Because the formality and institutionalization of the core organizing network has been fluid, that is, there are no official rosters of active organizers, bounding the network was a significant undertaking. I first recruited participants through personal

connections with organizers at California University and then used the network questionnaires to identify the rest of the network for phase 1 of the study. The network questionnaire was also used to identify participants for phase 2 of the study, the in-depth interview. Next, I explain this procedure in more detail.

Network-driven recruitment for the phase 1 questionnaire started with administering the network questionnaire to my personal network of organizers who I knew to be very active in the 2014-2015 academic year at California University. Within the network questionnaire, participants were asked to generate the names of the people with whom they regularly worked on union activities. The name generator question asked participants to:

Please name all of the people with whom you have organized and/or worked with on union activities within the last year, that is, **during the 2014-2015** academic year. Please identify people from your campus who you regularly worked with at any of the following: core organizer meetings, leadership meetings, committee or sub-committee meetings, monthly membership meetings, union campaigns, actions and other campus-based organizing activities.

Recruitment materials sent out via email and presented at the stewards' council meeting also defined the target population in the same ways. When a participant had completed the network questionnaire, I entered all of their network associates into a pseudonym key, and then emailed all of those network associates for participation in

the phase 1 questionnaire. Additionally, the final question on the network questionnaire asked participants to nominate up to four other organizers for participation, and solicited email addresses for those individuals. I had many email addresses already from my own participation, and when I did not and when email addresses were not provided by other participants, I searched for the email addresses online. As participants were identified for recruitment from a confidential source, they were not told how they had been identified, or by whom.

Recruitment for phase 2 interviews was done differently. The questionnaire included questions about who the respondent identified as having reproduced oppression, and when the instances that were reproductive of oppression occurred, to whom the participant went for support, to whom they went in order to resolve the issue, and to whom they went for some other kind of support. Thus, the group of individuals targeted for interview recruitment for the second phase was informed by participants having identified them in one or more of those roles. Key informants were also identified based on other roles they played in the union. For example, if a union organizer was identified by a network questionnaire participant as someone they went to for support after an event in which someone was reproductive of oppression, I recruited them for participation because everyone in the network was being recruited for the network questionnaire, and after the network questionnaire was complete, I recruited them specifically for the interview phase. In most cases, participants played multiple formal and informal roles. I also utilized a question in the network questionnaire that asked if participants were willing to participate in the

interview phase of the study in order to effectively recruit interview participants. If participants were nominated by another participant, they were not told by whom they were nominated for participation, and did not know whether they had been identified as a transgressor, support person, or someone who had been transgressed, nor did they know that was a criterion for recruitment for participation. Instead, they were requested to participate and reminded that they had indicated their interest in the interview phase when they filled out the questionnaire.

### **Participants**

Participants were academic workers, and thus graduate students who taught undergraduates at California University. They were a diverse, yet highly educated group, coming from multiple social groups, class backgrounds, and nationalities.

The network questionnaire was completed by 29 academic workers who were active in union organizing during the 2014-2015 academic year. The questionnaire participants included 16 women (including 2 trans\* women), 12 men, one person who identified as non-binary, and 5 people who also identified as gender-nonconforming in addition to any of the above categories. Twenty participants identified as white, 2 as Black, 2 as Latina/o and 4 as Asian American. A significantly large number of participants identified as queer. Most identified as able-bodied. Most identified as coming from middle- or upper- class upbringings. Table 1 summarizes these attributes.

Table 3.1: *Descriptive attribute data of network questionnaire participants (N=29)*

Race	21 white; 1 African American; 3 Asian American; 1 Afro-Latinx; 2 Latinx; 1 Middle Eastern
Class	22 middle class; 5 working class; 2 upper class
Gender	16 women or femme (incl. 2 transwomen); 12 men; 1 non-binary individual 5 people also identified as gender-nonconforming
Sexuality	17 queer/bisexual/gay/lesbian; 12 straight
Disability	27 able-bodied; 2 people living with a disability

The interview participants included 12 participants. Of these participants, 7 identified as women (including two trans\* women), one as non-binary and 4 as men. Nine participants were white, and three participants were people of color. These individuals have been identified in network questionnaires (their own and/or that of others) as targets, transgressors, supporters, resolvers, and those who were sought for other kinds of support. In many cases, participants fit into more than one category. Those recruited for participation in the interview had also indicated on the network questionnaire that they were willing to participate in an in-depth interview.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Data were collected using two protocols, a network questionnaire (Appendix B) and in- depth, semi-structured interview (Appendix C). This two-phase design included a series of questions designed to examine the social networks that were the context for anti-oppression work, as well as potential conflicts and acts of violence, in the first phase. Participants nominated members of their networks (who transgresses, who is transgressed, who confronts transgressors who provides support, etc.).

Phase two –the semi-structured interview – included questions about participants’ lives as organizers. Participants were asked to report on moments of conflict over microaggressions, power asymmetries, and problematic behavior, as well as their own complicity in oppressive social structures. To examine how participants made sense of and challenged complicity with oppressive structures (their own and of other group members), and made sense of moments of conflict, participants were prompted to tell stories of times when someone in the organizing setting did or said something that was considered reproductive of oppression. These questions addressed research question 2 regarding the complicit behavior of others. They were also asked about what they experienced as an individual, especially if they were the transgressor, addressing research question 1 regarding one’s own complicit behavior. Participants were prompted to talk about their reactions in terms of how they felt (affect), what they did (behavior) and what they thought (cognition) (Sue, 2010). They also explained what resources they needed in order to address their own complicity, or to address the transgressions of a comrade, who provided those resources, and how they understood themselves within this network of relational practice, addressing research question 3 regarding the nature and function of the network itself.

Network questionnaires were conducted in person or on-line. Participants received a questionnaire locked with a password, and filled it out on my computer in person, on their own if done online, and then sent it back to me. Data from these questionnaires was entered into a database and all proper names were immediately

given pseudonyms. Interviews were conducted by myself, audio recorded, and transcribed and double-checked by a team of undergraduate research assistants.

Pseudonyms were also inserted at the time of transcription.

### **Data Analytic Procedures**

Social network analysis (SNA) and qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews were conducted. SNA provides us with tools to consider the role relationships play in relational empowerment and the links between the individual and the social structure. A deep, thick description of how community organizers, in this case, union members, experienced the setting is also important. Thus, this inquiry used a mix of network analysis and interviews to understand processes involved with collaborative competence.

This research project took a sociocentric orientation. Sociocentric studies consider all of the links existing between individuals within a predefined and bounded population, such as all students in a classroom, or in this case, all active organizers in an academic workers' union. The structure of the network as a whole is important to understanding social relations and possibilities for change.

**SNA analytics.** This component addressed the questions: Is there an empowering setting in the union? What are the network structures associated with collaborative competence in this union setting?

Network questionnaire questions inquired about what I refer to as the global network, and functional networks. The global union network includes all of the

individuals active in organizing with the union, and who had regularly worked with whom within that network. The functional networks include resolution networks, social support networks, and networks of another kind of support (open-ended). That is, these networks serve the functions of different kinds of relational labor that contribute to collaborative competence. Questions asked about individual experiences of the reproduction of oppression in the setting, such as “when someone says or does something reproductive of oppression: 1) Who do you go to in the union in order to resolve the issue? 2) Who do you go to in the union for support? 3) Who do you go to in the union for another reason?” And finally, “Who from the union goes to you and why?” The relational data from those questions were used to construct functional networks, and the following section outlines the analyses run on the global and functional networks.

*Network power.* In order to determine if the union setting was an empowering one, network power calculations, as well as the distribution of network power, were calculated (Neal, 2014; Neal & Neal, 2011). According to Neal (2014) an empowering setting is one in which actors have relationships that facilitate the exchange of resources, and the distribution of network power (defined as power over resources and/or an individual’s ability to connect dependent others to resources) among individuals in the setting is roughly equitable.

Relationships between individuals in a network organize the flow of material and non-material resources that create empowering settings (Serrano-Garcia, 1994; Zimmerman 2000) and animate the process of empowerment (Christens, 2012;



Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010; Neal, 2014; Neal & Neal, 2011). That is, the distribution of network power in a setting influences empowerment processes and outcomes (Neal, 2014). Neal (2014) suggests an examination of the distributional properties of network power (i.e., power over resources, ability to connect others with resources) using histograms and the Gini coefficient as appropriate measures for considering the organization and flow of resources and power within a setting. The Gini coefficient is a statistical measure of dispersion that was initially developed to represent income distribution (Gini, 1912). It tells us how different income is, for example, between the top earners and the lowest earners in a given city, region or state. Likely the most common statistical measure of inequality, the Gini coefficient is often used to understand segregation based on race and/or class. In this research project, the Gini coefficient was used to summarize the amount of inequity in access to resources for individuals and for the entire setting (Gini, 1912; Neal, 2014). Histograms were also used to illustrate the distribution of access to resources and allocation of burdens.

Consistent with Neal's (2014) conception of empowering settings, individuals' access to those who provide support (i.e., relational laborers), would facilitate their empowerment, and the degree to which this access is equitably distributed would indicate an empowering setting. To this conception, I add the distribution of burdens or obligations. The support and assistance provided through some relationships is considered here as a (non-material) resource. I argue the support and instrumental activity provided for confronting oppressive behaviors is the

resource (i.e., support) and further, the provision of those resources is relational labor. A more equitable distribution of these resources and labor would indicate an empowering setting, in terms of burdens and access to resources. That is, if the burden of the labor is more equally distributed, a) more individuals would have access to resources that could help them become better comrades, and b) the highly emotional, burn-out liable work of relational labor would not be foisted upon a few, and especially those who are deemed effective at it due to naturalized assumptions based on gender, race and class. A more equitable distribution of this labor, then, would indicate that the organization is participating in a prefigured politics, and working toward social justice in their interpersonal relationships.

Neal's (2014) measure examines the structure of the network and whether individuals are connected; it does not represent whether the resource is actually being accessed, and it does not represent whether relational labor was expended. Therefore, it is useful as a measure of the potential of the network to support empowerment. To gain more nuanced insight, the functional networks were analyzed in ways that could represent access to support and resolution, as well as the relational labor reported. The following section outlines data analytic procedures for the functional networks.

***Network centrality.*** Tight networks and close relationships are important to understanding empowering settings and within-group functioning. Close relationships provide the caring and trusting context to address behavior complicit with structures of oppression. Data analysis methods for this area of inquiry included measures of centrality, including individual level degree centrality: that is, how many relationships

does an individual have with others, and network centralization: that is, how equitably are relationships of support, resolution, and other kinds of support distributed? The Gini coefficient and histograms were also used to understand the distribution of access to relationships, as well as the relational labor provided.

### **The Problem of Missing Social Network Data**

Using a SNA whole network approach (i.e., examining the relational factors of the network rather than the relationships of one individual at a time) requires researchers to gain near-complete data on all members of the network. A small number of network members declined participation in the study, many possible participants excluded themselves, stating they did not think they fit the criteria, and some possible participants did not respond to recruitment emails. The network data for this study were incomplete.

In order to address missing data in this study, a combination of reconstruction (Stork & Richards, 1992) and Cognitive Social Structuring (CSS; Krackhardt, 1987; Neal, 2008) were utilized. Reconstruction uses partial data regarding the presence or absence of a relationship between two individuals. That is, if one actor, for example Ava, reports that she has a relationship with Orianna, but Orianna did not complete the questionnaire, we can assume that Orianna also has a relationship with Ava. CSS is a network analysis method for addressing missing data from non-participants by asking participants to report on all relationships within the network, not just their own; that is, if most or all respondents believe that Ava and Orianna have a relationship, they would indicate this connection on the CSS protocol and it would be

treated as if Ava and Orianna reported the relationship. CSS is considered more desirable because information is solicited from a subset of a social network, yet can provide some information about all of the ties within it.

A note on the CSS approach: in many cases, researchers using CSS do so preemptively, incorporating a CSS section in their protocol. This approach was not possible because there was no roster to define the network in order to have a predefined CSS section in the protocol; the network was determined during data collection by starting with formal and informal leadership (who also were my personal connections) and asking respondents who they interacted with, who fit within the social network of active union members within the timeframe, and then contacting the potential participants based on completed network questionnaires. That is, due to the respondent-driven approach, it was not possible to include a CSS protocol in the initial questionnaire (Schonlau & Liebau, 2012). Therefore, the CSS was completed, post hoc, for all missing actors by five key informants (C. Collins, personal communication, March 3, 2016). The existence of a relational tie was conservatively established when at least 3 out of 5 informants agreed on the tie (S. Soltis, personal communication, April 24, 2016).

CSS determined the global network structure (i.e., who are the network members, and whether they know each other), and reconstruction determined functional networks (i.e., who supported whom, and who confronted transgressors and/or addressed oppression within the union, etc.). CSS was conducted with a small number of readily available leaders to “connect the dots” of the network, reporting

who worked with whom (that is, attended meetings, worked on campaigns, and/or served on subcommittees together). This is a limitation because the definition of the network – who knows whom – was in a basic sense determined by a small group of formal and informal leaders. This post hoc CSS protocol included three white men and two white women as key informants. These key informants were chosen because of their more central positions within the network, and because they were readily available for assistance. Yet, the social network principle of homophily suggests that individuals are more likely to have relationships with those who are alike in terms of socio-demographic and personality characteristics (McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001). Key informants would have only a partial view of the relationships of others, particularly those who are less similar to themselves. Moreover, at least some of the actors who did not participate were women of color, who likely have a different experience of the union and relationships within it. Thus, the estimation of the global network of the union was limited and partial, especially when representing women of color in this network. The ethical challenges of missing data for this study have been previously examined in greater detail (Ellison & Langhout, 2017).

The two-way data on the functional networks of all respondents (i.e., who do you go to and who goes to you) provided another data source for network actors who did not participate. Reconstruction was thus an appropriate remedy, but it has the potential to leave out parts of functional networks for all non-respondents. Utilizing reconstruction and CSS approaches, along with member checks and qualitative data,

provide multiple sources of network data and an appropriate level of confidence in the results.

**Analysis for interviews.** The semi-structured section of the interview asked participants about their experiences with conflict and complicity in oppression within their organizing group. Microaggressions and hostile or non-inclusive environments were reported, as well as relational factors and experiences of the organizing group. Data analytic techniques for the semi-structured interview included conventions set forth by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011). This analysis includes deductive coding, including a codebook built upon the frameworks presented in the literature review, such as relational violence, relational empowerment, cognitive dissonance, and community-based approaches to justice. Analysis remained open to other conceptualizations, therefore coders engaged in inductive coding as well. The codebook can be found in Appendix D, and the handouts used to guide the coding and memo-writing process can be found in Appendix E and Appendix F, respectively.

Data were coded by a team of three trained undergraduate researchers and me. The codebook was developed in a collaborative process; I created the initial codebook based on the literature, it was reviewed by my primary faculty advisor, and the research assistants were able to make suggestions for changes based on the literature and on interview data. Coding included a consensus approach, in which we individually coded and then met to go over line-by-line coding. Disagreements were rare, and often when there was a difference in a code, it was because someone had not initially coded the line, yet agreed that the suggested code was appropriate. Coders

also wrote analytic and integrative memos about discreet phenomena and patterns (Emerson, et al, 2011). This aligns with a relational orientation to the construction of knowledge, and the critical, transformational paradigm.

We now turn to the results chapters of that address (1) what happens for individuals when union organizers realize they themselves have committed an oppressive act (e.g., a racial microaggression), (2) what happens when union organizers witness another organizer committing an oppressive act, and (3) how do some organizers play different roles in navigating these issues (e.g., some may offer social or emotional support to a target, while others may confront the individual who was oppressive), and how is the labor associated with those roles distributed?

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Complicity with Oppression: Dissonance, Conflict and Relationships in Community Organizing**

In this chapter I focus on how organizers understood their own oppressive acts, and/or their own complicity with systems of oppression, examining narratives of organizers who self-identified as having said or done something that reproduced oppression within their organizing context. I describe the embodied and relational processes through which organizers came to understand their actions as complicity in oppression, and how they tried to navigate their own accountability to their organizing community. I illustrate how organizers came to understand that their behavior was oppressive, situated within a collaborative context with shared goals and values. Specifically, organizers realized their complicity through individual confrontation by a friend, which was also associated with an embodied, visceral experience. Their cognitive dissonance is highlighted by this embodied experience of discomfort. In some cases, intra-psychoic discomfort has resulted in individual change as reported by the transgressors themselves. I argue that the affective discomfort associated with reproducing oppression can be directed to support collaborative competence. When processes to confront transgressors regarding their reproduction of oppression include relational labor of others, notably the support of friends and/or colleagues paired with corporeal literacy, these processes can lead transgressors to engage in a political rearticulation of solidarity. Two overlapping practices –



corporeal literacy and supportive relational labor – form the basis of a model for collaborative competence.

### **Orienting Concepts: Complicity and Dissonance**

When working in collaboration, organizers are implicated in the lives of each other, and their interpersonal behaviors reverberate through multiple levels of analysis. When oppression is reproduced in settings where there are collective goals, such as within an organizing campaign, the setting can be understood as disempowering for some members. The reproduction of oppression serves to block the realization of shared goals, diminish collaborative competence, and thus, inhibit collective empowerment.

Indeed, social justice organizers' behavior can make them complicit in the systems they are interested in dismantling. Complicity is understood as participation in unjust social, economic and political institutions (Kutz, 2000). Individuals can be complicit in unjust systems like racism or sexism through a range of behaviors, including interpersonal violent behaviors such as assault and microaggressions. Through subtle and insidious everyday actions such as microaggressions, individuals hold systems of oppression and inequitable power dynamics in place (Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2014). Such complicity (whether intentional or not) may often go unnoticed by transgressors. Yet, if they are held accountable, which is sometimes the case when working collectively, transgressors are confronted with their own complicity and subsequently, may experience dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance is a clash between two beliefs one holds to be true, which then creates a sense of affective discomfort (Festinger, 1957). This experience is felt in the body, and in some cases, may prompt the individual to interrogate the sensation (Gould, 2010). To resolve the discomfort, an individual may deny, justify, distance, blame others, or dismiss the discrepancies as unimportant (Festinger, 1957; Martín-Baró, 1994; Tavris & Aronson, 2007). Or, individuals may confess their transgression, reflect on the discrepancy in values and actions, and/or change attitudes or behaviors (Festinger, 1957; Kenworthy, Miller, Collins, Read & Earleywine, 2011; Stice, 1992; van Wormer and Faulkner, 2012). Cognitive dissonance is experienced in conjunction with a wide variety of discrepancies in beliefs and/or actions.

Germane to this research, cognitive dissonance is one of the main psychological processes involved in the perpetration of violence. For those who enact violence against others, the dissonance associated with harming another human is often resolved through dehumanization, that is, the denial of humanity of the target (Martín-Baró, 1994). Yet transgressors cannot always devalue those they have harmed, especially when they are in relationship or working in collaboration; as a response to the discomfort created, transgressors may turn against the institution that demands or makes violence against others possible (Martín-Baró, 1994). This assertion is hopeful for the role of transgressors in their own behavior change as well as in social change: cognitive dissonance among transgressors may prompt (their) transformation. Yet Martín-Baró's work was in the context of the Salvadoran civil war in the 1980s; turning away from the structure that makes violence possible in that

context may have included turning against Salvadoran government forces and United Statesian imperialism<sup>3</sup>. Such a metamorphic possibility looks quite different when the acts of violence are less militaristic and more subtle, as in the case of this inquiry. Nevertheless, dissonance has been found to be a part of challenging oppression and creating social change in multiple contexts (Gibson, 2004; Gould, 2010; Martín-Baró, 1994; van Wormer & Faulkner, 2012). Learning more about how dissonance regarding complicity gets resolved as an embedded practice of a community organizing group provides information about how to transform disempowering settings into more empowering settings.

The questions guiding the analysis in this chapter include: How do organizers confront and process their reproduction of oppression in the organizing setting? How do individuals make sense of their complicity in those systems and take steps to build solidarity? These questions refer specifically to individuals' addressing *their own* problematic behavior, such as engaging in racial and/or gendered microaggressions. These questions are situated within the project of collaborative competence, or activities that promote group cohesion for groups working toward collective empowerment (as covered previously in the literature review chapter).

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<sup>3</sup> Although Marxist guerrillas committed acts of violence during the civil war, the United Nations Truth Commission found that more than 85 percent of the killings, kidnappings, and torture were committed by US-backed and trained government and paramilitary forces (Bonner, 2016; <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/ElSalvador-Report.pdf>)

This chapter focuses on the organizing setting as the site of analysis to interrogate transgressors' processes of political learning, that is, the praxis through which participants learn about their complicity with oppression and make changes to their behavior. It is important to note that this research does not focus on the target of interpersonal violence. There is a great deal of important research on the effects of such violence (e.g., Hwang & Goto, 2008; Steele, 1997; Sue, 2010; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). Some of this literature is in the introduction of this dissertation to bolster the argument that the functioning of community organizing groups warrants examination. Yet, because oppression and liberation are relational phenomena, the targets of violence along with transgressors and bystanders are a part of the accounts included in this inquiry. Subsequently, transgressors and bystanders come into focus when we consider interventions at the collective level of analysis. Moreover, individuals can be transgressors and targets, as well as bystanders, as this chapter will illustrate. The intention is to examine the context in which these interactions take place to understand how settings can be transformed to become more empowering and socially just.

Broadly, organizers who engaged in the reproduction of oppression needed to recognize that their behavior was oppressive in order to make changes and work toward an empowering setting. The following sections highlight how transgressors experienced this recognition. First, transgressors often came to recognize their complicity through an individual confrontation by a friend. Second, affect played an important role; their cognitive dissonance was highlighted by an embodied experience

of discomfort. And third, this intra-psychic, affective discomfort had, in some cases, resulted in individual change as reported by the transgressors themselves. The chapter ends with a discussion of implications regarding the relational and embodied experience of navigating complicity.

### **The Role of Collective Work and Relationships in Creating an Empowering Context**

**Relationships and political learning.** Participants often discussed the moments when they came to understand that their behaviors were complicit in oppression as being facilitated by one or more close, respectful relationships within the organizing group. For example, Frankie, a white cisgender heterosexual man from a middle-class upbringing, discussed the way in which he realized that he committed a sexist transgression.

Erin: Can you tell me about a time when you said or did something that may have been considered reproductive of oppression?

Frankie: Um so the one moment that just stands out to me, like I just don't think I'll ever forget because it stands out in my mind, is that there was a pre-strike meeting [...] it was a pretty big meeting; it was probably a thirty or forty person meeting [...]. I remember being really excited ha, because there was a lot of people who weren't super involved, as well as people who were super involved so it was like one of those kinds of meetings talking about what we wanted to do and one woman said, suggested we do, that we do, suggested some strategic tactical approach, um, that was um, would have been

illegal to you know according to American labor laws which you know I'm not a fan of (E: haha) but you know I'm knowledgeable about, as both as historian and as someone who does this stuff, um, and I um, I interrupted her while she was speaking. Rachel who was sitting next to me, who is one of my friends, one of my comrades and um, far more knowledgeable about both the technical aspects of union stuff and of, you know anti-oppressive dynamics, immediately said 'Frankie that was wrong, don't do that, like don't ever do that' (E: haha) and told me to apologize to the person, who I had interrupted, who I uh had been familiar with, but I didn't really know. [...] I apologized to the person afterwards, and I, I said, 'you know I'm sorry that wasn't the way to approach it, and that I, and different people bring different types of information and like we should really think about, we should really consider what ever-, what different people are saying, um, and that certain types of technical knowledge, uh, can be, used to, shut down, different perspectives, and also like, a uh, um, a vocal uh, white man, with inside knowledge of the union shouldn't be sort of using you know leveraging all those aspects of my you know, relative privilege to interrupt and shut down someone, anyone really, but particularly, someone uh someone who is female identifying' and that really stuck with me.

When I asked Frankie for clarification about how Rachel communicated with him about his transgression, he stated:

I was sitting next to my friend at the meeting, and she sort of spoke quietly to me right in the moment. So, she didn't quite pull me aside, and if other people were paying close attention to our side conversation they might have heard what she said, but it also wasn't a big public call-out.

Essentially, Rachel "called-in" Frankie. The process of calling-in is relationally strategic, and maintains connections with transgressors, whereas calling-out and public shaming may not include steps to keep a relationship intact and maintain the group (Trần, 2016).

The nature and content of the confrontation, as well as his relationship with Rachel, are important factors in Frankie's ability to be corrected and learn from his transgression. There are relatively few empirical studies about *how* confrontations occur, or *by whom* the confrontations are made, for subtle acts of discrimination; these studies also tend to be lab-based. In one such experimental study, direct confrontations, rather than indirect paths that involve multiple other actors in the confrontation (e.g., reporting the act to an organizational leader who then speaks with the transgressor, instead of a target or bystander speaking directly to the transgressor) provoked less anger (Fernanda Wagstaff, del Carmen Peters & Salazar, 2013). Another experimental study found that when confronted with accusations of racism, transgressors experienced stronger negative affect and discomfort than when confronted with accusations of sexism (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). Thus, confrontations over sexism may be easier for transgressors to comprehend and more likely to promote changes in oppressive behavior than confrontations regarding

racism. Frankie stated: “when Rachel confronted me, she confronted me directly after I did it, but it was in a very quiet and sharp way.” The confrontation was swift and direct, and focused on sexism. Supporting the findings of this lab-based research, Frankie’s experience did not provoke anger.

Moreover, Frankie’s friendship with Rachel positioned her as a mentor who influenced the way he came to understand his role in gendered oppression. “I might have come to that realization on my own but almost certainly not in the way that I did if not for (E:mmhmm) her.” This is useful in directing learning and critical introspection for many types of transgressions. That is to say that outside of the lab, one cannot choose what kind of transgression they will experience, yet one can strategically use a direct response made by someone who has a relationship with the transgressor in order to make the confrontation more effective. This interpretation suggests that in organizational settings, the work of relationship development is central to navigating complicity in systems of oppression and building a cohesive collaborative environment that can respond to conflict.

Feminist friends can provide the type of confrontation and guidance that a transgressor needs to be a better comrade or colleague. One in depth interview-based study examined relational aspects of developing a feminist masculinity among Black men. This study found that trusting, platonic friendships with feminist women facilitated their process of overcoming sexist behavior, and provided “a safe place to be human (and thus vulnerable), constructive criticism from political allies who have an interest in their development, and opportunities for informal and formal



mentoring” (White, 2008, p. 133). Therefore, feminist friendships can assist in political learning that has the potential to transform behavior. Although Frankie is not a Black man, this friendship-facilitated process may apply to his friendship with Rachel and his ability to navigate his masculinity. His relationship with Rachel and her constructive criticism and informal mentoring, however, may or may not apply to other axes of difference, as this important intervention and learning moment for Frankie was targeted at gender only<sup>4</sup>.

Thus, Frankie was gently corrected in a strong but non-threatening manner by someone he respected, the confrontation was direct, and he was confronted over a sexist transgression. Rachel’s instruction to Frankie to never interrupt anyone again -- especially women -- even if he has the expertise to correct them, was so salient that he continued to consider this advice in his behavior in seminars, with friends, and in organizing meetings, as will become clear in the final section of this chapter.

The social position of the transgressor matters in this relational phenomena. In Frankie’s case, as a white cis-gendered heterosexual middle class-raised man, he is normalized as having authority in this setting and beyond, and was acting on that authority. His friend Rachel disrupted that normalization, and reminded him of the anti-oppressive norms and values of the organization. Frankie’s relationship with a

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<sup>4</sup> We do not know any specific information about the woman Frankie interrupted in the meeting, and indeed she may have been experiencing an intersection of oppressions in this case (e.g., a raced and gendered microaggression) but the intervention as Frankie reported it, was single-axis, and specifically aimed at gender. This points to the possibility of limitations in feminist friendships if the feminist friend who is intervening is only attending to gender dynamics.

respected friend played a role toward his understanding his own complicity in oppression. Perhaps because of his positionality of being readily seen as authoritative and carrying all the visible markers of privilege, a gentle reminder, or being called-in, by a respected and trusted friend was what Frankie needed in order to *hear* that he had committed a transgression. He was able to be vulnerable enough with Rachel to receive her guidance; this often takes time and effort to develop (White, 2008). Rachel contributed to building a more empowering group setting by developing a trusting and safe relationship with Frankie. She used her relationship with Frankie to support his learning and build the cohesion of the organizing group.

A positive, respectful relationship can also contribute to a productive confrontation for those who are not naturalized as authoritative. Amar, a woman of color (Afro-Latinx) in a leadership position in the union, was also reminded gently by a friend whom she mis-gendered.

I do remember (exhales audibly) I remember where this [failure to recognize gender pronouns] became something. [...] It happened twice. [...] So I was actually sitting next to them and so I guess in conversation I referenced them and then they just turned to me and was like ‘I prefer [the gender pronoun] they’ and I was like *spotlight* my god I am so sorry, then I felt like an asshole, you know, especially since it was a person that I felt like I *vibed* with, and so it felt like a shitty thing to do. [...] It makes you feel really shitty because you feel like it really puts a spotlight on your privilege. [...] I felt like I should have known better. [...] It calls attention to like that I’m unable to

distinguish which pronoun is correct [...]. For the most part I think it was a safe space so I think that may have added to the ability to gently correct me and everything moved forward without there being an issue.

Amar was also called-in for her mistake. In this example, Amar explained that she felt “like an asshole” for making gendered assumptions, particularly because she got along well with her genderqueer colleague. She also indicated that because she felt comfortable in the space and with the organizer who corrected her, the issue was resolved. Here, Amar was held accountable for a microaggression and the group moved on seamlessly, aside from Amar’s embarrassment. Indeed, Amar’s connection with her friend, who was someone she felt that she “*vibed* with” and a feeling about the immediate context as “for the most part [...] a safe space” provided the ability for Amar to recognize her mistake, apologize, and move on. Thus, it was clear that Amar was frustrated with herself for reproducing oppression and being what she later called a “making-spaces-violent kind of person.” Amar’s description of a safe space and safe relationships more accurately line up with the concept of “brave space,” in the sense that Amar was interested in creating an anti-oppressive space where people can make mistakes, be corrected, and work through conflict, rather than conflating safety with comfort and feeling “unsafe” because she had to deal with a challenging element of her privilege (Arao & Clemens, 2013).

#### **Relationships and navigating disempowering elements of the context.**

Amar’s previous passage regarding being corrected complicates our understanding of relational empowerment because of her position at the intersection of oppression and

privilege. She discusses her faults or transgressions in the context of continually having her authority and expertise challenged. She felt that her transgression highlighted her privilege, and states that she “should have known better.” Her transgression called attention to her inability “to distinguish which pronoun is correct.” This misstep, for Amar, is heightened by her sense that she is not recognized for her authority, which is an ongoing disempowering element of the context for her. For example, Amar discussed how her authority was challenged, collaboration was difficult, support was limited, and her labor was invisible in relation to that of another union leader who is a cisgender white man:

He positions himself, from my perspective, in a way where he is always in the right place at the right time or saying the right thing that makes him appear to be doing more work than me and I think he purposely positions himself in that way, to my detriment. So, it it’s a challenge to not only my authority but because I don’t see myself as like having an authority but like...I can’t, I am not in the same position to ask people to do things to organize people that I would like to be... to be as productive as I could, and part of that [...] I don’t feel supported by him, like I don’t feel like he ever has my back or that I can lean into him, um...yeah so that’s that’s [our relationship] in a nut shell [...] when it comes to our relationship I don’t feel like he...does all that he can to-, so that we can be steering the ship together, so I feel very alone [...].

Amar goes on to describe that not only does she feel like she is not seen as doing enough work, the work she does is invisible, behind-the-scenes, and undervalued.

Amar: Like my job is to take out the trash like I-, even though I do all the work, all people ever do is see me taking out the trash because all the work that I do is behind the scenes (E: mhmm) and so it's like we'll be at an event and because we can't leave the food trash in the office, you literally have to take the trash out so that's why I say that.

Erin: you mean that *literally* I was thinking you were speaking metaphorically (hahahaha)

Amar: *Really really* I take out the trash and so like that's what I do. Or I am bringing the food in, like carrying packages, like doing manual labor moving chairs like that's when people see me working for the union, that's the kind of work they see me doing which I think is extremely problematic, and I don't know that people see me as possessing knowledge about the union because of the way things are kind of framed whether it's on purpose, intentionally, or not.

Thus, Amar's anxiety about her perceived lack of authority -- in the absence of relational support -- within the union were palpable when she enacted a cis-normative transgression and was corrected. She felt that the attention called to her inability to distinguish correct pronouns was further fuel for those who always already assumed she was not competent or authoritative because she is a woman of color, as she stated: "I don't know that people see me as possessing knowledge about the union because of the way things are kind of framed whether it's on purpose, intentionally, or not."

The trope of the unauthoritative, in-service-to-others African American woman is not a new one, even within academe. An early study of African American academic women's experiences in predominantly white institutions -- similar to the university context of this study -- found that typical features of the climate included: constant challenges to authority, excessive scrutiny, a requirement to work harder, tokenism, and lack of access to power structures and professional support systems (Moses, 1989; Wilson, 2012). The struggle for authority, recognition and respect is ongoing, and at the intersection of race and gender (Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, & Browne Hunt, 2016). The figure of the Mammy has been evoked by Black feminist scholars to explain the demand on African American women to do care work regardless of their educational attainment or occupational status (hooks, 1994; Wilson, 2012). Indeed, in one in-depth case study of an African American professor called Andra, very few of her students had ever seen a person of color in an authority role, and thus her credentials were continually questioned (Wilson, 2012). Thus, for Amar, an Afro-Latinx woman, her ability to respond to a confrontation takes place in a broader context in which she feels heavily scrutinized. The gentle correction by a friend within a brave space context allowed for things to "move on" with the tasks at hand, but her mistake reminded Amar that she does not feel supported in the union (and perhaps within the university), and is being closely watched and often challenged.

Bystanders can contribute to a disempowering context, in this case with regards to gendered racism. Benita, a white middle class bisexual woman, refers to

the challenges that Amar had with regards to leadership, relationships, authority and support, and suggested that she was complicit in Amar's experience of an oppressive dynamic because Benita did not reach out to Amar and provide relational support.

Benita: I mean, I guess I felt kinda crappy hahah (E: haha) just because I think you know that there are people who are outright offensive but there are so many subtle dynamics that can be influential on how people feel, in a given situation, and you know it just occurred to me that I've never been like 'lets go out for drinks after the meeting' to Amar or something specifically (E: mhmm) but I think, um, the sort of personal, what we call "the personal" and the sort of emotional supportiveness is really important um so I think it just made me realize how I was distributing, how I had distributed that energy and so I felt not so good about that I guess hahah (E: mhmm).

Erin: And directly after, how did you feel?

Benita: I guess the same just, you know recognizing my own like my own blind spots because of privilege and then feeling like I need to be more proactive.

Benita recognized that she was withholding relational resources such as emotional support and personal care, and this contributed to subtle power dynamics in the organization. Thus, an underlying element of Amar's experience, and a subtle yet powerful transgression on the part of Benita toward Amar, was that Benita did not exert energy or labor to promote Amar's empowerment within the setting (Christens, 2012). Amar did not have access to important relational resources (e.g., emotional

support, care) that would further the goals of the group (Fletcher, 1999) and promote a more empowering setting (Neal, 2014). Benita's failure to support Amar in, as Benita says, "the personal" reveals her "own blind spots because of privilege." Relatedly, this context included many white queer women in leadership roles prior to Amar's participation in a leadership position. Thus, the space was welcoming to Benita, but at the same time the way that she enacted her race and class privilege was a challenge to empowerment as a collective project. Further, it appears that there were no institutionalized avenues for Benita to work through difference and make a meaningful connection with Amar. This was a missed opportunity for Amar, but also for Benita, for "growth-in-connection" (Jordan et al, 1991). That is, a supportive relationship with Amar would have benefitted Benita as well. The growth-in-connection model is "rooted in private-sphere characteristics of connection, interdependence and collectivity" and contribute to the growth of everyone involved (Fletcher, 1999, p. 31). To work toward a more collaborative environment, organizers like Benita may need to provide more support and relational labor to organizers who are experiencing multiple axes of oppression within the union setting, as well as the broader predominantly white institution. If Amar had felt supported in the context generally, her reaction to being called-in may have been more effective in terms of the collective empowerment of the union.

Respectful relationships are essential for all people in empowering settings (Christens, 2012; Maton, 2008; Rappaport, 1987). For Frankie, someone with access to authority and privilege, these relationships provided assistance in navigating



complicity in systems of oppression and coming to terms with his transgressions.

Relationships were also central to these processes for Amar, someone with less access to authority and privilege, as these relationships also helped her with understanding her transgression and moving on with the collective tasks at hand. For both participants, the relational work done by their friends has supported their growth to varying degrees, and their continued work in changing their behavior.

For those who are structurally positioned with less access to privilege, transgressing was fraught with ambiguity. Amar's positionality as a woman of color who regularly has her authority and knowledge questioned; navigating her complicity meant also experiencing oppression for Amar. Her transgression, within the context of an organizing setting that values anti-oppressive relations (in word if not in deed) was yet another mark against her authority. Further, she reported a desire for more and deeper relational support and collaboration when she stated:

I am not in the [...] position to organize people that I would like to be, to be as productive as I could, and part of that [...] I don't feel supported by him, [...] that I can lean into him, [...] I don't feel like he...does all that he can to-, so that we can be steering the ship together, so I feel very alone [...].

This is important to consider in the collective project of creating a collaborative and empowering context. "Depending on the context, an individual may be an oppressor, a member of an oppressed group, or simultaneously oppressor and oppressed" (Collins, 1990, p. 225). In Amar's case, within this moment she was both; transgressed upon and transgressing; reproducing systems of oppression, and a target

of the reproduction of oppression. The concept of the matrix of domination means that racism, sexism, and cis-sexism (and other forms) are elements of a matrix in which different groups experience different dimensions of the matrix (Collins, 1990). Thus, if someone who continuously experiences questioning of her authority, like Amar, reproduces oppression, organizers might take care to understand how to advocate in connection with the transgressor in a way that does not amplify the disempowering elements of the context. Perhaps for organizers like Frankie, the connection already exists and his learning is supported, albeit through relational labor, more readily.

Withholding support can be considered relationally disempowering. Benita's experience provides a different angle to some of the disempowering elements of the setting, as she did not focus on building a relationship with Amar. Her transgression was that she withheld the resources that a relationship could provide to Amar in her leadership role. Benita saw this lack of support for Amar as a way that she was complicit in Amar's raced and gendered experience in the union. Thus, relationships, or recognizing the lack thereof, are central in an organization's ability to create brave, respectful and empowering collaborative spaces.

Transgression has been experienced differentially based, in part, on one's social position. Frankie's experience of confrontation was upsetting to him, but ultimately he saw it as a moment for growth. Amar's experience re-inscribed her lack of authority and support. Taken together, these stories highlight the need to expend and distribute relational labor in a way that deeper support is provided for those

experiencing a both/and situation as oppressed and oppressor (e.g., Amar). When considering relational empowerment, and especially collaborative competence, building relationships for solidarity is important generally, yet we must also be mindful of for whom relationships matter, and with whom relationships must be strengthened or developed. Next, as the relational level is not the only level of analysis in which these processes occur, I turn to transgressors' experiences in their own bodies as an important indicator for change.

### **The Embodied and Affective Nature of Dissonance and Political Learning**

It can be considered problematic to call attention to 'pain' of transgressors because of the tendency of privilege to re-center itself (Ahmed, 2004; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). This study does not intend to promote a narrative of pain on the part of the transgressor, however it is important to interrogate embodied sensations and relational processes associated with committing a transgression (e.g., racialized, classed and/or gendered microaggression) because it elucidates the process of challenging one's own complicity in oppression. The focus is on transgressors, who are often, but not solely, from more structurally privileged social groups, or are within the context of having privilege along a particularly salient axis at the time (e.g., Amar's privilege of cis-normativity when she misgendered her friend). For privileged groups the literature discusses the importance of discomfort in helping with reflection and therefore changing behavior associated with oppression (Applebaum, 2008; Arao & Clemens, 2013; Dutta et al., 2016; Kumashiro, 2000). Yet the body, where discomfort is experienced, is often overlooked in learning and meaning-making

(Lewis, 2011; McLaren, 1988; Richardson, 1992; Spry, 2001). We construct meaning from our bodies in relation to others and the social world (Barad, 1996; Dewey, 1938; Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2010; Lloyd, 2014; Probyn, 2004). Indeed, attention to visceral, embodied experience is central to understanding social processes such as power and oppression (Anzaldúa, 1999; Cruz, 2001; Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2010; Probyn, 2004). Thus, co-constructing a contextualized meaning of solidarity – through embodied sensations of discomfort – is part of the process of collaborative competence.

Shame was a prominent feeling of discomfort associated with being confronted regarding complicity with oppression. Data highlighted in this section show that the cognitive dissonance social justice organizers experience when they realize they were subtly contributing to oppression is something that was felt viscerally. Indeed, many participants highlighted their experience with dissonance as an embodied discomfort, and this visceral experience of shame may be an important signal to transgressors and bystanders that something in conflict with their political beliefs was taking place and a change needed to occur.

In tandem with the psychological literature on cognitive dissonance, which rarely engages with contexts of social movements and social change, the sociological literature on affect and social movements is helpful. This literature is appropriate to interrogate the embodied sensation participants referred to, as the organizing group was operating within the context of social movements; they were working to make

changes for workers on the job and beyond as a part of a broader movement for workers' rights and social justice.

The term affect is used to “indicate nonconscious and unnamed, but nevertheless registered, experiences of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body” (Gould, 2010, p.26). Bodily sensations can stir someone to figure out what they are feeling – a sense that something is not right serves as a prompt to reflect and perhaps act on the situation at hand. These sensations may also contribute to inaction; meaning that a sense of belongingness, or other positive bodily sensations may inhibit reflection on one's complicity in systems of oppression, or the confrontation of a transgressor. Paying attention to affect highlights useful sources of both inertia and social change, and the relational and emotional work of organizers can be useful in guiding the response toward justice-oriented change (Gould, 2010). Emotion work is an important and overlooked arena of political activity (Gould, 2010).

Context is integral to understanding affect; social movement unionism undergirds the context for this study. Social movement unionism is an approach to collective bargaining and power that focuses on multiple social struggles such as anti-racism, anti-sexism, and others, and how they intersect with workers' rights. This contrasts with 'paycheck first' models that focus on collective bargaining for workers along only one axis of inequality: economic inequality. Further, the horizontal structure of the union contrasts with top-down structures, and makes explicit the value of broad rank-and-file participation in the functioning of the union. Thus, norms

for those who participate in social justice unionism, and of this union, can be assumed to center solidarity<sup>5</sup> and democratic participation, but also exist within the context of relative privilege and complicity with oppressive systems. This context, in other words, is an emotional habitus of solidarity and privilege.

An emotional habitus provides information about what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior for the context; it is acquired social and bodily knowledge (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Gould, 2009). That is, emotional habitus includes norms. These norms and expectations are communicated explicitly and implicitly, and are felt in the body. This means that individuals have a sense of how to behave, survive, and fit in, yet it is not a precise schema and is sometimes contradictory (Gould, 2009). Within an organizing group, the emotional habitus implies norms about what it means to be comradely and to be in solidarity. Thus, the emotional habitus is connected to an organizing groups' collaborative competence, by which I mean the habitus impacts how an organization creates cohesion within the group. When an organizer violates those norms, they may be faced with the embodied experience of cognitive dissonance, as they now have affective discomfort due to two competing cognitions: 'I am a good person' or 'I am working in solidarity' and 'I am a bad person' or 'I am reproducing oppression.' Subsequently, the organizer will attempt to make meaning out of the feeling and resolve it.

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<sup>5</sup> Indeed, those who dismissed social movement unionism/focused on class only/followed a 'paycheck first' paradigm were only peripheral to the group.

These dissonant feelings often result in a framework of whiteness that bifurcates people into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ subjects. Indeed, affect and whiteness constitute each other in ways that create alibis for those whites who wish to be construed as non-racists; whites “construct the racist as always someone else” (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013, p. 151). Bifurcation into good and bad individuals, rather than actions, provides absolution for taking individual and group responsibility and thus is connected to how one feels about themselves and resolves feelings of discomfort (Applebaum, 2007). Thus, individuals who wish to be in solidarity with others across difference must contend with this dissonance and work to embrace the good and the bad within one body (Ellison & Langhout, 2016; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013).

As would be expected in many settings, contradictions of solidarity are evident within this context of study. Within the union context, participants are “workers” who may experience oppression and exploitation, but who are also in a position of relative privilege. That is, participants in the union collectively bargain because they are exploitable labor, yet they are in the process of obtaining an advanced degree from a prestigious university, and desire to be in solidarity with others. Solidarity implies difference: solidarity with other workers outside of the union, but also solidarity among difference within group, as union members experience their work life differently because of institutionalized oppression. This tension creates a context in which those with privilege -- understood within a matrix

of oppression (Collins, 1990) -- may experience feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment, and betrayal.

An emotional pedagogy is a contextual factor that helps participants make sense of their embodied affective experience<sup>6</sup>; it suggests “how and what to feel and what to do in light of those feelings” (Gould, 2009, p. 28). In making sense of their feelings, participants have options to understand the bodily experience in multiple ways. Although defining the emotional pedagogy of the union is out of the scope of this empirical inquiry, it is possible that the emotional pedagogy suggests that guilt and shame are not appropriate nor effective, as it centers the feelings of those with privilege, or those who have reproduced oppression. This is a common tenet of anti-racist organizing and white accomplice-ship (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). An emotional pedagogy could prompt organizers to navigate their complicity and associated negative affect, and perhaps to understand their embodied experience as something more effective than rumination on guilt and shame. The emotional pedagogy can support the development of corporeal literacy among organizers. Corporeal literacy is the ability to recognize and attend to information that is created through the body; it is knowledge of self, other and socio-cultural context that occurs viscerally (Spry, 2001; Lloyd, 2014). In the union, an emotional pedagogy may

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<sup>6</sup> Gould (2009) uses the example of the emotion work of early women’s consciousness-raising groups of the 1960s-70s that questioned the individualized and pathologized understandings of women’s experiences (e.g., depression) and authorized anger at the social structures of male supremacy influencing their situation and subsequent affect. The context of women’s consciousness-raising groups encouraged women to understand themselves and their feelings differently. This can be understood as an emotional pedagogy.



authorize introspection regarding privilege and complicity with oppression, promote corporeal literacy, and suggest that relationships may continue in the face of certain kinds of behaviors that reproduce oppression<sup>7</sup>.

Confrontations for transgressions often result in discomfort, de-centering of privilege, and shame. Yet in order to contribute to the creation of a relationally empowering collaborative setting, transgressors need to learn what to do with these sensations. Understanding and utilizing these sensations is corporeal literacy. Therefore, the following sections support the argument that developing corporeal literacy is one of the practices involved in collaborative competence. We now turn to a discussion of shame, and examples of shame among union organizers, as a way to highlight the complexities and the role of corporeal literacy in collaborative competence.

**Shame.** Shame and *being shamed* are not synonymous, especially with regards to confronting complicity with oppression:

Shame, it seems to me, does not require shaming: a critical and impassioned but nonmoralizing discussion about racism [for example] might, through its educative effects, flood a white person with shame about her ignorance, about her complicity in structures of racism, about her previously unacknowledged white privilege. Here, in the absence of shaming, the feeling of shame itself might elicit a positive political effect – she might be de-centered, for example,

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<sup>7</sup> By this I mean that certain behaviors may be tolerated, such as microaggressions, and relationships remain intact, yet others, for example the sexual assault referred to in the introductory chapter, are not tolerated, and thus relationships are broken.

suddenly mindful that her own reality perhaps is worlds apart from that of others. But, while shaming *can* evoke shame, and potentially political learning, it does not always succeed in doing so. [...] Shaming [...] might simply have made people feel resentful and angry about being shamed.

(Gould, 2009, p. 384)

Thus, differentiating shame from shaming is warranted in this discussion.

This is not to claim that shaming has no role in justice. Active techniques such as public shaming, aggressive confrontation and ‘bashing-back’ against transgressors by using physical force have been effective forms of stopping violent and easily recognized forms oppression (Baroque & Eanelli, 2012; Coleman, 2013; Haaken, 2010; Waugh, 2010; White & Rastogi, 2009). Yet the reproduction of oppression that union organizers reported was subtler than domestic violence, gay-bashing or sexual assault. Thus, the responses involved, including responses that mobilize shame, may manifest differently. With this in mind, we examine experiences with shame and the way it feels in the body.

***Feeling shame in the body.*** The body is the site of this discomfort and political learning; thus, an examination of the embodied experience of cognitive dissonance, or affect, involved in the transgressor role is warranted. Frankie highlights his bodily reaction of shame after being confronted by his friend for sexist behavior.

Frankie: um, I felt, uh very ashamed, uh um, I felt hot, hahaha my my face was very, I felt very hot, I mean both because both in the lead up to the

situation I was very agi- I was very agitated and I felt like I needed to make my point, because, this person was saying something that was incorrect, and then, uh, and then after Rachel called me out even though it wasn't a public, or I I wasn't ashamed in the face of my peers, I was self-ashamed, I felt very very hot, very, worthless, uh, very, not happy, and, after the situation I felt, uh, determined, to try to make a remedy, a certain exhilaration of right and righteousness that goes a long with that.

Although Frankie was not publicly shamed, he felt shame in his body and made a commitment to remedy his behavior. His commitment was encouraged within the context; that is, as explored previously, Frankie was guided by a close and respected friend to this point of commitment to making “a remedy.” As will become clear in the next section, this event of discomfort remained an important moment of political learning for Frankie.

***Being shamed.*** Shaming provokes an embodied experience, yet may only serve to stoke anger and resentment (Gould, 2009). Amity, a white non-binary queer person from a working-class background, talked at length about being publicly confronted in a meeting for writing an email about campaign priorities that was perceived as anti-immigrant or against the undocumented student movement within the union. Amity was publicly shamed, and the shaming was experienced not as educative, but rather as oppressive, an attack by a political rival, and deeply felt in the body:

Amity: [...] It was a really intense moment, where I wasn't quite sure what the situation was; I felt like I said something quite hurtful to a lot of people, and it was brought up in the context of elections as a way to discredit my commitment to a particular organizing project. [...] There was a profound moment of tension. [...] It was clear in my body [...] I just needed to have a lot more care for how I used the listserv and how I spoke and how that was received by other folks [...] It felt like a moment of reflection about who I am and what kinds of ways my voice might be read.

Erin: How did you feel as it happened?

Amity: [...] I remember just shaking and kind of feeling like okay, I need to be polite and calm, and then another white cis guy jumped in and started attacking me [...] I remember just losing it, and just being like I am sitting trying to be so polite, so caring, so calm, and thoughtful as you all read me in this way, and this is really fucked up. It was really tearful, I was shaking, and remember being just really upset. [...] Now in retrospect I see I should have fucking kept my shit together, and probably had better ways of engaging that [email] thread and like really clarifying my position earlier, and like I failed at communication too.

It is important to note that in this case, Amity was not interacting with close comrades in the union on their own campus. Amity's transgression was in the context of an online discussion across all campuses which then occurred in person at a meeting of all of the campuses, that took place on Amity's campus. Thus, Amity was interacting

with political rivals who perhaps do not share the same emotional habitus. More precisely, Amity did not think the confrontation was made by someone who had the intent to remain in connection or build a collaborative and empowering context.

Amity did consider the transgression and confrontation as somewhat generative, stating that it was “a moment of reflection.” They acknowledged that more care and clearer communication were needed, and owned being careless with words. Yet Amity, who is often read as gendered female but identifies as non-binary (i.e., they do not identify as solely female or male), maintained that the shaming was used as political discrediting and explained the public confrontation as an attack that was reproductive of gender-based oppression:

The moment of profound frustration I think came to me, the eruption into anger within the moment, came actually through gender dynamics where there was an older white cis male who was coming down on me for whatever he perceived to be my MO. I felt like it was so paternal, like this shaming or something, and I was like that’s where [...] I’m just like *fuck* I am not going to embody all these tropes of polite femininity.

The shaming led Amity to not only erupt into anger, but also to shed expectations of polite femininity expected of them.

Working-class white femininity often includes a tension with professional middle-class values, as well as outright resistance to gendered norms of passivity and docile womanhood. Lyn Mikel Brown (2001) argues that such relationships to classed constructions of femininity serve “to cement... lower caste status” (p. 96). That is, the

behavior that may feel freeing from passive and constrictive middle class conventions of femininity, such as anger and eruption – as Amity said “losing it” – may also be used “to label them, according to white middle-class notions of femininity, psychologically troubled, socially inferior, or marginal” (Brown, 2001, p. 108). Amity, a white non-binary, queer person from a working class background not only struggled with the experience of being publicly called-out by political rivals, but was also wrestling with class and gendered assumptions within a professionalized, middle-class dominated setting. As someone who does not identify their gender in a binary manner, the gendered aspect of this interaction may have been rather salient as an oppressive interaction.

Intention and outcomes are often teased-apart in anti-oppressive discourse; that is, the explanation that someone did not *intend* to commit a racist or sexist transgression is not sufficient in terms of accountability for the behavior (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Sue, 2010). Yet in the case of confrontations over transgressions, Amity’s experience suggests that intention matters. The way the shaming moved through Amity’s body was experienced not as a correction or with the intention of learning and behavior change, but rather as a manifestation of oppression along another axis in the matrix: gender. Amity explained:

It was so physical, it was just profoundly physical. [...] It started to sit in my body, in a bad way, I was like there is something happening to me where I am occupying a physiology that does not actually feel good, and as this other person took the mantle, it transitioned, I realized it, I could almost name it, I

was like this is oppressive in lots of ways, it doesn't feel, like in this space, a sincere conversation to try and reach a resolution [...] it wasn't coming from a place of 'I was hurt by you having done this, the points of privilege in your language [were hurtful]' like that would have felt like a different conversation. Instead it felt really difficult, different, and it manifested itself physically where I just erupted [...] and [stopped] rehearsing this gendered trope of polite quiet docility [...].

Amity's response illustrates not only the embodied, affective experience of dissonance regarding being a transgressor, but also that shaming may not be an effective means of learning to be a better comrade or creating an empowering collaborative setting. Shame is a powerful tactic (Halberstam, 2005; Gould, 2009). Perhaps because of the nature of this potential learning moment, in which "it [didn't] feel, like in this space, a sincere conversation to try and reach a resolution" the confrontation was less effective. In cases such as this, confrontations regarding the reproduction of oppression can themselves engage with oppressive dynamics and are not focused on building a collaboratively competent organizing group. Indeed, that was not how Amity understood the intent of their confronters.

Amity's example provides us with nuance; the transgressor can also be a target in the process of being confronted. The role of public shaming, at least in Amity's case, led to a sense of being attacked over political differences. In this case, the language of anti-oppression may have been leveraged not to build a cohesive collaborative environment, but rather to discredit political opposition. For Amity, the

visceral, affective state and accompanying dissonance, paired with a gendered response within a context of political tension, pointed Amity's behavior toward anger and eruption.

Furthermore, Amity provides an interesting negative case for developing a deeper understanding of complicity and collaborative competence; that is, the confrontation Amity experienced was not effective in promoting behavior change or contributing to an empowering environment. The call-out was experienced by Amity as an attack that reproduced gender oppression, and considered to be intended to discredit Amity, not to support their political learning, engage them in corporeal literacy practices, build cohesion or contribute to a better collaborative organizing setting. The intention (or perceived intention) of the confrontation is central to understanding the process of confrontation in collaborative competence. This is not to say that a confrontation must be gentle or kind, nor that shame is unproductive; a call-out can be effective, produce shame and still come from a well-meaning place, but this was not the case for Amity.

***Shame and the relational: Betrayal of self, family and union.*** Transgressing norms of solidarity can result in a sense of shame, as well as disconnection from the collective group. A sense of belonging, recognition, and respect are some of the positive sensations associated with participating in social movements and organizing (Gould, 2009). Shame can serve to dismantle positive affect. Luis, a cisgender Mexican American and white man from a middle class background, discussed his



classist transgression as something he felt as a force that alienated him from the organizing group. His realization led him to loneliness and disconnection.

Luis: Let's just say that I felt really bad I just felt, 'cause like I come from a middle class background maybe it's not my place to say this then I just put it out there and then, I just felt like all that privilege was there and was festering in this very humiliating and embarrassing moment. [...] So that was the moment I kind of just lost faith in myself as an organizer [...] I was like to do this to be a real good organizer you have to be able to be on your A game when you're tired when you exhausted when you're like, when you're running on fumes basically I was kind of at that moment I was like I couldn't do that you know and I had to be okay with that (E: mhmm) and that's kind of what I've been working on ever since to be honest and that's why I'm trying to stay clear of the union although I really...really admire and respect some of the people in it, I really I thought that that work was for me and I feel like I betrayed my comrades by walking away [...]

E: How did you feel directly after this happened?

Luis: Disappointed, sad. Lonely. And:: like I said I mean, I'm a multigenerational red diaper baby. My dad was in trade unions his whole life, my mom involved in really important work her whole life, I mean that was kind of a big identity shift for me in a lot of ways, away from that heritage. And I think in in a lot of ways [leaving the union] was a long time coming, this was just the kind of moment when it manifested itself.

Dissonance regarding political identity and familial ties to communism played a role in Luis' embodied feelings in a relational manner. His experience led to the relational state of disconnection and loneliness. Luis was not actively exiled. Yet he felt that he had betrayed his politics, his union and his family by participating in classism; betrayal and shame coupled with a sense of exhaustion led him to move away from organizing all together.

In addition to being the glue that holds an organization together (Fletcher, 1999), social support can buffer organizers against negative health outcomes like exhaustion, depression and burnout. Luis lacked social support in the union setting. Social support has long been established as a moderator for life stress and has been positively associated with mental health recovery (Cobb, 1976; Hannigan & Allen, 2013). Lack of support is associated with burnout; a longitudinal study of psychological health among teachers found that social support within the teaching setting was integral to wellbeing (Burke, Greenglass & Schwarzer, 1996). Perhaps it is no surprise that relational support has been a central tenet of feminist consciousness-raising groups and organizing (Smock, 2004; Stall & Stoecker, 1998). Nevertheless, one may need to seek support in order to receive it, and help-seeking rates among men are consistently lower than among women, especially related to emotional struggles, because masculinity inhibits reaching out for help, as well as perceiving that support is needed, or understood another way, corporeal literacy (Möller-Leimkühler, 2002). Furthermore, the labor of building and maintaining relationships is required to access support networks. Luis did not reach out, nor did he

develop relationships within the organizing setting that could have sustained him in the organizing context. In this respect, it is possible he did not see support as a function of the organization, and therefore did not access or value relational labor that union organizers might have provided. As will become clear in the next chapter, Luis did not report going to anyone within the union network for support.

In Luis' case, in addition to masculinity obstructing a path to support, the context's emotional pedagogy may have worked against him. By this I mean Luis' desire for, and the union norms of solidarity may have felt – to him – violated beyond repair. To make things right he would have had to expend even more energy while he was already “running on fumes.” A focus on emotion work and relationship-building may have served to keep Luis within the organizing context and able to grow and feel included. Recall Amar's need for support in the context of committing a transgression; because she received the support, even in light of her own oppression within the setting, she reported that she was corrected and the collaboration could continue seamlessly. Perhaps Luis' affect could have been directed through the relational work of himself and others within the context, but this was not the case, in part because he did not engage in relational labor himself. Luis provides another negative case for a model of understanding complicity and collaborative competence; his experience led him to leave the group, because at least in part he did not seek support or engage in emotion work.

In summary, relational structures need to hold transgressors accountable, but also support them in their political and corporeal learning, that is, their individual and

collective projects of practice, growth and change. Frankie's embodied sensation led him to a fervent commitment to do better, Amity's sensation felt like oppression was operating with Amity as the target, and Luis felt disconnected and lonely after realizing that he betrayed his ideals, family history, and friends from the union. In all three cases, the organizers were confronted for microaggressions, thus remaining in relationship with these transgressors may have been more palatable than remaining in relationship with someone who committed sexual assault, a racist hate crime, or domestic violence. Amity's example further nuances accountability processes in that some confrontations are not necessarily intended to correct behavior so the group can continue to work together, and can themselves be oppressive based on other axes of difference. Luis' example also nuances the emotional and relational nature of these processes, as he was unwilling or unable to gain support and stay connected with the organizing setting. Finally, shame is a sensation associated with transgression that was felt in the body for all three of these organizers, and shame can be associated with growth and change. In Amity's case, the perceived intention was for her to be publicly shamed, which resulted in rage and anger, and were divisive for the larger cross-campus organizing group. These examples contribute to our understanding of collaborative competence, providing support for the inclusion of corporeal literacy – in connection with supportive others – as practices that foster collaborative competence and thus collective empowerment.

### **Re-Articulation and Clarity of Political Commitments**

A small but meaningful number of participants resolved their dissonance through a re-articulation<sup>8</sup> or clarification of their political commitments. Or, stated another way, the visceral sense that something was not right along with the work of friends and colleagues – corporeal literacy along with relational labor –channeled discomfort toward a justice-focused response for some participants. This way of resolving cognitive dissonance related to complicity in oppression makes possible individual and social change (Gould, 2010; Tavis & Aronson, 2008; van Wormer & Faulkner, 2012).

Moreover, recognition of one’s patterns or patterns of the organizing group, supported by corporeal literacy and relational labor, may undergird commitment to change. Indeed, critical consciousness, or a critical understanding of social dynamics and contradictions, may facilitate a commitment to changing oppressive behaviors on the part of the transgressor and action in solidarity with those who experience oppression (Freire, 1970; Majzler, 2016). Frankie noticed patterns of gendered dynamics within the organizing group. He explained how he often reproduced gender-based oppressive dynamics by taking up too much space, for which Rachel called him in, as explored earlier:

This was my main, this was the main aggressive dynamic that I perpetuated in seminar, in conversation, and in organizing, was talking, not talking over people but dominating discussions with, not hostile aggression, but like you

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<sup>8</sup> I choose the term re-articulation purposefully to represent the praxis of political learning, that is, it is not merely a redefinition or reconceptualization of what it means to be in solidarity, but that it is a process that happens through embodied action.

know, excited, excited aggression, excitement, and self-confidence. [...]I would say that is also probably, one of the most common dynamics that you see in organizing spaces in general it's often gendered [...] so I'd say that's like the main the main oppressive, dynamic that I uh, observed.

Frankie did not state that he is no longer engaging in these behaviors. Indeed, he goes on to talk about his determination to contribute to a more empowering collaborative context:

I felt, yeah a renewed sense of determination but not the sort of exhilarated determination of like there som-, there's a concrete step, like I know I can do right now and I know I can do things better. It was like, it was, the type of determination that was kind of like, okay, I'm going to have to re-, reiterate, practice over and over and over again out into the future, not depressed about that, you know, I can do it, but like it's hard work and it's not a one-time fix.

Thus, Frankie realizes that it is not a fixed state to be anti-oppressive, it is a constant process and practice (Anzaldúa, 2002; Case, 2012; Sneed, Schwartz & Cross, 2006). Limiting one's behaviors that uphold systems of oppression requires a commitment to "an ongoing process of self-examination" (p. 90, Case, 2012). Committing to the practice of anti-oppression and solidarity – whether it is effective or not is another question – relieved Frankie's discomfort, shame and dissonance.

**It takes a village.** The ongoing project of developing anti-oppressive behaviors and working toward an anti-oppressive collaborative environment is not a

solitary one; as previously explored, relationships play a significant role deepening commitment to anti-oppressive behaviors (White, 2008). For Frankie, a relationship with Rachel facilitated the kind of introspection and emotion work he needed to recognize his pattern of what he calls “the main aggressive dynamic that [he] perpetuated” in many settings. Frankie had a feminist friend in Rachel, but he was also getting similar messages and interventions across multiple contexts in order to help him rearticulate his political commitments and work toward a more feminist collaborative setting. Frankie explains:

I was in a seminar at the time in my department and I think, I can't remember if this was before or after but, sometime close to, sometime, inprox-, sometime approximately to when this happened, a friend of mine had sent out an email it was like a fifteen person seminar, maybe, 12 of us were men in the seminar, 3 were women[...] and one of my friends had sent around an email to a couple of the men in the class sort of, saying like we needed to talk about how gender was playing out in our seminar, we needed to take affirmative steps to make it a more feminist and woman-friendly space so, a lot of things were sort of happening in my life at the time. I feel like my partner was bringing it up in our personal life, like when we would have debates I would often be like you know aggressive, not hostile, like I said, but you know, like excitable and aggressive. Also simultaneously I was obtaining, really powerful role models who were women. For organizing, I mean all of my role models in the union are women: um Rachel, Mary, Madison, Ava, Rita, were

sort of my people, people I looked up to in a very serious way, (E:mmhmm) I don't think I had any male, role models in the union, um, and so just sort of looking at all these people and all of these, things happening in my personal profess-, you know academic, and political life were all just sort of all happening at the same time, this was just second semester of my first year of graduate school.

Frankie was surrounding himself with women who engaged in the relational work needed to remind him, from many different angles, to be a better comrade and to limit his oppressive behavior. Indeed, he was also receiving professional support to counter his oppressive behaviors:

That was what my therapy was about at the time, how to listen, uh better, how to, breathe, and think in conversations, um, how to, yeah, respect other people listen to other people and respond to other people, instead of uh bulldozing over with like a set agenda, a set of points that I already had.

Thus, we might say behind every white man trying to be “woke” with regards to sexism is a cadre of women (white women and women of color) willing to remain in relationship with him, helping him develop his practices of solidarity and contributing to an empowering collaborative environment (White, 2008). Yet collaborative competence requires one to push beyond critically understanding one's own role in a disempowering context to that of *also* actively working to create a more empowering one.



**Understanding pervasive setting-level hostility.** Critical reflection plays a role in the work of collaborative competence and the resolution of cognitive dissonance. In Ava's case, her narrative of transgression, dissonance and shame were resolved via solidarity and re-articulation of political commitments, supported by friends, as well. Ava, a white, middle class trans woman, had perpetrated a racial microaggression during her time working on the campaign for all gender bathrooms (a queer student concern) along with an undergraduate, Julius, who is a Black man. Julius was harassed by the police after he and Ava made an unauthorized bathroom re-designation (i.e., changed a binary bathroom to an all gender bathroom), and when reporting back to the organizing group, Ava did not discuss the interaction that she and Julius experienced with the police as an instance of racialized harassment. Additionally, in this complex situation, Ava unilaterally asked Julius to leave the campaign because she heard that Julius had committed a sexual assault. Melissa, a Black woman who was a close friend of Ava's and working on a video for the bathroom campaign, called her in for her transgression. Ava explains the situation:

[In a meeting] I kind of told the story of us getting harassed by the police 'cause that had just happened basically. When I told this story, I didn't identify Julius as Black and didn't sort of characterize the police harassment as racist. And I didn't really say that they seemed to be targeting him more than me (E: mhmm). And then [...] an administrator from the LGBT center was coming to talk to us about where things were with the alternate bathroom stuff and he's Black and a gay man. Basically a lot of what the meeting wa, [it

was attended by] people in the [bathroom]group, which was majority white, kind of being like ‘well what about this, well why haven’t they done this’ and it was kind of this back and forth with him for like twenty minutes [...]

Melissa talked to me afterwards and was like ‘thatfelt like the whitest meeting, I really didn’t like that, the way you characterized what happened with the police, and I don’t like what the fact that Julius was asked to leave but I’m also interested to hear why that happened’ and um so we kinda had a conversation about that. We are close friends so it was kind more in the context of friendship then a kind of like we are union colleagues. [...] Then she just stopped going to the group basically. But Melissa was like ‘if you all want to do that video like I’m still up for doing the video but yeah I am not going to come to the group ‘cause that felt hostile.’

The combination of events contributed to the disintegration of the campaign. Ava explained how she felt:

I was like, this kind of feels shitty and also people were like ‘we don’t wanna keep doing the bathroom re-designation’ which kind of annoyed me because both Julius and I [after the police harassment] both of us were like ‘keep doing it, haha, don’t stop because we got harassed, do it!’ And people just didn’t wanna do it. So I was annoyed at that ‘cause it was like ‘ok you’re an ally, do something that puts you at risk!’ At that point I also kind of just felt like shitty about my involvement and the fact that Melissa had felt like this meeting was hostile, so I kinda was like I am just gonna prioritize doing

support and solidarity work for BSU [Black Student Union] with their couple of actions that they put on in the next few months and trying to get people in the bathroom brigade to show up to that. I was kind of just like well I don't wanna be part of winning a victory on the bathrooms and BSU is getting stone-walled by the administration [in their demands]. That is how I was thinking about it, like, I don't want it to go that way and if it's going to go that way at this group needs to be acting in solidarity. So anyway, whatever, that's it. It must be so interesting to hear people tell their shame, hahaha, so that's my shame.

Ava felt “shitty” about committing a set of racialized microaggressions, the hostile environment of the union's bathroom campaign, and her complicity in racism. Her realization, like in previous examples, was facilitated by her close relationship with Melissa. Melissa remained in relationship with Ava, but disconnected – at least in part - from what she experienced as a hostile environment for Black organizers.

This experience led Ava to understand her own individual behaviors as well as her role in the disempowering context that Melissa (and perhaps Julius in being exiled from the union) experienced. Her embodied, critical analysis of the context propelled her discomfort and helped her re-articulate her understanding of solidarity. She then committed to work to support the Black Student Union as a result of this conflict. Taken together, these examples provide support, and hope for, the emotion work that community organizers can engage (on the individual and relational levels, that is corporeal literacy and relational labor) to move people toward non-oppressive

behaviors and build empowering organizational settings. The body and relationships must be centered in the critical reflection and action cycle of praxis.

### **Implications for Relational Empowerment: A Corporeal-Relational Praxis**

#### **Model of Collaborative Competence**

As described earlier, relational empowerment includes all of the relational activities utilized in gaining access to resources and changing oppressive social dynamics (Christens, 2012). Relational empowerment includes: collaborative competence, network mobilization, bridging social divisions, facilitating the empowerment of others, and building a legacy. Collaborative competence, understood as creating group cohesion via group norms, caring and support, and challenging oppressive group dynamics, is easier said than done. Examining one's complicity in oppression, and limiting oppressive behaviors is central to supporting collaborative competence. The data presented in this chapter support the argument that it takes practices of corporeal literacy to make meaning of one's complicity, along with recognition and practices of the relational labor of friends and colleagues, to build collaborative competence and work towards an empowering relational environment. This interpretation suggests a corporeal-relational model of collaborative competence.

## corporeal-relational praxis model of collaborative competence

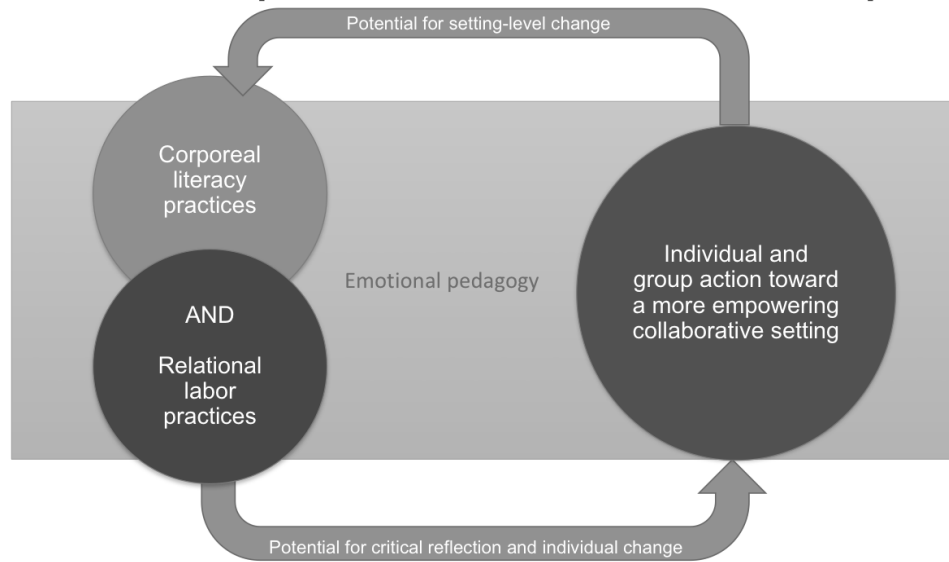


Figure 4.1 *The corporeal-relational praxis model of collaborative competence.*

Within this model, corporeal literacy practices, and relational labor are overlapping because both require internal and relational processes. Corporeal literacy practices (i.e., recognizing and attending to information created within one's body/recognizing the body as locus for understanding and meaning-making) occur in relationship with others and in the social world, and is a kind of emotion work individuals must do within themselves so they can work in collaboration. Relational labor, including social and emotional support, is a kind of emotion work that individuals do for others within the setting, so the group can better work in collaboration. When both of these processes are operating, it may lead an individual to make a commitment or take an action that supports a more empowering collaborative environment. Corporeal literacy together with relational labor may be

necessary but not sufficient for individual behavior change. These processes may lead to critical reflection, action and political commitments to change, but it's not clear from this exploration that actual behavioral changes were made, and thus may be an area for future research.

The model is constructed as a praxis model, in that one does not arrive at collaborative competence, it is an ongoing collective process. The emotional pedagogy of the organization is the backdrop for this praxis model, as this contextual element authorizes what kinds of emotions are appropriate and useful for the group. I suggest that groups should establish norms and an emotional pedagogy that holds the tension of cognitive dissonance, and uplifts that discomfort as part of the work of community organizing.

This contextualized examination of complicity with oppression prompts us to think about ways an emotional pedagogy directs participants to be better comrades, develops corporeal literacy, and limits oppressive behaviors in ways that become institutionalized in the organization. The discomfort is relational and embodied, perhaps to be sat with, interrogated, and when necessary, directed toward socially just action. Participants must sit with discomfort, in community:

Not seeking so zealously to “get over” the discomforts of acknowledging complicity and being willing to remain engaged even in the midst of discomfort promotes the possibility of creating alliance identities and is a necessary step in working together to challenge and undermine the unjust system we are currently so deeply embedded in. (Applebaum, 2008, p. 298)

Thus, building collaborative competence requires an embodied experience of discomfort for those who have been complicit in oppression, as well as a process model that recognizes emotion work – particularly corporeal literacy practices and relational labor – as central to building socio-political power.

These results support previous findings that cognitive dissonance is involved in individual and social accountability for participation in oppression, as well as individual and social change. This study engages affect theory, and extends the literature on cognitive dissonance to include shared contexts or settings where there are shared goals and values. These union organizers were individually committed to social justice, and were accountable (at least in theory if not in practice) to their organizing group. Some of these participants were able to take the route of solidarity, and re-articulate their politics to account for their complicity in systems of oppression.

Further, the context of oppression (in the institution of higher education where these organizers are located, in society more broadly) is always at play, and the critical examination of the context was integral; taken together with the importance of the embodied experience of working in community, these results contextualize and deepen our understanding of collaborative competence. Organizers used their relationships and their bodies in political learning and critically examining the social dynamics and contradictions of the organizing setting itself. They utilized a network of support and relationships, often struggling along the way but were pushed back on course by a close friend. They navigated affect to learn to be a better comrade, and to

be in solidarity. They used their bodies to build a better, more empowering relational and collaborative environment. The results of confrontations of oppressive behaviors were not always positively valenced. Some confrontations did not contribute to a more empowering setting, as experienced by some individuals in this study.

The intent to remain in connection is crucial to the collective project of collaborative competence, as shaming did not appear to work towards building a more empowering setting for all. In these cases, the corporeal-relational praxis model of collaborative competence did not hold. Perhaps the approaches of calling-in or calling-out when the intention is perceived as to remain in connection, rather than shaming or other confrontations aimed at discrediting individuals and disrupting organizations, are only appropriate for subtle transgressions. No outright violent interactions were communicated during the interview process.

An important question remains: Does the relational labor expended by friends and comrades contribute to the collaborative competence of the group and a more empowering setting for *all* members of a setting? The case of Frankie is interesting in this regard. Perhaps he has learned, and has done work necessary to be in community with folks who have less privilege and authority than he has, but he also seems to have a lot of support in the process. It is also likely the case that he has the most work to do. The fact that he thinks he can do it is notable. He has a naturalized authority, the space is already empowering for him, and he has support, but does this mean that he has changed or will change? A focus on his behavior change by his friend, and many others, was needed to support his ability to navigate complicity in a way that



centers the collaborative environment. Yet the focus of relational labor on Frankie might come at the expense of others – Amar and Luis come to mind. Amar and Luis needed more support within the organization, and they did not receive it. Access to relationships of support requires further examination, especially since providing those resources is labor and the labor is inequitably distributed.

## Chapter 5: Results

### **Relational Labor Among Organizers: Implications for (Measuring) Empowerment**

Relationships are central to empowerment processes and empowering contexts, and are required to build the sociopolitical power needed to make change (Christens, 2012; Maton, 2008). The work of relationship-building, maintenance and - in times of conflict –repair is considered relational labor (Crittenden 2001; England et al., 2002; Fletcher, 1999; McDowell, 1992; Tronto, 1993; Williams, 2000). Within diverse groups, relational labor includes engaging with the critical challenges of difference, and disrupting the reproduction of inequitable social structures (e.g., racism, sexism, classism, ableism). This chapter examines the distribution of resources (i.e., access to social, emotional and instrumental support) and labor or burdens (i.e., providing relational labor in the form of social, emotional and instrumental support) involved in navigating and resolving the reproduction of oppression, as well as organizational operations broadly, within the labor union setting. Using social network analysis (SNA), complemented by qualitative data, I examine the degree to which the organizing setting can be considered empowering. According to Neal (2014), an empowering setting is one in which actors have relationships that facilitate the exchange of resources, and the distribution of network power (i.e., power over resources and/or ability to connect others to resources) among individuals in the setting is roughly equitable. In this analysis, the distribution of labor (i.e., burdens) is similarly calculated, thereby connecting the understanding of

empowering settings more closely with social justice (i.e., the equitable allocation of resources and burdens in society; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). This research has practical implications for the organization, and methodological implications for the field of community psychology regarding the measurement of empowerment.

This chapter seeks to answer the question: is there an empowering setting in the union? To explore this question, I will first briefly revisit the concepts of empowerment, relational empowerment and empowering settings, underscore the feminist intervention forwarded in this dissertation that calls for an examination of relational labor, and utilize network analytical measurements of empowering settings to examine the degree to which the union setting is an empowering one. The network analytic methods utilized in this chapter – measures of the whole network – are often relative measures that provide insights into network characteristics across various networks in other contexts. This study investigates multiple functional networks (i.e., networks of relational resources and labor) within a global network of the union. Therefore, for triangulation purposes, I include qualitative data along with various descriptive network data for a more complete picture of the setting under investigation. The analyses presented in this chapter suggest that the union setting is somewhat empowering. I argue that examining the distribution of relational labor within an organization is integral to the creation of a collaboratively competent empowering setting.

### **Empowerment, Empowering Settings and Relational Empowerment**

Settings that promote the development and access to resources of all members are central to empowerment (Maton, 2008). Accordingly, the organizational setting is the level of analysis for this chapter. Relationships are integral to the collective aspect of empowerment and the settings in which empowerment occurs. Relational empowerment, the relational aspects of gaining access to resources and changing unjust power relationships, includes five elements: collaborative competence, network mobilization, bridging social divisions, facilitating the empowerment of others, and building a legacy (Christens, 2012). This dissertation focuses on collaborative competence; the collective goal of collaborative competence is to create an environment that supports the development of all members of the setting, promotes members' ability to work together, and builds the power needed to make change. Collaborative competence includes activities to create group cohesion, support members of a group, and address injustice within the group when needed (Christens, 2012; Langhout, Collins & Ellison, 2014). These activities focus on within-group functioning such as building, maintaining and repairing relationships.

**Challenges to empowerment and empowering settings.** Collaborative competence is needed to address some of the most difficult challenges to empowerment. Relationships, and thus empowerment processes and settings, are challenged by the reproduction of oppression. This reproduction often occurs in the form of microaggressions, or everyday acts of violence that denigrate or invalidate individuals based on their social location (Sue, 2010). Sometimes members of a group or organization engage in behaviors that are harmful for others within the setting,

even when they do not intend it; yet harm can be done irrespective of intent (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Sue, 2010). These behaviors can also create a hostile environment for individuals from marginalized groups, perpetuate a white supremacist and/or patriarchal culture within the setting, and therefore foster a setting that is disempowering for some members of the group. The reproduction of oppression within a setting is deleterious to individuals and the collective group.

**Feminist intervention to concepts of empowerment.** Empowerment requires relational labor to address issues associated with the reproduction of oppression. Relational labor holds organizations together in order to achieve goals (Fletcher, 1999). As argued in the introductory chapters of this dissertation, relational labor is feminized, under-recognized and inequitably distributed (Crittenden 2001; England, Budig, & Folbre 2002; Fletcher, 1999; McDowell, 1992; Tronto, 1993; Williams, 2000).

More specific to empowerment theory and the relational empowerment framework, relational labor in community organizing refers to relational work and attention to within-group functioning, that is, attending to group cohesion, interpersonal transactions and relational processes undergirding the organizational ability to exercise transformative power and repair our world (Christens, 2012). Consistent with Neal's (2014) conception of empowering settings and network power, the degree to which the burdens and resources of relational labor are distributed determine the degree to which the setting is both empowering and empowered. Thus, an empowering setting is defined in this dissertation as one in

which access to relational resources as well as the burdens of relational labor are more equitably distributed. We may consider this definition to more accurately reflect a relationally empowering setting, or a collaboratively competent empowering setting. It is therefore appropriate to examine the ways in which collaboratively competent empowering settings have been measured from a network perspective.

### **Measuring Empowering Settings**

One way that empowering settings have been examined is through the network power measure (Neal, 2014; Neal & Neal, 2011). This measure suggests that a setting can be considered empowering based on how much access to resources individual actors have, and if that access is more equitably distributed within a network. This social network analytical technique analyzes an entire network to see who is connected with whom, and how resources may flow through that network. Individual actors receive a power score based on how advantageous their location is within the network (Neal & Neal, 2011), and then the power scores are examined to see how equitably distributed they are (Neal, 2014). Figures 5.1 through 5.3 illustrate purposefully simplified examples of an empowering network, a moderately empowering network, and a disempowering network utilizing Neal's network power measure (Neal, 2014).

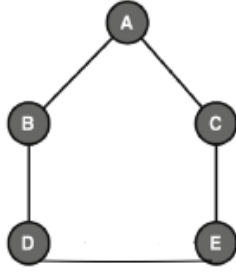


Figure 5.1 *A network in which power is distributed equally. This network is considered an empowering setting (Neal, 2014).*

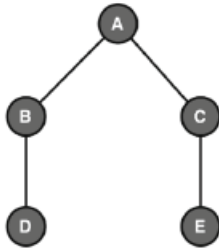


Figure 5.2 *A network in which power and therefore access to resources is distributed less equitably than figure 5.1 (Neal, 2014).*

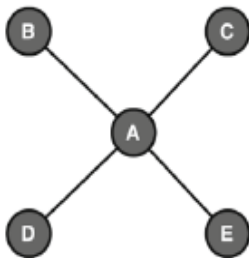


Figure 5.3 *A network in which relationships are most centralized and least distributed. This network is considered disempowering (Neal, 2014).*

Access to resources of support, conflict resolution and other forms of support are central to a relationally empowering setting, and thus it is appropriate to examine how access to those specific resources are utilized, and how the utilization is distributed within the network. As previously suggested, for the purposes of this inquiry, an empowering setting is also one in which the distribution of labor (i.e., relational labor) is approaching an equitable distribution. Thus, to adequately focus on collaborative competence and appropriately measure whether a setting is empowering based on this operationalization, we must consider access to relational resources as well as the provision of relational labor. Neal's (2014) measure provides an understanding of how a network is structured and whether resources would be able to flow through it based on the availability of relational ties; that is, this measure determines if the network structure provides the ability for actors to access resources such as support or resolution. An additional measure is needed to consider resource utilization, or the actual resources that were accessed by the union organizers, and the labor that was expended on relational support during situations in which oppression was reproduced. That is, if empowering settings are characterized by equitable distribution of both access to resources and the labor required to provide the resources, community psychologists can benefit from an analytic that illustrates the relational resources that have been accessed (and reported) by members of a network, and the relational labor that has been provided (and reported) by members of a network. One overall measure does not provide this type of nuance.



I propose an additional measure of empowering settings that considers of the distribution of relational resources and labor. An appropriate additional measure of an empowering setting may be the degree centrality of actors and the distributional qualities of that score. Degree centrality is also a measure of how advantageous an actor's position is within a social network, yet it provides more granular detail in terms of the directionality of the resource. Utilizing the centrality measure, we can determine the degree to which individuals receive or have accessed relational resources, and the degree to which individuals provide relational labor.

The actor in-degree centrality score represents the provision of relational labor on the part of an individual to others in the network, for example, the number of organizers who go to Amity for support represents Amity's in-degree centrality. The actor out-degree centrality represents the degree to which an individual has accessed relational resources from others in the network, for example, the number of individuals Amity goes to for support represents Amity's out-degree centrality. Meaning, actors who have high degrees of centrality tend to have many relationships. The distributional qualities of degree centrality can be represented in terms of network centralization (Freeman, 1979) or by the Gini coefficient (Gini, 1912; Neal, 2014). The in-degree and out-degree centralization scores, as well as Gini coefficients of in-degree and out-degree centrality illustrate the distribution of the respective actor centrality scores in a network. These analyses indicate how similar or different the amount of relationships individuals have within a network; if the in-degree centrality is not well-distributed, or said another way – highly centralized – it indicates that

certain actors are providing more support than others. Similarly, if out-degree centrality of support is highly centralized, this indicates that only some actors have accessed support. When these networks are highly centralized, I argue, they are not empowering settings.

Figure 5.3 represents an example of the most centralized and thus disempowering network (Freeman, 1979; Neal, 2014). In this example, the distribution of resource X is the least distributed. Network centralization calculations have no standardized cut-points to determine just how centralized is too centralized, and are often used to compare networks (e.g., network A is more centralized and thus unequal than network B). Therefore, centralization is presented along with Gini coefficients, which are a standardized measurement. Typically, Gini coefficients of over 0.5 (on a 0 to 1 scale with 1 being the most unequal) are considered unequal (R. Hanneman, personal communication, September 25, 2017). Both measures require contextualization in their interpretation. In the case of this union organizing setting, I utilized the 0.5 guideline as a representation of a borderline (dis)empowering setting, meaning that the 0.5 level of inequity is on the cusp of a score that would represent an empowering setting. The following results examine relational empowerment of the union setting, providing different insights into how empowering the union setting might be.

## **Results**

This results section examines the degree to which the union setting is empowering using multiple network analytic measures, supplemented by open-ended questions from the network questionnaire. The following results are based on networks constituted by the following network questionnaire questions: who have you worked with in the union (global network); tell me about a time when someone in the union said or did something considered reproductive of oppression, and for the situation you just named, who do you go to and who goes to you for support (i.e., support network), to resolve the issue (i.e., resolution network), for another reason (i.e., other network)? A summary of these results can be found in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 *Summary of analyses and results*

Network	Network Analytic	Scores
Global network (n=56) Who have you worked with?	Distribution of Network Power (Neal, 2014; Neal & Neal, 2011).	Gini coefficient: 0.537
	Freeman's Centralization (1979).	In-degree centralization: 0.4331 Out-degree centralization: 0.3405
	Distribution of in- and out-degree centrality scores.	In-degree Gini coefficient: 0.5049 Out-degree Gini coefficient: 0.5056
Support network (n=37) Who do you go to for support/who goes to you?	Freeman's Centralization (1979).	In-degree (labor): 0.2176 Out-degree (accessed): 0.3603 In-degree (labor) Gini coefficient: 0.5374
	Distribution of in- and out-degree centrality scores	Out-degree (accessed) Gini coefficient: 0.593
Resolution network (n=32) Who do you go to resolve the issue/ who goes to you?	Freeman's Centralization (1979).	In-degree (labor): 0.1446 Out-degree (accessed): 0.2445 In-degree (labor) Gini coefficient: 0.775
	Distribution of in- and out-degree centrality scores	Out-degree (accessed) Gini coefficient: 0.793
Other network (n=34) Who do you go to for another reason/ who goes to you?	Freeman's Centralization (1979).	In-degree (labor): 0.3719 Out-degree (accessed): 0.1846 In-degree (labor) Gini coefficient: 0.824
	Distribution of in- and out-degree centrality scores	Out-degree (accessed) Gini coefficient: 0.602

## Is the Union an Empowering Setting?

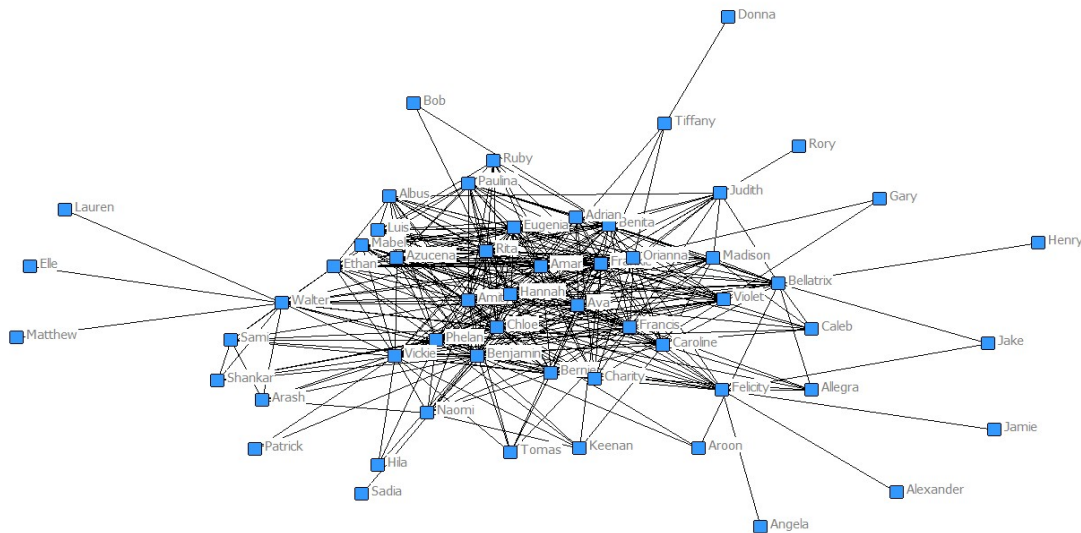


Figure 5.4 *Global union network sociogram*. This figure illustrates all of the people who have worked together on union activities and their relationship to each other.

**Examining the global network.** When examining the global union network, that is, the network based on the question “who have you worked with in the union” we can first look at the visualization, depicted in Figure 5.4. This sociogram represents all of the relationships reported. Figure 5.4 shows a dense network with many relationships; there are 56 individuals represented in the network, and 537 relationships (out of a possible 1540 ties). Results using Neal’s (2014) network power measure suggest a setting that is borderline (dis)empowering with a Gini coefficient of 0.537. The opportunities for access to resources (i.e., relationships), are not equitably distributed. Moreover, according to Neal (2014), disempowering settings have positively skewed distributions of individual actor power scores; the histogram

depicted in Figure 5.5, which illustrates the distribution of individual actor power scores within the whole network of the union, is positively skewed. Analyses using Freeman’s (1979) centralization as well as the Gini coefficient of actor centrality scores yielded similar results. Given the union is working toward democratic, non-hierarchical practices -- yet the union is also an organization that includes official leadership and paid positions and therefore includes a hierarchical structure -- these analyses suggest that access to resources by way of relationships within the network could be more equitably distributed.

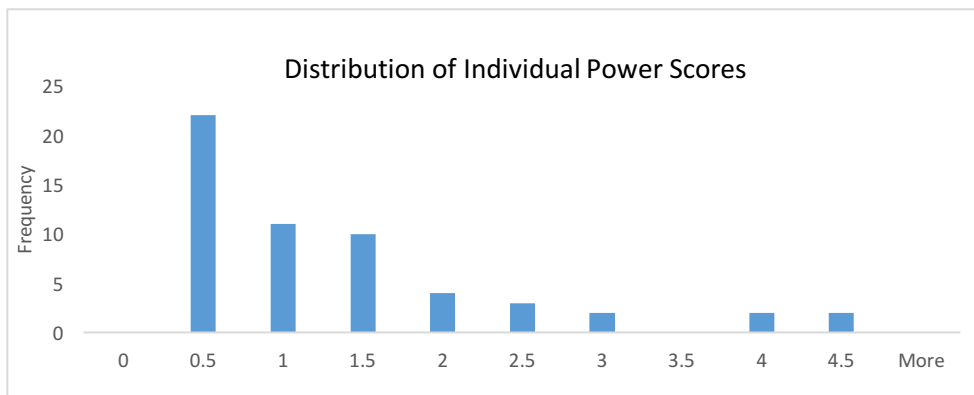


Figure 5.5 *Distribution of individual actor power scores*. This figure illustrates a positive skew, meaning that it is not considered an empowering setting according to Neal (2014).

**Examining functional networks: support, resolution and other.** Each of the three functional networks – the support network, the resolution network, and the other kind of support network – were analyzed using Freeman’s centralization and the Gini coefficient. Refer to Table 5.1 for a summary of each of these analyses. Freeman’s centralization was also run on the global network as a comparison to

Neal's empowering setting measurement (i.e., the Gini coefficient of network power scores); Freeman's and the Gini coefficient are both on a 0 to 1 scale, with a coefficient of 1 suggesting power or resources that are concentrated in the hands of very few individuals. These analyses indicate that the distribution of relationships is borderline (dis)empowering. The following sections examine the analyses for each of the functional networks (support, resolution and other).

*Network of support.* Supportive relationships are central to organizational operations broadly, and more specifically to collaborative competence and the ability of a group to navigate the reproduction of oppression. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider how support as a resource is distributed within the network, and also how the labor of providing support is distributed. Figure 5.6 illustrates who goes to whom for support related to the reproduction of oppression within the union. The distribution of labor (in-degree centralization: 0.2176, Gini coefficient 0.5374) analyses indicate that the providers of support are borderline homogenous, meaning the labor is somewhat but not entirely concentrated on the shoulders of a few. According to this measure, the distribution of labor is shared among a small number but more than just a few people, indicating a borderline (dis)empowering setting.

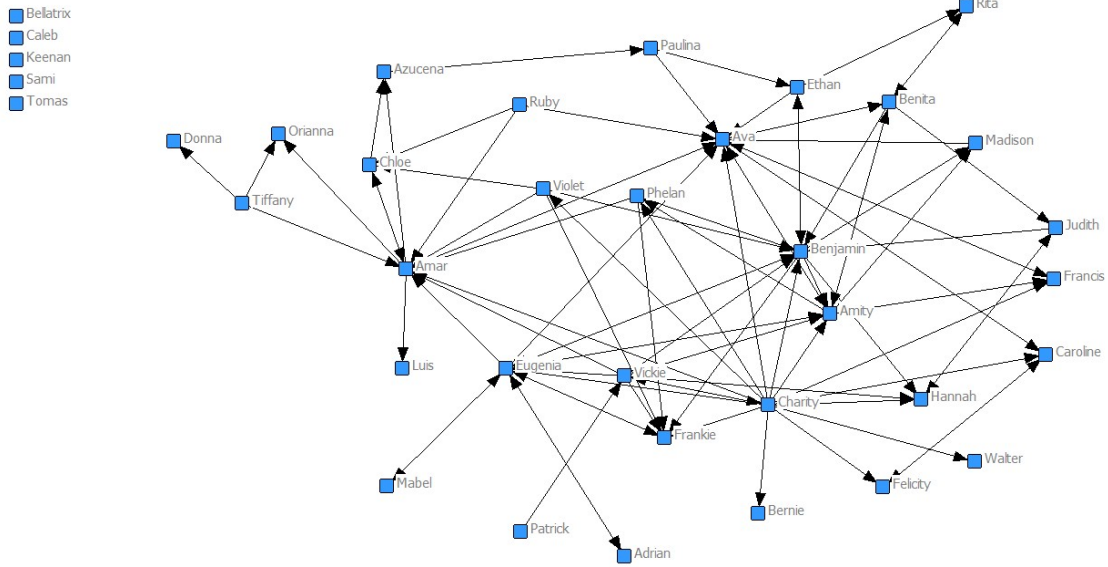


Figure 5.6 *Sociogram of the support network*. This figure illustrates who goes to whom for support related to the reproduction of oppression within the union. The arrows indicate the direction of the tie; arrows go into the person who provides support.

The network visualization of the support network in Figure 5.6 corroborates this analysis from a slightly different vantage point. The visualization illustrates that Amar, Ava, Amity, Frankie, and Benjamin were called on to provide support for multiple other union organizers. Hannah and Francis provided relational labor in the form of support to a lesser degree, but they also supported multiple people. The histogram of support labor found in Figure 5.7 shows the distribution of in-degree actor centrality scores within the support network (Freeman, 1979). This figure illustrates the support labor provided by individuals. Most frequently (n=10) individuals have an in-degree centrality score of two, meaning that many individuals



provide support to two other individuals. This figure also illustrates that relatively few actors had high in-degree centrality scores (e.g., 6- 10), which indicates that relatively few actors are providing a significant level of relational labor in the form of support for multiple other actors. This indicates that the burden of providing support is somewhat distributed, yet there are still a few individuals who shoulder a heavier burden of labor and provide support for many others.

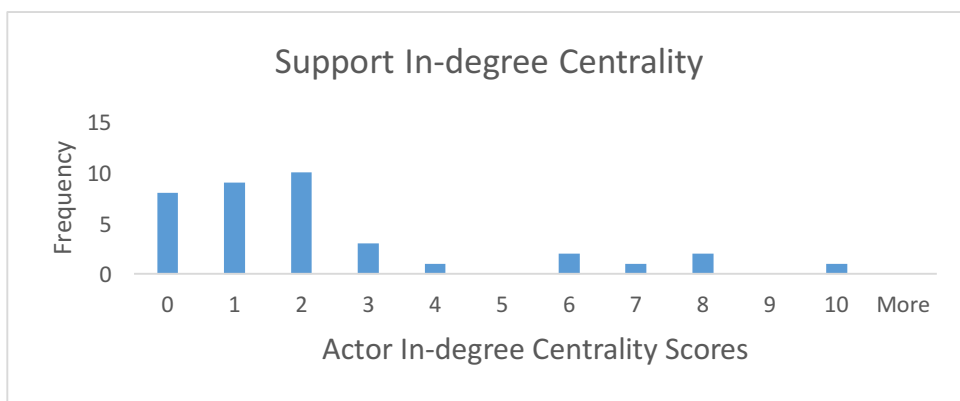


Figure 5.7 *Distribution of in-degree actor centrality scores within the support network.* This figure illustrates the support labor provided by individuals.

Some actors were called on to provide support based on their leadership roles. Leaders in this context include Amar and Frankie in leadership capacities, who both provided support to a high proportion of other members. There were also many other leaders who provided support, including Ava, Amity, Benjamin, Benita, Francis and Caroline. These less formal leadership roles depended on the specific union campaigns. For example, Benjamin was prominently positioned as a leader in the boycott, divest and sanction campaign against Israel (BDS); it makes sense that

Benjamin is someone who provided support in that context. The time period of this study was when the union had undertaken the BDS campaign; Benjamin refers to this campaign in his interview as formative to his Jewish identity. He positioned himself to be in direct communication with those who opposed BDS and saw his positionality as a Jew as important to promoting the campaign and brokering conflict resolution when the union received a significant amount of negative (and sometimes aggressive) feedback from those outside of the union setting. In his network questionnaire, he stated: "I sort of made myself the designated 'deal with the hateful Zionists' guy." Perhaps multiple people sought Benjamin's support related to the BDS campaign, which was a very contentious issue, because he was willing and equipped to take on the issue and negative interactions that may have occurred. Thus, there were a number of leaders in the union who provided support. Gini coefficients of 0.5 or more are typically considered fairly unequal. Taking the context of formal and non-formal leadership positions into account, along with the somewhat shared burden of support, these findings suggest that the union is borderline empowering in terms of the relational labor of support.

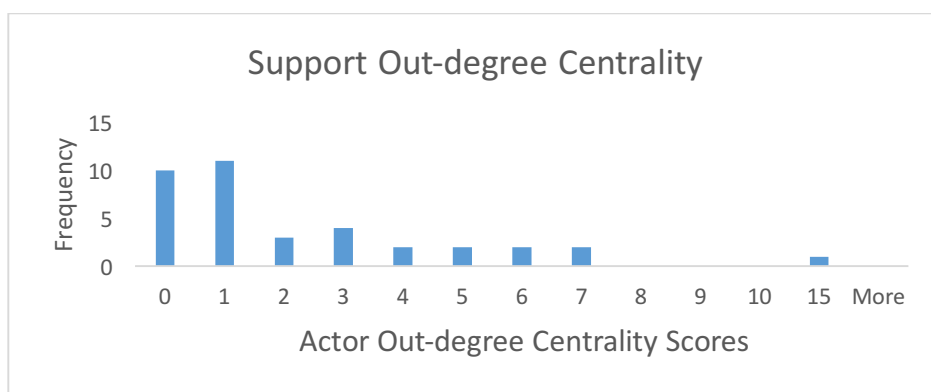


Figure 5.8 *Distribution of out-degree actor centrality scores within the support network.* This figure illustrates the support labor accessed by individuals.

Support was also accessed in a somewhat distributed way. The out-degree calculations (centralization score: 0.2527; Gini coefficient: 0.539) suggest that support was accessed by individuals within the network in a somewhat distributed manner. Compared with the in-degree calculations, this indicates that accessing support was slightly less equitably distributed than the labor provided (i.e., more people provided support than those who sought support). Figure 5.8 illustrates the out-degree actor centrality scores within the support network (Freeman, 1979). Most frequently individuals have an out-degree centrality score of one, meaning that most individuals sought support from one other actor. Ten actors did not seek support from any other actors within the network. This distribution also indicates that 16 actors had multiple sources of support, suggesting a network in which most people (n= 27) had at least one person they went to for support, and many individuals (n=16) relied on more than one person when they needed support. Having multiple sources of support is indicative of a supportive setting, and contributes to an empowering setting.

Therefore, taken together, these analyses indicate that the union was borderline (dis)empowering in terms of support.

*Network of resolution.* It was rare that anyone sought or provided resolution.

Figure 5.9 is a sociogram of the resolution network within the union. This figure illustrates who goes to whom to resolve an issue related to the reproduction of oppression within the union. Figures 5.9 and 5.10 illustrate in- and out-degree centrality for resolution. These figures show that most actors do not go to, or provide resolution.



Figure 5.9 *Sociogram of the resolution network within the union.* This figure illustrates who goes to whom to resolve an issue related to the reproduction of oppression within the union.

As Figure 5.9 illustrates, Benjamin, Amar, and Amity provided resolution labor most frequently. The distribution of labor (in-degree centralization: 0.1446, Gini coefficient: 0.775), and the distribution of resolution accessed (out-degree

centralization: 0.2445, Gini coefficient: 0.793) analyses indicate that this setting is moderately disempowering within the resolution domain. In calculating this distribution, it is important to consider the degree to which no resolution was provided or sought. Figure 5.10 illustrates the distribution of in-degree actor centrality scores within the resolution network, highlighting the resolution labor provided by individuals (Freeman, 1979). Most frequently individuals had an in-degree centrality score of zero, meaning relatively little resolution labor has been done. This figure also illustrates that relatively few actors had somewhat higher in-degree centrality scores (e.g., 3, 4, 5), which indicates that relatively few actors provided resolution labor for multiple other actors. Similarly, Figure 5.11 shows the distribution of out-degree actor centrality scores within the resolution network (Freeman, 1979). This figure illustrates the resolution labor accessed by individuals. Most frequently individuals had an out-degree centrality score of zero, meaning that most individuals sought no resolution. This distribution also indicates that relatively few actors sought resolution from multiple other actors.

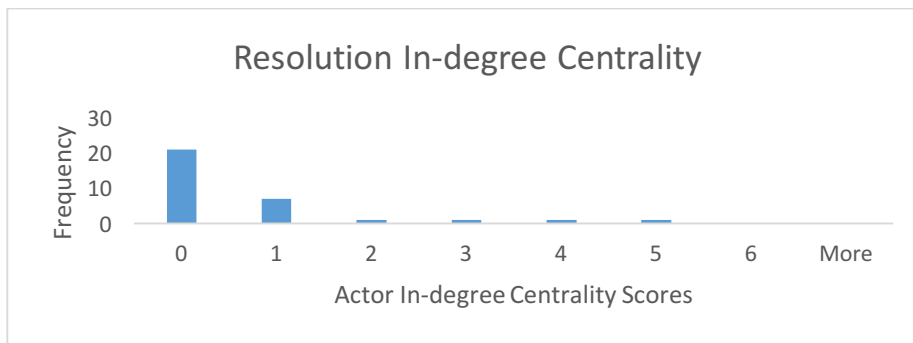


Figure 5.10 *Distribution of in-degree actor centrality scores within the resolution network*. This figure illustrates the resolution labor provided by individuals.

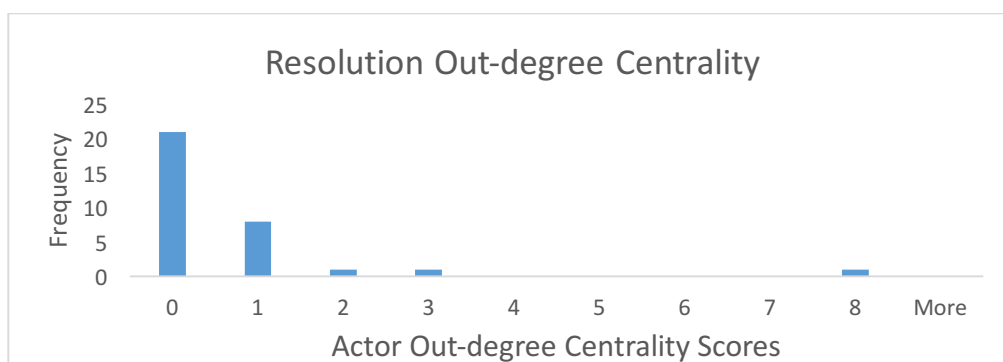


Figure 5.11 *Distribution of out-degree actor centrality scores within the resolution network.* This figure illustrates the resolution labor accessed by individuals.

Thus, very few participants reported any attempts at resolution at all. Eugenia reported utilizing the relational labor of a large number of people for resolution. The incident she reported is one in which she identified herself as the person who created harm, and upon realization of her oppressive behavior, she went to multiple people to resolve the issue. She stated in an open-ended section of the questionnaire that she realized her transgression after it happened, and did not reach out to the person she harmed because she didn't want to engage in what she stated was:

The 'confessional' aspect of white organizers' subject position... I didn't want to reproduce that. But I also think I was just feeling shitty and stupid and ignorant and resolved the way to make it right was to just not do that again.

Thus, Eugenia reached out to others in the union to attempt to resolve the issue of her own transgression. This example highlights a rare occurrence of an attempt at resolution, yet it suggests that when organizers experience cognitive dissonance as

Eugenia did here, and as explored in the previous chapter, they may enlist others to help them resolve the tension.

If there were no conflicts or transgressions within a setting (it may be surprising, yet it would not necessarily be evidence of an empowering setting) the relative absence of a network of resolution would perhaps align with the absence for the need of such a network. Yet these data on the number of transgressions (although not the focus of this dissertation) indicate that there were regularly transgressions in which oppression was reproduced. Recall the network questionnaire asked participants to report up to 3 instances in which oppression was reproduced in the union organizing setting. Out of 29 network questionnaire respondents, 14 people reported the maximum number of incidents or ongoing dynamics (i.e., 3), 4 respondents reported 2, and 5 respondents reported 1 incident or ongoing dynamic. Five participants stated that they did not experience or were unaware of any instances of the reproduction of oppression. Although there were some cases in which participants were reporting the same incidents or dynamics, there were also many distinct reports. Thus, there were many oppressive incidents or dynamics that went unresolved. That is, there is no evidence to support that the lack of resolution is due to the absence of a need for it. Thus, the calculations suggest that the resolution network is moderately disempowering, and the relative lack of resolution, especially for ongoing dynamics, is a concern for the creation of a more empowering setting.

*Network of other kinds of support.* Finally, in addition to support and resolution, there are other reasons for which organizers sought resources and provided

labor. In this question on the network instrument, organizers were asked to name who they went to for another reason, and then to list the reason(s). Organizers went to each other for many reasons related to collaborative competence, including: to think through things, to strategize; for emotional support, processing, reflection, about creating more democratic and open meeting spaces; to particular organizers for their intelligence and sensitivity; to learn from their fellow organizers; and to debrief.

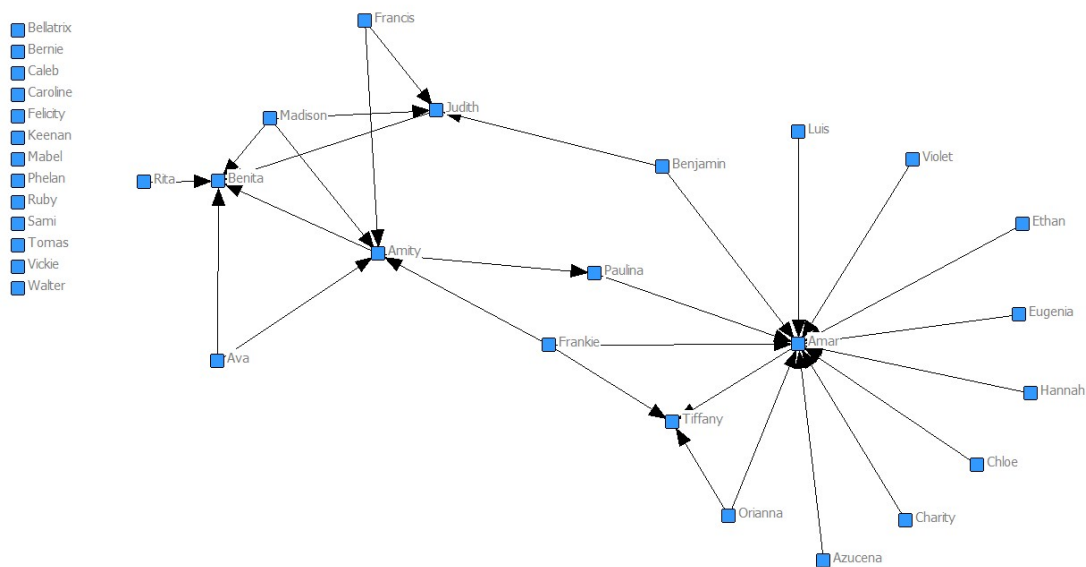


Figure 5.12 *Sociogram of the other kinds of support network within the union.* This figure illustrates who goes to whom for other kinds of support related to the reproduction of oppression within the union.

One open-ended question, the visualization represented in Figure 5.12, as well as the higher in-degree centralization score (0.3719) and Gini coefficient of in-degree centrality (0.824) suggest substantial inequity in relational labor. Figure 5.12 is a sociogram of the other kinds of support network within the union, illustrating who



goes to whom for other kinds of support related to the reproduction of oppression within the union. It is evident that labor is heavily centralized on one individual, Amar, who stated in her open-ended response:

I think these people come to me because they don't know what to do and think I do, because I'm black. Not necessarily because I can resolve it, but because they don't want to deal with it and want me to.

Amar reported that her fellow union organizers were unsupportive of black issues in that they were not adequately dealing with issues of anti-blackness experienced within the university workplace. Taken together, these analyses suggest that the union is not empowering in terms of networks of other types of support.

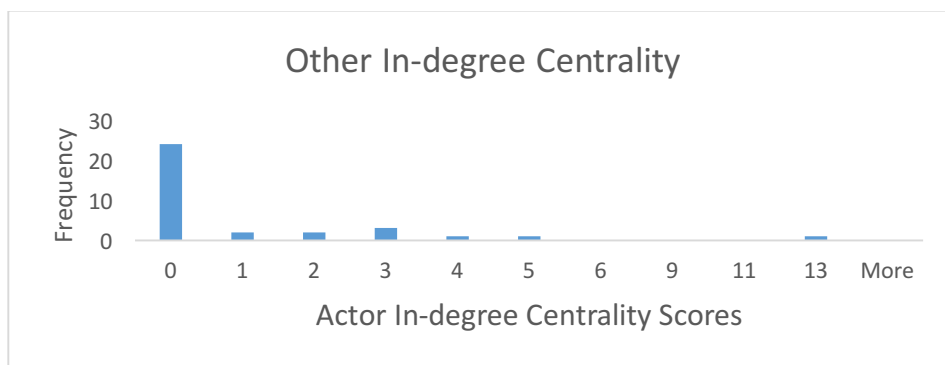


Figure 5.13 *Distribution of in-degree actor centrality scores within the other network.* This figure illustrates the other labor provided by individuals.

The distributional qualities of the actor degree centrality scores provide additional support for a non-empowering setting. Figure 5.13 illustrates the distribution of in-degree actor centrality scores within the other network (i.e., who

provides another kind of support; Freeman, 1979). Most frequently individuals have an in-degree centrality score of zero, meaning that no actors provided labor in the form of another kind of support. This figure also illustrates that relatively few actors had somewhat higher in-degree centrality scores (e.g., 5, 13), which indicates that relatively few actors are providing support for multiple other actors. This indicates a non-empowering setting because of this higher level of labor provided by only a few actors. Interestingly, although a plurality of those who sought another kind of support went to Amar for support, many individuals did not seek another kind of support at all. Figure 5.14 illustrates that most frequently individuals have an out-degree centrality score of zero. This distribution also indicates that relatively few actors seek another kind of support from multiple other actors.

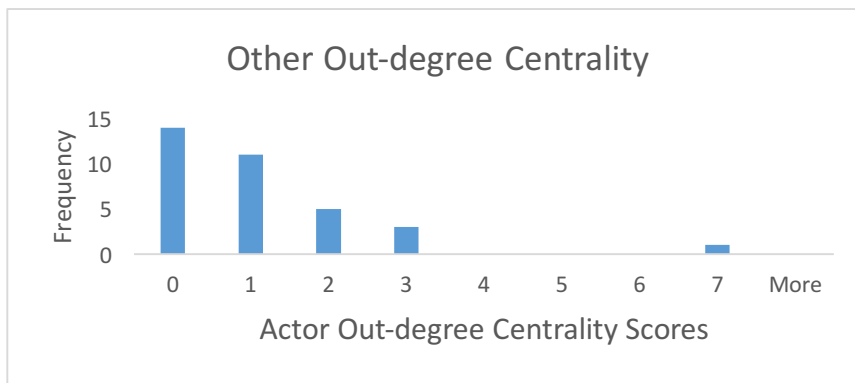


Figure 5.14. *Distribution of out-degree actor centrality scores within the other network.* This figure illustrates the other kinds of support accessed by individuals.

Taken together, these analyses also suggest the union setting is not sufficiently empowering to match their political commitments. It should be noted that these

political commitments are perhaps difficult to achieve given the hierarchical nature of the multiple contexts within which the union is embedded (i.e., a union in which some members are formal leaders and there are paid positions, and hierarchical university and international union settings).

## **Discussion**

These analyses illuminate multiple different vantage points from which we can consider empowerment. One is the structural view in which we can examine overall connectedness of the entire union organizational network. This measured potential for resource exchange that is afforded by the network structure. Neal's (2014) measure indicates that the union network is moderately connected, and thus moderately empowering, because resources can flow through the network fairly well, and the distribution of access to resources is approaching a moderate distribution. By Neal's (2014) measure, the union is somewhat empowering, but likely less empowering than they would like, considering the organizational commitment to horizontal, non-hierarchical governance.

In contrast, by operationalizing the conception of an empowering setting as one in which resources and labor are more equitably distributed, we can examine the setting at a more granular view. We zoomed-in to three functional networks in which individuals receive and provide relational resources and labor (i.e., support, resolution, other) to examine not only the relational tie, but also the directionality of the tie through Freeman's (1979) centralization. According to the distributions of

degree centrality, depending on the kind of relational resource, the union is variably empowering. Most notably, the union is non-empowering in terms of networks of other types of support. This network analytic result complemented by open-ended data is especially integral to our understanding of an empowering setting in this context because data indicate that the setting is not responsive to the needs of black organizers. Therefore, the labor of caring for a portion of the union's membership and organizational core falls upon the shoulders of one individual. These results support the argument that an empowering setting would provide labor and care for all issues facing academic workers rather than pushing certain issues into a kind of special interest category. Said another way, if this setting were empowering for black workers and organizers, the labor of being responsive to their needs would be provided by multiple members.

A more nuanced and mixed-methods approach to measuring empowering settings allowed us to understand that this union organizing setting is non-empowering for some members, and illuminated particular challenges that may be targeted for intervention, such as working on how union members might hold each other accountable and resolve oppressive incidents or dynamics, and centering the desires and needs of black workers. Thus, Neal's (2014) measurement is not the only way to use network analytics to measure empowering settings, especially when empowering settings are operationalized as ones in which access to relational resources and labor are roughly equal. Viewing the network power measure in relation to the degree centrality measure and supplemented with qualitative data, it is

clear the network power measure does not provide a sufficiently nuanced view of collaborative competence. Centralization and Gini coefficients of in- and out-degree centrality complemented the more global measure, and provided a more refined look at how participants were working to create a more empowering and collaboratively competent setting. Nevertheless, these conclusions are still partial.

There are some important limitations to this inquiry. It is likely the case that the network questionnaire failed to capture all the labor of, and access to, relational resources. The juxtaposition of data from interview and questionnaire data of one participant, Frankie, illustrates this challenge. Recall, in his interview he explained that the women in the union served as role models and mentors for him, and helped him deal with his white masculinity and his anti-oppressive learning, introspection, and work on himself; he credits women in the union, in his seminars, his partner, and his therapist for helping him deal with his oppressive behavior. In his interview, he specifically named individuals who helped him to address “the main aggressive dynamic that [he] perpetuated.” He stated:

...One of my friends had sent around an email to a couple of the men in the class sort of, saying like we needed to talk about how gender was playing out in our seminar, we needed to take affirmative steps to make it a more feminist and woman-friendly space so, a lot of things were sort of happening in my life at the time. I feel like my partner was bringing it up in our personal life, like when we would have debates I would often be like you know aggressive, not hostile, like I said, but you know, like excitable and aggressive. Also

simultaneously I was obtaining really powerful role models who were women. For organizing, I mean, all of my role models in the union are women: um Rachel, Mary, Madison, Ava, Rita, were sort of my people, people I looked up to in a very serious way.

Yet when Frankie was asked in the questionnaire who he goes to for support around oppressive acts within the union, he did not name a single person. Based on interview data, he clearly utilized relational resources within the union setting. The interview data might also suggest that a disproportionate amount of relational energy went toward helping him be a better comrade. Perhaps Frankie did not see mentorship as support, or that he did not recognize their mentorship as labor involved in creating a collaborative environment. Another issue with the questionnaire may have been the wording. I asked participants to name a time that something reproductive of oppression occurred in the union, and when that occurred, to whom they went for support. Frankie reported the same incident that is highlighted in the previous chapter, when he interrupted a newer organizer who was also a woman. He talked about his friend Rachel confronting him in the interview, and also pointed this out in his questionnaire response, but he did not name anyone as someone he went to for support. Perhaps he did not seek support, but people provided it anyway. This is in contrast with Charity, who stated that she went to everyone for support; she has sought the support, and perhaps she also recognized the labor. Finally, there may have been order effects; the interview was conducted after the questionnaire, as was integral to the study design. If participants were to engage in the reflective process of

an interview first, they may be able to provide more detailed network data. Taken together, these examples suggest that there may be a perception issue regarding the measurement of labor, particularly when that labor is provided without being requested.

## **Conclusion**

Given these analyses, overall, the union is borderline (dis)empowering and certainly not as empowering as their political commitments suggest they should be, however aspirational this may be. Support is moderately distributed in terms of access and labor, and therefore borderline empowering. Resolution, although under-utilized, is moderately disempowering. The examination of other types of support suggests that the union needs to do more work on integrating social justice issues so that all issues for workers become the burden for all within the union organizing setting. The network power measure was good for understanding access to resources broadly, but the distribution of degree centrality may be more appropriate for determining empowering settings if the understanding of empowering settings includes distribution of labor.

I put forth this feminist intervention into the empowerment literature not to argue that we should eliminate burdens of relational labor – these burdens come from being implicated in the lives of each other and working collectively. Indeed, when working in collaboration, and working toward creating an empowering setting for every person in the collaboration, we should want to provide relational labor in the

form of caring, support, holding each other accountable for harms done and other relational needs. This is the work of changing inequitable social relations within an organization to change inequitable social relations outside of it. Liberation, freedom and empowerment does not mean complete autonomy (Hayward, 2000; Rappaport, 1981). Being autonomous or self-sufficient is the opposite of collective, relational empowerment and antithetical to activities of collaborative competence.

Relationships make organizations strong, sustainable and powerful (Fletcher, 1999; Speer & Hughey, 1995; Speer et al, 1995). Nevertheless, these labors go under-recognized in the functioning of organizations, should be illuminated, and should be more equitably distributed.



## Chapter 6: Conclusion

### **The Creation of Collaboratively Competent Settings and the Future Societies**

This dissertation contributed to understanding how community-based groups address the reproduction of injustice in order to create well-functioning relationships of solidarity, empowering settings, and the power necessary to make change. Racism, classism and sexism structure our daily lives and our life chances unequally. Because they are social structures, they exist beyond individual actors, yet the daily behaviors of individuals can reinforce and/or disrupt inequality. In the context of community organizing, a group's ability to build power and increase access to resources may be limited by their own reproduction of injustice. This reproduction often occurs in the form of microaggressions, yet some community organizing groups experience more overt acts of violence including but not limited to, rape and domestic violence among their ranks. These acts of violence conflict with personal and group values, and must be resolved by the individual and the organizing group if the group is to continue to work together in empowering ways. Resolving such instances involves relational labor to resolve conflicts and build a more just community.

#### **Implications**

This dissertation constructed a corporeal-relational praxis model for collaborative competence; that is, practices of corporeal literacy are necessary to make meaning of one's complicity with oppression, along with recognition and

practices of the relational labor of friends and colleagues, for individuals and groups to confront the ways in which oppression is upheld in organizational practice.

Utilizing this information, an organization may choose to recognize what is felt in the body, and what is communicated through relationships, in order to focus on collaborative competence. This research has implications for improving organizing processes in order to support the creation of empowering settings and stronger social movements.

An important contribution of this research is the positioning of relational labor as a resource to group members. These resources and labor may be more or less equitably distributed within the network of a community organization. This dissertation makes a feminist intervention into current conceptions of empowerment theory to connect the understanding of empowering settings more closely with social justice, which can be understood as the equitable allocation of obligations and resources in society (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). This research complicates and contextualizes the way we engage with and measure empowerment, and centers social movement work that is often overlooked, undervalued, and naturalized.

### **Future Directions**

Next steps include the development of more appropriate and sensitive questionnaire items to more accurately account for relational labor in organizations, and therefore the distribution of this labor. Future data collection can include multiple organizations in order to compare centralization and network power distribution confidently; that is, how much does network power distribution which is based on the

general existence of ties (the structure provides the potential to exchange resources) predict the actual exchange of relational resources? Moreover, critical ethnographic methods such as participant observation could enhance a deeper contextual understanding of the ways in which relational labor, corporeal-relational praxis and the development of collaborative competence occur in the context of social movement organizing. The challenges of difference and the reproduction of oppression are longstanding ones that must be addressed if we are to have a more just world.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Bridging difference within an organizing group – in order to create an empowering setting and build power necessary to make change – is a central activity in social movement organizing. This activity takes effort, time, and competence to support collaboration among organizers. Developing such collaborative competence is a predictable problem. Predictable problems emerge from all settings, including those in which individuals have banded together to push back against the injustices of other settings (Sarason, 1972). Conflict emerging from difference and the challenges of collaboration are predictable problems in the creation of new settings and new societies.

Addressing conflicts should be normalized before they become crises, and addressed in generative ways that support the development and well-being of all members of the setting (Langhout, 2012). That is to say, in writing this dissertation, I did not set out to demonize those who have reproduced oppression, or shame them for

failing to live up to their politics. Rather, I seek to normalize the process of addressing complicity with oppression and recognize the work involved in doing so. The work of collaborative competence is the labor of mending our world, as settings interact ecologically in broader contexts.

Essentially, settings must thrive if they are to facilitate wellness in the larger society. This argument is consistent with prefigurative politics, or a praxis model, which holds that theory must be embodied, or the functioning of movements and individuals within those movements must be consistent with the change that is sought (Langhout, 2012, p. 218).

Engaging in relational labor on the relational and organizational setting-level is connected to the societal level (Langhout, 2012; Sarason, 1972).

Concerns over asymmetric labor and outcomes in social movement settings and society are long-standing ones. Cherrie Moraga (1983) wrote about experiencing and confronting racism in the women's movement:

*How can we – this time – not use our bodies to be thrown over a river of tormented history to bridge the gap? Barbara says last night: “A bridge gets walked over.” Yes, over and over again. (Moraga, 1983, p. xv; emphasis in original)*

In seeking my own liberation as a white cisgender woman (i.e., someone who is a transgressor, a bystander and a target) walking over someone to bridge the gap of difference does not create collective empowerment, build empowering settings, or

promote liberation. It is also not a prefigurative political praxis. Thus, I seek to conceive of, and engage in, collaborative competence as through – *not over* – difference. The expanse must still be traversed, and thus those of us with significant privilege must engage in a corporeal-relational praxis of collaborative competence, and take great care to better distribute access to relational resources and the burdens of relational labor. Taking care to mend our settings, and our relationships – collaborative competence – is necessary to mend our world.

## Appendix A: Recruitment email

Dear Comrade,

My name is Erin Ellison and I am an academic worker and organizer at UC Santa Cruz. I've been involved in the union, the union democratization movement and the student movement since 2009. I'm currently working on my dissertation, and I need your help! I am also hoping that some of the work I do will be of assistance to the union, and I'm interested in providing some feedback as the project matures.

A little about my project: I am interested in how individuals from various backgrounds work together in order to build power and make socially just change. The purpose of the study is to understand, in context, how community organizers within your union collaborate and build relationships of solidarity. I am especially interested in how union organizers challenge oppression. I would like to know more about how organizers in your union respond to and address behaviors that uphold oppression (for example, racist microaggressions or sexual assault) among your ranks.

There are two phases of this study. The first phase is a shorter, easier commitment. It is a questionnaire that should take about 30 minutes. I am trying to get as many active union members as possible to take this survey. By active union member, I mean those who attend core-organizing meetings, and/or serve on committees and/or attend monthly membership meetings. These folks might also serve as their department steward, or perhaps they are just a regular attender of meetings and organizing activities. If this means you, I will come to the location of your choosing and provide the questionnaire. I will also give you a monetary incentive to do this. After you have taken the questionnaire, I will ask if you are interested in talking with me further. I want to do a number of in-depth interviews for the second phase of the research, but because this will take more time, I won't be able to interview everyone. I will also give you a monetary incentive to do this portion of the study.

Does this sound interesting to you? Do you need more information? Do you want to talk more about what this research can do for our organizing efforts? Please don't hesitate to email or call me at [eellison@ucsc.edu](mailto:eellison@ucsc.edu) and 732-245-7410.

In solidarity,

Erin Rose

## Appendix B: Community Organizing Study Phase I. Network Survey

**Introduction and welcome:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research. These questions will ask you about the people in your network. I am asking about this because I want to enhance the capacity of organizing groups to create socially just change. Because even the most well-meaning, social-justice oriented people and groups can engage in behaviors that are intertwined with, and uphold systems of oppression, I am going to ask you what may seem like sensitive questions about problematic behavior. I am not interested in punishing or judging individuals or groups regarding these behaviors - please be honest about these behaviors. I am interested in characteristics of the group and your networks that are involved in addressing the reproduction of oppression within your organizing group. I would like to learn more about the qualities of relationships and networks, and whether they help support a) individuals confronting their own complicity with oppression and b) group processes around addressing others' complicity with systems of oppression.

All information gathered in this questionnaire will be confidential. Your name will not be connected with any information you provide. You will be asked to nominate some of your fellow union organizers for participation in this study. I will not let them know who has nominated them, or why.

There is an exception to your confidentiality. If, in the course of this questionnaire, you disclose to me that you have committed a sexual assault or hate crime, your confidentiality will not be protected. In this case, I will bring this information to your unit chair.

I am interested in doing member-checks, and in providing feedback to the union if you all decide you are interested. The information I collect from you during this questionnaire will be used to create maps of your social network. The kinds of maps I am interested in sharing with your group would be about the networks of care, support and resolution among union members. I think this is important to consider when we think of the kinds of work involved in organizing for change. I would be open to sharing network maps if your union is interested. Yet I will never show a map of less than five individuals because it becomes too easy to identify participants with such a small number. This is a general rule of thumb. Any network maps I give back to your organization, should you request them, might look a little like this. It will not have real names or identifying information on them.





A3) Anti-oppression work can be considered work that identifies and challenges discrimination in our workplaces. This includes: organizing in solidarity with students, community groups, and other unions against various forms of oppression within the UC system; helping develop demands during contract bargaining that challenge racism, language discrimination, sexism, transmisogyny and heterosexism, ableism, ageism and citizenship status; educating about how to address power dynamics within the union and developing sustainable practices and leadership development pathways to diversify union leadership (adapted from <http://www.uaw2865.org/current-campaigns/anti-oppression-committee-3/>). Please name all of the people that you consider to be doing anti-oppression work in the union.

### **B) Problematic behaviors of others**

Sometimes members of a union or other organizing group say or do something, whether intentionally or not intentionally, that might be considered as reproductive of oppression. Oppression can be considered a state of uneven access to power and resources in which some individuals, based on group membership, endure violence, discrimination, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, and/or cultural imperialism. Everyday acts serve to keep oppression in place. Even the most well-intentioned person might engage in behavior that is considered, for example, racist and/or sexist. Behaviors that might reproduce and/or uphold oppression might include, but are not limited to sexual assault, domestic violence, racist migroaggressions, ableist assumptions and classist exclusions or slights. Sometimes these situations create conflict within the group. I am going to ask you to think about your experiences with these kinds of situations. Please tell me about the **3 most salient** situations that come to mind that may have been considered reproductive of oppression.

Situation #1: Think of a situation where a union organizer did or said something that was considered, by you or others, as reproductive of oppression. Please give situation #1 a title.

Some examples of a brief title for your situation might include: a member participated in cultural appropriation, a member reported domestic violence to the group and it was ignored, a member perpetrated sexual violence against someone outside of the union, a member called someone a name that was dehumanizing and degrading to that person's heritage or social group, the organizing group did not think about the accessibility of the meeting location, the group reinforced ideas about intelligence and authority based on social group membership, in contract negotiations the needs of a particular group were initially ignored.

Situation #1 title: \_\_\_\_\_.

Did you, or others, consider [this situation] any of the following? Mark as many as are applicable:

- Racist
- Classist
- Sexist/misogynist
- Heterosexist
- Transmisogynist/genderist
- Ableist
- Ageist
- Other: Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

For situation #1, [the situation you just described as x, y, z], I would like to know the following. [Reproduce list in the name generator and have them check off names.]

- a) Who feels safe to discuss this with?
- b) Who feels unsafe to discuss this with?
- c) Who do you go to for support? (What kinds of support do they provide?)
- d) Who do you go to in order to resolve the issue? (How does the resolution happen?)
- e) Who do you go to for another reason? What is the reason?
- f) Who confronts the individual? (How?)
- g) Who has been confronted (for this problematic behavior)? (Why do you think that is the case?)
- h) Who has **not** been confronted (for this problematic behavior)? (Why do you think that is the case?)

Situation #2: Think of a second situation where a union organizer did or said something that was considered, by you or others, as reproductive of oppression. Please give situation #2 a title.

Situation #2 title: \_\_\_\_\_.

Did you, or others, consider [this situation] any of the following? Your responses can be the same or different from the previous situation you described. Mark as many as are applicable.

- Racist
- Classist
- Sexist/misogynist
- Heterosexist
- Transmysogynist/genderist
- Ableist
- Other: Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

For situation #2, [the situation you just described as x, y, z], I would like to know the following. These names can be the same or different from the last situation you described. [Reproduce list in the name generator and have them check off names.]

- a) Who feels safe to discuss this with?
- b) Who feels unsafe to discuss this with?
- c) Who do you go to for support? (What kinds of support do they provide?)
- d) Who do you go to in order to resolve the issue? (How does the resolution happen?)
- e) Who do you go to for another reason? What is the reason?
- f) Who confronts the individual? (How?)
- g) Who has been confronted (for this problematic behavior)? (Why do you think that is the case?)

h) Who has **not** been confronted (for this problematic behavior)? (Why do you think that is the case?)

Situation #3: Think of a third situation where a union organizer did or said something that was considered, by you or others, as reproductive of oppression. Please give situation #3 a title.

Situation #3 title: \_\_\_\_\_.

Did you, or others, consider this situation any of the following? Your responses can be the same or different from the previous situation you described. Mark as many as are applicable:

- Racist
- Classist
- Sexist/misogynist
- Heterosexist
- Transmysogynist/genderist
- Ableist
- Other: Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

For situation #3, [the situation you just described as x, y, z], I would like to know the following. These names can be the same or different from the last situation you described. [Reproduce list in the name generator and have them check off names.]

- a) Who feels safe to discuss this with?
- b) Who feels unsafe to discuss this with?
- c) Who do you go to for support? (What kinds of support do they provide?)
- d) Who do you go to in order to resolve the issue? (How does the resolution happen?)
- e) Who do you go to for another reason? What is the reason?
- f) Who confronts the individual? (How?)

g) Who has been confronted (for this problematic behavior)? (Why do you think that is the case?)

h) Who has **not** been confronted (for this problematic behavior)? (Why do you think that is the case?)

**C) About you**

C1) In situations such as those listed previously, who goes to you for support?

C2) In situations such as those listed previously, who goes to you in order to resolve the issue?

C3) In situations such as those listed previously, who goes to you for another reason? What is the reason?

C4) Please tell me about your (paid) academic appointment(s) for the last academic year? Circle all that apply:

1. Teaching Assistant (TA) or Graduate Student Instructor (GSI)
2. Tutor
3. Reader/grader
4. Graduate Student Researcher (GSR)
5. Currently on fellowship
6. Recently graduated and employed elsewhere/outside of the bargaining unit
7. Currently on leave
8. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

C5) Do you currently hold, or have you ever held, a leadership position in the union?

Yes

No

C6) What committees, subcommittees, and caucuses within the union have you participated in?

C7) Which title best describes your current standing in your graduate program. Circle all that apply:

1. PhD student
2. PhD candidate
3. ABD
4. Recently earned PhD degree
5. Masters (MA, MS, MPH, MFA) student
6. Recently earned Masters degree
7. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- C8) What year did you enter the graduate program?
- C9) What year do you intend to graduate?
- C8) With which department(s) are you affiliated?
- C10) How do you identify your race/ethnicity?
- C11) How do you identify your social class background?
- C12) How do you identify your gender?
- C13) How do you identify your sexuality?
- C14) How do you identify your ability status?
- C15) What year were you born?
- C16) Is there anything else you think I should know about you?

**D) Please nominate others for participation**

Choose, among all the people you have named in this survey, three to five people to nominate for research participation. If you can provide contact information for this person, that would be very helpful.

D1) Person #1 \_\_\_\_\_

- a) Why would they be interesting candidates for participation?
- b) Why do you think I should speak with them?
- c) Why would they be likely to participate?
- d) Can you provide their email address so I can contact them?

D2) Person #2 \_\_\_\_\_

- a) Why would they be interesting candidates for participation?
- b) Why do you think I should speak with them?
- c) Why would they be likely to participate?
- d) Can you provide their email address and/or phone number so I can contact them?

D3) Person #3 \_\_\_\_\_

- a) Why would they be interesting candidates for participation?

b) Why do you think I should speak with them?

c) Why would they be likely to participate?

d) Can you provide their email address and/or phone number so I can contact them?

D4) Person #4 \_\_\_\_\_

a) Why would they be interesting candidates for participation?

b) Why do you think I should speak with them?

c) Why would they be likely to participate?

d) Can you provide their email address and/or phone number so I can contact them?

D5) Person #5 \_\_\_\_\_

a) Why would they be interesting candidates for participation?

b) Why do you think I should speak with them?

c) Why would they be likely to participate?

d) Can you provide their email address and/or phone number so I can contact them?

D6) Is there anyone you did not name in the survey, who you would like to nominate for participation in this research project?

a) Why would they be interesting candidates for participation?

b) Why do you think I should speak with them?

c) Why would they be likely to participate?

d) Can you provide their email address and/or phone number so I can contact them?

D7) I would very much like to have a deeper discussion about your experiences organizing with the union. Would you be interested in talking further about some of the subjects of this survey?

Yes

No

**Thank you for participating in this network survey!**

## Appendix C: In-depth, Semi-structured Interview Protocol

### Community Organizing Study Phase II. Interview

**Introduction and welcome:** Thank you for agreeing to continue your participation in my research. These questions will ask about your experiences, and about the people in your network. I am asking about this because I want to enhance the capacity of organizing groups to create socially just change. Because even the most well-meaning, social-justice oriented people and groups can engage in behaviors that are intertwined with, and uphold systems of oppression, I am going to ask you what may seem like sensitive questions about problematic behavior. I am not interested in punishing or judging individuals or groups regarding these behaviors - please be honest about these behaviors. I am interested in characteristics of the group and your networks that are involved in addressing conflict regarding the reproduction of oppression within your organizing group. I would like to learn more about the qualities of relationships and networks, and whether they help support a) individuals confronting their own complicity with oppression and b) group processes around addressing others' complicity with systems of oppression.

All information gathered in this interview will be confidential. Your name will not be connected with any information you provide. I am interested in doing member-checks regarding the analysis of data collected in this interview. I will follow up with you within the next 5 months. I am also interested in providing feedback to the union if you all decide you are interested.

There is an exception to your confidentiality. If, in the course of this interview, you disclose to me that you have committed a sexual assault or hate crime, your confidentiality will not be protected. In this case, I will bring this information to your unit chair.

You can stop this questionnaire at any time. It is completely voluntary and confidential. Your full participation is greatly appreciated. If at any time you feel uncomfortable or need support, please call **CAPS at** (redacted #), specifically for relationship violence or sexual assault, call: (redacted #). There is also a detailed list of other resources that I will also provide for you.

Ok, if you are ready to start, I would like you to think about yourself, and about folks who are active in the union.

#### **A) This first set of questions asks about your own behavior.**

Sometimes members of a union or other organizing group say or do something, whether intentionally or not intentionally, that might be considered as reproductive of oppression. Oppression can be considered a state of uneven access to power and



resources in which some individuals, based on group membership, endure violence, discrimination, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, and/or cultural imperialism. Everyday acts serve to keep oppression in place. Even the most well-intentioned person might engage in behavior that is considered, for example, racist and/or sexist. Behaviors that might reproduce and/or uphold oppression might include, but are not limited to sexual assault, domestic violence, racist migroaggressions, ableist assumptions and classist exclusions or slights. Sometimes these situations create conflict within the group. I am going to ask you to think about your experiences with these kinds of situations.

Can you give me examples of a time that **you** said or did something considered problematic and reproductive of oppression? Please tell me about the **3 most salient** situations that come to mind **when you may have been considered** doing something reproductive of oppression. If you have more than three that you would like to talk about, that is fine, too.

Situation #1: Think of a situation where **you** did or said something that was considered, by you or others, as reproductive of oppression. Some examples of a situation might include: I participated in cultural appropriation, a member reported domestic violence and I ignored it, I called someone a name that was dehumanizing and degrading to that person's heritage or social group.

**How would you describe this incident?**

- a) Please tell me more about this situation. How did this process unfold?
- b) What did you feel as it happened? What did you feel after? How do you feel about it now?
- c) What did you think as it happened? What did you think after? What do you think now?
- d) What did you do? (And when?)
- e) (If not mentioned) How did you come to realize it was problematic? Probe: Did someone bring it to your attention? Who?
- f) (If not mentioned) Would you consider this incident to be any of the following?

- Racist
- Classist
- Sexist/misogynist
- Heterosexist

- Transmisogynist/genderist
- Ableist
- Ageist
- Other: Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Situation #2: Think of another situation where **you** did or said something that was considered, by you or others, as reproductive of oppression

**How would you describe this incident?**

- a) Please tell me more about this situation. How did this process unfold?
- b) What did you feel as it happened? What did you feel after? How do you feel about it now?
- c) What did you think as it happened? What did you think after? What do you think now?
- d) What did you do? (And when?)
- e) (If not mentioned) How did you come to realize it was problematic? Probe: Did someone bring it to your attention? Who?
- f) (If not mentioned) Would you consider this incident to be any of the following?
  - Racist
  - Classist
  - Sexist/misogynist
  - Heterosexist
  - Transmisogynist/genderist
  - Ableist
  - Ageist
  - Other: Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Situation #3: Think of another situation where **you** did or said something that was considered, by you or others, as reproductive of oppression.

**How would you describe this incident?**

- a) Please tell me more about this situation. How did this process unfold?
- b) What did you feel as it happened? What did you feel after? How do you feel about it now?
- c) What did you think as it happened? What did you think after? What do you think now?
- d) What did you do? (And when?)
- e) (If not mentioned) How did you come to realize it was problematic? Probe: Did someone bring it to your attention? Who?
- f) (If not mentioned) Would you consider this incident to be any of the following?
  - Racist
  - Classist
  - Sexist/misogynist
  - Heterosexist
  - Transmisogynist/genderist
  - Ableist
  - Ageist
  - Other: Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

4) Can you think of another incident that you would like to discuss? If yes, ask same as above.

**B) The next questions ask about the behavior of other organizers in your organizing setting.** Can you give me examples of a time that you or another union member experienced a fellow organizer or comrade say or do something considered problematic and reproductive of oppression? Please tell me about the 3 **most salient** situations that come to mind **when a fellow organizer may have been considered** doing something reproductive of oppression. If you have more than three that you would like to talk about, that is fine, too.

Situation #1: Think of a situation where *a fellow organizer* did or said something that was considered, by you or others, as reproductive of oppression.

**How would you describe this incident?**

- a) Please tell me more about this situation. How did this process unfold?
- b) What did you feel as it happened? What did you feel after? How do you feel about it now?
- c) What did you think as it happened? What did you think after? What do you think now?
- d) What did you do? (And when?)
- e) (If not mentioned) How did you come to realize it was problematic? Probe: Did someone bring it to your attention? Who?
- f) (If not mentioned) Would you consider this incident to be any of the following?
  - Racist
  - Classist
  - Sexist/misogynist
  - Heterosexist
  - Transmisogynist/genderist
  - Ableist
  - Ageist
  - Other: Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Situation #2: Think of a situation where *a fellow organizer* did or said something that was considered, by you or others, as reproductive of oppression.

**How would you describe this incident?**

- a) Please tell me more about this situation. How did this process unfold?
- b) What did you feel as it happened? What did you feel after? How do you feel about it now?

c)What did you think as it happened? What did you think after? What do you think now?

d)What did you do? (And when?)

e)(If not mentioned) How did you come to realize it was problematic? Probe: Did someone bring it to your attention? Who?

f) (If not mentioned) Would you consider this incident to be any of the following?

Racist

Classist

Sexist/misogynist

Heterosexist

Transmisogynist/genderist

Ableist

Ageist

Other: Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Situation #3: Think of a situation where *a fellow organizer* did or said something that was considered, by you or others, as reproductive of oppression.

**How would you describe this incident?**

a) Please tell me more about this situation. How did this process unfold?

b) What did you feel as it happened? What did you feel after? How do you feel about it now?

c)What did you think as it happened? What did you think after? What do you think now?

d)What did you do? (And when?)

e)(If not mentioned) How did you come to realize it was problematic? Probe: Did someone bring it to your attention? Who?

f) (If not mentioned) Would you consider this incident to be any of the following?

Racist

- Classist
- Sexist/misogynist
- Heterosexist
- Transmisogynist/genderist
- Ableist
- Ageist
- Other: Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

4) Can you think of another incident that you would like to discuss? If yes, ask same as above.

**C) These next questions ask about the organizing setting.**

C1) Can you give me an example of a time when you, or another union member, ever considered some of your group practices or internal structure to be reproductive of oppression?

**How would you describe this incident?**

- a) Please tell me more about this situation. How did this process unfold?
- b) What did you feel as it happened? What did you feel after? How do you feel about it now?
- c) What did you think as it happened? What did you think after? What do you think now?
- d) What did you do? (And when?)
- e) (If not mentioned) How did you come to realize it was problematic? Probe: Did someone bring it to your attention? Who?
- f) (If not mentioned) Would you consider this incident to be any of the following?

- Racist
- Classist
- Sexist/misogynist
- Heterosexist

- Transmisogynist/genderist
- Ableist
- Ageist
- Other: Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

4) Can you think of another incident that you would like to discuss? If yes, ask same as above.

C2) Are there any practices in the union organizing setting that are designed to address the reproduction of oppression? Please tell me about them, who designed them, and how they came to be incorporated into your practices. Do you think they are effective? Why or why not?

C3) What do you need to do anti-oppression work? What do you need to confront behaviors that can be considered oppressive/reproductive of oppression? An example might be: patience, close friends, an alternative-/counter- space, etc... Who helps you with this/provides you with this?

C4) What does your group need to confront behaviors that can be considered oppressive/reproductive of oppression? Who helps your group with this/provides you with this?

**D) These next questions ask a little about you, your role, and your thoughts regarding organizing.**

D1) How do you describe your role in the union?

D2) Do others go to you during times of tension or conflict? Why do you think this is the case? Can you give an example of what happens when someone comes to you? What are they looking for when they come to you?

D3) Have you changed since getting involved in union organizing? How?

D4) Can you tell me about a time in your work as an organizer that contributed to you learning about yourself?

D5) Do you ever experience organizing burnout? If yes, please explain your experiences with burnout.

D6) What sustains your commitment to the organizing group?

D7) What term do you use to refer to your fellow organizers?

D8) How do you define the term comrade?

D9) How do you decide or choose to work with people politically? What leads you to want to work with someone? What leads you to decide not to work with someone?

D10) On average, what percentage of your friends are also involved in organizing with you? What kinds of work do you do together? What role(s) do your friends play in your political life?

D11) How do you define solidarity? What does solidarity mean to you?

D12) Is there anything else you think I should know?

D13) Is it possible for me to follow-up with you after I have compiled and analyzed these data? What is a good email address and phone number to reach you?

**Thank you so much for participating in this interview.**



## Appendix D: Codebook

**[RQ1]** How do organizers confront and process their reproduction of oppression in the organizing setting? How do these individuals make sense of their complicity in those systems and take steps to build solidarity?

**[RQ2]** How do organizers confront the reproduction of oppression within their groups and networks? That is, how do individuals embedded within groups address the reproduction of oppression among others within their organizing group?

**[RQ3]** What does the network structure look like for collaborative competence and the resolution of oppressive interpersonal interactions (e.g., microaggressions, sexual assault) within the organizing setting? Is the union an empowering setting? How are relational resources and labor well-distributed?

Category and RQ	Code	Definition	Example
Transgression RQ1, RQ2 & RQ3	<b>1)</b> Physical violence: Rape, sexual assault, other assault; Hostile environment; Microaggression; Confusion about transgression	<p>Talks about an incident of rape, forcible sex, sexual assault or a breach of consensual boundaries, domestic violence;</p> <p>Talks about the work and/or union environment as hostile, unhealthy, etc. Includes sexual harassment, harassment for membership to social identity groups; Includes hate speech;</p> <p>Talks about any slight or indignation based on social group membership, including challenges to authority;</p> <p>Talks about feeling confused about whether a transgression occurred</p>	
Conflict RQ1, RQ2, RQ3	<b>2a)</b> Individual level – cognitive dissonance	<p>Talks about a tension between a thought and a behavior, or between two thoughts or behaviors;</p> <p>Talks about how one’s identity or positive thoughts about oneself or group are called into question when a behavior betrays a political commitment;</p> <p>Talks about feelings of unease due to a transgression one has made oneself, or feelings of unease about being a part of something oppressive</p>	2a) Example: When I realized that I had misgendered my friend I questioned myself and my ability to be an ally for queer folks

		Talks about feelings of guilt and shame [may also consider coding with emotions codes]	
	<b>2b) Relational level- interpersonal tension</b>	Talks about tension within a relationship with another person; Talks about a change in a relationship of an ambiguous nature – tension in the relationship but not yet resolved in any way;	2b) Example: When I realized that I had made a racialized microaggression, I felt like I couldn't make eye contact with my friend and have not talked with her since
	<b>2c) Group level – change in group cohesion or group composition</b>	Talks about a change in the group of an ambiguous nature – tension in the group but not yet resolved in any way;  Talks about some people possibly leaving the group, but without clarity;  Talks about avoidance of the group after a transgression or as a result of a dynamic or pattern;	2c) Example: After I made that classist assumption, I sort of withdrew, and I think some of the others did too... we just didn't feel like a team anymore
Resolution – <u>these are always/only in response to a transgression and subsequent conflict.</u>  RQ1, RQ2, RQ3	<b>3a) Individual level:</b>  Denial, defensiveness, blaming the victim  Providing personal care, gift giving,  Defiance of oppressive social norms, and/or becoming an ally through political advocacy; stepping back or self-silencing as allyship  Distancing from oppressive structures, turn against the institution (and/or community) that facilitates violence  Fighting back within the moment on part of the transgressed individual - using physical force or verbal aggression to prevent further aggression,	Talks about denying the problem, about reacting defensively and/or placing blame on the target(s) of the transgression,  Talks about trying to do something nice for someone who endured a transgression  Talks about some kind of re-articulation of political commitments or clarity for political commitments  Talks about trying to remove self from the source of the violence;  Talks about direct confrontation of an individual (or group) who has transgressed, but only on the individual level (no bystanders, not in the context of a public meeting, etc.)	Example: I didn't see it as a big deal, I just made a mistake and she took it the wrong way.  Example: After they told me that I was using the wrong personal pronoun, I decided I would try to be extra nice to them and brought them a cupcake.  Example: After I realized that my actions had been reproductive of racism, I made a commitment to support the Black Lives Matter movement on campus in any way I could  Example: I came out to my family and community, a community very supportive of Zionism, as against Zionism  Example: The next time he touched the small of my back like that, I immediately turned around and told him that he should never do that again.
	<b>3b) Relational level:</b>  Reflexive dialogue and/or social support within	Talks about consulting friends, discussing issues about experiencing or witnessing a transgression  Talks about the transgressor getting called in – gently and/or respectfully	Example: After the JC I spent the whole time in the car venting with friends about that incident.

	<p>relationships [also code as 10 (labor)]</p> <p>Restorative justice-influenced approaches, including “calling-in” [also code as 10]</p> <p>Distancing from transgressor by the bystander or target, or over-simplification/dichotomization of the perpetrator</p> <p>Ending relationship</p>	<p>corrected in the context of a strong relationship</p> <p>Talks about trying not to interact with the transgressor, or talks about trying to be known as someone who is not like the transgressor; Talks about (resolution through) claiming the perpetrator is a fascist, a racist, a sexist; that person is bad.</p> <p>Talks about the end of a relationship – different from distancing because it’s completely over</p>	<p>Example: When I shut down the new organizer while she was mid-sentence, my friend put her hand on my shoulder and explained to me what I had just done</p> <p>Example: When he said that racist thing in the meeting, I sighed and visibly rolled my eyes, thinking that guy is a racist! I’m not like that!</p> <p>Example: I just decided not to ever hang out with him again.</p>
	<p><b>3c) Group level</b></p> <p>Resolution through strong leadership,</p> <p>Efforts at group cohesion</p> <p>Collective ‘bashing back’ and group confrontations after the transgression, including physical force</p> <p>“Calling-out” - public shaming</p> <p>The creation of counter-spaces</p> <p>Ending participation of transgressor with group: exile or expulsion</p>	<p>Talks about a leader stepping up to handle a situation</p> <p>Talks about the group trying to do some bonding or spend time with each other to become more cohesive</p> <p>Talks about the group or subgroup aggressively seeking vengeance on a transgressor</p> <p>Talks about publicly announcing that a person has transgressed, or somehow publicizes their transgression, including confronting them in the middle of a meeting</p> <p>Talks about creating a different group or space outside of the union</p> <p>Talks about ending participation of transgressor, kicking them out of union, etc.</p>	<p>Example: Ava stepped in and brought the group together.</p> <p>Example: We decided we needed more socializing time and time to do fun things together and get to know each other.</p> <p>Example: About 10 of us decided we would go threaten the rapist, and we brought baseball bats and tied him to a chair.</p> <p>Example: We created flyers and a website to publicize that this person is a rapist. - OR – She stopped the meeting right there to tell him, in front of everybody, that he had just said something sexist.</p> <p>Example: The women of color in the group decided they needed their own space to talk about what was going on in the union, so we started meeting at Amar’s house every other week.</p> <p>Example: With pressure from the group, Richard eventually resigned from his leadership position in the union</p>
<p>Accountability</p> <p>RQ1, RQ2, RQ3</p>	<p>4+ effective</p> <p>4- not effective</p>	<p>4+ Individuals and/or group held accountable; Resolution was effective, the result increased levels of empowerment for those who face oppression</p> <p>4- Lack of accountability: Resolution was not effective, the result increased levels of disempowerment for those who face</p>	

		oppression; the result increased levels of empowerment among those already experiencing high levels of power and privilege;	
Coping RQ1, RQ2, RQ3	5) Silence as coping, minimizing self, self-silencing to avoid mistakes (by bystander/ally/transgressor), self-silencing to cope with being a target of transgression	This is any kind of behavior, particularly but not exclusively silence, that is a way to cope rather than to confront or have any kind of resolution.	
Roles RQ2 & RQ3	6TSI: Transgressed – self identified 6TOI: Transgressed – other identified 6CSI: Complicit in – self identified 6COI: Complicit in – other identified 6EMO: Social and/or emotional support 6IS: Instrumental support – helps to do something about it (anything aside from confrontation) 6CON: Confronts 6OTH: Other kind of role	6TSI or 6CSI is when the speaker is talking about themselves; 6TOI and 6COI are when they identify another person;  The difference between T and C is somewhat subtle. T is in relation to any kind of transgression outlined in 1, including mis-gendering someone. C is more like a sin of omission, allowing a transgression to occur, going with the flow of a transgression or problematic dynamic (not disrupting a problematic dynamic), being part of the whiteness of the group.  6EMO, 6IS, 6CON and 6OTH, (as long as they are talking about the act of doing the support/confrontation eg ‘I confronted her’ rather than an identity as a supporter or confronter eg ‘I am the type of person who would confront’) should also be coded as 10 (labor).	
Resources RQ3	7) Resources including material, psychological (including feelings of collective efficacy), relational, knowledge, time, communication, expertism	7a) Talks about the resources involved in resolution and accountability  7b) Talks about the resources involved in union functioning or organizing more broadly  These should also be used in referenced to the absence or lack of these resources.  Question: Does a 7 always go with a 10? In what cases does it not? It does not always go with a 10. For example, in gatekeeping circumstances, a 10 is not involved. Someone hoarding or blocking access to resources does not involve labor.	
Emotion/affect RQ1	8) Any reference to emotion, the body and/or something that is felt in the body; comfort, discomfort; anger, frustration,		Example: I felt really shitty about the whole thing.

	burnout, helplessness, powerlessness; depression; isolation		Example: I felt really lonely after that.
Labor and labor status RQ2 & RQ3	10 10 hi for high status 10 lo for low status	Any mention of <u>labor or work</u> related to organizing gets a code of 10. If the participant talks about it as low or high status, indicate by adding lo or hi. Do not make assumptions about the status of the labor, rather only indicate status of labor if the participant talks about it as denigrated labor vs some kind of labor that makes them feel good about themselves, gives them authority, etc.	10 lo) Example: I literally took out the trash, that is the kind of work people see me doing. They see me doing the dirty work and not as a leader.
Not specifically among union members but within union organizing activities	*	Add this to any code, may particularly be useful/come up a lot around transgressions that happen by folks outside of the union but still affect union functioning (eg police harassment of an organizer would be 1*)	
Democracy	D+ Efforts at union democracy D- Not union democracy	D+) includes efforts to increase the shared decision-making power, horizontality and decentralized power of the union  D-) Talks about things being undemocratic, might include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unilateral decisions</li> <li>• Handpicking leaders</li> <li>• Withholding resources, including but not limited to information</li> </ul>	

## Appendix E: Coding Workshop for Collaborative Competency Project

Step 1a: Read everything, the whole corpus, in an intensely reflective and analytic way

- What are people explaining? What are they trying to accomplish when they explain in these ways?
- How exactly do they do this? What specific means and/or strategies do they employ?
- How do members talk about, characterize, and understand what is going on?
- What assumptions are they making? What do I see going on here? What did I learn from these transcripts?

Step 1b: Identify roles of each participant

- In a grid provided, identify which roles each member has participated in
- First in their own interview, do they identify as someone who has transgressed? Someone who has sustained a transgression? Someone who has provided support (someone goes to them for social support, caring, venting, etc.)? Someone who has provided instrumental support (someone goes to them to do something about it)? Someone who confronts? Someone who does something else?

Step 1c: Read closely, 3 pages, code line-by-line and take notes in the margins

- What is going on here?
- Do you see any of original codes? Note which ones.

Step 2: Combine close reading with procedures for analytically coding transcripts on an ongoing basis. The transcripts become textual objects to be considered and examined with a series of analytic and presentational possibilities in mind.

There are two ways to do this. We will do a hybrid of the two.

- a. Open coding – read transcripts line by line to identify and formulate any and all ideas, themes or issues they suggest, no matter how varied and disparate.
- b. Focused coding – subject transcripts to a fine-grained line by line analysis on the basis of topics that have been identified as of particular interest, with an eye toward connecting data and delineating subthemes and subtopics. Focused coding is based on our codebook.
- c. It is also iterative, so, if things are coming up that are not from the codebook, they can be added. This is the purpose of combining a and b!

Step 3: Memo-ing! While coding, elaborate insights by writing memos. There are two ways of doing memos, and we will do both.

- a. Theoretical memos – clarify what you are thinking/analyzing
- b. Integrative memos – link analytic categories, think about how memos relate to each other, think about how themes and subthemes are patterned, linked, etc.

Step 4: Develop a thematic narrative:

“An ethnographic story proceeds through an intellectual examination of evidence to eventually reach its contributing central idea. While a thematic narrative begins by stating a main idea on thesis, it progresses toward fuller elaboration of this idea through the paper” (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011, p. 171).

This step might also include building conceptual models, drawing out relationships between themes and subthemes, recognizing stories or threads that you have memo-ed about...

Step 5: Transpose excerpts into text – find examples that tell the story

Step 6: Produce completed ethnographic document

- a. Introduce the project
- b. Link the study to other research – only those that are relevant and highlight your analysis
- c. Introduce setting(s) and methods
- d. Write a conclusion - possibilities

<p>This process is adapted from: Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011) and Regina Langhout’s comparative coding handout.</p>
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## Appendix F: Coding Instructions

### How to Write a Memo for Qualitative Analysis: Collaborative Competence Dissertation Project

While coding, elaborate insights by writing memos. This is a tool to synthesize ideas and consolidate understandings of the setting. According to Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011) there are two ways of doing memos, and we will do both as appropriate.

- c. Theoretical memos – clarify what you are thinking/analyzing – this is reflective and analytical
- d. Integrative memos – link analytic categories, think about how memos relate to each other, think about how themes and subthemes are patterned, linked, etc.

d.

Memoing aids the analysis in that the researcher records the meanings (they are contemporaneously constructing) derived from the data. There are no universal rules pertaining to memoing but we will follow the conventions listed below.

Memos tie different pieces of data together. Memos can be a few sentences, a few paragraphs, or a few pages.

You will submit a hard copy during working meetings and electronic copies prior to the meetings. The document should always have your name on it.

Memos should always be dated and referenced. Each of our transcripts contain page numbers and line numbers. Use these for reference, and excerpt quotes whenever applicable. This will help with drafting the results chapter(s) if the quotes have already been inserted into some analytical text.

Memos elaborate your codes – you might want to elaborate on why you used certain codes for certain transcript excerpts, or you can use a memo to develop a new code that is missing from the current codebook. In this case you might elaborate on why a new code is needed, and what literature you think might be helpful for us to understand this new code.

Memos should contain a heading and should be cross-referenced. That is, if you are writing about something that refers to something you wrote in another memo, note the date and heading and sub-heading of the memo to which you refer.

Memos (for this project) are not about people but rather about conceptual ideas derived from incidents or statements or patterns of language. We are studying the setting and the role of relationships rather than individual people. It's helpful to remember this.



Memos can evolve as the research proceeds. If you modify an existing memo, be sure to reference the initial memo heading and date and save the file as an updated file so I can update our electronic files as necessary.

It may be useful to restrict each memo to one main idea, but if there are a few ideas you are exploring, or more likely a few connected ideas, use sub-headings.

Diagrams/concept maps/flow charts can be used to illustrate connections between ideas - a memo integrates analytic categories and illuminates connections between ideas/concepts; it might contain a diagram to visually explain these connections. They illustrate the density and complexity of the qualitative analysis. A diagram helps the researcher to discover gaps and flaws in the relationships of categories and of the logic.

Because this study is coming from an ethnographic perspective, we are hoping to understand the culture of the organizing group. It will be useful to take note of the views of participants as they construct their understanding of the setting (emic approach) as well as the views of yourself as the researcher, as you are constructing your understandings of the setting (etic approach). It will be useful to clearly identify the participants' understanding as they communicate them, and your interpretation.

We are working towards a 'gestalt': a symbolic configuration or pattern of elements so unified as a whole that its properties cannot be derived from a simple summation of its parts.

What we hope for is an interrelated set of memos that form a coherent analysis with excerpts from the interview transcripts to provide evidence for the storyline(s) we tell with the analysis.

You can write about anything that strikes you as important to write about (regarding the data, of course). I want you to focus on the themes you are constructing from the data, and their interrelation. Here are some ways you might organize thoughts about and listen for the plot of a given section of data/set of ideas:

1. Dominant themes – themes that seem to stick out repeatedly
2. Contradictions – things that are at tension with one another; a combination of statements, ideas, or features of a situation that are opposed to one another
3. What is absent – what is not being discussed, what is potentially being avoided?

But there is more to the story. Some useful questions for the memos might also include:

- What is the larger social context being discussed?
- Who is speaking and under what concrete circumstances?
- What is happening in this story? What story is being told?

- What is the role of relationships in this story?
- What is my own social location and how does it relate to the speaker?
- What is the nature of my (our) relationship with the speaker?
- What is my emotional response to what is being said?
- How does the speaker understand the organization? What kinds of analyses are they putting forward?

Based on: [http://www.psychsoma.co.za/qualitative\\_inquiry\\_growt/2010/03/memos-and-memoing.html](http://www.psychsoma.co.za/qualitative_inquiry_growt/2010/03/memos-and-memoing.html); Charmaz (1983); Cresswell, (2013); Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (2011); Fetterman (2010); Gilligan, et al., (2006); Lofland & Lofland (1995); and a handout from Regina Langhout.

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