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Whose Streets? Our Streets!: Identity, Institutions, and Privilege in Student Activism

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a qualitative ethnography of college student activism that examines student activist identity, and the role of social structures and privilege in activism. The study uses data from two years of in-depth fieldwork including over 18 months of participant observation and interviews with 13 key respondents. I took on this research project to better understand how students come to think of themselves as activists, how they speak about and experience activism, how activism—as a cultural text—tells a story about power and privilege, and to explore the role of education in the culture of activism. In this dissertation I argue that student activism is a practice of democratic citizenship that is complicated by the contradictions and complexities of students' uninterrogated privileges. Mobilizing as a collective, students challenge normative notions of youth and youth subcultures through extracurricular activities and practices that include public and self-education. Activist work includes navigating contradictions granted by identity privilege and serves as a contested space where social inequities and relations of power and privilege are rejected, interrogated, and reinforced. Student activism, as a subculture and a lifestyle, becomes informal schooling for privileged youth offering lessons which bridge the gap between the disconnected realities of school, individual experience, and group work in the "real world." In this way, activist work and pedagogy provides students with opportunities to engage with the discomfort of privilege. Even as students are confronted with contradictions of their own privileged identities, their political agenda as anti-racist, anti-oppression allies continually push them to better understand their role as privileged actors in a world of injustice.

WHOSE STREETS? OUR STREETS!:
IDENTITY, INSTITUTIONS, AND PRIVILEGE
IN STUDENT ACTIVISM

by
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DISSERTATION

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CHAPTER 1
Introduction

Over years of research and writing, in spite of what I thought was clear evidence, friends and colleagues who asked about my topic of study continued to question the existence of student activists. Despite doubt, evidence that North American students were engaging in activism in the 21st century was abundant.

At the height of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, just over a year after I began my doctoral study, students from South Hadley High School in Massachusetts formed two politically active groups. One was a "Peace Club" whose student members spoke out against the war. In response, students who supported the war formed The Alliance of Republican Conservative Students. As I completed my writing in 2012, on April 4th of the same year, police pepper sprayed students from Santa Monica College who were engaged in a non-violent protest against tuition hikes. On the same day in April, over 50 people were arrested at a similar tuition hike protest in Montreal, Canada. On May 24, 2012, students joined others in Philadelphia to protest what they saw as a corporate takeover of, and union busting in, public schools. Two days earlier in Montreal, over 250,000 student-led protesters marched in defiance of a government attempt to curtail the right to protest. A few weeks later, in June, students at Stuyvasent High School joined "Slutty Wednesday" purposefully dressing in provocative clothing to protest the school's restrictive, and some say discriminatory, dress code.

As students in South Hadley, Mass formed their respective groups in response to the US war on terror, Noonan (2003) wondered whether global complexities -including war- would create a "new age of activism or the same old apathy" of youth (p. 55). Noonan (2003) called this "new wave of activism" a "welcome change from the 1990s, when prosperity seemed to trigger an

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epidemic of detachment among young people, and voter turnout among 18-24 year olds dropped steadily" (p. 55). All over the globe, student activists like those of Student Activists for the Environment (SAvE), who are the focus of this study, are at the center of this wave.

This qualitative project represents an analysis of data from nearly two years of fieldwork and multiple, in-depth unstructured interviews with 13 key participants and other college student activists from two Upstate New York regional chapters of SAvE, a national student environmental action organization. The project explores activism as an educational activity and focuses on what anti-war/militarization and environmental activism means to college student activists from SAvE. Because activists are often represented in limited ways in media, popular culture, and education, this study hopes to add complexity to the definition of student activists and activism by exploring how student activists speak about and negotiate their identity and educational histories (Best 2000). In addition to examining the student's own words and actions, this study also explores the contexts that facilitate and define student activism.

The introduction begins with an overview of the context in which this work takes place and addresses why I decided to focus on youth on the margins. The second part of the introduction provides details about frameworks that inform my writing, including the influence of Cultural Studies, the study of youth, culture, and identity, and an overview of the history of student activism. I conclude by briefly introducing the setting, and summarize the data chapters that are organized to reflect the way student activists understand themselves as activists, how they understand activism in relation to institutions, and how privilege complicates their activist work.

Context

At the beginning of this century, Giroux (2001) argued that we are experiencing not only a "demonization of youth" but "the emergence of a state that is radically moving from a politics of

social investment to a politics of containment and militarization" (pp. 36-37). Today, across the globe, student activists continue their struggle to make sense of this shift. They protest war, militarization of public space, environmental degradation, poverty, bigotry, corporate takeovers of everything from public education to food sources, and more. All the while, education and popular culture compete for student attention.

Youth experience is mediated through the formal and informal curriculum of social structures like school, popular culture, the family, church, government, and more. In particular, school and popular culture formulate, communicate, and circulate ideas about war, peace, and activism-- often intersectionally. For example, The PBS series Women, War & Peace[1] features first person accounts of individuals who wage peace in the face of war and uses state and national learning standards to construct companion lessons for their series. One such lesson was created to complement a unit on "contemporary geopolitics and ongoing military conflicts" and satisfied New York State Learning Standard[2] SS2 for World History. It reads, "students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives." New York State U.S. History B standards raise questions about activism, referring to the 1960s as a "decade of change and upheaval," and "years of turmoil and change," and asks an essential question that reads, "How did the counterculture impact society in the U.S.?"

Popular culture is rife with an informal curriculum on war. First person shooter games like Modern Warfare 3, publications like Seth Tobocman and Peter Kuper's comic compilation

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[1] http://www.pbs.org/wnet/women-war-and-peace/
[2] http://www.nylearns.org/module/standards/3679/standard.ashx

World War 3[3] Illustrated, and war-themed films like Captain American and Iron Man, repeat and circulate images of war. Politicized and popular post 9/11 rhetoric about war, militarization of public space, and environmental degradation displayed "the patriot," as a red, white, and blue cloaked archetype of the loyal American citizen. President Bush himself drew lines that delineated the patriot and the enemy other by suggesting, "You are either with us or against us."

From the outset, this project was shaped by questions focused on youth, schooling, and student activism. How do students come to understand themselves as activists? How do students speak about and experience activism? What role do social structures like schooling, the family, and student organizations play in the education of activists? How does U.S. education prepare students to participate in a culture of critical thinking and resistance? How does activism, as a cultural text, tell a story about power and privilege? How do historical, social, political, and economic contexts contribute to activist identity and group work?

Why study subordinate or subcultural youth?

Throughout my career as an educator I have been keenly interested in the stories of youth who resist conventional social identifications and, to borrow from Walsh (2006), those who have a "history of feeling different, excluded, and voiceless," (p. 225). The work of qualitative research and school counseling are similar in that they require a certain amount of time and patience to sit down, listen, and gain access to a participant's perspective. As a k-12 school counselor I spent 15 years, many of which were in a clinical setting, with kids who were characterized by school culture as "at risk" or on the margins. Typically, but not always, the "freaks," "geeks," and "punks" were kids who were marked by visible or invisible disabilities, race, class, and sexuality as subordinate members of the school community; but they were almost never mainstream athletes, popular students, or the prom queen or king--especially in wealthier

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[3] http://www.worldwar3illustrated.org/about.html

suburban school districts.

Social locations such as "working class" are not stable and intersect with race, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, nationality and other social constructions; as such these locations cannot fix youth or families into permanent identity categories. For example, "jocks" whom Eckert (1989) argues seek "independence from the family in intense involvement in adult-sanctioned peer institutions" and "burnouts" who seek independence "in a peer society that rejects the authority of these institutions" can share fluid and intersectional identities (p. 74). I use identity categories and social locations because youth themselves use these labels. Identity categories demonstrate how kids on the margins, regardless of their intersectional social location, are subject to the dominant narratives of identity and schooling.

In my many years of teaching and counseling, the students who stirred the pot or stood out for something other than academics or athletics had the most frequent teacher and self referrals to my office. And yet, they were often my favorite students to work with. In my experience, subordinate or subculture kids were among the most creative, sensitive, thoughtful, individualistic, funny, and caring students in school. Rather than embracing students for their individuality, these youth are perceived as unconventional; so much so that their means of self-expression often violates school rules. For example, according to the West Basil Knoll student dress code, youth who have "unnaturally colored hair and nose piercings" violate school standards (Jan. 2008). These individualistic youth who challenge mainstream rules of belonging, along with students who have atypical body types, physical and emotional challenges, quirky sensibilities, and sharp intellect drew me to study youth subcultures.

Youth on the margins are easy to spot-especially in mainstream school culture where "good," compliant youth frequently maintained the status quo while the subculture youth took risks with

their politics, their lifestyle practices, and affiliations. They organized clubs like the Gay Straight Student Alliance, made friends with the foreign exchange students, read obscure books about Wiccan and gaming culture, played Yu-Gi-Oh™ embraced bowling and chess, and watched World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE). Much to their delight, subculture kids freaked out the popular kids, teachers, administration, and sometimes, their own parents. Like me, they occasionally struggled with the corporate structure and business model of schooling where the battle for personal freedom, intellectual integrity, and independence was waged on a hierarchical terrain of extracurricular participation, family and neighborhood affiliations, and academic identities (Eckert, 1989, p. 100).

I am interested in how identity, group life, and schooling relate to privilege and to the reproduction of inequality in extracurricular life of youth--those activities and spaces where youth engage with school, cultural work, family, peers, media, popular culture, technology, the branded economy, and so on. Most subcultural research on identity and group culture uses a working class or working poor vantage point. Instead, I chose to analyze how relatively privileged, or what Applebaum (2007) calls "systematically privileged" college student activists understand class consciousness and struggle with contradictions and complications of their social and cultural privilege (p. 338).

At first glance, the participants in this study seem like the everyday students you might find in a typical first year college writing seminar: honors students, a theatre kid, a Girl Scout turned assistant troop leader, a hardcore alternative music scenester, a former elementary school Earth Club president, a soon-to-be drop out, a self-described geek, a rock climber, a fashion design major, a Black Queer youth, a white Punk youth; students from intact families and students from divorced families, and so on. Yet all of these students refer to themselves as "activists" and they

see the work of student activism as a lifestyle practice because, to them, activism is as much or more a part of their identity as are their other social or cultural affiliations.

The intent of this work is to bring attention to how youth, as part of the complex process of creating meaning as student activists, wrestle with subcultural identity, institutional engagement, and privilege. Boren (2001) wants us to believe that "student resistance largely appears to have become a thing of the past" (p. 248). Rather than contributing to a has-been discourse of student activism, Duncombe (2002) encourages us to look to the places where action continues to happen--where student activism is alive and well. To render the relationship between culture and politics visible, this study of student activism goes "one step further," to consider how "transforming resistance in the realm of culture" becomes "political action on terra firma" (Duncombe, 2002, p. 5).

I want to pause here to take up the question of "who is a youth and who is not?" Schools use common language that frequently frame Elementary school-age students as children, students in Middle School as adolescents, and those in high school through college as young adults or emerging adults. Although defining youth is not the focus of this project, like Bogad (2002) I reject the storm and stress language that situates youth as biologically determined beings, and I am in favor of (re)imagining them as agents "actively constructing subjectivity and identity in tension with and against the institutional and adult voices that frame them" (p. 86). I side with researchers who argue that "youth" is a socially constructed term, influenced by historical, cultural, and institutional framing or what Lesko (2001) calls "the technologies of adolescence, that is, techniques of naming, studying, diagnosing, predicting, and administering an identifiable adolescent population…" (p. 69). I agree with Flacks (2007) who warns that "the growing sense among youth researchers that broad categorical terms like "youth," "subculture," and even

"emerging adulthood" may be inadequate for the challenges of study contemporary young people" (p. 61). For the purposes of this study, youth refers to a broad range of students from those in high school to college—intending not to align youth with definitive categories based on age or "a legacy of developmental approaches," but contribute to the view that youth are complex and often resist definition (Raby, 2007, p. 40).

In the United States today, youth subcultures in general and student anti-war/militarization activists in particular are being negatively constructed by the very systems of power and authority that mandate their participation and demand their attention. By positioning members of youth subcultures in a different light, this qualitative study may foster a deeper engagement with how representations and discourses of youth subcultures operate in education and media. Youth may benefit from being represented through a perspective that is attentive to how, in their personal and public struggles, they make sense of resistance, identity, oppression, status, and their role in their local and global communities. If youth are our future, then stories about youth and their engagement in political actions, organizing, and educating will enhance knowledge of and challenge common understanding of and engagement with youth culture.

A heightened visibility of student activist practices and activities will provide a lens that views dissident or culturally resistant youth as a resource rather than members of "the entitlement generation" (Twenge, 2006). Modern day contributions of resistant student culture in the United States, especially regarding students who engage in political activism, organizing, and education in higher education settings is largely absent from sociological and educational literature. This research has the potential to contribute to a positive discourse to encourage educators, policy makers, the media, and social scientists to regard resistant youth as capable agents of change.

Theorizing student activism

In this section I address the literature, perspectives, and insights that helped me make sense of my findings. I discuss the influence of Cultural Studies on my work, and how it frames my understanding of culture and identity. Then I go on to briefly outline student activism in history as it pertains to this work.

When the time came to talk to students about their life as activists, respondents offered story after story about the role of their k-16 schooling and extracurricular life, their engagement with popular culture, their escapades with family and friends, and with the state of the world as they grew up. Interactions within these diverse public and private spaces mediate the way students negotiate and perform their identity and, moreover, are articulated to the production, circulation, and engagement of institutional discourses of youth subcultures (Dennis 2007; Dimitriadis 2009; Flacks 2007). Although formal and informal schooling and extracurricular activities link students in this study, their shared interests create a community that "set*(s)* them apart from mainstream culture" in higher education (Greenberg, 2007, p. 1).

This dissertation draws on the literature of youth subculture and social movements, both of which take up issues of identity, resistance, and collective action—albeit in different ways. I use these two literatures to tease out the overlap between youth culture and the culture of student activism. I also rely on a cultural studies perspective to investigate the tension produced by identity construction at the intersection of youth culture, education, and popular culture. While some scholarship focuses on the relationship between youth subcultures, schooling, group life, and identity, this study adds the complexities of student activist identity and resistance to the mix. The gap that my study fills is the distance between literature on youth subculture and social movement literature. Social movement literature tends to see activism as intentional where

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people are in control of framing issues and strategizing, and youth subculture literature sees activism as muddled resistance that does not really resist. What I found is something that has elements of each of those. This dissertation focuses on struggles of activists themselves, and is a study of SAvE's struggle with the outside world and within the group itself.

Before this work, I defined activism as sustained group actions and practices that seek to challenge and change the policies and practices held in place by privilege and power. Kezar (2010), borrowing from Altbach, defines activism as "…students' efforts to create change on or off campus related to a broad range of social, political, and economic issues often using techniques outside institutional channels such as protests, demonstrations, and rallies" (p. 451). By either definition, activism can mean expressing a grievance in a letter to a politician, attending a rally or protest, volunteering with a special interest group, or communicating an idea through social media. Yet for the students in this study, activism is messier and more complex than acting in the name of change.

The Influence of Cultural Studies

For students in this study, activism is not defined by a single event or action, but is a type of civic education that requires negotiating identity, culture, and the politics and power of institutions and privilege. As such, this dissertation uses a cultural studies perspective to examine the complex intersection of youth, schooling, and culture in order to explicate how relations of power, agency, identity, and knowledge production work in these overlapping sites (Kellner & Durham, 2002). Cultural Studies (CS) informs my methodologies and approach to analyzing my findings. Cultural Studies serves as an interdisciplinary framework for analysis that is attentive to issues of power, struggle, and identity, and is employed here as a means of critical inquiry into how youth construct activist identity as a "political, pedagogical practice" (Giroux, 1996, p. 15)

as well as an effort to gain insight into how youth enact self and community education. Cultural Studies frameworks on power allow me to get at a sociological understanding of identity and social structures that help explain student understandings of self, inequality, and social differences.

According to Stuart Hall (1999), one of the "fathers" of Cultural Studies, Cultural Studies is a "discursive formation" meaning that the origin of CS is complex, and materialized with inspiration from what he calls "different histories" (p. 263). Hall goes on to say CS "was constructed by a number of different methodologies and theoretical positions, all of them in contention" (1999, p. 263). So while disciplines like sociology, education, and anthropology draw from CS frameworks to understand social construction of identity and relations of power, CS resists being applied as a "master discourse" even though its scholars are willing to establish positions grounded in the questions CS explores. This conundrum speaks to the "messiness" of CS. It is worth quoting Hall (265) at length when he explains the complexities of and influences on the CS "agenda,"

> …the questions that Marxism as a theoretical project put on the agenda: the power, the global reach and history-making capacities of capital; the question of class; the complex relationships between power, which is an easier term to establish in the discourses of culture than exploitation, and exploitation; the question of a general theory which could, in a way, connect together in a critical reflection different domains of life, politics and theory, theory and practice, economic, political, ideological questions, and so on; the notion of critical knowledge itself and the production of critical knowledge as a practice. These important, central questions are what one meant by working within shouting distance of Marxism, working on Marxism, working against Marxism, working with it, working to try to develop Marxism (p. 265).

Whether used by sociologists or educators, Cultural Studies concerns itself with how to connect theory with practice when it comes to questions of power and knowledge. The CS agenda focuses on what Hall (1999) calls "our privileged objects of study: culture, ideology,

language, the symbolic" (p. 266). Fiske (1992) talks about CS as a line of inquiry "into the culture of everyday life" to examine "distance…as a marker between high and low culture, between the meanings, practices, and pleasures characteristic of empowered and disempowered social formations" (p. 154). In other words, CS considers what is produced in the intersection of the historical, social, economic, and political experience of culture, which fits well with a study on student activists and activism.

Studying culture and identity

Kellner (1995) uses a CS perspective to argue how forms of culture, like television, news, fashion, and music, "socialize us and provide materials for identity in terms of both social reproduction and change" (p. 10). To get at questions of power and identity, in his analysis of media, Kellner claims that "radio, television, film and the other products of the culture industries provide models of what it means to be male or female, successful or a failure, powerful or powerless" (1995, p. 1). Kellner and others like Hall (1975) and Williams (2007) push us to question who benefits and who suffers from the repetition of images--for example--of women in certain magazines, or of youth on television, and who has the power to produce and circulate those representations. Kellner (1995) demonstrates the influence of the culture industry on identity when he suggests that:

> media culture provides the materials out of which many people construct their
> sense of class, of ethnicity and race, of nationality, of sexuality, of "us" and
> "them"…and helps shape the prevalent view of the world and deepest values: it
> defines what is considered good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil (p. 10).

Kellner (1995) does not suggest that people construct their identity without questioning media and culture rather he argues that people can resist dominant narratives produced by media messages and create their own "meanings, identities, and forms of life" (p. 3). Williams (2007) defines culture as a way of life and a set of practices that tell a story or create meaning about

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people, places, and time. If we view activism as a practice, cultural text, or form, we can locate

its practices and activities in relationship to broader contexts where it takes place, and make

claims about activists as cultural producers and distributors of knowledge and identity. A CS

perspective helps to get at how student activism becomes a site of struggle for power and

identity. Because a cultural studies perspective is attentive to the social construction of reality

and identity, and struggles for power, it provides insight into how culture intersects with student

activist identity and practices and with the way student activists consume, challenge, and collude

with culture.

A Cultural Studies perspective is attentive to the relationship between power and knowledge

and helps me to examine the complexities and conflicts students face as they conform to and

resist culture. I am interested in how activism serves as a cultural text that tells a story about,

among other things, the role that power and privilege play in bringing students to activism and

how social, economic, political, and historical contexts contribute to activist identity and group

work. I am hopeful that this account of student activism will contribute to literature on youth

culture, schooling, and popular culture.

On the subject of the complexity of knowledge and its intersectional nuanced relationship to

experience and identity Kincheloe (2006) agrees that knowledge is a process that connects

identity with context. He writes:

> Our identity always exists in relationship to our learning- knowledge and identity
> are inseparable. After engaging in certain acts of learning, I can never be the
> same. With this in mind we come to appreciate that knowledge is not a thing. It is,
> instead, a relational process that emerges in the intersection of a wide variety of
> forces. It is a relationship connecting self, other people, power, and the world
> with particular frameworks (Kincheloe, 2006, p. 65).

Ritzer (2000), a social scientist who studied Grateful Dead culture in general and individual

Deadheads in particular, contends that "minority and subversive groups, must negotiate

throughout their lives…picking and choosing between characteristics of the dominant society and the subversive culture…constructing a life that suits their needs, rather than passively relying on offerings of either culture" (p. 242). It makes sense then to focus on how student activists negotiate identity, experience, relationships, community, culture, and power.

The negotiation can be seen in the way everyday performances, practices, and activities of student activists serve as cultural resistance and thus as a site of struggle for identity, institutional engagement, and democratic citizenship. This focus follows the lines of inquiry drawn by subcultural and cultural studies scholars like Duncombe (2002), Gelder (2007), Greenberg (2007), Haenfler (2006) and others who situate youth subcultures and popular culture as legitimate subjects and sites of knowledge and identity production, and schools as places where *some* youth enact resistance. Subcultural studies foregrounds youth as owners and producers of knowledge and carves out a place for youth in an education industry that is tightly regulated and controlled by adults (Dimitriadis, 2009). I am interested in the roles that the social, economic, and political factors play in youth's lives, and how these elements bring youth to a particular type of activism, community work, and understanding of difference and identity while they attend school.

Indeed, Brake (1990), Carlson (1998), and Keniston (1971) argue activism provides students with a new community in which to understand themselves and others. Brake (1990) contends that subcultures offer youth a place to practice "secondary socialization" where youth, who are agents of cultural change, are introduced to "the values of the world outside of work and school" (p. 17). Carlson (1998) argues that partaking in values, lifestyles, and social projects of identity groups or subcultures provide an individual with a "community of common language and meaning that is also a cultural home-something that is inhabited and lived in" (p. 109).

Defining difference is a complex part of subcultural life for the student activists-especially for students who make challenging whiteness a part of their agenda in their cultural home. As Alcoff (2006) sees it, "part of white privilege has been precisely whites' ability to ignore the ways white racial identity has benefited them" (p. 207). Because of how race and gender operate as visible markers of identity, unless they acknowledge white privilege, white students become the "invisible contender in a ring full of visible bodies" (Alcoff, 2006, p. 205). SAvE members are indeed visibly marked by social identities like race and gender. Another important part of this project is to examine the way members work to make sense of and acknowledge privilege conferred by social identities like race, gender, class, and ability.

This project also examines the schooling lives of student activists to better understand the way educational structures define identity. Alcoff (2006) connects identity to the way we make sense of historical and social contexts suggesting, "meaning and implications of visible identities will be determined largely by how the historical events and social structures that demarcate identities are interpreted and understood," (p. 288). In the media saturated 21st century, portraits of activism are constructed through events like 9/11 and Occupy Wall Street. As she writes about social identities like race and gender, Alcoff (2006) makes another useful distinction regarding how visible social identity is "fundamental rather than peripheral to self" (p. 6). In the 1960s, student movements, although not exclusively male and white, were often identified with the white male students who served as the public face of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The Feminist Movement, which grew out of the student anti-war movements of the 1960s, along with the Civil Rights and Gay Rights movements exemplify just how fundamental gender, race, and sexuality are to the way activists made sense of identity at the time.

In addition to using historical events and social identity as a framework for understanding identity, highlighting affiliations--for example with activist groups like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) or with mainstream groups the Girl Scouts—and practices can help us better understand how identity is constructed and understood. Alcoff (2006) writes that "social, cultural and political affiliations" are often signified by style, dress, or body modification practices and argues that these visible markers can be "both the means of segregating and oppressing human groups and the means of manifesting unity and resistance' (p. 7). According to Alcoff (2006) drawing conclusions about identity based on "only what is visible" is a byproduct of "our excessively materialist society" (p. 6). Alcoff's observation illustrates the complexity of identity and the relationship between culture, affiliations, and identity. In this study we see how student activist identity is often coded as resistant or subcultural, and how activists both cleave to and resist this identity, and are also marginalized because of it.

Even though SAvE members certainly differ in their social, cultural, and political affiliations, because they share the label "student activist" they are consequently coded in a particular --and often negative--way by their peers and the public. Members who have tattoos and dreadlocks-- purposely formed locks of hair varying size and are an everyday African American hairstyle choice associated with Rastafarian religion, white heavy metal, and activist subculture-- are more often coded as resistant or "activist" than members whose practices and style blend in with the majority of their college peers. All students on college campuses mark themselves with style, habits of consumption, and affiliations that are read by other students as codes of belonging. Athletes are easily recognizable by the sports gear the carry, the clothes they wear, and their presence in the athletic facilities on campus they frequent during their season. Members of the Greek organizations on campus herald their association with their respective fraternity and

sorority by sporting clothes with Greek letters and house colors, and often have large homes on campus that mark their presence. On college campuses, much like in high school, peer groups or cliques, while not formally organized like athletes and philanthropic clubs, are still easily recognizable and grouped together by style and habits of belonging. Biklen (2004) argues that peers readily identify "Mount Girls" on their upstate Northeast campus because of their distinct clothing style: black slacks, strappy heels, and designer handbags.

Campus activists, too, read and recognized each other by a coded system that includes specific style, lifestyle and consumption habits, and affiliations. Bettie's (2002) account of power relations and peer hierarchies in high school extracurricular activities is useful in understanding how students are marked by their social, racial, and class identity in terms of style and group membership. Those students at the top of the social hierarchy according to Bettie (2002) "define who it is that extracurricular school functions are by, for, and about" (p. 102). Students, like those involved in Greek life and Division I athletics, "learn a sense of entitlement from the school, which endorses power relations among peers" (Bettie, 2002, p. 102); as a result, on college campuses we have a discursive and performative split that replicates what goes on in high schools across the U.S. between the "good kids" and the subordinate youth. The marginalized others-student activists in particular- are effectively rendered subordinate because in the highly visible, school sanctioned culture where activities or social hierarchies determine popularity and power their habits of style, consumption, and leisure push them to the sidelines. The majority of SAvE members, however, are white—a visible identity steeped in privilege and one that is impossible to mask but nevertheless plays a significant role in how students name their identity and practice activism.

Kimmel (2003) claims that resistance is the first line of defense used by white privileged college students to maintain their power and dominant position. Kimmel (2003) argues that when students from the majority culture are confronted with the unequal relations of power they are often "indifferent, defensive, and resistant" and tend to "individualize and personalize processes that are social and structural" (p. 2). When I was a Teaching Assistant, in one American School course discussion on structural racism, poverty, and housing inequities I witnessed the resistance as I heard some say, "It's not my fault that the guy on the corner has to sing for a cup of coffee, he should just get a job" or "My family didn't own slaves," as if these are merely individual "problems" rather than ones for which the social collective should also take responsibility.

Frequently students have a hard time even seeing themselves as "white" but, as Gallagher (2003) argues, in our contemporary "racially charged environment," (p. 304) most white students are at least thinking about "themselves as occupying a racial category" (p. 300). Kimmel (2003) connects social identity to privilege, "Being white, or male, or heterosexual in the United States is like running with the wind at your back. It feels like just plain running, and we rarely, if ever, get a chance to see how we are sustained, supported, and even propelled by that wind" (p. 1). The students in this study are propelled by privilege yet through activism and group life they struggle to "make the wind visible" (Kimmel, 2003, p. 1). Although SAvE members often distance themselves by resisting or denying a connection between privilege, social identity, and oppression, the group itself strives to connect others' individual and institutional privilege to oppression; an effort that is complicated and messy. In this study, whether called out by others inside or outside the group or self-implicated as privileged actors, we see how the students use their agency to critique social and institutional structures of power, and contribute to a (re)imagining of school and teaching as complex and political.

My fieldwork also pushed me to consider how activism confers the privilege to exempt, authorize, or choose identity. Schwartz (1999) reminds us "if identity is created by location—or alienation—from a community, family, or society, it seems correct that the accumulation of having been in multiple communities, societies, and families must also have an impact, though not straightforward one." (p. 159). Identity according to Schwartz (1999) is made up of a "multiplicity of presentations of self" and these presentations are drawn from life experience, are shifting and diverse, and are articulated in choices we make throughout our lives as well as affiliation with affinity groups that leave a "permanent identity residue" (p.160).

I want to make one last point and connect, as Dimitriadis (2009) does, culture-- in this case activist culture--to performance. Dimitriadis (2009) applies the term "performance" to "symbol systems" or the "lived experiences" or "realities" of young people (p. 13). Identity, for example, is a performance that has "no inherent meaning" but is "always given meaning by people, in particular times and in particular places" (Dimitriadis, 2009, p. 13). In my first findings chapter I address performance as a symbol system specifically with regard to something I call the performance of poverty.

Student Activism in History

History plays a role in situating student activist imagination and performance and helps to illuminate the "backdrop of social practices and values" from which student activism and protest culture materialized (Giroux, 2001, p. 110). Myriad studies examine student protests against war, living conditions, as well as other concerns in higher education from an historical perspective (Altbach,1997; Bailey,1998; Boren, 2001; Brax, 1981; Rhoads, 1998). The origin of student activism in higher education in the United States is often traced to 1766 when students at Harvard University staged a rebellion over the quality of butter served on campus (Brax, 1981).

In the 18th and 19th centuries student dissent was limited to mostly eastern U.S. Ivy League colleges where efforts frequently focused on student complaints with and against individuals or power structures within the college (administration, teachers, or fellow students) or on what was referred to as "town v. gown" clashes (Brax, 1981, p. 3). With the exception of a small number of anti-slavery student groups, college activists back then were not typically political or focused on social change. In contrast to nationally organized movements of the 1930s student activism before the 20th century was, for the most part, centered on school-based and local issues.

Economic and wartime conditions of the 1930s set the stage for widespread rejection of adult or authoritative moral conventions. Increasingly liberal opinions of a small number of college students alarmed the more traditional moral gatekeepers. Students with non-traditional values and attitudes began to organize affordable college housing cooperatives, fill seats in government and economics classrooms, and favored social change, including opposition to war and the protection of civil liberties. Various studies from the 1930s show that the majority of college students, however, remained aligned with the status quo and more conservative cultural values (Brax,1981). From the 1920s through the 1950s, membership in student activist organizations ebbed and flowed experiencing a boom that was followed by an equal and opposite dwindling in numbers and actions. Still, a quarter of the way into the 20th century, activist student involvement was becoming more and more ideological, political, and collaborative.

According to Gitlin (1987) the U.S. student movement in the 1960s "was partly a product of social structure—there had to be a critical mass of students, and enough economic fat to cushion them—but more, the upsurge was *made* from the living elements of a unique, unrepeatable history, under the spreading wings of the zeitgeist" (p. 4). His claim here is that the student movement of the 1960s was buttressed by certain social structures and historical events that

provide distinctive scaffolding for youth resistance. War, desegregation, racism, affluence, civil rights issues, and assassinations of key political figures like Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., Jack and Bobbie Kennedy, ignited youth focus on politics and social justice and saw the resurgence of college student activism and national student activist organizations (Altbach,1997; Boren, 2001; Rhoads,1998). The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)--"the organizational center of the New Left"--and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were two well-known and powerful groups who took back the previously apathetic college political scene (Gitlin, 1987, p. 2). SDS was made up of mostly white, mostly male, and mostly privileged actors, and ended up spinning off radical factions, one of which was the Weatherman, also known as The Weather Underground. SNCC, formed by a small group of Black college students in North Carolina, mushroomed into a new form of community organizing, an "internal participatory democracy" that promoted non-violent action and leadership at the local level (Perlstein, 1990, p. 302). Toward the end of the decade the splintered student movement was eclipsed by thriving Feminist, Gay and Lesbian, and Black social movement organizations that also drew attention to issues of sexism, discrimination, segregation, poverty, racism, U.S. Military policy, and student life. The 1960s was a period of growth and turmoil for college student activists and for the country. Still rebellion and resistance in the university during the 60s was predominantly a white middle-class student activity as historians including Altbach (1997), Boren (2001), Rhoads (1998), and Wood (1974) have noted, and is a time that figures greatly in the nostalgic imagination and actions of today's student activists.

In his 1968 book *Young Radicals*, Keniston portrayed youth who worked in a program called Vietnam Summer. In descriptions that eerily paralleled those of many of my respondents, Keniston's (1968) respondents were in their twenties, had "upper middle class, politically liberal

and well-educated parents," who attended "prestigious colleges and universities" or at least had started college (p. 15). His all white, mostly male respondents whom he called "young radicals" came from "relatively privileged and advantaged sectors of American society" (Keniston,1968, p. 14).

Many students of color were engaged and active in national and college politics and social movements. Yet a majority of members of the peace and antiwar movement reflected the fact that more white, upper middle class, and predominantly male youth attended college at the time than students of color or women. Keniston (1968) saw this privileged group of college students retreat into an activist lifestyle as a way to both deal with their disappointment in the social and intellectual life of college and because these students, who placed a special value on serving others, had in common a desire to "solve the problems of society" (p. 365).

Boren (2003) suggests that U.S. student activism was reborn in the 1990s but see its reincarnation as more issue oriented than ideological. He claims that although the Gulf War and sweatshop labor drew the attention of student protestors, most U.S. student activists of the late 20th century focused on local college-based student rights issues like health care, alcohol and other drug use, tuition, and scheduling concerns. Rhoads (1998), who uses case studies to examine multiculturalism and identity politics movements of the 1990s, sees things differently. He argues that although contemporary student activism appears to be loosely connected and indiscriminate among the racial and ethnic groups, gay rights activists, and women's issues who lead the majority of identity-based campus protests in the 1990s (often including the support by progressive whites), there is a "collective consciousness" among the disparate groups (Rhoads, 1998, p. viii). This study explicates how SAvE members make sense of their role in the collective consciousness of campus activism today.

The Setting and Participants

The methods chapter provides a detailed explanation of the setting and participants, but here I introduce both how I came to do this research and where it took place. As I began my doctoral coursework, I spent a good deal of time on several college campuses teaching, using the libraries, and attending events. Almost immediately I noticed flyers announcing the first meeting of the semester for SAvE. While most club flyers are computer generated and typed, SAvE's artistically rendered hand drawn graffiti-like images caught my eye. A few evenings later, I attended the first meeting. Initially, I was both intimidated and turned off by a drum circle and chaos of the less than inviting atmosphere. There were no signs indicating that this was a meeting. No one wore identification so I could not tell who was there for the meeting and who was there for the free pizza. There were over 30 students--mostly white-- milling about the grassy quad. Some young men were banging on drums while young women in flowing skirts danced in circles around them. Most of the students were undergraduates more than twenty years my junior. I could not distinguish between veteran members and prospective members. No one talked to me and I felt invisible. I resolved not to go back but strangely, the whole scene reminded me of the parking lot at a Grateful Dead concert (minus the drug use)—a venue that had intrigued and baffled me.

When I returned for a second SAvE meeting, which took place on another campus, the atmosphere was more school-like. We met in a bright white, naturally lit nearly one hundred year old classroom filled with random desks, a blackboard, and well-used wooden podium. The group was far smaller and, absent the drums and dancing, everyone gathered in one circle, facing each other. The students warmly welcomed me. As I left I wondered why the classroom setting made me more visible, and why I did not feel comfortable in the party-like atmosphere

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of the initial meeting. I began to consider what effect extra curricular organizations had on a student's sense of identity and belonging. I was equally intrigued by the activist agenda and the political involvement of these students. I would come to spend over two years in classrooms, quads, the streets, and other venues with students from two Upstate campuses.

I knew I wanted to study youth, schooling, and popular culture. Initially, I wanted to study girls' experience in the male saturated gaming culture, but struggled with studying mostly white youth in shopping malls and basements. While I was interested in the experience of youth on the margins, and specifically urban youth, I kept coming back to my experience with SAvE. Although these students were also mostly white, I was intrigued by their style of self-education and organization, and by the otherwise wide variety and interests of students who attended meetings and claimed to be activists. Before I asked permission to study their group, on separate occasions I mentioned to friends that I was considering studying student activism. Inevitably the reply was something like, "Are there even any student activists to study?" These impressions of teachers, counselors, and business people cemented my desire to get to know more about these students who seemed to be hiding in plain sight.

When I started my fieldwork, I was on a two year leave of absence from my job as a school counselor/social worker, newly remarried, taking what seemed to be impossibly difficult theory classes, parenting a teenager, and had little disposable income to spend on travel and housing costs. Although SAvE is a national organization with hundreds of regional chapters, I chose to study one accessible chapter comprised of students from two different college campuses. However, over the course of this project, my fieldwork took me to several out of state protests and SAvE regional conferences, and twice to the National Conference of Organized Resistance where I met SAvE members from other U.S. chapters.

Outline of the Chapters

The first findings chapter explores how individual students make sense of and produce activism and resistance and how they represent themselves as resisters. Further, it examines how youth complicate what it means to do activist work in an historical period of heightened nationalism and patriotism amidst political, economic, and social uncertainty. In this chapter, I examine how students come to activism and how they talk about what activism means to them. It argues that there is no one typical individual who becomes a student activist. And while all activists are motivated by a desire to make a difference in the world, there is no universal type of "activism." The chapter also argues that when students adopt the identity of "student activist," in school and at home, they must negotiate struggles associated with social and political identity

The following findings chapter, chapter five, examines the complexities of activist struggles for legitimacy, and it explores how students make sense of the institutional boundaries of campus activism. I argue that negotiating institutional boundaries creates informal lessons in activism for students. I examine how student activists produce and distribute messages of cultural resistance to their peers and family members and how they navigate the tension created by their affiliations. Additionally, I argue that in order to get at how student activism is complicated by the contradictions of students' sometimes uninterrogated privileges, it is important to understand the role of the power relations within the larger structural and institutional contexts of education.

Chapter six is the final findings chapter and examines how the group makes meaning out of their everyday practices. This chapter argues that SAvE's activities and practices, like the caucuses, conferences, and weekly meetings, provide students with opportunities to engage with the discomfort of privilege brought on by the very pedagogical strategies used to address privilege. This chapter on facing privilege addresses the process of self-discovery youth go

through as they confront issues related to social location and privilege as they do their activist work, and as they engage in a collective struggle for political agency as citizens who oppose legacies of oppression and social injustice, and seek out social change. The chapter argues that activist work brings to the surface student struggles that highlight a complicated and messy awareness of privilege. This chapter also argues that extracurricular activity of an activist organization is a contested educational space where social inequalities and relations of power are interrogated, reinforced, and challenged.

CHAPTER 2
Literature Review

In this chapter, I explore how youth culture scholars define and distinguish youth, and focus on resistance, identity construction, and group life. The history of social movements--in particular the history of the environmental movement—is detailed here as it also frames the way I understand student activism, activist identity, and resistance. I start by framing literature on youth culture, resistance, and social structures then follow with literature on social formations where I outline concepts that affect group life like status and identity construction. I end with a brief overview of social movements. I present historical perspectives on social movements and activism to create a foundation on which to explore how certain student activists negotiate identity and make meaning of culture and social structures.

Literature on student activism and social movements share the notion that student activists have an impact on social structures, yet individual student experience with activism is rarely the focal point of the research. Much of the early academic literature on student activism in the U.S. focused on the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Social movement literature of the time explored, as Walder (2009) cites, "the relationship between social structure and political behavior, and was preoccupied with explaining variation in the political orientation of movements: their ideologies, aims, motivation or propensities for violence" (p. 393). In addition, scholars theorized about resource mobilization and social movements (McCarthy & Zald, 1977), and others examined how associations between social movements facilitate the sharing of tactics (Wang & Soule, 2011).

Like social movement theory, mid 20th century studies of student activism were also concerned with the consequences of student activism on organizational culture and institutional policy. Edwards (2008) studied student activism at small colleges from 1965-1971. He found

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that this time was unlike any "other period of modern collegiate history-at small as well as large schools," and claimed "activist students…revitalized their institutions" (Edwards, 2008, p. 50). Edwards also found that students stood alongside certain alumni and faculty to challenge the "long-standing practice of *in loco parentis" or* other parietal rules, academic policies, war, and civil rights (2008, p. 18).

Other scholars have contributed to the critical conversation on youth who engage in dissent and cultural resistance, and point out how certain politically engaged youth are marginalized and branded as operating outside of mainstream culture. While not addressing students as activists, Duncombe (2002) explored how youth used culture-from rap music to computer hacking-as a political tool and Dennis (2007) focused on youth who connect music to political involvement. Dennis labeled the group of 90s West Coast youth activists "an oppositional subculture" (Dennis, 2007, p. 6). Gelder (2007) argues that "the most common narrative about subcultures is, of course, one that casts them as nonconformist, and non-normative: different, dissenting, or to use a term sometimes applied to subcultures by others, 'deviant' (p. 3). Any activist group has the task of constructing identity as a group, and the way they go about this is to create a subcultural group. While it is true that activists develop subcultures and rely on subcultural identity markers to form bonds, I resist marking student activists as deviant. Literatures that inform this study help to make sense of the distinction that is woven through the lives of youth, especially youth--like student activists-- who construct identities outside of the dominant culture. As mentioned, these frameworks are attentive to power and privilege and focus on how marginal identities develop in the lives of school age youth. Marginal has different meanings, but activists and subcultural youth have to struggle with the way people stereotype them--especially in education.

While there is overlap between activists and subcultural groups, their struggles are not identical. This literature review helps me to tease out the overlap and differences between activist youth and subcultural youth. Much of the literature suggests that activism is often based on visible and non-visible identities within an organization or group, but my project addresses how activist, as an identity category, becomes constituted or negotiated. In other words, my study focuses on how students construct identity and how identity has, more and more, become a site of activism where students develop a greater self-consciousness.

Youth Culture

Studies of youth culture—especially those of youth subcultures-- are often tied to resistance. While resistant youth are commonly stereotyped as deviant or rebellious, studies also portray resistance as tool youth employ to help us better understand and accept difference. In his account of minority youth and Zoot suit culture of the 1940s, Alvarez (2010) explores how youth use style as a form of resistance. Alvarez argues that minority youth used the Zoot suit as a marker of resistance against race, class, and age discrimination in the US at that time. Alvarez positions the body as a location where youth struggles for power, identity, and belonging take place. He argues that this type of resistance politicizes youth culture by giving power to certain "social spaces and cultural identities" as a means to value rather than disparage difference (Alvarez, 2010, p. 243).

I join Alvarez and others who analyze youth, resistance, and identity in relation to culture. When I say culture, I refer to Williams (2007) who argues that institutions and practices hold meaning:

> …it certainly seems necessary to look for meanings and values, the record of creative human activity, not only in art and intellectual work, but also in institutions and forms of behaviour. At the same time, the degree to which we depend, in our knowledge of many past societies and past stages of our own, on

the body of intellectual and imaginative work which had retained its major communicative power, makes the description of culture, in these terms, if not complete, at least reasonable" (p. 49).

This view locates schooling in relation to other institutions where 'education' takes place, and includes media, popular culture, and the family. In part, I study the value and meaning of student activism by examining the culture, activities, and the institutions where students do their work. Throughout my research, students were not necessarily confined to the educational institutions that initially brought students together so I observed students in both public and private spaces like streets, schools, and neighborhoods.

Shifts in theory drive the scholarship and social scientists continue to be interested in the nuanced influence of identity and social life on youth (sub)cultures in educational research. Literature on youth, schooling, and subcultures covers a broad array of topics including the study of a variety of social formations such as punks, skaters, Wiccan's, Emokids, Goths, Deadheads, Hip Hop, and Straight edger's, and gender, class, and racial formations, in addition to other geographies of youth (Best, 2000; Bettie, 2003; Brake, 1985; Dolby, 2001; Eckert, 1989; Greenberg, 2007; Hodkinson, 2002; McDonald 2001; Perry, 2002; Skelton & Valentine, 1998; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2002). Other scholars of youth subculture and identity investigate how these social formations operate in recreational spaces--from the street to clubs and concerts to education settings—and create and enact resistance against oppressive or oppositional dominant cultural systems (Bettie, 2003; Best, 2000; Duncombe, 2002; Skelton & Valentine, 1998; Tovares, 2002). Students who are part of activist social formations are negatively configured by dominant culture, much like other subcultural social formations are; they are considered marginal, deviant, and disrupt mainstream notions "good" youth. My interest in youth subculture lies not in the practice of classifying or categorizing youth who identify with a social formation,

rather my work is interested in how the student activists constitute a different "cultural constellation" and exercise privilege and power as individuals and as a group (Muggleton &Weinzierl, 2004, p. 3).

Thornton (1996) illustrates how the complexities of group life and subcultural identity produce "social and cultural hierarchies" that help youth to both "magically resolve certain socio-economic contradictions, but also maintain them and even use them to their advantage" (p. 115). The more youth understand the codes of their subcultural group, that is, the hierarchies of value attached to certain codes and to the people who use them (and the way they are used), the more subcultural capital they gain. In this way cultural capital becomes the double-edged sword of privilege as a marker of difference.

Defining youth resistance

As mentioned, scholarship on youth culture often categorizes youth resistance as deviant, or as muddled attempts to push back against the rules and organization of dominant culture. Many see resistance as a site of struggle where youth engage in a tug of war with authority as they "negotiate space for the collective expression of subcultural identities" (Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004, p. 6). While youth studies scholars focus on the struggles *between* youth and parent--or dominant--culture, my work examines the struggles faced by students, who are privileged actors, as they work to construct a resistant identity. In order to make sense of how students self-identify as activists, I use identity construction as a framework for understanding youth resistance.

In the 1970s, Hebdige (1979), Hall and Jefferson (1975), Willis (1977), and others from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) brought the study of youth subcultures into sharp relief when the Birmingham School began to look at transgressive youth behavior as something other than juvenile delinquency (as it had been earlier conceptualized by the

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American subculture scholars in the Chicago school). As Gelder (2005) remarked, the British scholars shifted the "focus on subcultures from territory to style" concentrating on "the way subcultures purchase and organize their 'look' and 'outlook' through fashion and related tastes and practices" (p. 83). CCCS inquiry adopted subcultural style and "resistance through ritual" as the slogan for identity and cultural subversion in post-WWII working class (mostly white) male contexts (Jenks, 2005). By their definition, subcultures stood in opposition to the parent or dominant culture and their potential for resistance was contained by their subordinate stance and in the distinctiveness of their practices; the degree of success was determined by their potential for opposition or resistance to dominant culture (Jenks, 2005).

Hebdige's (1979) canonical studies of working class, mostly white male British youth subcultural styles of dress and music examined how struggles over meaning took place and were expressed. He looked at how experience encoded in subculture was shaped by tension between working class youth and dominant culture. Hebdige found that strategies of symbolic subversion used by these marginalized groups were, in part, their way of talking back to the class structures and parent culture. By adopting token dominant culture artifacts (safety pins, clothes, hair styles, pharmaceuticals, motor bikes) and changing their meaning or use (lacing safety pins through their cheeks), subcultural youth (like Punks) used forms of symbolic resistance to express their outrage at being in a subordinate class position.

Haenfler (2006) argued that CCCS scholars like Hebdige merely drew attention to this untidy cycle of "commodification and resistance to that commodification" (p. 212). Although they were portrayed as heroic in the research, these working class youth who were under the CCCS microscope were thought to do little more than talk with symbols in their leisure time. According to CCCS, style is the class-based mediator of culture used to shock the parent culture, but at the

same time, it was assumed that style had little or no relationship to the means of production. As a result, all style did was lock youth in a symbolic power struggle. Subcultures that used style as their sole means to create resistant identities were forced to reinvent themselves in order to keep their subversive hybridized forms from being appropriated by the fashion or musical styling of a mainstream and capitalist market culture. The mostly class and sometimes gender based analysis placed youth in a *symbolic* struggle for power and attention (consent), where youth had a role- however local and limited- in resistance.

For decades, sociologists who studied youth subcultures saw young people cook up various forms of resistance to dominant cultural norms as a means to navigate their way from childhood to adulthood (Downes & Rock, 1998). According to Duncombe (2002) culture is "elastic" and refers to a "thing…a set of norms, behaviors, and ways to make sense of the world," while resistance to culture is "no firmer" and can "take on many forms" such as "political resistance" (p.5). For example political resistance can be enacted in the streets or written on the body where the old school tattoo designs from the turn of the century resurface on the arms of today's inked-up youth. These historical markers give sociologists clues about rebellion, style, and the influence of history and nostalgia on today's youth. Tattoos and other body modifications are part of a larger vernacular of today's youth; they serve as codes that can be read to gauge youth practice and participation in cultural rituals and activities.

Subcultural studies foreground resistant youth as owners and producers of knowledge. I, too, rely on subcultural literature to tease out my understanding of the position(s) from which activist youth speak both as individuals and as a collective. Giroux, citing Forgacs, reminds us that Gramsci took a similar position on youth and education. Gramsci argued that, "education is not a matter of handing out 'encyclopedic knowledge' but of developing and disciplining the

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awareness which the learner already possesses" (Giroux, 2000, p. 119). Like Giroux and others who advocate for youth, my work aims to help "students to develop a critical understanding of how the past informs the present so that they can liberate themselves from the ideologies and commonsense assumptions that form the core beliefs of the dominant order" (2000, p.1 19). I use subcultural and postsubcultural scholarship on youth to consider how everyday practices and activities of certain college student activists serve as sites of cultural resistance and reproduction, thus as a site of struggle for identity and democratic citizenship. This trajectory follows the lines of inquiry drawn by scholars like Dimitriadis (2009), Gelder (2007), Giroux (2001) Greenberg (2007), Haenfler (2006) and others who situate youth culture and popular culture as legitimate sites of knowledge production, and schools as places where *some* youth enact resistance.

As new theoretical trends emerged in sociology and education, "post" theories sprouted up alongside of them. For Nealon and Searles Giroux (2003), we live in a world of "posts" where cultural artifacts serve as place markers for trends that reflect a cultural obsession with (re)imagining:

> Maybe all this suggests is a post-modern insistence on *process* rather than on *product*: A "postmodern" artifact is one that consistently questions itself and the context that it seems to fit within. Perhaps, preliminarily, we could say that postmodern cultural artifacts are constantly calling attention to the ways in which both the work and the viewer are constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing meaning (p. 127).

My study blends traditional or old school theory with these new models for understanding youth. In post subcultural studies, scholars critique and often dismiss as old school the subculture theories that that came out of the CCCS. Yet they build on traditional theories to (re)imagine youth formations. Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, Butler, and Maffesoli, contemporary post subcultural theorists use concepts such as taste, cultural capital, and performativity to frame identity and subcultural formations.

Contemporary scholarship on subcultural theory reflects a trend toward renovating subcultural study to address changes in youth and youth cultural formations in the 21st century (Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004; Gelder, 2007; Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2005). This post-subcultural turn takes into account how globalization, technology, political and leisure habits collude with the "shifting social terrain of the new millennium…to produce new hybrid cultural constellations" (Muggleton &Weinzierl, 2004, p. 3) within youth culture. This turn also reflects a trend toward rejecting traditional theories of youth subculture in favor of incorporating post-modern theory into work that deals with identity construction and social formations in youth culture, specifically ideas of distinction based on consumption and cultural capital.

Social Structures and Identity

Social scientists, educators, parents, or anyone who spends time with youth can see how they can sometimes get caught in structural webs, whether relational or institutional, that are not always of their own making. Social structures like family, religion, law, education, and the media and popular culture drive social and cultural regimes of truth. Social structures often trap youth on their own turf, effortlessly incorporating them into social scenes that appear democratic and classless. For example, class culture markets youth identity back to them (think highbrow Abercrombie and Fitch and lowbrow Hot Topic) by "labeling the participants 'ideologically', as the mass media might label punks as 'deviants'" (Gelder, 2005, p. 85). As such, social scientists view institutions like family, consumption, and popular culture as important structures in the struggle for identity and culture. For Thornton (1996):

> [C]omparatively little attention…has been paid to the hierarchies within popular culture. Although judgments of value are made as a matter of course, few scholars have empirically examined the systems of social and cultural distinction that divide and demarcate contemporary popular culture, particularly youth culture (p. 7).

Thornton draws on Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital to advocate the "power of difference" or "distinction" to provide insight into discriminatory characteristics and cultural patterns within subcultures (1996, p. 166). In spite of the way hierarchical differentiation affects youth in their own internal social and cultural milieu--often categorizing youth into cliques or identity-based distinctions--focusing on social structures help us see the way youth exercise political, social, and cultural status and make sense of their encompassing relationship to capital, consumption, social structures, and institutions.

Distinguishing Youth Formations

The focus on membership in present-day setting imagines youth in fluid "neo" or urban tribal formations (Dimitriadis, 2009; Dennis, 2007; Sweetman, 2004; Kontos, 2003; Winge, 2003). Scholars spotlight hybrid social networks born out of the global techno revolution or local happenings like club culture (Carrington & Wilson, 2004; Haenfler, 2006; Huq, 2003; Thornton, 1996); raves (Hoadley, 2007; St. John, 2003; Ueno, 2003); online culture (Bennett, 2004; Bury, 2003; Hodkinson, 2003; Kahn & Kellner, 2003; Williams, 2007; Zhu, 2007;); or (re)imagine girl culture from a postmodern perspective (Lincoln, 2004; Piano, 2003; Porter, 2007; Reddington, 2003).

Youth in social formations-as Goths, ravers, Straight Xer's, virtual friends- are examined as participants whose relationship to culture and to each other is increasingly mediated by passive consumption. The argument is that leisure activities, engagement with technology, media, popular culture, and the rituals of privilege and rites of passage of youth are less about collective resistance and more about individual visibility, power, and agency. In this view, the creation of identity is bound to agency, performance, consumption, and consumer reflexivity (Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004).

As social, political, and economic boundaries of culture become less local and more global,

many youth are exposed to an increasingly diverse world. They exercise agency in this shifting

cultural and physical geography by, for example, using public and private space (Valentine,

Skelton, and Chambers, 1998) and producing small-scale economies of culture (McRobbie,

1999) in the DIY (do it yourself) market that is once again exploding in the 21st century. Some

argue that youth culture is a metaphor for social change because of the way their habits of mass

consumption, style, and post-war access to schooling mark them as a group with power (Clarke,

Hall, Jefferson, and Roberts, 2006). I am interested in the way organizations or group formations

help youth to exercise their social and culture capital, or privilege.

Status and Privilege

In the 21st century global economy, where *select* youth have enormous power as consumers

and producers of culture and trends, the relationship between cultural resistance and subcultural

identity brings to the debate tensions related to class, race, and gender-especially as youth deal

with related issues of access and equity in schooling and culture. As youth move through the

(un)familiar territory where they work, live, and play they use status gained through social

structures including who and what they know to negotiate daily living. Cultural capital, which is

linked to status, can be communicated or accumulated (or not) through education and

socialization. According to Bourdieu:

> Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, i.e. in the form of
> long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the
> form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines,
> etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories,
> problematics, etc.; and in the institutionalized state, a form of objectification
> which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational
> qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which
> it is presumed to guarantee (1985, p. 102).

Cultural capital creates categorical markers of distinction that set youth apart from one

another as they invest in the exchange and marketing of cultural and social capital in its various forms and states. As Thornton (1996) argues, cultural capital is associated with class distinction where, for example, in Britain "accent has long been a key indicator of cultural capital, and university degrees have long been cultural capital in institutional form" (p. 10). The same is true in the United States. According to Jordan (1985) "White English, in America, is Standard English" and because of the way hegemony works to secure linguistic capital for these privileged speakers, Black Americans (and by extension people with an accent-say people from the south or from another country, or people with a speech impairment) are alienated because they are seen as somehow culturally or socially deficient (p. 124).

Thornton refers again to Bourdieu to examine other types of capital "linguistic, academic, intellectual, information, artistic" and expands to include "subcultural" capital (1996, p. 11). Subcultural capital operates within the hierarchy of the subculture to denote an individual's level of sophistication and relationship to group norms. In other words subcultural capital is articulated to youth's ability to be "in the know," to read the codes within their subculture to the point that they seamlessly embody the culture by being down with the language, the clothes, the hair, the dance moves, songs, collectibles, electronic equipment, and so on (Thornton, 1996, pp. 11-12). In this way, we can understand status associated with social and cultural capital as a form of identity privilege. If members acknowledge the way social and cultural capital work to grant status within group hierarchies, they can better see the intersection between group experience, identity, privilege, and culture.

Alcoff (1998) argues similarly about identity privilege by acknowledging how whiteness intersects with social structures. In order to unmask, interrogate, and accept the material consequences of privilege, whites have to first grant that their whiteness affects experiences of

and in culture:

> Many race theorists have argued that antiracist struggles require whites'
> acknowledgement that they are white; that is, that their experience, perception,
> and economic position have been profoundly affected by being constituted as
> white (Alcoff, 1998, p. 8).

Youth membership in a subculture has the potential to expose the way status and privilege work within group hierarchies and in systems, perhaps instructing youth on how to be better allies. Thornton (1995) examines the role of social structures in relation to status below:

> Subcultural capital is the linchpin of an alternative hierarchy in which the axes of
> age, gender, sexuality and race are all employed in order to keep the
> determinations of class, income and occupation at bay. Interestingly, the social
> logic of subcultural capital reveals itself most clearly by what it dislikes and by
> what it emphatically isn't (p. 105).

Exercising subcultural capital is employed as a tactic to deny identity privilege. Thornton (1995) argues that subcultural capital "clouds class background" (p. 13) and although youth "aspire to a more egalitarian and democratic world" they employ "classlessness as a strategy for transcending being classed…as a means of obfuscating the dominant structure in order to set up an alternative…an ideological precondition for the effective operation of subcultural capital" (p. 167). Youth in this study similarly use their role as activists to mask privilege. For example, in an effort to paper over class privilege, some student activists deliberately perform poverty by dressing in clothes that are purchased at thrift shops, are handmade, or have no designer labels.

As Teddy Boy, Riot Grrrl, and Hip Hop culture counterparts outwardly respond(ed) to joblessness, sexism, poverty, and other social ills, the "faddish and fragmented" club culture youth talked back to mainstream culture by establishing social markers of distinction and taste within their *own* cultural milieu (p. 98). Still, one's ability to negotiate gate keeping mechanisms in the peer groups- a terrain influenced by media consumption and other determinants within a social hierarchy of apolitical distinction-is dependant upon status in the group and in society.

Group Life

Schools today are not only charged with educating students, but serve as a resource for the social, emotional, and safety needs of students and their families. Because they are so busy, educators sometimes fail to take into account the nuanced ways students structure their schooling lives-- especially their extracurricular life--into specific social formations. The result is that youth participation or lack thereof is commonly categorized in black and white terms where youth and schooling practices are deemed good or bad, and youth and institutions are praised and punished accordingly (Ferguson, 2001; Lyons and Drew, 2006). A nuanced look at group life of marginalized youth tells a richer story about youth identity and culture. Indeed, subculture participation was once conceived of only as a "leisure-based career" but can now be examined as "way of life structured by the social relations based on class, gender, race, age…income, occupations…the institutional sites of hegemony (those of school, work, home)… in which resistance is located" (Clarke,1981, p. 172). By examining how privilege and power is exercised in culture, especially in youth social formations and identity affiliation, we can imagine student resistance as a sometimes complex and untidy personal response to power rather than a problem or symptom of deviance.

While past analysis of subcultures focuses mainly on class and masculinity in groups, interim scholarship gravitated toward analyzing social formations or identity-specific cultural affiliations of youth in explorations of youth in gangs (Tovares, 2002), and graffiti (MacDonald, 2001), queer/gay (Rhoads, 1994), Goth (Hodkinson, 2002), punk (Clark, 2003; Leblanc, 1999, Reddington, 2003;), Straight Edge (Haenfler, 2006; Wood, 2006), and hippy (Sardiello, 2000) culture. Most of these social formations and affiliations are categorized as threatening to the dominant social structure of society. Today, socially conservative politicians, special interest

groups, and some in the so-called education reform movements rally against practices and activities they construct as outside of mainstream culture, and against the individuals who embrace those practices or groups. What they fail to see are the individual and cultural benefits of participation in certain social formations. Nancy MacDonald's (2001) ethnographic account of graffiti subculture claims participation goes beyond class and gender-based agendas to personal benefits of individual participation in the group life of graffiti subculture. MacDonald (2001) uses her findings on graffiti subcultures to get at themes of youth agency, identity, masculinity, power, and membership (p. 6). She argues that this exclusively masculine culture affords participants a bridge to manhood, and puts a "human face" on the struggles for manhood and status in an otherwise theoretically "flat and 'meaningless' landscape of the postmodern world" (MacDonald, 2001, p. 229). She elevates members of the graffiti subcultures, suggesting they possess both conscious and creative power that facilitate the "remaking" of their identity and status within and outside their own cultural milieu (MacDonald, 2001, p. 231).

Punk youths' struggle for identity is another example of the benefits of group life. According to McRobbie (2005), "the selling of punk" was not just about buying a style, it was about a social dimension and creation of space and community that was largely ignored by CCCS sociologists (p. 133). For McRobbie (2005) "the very idea that style could be purchased over the counter went against the grain of an analysis which saw the adoption of punk style as an act of creative defiance far removed from the mundane act of buying" (p. 133). To CCCS, authenticity and agency depended upon punk youth engagement with (or resistance to) dominant culture, but as McRobbie points out, CCCS singular focus on youth resistance to parent culture blinded them to other ways of conceptualizing resistance and youth subcultural practices, especially the power of affinity. I locate this work alongside of others who claim that youth participation in subcultural

life promotes and supports individual social consciousness and the power to, as (McDonald, 2001) argues, help youth to remake their identity.

Most contemporary theorists still bind resistant identity to consumption and examine youth practices in leisure spaces, but pay attention to these spaces and practices along different lines and with different language, linking youth to:

> social activities and attitudes that influence, as much as they are influenced by, the *space* in which they reside…suggests a move away from vertically rigid models that rely upon class, while enabling a nuanced examination of individual identity and group dynamics and how these are articulated to (often unevenly) to large scale, cultural arenas (Stahl, 2005, p.28).

These "simultaneously social and geographical" networks imagine youth in a "continuous process of interaction and negotiation" (Jenks, 2005, p.63). Post-Birmingham scholars conceptualized youth formations as transitory, fluid, disperse, fragmented and apolitical, which recall the disparate structures and spaces in which so-called post-subcultural youth gather: raves, dance clubs and underground music venues, the Internet, neighborhoods, and techno-parties. These same post-subculture theorists of the late 20th and 21st century paint *youth* as nomadic, self-centered, and disengaged (Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003, p. 14). If CCCS "over-politicized" the resistant potential of youth subcultures:

> then post-subcultural positions have been equally guilty of under politicizing them. The assumption that youth cultures are mainly hedonistic, individualistic, and politically disengaged, or are concerned only to assert their authenticity via the accumulation of subcultural capital, has been significantly undermined by the political activism and media visibility of new post-subcultural protest formations (Weinzeirl & Muggleton, 2005, p. 14).

Indeed, as they interact with and negotiate activism, students in this study are anything but disengaged. They see their struggle for identity as political.

Duncombe (2002) grounds his analysis of cultural resistance in his experiences as a young activist and later as a researcher and teacher. He examines the political potential of culture and

cultural resistance and argues that cultural resistance, as a political action, is a way for activists to negotiate dominant systems of capitalism, racism, and other inequalities. Although Duncombe (2002) resists defining culture because he see it as multifarious, he concludes that "culture is deeply political," "it helps us to account for the past, make sense of the present" and disrupts the status quo of the "powers-that-be" (p. 35). When it comes to youth, contemporary scholars like Duncombe may see politicized forms of cultural resistance like student activism as "political self-consciousness" (2002).

Social Movements

About a year before I began my doctoral study, I was browsing in a local bookstore and came across C. Wendell King's 1956 book on social movements. I read a paragraph on group cohesion, purchased the book, and placed it on my bookshelf. When I started the literature review for this work, I retrieved King's book. His work helped me to parse out my understanding of social movement theory in relation to student activism. King (1956) described social movements as having sociological relevance for two reasons: to provide a theoretical opportunity to study social change, and as a practical platform from which to understand social planning.

King's work centered on three groups--the KKK, the Grange, and Christian Science-- each of which had a hierarchical organization structure that included leaders and subordinate members. King (1959) argued that "patterns of relationships" are central to the organization of a social movement (p. 34). He wondered how labor was divided among group members. He examined how duties and commitments, as defined by institutional rules and guidelines, brought certain rights and power to individuals. He concluded that "the status distinction between leaders and followers and the roles each played" reveals the way power works in an organization (King, 1956, p. 34). King also supposed that tactics --"those activities and policies of a movement

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which are directed at the outside world"—display the cohesion of the members and the structure and ideology of the group (1956, p. 37). Similarly, as we see in the findings chapters, students in this study struggled with the tactics that clashed with their understanding of activism and the aims of the group.

In addition to a focus on social structure of the group, there have been many "grand theories" ascribed to the sociology of social movements including resource mobilization (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Weber, 2000) and political process theory (Dowie, 1995; Shabecoff, 2003). Over the years, social movement literature has questioned and augmented these grand narratives, partnered with organizational scholars to study group life, and raised questions of identity, emotion, and citizenship in social movements (Calhoun, 1994; Flam and King, 2005; Goodwin, Polletta, & Jasper 2001; Polletta, & Jasper 2001).

McCarthy & Zald (1977) define a social movement as "a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society" (pp. 1217-1218). They define social movement organizations as "complex, or formal, organizations which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals" (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p. 1218). Klandermans (2008) sees the collective action of social movements as "a regular form of political participation" (p. 992). By these definitions, SAvE shares goals with the preferences of the environmental movement, so members—who see their work as a form of political participation—are part of both an environmental social movement and a social movement organization (SAvE).

The Environmental Movement

The environmental movement in the US can be traced back to the 19th century where outdoor enthusiasts and hunters sought to protect, conserve, and better manage public land and natural resources, and medical professionals and urban advocates championed accessible clean water and sanitation systems for cities (Shabecoff, 2003; Weber, 2000). The end of the 19th century ushered in the formation of national organizations like the Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Federation, and the Audubon Society whose focus was the preservation of natural resources, public lands, and wildlife. Weber (2000) categorizes these two initial movements by their focus on "conservation" and "preservation" (p. 238). These major environmental organizations sought to work within the boundaries of the law to enact policy change and develop standards that would preserve human health and protect the environment.

Spurred by events in the 1960s, including the threat of nuclear war, other ecological disasters, and the publication of Rachel Carson's cautionary tale *Silent Spring*, the "contemporary" environmental movement gained traction in the 1970s (Weber, 2000, p. 241). Some scholars claim that the contemporary movement shifted focus from preservation and conservation to controlling air and water pollution, and curtailing human intervention and habits that were littering the planet (Dowie, 1995; Weber, 2000). National environmental organizations focused their ambitions on policy making while seeking to inform and recruit the general public to join the cause. And they did. On the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970, this contemporary movement harnessed the participation of hundreds of thousands of students from elementary school to college to celebrate the intrinsic worth of nature. According to Bosso (1995), contemporary environmental organizations' willingness to work with "the establishment" transformed what was once a grassroots social movement into a legitimate institutional entity. But by joining the

ranks of Washington lobbyists and lawyers, the Sierra Club and other groups were viewed with

suspicion by some environmentalists who felt alienated by institutional bureaucracy. Members

began to distance themselves from national environmental organizations, but looked for ways to

stay in the movement.

By the end of the 1970s, fledgling groups like Greenpeace and Earth First! which, according

to its website, was born in "response to a lethargic, compromising, and increasingly corporate

environmental community" were gaining support. Less than two years later, the Sea Shepherd

Conservation Society formed after its organizer parted ways with Greenpeace, signaling a crack

in the solidarity between grassroots organizations. Within less than two decades, radical

members left Earth First! to create the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) in England. A branch of

ELF came to the US in the mid-90s, and unlike other grassroots US environmental groups,

replaced legal tactics like protest with property damage and other criminal acts. Grassroots

environmental organizations prefer sometimes risky but legal tactics like protests and civil

disobedience. Shabecoff (1995) suggests that national and grassroots environmental groups share

certain objectives and principles, but otherwise often differ in approaches to achieving their

goals. Despite the tension at the national level, local grassroots organizations emerged with a

focus on managing local ecosystems. Weber (2000) calls these local groups "the vanguard for

the environment" (p. 237).

The 1980s saw the World Women in Defense of the Environment organize to address issues

of environmental justice focusing on environmental risks faced by the poor, disenfranchised, and

underrepresented groups (Forman, 1988). By the end of the decade, SAvE, who had started as a

small regional group, asked students nation-wide to join its efforts to "save the planet" and

within a year, had developed a strong student environmental presence nationwide. In the 90s, the

movement struggled to maintain momentum, especially with regard to keeping political attention focused on environmental issues. The decade ushered in Bill Clinton's two terms in the Whitehouse, the pressure of Newt Gingrich's *Contract on America,* demands from a powerful and increasingly divisive and socially conservative Republican party whose focus on the economy, war, political scandals, and a backlash against government programs cast a dark shadow on environmental issues. In the George H. W. Bush administration, the environmental agenda was not only put on the back burner but became a target of the political right who set back the gains—in terms of regulations and policy—that had been made during prior administrations who were friendlier to environmental concerns. Despite the decline in focus and the fractious relationship between and within mainstream and grassroots environmental organizations and the US government, the environmental movement remained one of the most important social movements of the 20th century.

Conclusion: (Re)imagining Activist Youth

Some sociologists who study youth subculture and protest culture have indeed focused on why youth participate in collective action. For example, Klandermans (2008), who studies collective action, explains that grievances—which he defines as "a sense of indignation about the way authorities are treating a social or political problem"—are one factor that motivates participation. My participants share this sense of indignation about the way the policy makers have shifted away from important issues like poverty, racism, and the environment. In my first findings chapter, I interrogate how students make meaning of activism, and how they describe the struggles of their work as activists. Rather than examine why they come to participate as political actors, I look at how they define what their work as activists means to them, and how they negotiate this work. Participants describe activism as change work, as a commitment to a

political struggle, as a way of being critical and proactive, as a form of education, and a critically reflective way of thinking and doing. This politicized identity has less to do with personal oppression and more to do with exploring and exercising their privileged position in culture. In 1995 Gamson wrote about the implications of identity and identity politics on power in social movements and posited a "queer dilemma" that fits well as a metaphor for the struggles of student activists in this study both with identity, privilege, and with participation in the collective.

Whether marching in the streets of LA to protest cuts to the education budget or in support of the Dream Act or movements like Occupy Wall Street, the recent multiple public images of student protests and antiwar and environmental activists as deviant, pariah, and/or creators of moral panic, coupled with discourses that portray subcultural youth as a collective social problem rather than critical thinkers or change agents, requires theoretical and ethnographic intervention. Sociological studies that place activist, subcultural, or any youth at the intersection of power and popular culture collide with institutional practices that continue to contain youth by naming their practices, habits of being, and ways of seeing the world as "at risk," temporary, symbolic, problematic, misguided, and politically (dis)engaged. The efforts of this study also run the risk of fixing youth within these dangerous discursive trajectories and in the sites of institutions that specifically target subcultural and activist youth. This dissertation adds to the literature narrative accounts of engaged youth *where they are*, by accounting for their interests, practices, beliefs, and affiliations.

In this dissertation, I work to represent how students identify as activists and members of a group, and to represent well the undergraduates whom I interviewed and spent two years with in the field. This involved examining how students define activism and their struggles with the

complications and contradictions of student activist identity, how they struggled for legitimacy, and how they made sense of working in an activist group.

By focusing on the struggles activists face as they do their work, rather than on the collective identity of the organization, my work seeks to bridge the gap between social movement literature, and those who study youth and youth subcultures. Rather than study how social movements mobilize social structures to support student activist organizational development, I focus on the activists and the dilemmas they face while doing activist work. My hope is that the broader conclusions drawn by examining this small group of student activists in the 21st century contributes to creating an "alternative script" of youth, youth subcultures, and activist youth (Brake, 1985, p.191). In the next chapter, I address qualitative methods, the dilemmas and challenges of fieldwork, and review the frameworks that guide this study.

CHAPTER 3
Methods and Methodology

Introduction

Before I began my doctoral study, I spent over fifteen years as a teacher and school counselor in kindergarten through twelfth grade public, private, and parochial school settings. I observed, listened, interviewed, and took notes on student behavior, interaction, and the culture of the schools. As a counselor, my daily calendar was often filled with the most marginalized students in school—the youth who, for various reasons, did not share the same status with students who were at the top of the social ladder. Certain students are pushed to the margins of an educational system that rewards conformity and compliance, punishes and polices difference, and resists attempts to challenge or subvert dominant norms of dress, behavior, activities, or practices. I admired students who reject conformity and refuse to be hemmed in by false boundaries of good and bad youth.

What I learned from students in my practice and classes, and from my study of youth, schooling, and popular culture during my graduate work shapes my current research on how college student activists think about and construct activism and privilege. I use the term activist because the students in the study refer to themselves as activists and to their work as activism. I consider myself a feminist and researcher who is attentive to issues of power, equality, affiliation, relationships, and identity, and to my place in the research (DeVault,1990; Lather, 1991; Wolf, 1996). I am intrigued by the politics of form in writing and research especially since the discursive and material conditions of activism in post 9/11 US make for potentially "dangerous fieldwork" or ethnography (Nilan, 2002).

In this chapter I discuss methods and methodology. I focus primarily on my research practice and wrestle with dilemmas of fieldwork including relationships, impression management, and

power. I argue that reflecting on proximity and distance serves as a useful framework to discuss membership, relationships, identity, power, and narrative construction. I begin the chapter by outlining my entry into the field and provide details about the setting, the participants, the organization, methods, data collection, and historical context. I then focus on methodology to explicate the thinking that informs my research practice. I follow by examining participant observation in depth; this is where I begin to construct my argument about proximity and distance in fieldwork and writing. I connect relationships and impressions to this dance of proximity and distance, which validates the messiness of qualitative research and value of reflexivity. Lastly, I reflect on my struggles with fieldwork and data analysis to highlight the complications and richness of qualitative research, and I discuss the limitations of the study.

Entering the field: Student Organization, Participants, and Methods

This multi-sited study of Students Active in the Environment (SAvE) takes place in two higher education settings in the northeast United States: Upstate University, a mid-size private research university with over 20,000 full time undergraduates and nearly 3,000 full time graduate students, and Green State College, a state college that specializes in environmental studies and related disciplines. Although these two schools share some academic and facilities resources, they maintain separate identities.

Green State College (GSC) is renowned for its variety of environmental and renewable resource programs, collaborative community relationships, and green campus initiatives. Because of the academic focus on science and the environment, GSC students are often characterized as "tree huggers" and "hippies" and have earned the nickname, "green bloods." On the GSC campus there is more parking for bikes than for cars. Although both schools have bachelors, masters, and doctoral programs, unlike GSC, Upstate University (UU) has Division I

athletics, an active Greek Life, more women than men, and a significant number of schools and colleges within the university. Tuition at UU is almost ten times what it is at Green State College, making the student populations differ significantly in terms of class and material privilege. Each school has a majority white population—GSU has (33%) non-white students and at UU minority students represent 23% of the population.

The Student Organization

Students Active in the Environment (SAvE) has hundreds of chapters in colleges, universities, and some high schools in the U.S. and Canada. The agenda of this student run activist organization centers on issues of environmental justice, anti-militarization/anti-war, and social justice activism. The research respondents are student members of the national organization that has regional chapters at UU, GSU, and other college campuses in the northeast. I want to note that research subjects are commonly referred to as respondents. In activist circles, the term informant has a negative connotation because it is often used by law enforcement to indicate someone who has betrayed the trust of the organization. Sociologists like DeVault (1990) use the term "respondents" which I have adopted for this sociological study.

Modeled after the grassroots democracy of the national organization, the UU/GSU chapter of SAvE operates on a consensus based, "bottom up," non-hierarchical model. SAvE UU/GSU is committed to teaching about and advocating for environmental justice through a diverse, anti-racist ally agenda. To acknowledge how power, privilege, and oppression have historically divided social movements and affected environmental racism and degradation, SAvE has an active caucus structure in place. In addition to weekly meetings, the caucus structure, retreats, and conferences expand SAvE's environmental justice mission to organize, educate, and agitate, and to acknowledge identity—race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability— as part of the social

environment they address. One of SAvE's goals is to redefine its common history with the environmental movement where leadership is "mostly white, mostly male, and mostly people of affluence" (website). SAvE's commitment to challenging power dovetails well with feminist scholarship on intersectionality, identity, and representation, and makes this study a relevant and appropriate subject of feminist inquiry.

Although a key emphasis of SAvE is coalition building with other groups, SAvE members and their combined college chapter are the focus of this study. Membership in SAvE is open to anyone enrolled in or alumni of an educational institution, and who has an interest in environmental activism. Throughout the study, SAvE's email listserv had nearly 150 members comprised of alumni, supporters, current members, and concerned citizens. Average attendance at weekly meetings varied from six to three dozen students, but SAvE maintained a core group of more than two dozen dedicated members, including 13 who eventually became my key respondents whose profiles I include below. Key informants were group members whom I noticed had the most consistent membership in the group. After six months of observing their participation, I asked 14 members to become key informants and 13 said yes. Key informants were very representative of the group itself in terms of race, gender, and ability. All of the male members were white, and most of the females identified as white accept for Linnea. Toward the end of my study, one South East Asian female joined and I would have included her had I not been exiting the field at that time.

The participants

Amanda identified as a white middle class straight female. She is a community college transfer and a junior at Green State College where she majored in Conservation Biology. Amanda is always smiling, and is friendly, quiet, and hard working dedicated student. In her

spare time, Amanda is an assistant Girl Scout leader with a local troop. Her experience with scouting, her love of the outdoors and for empowering girls, shapes who she is as an activist. In her opinion, Amanda does not necessarily fit into the style profile of an activist. She eats meat, wears practical (leather) shoes, and does not shop for thrift store clothes. The majority of her energy is spent on the community campaign on environmental racism where she works with the two other Green State students. Amanda is particularly close with Havoc, who brought her into SAvE.

Ann identified as a white, middle class, undecided, female from a small urban center. She graduated from an out of state school with a degree in art. She currently lives with Milo and works what she describes as a blue collar job. At 24 years old, Ann was the oldest SAvE member and often used her patience and wisdom to redirect the group. She wrote lengthy instructional and educational messages on the listserv and had equally detailed contributions during group meetings. Her work focused predominantly on militarization on campus.

Ben was the first member of SAvE to introduce himself to me. Ben identifies as a vegan, Jewish, white, straight, middle class male who comes from a downstate suburb. He is a member of Green State College class of 2003, majored in Environmental Biology and Policy Studies and wrote his senior thesis on his life as an activist. When I first came into the field he was the lead co-facilitator of SAvE. Affable and likeable, Ben runs a smooth, well-orchestrated meeting. He attends to the needs of students, making sure everyone gets heard and upholds the protocol of the group by following SAvE rules of order. Ben always aimed to make sure members knew how to participate in the meeting and introduced and reviewed hand signals and procedures from the handbook and Ben knew the rules exceptionally well. Ben was dedicated to working on the

community campaign on environmental racism and was one of the lead community liaisons for the group.

Darby is a dedicated, active, and engaging member of SAvE. Darby identifies as a white middle class straight female who was born abroad but grew up in a suburb in the western United States. An Upstate University junior, Darby started out as a fashion design major and ended up majoring in Social Sciences and Women's Studies. Darby is one of the best meeting facilitators I witnessed in the field. She is diplomatic, patient, and balances listening with critique and information. Darby was co-facilitator with Ben and then transitioned into that role with Tory before she left for a semester abroad. Darby uses the listserv to stay in touch with the group and continues to be an active contributor to the group via the listserv and at meetings. Darby focused on anti-militarization but worked on as many campaigns as she could, was active in attending outside actions, and was one of the founders of the Progressive Coalition, an offshoot of SAvE that promoted solidarity among campus organizations. The first time I met Darby she was wearing a powder blue sweatshirt with handmade white block letters that spelled COLLEGE sewn across the front of the shirt. She is a petite blonde, who often comes dressed in jeans, hand-knit scarves, and t-shirts. Before it was popular, she carried a Nalgene water bottle with stickers signifying her affiliation with the peace and environmental movements.

Emma is a Korean adopted by a white family with various ethnic roots and identifies as Queer, but has a male partner. Emma is a tiny, vivacious character, full of warmth and good will. She attended k-12 public schools and, when I met her, she was struggling to stay in school at Green State College and eventually dropped out for good. She was a GSC transfer student from a two year fashion school and majored in Environmental Studies. Emma has a flair for fashion and has an eclectic home sewn meets Salvation Army meets military style. We spent time together in

DC, walking and talking about life, drugs, suicide, relationships, and depression. Emma wanted to keep in touch with the group after she dropped out of school but found it hard because she was housing vulnerable. The last time I saw Emma was after I left the field; she was in her Radical Cheerleader gear at a political event.

Havoc is a towering figure with a deep, gravely voice, friendly eyes, and warm smile. Havoc is a 20 year-old transfer student from a downstate community college who is in his junior year at Green State College studying Environmental Biology. Havoc identifies as a straight, white male from a middle class Catholic background. He clarifies this by saying that growing up, his family was "lower middle class" because of the financial demands of raising a large family (seven kids). Eventually his dad was steadily promoted and earned more money over the years in his job as a manager for public relations in a suburb of a large urban center in western New York. In high school he played sports but preferred the drama club.

His environmental sensibilities drive the direction of his SAvE work, so the entire time I was in the field, Havoc dedicated his effort to the community campaign and local environmental racism. Havoc made friends easily because of his calm and reflective presence. He was a patient listener and was well respected and equally comfortable with working with students, faculty, and community members.

Linnea identifies as a having "all four oppressions—'Queer' but bisexual, Black, women, and poor." She is hip and friendly, and always extended a warm greeting to everyone or hug-hello to friends. Short, cropped hair, and a pair of glasses with small, trendy black rims frame her face. Other members of the group adopted certain phrases of hers like "good times," "kids," "heads". Linnea is the only Black member of SAvE. She is a college junior at Upstate U who had hoped to have senior status by now, but activist commitments compete for time with her very

demanding science major. She was raised by working class parents in a city in the southern tier of the state. She came to activism when she met Milo in college and her energies are directed toward the community campaign on environmental racism. In the summer after I left the field, Linnea was arrested at one of the actions planned by SAvE.

Milo is somewhat of a legend in SAvE. At the time I met him, he had been on campus for six years as a perpetual undergraduate social work student at UU whose activist lifestyle often pulled him away from class during the school year. Milo is a twenty three year old, and identified as a straight, able-bodied, middle class, male who is Columbian, Irish, and Jewish and a "Race Traitor" who is "actively working to fight against white identity." Milo has a head of dark disheveled hair, equally scruffy mustache and a beard in various stages of growth. He is most often in jeans, t-shirts (some with pictures of Che or other activist messages or symbols), and looks generally rumpled--as if he just got out of bed after sleeping in his clothes. Milo always wears a hat of some sort-mostly military style camouflage or army green caps with some sort of homemade patch or button affixed just above the brim.

Milo is well respected and is clearly one of SAvE's most vocal members. He has a reputation for advocating tactics like tagging stencils in public places or more radical Black Block tactics like chameleon chains and jail solidarity. Legend has it that he once suggested that the group purchase a tank. I have heard him mention the 1970s ROTC bombings on campus and in the same breath advocate reading theory as a strategy of activist engagement.

The year before I entered the field, Milo was called out by a female member for sexist behavior because, among other things, divisions of labor in the group were unbalanced and Milo's way of asserting himself as the spokesman for the group tended to silence women. I experienced this attitude first hand when I met Milo at the first meeting. He asked me how old I

was and if I was married and made a comment on my legs and my tattoo. When I told him my age-which was apparently quite a bit older that he had expected- he let me know that it was okay if I decided to come in my wheelchair.

Milo was an important presence during the time I was in the field. Milo's off campus house (he lives with Ann and Linnea) is the home of the SAvE summer reading group and many SAvE parties (none of which I attended). He helped to organize the anti-militarization campaign, film festivals, off campus trips to protests, the reading group, and other outside projects.

I traveled with Milo to a protest in D.C. and saw him frequently at meetings and other places on campus and grew to deeply respect him as an activist and organizer. Milo finally graduated the year after I left the field. He is currently a labor organizer in another state.

Nate identifies as a white, upper middle class straight male from a local wealthy suburb. He is an Upstate U. sophomore who is in the academic honors program in Spanish and Business. His dad is a surgeon and his mom works occasionally as a part time librarian and takes care of her grandson. Nate is a vegan who wears thrift shop clothes--mostly t-shirts and jeans. He is a tall guy with a big head of hair, big eyes, kind smile, and comes off as almost painfully shy. He was very active in SAvE, spending most of his energy and effort in the community campaign on environmental justice, but supported the other campaigns and general activities as well. Nate posts on the listserv regularly as a way to get people involved and to keep them informed. He used to be part of a college peace group but found it hard, with his studies, to do both. Nate stayed with SAvE because he felt like the goals of SAvE are more radical and broad. He started in SAvE during the second half of my fieldwork. He continues to work for social justice as an advocate for local farming and food security.

Nell joined SAvE halfway through my fieldwork, but immediately took a leadership role in the group. Nell identifies as a white, straight, able-bodied, upper class student. Nell wore her hair short and bleached, then toward the end of her tenure, she dyed it a deep purple color. She sported trendy glasses and minimal jewelry. Her style, like many others, was a casual mix of thrift shop wear and her own clothes-mostly jeans, sneakers, etc. Initially, this Upstate U. sophomore was something of a bull in a china shop in meetings; she was not familiar with how meetings were run and would often interrupt. As I came to know Nell better I understood her style reflected her deep passion and drive for organizing. She is energetic and committed, at least for as long as she could sustain it (which was about one year).

Nell was raised in a well-to-do suburb in the eastern part of the state. Her parents, who are divorced, are both professional people. She was an honors student in her k-12 public school and really enjoyed her Women's Studies and Sociology classes the most. I liked interviewing her because I was able to gain some insight into how her activist life was shaped by her upbringing.

Red identifies as a straight, white lower-middle class male. He is an Upstate U. social sciences sophomore/junior who attended public schools and was raised by his mother in a working class neighborhood near a major urban center in the northeast. He left to study abroad in 2003. Red wears glasses and dark clothes and has an awkward manner about him. He often comes late to meetings, interrupts others, and contributes things that make it appear that he is not listening or making an effort to connect with the issues and people at hand. When I interviewed him, I found Red to be a bit paranoid, if not grandiose. He was preparing for a semester abroad in the semester after I was leaving the field. Red worked on the community campaign on environmental justice, and his efforts went in fits and starts. He produced a video for the campaign that did not get much attention. He put a great deal of energy and time into it, but the

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editing and sound were poor. Red frequently posted on the listserv, often asking for help on projects or for rides to conferences or actions. I did not see many replies, which led me to believe he made few contacts in the group. After observing him in meetings, interviewing him at length, and reading his posts, I became concerned that Red might have a mental illness.

Tory is a 19 year old, white, middle class male from a small, rural, working class town in the northern part of the state. His parents were divorced when he was young and he lived mostly with his mother, a practicing Mormon, until he was in junior high school when he moved in with his dad. He attended a k-12 public school where he was a self-described "hoodie-wearing punk kid" who toilet papered trees and went to field parties and hardcore shows on the weekends with friends. Tory has reddish blonde hair and is average height and weight, wears jeans, sneakers, t-shirt and a black hoodie. His backpack has patches and buttons that display his dedication to the hardcore scene, as well as his political stance against the war.

When I first came into the field Tory was a freshman majoring in Economics and was about to change his major to Social Science. Within a semester of joining SAvE Tory, who is extremely sharp, warm, and soft-spoken, emerged as a leader and was elected as co-facilitator for his sophomore year. Tory is a sound meeting facilitator and reflective listener with good intentions. His attendance at meetings was perfect and revealed just how seriously he takes his role as an activist and leader in SAvE. Tory, along with Amanda organized the fall 2003 retreat and a speaker series the following year. His work as an activist, before he left for a semester abroad, was split between working on an off-campus community environmental justice campaign and the on-campus anti-militarization campaign. He also played an active role in the short -lived Progressive Coalition and publication The Progressive Press.

Ruth and I met on a train to a protest in Washington, D.C. She was with other students from Vickers College, a small, elite private school north of the Redrock River who were on their way to join and protest against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Ruth, who identifies as a white, reformed Jewish women who is "Queer but male-centered," is 20 years old and has a swimmer's body with broad shoulders and muscular limbs. She wears her chlorine bleached blonde hair in long dreadlocks that are festooned with bright, neon colored synthetic braided hair extensions. As a self-described tomboy, Ruth grew up in an intact family she describes as "well off," in a wealthy suburb and did her K-12 schooling in a district in that has a reputation for being "rich snobs." Ruth has an eclectic style that incorporates a mix of second hand and new clothes that have a preppy edge (hobo-prep). Often colorful and mismatched, the clothes she buys from the Salvation Army mask her upper class upbringing.

Politically, Ruth describes herself as activist who was raised by conservative Republican parents. In college, Ruth is on the swim team and majors in women's studies and environmental policy. She is an active member of her school's SAvE chapter and other political groups on campus. Ruth first came to activism through her experience coordinating a small-scale effort to bring a chapter of the Acceptance Coalition to her school. Even though Ruth is not in the same regional chapter of SAvE, she identifies as a local, and is close with several members of the chapter I studied. Ruth's contributions are significant—especially as I talk about the construction of activist identity. I used data from our initial meeting, and from two subsequent interviews and observations in the field.

Qualitative Research

Like many sociologists and educators, I am schooled in the qualitative research tradition and apply its methods and methodologies in this study. Qualitative research, like activism, involves

employing strategies in the form of methods that outline an approach to research as well as tactics or methodological procedures used implement the research. Not all qualitative researchers strategize or think about research in the same way but it is worth quoting Erickson (1977) at length on the focus of qualitative researchers who, he argues, are:

> concerned with social *fact* as social *action*; with social *meaning* as residing in and constituted by people's *doing* in everyday life. These meanings are most often discovered through fieldwork by hanging around and watching people carefully and asking them why they do what they do, sometimes asking them as they are in the midst of their doing. Because of this orientation toward social meaning as embedded in the concrete, particular doing of people—doings that include people's intentions of points of view—qualitative researchers are reluctant to see attributes of the doing abstracted from the sense of social action and counted out of context (p. 58).

As an educator, I wanted to know more about youth subcultures in education and, in particular, how student activists make sense of their experience in school and in the community, so I used qualitative tactics of inquiry like participant observation and in-depth interviews to provide a way to investigate the who, what, why, and how of student activism. Data collection methods like "hanging around" and other "approaches to inquiry" (Erickson, 1977) are, as Punch (1994) writes, part of "a spectrum of techniques—but central are observation, interviewing, and documentary analysis" (p. 84). Not only did I hang around with and ask questions of student activists in this study, I engaged in in-depth participant observation by attending meetings, protests, actions, conferences, social events, and more--both on and off campus--with students. I also conducted formal and informal interviews with key respondents over the course of nearly two years in the field.

Qualitative research is not only about method, techniques, and procedures but it is a way of thinking about and investigating a research dilemma. While quantitative research seeks to test a theory or hypothesis, often pre and post testing a sample group and offering a numbers-based

explanation of phenomenon, trends, or attitudes, as Bogdan and Biklen (2003) write, qualitative research questions "are not framed by operationalizing variables; rather, they are formulated to investigate topics in all their complexity, in context" (p. 2). Although both qualitative and quantitative research used in a mixed methods approach, quantitative research often advances generalizable conclusions to prove a hypothesis. On the other hand, qualitative researchers are not out to answer a specific question or test a hypothesis but are "concerned with understanding behavior from the subject's own frame of reference" and "tend to collect data through sustained contact with people in setting where subjects normally spend their time" (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003, p. 2).

As stated, qualitative researchers seek to understand experience and meaning making as it occurs in social, political, economic, and historical contexts, so providing rich, detailed description of observations and first person accounts allows me to better understand and interpret respondant experience. In each setting, I pay attention to details like who is speaking, how they speak, and how others make sense of the spaces, places, people, and context of the research setting. I also, as DeVault (1999) puts it, "use theory reflexively to analyze my own blindness and exclusions" (p. 17). I do locate myself in my work and therefore I understand the power dynamics inherent in the research contexts and relationships and use theory—specifically feminist and subcultural theory—to guide my research practice. For instance, because historical and first person accounts construct environmental activism as a predominantly white male space, I paid particular attention to gendered practices in the field and noted the way women were present and participating in the contexts of this study. I do not claim to "give voice" to the women here; rather, I am interested in their ways of knowing and, broadly, in issues of "silencing, censorship, suppression, marginalization, trivialization, exclusion, ghettoization, and

other forms of discounting" women (DeVault, 1999, p. 177). As such, theorizing silence, voice, difference, emotions, patriarchy, and more helped me to frame the way gender emerged as a structure of power and knowledge.

The strategies and procedures I use in this research aided my goal of considering "experience from the informants' perspectives"(Bogdan and Biklen, 2003, p. 7). They also contributed to an abundance of data gathered for analysis, the benefits and consequences of which I address in this chapter.

Methods and Data Collection

Many things affect the way I record, interpret, and write up my data. I agree with Mauther and Douchet who argue, "methods of data analysis are not simple techniques…but they are infused with the assumptions of the researchers who use them" (2003, p. 415). According to DeVault (1999), methods "should not be conceived as neutral 'tools' to be picked up and put down at will, but rather as practices that imply distinctive ways of understanding the world" (p. 21). DeVault suggests that methods reveal our "broader commitment to guiding research practice" rather than "prescriptions for action" (1999, p. 21). Throughout this chapter, I describe how a commitment to ethical fieldwork, including lengthy participant observation, in-depth interviews, and detailed record keeping, guided this research project.

For two years I spent several days a week with members of the group at meetings and actions. I joined them at their weekly organizational meetings, out-of-state protests, national and regional conferences, local rallies and marches, frequent campus teach-in's, film festivals, art exhibits, pot luck dinners, and in various other local and national activities. When I sought permission to conduct research from the group, I made a deal to exchange my labor for the opportunity to be a participant observer. As per this agreement, I served as the listserv manager for the group that, at

the time, communicated outside of meetings by phone and email. I also participated in rotating weekly community meeting tasks like taking notes or facilitating meetings. I also volunteered for various duties including co-coordinating food for the regional conference, co-organizing the wimmin's (women's) meetings, participating on the education committee, and on occasion, providing transportation to or from meetings, conferences, and rallies.

This project hinged on my interest in exploring student activist experience. After spending a few months in the field, I organized my research around questions like, What do student activists do? Why do students become activists and what does that mean to them? How does schooling affect student understanding and practice of activism? What role does identity play in student activist practice? For two years, I continued participant observation, and added two sets of in-depth interviews with key respondents at the end of year one and two. During this time, I took head notes and kept extensive field note journals. I collected several bins of texts to analyze including email communication, literature and advertising produced by the group, copies of a newspaper the group helped to produce, literature from conferences and retreats, and still and video photography that I recorded in the field. I conducted in-depth interviews with all thirteen of my key respondents—sometimes conducting a second interview after transcribing the first. In all, I had twenty cassette tapes to transcribe, interpret, and analyze. I hand-coded the data from the interviews and participant observation, and organized the data into several dozen themes that emerged. I interpreted and analyzed this data to complete an account that best represents not only how respondents made sense of their experience, but also what I witnessed.

At the beginning of the second year, I reassessed the way I organized my research and began to focus on privilege and organizational structure. I wondered how the organization served the needs of activists who were also students. I noted the complexities of a non-hierarchical

organization. I began to notice how privilege played out in individual and group activities and practices. My observer comments took up notebook after notebook alongside memos I wrote about what I was coming to know in the field. Eventually I became overwhelmed with the amount of data I had to analyze. Saturated, I finished my last few interviews and stopped observations just as the second school year wrapped up.

After spending several days a week, over twenty weeks per year for approximately 2,000 hours over two years, I left the field with an abundance of data. Two large bins overflowed with texts and ephemera I collected from various events and travels. I printed reams of email communication that I clipped into three 4" binders. I had 11 tapes left to transcribe and interpret. I had eight combined steno and marble composition books filled with field notes, 52 memos, and nearly 300 pages of transcripts, including observer comments. Over several weeks, I spent hours and days carefully transcribing each key informant interview and writing observer comments. I ended up with hundreds of pages of transcriptions which I first flagged with Post-its™ and then coded with colored highlighters as patterns surfaced and repeated. I followed by reading and analyzing dozens of memos and notebooks of field notes looking for language, actions, or students meaning making that seemed to coalesce around certain themes. I turned these themes into a list of codes. I labeled individual manila folders with each code and added relevant snippets from interviews and OCs that matched the codes. As more coding categories began to emerge, I wrote more memos and transferred information highlighted in the memos to the folders. When I exhausted my categories, I stopped analysis and began to organize the folders under family codes so I could envision data chapters.

My coding categories overlapped in dizzying fashion. I worried that, because I did not have a fancy computer coding program, I was somehow doing this all wrong. I worried that I had too

much material, then I worried that my sample size was too small. For two years, I was undecided about doing textual analysis on newspapers, emails, and artifacts collected over time. Finally, I focused on three family themes--identity, privilege, and membership—and returned to sub codes generated from interviews with my key respondents and in-depth participant observation.

Context

It is important to acknowledge that I conducted this research in an historic cultural context where post 9/11 political and economic systems, discursive constructions, and mediated representations came together to define the "patriot," and reinforce and reserve their place at the center of dominant culture practices and ideology. Some "patriots" purchased and displayed their loyalty by affixing a magnetic yellow "Support the Troops" ribbon to their car or flying the American flag from their home, business, and/or car. Even if they flew the flag or supported the troops, activists or anyone who questioned the wisdom of war profiteering were characterized as a bad citizen, enemy-other, dissident outlaw, evildoer, and even terrorist.

Because my fieldwork often took place during protests that critiqued America's role in global war profiteering, environmental degradation, and greed, there were times during my fieldwork when I felt like that bad citizen. Early on in my research, post-9/11, I attended a three day IMF-WTO protest in Washington, DC and was astounded by the overwhelming police presence. Whether sporting intimidating riot gear, undercover suits, or their everyday uniforms, law enforcement resembled a militaristic parade of storm troopers, MIB (Men in Black), and cavalry. Lining every street and corner, sometimes two divisions deep, this heavily armed and at-the-ready police state was a sharp contrast to the festival like gathering I witnessed at the Washington Monument on my first day at the event. Priests and nuns chatted with AIDS activists. College-age "radical cheerleaders" chanted alongside dancing grannies, marching

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trannies, and all manner of people praying for peace. A dark hive of black block activists buzzed nearby a dreadlocked drum circle and a dizzying array of larger than life papier maché puppets. I was stunned by the calm chaos, the curious onlookers, the journalists, the families, and student protesters who came en mass. As I approached the monument I was videotaping the scene, and panned the camera over two DC officers in a police car who were conducting surveillance at the entrance to the national park. The officer on the passenger side immediately returned the gesture and snapped a picture of me videotaping him. My husband, who is a foreign national, was reluctant to do anything that seemed confrontational, including holding a recording device or taking a picture of or near the Washington Monument and other DC landmarks. I can only imagine what was at stake in this climate for people who have historically been criminalized in the US, including citizens of color, and--at the time--anyone perceived to be Muslim or of Arab decent.

Methodology: Framing Research and Writing

My conceptual and methodological orientation to qualitative research has roots in anthropology, sociology, education, and feminist traditions. As such I approach this research from a relational standpoint that understands "human beings…as interdependent rather than independent and as embedded in a complex web of intimate and larger social relations" (Mauther & Doucet, 2003, p. 422). I believe that a network of relationships influences the way the student activists in this study make meaning of their life experience, so I spent two years in the field with my respondents doing participant observation, conducting in-depth interviews with thirteen key participants, and collecting related texts that I hoped to analyze for this study. Once I committed to being in the field, I missed only one meeting in two years. This dedication to participant observation at meetings, actions, and events allowed me to see various networks in action.

In this project, Symbolic Interactionism (SI) helps me to make better sense of how a certain group of student activists make meaning of and negotiate their identity, struggle for legitimacy, institutional boundaries, and the complexities of privilege. Symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934) aligns with a cultural studies lens to assume actions are derived from the meaning people give to things and to their social interactions with others, as well as to the way people manage these interactions. Symbolic Interactionism provides the guiding framework to interpret and analyze my data. SI looks at the way individuals work together and examines how these interactions influence identity construction. For decades, researchers who studied education, youth, and subcultures have embraced SI as a way to think about their fieldwork and interpret data (Becker, 1990; Brake, 1990; Hall, 2006; Muggleton, 2005; Stack & Kelly, 2006; Wilson, 2006). As mentioned, SI supposes that individuals give meaning to the things and people with whom they are connected. As individuals interact with their environment, they create, modify, and recreate meaning. By emphasizing meaning making interactions, SI underscores the relational perspective of this research.

This ethnography of student activists seeks to "examine the facts behind the promises of a better world," a phrase Lemert (2010, p. 12) uses to characterize Marx's lifelong query about the connection between increasing wealth of a few and the proportional poverty of the masses. Like many scholars who employ a CS framework, "Marxist-related concepts of hegemony and ideology" inform my analysis of power, knowledge production, resistance, and relationships (Wilson, 2006, p. 312). In his research on cultural life, social resistance, and youth Wilson (2006) suggests,

> A neo-Marxist understanding of hegemony presumes a relationship between
> marginalized youth and a dominant group (e.g., moral entrepreneurs such as law-
> makers and media producers), a relationship that has been at least tentatively
> secured because the dominant group has been able to achieve and maintain

consent to its dominance and because it has successfully allowed safety value expressions of resistance amongst those who are marginalized. (p. 312)

My feminist perspective also informs how I make sense of links between social and power relations, including who I am within this context and how relations produce or contribute to the conditions of affinity in my work. I treated interviews as conversations, coming prepared with a set of prompts that I quickly set aside as respondents told their stories. I tried to attend to how "dominant language and meanings" are naturalized in my interviews and interpretation (DeVault, 1999, p. 67). I allowed respondents to select the interview sites. Some chose a chapel, some the outdoors, some a noisy restaurant. Although I do not attend to it at length here, an exploration of how certain discursive, political, and cultural landscapes construct affinity between subject and researcher is worth exploring in the future.

My Analytical Journey

While in the field, I did as Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggest, and began to speculate and put ideas together both while I collected data and after data collection was complete. Yet, there was a clear distance between the time I left the field and when I wrote up my findings. In that space, I engaged in an analytical journey working to make friends with my data on a regular basis by reading, transcribing, sorting, and coding data, and writing memos. As themes emerged from dozens of codes, I once again followed Bogdan and Biklen's (2003) advice to decide on a fixed set of categories to analyze. Although prior to beginning my research I had notions about activism, my codes were grounded in my data and were not pulled from literature or prior assumptions. I used coding as a tool to create broader, over arching themes that allowed me to theorize.

In reviewing memos about coding I came across two questions written in pencil across the top of many of the memos: What repeats? What stands out? These are typical questions a qualitative

researcher asks as they review transcripts, field notes, and memos looking for words, phrases, patterns of behavior, an informant's way of thinking, or events that are curious, counter their assumptions, or recur. Patterns started to emerge regarding both they way informants and my notes addressed activities, practices, and the politics of schooling, identity and privilege. For example, students talked at length about the meaning of "activist" and categories like clothing, vocabulary, experience, guilt, radical, outsider, leader, vegan, and making a difference emerged. To illustrate, the code "radical" came from statements like "radical activists go the next step," and "radical activists are the real deal," and "radicals are outsiders."

As patterns emerged, I moved from codes to analytical themes. "Identity" surfaced as major theme in both the way students made sense of, enacted, and performed activism, and in recorded patterns of behavior and events from my observations and field notes. Within this theme, there were many, and often overlapping, identity sub codes including resistance, activist language, style, activities, food, political acts, gender, race, sexuality, class age, art, masculinity, race, privilege, popular culture, nostalgia, education, and language. As I continued to sort through coding categories, "education" stood out as a significant theme both in terms of the role schooling played in my informant's critique of the institution and in the development of their critical consciousness. They spoke of education as contested spaces of power and power struggles over belonging, authority, curriculum access, membership, and bureaucracy. Another major theme that emerged from the data—one that intersected with education-- was "extracurricular organization." Sub codes like non-hierarchical, student run, organizer, agitator, educator, opening circle exercises, popular culture, nostalgia, outsider, them (as in us v. them), and affinity/solidarity become apparent in the way students defined themselves with and against the outside world. Their talk and actions within the organization provided the codes that pushed

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me to analyze the way students define themselves in relation to their group and to the outside world.

Lastly, a major analytical theme that surfaced from coding categories was "privilege." Although this code overlapped with identity and education, what made it stand out as a strong theme were the struggles with certain privileged identities and notions, like race, class, gender, ability, and sexuality that were often both taken for granted and contested. In addition, student's attitudes about privilege and identity became evident as I observed group meetings over the years. Codes like having voice, giving voice, educating others, privilege, whiteness, white guilt, oppression, benevolence, conscious identification, gendered work, intersected with group practices and actions and provoked my analysis and findings on the way activities and practices complicated notions of privilege.

Because I had a number of years to reflect as I wrote up my findings, I composed a few memos on how my thinking may or may not have changed. For example, as student activism became increasingly visible and mediated in nightly news, blogs, and social media, I wondered how things might have been different had my informants been able to communicate and organize via text or Tweets which address this in my conclusion. However much of what took place during the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement resembled what I observed at various protests and actions while in the field and had little influence my analysis. Just like members of SAvE, OWS protestors made themselves visible by gathering in public spaces, carrying hand made signs, chanting slogans, holding teach-ins and sit-ins, performing guerilla theatre, sharing communal meals, and engaging in conversations—and sometimes confrontations--with curious onlookers. As I worked with my data I did consider what role the current movements would play in my future research.

Considerations and conversations in participant observation

Participant observation (PO) in qualitative research involves negotiating a complex network of social relationships (Eckert, 1989; Ellis, 1995; Taylor, 1991; Thorne, 1997; Wolcott, 1995). PO is guided by a theoretical orientation, the underpinnings of which provide direction and substance to the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). LeCompte (2002) argues that theoretical perspectives are necessary in fieldwork as they guide ethnography toward a more rigorous, and less messy and vague, practice of data collection and analysis. A growing body of literature supports this approach and suggests researchers who conduct participant observation need to be more specific and reflexive about reporting their own dilemmas and relations in the field (Adler & Adler, 1995; Ellis, 1995; McLaren, 1991; Narayan, 1997; Watson, 1999).

Feminist approaches to doing fieldwork also focus on issues of presence, emotions, shifting personal locations and identities, experience, and the complexities of framing how researchers conceptualize, conduct, and write about their research (Gardner, 1999; Narayan, 1997; Webb, 2000). Schratz and Walker (1995) understand qualitative research as a social and personal practice. They advocate for interrogating how our personal interests and values directly relate to the validity of the endeavor. These considerations and conversations place special emphasis on how affinity and the identity of the researcher complicate issues and relationships in the field, especially when writing.

Contemporary arguments also emphasize, as Gubrium and Holstein (1997) do, that "experience is not gained by mere proximity" (p. 9). However conversant we are about using our experience and theoretical orientation to understand relations in the field we must, as Watson (1999) proposes, be reflexive and "step outside ourselves in order to reflect on how our own life-histories are contributing to the perspectives we are accumulating" (p. 4). As they construct the

narrative of their experience, ethnographers must reflect on what constitutes a fair crafting of others *and* self in the field. For me, reflecting on experience in relation to my respondents enhances the understanding of research practice and data analysis.

Relationships and Roles in Participant Observation

Exploration of the context, conditions, and relationships of research provides a framework for ethnographic reflexivity in both data collection and writing. Contemplating conditions and relationship challenges the argument that ethnographer presence can be objective, invisible, or static. While in the field, building relationships with key members helped to connect me with SAvE's sporadic membership of newcomers and alumni, and with members of the activist community at large. Perceptions of proximity and distance to the membership created a shifting status where many members saw me as an insider while others kept a distance. For example, one member who refused my request to be a key respondent described me as an insider. I ran into him one day while I was at a café where he worked and he introduced me to his coworker like this,

> How do I describe Tina? She's a full-fledged member of SAvE. She came in to
> write about us and to study us, but she saw something there, something radical,
> and decided to participate-to become one of us. She's one of us.

According to this student I went from student-researcher to member because of a commitment to participation. Although I was clearly not a member of SAvE, I believe student participants interpreted my dedication to doing a quality study as affinity for the group and their work. Because I spent so much time with this group, relationships developed as did an understanding that I supported critical thinking and activism. In this case, my role as participant observer contributed to an illusion of hybridity (of researcher as member) that operated to "dismantle objective distance to acknowledge our shared presence in the cultural worlds we

describe" (Narayan, 1997, p. 34). Throughout my research, I witnessed the impact of affinity on my role and practices. Although I could not name it while I was in the field, in order to be seen as less strange but not too familiar, I was actively working on impression management (Goffman, 1959).

I am committed to ethical research, so I often acknowledged the dynamics of power by reminding students of my role as a researcher. Indeed, this research is an effort to document and describe a phenomenon that was of interest to me and to them. Combining methods—using participant observation and interviews—served as a means to engender confidence in my professionalism for both me and the students. In research, issues of affinity are embedded with relations of power and authority, and theoretical orientation to fieldwork provides necessary guideposts. As Narayan (1997) teases out, expanding the dialogue on hybridity beyond considerations of researcher roles and status as bound and static allows researchers to "more closely approximate the complexities of lived interaction" (p. 34). Combining methods supports the qualitative project of broadening the view of interesting phenomenon in order to gain a better understanding of life experience.

Oftentimes, my respondents pushed me to think deeply about my role in the research. One question, as outlined below, lingered with me growing from a simple inquiry into complex questions about relationships and roles in qualitative research. Milo, a key participant in my study, and I crossed paths one day in the common area of Hemmingway Hall, as we did on occasion. We had just returned, with other members of SAvE, from a weekend trip to the National Conference on Organized Resistance (NCOR) in Washington, DC. Milo was a passenger in my car on the seven-hour road trip. This was my third voyage to Washington, DC to observe the student activists in the study, but it was the first time I traveled *with* participants,

as opposed driving separately. On this day, Milo,[4] an undergraduate student in the program

where I am a teaching associate and graduate student, stopped me to inquire about my research

and talk about the NCOR trip. Milo was insatiably curious about my findings--especially what I

thought of him. We exchanged impressions about the snowstorm on the harrowing return trip

and about our conference experience. Our brief conversation ended and Milo thanked me again

for the ride. After a momentary hesitation, Milo called out from a distance, "Tina, just who are

you now? A participant or an observer?" My reply was something vague like, "Well, I did

exchange my labor for an opportunity to observe your group, so I guess I am both."

Milo pushed me to regard participant observation, as Van Maanen (1988) proposes, as a

"situation rather than a method" (p. 77). Even though the methods I used to gather data for this

study—participant observation, in-depth interviews, and textual analysis—can be seen as

"tools," the way I apply and understand them is deeply influenced by a host of factors including

but not limited to my career in education, my schooling, my identity, and the field itself. My

personal biography, and the sociopolitical and historical contexts influence how I conduct and

interpret data collection. In this way participant observation creates and takes place in

circumstances that contribute to the complexity of the work.

Questions at the intersection of ethics and identity that qualitative research in general and

participant observation in particular pose for both the subjects and the researcher interest me

most. In her observation of the changing face of ethnographic researcher--that is a diversity of

gender, race, and class--Tedlock (2000) offers that "participant observation has become the

observation of participation" in which researchers' personal narratives inform the research (p.

471). Further, Tedlock claims that "the ongoing nature of fieldwork connects important personal

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[4] I was a teaching associate in one of his classes. I took a class with Milo several semesters back but we did not know each other then. In addition to his thought provoking comment, I mean to explicate how Milo and I (and the others in my study) occupy shared territory and how this complicates the project of participant observation.

experience with an area of knowledge; as a result, it is located between the interiority of autobiography and the exteriority of cultural analysis (2000, p. 455). Because I was working with youth, I paid particular attention to issues of identity, power, and authority affected my research and writing.

Proximity and Distance: Ethics and Boundaries in Fieldwork

For years, qualitative researchers have defined, categorized, and debated researcher practices and dilemmas of proximity and distance in fieldwork. Early on, Malinowski's (1922) groundbreaking work on observation in fieldwork experience started the debate about the complexities of "going native." Decades later Goffman (1959) wrote about impression management as social behavior as attempts by an individual or team to perform or "stage a character" to affect the way they are perceived in the field (p. 208). Goffman's cautionary tale serves as a reminder of how individual behaviors, actions, and gestures as well as interactions with others, change the way our "audience" makes sense of a researcher and her practice. Baker (2006) suggests that, "participant observation research differs from other methods in that it requires the researcher to have more specialized training on how to observe, what and how to record the data, how to enter the field and leave it, and how to remain detached and involved at the same time"(p.187). This idea of being simultaneously detached and involved evokes the challenges of proximity and distance; a dance that culminates in lessons on how to enter, be in, and leave the field. For me, aside from ethical guidelines, my reflecting on my field experience helped me to guide involvement with my respondents and the direction of this study.

Like many of my respondents, I sometimes struggled with insider/outsider boundaries. I had a desire to be seen as familiar/not-strange, and portray my presence as shadowing rather than surveillance. Below, Ben a student activist and veteran member of SAvE addressed how habits

of being and personal taste can mark an activist as an "outsider:"

> I waited and waited to be picked up for the conference. This was the first time I learned what the L in Leftist stood for--Late, and the "eft" stood for every fucking time. On this ride with I was exposed to new music I had never heard before and didn't particularly like and I realized just how outside I am when the others in the car reacted negatively to the music I liked. When we arrived, we went to a bar to socialize with some of the organizers of the conference. I drank a soft drink while others socialized. It wasn't just then, but I often felt like an outsider. For example, breakfast was bagels and hummus. What the hell was hummus? It tasted horrible to me, though one guy who looked like a 25 year old Jerry Garcia, just kept salivating over it. For dinner, I went out to eat with a bunch of people from Western University, who were all vegetarians or vegans. While I ordered some pork, they ordered bean curd. What is bean curd? That was my first reaction. They explained it to me, and were very accepting that I ate meat, though they planted some seeds for the future.

Once, when I brought a cup of Dunkin Donuts coffee to a meeting, a member chastised me for drinking from Styrofoam (the cup was paper). That moment recalls Ben's conflicts about making sense of experience and belonging. Building trust and relationships in the field requires researcher reflexivity, that is paying attention how respondents make sense of their world and of me. Early on, I remember being concerned about how the group perceived me. I never brought food to share at meetings. Food sharing was not a general practice at meetings and I did not want to be seen as a den mother-type who would garner favor with home-baked goods. I rarely gave rides to students, as I was afraid to be seen as a taxi or soccer mom (I drove a minivan at the time). I was friendly but not social and I never offered personal information unless asked. I did not attend informal social gatherings where alcohol, underage drinking, and drug use might be present. Although my husband did accompany me on one out of state trip, I never brought my daughter into the field with me.

After only my third SAvE meeting I wondered in my field notes why no member had asked me about my research. Had I explained my role well enough to begin with? Was I expected to explain who I was every time a new member came in? One student who had not been present

when I initially introduced myself and was granted access to the group refused to speak of a planned action in my presence. Because I was unfamiliar--as were other new members--and the only adult in the group, she cited "security culture" as the reason for her hesitation. At the time, I felt she viewed me as a potential threat. What was clear to me, but not to everyone, was that I was a researcher and not an infiltrator or foe.

Strangeness and Intimacy

Reflecting and writing memos while in the field showed me how boundaries around relationships affect research practice and data analysis. In my professional life as an educator, my business with students, their organizations, and families was "work" where I always maintained strict boundaries between the professional and personal. The ethical gauge I applied to my teaching also framed my understanding of proximity and distance in my research with students. When I reread accounts in my field notes, memos, and interviews, I saw a pattern emerging of how my respondents situated me. I was cognizant of how, as Clandinin and Connelly (1998) put it, "researcher relationships to ongoing participant stories shape the nature of field texts and establish the epistemology status of them…a field note is not simply a field note…what is told, as well as the meaning of what is told is shaped by the relationship" (p. 162). I resisted being constructed as an "insider," yet reflecting on how impressions influence roles and status, my analysis and writing became more clear and focused.

Layered narratives of understanding emerge out of our research encounters; each one reinforcing Schwandt and Thomas' claim that understanding is relational and that strangeness and intimacy are not merely "cognitive or rational aspects of our experience, but ways in which we actually experience being in the world" (1999. p. 457). My experience in education, including

the way identity and power work to produce strangeness and intimacy affect the way I conceptualize my role with, and relationships to, students in the field.

Although the students were surprised when I told them I am nearly ten years older than their best guesses, because I conducted research with college students and student run organizations, my age immediately marked me with a level of strangeness. But other factors, such has having a tattoo or "coming of age" in the 1960s and 1970s--nostalgic decades for many anti-war and environmental student activists--helped me to secure a place, however misguided, as someone who is potentially subversive and possibly one of them. When my respondents sought a level of intimacy that I thought crossed the boundaries of privacy (both theirs and mine), I struggled to respond. Even though I clearly have narrative authority over the written work, I did not want to be seen as an adult *in authority* especially over their own experience.

In my field notes, I observed how Emma marveled over the fact that "I was older, have a child, am a graduate student, etc." She remarked on how "young" I looked and how "cool" I was "for an older person." As we walked arm in arm down the streets of DC, Emma told me about her relationship troubles, her interest in women, her alienation, and how much her love of weed and alcohol gets her in trouble. Shortly after that encounter, Emma called me to invite me to a poetry reading and I politely declined.

I was afraid of getting too close to Emma. I convinced myself that doing fieldwork meant that I could not muddy my roles. After all, I was a researcher and not a counselor and could not let this other aspect of my professional life seep into my work in the field. Looking back, I am sure that Emma merely extended the invitation out of kindness. While I understand identity as porous and not fixed, I resisted any interpretation of me that did not include "researcher-first." Moreover, I was suddenly unsure about what constituted "the field." Should I observe the

'casual,' social activities in addition to areas I considered fair game? Because I saw myself as a "teacher-researcher" doing ethical research about youth that honored my respondents' privacy, I did not want to mix business with pleasure (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 44).

Later, I wrote about how I may have missed out on an opportunity to observe Emma and other student activists in a casual setting. Once I left the field and began data analysis, I recognized that I had set up boundaries meant to maintain an ethical distance, protect my privacy, and manage my image in the field. This dance of proximity and distance I practiced created a kind of social camouflage that helped me to define the field and good practice. In formal gatherings like weekly meetings and actions, I had a defined, active role that helped me to control my exposure. We met and worked mostly in groups. I was Tina, the researcher, taking care of business. Unlike the "work" of the weekly meetings and actions, I treated casual events (like house parties) as student only spaces that were off limits to research. I actively constructed boundaries between the private (casual/intimate) and the public (the business of research), so I could control the level of intimacy—or so I thought. Students who sought to bridge the gap between the private and public, who pushed me to be less strange, also pushed me to think in more complex ways about the benefits and pitfalls of relationships, identity, and ethics in the field.

For example, when given the choice to travel to out of state events with participants, I initially chose not to be part of the organized carpool. The student activists refer to these road trips as "bonding experiences" because these intimate, casual experiences helped students develop personal connections. I preferred to maintain a comfortable distance on both the long rides and in the overnight accommodations. Most students who go on these activist road trips stay with strangers, sleep in sleeping bags on cement floors, lack the comfort of a private bathroom, and

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stay up talking--and sometimes partying--into the night.

I was conflicted. I felt silly fussing about accommodations; I knew that one earned their activist stripes by roughing it. I suffer from chronic migraines and lack of sleep and regular meals among other circumstances exacerbated this condition. I also thought better of having a sleepover with students twenty years my junior. I was not ready to be privy to late night conversations. Surely the privacy and relief of a hotel room would help with recording accurate field notes and achieving a good night's rest. Still, I did not want my need for comfort to put distance between the research participants and myself.

On the third trip out of town, although I found my own accommodations, I decided to join the students as part of the carpool to National Conference on Organized Resistance (NCOR). This increased level of proximity on the rides down and back proved to be a turning point in my research. I also brought my husband on this road trip. The presence of my husband, the fact that I happen to drive a minivan, the type of music and food we brought along, and conversations we had all provided clues to my "back regions," to who I am, to certain conditions of my personal life (Linekin, 1998).

I typically interacted with students on campus and at a few local off campus events. I went to an occasional potluck but never to social events like parties at student's homes. Because we met at predominantly on campus locations, students never saw certain aspects of my private life. When we picked up Milo on the way to the conference he immediately commented on the car I was driving. "A Honda Odyssey?" he said, "You must be loaded." I could not discern whether he was trying to mark me as someone who had money so he could get out of chipping in for gas or he automatically made the assumption that people who get around with anything other than a bike are rich. I naively thought that the destination (the protest) was where I was going to begin

the work of participant observation. Yet, these casual encounters stuck with me. As Milo and others began to make sense of me on this trip, I saw the fluidity of the self-imposed boundaries between "work" and "social." The car ride to and from conference had varying effects on my affinity with students as illustrated by the following encounters.

For example, Milo commented at length on my selection of music CDs; he brought militant rap and obscure spoken word poetry and I had mostly jam-band rock, techno, and classical rock. According to Milo my taste in music was "not all that hip" further concretizing the gap between us. However, the sushi and other road trip food I brought along helped me to regain some of the lost cache in a way that troubled me. Milo, who liberally helped himself to the food, subsequently claimed his spot on the ride home and made everyone in the car swear not to tell anyone else how "down" [cool, enjoyable] this ride was. Even though along the way we did have lengthy, involved, and at times deeply personal discussions, I suspect that Milo wanted to return for the free food more than anything else.

As it turned out, I had an entirely different load of students on the way home. And although I have decades of experience and an accident-free driving record, the weather was not working in our favor. The blowing and drifting snow made visibility near zero at times. Every half-mile cars were off the road, some embedded in snowdrifts. We drove at a snail's pace. One student, Kerry, a freshwoman at GSC and a former student of mine, was concerned that her mother would be worried so I encouraged her to call her mom on her cell phone. "Would you talk to her?" Kerry requested. "Of course," I replied. In the meantime Mary, a senior in the ROTC program at UU, and a first time participant in the conference with whom I did not have much contact outside of seeing each other at weekly SAvE meetings was gearing up to ask me a "personal question" about a dilemma she was having. We went on to have a conversation about this and

turn to another subject but not before Mary declared, "You remind me of my mom!"

For a moment I forgot about the storm to consider the implications of her perception of me (Mom! What does she mean?). So I decided to ask. Mary said that I was a "good listener and a thoughtful person." Plus, I can "drive well." When I dropped Mary and Kerry off at their respective residence halls, they both gave me a hug-- something that was new for us but not uncommon among members of the group. Despite my exhaustion, I paused to wonder how that ride might have affected my affinity and relationship to the group. Almost directly after this trip, as one of our many conversations in the van alluded to, Mary dropped out of SAvE. I could not help but wonder whether Mary, who prided herself on being tough, felt a little too vulnerable in front of me. This encounter left me with many questions: How do I come across as "mother" or "fun?" How do age and gender mark me? What does it mean to be an adult in the field with college students? How do relationships—especially those constructed as parental--complicate leaving the field? How does Mary's view of me as "mom" shift the already evident power dynamic in the field?

In the end, these brief encounters showed just how porous "the field" is and how little we can control the impressions of others. Casual encounters establish a degree of intimacy that my 'business' participant observation did not. Without imposing on their personal space, I came to better understand how students understood the road trips and parties as a space to create and build relationships.

Chance encounters

Ethnography is a process of gathering data and constructing a narrative in an "attempt to place specific encounters, events, and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context," (Tedlock, 2000, p. 455). I live, work, study, and play in the city where I conduct my research,

therefore in my everyday activities--both by choice and by design--I cross paths with the participants of this dissertation project. From her research in educational institutions, Eckert acknowledges the potential interference of personal experience when conducting research in our own backyard (Eckert, 1989). Posner refers to doing fieldwork on home turf as semi-familiar (Posner, 1980). Similarly, I wonder how chance and casual encounters change the dynamics of fieldwork.

With casual encounters researchers have little control over protecting certain aspects of their personal lives. As I mentioned earlier, I tried to avoid bringing my family into the field however, because I do research where I live I sometimes run into participants in off hours or at non-SAvE functions. Like casual encounters, chance encounters challenge the question, "In what field does fieldwork occur?" (Gordon, 1997, p. 41). They led me to wonder how I should account for chance encounters in my data collection and writing.

In the winter of the second year of my research, I attended the second annual UU/GSC production of Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* with my friend, Madeline, who owns the local independent bookstore. One year earlier, Madeline and I were "Vagina Warriors" from the first joint production of the play. We were the oldest "actresses" in a cast filled mostly with undergraduate women some twenty years our junior. Even though this was a student production, I did not expect to run into any of my research participants, let alone consider the space as fair game for participant observation. However, by the end of the evening, I had a few pages of observer comments that I included in my data.

Upon my arrival at the play, I had a chance encounter with Jesse, a SAvE graduate student activist in the study who identifies as "a queer vegan." Jesse was also in the audience that night and his reaction to my presence took me aback. Jesse, who is demonstrative but often aloof to

my presence during meetings, practically knocked me down with an embrace that included planting a noisy, wet kiss on both of my cheeks. This unfamiliar gesture was followed by a remark that Jesse punctuated with surprise and delight; "I am *so* shocked to see *you* here." This was a chance encounter for Jesse, too so I replied with equal enthusiasm to put my presence into context, "I am a Vagina Warrior from last year's premiere production!" Jesse replied, "Oh my God! I would have never guessed. That is so cool!"

The enthusiastic greeting and the insistence on kissing me goodbye after the performance, coupled with Jesse's surprise and delight at seeing "Tina the researcher" at a queer friendly event was another "ah ha" moment for me. I realized that as long as I had not left the field, no matter where I went public spaces were no longer reserved for private, non-research moments like theater going. On the contrary, each time I left my house, I was open to chance encounters with the participants of my study. In this case, my encounter with Jesse seemed to enhance our relationship. In his eyes, my status as a "Vagina Warrior" transformed our affinity. I became less strange. I began to formulate an answer to Milo's query about my role (Are you a participant or observer?). I was a participant in this research not just because I exchanged my labor for the privilege to study the group, but because I was a subject in this research, too. My personal experience--and interpretation of experience--matters to data analysis and narrative construction. As Clandinin and Connelly (1998) note:

> How we get from field to field texts is a critical matter in personal experience methods. Central to the creation of field texts is the relationship of researcher to participant. We take for granted that all field texts are selectively chosen from field experience and thereby embody an interpretive process. What we want to add to this understanding is the importance of the relationship (p. 162).

When I had time to reflect on my fieldwork I was able to fully consider the impact of personal experience and relationships on researcher practice.

Practices and portrayals: Writing experience

Ethnography uses data from field notes, head notes, artifacts, casual conversations, interviews and observation to construct a narrative. The process of building a narrative—in this case a dissertation about student activism-- raises a variety of questions about methods and methodology. Van Maanen (1998, p. 4) argued that fieldwork however "limited" and "sticky" is the means we use to *know* a culture; on the other hand, the writing or "desk work" of ethnography is a means to *portray* a culture. In ethnography, fieldwork and writing are companions, and as Van Maanen (1988) suggests "ethnographies are politically mediated, since the power of one group to represent another is always involved" (p. 5).

For years, researchers have debated important considerations raised by research design, data collection, interpretation, and analysis. Questions such as what is "good" research practice (Bogden & Biklen, 1996) and how do we represent our "tales from the field?" (Van Maanen, 1988) continue to interest me. For one thing, our portraits and portrayals of the field, like the stories presented here, represent our understanding of culture. As Van Maannen (1988) reminds us:

> To portray culture requires the fieldworker to hear, to see, and most important for our purposes, to write of what was presumably witnessed and understood during a stay in the field. Culture is not itself visible, but is made visible only through its representation (p. 3).

While completing my fieldwork I began to explore the way in which the practices and relationships of participant observation provided a framework for ethnographic reflexivity. In the end, I selected data that best represented student experience and organized it accordingly. As I coded my data, I kept going back to something Amanda said,

> I see you but I forget that you are doing research. It's like Tina is a member of the group. And everyone thinks you are the coolest person ever. And we're like, we love Tina.

I did not have the luxury of forgetting my role or responsibility. Sometimes I worried so much about what I wrote that I toyed with leaving certain things out of my notes. From the beginning of my first semester in the field, I recorded field notes and wrote memos after each encounter. One evening, I remarked on the "ease and openness" with which members referred to drug use. Rather than attribute student disclosure to comfort or security, I wrote that the group must accept marijuana use because its mention was so casual. Because none of my key respondents had discussed drug use I decided to leave any mention of drugs out of my memos or notes. I was concerned about how disclosure of illegal activities might affect the students.

After the following meeting, one of my key respondents approached me and said, "You smoke pot, right?" Taken aback I said, "Did I tell you I did?" "No," he said, with a smirk and a laugh. "Did I give you the impression I did?" I said. And he laughed again. He went on to tell me that he had some great "homegrown" that he wanted to share. I thanked him and mentioned that I did not think that was a good idea, given that I am an employee of the institution where he is a student. He said, "I'll bring you some anyway." I thanked him but gave him a stern, "No" and walked away.

I immediately detailed this exchange in my field notes. When I had time to reflect I wrote a memo titled "Assumptions" questioning why this student decided to approach me and whether I should include this story. Was it a test? Did he think I was a security threat? Was he just being nice? Should I ask him? Rereading the notes, I noticed that I never told him that I did not smoke pot. Instead, I blamed the certain trouble any association with illegal drugs would cause me professionally. Was I trying to appear something other than I am? Was I concerned about rapport? I decided that thoughtful consideration of all experience was essential to data analysis and to the way I portrayed my experience.

Struggles and Limitations of the Study

Struggles

As a doctoral student, I embraced the study of qualitative research. I loved reading about it and conducting fieldwork, and I had many inspirational mentors who pushed me to be a thoughtful researcher including Huei Hsuan Lin, Sari Biklen, Maureen Schwartz, Steve Taylor, Bob Bogdan, Marj DeVault, Leslie Bogad, and Nisha Gupta. With all of the joy and insight that came with doing research, in many respects I struggled. For starters, I wanted to use multiple methods and I ended up saturated with data that I had trouble marshalling. While writing observer comments and analyzing the data was a breeze, I struggled with organizing codes, subcodes, and family codes that emerged from the mountains of data I collected. Also, because I could not decide which stories to tell (and I was not sure how to tell them) I had enormous difficulty writing when I left the field.

Limitations of the study

This account is most certainly "selective and partial" (Wilson, 2006, p. 31). These images and stories highlight student experience of activism from a limited perspective of the college students I observed and interviewed. Additionally, student activists in the group were mostly white, mostly heterosexual, mostly materially privileged, and mostly able-bodied. I imagine students who are marginalized because of race or ability or sexual orientation may have their own, and perhaps different, experience of activism. Other college students, who might characterize themselves as politically conservative, maintain an important presence on college campuses today. Examining their perspectives on activism, war, and environmentalism, and looking at the structures of their organizations would be equally instructive about identity, privilege, and membership. Further, there are college students who consider themselves activists but never

protest or join a group. Their stories seem worth telling, too. Still, observing and writing about these particular students' experience of activism tells a story that has merit for educators and other student activists and groups. No matter how small the sample seems, it is important to understand how meaning is made and understand lived experience in the shared territory of activism.

As far as methods go, focus groups may have been instructive for students and contributed a different perspective to this project especially concerning how students, as a collective, understood the organization. Also, social media was not widely used by college students during the time my study was conducted. Facebook and Twitter exploded after my study was complete and were not part of activist literacy or communication in the early part of the 21st century. It is worth exploring how activist groups use social media today. In addition, I did not use volumes of data from exchanges on the listserv and from multiple print media used to communicate to each other and to the outside world. Given the role of Facebook and Twitter in recent global activism, I wonder how textual analysis of the material I collected, specifically about the students' use of technology, would have enhanced or changed the nature of this study. Lastly, all of my respondents were educated in public schools. With the advent of the Common Core Standards and the so-called school reform movement by individuals and institutions who seek to privatize public education by creating charter schools, it would be interesting to examine how other school structures like charter schools, parochial schools, and private schools understand critical thinking, student resistance, and youth formations.

CHAPTER 4
"This is What Democracy Look Like": Making Sense of Student Activist Identity

In this chapter, I examine how students come to activism and what activism means to them. This chapter also explores what it means when individual students adopt the identity "student activist" and how students understand and negotiate activist labels. Among others, this chapter addresses the following questions: Who becomes a student activist? What reasons do activists give for becoming activists? How do students talk about activism?

Students in this study became activists for a variety of reasons. Some came to activism in high school where the gender and institutional power structures defined borders for engagement with youth on the margins. Some came to activism in college where cultural codes and language shaped how they interacted with peers and family. Coming to activism is by no means linear but activism helped students to make sense of the way institutions educate individuals to become critical thinkers and agents of change. Activist schooling takes place through an informal curriculum of individual and group engagement and is driven by a combination of personal experience and critical inquiry.

This chapter is divided into two parts. First, I examine how students define and how they come to activism. Second, I describe respondents' struggles to make sense of their work as activists.

Part One: The Meaning of Activism

Change Work

Activist work is change work. Student activists engage in debate, discussion, and stewardship with a goal toward effecting meaningful change and building membership in a strong community. Student activists in this study share an affinity for the politics of the environment

and anti-war/militarization and learn while practicing their politics. Student activism is not just an extracurricular activity but it is a commitment to engaged scholarship and sustained involvement with political issues and people.

According to respondents, student activism is a lifestyle for students who are committed to change. Student activists are not just "weekend warriors" who can separate their activism from schoolwork and other college activities like partying. Student activists are not just passionate or informed about an issue they integrate actively working for change into their daily life. Before she became an activist, Nell said "there were times in the past where I was interested in an issue but I wasn't actively trying to change things. I would just sit around and complain." Whether their parents are "liberal" like Anne's or "conservative" like Nell's, activists advocate matching concerns with work:

> …I always had liberal parents in the background and I've always been distrustful
> of the media and of corporations and all that but I hadn't really put it together in
> any kind of analysis or work. And I also took for granted that it was just a crappy
> world and I would be depressed about it.

Tory agrees that activism means more than just complaining; it involves producing change:

> At home I was just a punk kid and me and my friends ran around the streets and
> caused trouble. But I wasn't really directing that energy toward anything really
> that useful. I mean we talked about how shitty things where and how the
> government and politicians suck...but never anything productive.

The work of activism requires that students put their energy and ideas into action. Havoc also describes activist work as productive, active, and change oriented:

> Yeah, I call myself an activist. I guess I would define it as, take it like, regardless
> of like whether you are in the system or out of the system, I think of it as, if you
> are proactive on an issue and you really drive to make that change.

Milo defines the nuances of doing activist work when he talks about the difference between a tactic and a strategy. Milo says:

"I'm certainly sympathetic to these kids who show up and want to throw bricks through windows and I'm just like, sometimes there's a role for throwing bricks through windows but it's a tactic, it's not a strategy."

These students understand the "system" as a social structure that organizes people as either mainstream (in the system) or marginalized (outside of the system). As Milo states, activism is a form of education and a reflective process of thinking critically about the role of power, culture, and experience:

> …people are products of their culture, I think people need to recognize that. And trying to teach and help other people to grow and become citizens…they need to be reflective about what they are thinking because of their experiences, and what they were thinking because they were told to think it. And they need to be critical of experience, critical of themselves.

Enacting change involves understanding the system, sorting out the useful bits, and organizing. Ann understands the work of change this way:

> I just feel like, in order to understand how to effect change, it's really important to know how things work. To know like where the weaknesses are in the system. I think of it, I almost always lately think of everything in terms of organizing, what is useful.

An acute understanding of the system is key to changing it. Activism is not just espousing a theoretical analysis of a situation, as Ann points out below activist work is an active, on-going process of educating and organizing:

> I think reading is a valuable strategy for me. I think some people have the attitude that you have to read a certain amount before you can be an effective organizer or activist and I think that's dangerous. I don't know, I just, especially being surrounded by people academia again. There's a whole bunch of people who have perfect analysis but who never do anything about it. But like get into dialogues with other, you know, Marxists, and blah, blah, blah, and I think that's dumb.

Students argue that activism is both talking the talk and walking the walk. It is not merely an academic process of dialogue with other like-minded people because knowing and discussing theory is not enough. Activists do not merely adopt the cause du jour; rather they are dedicated to

understanding and changing the politics and policies connected to their issues. As Nell suggests, activism is more than associating with an issue; activism is political action:

> Globalization is up there. So is global justice and fair trade. But there's definitely a political side of it. You know environmental issues are important, but foreign policy issues-how governments interact with each other, especially the role of corporations in the United States, because it's a process of taking over the world right now. And we've got to do something about it.

The "doing something" or work of activism is often represented by tactics like protests or sit-in's employed as a way to express frustration with the system, but student activists see change work as much more. The work of effecting change is strategic. Students see this work as an ongoing process of reflexivity, critical thinking, education, organizing, and action.

To further illustrate negotiation required by student activists as they figure out how to do activist work, Amanda recounts a scene at a weekly meeting that tested student commitment to certain practices:

> A: I remember one day when Naysha came in, or maybe it was Linnea, and they had food in a Styrofoam container. And a couple of people were like, "Why do you bring in Styrofoam?" And they were like, "We need to eat."

> I: Yeah, those things can be alienating. I remember bringing a paper cup from Dunkin Donuts and someone tried to call me out as having Styrofoam. I was like, "It's paper." But I was embarrassed nonetheless.

> A: I know, like Havoc, he eats meat, and he doesn't ever want to bring anything that has meat because, (laughs) he might be shunned.

The complexity of doing activism is highlighted in student struggles with a real or imagined set of activist practices, activities, and behaviors. For some, activism may be "Do what I say, but not as I do." Student activists can tell their peers, "Don't use Styrofoam" but many students are dependent on meal cards used in dining halls that serve food in Styrofoam packaging. In addition, as Amanda points out, activist practices carry meaning and, depending on the context, have consequences. I will discuss the complexities of group life in detail in the next chapter.

A Politicized Identity

   School, family, and friendships are just a few of the social relations that organize and

determine the boundaries of conformity and convention for youth. Over and over, in interviews

and in fieldwork, my respondents demonstrated how school and family shaped their

understanding of and entry into activism. For example, students suggest that "activist" is

politicized because they belong to a group with political aims, and share a collective identity in

their fight against structures of power.

   As Ruth contends, the context, politics, and language of home, school, and "society" matter in

how people self-identify:

> I'm 20 years old. Female and white. And um, as far as sexuality, I identify as
> Queer even though I am male oriented, I think for political reasons and I don't
> feel like I fit into the little box that society has created for me as female
> heterosexual or any of that, so I identify as Queer…um. And most of my college
> friends are Queer and identify as that or gay or bisexual (Ruth).

   I first met Ruth on a metro train to Washington D.C. as we were heading to a protest staging

area on the Mall. Later we met near the campus of Upstate University, one of the sites where I

conducted my research, for a formal interview. Ruth had a lot in common with her peers at her

predominantly white, upper middle class, suburban high school. She did not have to work after

school, and had access to and took advantage of a variety of Advanced Placement (AP) classes,

well-funded sports and arts programs, and myriad extracurricular and leisure activities.

Throughout school, Ruth's politics, friendships, and activities influenced her identity. Unlike

most of her high school contemporaries, Ruth identified as an "activist" and "queer but male-

oriented…for political reasons," meaning she was a heterosexual ally to her gay and lesbian

peers. To Ruth gender and sexuality are social constructs imposed by society. Ruth exercised

heterosexual privilege by creating an ally identity that masked her heterosexuality. She sees this

as a political move, in part, because of a desire to stand in solidarity with the LGBTQ

community and to push against constrictive societal norms. She was also part of a group who

shared her struggle and interests. In high school, student activist groups often occupy a

politicized position that articulates solidarity with marginalized others. As Ruth describes in the

interview segment below, she was part of a coalition of students working to educate others about

LGBTQ issues, equality, and diversity:

> Yes. I'm a college student and an activist. Actually I was lucky in that I had a
> great group of friends who were in high school. We were kind of ahead of the
> game. We figured out this whole queer thing. Some identified as gay. We um,
> I'm sure I'll get into this later, but…there was this group called The Acceptance
> Coalition we started in high school. I helped to start it in my high school. Um.
> Well they, most of the people in the high school did not understand what queer
> was, what we were trying to do. As the Acceptance Coalition we were "the gay
> kids" to them even though that wasn't what it was. But we tried to open up their
> minds and make them realize we just wanted equality and acceptance and to
> celebrate diversity.

LGBTQ activism created solidarity among a determined, proactive, forward thinking,

somewhat marginalized collective ("we") who stood opposite an uninformed, closed minded

majority other ("they"/"them"). Ruth's Queer identity connected her to marginalized youth and

defined her political agenda. While some gay and lesbians are forced to hide their identity, for

example, to gain acceptance in the military or the workplace, activists like Ruth often "mobilize"

their identity for political reasons. Below, Alcoff (2006) reveals the complexity of the role of

identity in culture:

> Age can be surgically masked, homosexuality can be rendered invisible on the
> street, and class can be hidden behind a cultivated accent or clothing style, but
> when these identities are mobilized in political movement, visible markers are
> generally highlighted, whether in styles of dress or bodily comportment (p. 6).

Yet subcultural youth reject attempts to define and categorize them. Emma, a SAvE member

from a different regional chapter, explains how Queer identity is one way to mess with gender

boundaries imposed by society:

> Um. To me it means, like knowing yourself better than the next person knows
> you. Not taking what society says about you as you. From day one, because of
> my physical gender, I am a female, I am a girl, so I wear skirts and I wear my hair
> in a ponytail and I play with Barbie. Uh, no.

Like Ruth, Emma mobilizes Queer identity as a political *choice* that rejects accepted

conventions of gender and sexuality, and signals solidarity with the LGBTQ community. Like

Emma, Ruth ignores the privilege inherent in the claim that Queer is, "a very inclusive self

identifying term." Some LGBTQ individuals choose to self identify but being gay or lesbian is

not a choice for most. In this case, Queer identity is politicized as a lifestyle choice to support

inclusion, resist society's labels, and to regain control of the privilege of self-definition. Youth

on "the outskirts" of culture derive power from embracing a shifting, self-naming identity.

Emma says that youth see the privilege of self-identification as a type of informed mindfulness

amid a culture that is in flux:

> Right! This is how I feel and no one is going to tell me that I feel differently. And
> you can be whatever you want to be. I guess it's self-identify to some extent but
> it's always knowing that anything can shift, everything is shifting and you shift.
> And being always aware and being more conscious. It's always the outskirts, you
> know?

Queering identity is a fluid, ideological, and protective process for individuals who are

seeking a place to belong:

> I think that's why I feel really, really, safe with Queer. We're really accepting
> and may be judgmental inside as any individual, but we know that there's always
> a connection that can be made, there's always like more to learn from people
> forever. I don't know how much of a queer community there is. There's a few
> people but I think it's found just by talking and stuff and like realizing that our
> ideologies are similar.

Queer is also a group identity; it is a political identity that helps student activists bond with

others who have similar thoughts and views. Some student activists struggle with labels that

politicize their identity. Some struggle to balance their desire to enact a politics of change in a

group with their guilt about individual material privilege. As Nathan argues here, "guilt" about

being born into a "well-off" family motivates his genuine desire to give back:

> I think part of the thing that bothers me about identifying with class privilege is
> that there is a certain level of guilt that I feel. You know, coming from a well-off
> home where I don't have to worry about things that a lot of people do and that's a
> struggle that I really feel and not quite sure how to deal with. I think that's one of
> the reasons why I'm in activism is that I have had so much given to me that I
> can't not give stuff back. I need to go out there and do something or else I would
> feel bad about myself.

Self-preservation and self doubt pervade Nathan's answer. He recognizes that others have to

worry about necessities he takes for granted. His awareness of class differences and material

privilege fosters guilt and the need to "give back" and provides a reason to participate in an

activist community. Alcoff cautions that white anti-racist allies must acknowledge how race

positions them as privileged subjects in culture. Alcoff cites Katz's 1978 anti-racism training

work and explains that "Katz is highly critical of white guilt fixations, because these are self-

indulgent" (1998, p. 12). If white guilt motivates anti-racist alliances, then solidarity is more

about assuaging guilt rather than working to interrogate the role of whiteness in the perpetuation

of oppression and institutional privilege. Alcoff (1998) says:

> …whites cannot disavow whiteness. One's appearance of being white will still
> operate to confer privilege in numerous and significant ways… (p. 17).

She continues:

> …for whites, double consciousness requires an ever present acknowledgement of
> the historical legacy of white identity construction in the persistent structures of
> inequity and exploitation, as well as a newly awakened memory of the many
> white traitors to white privilege who have struggled to contribute to the building
> of an inclusive human community (p. 25).

For activists, addressing privilege and whiteness is part of a complex, tangled web of social

location, guilt, structural oppression, and identity where critical consciousness and culture play a

role in how privilege and power is exercised.

Extracurricular Education

For many of my respondents, experience in an extracurricular school club, organization, or classroom piqued their interest in environmentalism. Students with leisure time, disposable income, adult support, or a school district with means, often have access to leadership opportunities in or outside of school. Continued engagement with the informal schooling of activism affects a private-public consciousness-raising that shapes and influences student activist identity.

Extracurricular experiences help students make meaning of who they are. Below, Darby reminisced about the "lasting impression" school programs had on her and by extension, her environmental awareness and activism:

> D: She was really, well, you know how you love your elementary school teacher- especially because she was the first teacher I had in the US.
>
> I: What was it about her that you really loved?
>
> D: Well, she was just really engaging, I think. Like the projects that we did. She did lots of things like, really hands on experiments and projects that related to the environment that really piqued my interest. Like we went out to the side of the school one day and buried an apple core and a Styrofoam cup and three weeks later, which seemed like an eternity, we went back and dug it up. We looked at what biodegraded and what didn't, what did this mean that everything that we put in the ground that is Styrofoam is going to stay forever.
>
> I: You liked her and the focus.
>
> D: I think she placed a special emphasis on it. There were other things, too, we grew our own plants in the room and then we split them up and fed half of them regular water and the other half acid rain water and we saw how the other plants died. Just a lot of projects like that.
>
> I: You were eight?
>
> D: Yeah and I thought it was amazing. I was just like, oh my god. Yeah we had a seventh grade winter environmental camp. What was neat about that was for

three nights and four days and you went with your team of four teachers or whoever it was who taught you. It was like 100 seventh graders and you're like, "Oh my god, this is paradise."

Thirteen years later, Darby joyfully recounts and romanticizes her early years school experiences. Her memories serve as a reminder of the power of memory to "map a gaze" on our "youthful experiences" (Biklen, 2004, p. 251). Extracurricular events exposed Darby to people who were passionate about the environment and she continues to mimic their enthusiasm. For Darby, early immersion experiences had lasting impact on her engaged, sustained involvement with environmental issues.

Emma had similar experiences with extracurricular events that focused on the environment. Below, Emma describes her disappointment with an environmental club she joined in her upper middle class high school in the late 1990s. Emma follows up with a description of a more enjoyable experience that exposed her to the "alternative lifestyle" of environmental activism:

> I was in 10th grade and I joined HOPE. And I don't know what it stands for, um, but we taught little kids how to plant trees and how to do organic gardening. It was very, very, apolitical. Like, "Let's plant trees in the park. Ee, ee." Let's not talk about the forest being devastated. No, the first time that I really saw there was an alternative lifestyle, if you want to say, where white picket fences didn't matter I went to an environmental camp. And I was really lucky because it was scholarship based and I was first runner up, and the girl who got the scholarship got the flu the day she was going away and they called me. It was sleep away camp for three weeks, in log cabins, no running water, no nothing. Like the only music we made were musical instruments we made ourselves, and like a few of the camp counselors had guitars. I loved it.

Emma's extracurricular educational experiences contradicted one another. Extended stays or overnights, like sleep away camp, provided opportunities to experience living away from the conventions that defined everyday life, whereas in-school activities felt like empty gestures. Exposure to an alternative lifestyle had a positive impact on Emma but she was unable to replicate the sense of belonging to a meaningful community she associated with her camp

experience. Below Emma, who was adopted from Korea, recalls being driven home from her three week long environmental camp experience:

> That experience was the first time I realized that I don't have to be uncomfortable with myself, there's so many ways to get to know people. Anyway, I remember my dad coming to pick me up and feeling what it was like to be in a car and he turned on the radio and was like, this is weird, I don't really like this. I think I was 11 or 12 and I try to go back to that feeling, by like doing drugs and stuff and whatever.

Emma argues that these experiences help some get away from their "white picket fence" lifestyle. Emma was comfortable at home and had a love of being outdoors but she never quite fit in at school. She says that this single outing helped her to reconcile her outsider status and find her "inner activist." In college, Emma joined SAvE, an environmental activist community with whom she could express solidarity and find a sense of self-worth and reassurance. As we saw with Amanda, Nell, Darby, and Emma, meaningful environmental immersion education can foster deep connections to the environmental movement. Unlike a typical mandated school curriculum, immersion and extracurricular programs where students "experience" alternatives to their regular routine offer informal lesions that pack an emotional punch.

Ruth describes how friends introduced her to environmental and anti-war activism with SAvE. She says, "Mainly it was just because I was friends with the people who were really involved in SAvE. So I would just be hanging out with them before and I would just go to meetings and I was like, this is fun, so I got involved." Activist groups provide the opportunity for casual, social friendship with other activists and can influence a deeper involvement in activism. Ruth's commitment to activist solidarity and the "fun" nature of these new and timely activities and practices convinced her to join SAvE at her own college. In a post-9/11 world, the war on terror and a swing toward multi-issue activism on college campuses sealed Ruth's participation in SAvE. Megan Boler (1999) illustrates how "identity politics separates us even

more acutely in a time of war when the notion of 'us' and 'them' is put into sharp relief by nation, class, and racial boundaries" (p. 145). For Ruth, like her activist peers Nathan, Havoc, Amanda, and others, involvement in SAvE's anti-militarization and environmental movement was driven by membership in a school group where students express political solidarity with each other, have a good time, and act in meaningful ways. Education for new student members includes reading, direct action, casual conversations, weekly meetings, and program planning and attendance. Membership education helps students to connect concepts to material experiences of activist life. As Linnea recalls, her peer-to-peer, informal activist education began within months of coming to college. Linnea says, "They would be like, READ, READ, READ, and we're going to do this, and go to this and go hear this and… I started with SAvE the second semester my freshman year."

Linnea came to activism because she was looking for a group that was fun, educational, and active and because she received an invitation from a fellow student who was involved. According to Linnea, even without an invitation SAvE campus actions were often public and open to all students:

> They were tenting on the quad against sweatshops. I had actually gone to the
> PRIDE union meeting and this really cute girl named Jesse was like "Hey, we're
> out on the quad and you should come and stay over and stuff" and I was like,
> "Oh, oh, I will check you out" and she never showed up. It was terrible. But I met
> all of these other heads in SAvE and I was like, "Cool." So I stayed out on the
> quad with them for three days or something and been doing things ever since.

Participation in extracurricular activities like student activism provides students with education, support, and a venue to explore and express their interests. As Linnea points out, the informal education of student activism promotes confident, critical, and action oriented participation:

> L: It was actually funny. After my first year in SAvE, I went home and I was

like, I'm a vegetarian now, and I do all this stuff, and I'm talking to people all the time about all of this political stuff. I'm arguing with everybody and they are like, "What is wrong with you? What are you doing?" They've definitely gotten used to it and I don't think they think it is a phase.

I: It's who you are now, the activist?

L: Yeah. And it's funny because I think it's part of who I am whether I knew it or not. There are all of these examples of my life, my friends' lives, my life, and home. And then I come here and it's like, this is some for real shit and I've got to do something and if I don't do something, it's going to be a mess.

Milo, who was born into a political family, is an activist with a strong interest in the politics of class. Here, he marks the beginning of his "formal adult activism" when, at 17, he fell in love with Ann:

I would say my formal adult activism began when I was 17 and 18, I met a young women who was real working class and fell in love. And we lived together for like four or five years. I worked at Taco Bell at the time. I thought of myself as poor and working class, right, but I really wasn't, I was really kind of middle class. And she has a pretty great class-consciousness; completely working class background…so we lived together and we spent the next couple of years hashing out stuff. So that's how I became an activist in the formal sense.

The lengthy process of debate and discussion ("hashing out stuff") is the educational cornerstone of activist identity. Milo's cumulative coming of age story adds detail to his political affinity and activist identity. Because of his interest in the politics of class and race Milo, who is the son of a college professor and attorney and was raised in a politically active household, had a genuine desire to "know" class and create an affinity with the working class. At the time he met Ann, a fellow activist, he was working in a fast food joint and had been kicked out of three high school programs. He was also about to enter college for free because his father, a lifelong activist, was a professor at UU. Schwartz (1999) argues that the "search for identity begins, for the most part, because human beings need a central theory of who they are before they can start to embroider and elaborate the self" (p. 160). Only after years of "consciousness" raising--

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including doing activist work himself--Milo embroidered a new class-consciousness that helped him to cast himself as working class. According to Schwartz (1999), identity is made up of a "multiplicity of presentations of self" and these various selves are drawn from life experience, are shifting and diverse, and are articulated to choices we make as we associate with a range of affinity groups that leave a "permanent identity residue" on our personal and public identity (p. 160).

Various informal experiences contribute to identity formation. Students gain or lose social acceptance or approval when they do things like choose friends, join an organization, claim solidarity with LGBTQ, working class or working poor people, take a job, leave home, select college classes, participate in action and discussion, etc. In Milo's case, working a minimum wage job at a fast food joint alone did not serve to raise his class-consciousness. In his own words, it took years of living side-by-side and "hashing" things out with a "real" life example of a "working class" individual and participating in activist groups before Milo developed his "formal" adult activism. His lifelong affinity with politics shaped Milo's identity and promoted solidarity with the activist community.

Stewardship

Service work can create a collective sense of responsibility for and establish a protective relationship with causes students care about, whether HIV AIDS, immigration policy, or the environment. Stewardship of a cause through service work cultivates a sense of agency or ownership for students. For many of my respondents, stewardship of the environment also fostered a change in action and awareness. Helping the environment may have been the motivation for joining a particular group or fighting for a particular cause but environmental stewardship was not just an altruistic pursuit. Environmental activism helped students to define

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meaningful commitment.

Tory argues that, "picking up trash by the side of the road" with his school's environmental club had little to no impact on him. He connects living in a rural area to his interest in the environment and says, "I wasn't an activist in high school but I was very much into the environment. We lived out in the woods. That's what we, that's what we knew. So we did things like clean up trash on the side of the road." Tory's exposure to and relationship with the natural environment shaped his stewardship of it. As Tory explains, by the time he was a second semester freshman in college, his views on stewardship changed:

> The reason I say I have different views about that now is because we thought we were solving the problem by cleaning it up but we didn't realize what the real problem was, that is a consumer culture and that nobody really cares where they are throwing their trash. We did certain things but we didn't understand what was going on.

Environmental stewardship is both self-education and group work. Stewardship is a collective effort that involves a commitment to understand and work toward solutions that get at the root of environmental problems. Activism does not end with picking up trash, but rather begins by better understanding the problem and policies associated with littering and trash. Action and understanding are equally important to meaningful activism. As student participation in environmental action is fostered, their views can shift toward deeper understanding of cause and effect relationships. For Tory, activism connected symptoms like littering to larger cultural issues like over consumption and apathy.

Meaningful, consistent stewardship of the land and working in a natural setting can also cement a student's relationship to environmental activism. Amanda has a long-term relationship with and emotional connection to Girl Scouts. Amanda credits her outdoor engagement and leadership skills to 14 years in an organization where, for six years, she worked as a "nature

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specialist" at a summer camp:

> Yeah. I was just going and I loved it. I went to a counselor in training program and then I was a kitchen aide and counselor and last year I was the nature specialist and I kind of worked with the counselors in training. So I hope, I definitely, hopefully encouraged people to love the outdoors and embrace it because I did. My Girl Scout experience shaped who I am today.

Amanda credits her sustained relationship with the Girl Scouts for shaping her identity as an environmentalist. As we have seen in this chapter environmental stewardship and meaningful group, extracurricular, and school experiences are connected. For example, meaningful interaction with people who supported her interest in the environment, plus an accessible outdoor space at school piqued Amanda's environmental awareness:

> In high school, some of the teachers would say, "What are you interested in?" And I was like, I think I'm interested in the environment. So one of my teachers, she was my 8th grade History teacher, told me to read *Silent Spring*. I was too young for it then. But read it in 10th grade. Also, at my high school they built nature trails and it was in the middle of nowhere. Our teachers used to take us there and there were little sticks on the ground with notes and you could read about the tree.

Teachers who modeled care taking in nature fostered Amanda's interest in the environment. Her early school experience had such an impact on her that later Amanda would replicate the school's nature trail at her Girl Scout camp and end up graduating from two colleges with a decidedly environmental focus.

Activism for Amanda was more than just a relationship with the outdoors. Activism required sustained education and action. Amanda was in the first cohort of her high school to take AP classes. AP sciences were not offered at that time so she took history courses like AP American, AP European History, and AP Gov't/Econ. She went on to study the environment at a two year college with an environmental feel and focus, and started an environmental newspaper with her college advisor. After two years and an Associates Degree, she transferred to the four year

Environmental Studies program at Green State College. I asked Amanda about her involvement

in extracurricular life in college. She argued that her interest in the environment shaped her

participation in the clubs:

> I: What sort of things did you do to get involved?
>
> A: At the beginning I went to all different clubs that I was halfway interested in.
> I went to SAvE and I went on the first hike with the Outdoors Club. And I started
> talking to people from the *The Tree Hugger* to see if I wanted to write there. But
> I didn't like that exactly.
>
> I: Why?
>
> A: Well, at Lake College I started up, well, not my own newspaper, but with my
> advisor, we started up a newspaper. And I wanted it to be online so I didn't waste
> paper. Kind of like the Daily Scene at UU does, I wanted it to be sent online and
> people could read the newspaper on line. And *The Tree Hugger* seemed to be
> kind of disorganized and childish and it wasn't real accurate reporting. It was like
> I went out and wrote this in two hours.
>
> I: So it didn't have the integrity you were looking for in a paper?
>
> A: Right.

Amanda's deep commitment to education and to the environment fostered her sense of

journalistic integrity. In this case the student paper did not meet her standards for organized,

mature, and thorough environmental reporting. She took the environment seriously and thought

that any institutional establishment she was part of should do the same. Amanda's environmental

stewardship was intertwined with her academic and extracurricular life.

Part Two: Making Sense of Activist Work

When I was a Girl Scout, at weekly troop meetings, I proudly displayed the badges I earned

on the green cotton sash I draped across my uniform. From building a successful campfire to

learning to cook or perform a scientific experiment, each badge represented a scout's dedication

to her troop and its mission. Badges signaled belonging and achievement. Awarding badges was

a way for scouts to distinguish their quests and deeds and created a hierarchy among members. Fellow members looked up to scouts who had the most or challenging badges. These scouts were viewed as dedicated, active, authentic scouts. Being a "good" activist requires participating in a similar hierarchical type of identity work. Most of my respondents named consumption practices, activities, and behaviors as "activist" identity markers. Similar to working for a Girl Scout badge, student activists often felt pressure to have the "right" style, eat the "right" kind of food, or act in the "right" way. In the struggle to belong, students earned their "activist badges" by negotiating a membership terrain that is complex and messy. In this section I continue the discussion of the struggles activists face as they make sense of their work and examine the way students understand and enact activist identity.

Identity Markers

Style and consumption help activists make sense of and mark their identity. Student activists argue that activist identity is coded by language and action but it is also multifaceted, and some use appearance and consumption as markers of symbolic resistance to confront what students see as identity stereotypes. Campus activists adopt or reject style through consumption or other practices associated with their group. Hairstyle, body modifications, and clothing have an influence on perception of identity.

Student activists are constantly negotiating the complex terrain of activism. In the following interview segment, Darby delineates "activist" and "non-activist" as categories of belonging judged by certain gatekeepers within the group:

> I: I think your point about activist identity as something that keeps people from coming back is …
>
> D: (interrupts) I think that's a really crucial part! I don't know if you remember Junie? That's a big thing for her. We've talked about it. She's worried that people look at her like she's a non-activist because she likes to shop and she's in

the Journalism School. She was intimidated by people like Milo.

> I: We're so used to conformity in k-12 we put people in categories of like those who wear Abercrombie are just as conformist as people who shop at Hot Topic.

> D: And just like if you wear the same thing and the patches like all of the other activists. Like the black hoodies…that's conformity, too.

All members of SAvE set expectations for the group identity. Some considered Junie's mainstream activities (shopping) and her major (Journalism) as conformist and not activist enough. Negotiating identity requires activists to create and recreate meaning depending on people, places, and circumstances. Nell makes a distinction in hierarchies of activism. She claims that an active, labor intensive commitment to change defines an activist:

> I feel like the term activist gets thrown around a lot and over used. I think an activist is someone who is really, really actively trying to change things. They've made it a fairly big part of their lives. They put a lot of time and energy into it.

Amanda verifies the identity "mold" student activists construct for their peers around style. She recounts how she felt judged by her activist peers for wearing leather shoes:

> These shoes are *Bass* and I got them on clearance for like ten bucks. You can keep wearing them forever, but you do feel like you're being judged. I don't know necessarily if people are, because I don't do it. So, yeah.

People often make judgments about identity based on appearance. In one interview, Darby alludes to tension produced by typical activist body modification (nose ring or other piercings) and hairstyle (dreadlocks). She suggests that in the eyes of an "average college student" these permanent identity markers can relegate the activist student to an outsider status, perhaps even seen as a member of a "cult" or "crazy" by average students. As Tory claimed, the mere mention of the word activist can cause a reaction.

For both respondents, "changing faces" is an act of passing that allows them to opt out of the activist mold to mimic the "average college student." Some activists "pass" by using cultural

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camouflage like hairstyle, body modifications, clothing, and language to mimic typical students

and mask their activist identity. Changing faces is a privilege and has a political advantage for

some college activists. It allows the average college students to work within activist groups on

campus *and* work with their more mainstream peers. By Darby's account, passing helps activists

blend in with the mainstream:

> I thought about dreading my hair. It would be really cool if I dreaded my hair or
> it would be really cool if I got a nose ring. I've always wanted a nose stud, or
> whatever, but then in thinking about this, I've also begun to see the advantages of
> being someone who can change faces, sometimes. I think it's an advantage to
> look like the average college student. People will perceive activists in general,
> they will get the idea of the bandana over the face, and the "I'm way too hard core
> for you, I have these radical views that are diametrically opposed to yours" and
> the fact that I can go into a classroom and be "I'm just like you." I mean I came
> to college as a fashion major and just got involved in a group. And I have learned
> all of these things. It's not a cult, it's not about being indoctrinated into
> something crazy, I mean it makes you more accessible and you can transverse
> different boundaries.

At Upstate University, where the shorthand "activist" had several meanings, some students

feel they had to hide their identity as an activist. Tory, in his first year on campus, expressed

reservation about declaring himself an activist. He explains how the term "activist," for the most

part, relegated him to the fringes of mainstream college culture:

> I: Would you call yourself an activist?
>
> T: Yeah, I guess I would according to everyone else's opinion. Like everybody
> else is an activist, I guess I am too. I just don't like to be like, "What do you do?"
> "Activism." I don't really like saying that.
>
> I: Because?
>
> T: It's too easy. As soon as you say that, people are like "Oh, one of *those*
> people".
>
> I: Because there's a profile for activism?
>
> T: Yeah. Just like activists are always protesting everything, and they must
> think…we must be weird because we think everything is wrong. So I think it's

much more effective to say, "Hi, my name is Tory." It's easier to talk to other people who aren't part of activism like that.

Activists measure who they are and want to be against how others define them. The meaning of "activist" changes with the context and is constructed by the person who is asking the question. According to Tory, some understand "activist" as code for the oddball complainer who always sees the glass half empty.

When I interviewed Ruth formally for the first time, she was dressed in her typical, classic thrift store chic: "recovered" Ralph Lauren khaki pants, a second hand, bright green, Ralph Lauren Polo shirt layered over a long sleeve white thermal tee, red Chuck Taylor high top sneakers and funky polka dot socks. Several inches of each wrist were wrapped with braided and beaded bracelets along with two Vietnam-era MIA metal bands. A lime green and hot pink headband was holding back a nest of natural and chlorinated blonde dreadlocked hair embedded with multicolored neon hair extensions all of which fell beyond her shoulders. Ruth is an honors student and athlete, who completed her k-12 schooling in a district with "privileged" kids who, according to Ruth, enjoyed the "stereotype being the rich snobs."

Ruth used her appearance to upend the conservative sensibilities of her household and school. This rebellion through style is reminiscent of the punk and other subcultural youth of the 80s and 90s who used style, as Ruth illustrates here, to push against the parent culture (Hebdige, 1987):

> Well all throughout high school I was not allowed to dye my hair. So this is my way around dyeing my hair. (She laughs). I'm like, fine, I'll put a colorful extensions in it and not brush it! So there, ha!

Ruth's mother wanted her daughter to fit in with the majority of girls in the school and also to reflect their conservative family values, but her mother's efforts to maintain control over Ruth's body and identity failed. Fake extensions won out. And although Ruth suggests that she was a part of an academic elite who also played varsity sports and was a loyal member of her temple's

youth group, her appearance was a symbolic resistance that outwardly contradicted the mainstream value system of her home and majority school and extracurricular culture.

Being an activist requires a particular type of identity work. Darby, Ruth, and Amanda all named dreadlocks, and other similar identity markers, as "activist." Dreadlocks are one of the signifiers that I came to call an "activist badge" or a practice with which some activist's strive to identify. When I asked Ruth about the work associated with her dreadlocks she said:

> R: Yeah, it's fake hair, like weave, braided in. And then I just left them braided in and did not brush my hair so they just dreaded around them….So it was a slow process and my mom would be like (*in a more high pitched voice with an intolerant tone*) "I think your hair is starting to dread. Let me brush it for you." And she'd like take her brush out. And it was funny. Like, ya think it's starting to dread? And they'd be, like full dreads.

> I: Did she understand? Is there a significance for you?

> R: It didn't have to do with religion or anything like that. It was more style. Like, it's easy, I don't have to do anything.

Even though Ruth claimed the style was "easy," dreading her hair *was* a "slow" and involved process. She had to add synthetic neon extensions or "weave," which can be either human or artificial hair, to her natural hair to get the process to work. And as her mother struggled to negotiate Ruth's anti-establishment choices (the request to dye her hair), Ruth showed resistance by eventually dreading her hair. Like McRobbie's (1995) respondents, who as a form of protest in the mid 90s altered their school uniform and read the magazine *Jackie* [5] in class, Ruth pushed back by rejecting family norms for appearance. While Ruth can be criticized for taking cultural hair politics for granted, Ruth's dreadlocks both resist and contest the rules of home for *her*. In Ruth's case, her hair politics were a delicate negotiation between mother and daughter

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[5] *Jackie* was a popular British weekly magazine for teens that first went to press in January 1964. Much to the disappointment of fans now in their 40s and 50s who have a Facebook group trying to resurrect the publication, D. C. Thomson & Co. Ltd of Dundee published the last issue of *Jackie* on July 1993. http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=37141741549#!/group.php?gid=37141741549&v=wall

reinforcing Bettie's (2003) observation that "students' constructions of identity vary by context" (p. 140).

Students on college campuses mark their identity with appearance, leisure activities, and habits of consumption that are read by other students as codes of belonging. In one interview Amanda took note of how similar the styles were among college student environmental activists from colleges that were several hundred miles apart. She described her first SAvE meeting at Green State College this way, "I was definitely shocked when I went in. I mean that's what meetings at my community college were like. Everyone had dreadlocks, Birkenstocks, etc." Amanda suggested that shared markers of identity, from dress to taste to activities to language, often signify student activists' affiliation with each other. Cultural symbols like clothing, makeup, and hairstyle provided a lens for activist youth to view themselves and each other. But some students use style and consumption to bend the meaning of and cultural codes associated with activism. Below, Darby demonstrates an acute awareness of how choices and expectations affect identity. She knows what an environmental/anti-war activist is *supposed* to look like, yet her own style appears to be in conflict with the activist archetypes she describes:

> D: Yeah, I think about identity and the way that you come across to other people. I mean, clothing choices, everything. I mean, when I first got involved in SAvE I was like, "OH my gosh, I have American Eagle clothes and I don't wear the same thing everyday. And oh, my god, I wear mascara. And people will look at me and say, "Oh wow. She's still in her consumerist, materialist stage, it's going to take her a while" and I was really conscious of that, really self-conscious. I mean, sometimes I would even change my shirt to go to a SAvE meeting.
>
> I: You had the sense that there was an activist identity? How would you describe that?
>
> D: It's very counter-consumerism, counter-culture, so people take it in different ways. Some people dress sort of hippie, in multiple layers, very sort of I could be outdoors at any second or I'm a summer child, I have lots of shirts and sandals and lots of jewelry. That's sort of the more spiritual, like, "I'm a deep thinker" look. And then you've got more of the hard core punk scene with the safety pins

and the patches, and they you know, the "I'm super political and I'm going to challenge you and I have a Mohawk" and things like that. That's sort of the "I'm counter-culture, don't mess with me" look. And then, I don't know if there are more…

Darby describes two broad categories of student activist style: the hippie-outdoor-spiritual-deep-thinker type or the hardcore-political-counter-culture-punk. Along with codes of style, Darby identifies attitudes that go along with other markers. Attitudes about consumption and culture may be decidedly anti-mainstream (clothes and/or makeup that are *not* purchased in the mall at *American Eagle* or the drugstore) and are likely to be confrontational.

Some activists mask their political identity by appealing, style-wise, to their more mainstream peers, and Darby and Amanda are affable border crossers. Although Darby is a long time environmental activist practicing since elementary school, she prefers passing as an average college student over an "in your face" approach to activism. Her mainstream identity does not alienate people; something she says learned as a campus activist in SAvE. Rather than capitulating to the accepted codes of activist identity, Darby used her "average" looks to gain access to both a radical environmental activist group (SAvE) and to her more mainstream peers.

Students who join any group or extracurricular activity understand that participation requires sacrifice and compromise of time and energy. Going to a meeting after a long day of classes or giving up study time to attend an event requires dedication and fortitude. Students gradually come to understand the spoken and unspoken rules of membership. Below Amanda outlines how actions at SAvE meetings reveal expectations for style and consumption and verifies the "mold" student activists construct for their peers, including the judgment felt as she negotiated activist identity:

> Yeah. You go to the meetings and wonder, "Do I belong?" but I want to stay. Yeah, in order to fit the mold, you can't eat meat…I like having leather on my backpack! I've had this backpack since I was in ninth grade! And I just look at it

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and I can't believe I'm going there and I have leather shoes. Havoc got criticized for his *Nike* shoes. He was like, "I have had them forever. I don't want to throw these out."

"Fitting the mold" means that certain styles and practices appear to be off limits for those who choose activist identity. In other words, if you want to be an activist, the assumption is that you can't wear leather, eat meat, or buy certain brands. Amanda keeps her backpack as a matter of economic frugality. As consumers of good and services, some student activists recognize the role privilege plays in practicing what they preach. In this case, privilege is the ability to make choices about consuming goods and services that fit a certain criteria. Style and consumption choices are often used as a tactic by students who seek to balance activism and privilege. Some students use style and consumption in an attempt to hide their class privilege.

Understanding identity and youth culture depends on decoding social privilege in relation to experience. Alcoff's (1998) take on white identity and privilege is clear:

> Part of white privilege has been precisely whites' ability to ignore the ways white racial identity has benefitted them. Whiteness has always been fractured by class, gender, sex, ethnicity, age, and able-bodiedness. The privileges whiteness bestowed were differentially distributed and were also simply different, for example, the privilege to get the job for a man, the privilege not to work for women, and so on" (pp. 8-9).

Alcoff argues that privilege is unevenly granted and acknowledged. In particular, whites take for granted privileges conferred to them, overlooking systematic benefits of their intersectional privilege. In my field notes, I describe how some students perform poverty by adopting an appearance that camouflages their material privilege and class. Because student activists who are privileged often struggle with guilt, they avoid powerful class distinctions like brand name clothing and adopt habits they perceive are shared by the working poor including shopping at thrift or second hand clothing stores and dumpster diving. These habits help distance students from their privilege and create the appearance of solidarity with the poor or working poor.

During an interview, I asked Nathan about employing the performance of poverty as a tactic to mask privilege. He said:

> I think I would subconsciously do that. I don't intentionally try to hide my privilege, I guess, but like the manifestation of that would be like shopping at thrift stores and wearing clothes that don't necessarily fit the class that I come from. Yeah. I really try not to have anything that's brand name because that's like a class indicator. And I guess I really haven't thought about it that much but I guess it's one way of trying to escape it. I think part of the thing that bothers me about identifying with class privilege is that there is a certain level of guilt that I feel.

While Nate acknowledges that his style and consumption habits are not intentional, he also argues that they also represent an effort to mask social location. In this way, he acknowledges that dealing with the guilt associated with privilege is a process; and he did not have to read Applebaum to get the sense that facing privilege requires struggle. Applebaum (2004) points to the need for whites to acknowledge social location:

> Whites need to be continually vigilant and such vigilance, I submit, requires that white people never forget their social location. Rather than moving away from a concern with white identity, I am suggesting that we keep such identity in focus and continually trouble it. Focusing on white identity, therefore, does not have to lead to comfort and certainty but can produce the discomfort and uncertainty…(p. 319).

To flesh out social location, Applebaum (2007) uses the terms "systematically privileged" and "systematically marginalized" to describe how students are positioned within "power dynamics" which uphold "systems of oppression and privilege" (p. 338). Privilege is the social scaffolding of student resistance or "culturally sponsored defensiveness" (Applebaum, 2007, p. 339). In order to avoid addressing their role in systematic oppression, students employ privileged resistance using a variety of tactics, including "remaining silent, evading questions, resorting to the rhetoric of ignoring color, focusing on progress, victim blaming, and focusing on cultural rather than race" (Applebaum, 2007, p. 340). Breaking through this resistance requires the

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systematically privileged to engage with the possibility of complicity.

Students often use clothing to identify status or to signal group membership. Nathan argues that brand names are a marker of class privilege. But some student activists reclaim brand names as a way to mock class privilege. As I said above, when I interviewed Ruth formally for the first time, she was dressed in her typical, classic thrift store chic. According to Ruth, her second hand style mocked the typical rich kid chic.

In one interview Amanda took note of how similar the styles were among student environmental activists from colleges that were several hundred miles apart. Amanda suggested that shared markers of identity, from dress to taste to language, often signify student activists' affiliation with each other. Cultural symbols like clothing, makeup, and hairstyle, provided a lens for activist youth to view themselves and others.

Mindset v. Action

Student activists demonstrate an acute awareness of how thinking, language, and action affect identity. My respondents described activism as a way of thinking and acting, often times expressing the need for congruency between the two as a prerequisite for being an activist. A student activist standard is "practice what you preach," yet what activist groups say and do is often at odds, and can cause confusion for some students looking to do activist work.

Like others Nathan's association with activism also began with an affiliation to his high school's chapter of the Acceptance Coalition (AC). Nathan's interest in activism or what he calls, "those types of things," began as a search for what Williams and Copes (2005) would call "meaningful interaction" with others in high school (p. 71). But, his perception of the club and activists as "radical in nature," kept him from becoming fully involved in activism until college. Below Nathan describes how activist groups, at first, were a turn off for him because actions and

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mission did not match:

> I: Maybe you can speak from when you started high school. Were you an
> activist?
>
> N: No. I was always, in the back of my mind, interested in those types of things
> but I think I was sort of intimidated to join some of the groups that were in my
> high school. Like there was an Acceptance Coalition (AC) and I was friends with
> some of the people in there. I don't know, I was always intimidated with that
> somehow. Like even though it's the Acceptance Coalition.
>
> I: Say more about your reservations.
>
> N: I think this is relevant to SAvE too because I think a lot of people feel this.
> It's just that people in the AC were very radical in their dress and their
> mannerisms and just the way they did things. It's hard when you see a group of
> people who are all acting in that same way and you're not exactly like that. And
> it's like the things that we're trying to fight that we end up building again.

Although they advocate inclusion, activist groups can act in ways that may exclude others, and the contradictory nature of the Acceptance Coalition did not jive with Nathan's ideas about activism. In college Nathan initially found SAvE's appearance and practices as conflicting as those of the Acceptance Coalition--their actions did not always match their mindset. With both groups Nathan saw evidence of a disconnect between the activist commitment to change and anti-racist work and their collective and individual action. Both Acceptance Coalition and SAvE mention acceptance and tolerance in their charters and according to Nathan the goal of both groups was to build a sense of belonging and common identity as advocates. Nate, who is straight, struggled with membership in the AC. He was a LGBTQ ally and had a desire to join a group that did something of consequence, but his concern about being affiliated with a radical group left him cautious. Activism was always on Nate's mind but he was not sure where he fit in relation to how others defined activist behavior.

Havoc is another white, male student who wanted to "do something" about the state of the world broadly and environmental racism in particular. He uses the phrase "activist mentality" to

describe the proactive, thoughtful mindset of students who work for change. Initially, he

participated in activist actions but he did not necessarily think like an activist. I interviewed

Havoc in his first year of membership with SAvE and when I asked him whether he thought of

himself an activist he said:

> Yeah, I call myself an activist. I guess I would define it as, regardless of whether
> you are in the system or out of the system, if you are proactive on an issue and
> you really drive to make that change. I know I wasn't too like an activist
> mentality in high school but I participated in a lot of activities that were for
> change and what not.

Havoc separates activist thinking or mentality from activist action and suggests that being in the

activist mindset requires focus and drive. In his first interview Havoc, who is one of six kids

from a Catholic household on the outskirts of New York City, claimed "minority" status at his

"mixed high school that was about 70% Black, 30% white with some Hispanics." After high

school, Havoc went to a predominantly white community college, graduated and transferred to

Green State College, which was predominantly white. I mention this here because Havoc

describes his first semester in SAvE as "pretty alienating." Yet Havoc, "kept on coming back" to

the group because, in his own words he:

> ... just wanted to do something. I was cool with what they were doing, so I was
> like, I really should stick with this. Also, my neighbor (*in college*) is a
> Presbyterian Reverend and he was telling me about the Oxford Ave., you know.
> And he was telling me that SAvE was doing a campaign on The Oxford Regional
> Treatment Facility, and that really attracted me as well.

Havoc's social conscience created a desire to "do something."

Code Switching

Student activists are often pressured to construct and negotiate their identity in the image of

other activists. Mediated images of activism along with activist activities and practices dictate,

control, and regulate activist identity. As student activists negotiate their identity, they use code

switching as a way to negotiate between identity, mediated images, language, and context. Much like "youth" are often coded as deviant, in need of supervision, and naïve, student activists understand that their identity is socially and culturally coded. Before the Occupy Wall Street movement became so visible, when I told friends the subject of my dissertation some replied, "I thought youth activism went out with the 60s," "Aren't there fewer hippies on campus these days?" and "Isn't that dangerous work?" Activism to them is coded as rebellious, radical, or counter culture behavior or a nostalgic behavior from days gone by. Media often represent environmental activists using sensationalized footage, reporting, for example, on a small contingent of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) carrying out extreme property damage. Likewise, anti-war protesters are characterized as Weather Underground-like state terrorists who deserve to be raided by the FBI and be subject to grand jury investigations.[6]

The more activist work my respondents did, the more they would interrogate ways others saw them and how their own words and deeds portrayed their work. Activism creates an awareness of how language works in social situations, sometimes requiring the speaker to shift their language and actions to meet the needs of the audience. Code switching requires students to be flexible, reflexive, and interrogate how language works to position them in various contexts. This theme examines how student activists analyze their social role and the function of language in their identity development.

When I interviewed Linnea, my only key informant of color at SAvE's Upstate University campus, she described gaining respect within the SAvE community because, in her words, she had "all four oppressions…queer, Black, woman who does not have a lot of money." Being labeled an activist complicates identity and the notion of home and school. Below Linnea talks

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[6] In September 2010, the FBI conducted raids on US citizens in Minneapolis and Chicago accusing several of adding and abetting "terrorist" groups at home and abroad.

about how the label activist changes how she reveals herself in her various communities:

> Yeah, it depends on who I am talking to. If saying I'm an activist makes sense, or they have an idea of what that is, that's cool but I don't go home and be like "I'm an activist! Dah, dah, dat, dat dah." Because people will be like, "You act about what? What do you do?

Linnea shows how the label "activist' means different things to different people. Activist work requires an ability to sense how to use language in order to be better understood by various audiences. According to Linnea, depending on the audience, the label "activist" sometimes requires explaining:

> I don't think the label activist is necessary, but it's just useful in some places. Like here at UU, if I'm an activist, click, people understand quickly what the deal is and what I do. Well, kind of. And at home it can be alienating and weird and somewhat elitist and icky.

Linnea defined where the social meaning of activism is understood and where it is not. In this case activism is understood differently in each setting; "here" is college and "home" is the predominantly Black working class neighborhood where she grew up. Linnea clarifies the weighted or coded meaning of activism in these various environments. Home is where activism is viewed with skepticism and is coded as elitist and strange. She implies that many of her fellow college students "sort of" understand what other student environmental or anti-militarism or anti-war activists do on campus. But, depending on the setting, Linnea often has to use deliberate verbal strategies when she describes her activism.

Linnea also acknowledges the power of labels. They are utilitarian and can be manipulated depending on how and where you use them. Context matters, too. If you can read the crowd, then you can use the "label" activist, if it works for you in that situation. In her hometown, being an activist creates a boundary, so she does not take the label for granted and rarely uses it to self-identify.

When communicating with a wide audience, student activists come face to face with images of activism and develop a better understanding of activist identity. Like Ruth, Nell, Tory, Darby and others, Linnea's activism requires her to first understand how others see her. They are aware of how "activist" can be a "useful" or convenient label or have an off-putting connotation. For example, it is used between activists to recognize each other and sometimes as shorthand to explain what activists do. But activists learned, too, that identity has a nuanced meaning that requires thoughtful consideration of language and action.

After 9/11, I conducted an interview with Tory, and from the inflection in his voice and his word choice he implied that everyday "people," including his fellow students, thought student activists should be viewed with caution. Since activism is code for a culture of dissenting youth who are out of step with mainstream culture, in order to be effective, many students avoided the label "activist" or tested its use with a familiar audience. They also used the label to help facilitate communication to others. As respondents gathered information about the rules of activist culture, a picture emerged of what it meant to be a campus activist. Students learned when to code switch so as not to alienate others and to build a better sense of belonging to their community. As Williams and Copes (2005) contend, individuals construct "a subcultural self through meaningful interaction with other individuals who may or may not agree on subcultural ideas and practices" (p. 71).

Conclusion

Immersion in an activist group presents various challenges for students. Popular culture, family, and schools serve as sites of struggle for student activists. Although students in this study are all college activists, their identity as activists is not fixed. Identity is a constant process of negotiation, especially on campus or at home where the pressure to perform is dictated by

dominant discourses, and mainstream rules and behaviors. Activist affiliation suggests a mindset or protocol for activism that both befuddles and aid students. Student activists belong to political subculture of youth with informal and formal codes of membership; these codes of belonging shape and influence how students act, speak, dress, and make meaning in everyday life on and off campus. Activist culture requires students to code switch and deal with gatekeepers who set dominant and group norms for practices and behavior. Like all members of a group, negotiating the rules and norms of identity and belonging is complex and fraught with conflict.

Most of my respondents did activist work in a variety of venues with diverse audiences where students confront a range of identity choices. Whether style or rhetoric, college activists are influenced by nostalgic and current activist trends, too. Our popular imagination is full of pictures of activism and activists from pop, counter, and protest culture including Che Guevara, the Black Block anarchists, and the Occupy Wall Street movement. Silk screened on t-shirts, embossed on posters, and found on the streets in real life, popular images influence cultural practices and thus play a role in performing identity.

Part of the performance of activism is also about the privilege of making choices. But as Amanda states below, most members agree that the label has more power than the practice, "if you're in SAvE it's basically that you want to make a difference, it's not what kind of things you wear." In other words, in the end, activism is not just about style or practice, but about substance and working for change.

Discourse and context matter, too. I have argued that there is not one way to define activism. Student activism involves a negotiation with language and power. Student activism involves code switching and acknowledges how privilege works to influence and privilege race, class, and gender, leisure, and consumption. Student activist organizations like SAvE are vulnerable to the

changing winds of culture and context, but as we will see in the next chapter, they are most

susceptible to the contested spaces of higher education and to the contradiction and

complications identity, membership, and privilege brings to bear on their own organization.

CHAPTER 5
Getting Schooled: The Education of Student Activists

"Well my mother was about eight months pregnant and my father went to a demonstration where they were rallying around the church with picket signs and she got worried about him, so she went out there and there were a lot of Black demonstrators, and the police showed up and started busting heads. One of the police did something to my dad and my mom rushed over and I think she grabbed somebody's arm when they were going to swing and hit with a club. And another police officer said that she was pregnant and took a swing at her belly. She was 8 months pregnant. Another protester got in the way, to protect her, and got his arm broken. That was the force with which the police officer was hitting. This was not a tap or a "you've got to move back." He was seriously trying to hit the pregnant belly. That was *me* in there. So when I say that I've been doing activism for a long while, I mean it." Milo, interview.

Generations of school age American youth have been "doing activism" since before the 19 century.[7] Today's youth are no different. Like Milo, some students are born into political families, but they must *learn* how to be political actors. Individuals gather knowledge about what it means to become an activist by negotiating the complex structures of the family, popular culture, and education. They see activism as a way of life that involves negotiating people, places, and "forms through which they communicate" (Williams, 1998, p. 48). This chapter examines the complexities of campus activists struggle for legitimacy at home and at school, and explores how students make sense of the boundaries of campus activism, including self-imposed expectations. It argues that negotiating institutional and group boundaries create opportunities for informal lessons in activism for students. It considers questions like, What role do institutions play in activist education? Who are the gatekeepers? How are the boundaries of activist work structured? How do students as they negotiate these boundaries?

Institutional Lessons

For most student activists in this study, k-12 education is a target of their critique; *yet* it is also

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[7] The Great Butter Rebellion of 1766 took place on the campus of Harvard University. Students protested the serving of "sour butter' at the dining hall. http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1963/5/3/riot-rebellion-pthe-statutes-of/

a source of their critical consciousness. Schooling experience helps student activists make sense of institutional and curricular authority, and as they navigate the system students learn the connections between power, opportunity and access, curriculum, and politics. For example, many of my participants struggled to fit within boundaries schools set for student success like testing and curriculum mandates that leave little room for the critical thinking or student-based inquiry activists value. Yet, while some participants pushed back against the restrictive system others found a place within it. No matter how my participants described curricular requirements or mandates, their schooling experience shaped their understanding of, and place within, the system.

Challenging Power

Milo is highly critical about the goals of schooling. He argues that schools reproduce power for the powerful:

> I firmly believe the role of education is completely social reproduction for capital. Recreating workers, recreating citizens only to the extent that they will keep the system going and the system that's going is a capitalist economy and a capitalist democracy, right? It's the role of education. It's not to invite honest discussion, it's not to get people to become thinkers, because if they become thinkers they might think to challenge power. You see they really don't want that.

In much of his work as an activist, Milo focuses on an analysis of power and makes certain to share ways to "level the playing field." Student activists advocate challenging authority even though those who challenge power are often labeled and disciplined. Activists believe that one way to gain legitimacy when challenging power is to examine and understand institutional structures. All the student activists I followed had experience in public, private, or parochial schools. Many of these activists described schools as a system of power and control that marginalize certain students, namely those who challenge teacher and curricular authority.

According to Tory, rigid curriculum mandates created teacher apathy and created an

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environment where students are labeled, isolated, and disciplined. Below Tory describes how

students who pushed back understood curricular power and authority:

> I recognized that there were systems of power that left us out somehow. I think the biggest part was schools, for us as a group of kids. School was terrible. Ever since like, I think it started in middle school, and we just, it was so ridiculous. The whole way everything worked we continually had teachers were like, "YOU have to do this homework because you have a test on Wednesday" and that's the way that things were run. You did things to pass a state or federal test. To do 9th, to do 10th grade, to get into college. Like they had a set schedule where they had to get this done by then. And if you did start to talk about something else, "No, NO, NO" And I think their lack of interest in what we were interested in actually encouraged a lot of kids to get into trouble. That's a big reason why in-school suspension was filled up everyday in school and after school.

Tory argues that standardized tests and curriculum organize students and have the power to

prevent free exchange of ideas. Additionally, curriculum mandates curb teacher enthusiasm and

power in turn, discouraging spontaneous student engagement and inquiry.

In addition to resisting curricular mandates, some students resent being controlled by

institutional rules like the hall and bathroom pass system. Below, Milo provides an example of

how student resistance tests institutional power and authority but ultimately ends in student

discipline:

> I'm a terrible student. That's also the product of being in a public school for 12 years and just constantly going to war with the teaching staff. I would just be like this completely troubled kid who when he wasn't in in-school suspension was like the kids who were doing really good stuff. It was fun. But all of the hall pass stuff, the asking permission stuff, the false history that they teach in schools, I rebelled against it.

In most schools there is little room for students who push against authority or challenge

power. Students who go to "war" with teachers over rules and regulations that prohibit freedom

of movement and critical thinking see themselves as outlaws, especially when held up against

students who follow the rules and trust teacher authority.

Students are often vague when describing "the system" and its consequences but they are

convinced of its power to manipulate. Below, Milo explains how activism involved challenging the blind acceptance of institutionally supported myths:

> And we're trying to help illustrate the parts and facets of the struggle with strains of resistance. We're helping them along and what we're saying to people is, okay, we have you for a minute. And for the last 18 or 19 years, it's like the day you find out that Santa Claus isn't real. It's a shocking day. Right. Everybody has lied to you. Your teachers have lied to you-because remember you made Santa Claus stuff in class. Your parents have lied to you, you know because they pulled that shit every year. The policemen at the mall who guard the Santa Claus is lying to you. The whole mall is lying to you! That Santa Claus special you had on TV? The TV was lying to you. The system. It's all pulling its little moves on you. Okay, that Santa Claus thing was made up, but we got something bigger. It's a critical analysis of what is going down now. And everybody comes in because they have this guilt. Well not everybody has the guilt. And we get them in the chairs and we're an earth group, right. We can show pictures of dolphins and pandas and say the evildoers are gonna get 'em. And they say, "I've got to save them!" And we sit them down and we say, "Wait a minute. We've got to examine the other issues." But we can't examine the other issues, until we talk about how we have a system that is so coercive in all of its manifestations and all of its relationships.

Over the course of two years, I heard student activists at one time or another refer to this sneaky and manipulative power structure as "the system." I noted descriptions of "the system" including institutions like "schools, police, family, government, church, society, and white men" who possess a desire to maintain power by colluding and perpetuating myths like "the American Dream." Milo insists that in order to understand system wide collusion and lies, we must conduct a critical analysis of the relationship of the parties involved. Guilt is a reaction to a problem that, on the surface, seems horrific but still requires that individuals connect problems to institutional relationships, policies, and programs. It is not enough for student activists to save individual dolphins but the key is to understand the systems and rules that allow dolphin slaughter in the first place.

In this excerpt from an interview, Linnea acknowledges how peer-to-peer activist education works to unmask power relations:

From a lot of reading with and just hanging out with the crew. And people talking and I'm like, "What did you just say? Can you explain that to me?" Oh, okay. Good times. I didn't learn very much about US power structures in my schooling. I've actually learned a lot more since I've joined SAvE. Not so much learned, but I've experienced a whole bunch of things and I didn't know the connections between them all until now. Like I knew it was messed up that there were cops always down by my house and I knew it was messed up that mom was working everyday and we were still getting our electricity cut off and shit like that. I just didn't have a grasp on like, this is not just my mom, this is not just my town. This is a world system and there are definite reasons for this and this is not our fault entirely.

Although she cannot quite put her finger on what this "world system" means, Linnea now understands that her working poor mother and community are not solely to blame for the constant surveillance by police or for not being able to make ends meet. Strategies like reading, discussing, and group membership help students link personal experience to structures of power.

One organizational goal of SAvE is to "challenge the power structure." According to their mission statement, structures of power are present in various environments:

> SAvE is a student and youth run national network of progressive organizations and individuals whose aim is to uproot environmental injustices through action and education. We define the environment to include the physical, economic, political, and cultural conditions in which we live. By challenging the power structure which threatens these conditions, students in SAvE work to create progressive social change on both the local and global levels.

Students use direct action and self and public education to better understand how structures of power work. Whether popular culture or politics, an imbalance of power in culture prevents progressive social change and is a threat to a democracy. According to SAvE's Organizing Principles, their "vision for the organization…when combined with the mission statement" shapes all major decisions for the organization including efforts to:

Fight environmental degradation
Recognize the impact of the environment on humans and communities
Support human rights
Support animal rights
Demand corporate responsibility

Fight class inequalities
Fight racism
Fight sexism
Fight homophobia and heterosexism
Fight imperialism and militarism
Have a diverse membership
Develop an activist rather than a volunteer approach
Link our issues to local, community concerns.

Challenging Curricular Authority

Below Milo describes the way an institutional power structure emerges when students

exercise and challenge knowledge:

> Um, like Japan entered WWII by entering Hawaii. Well actually Japan did some
> invasions into China first, into Asia first. So I raised my hand and brought it up to
> the teacher and she was like, "Well it's in the textbook" "Well," I said "The
> textbook is wrong". And she said "The textbook is not wrong." I went home and
> my brother had three books on the stuff. And looked it up and she was wrong.
> The next day I wanted to show her…I had this stack of books with little book
> markers that said Japan did not enter WWII as you said. I want you to look at it.
> You're wrong. And so I walked back to my desk and left the books there. And
> she, she came up to me and she knelt down at my desk and she said "We have a
> test today and if you put that down as the correct answer on the test, I'll grade you
> right, but if anyone else does, I'll have to grade them
> wrong." I got up and left. I was like this is crazy, this is insanity. And that kind
> of insanity goes on all of the time. I think that what is happening in schools right
> now is a crime.

Milo problematizes the value of "textbook" knowledge by suggesting that a single individual

or source cannot be held up as the oracle of truth. He criminalizes textbook history and the

methods some teachers use to preserve its place in the knowledge production hierarchy. All of

my respondents went to high school in the same state, although often hundreds of mile apart.

Like Milo and many of my key respondents, Linnea -- if nothing else--calls for an honest

dialogue in classes:

> Well, for one, stop teaching such bullshit history! Like, ridiculous. The whole
> great presidents things. For years I memorized these presidents and what they and
> it was like, this one white man would do whatever was necessary and made
> everything great. It totally ignored all sorts of things that people did to make the

people successful.

Lack of variety and viewpoints in school curriculum is a consistent criticism of all of the activists I interviewed. They blame teachers for repeating textbook history without a critical lens. They argue that year after year the same history, especially history of oppressed people, is taught in the same limited scope. Any push back by students is viewed as dissent. For example Red claims that certain historical figures have become the token heroes of Black history:

> And they'd be like, (in this high pitched girlie voice) "Oh yeah, now we're going to do the Civil Rights movement" with like Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and Rosa Parks and that was it. And it's like, right. MLK got like mad pages. And Malcolm got like one page, if that, and he was portrayed the crazy guy.

Instead of exposing students to a variety of materials, history makers are reduced to a hierarchy of brief sound bites and simple caricatures.

Allies

Most activists in SAvE trace intense periods of learning to an engagement with various texts. They credit reading, conversation, questioning, and critical analysis as important tools of literacy, awareness, and identity formation. Milo argues that all teachers are not the same, but being open to dialogue and critical thinking from students who push back has value:

> There are individuals, there are oasis's, they are teachers. The teachers who I had who were really cool, one of the teachers that had radical left politics like I do, they were teachers that encouraged us to think for ourselves and talk. I mean, I know it's like the real apparent stuff, like what would the ideal teacher be like in this machine. But it's the obvious answer. It's the teachers who say, "What do you think?" Who admitted that they didn't know stuff. Who admitted that they were wrong. The teachers who had discussion. The teacher who valued what you had to say. That you weren't just some cog in the wheel to them. I mean, that was incredibly powerful, I mean…they literally kept me alive.

Milo argues that students need teachers to fight institutional efforts to crank out compliant students who do not question authority. These students value individuals who support critical thinking, dialogue, and honest exchange of ideas. Students who struggle with structural rigidity

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learn to negotiate certain rules, codes, and practices associated with school culture and to appreciate people and programs that support their interests.

Access and Equity

Student activists critique schools because they feel mandated curriculum has the potential to limit critical thinking and access to information. Many student activists are honors students and have access to classes that allow critical thinking, questioning, and creative assignments. Tracking also provides both academic and social advantages, like opportunities to engage with teachers and students who are creative and supportive. Below, Nell explains how knowledge acquisition is articulated to polarized political climates that set the tone for curricular and institutional authority. Nell studied political science, history, and women's studies in college. In her words, she comes from an "extremely conservative" town in a "fairly privileged suburb" with an "extremely conservative school district with equally conservative teachers." Below, Nell explains how the historical and political climate helped set the tone for school:

> I guess they just did a survey in the school newspaper and 80 percent of the school was for the war. And you know, a lot of my social studies teachers were formerly in the military and my dad is really conservative.

In high school, her "radical" ideas did not true up with the majority at her school. Nell was a "big nerd in junior high and high school when it came to global studies and social studies," so for Nell participating in an Advanced Placement (AP) college-preparatory curriculum called "Aquarius" helped to "spark her interest" in activism. In spite of the conservative atmosphere, according to Nell, her interest in history and politics were fostered by an AP and honors curriculum that valued "critical thinking and questioning." In her college prep courses advanced texts on the subject of war, civil rights, and global issues were critiqued. AP courses and honors programs also had "motivated and engaged students," and provided a favorable advantage on a

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college-bound student transcript. Nell, Nathan, Ruth, Ben, and Linnea are among the student activists that claimed being part of an Honors curriculum track helped them gain admission to favorable, competitive colleges including Upstate University and Green State College.

College prep and honors classes provide certain students with skills to negotiate school pressure and allow opportunities for critical inquiry. Nathan observed how access to certain curriculum could foster critical thinking, confidence, *and* inequitable schooling. Some students in regular education classes react negatively to what Nathan terms "marginal ideas" or ideas that differ from their own. Below, Nathan described the pressure he felt from student judgment. He also attributes the freedom to think critically to the honors track:

> I definitely felt like I was on the margins. I never felt that the teachers marginalized, I think they picked up on marginal ideas and they liked that and encouraged that. The pressures that I've always felt are directed by, derived by peers. Just people being talked about and that sort of thing. I was really cautious of the student body as a whole, people just watching and judging and making impressions. I usually felt like my teachers were much more accepting and interested-in a variety of perspectives and ideas than my peers. I can definitely see where the memorize and test experience comes from and I think this exists, to some degree, but I think I had a lot of good critical thinking experience and well…I think a lot of that comes from being part of the honors program and advanced courses. So I think it was a much different experience than kids that weren't in the honors program because they always challenged us.

Depending on the curriculum track, student experience with knowledge acquisition varied. Nathan names peer pressure as a potentially marginalizing force in school, one that can be countered by supportive teachers and earning a place in an honors curriculum track. Unlike students who did not participate in activities or curriculums that provided room to question authority or knowledge, students in these rigorous college prep programs had teachers who seemed to value and support a variety of perspectives and critical thinking. Like others, the honors program validated Nathan's intellectual curiosity and need to be challenged. Freely able to express opinions, Nate no longer felt hemmed in by peer surveillance and disapproval.

Social Hierarchies, Belonging, and School

Youth subcultures are historically understood as nonconformist, non-normative, different, dissenting, and deviant. Although many of my key respondents came from close-knit families, were Honor's students, and participated in extra curricular activities like Girl Scouts, Earth Club, or the Acceptance Coalition, they all identify as radical student environmental and anti-militarization activists. Using subculture as a means of resistance sets the conceptual framework to examine the complex intersection of activist youth culture, social structures, and political action. In addition to curricular hierarchies, another lesson my key respondents learned is how social structures of family, school, and community govern youth acceptance and identity by imposing hierarchies for identity construction and belonging. When college student activists do their work in public, their legitimacy as students and citizens is challenged. Much like membership in Greek life (fraternities and sororities) or athletics, membership in SAvE provides student activists with a new form of group identification.

Extracurricular school groups structure social identity so certain group membership is valued over others. On college campuses like UU where over thirty Greek Life organizations pledge nearly a quarter of students and Division I athletics spans nearly two dozen sports teams, a few dozen student activists who work for environmental causes and stand against US and global militarization have little status among their peers. Unlike activism, sports programs generate money, publicity, and enthusiastic student and community support. Green State College differs from UU as it offers only club and intramural sports and no Greek affiliation so social hierarchies are not organized around sports and Greek life, and environmental activism does not turn heads like it does at UU.

 The other student advocacy groups on campus deal mainly with issues that relate to carefully

focused identity or party politics and host activities that mainly relate to on- campus issues.

Unlike their student counterparts, SAvE activists do their work both on and off campus, focusing

on the urban, mostly working poor Black community surrounding their campus[8]. Nevertheless,

schools bear witness to the spectacle of identity performance and jockeying for social position.

Perry (2002) points out that "identity making is not only central to youth, but is also very public,

performative, and often spectacular" (p. 10). She goes on to argue that schools "standardize and

enforce dominant norms and expectations" and "embed youth in a matrix of social and

institutional relationships that provide the symbolic material with which youth fashion social and

collective identities" (Perry, 2002, p. 10). Institutional expectations set boundaries for youth to

measure up to, push against, act upon, and follow.

Social norms set by schools also provide borders for judging individual and group legitimacy.

Havoc is from a close-knit, large, "athletic" Catholic family. He recalled being "forced into

sports" by family tradition and the pressure that "everyone" in his school--70% students of color-

predominantly Black-and 30% white students--was "into sports." While Havoc felt pressure to

participate in sports, he preferred Drama Club and performing in musicals where he argued, "you

have a core of people who would accept anybody." Here Havoc describes how social structure

was shaped by extracurricular participation:

> It was clear who your social structure was. I look at my brothers who played
> basketball and they knew a lot more of the Black people because they played
> basketball. And there were only a few Black kids in the musicals. It was okay, it
> is also a sense that if you were in that scene (drama) you were pretty much white-
> the musical is a predominantly white space, and as we were growing up, we
> would just get our Black friends into it and it would get a little more mixed, and it
> was good.

As a collective, SAvE often faced the scrutiny of their peers. SAvE held on campus actions

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[8] Since the new chancellor initiated programs to address the town-gown split, more students have been actively participated in school sponsored programs in economically depressed neighborhoods near campus.

like die-ins, tenting, and guerilla theatre as a way to raise awareness of an issue but also to push social boundaries and evaluate their standing. Reactions from campus peers shed light on dominant norms and social expectations on campus producing boundaries that SAvE members constantly had to negotiate. During one of the many overnight participant observations I conducted during two years in the field with SAvE, I witnessed several tense exchanges between SAvE members and their non-activist peers.

On one occasion I observed an incident at a weeklong anti-militarization/war protest that involved tenting on the quad. I was at the tents and I had just finished interviewing Nate when a white male UU student with a video camera emerged from a group of fellow white male students who were not involved in the action, and started taping. Another male from the same group came running across the quad and purposefully jumped on one of the tents where SAvE members and their supporters were hanging out. At first I thought he dove into the tent because he was catching a ball. It was a nice day and there were many students sunning and lounging on the quad. But his movement was so violent and aggressive that I read it as intentional--he literally ran into a group of about eight students who where sitting in or near the tent, and body slammed the tent. He yelled something about supporting President Bush and ran off to his friends, the group of eight white males who were filming and commenting on what they saw. They said something like, "Get off *our* campus, freaks" as if the student activists were intruders who did not belong there.

Because they were wearing Greek letters, I pegged them as UU fraternity members. All of the students belonged to the same fraternity and felt it was their duty to run these "freaks" off their quad and campus. The fraternity members assumed that the student activists were from nearby Green State College when, in fact, the majority of activists attend UU. At one point Milo sent

Desi (both UU students) over to the fraternity brothers. Desi was wearing a fishnet scarf over her exposed waist, and a pair of cropped green army shorts. Her feet were bare and her long hair was blowing in the breeze. She was drinking from a straw stuck in small box of soy milk. As she approached, one guy remarked that she was a "freak." He went on to say, "…they're all freaks and they don't belong on our campus. They're just trying to make us and our school look bad."

These fraternity brothers argued that student activists violated the norms of acceptable behavior. These fraternity brothers saw themselves as gatekeepers of the moral and social high ground of the school. Disparaging remarks, made by the fraternity brothers, about protesting students drew a line between students who do and do not belong. The line illustrates a hierarchy of legitimacy within campus culture. According to the fraternity brothers, they have all of the rights at this private school, including the right to harass students who dare to criticize school policies and politics in public. On this college campus where status quo sets the boundaries of identity and belonging, students who dissent are "freaks." Students who connect the school and its policies to larger social concerns like the material consequences of war make the school look bad; so although this small group of fraternity brothers do not represent the whole of the Greek Life their perceived status marginalizes student activists as the campus freaks.

Hierarchies and belonging take shape as rhetoric, practices, and perspectives manage identities. Student activists often gauge their place on the social ladder from the reactions of their peers. Not before the shock of the incident at the tents wore off Linnea articulates her fellow students' reaction to a cultural stereotype of student protesters. When she said, "I feel like we're all dirty hippies," Linnea acknowledged the social hierarchy and articulates the place of the activist within it.

On the other hand, Amanda describes how the meeting at the tents was affirmed by a different

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group of students:

> I don't know if anyone told you this but the most amazing thing ever happened. So we were sitting in the circle and we had blankets and sleeping bags on us and a group of people came up to us and they started lighting candles. And they were like, we've come to bring you warmth and light. And we were speechless. They were like, "We want to thank you for all you are doing, this is amazing." We were like, "No, thank YOU. Thank you for supporting us. We're all working together in solidarity. We're out here but it takes like all kinds of different groups." It was a social work class at UU. They just brought us candles so we could keep warm and have light. It was amazing. It was probably the highlight of the experience. They thought we were doing the hard work and they wanted to support us, but again it takes all different levels of work.

Solidarity with others is one goal of activist action and education. When student activists are the targets of peer rage, the act of peer solidarity made them feel less isolated and more welcome on campus. Activists use their college campuses to test the rules of engagement and acceptance, often before they work in communities beyond campus. Activist work requires being visible, taking a stand, and sticking to group values in spite of how the school sanctions identities on campus.

The way social settings in schools structure students' academic and leisure lives reveal the power and authority of school in society. Schools offer opportunities to youth and establish norms for participation that categorize and label students. To create a status quo, schools hope students will participate in the practices they organize, sanction, and regulate rather than create their own groups and norms. Any focus outside of the school's agenda creates tension between the administration and the student activists. My respondents often had to work outside the system until they were awarded institutional sanctioning. As long as Ruth's school district could hide the Acceptance Coalition in a district sanctioned, state mandated character education program, the students could *try* to start a club. Yet, according to Ruth, gaining support and legitimacy remained a challenge:

Um, you know we just kept pushing through. Every time they (the administration) would cancel a meeting or just not show up for a meeting we would just go on and have another one. So we ended up meeting, during this time we were trying to make ourselves official, we were still meeting every week. We weren't allowed to put up flyers or anything, so just word of mouth. People who we thought would be interested in something like this. People who we knew were open-minded and might want to make a change.

Despite the lack of official recognition, the group defiantly continued to meet. They used school-sanctioned methods of posting flyers and word of mouth to market themselves and advertise for members. Ruth's effort to "push through" demonstrates how extracurricular spaces and practices become "repositories for youth to express their sense of culture, articulate their everyday class, race, and gender selves, and struggle against forms of authority" (Best, 2000, p. 10). In an interview, Darby explained how forms of authority, like school administrative agendas and institutional rules, serve as gatekeepers of youth expression:

(Big sigh). It's soooo frustrating. On the one hand, you can't really just go off and be like every rule they institute is restrictive and it's intentional and this and that because I understand that this is a university and things have to run smoothly. That means that you have to negotiate between desires of groups and student body and administrators and stuff. I can understand issues of liability and things being dangerous and whatever. But beyond that, (sigh), uh, there was a point at which there is so much CONTROL relegated over student groups based on the FEAR that something will happen, something very negative, and that would even cause conflict in general. It's frustrating to live in that atmosphere. Well maybe it would be a good thing for an argument to ensue or for people to be at odds because that brings the issue to the foreground. Having all of these SURPESSIVE MEASURES…it's like, oh great. You can only express your dissent on the SPEAK OUT board, the INSTITUTIONALIZED speak out board in the SANITIZED student union.

Campus norms and boundaries influence how student activism is practiced and perceived. As above, some institutions sanitize dissent, exercise control, regulate and suppress free speech, and rule out of fear that conflicts will upset the natural order. Activists argue that this contested space can be a site of learning and engagement. Groups who dissent acknowledge that they must negotiate with others on campus because they are all subject to the norms of the institution. This

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negotiation is often frustrating because student activists see institutional boundaries as unnecessary roadblocks to expressing dissent, sharing information, and connecting to the community.

Black Sheep: Family and Contested Identity

While student activists struggled to find acceptance and legitimacy at school, some also faced disapproval at home as they negotiated family norms. Some students participate in extracurricular activities in order to experience group life outside of the pressures of the classroom. Others participate because of college admission ambitions, family tradition, a sincere fondness of the activity, or the will to fit in. Like other students, Havoc worked hard to fit in at school and at home. Havoc referred to himself at the "black sheep" of the family, a designation many other key respondents also noted.

Nathan also maintained a delicate negotiation between family and school membership. According to Nathan, the air of exclusivity in certain clubs can be "intimidating" to students who want to participate, but were raised in a family with seemingly different values or ideas. He argued that groups themselves often end up cementing the very social inequalities they attempt to fight. In his high school "preppy" students, who were prevalent and popular, coded members of the Acceptance Coalition as "the punk kids" in a school. Although Nathan did not self-identify as preppy, he resisted membership in the AC because he did not want to be identified as a punk or a student on the margin. His participation in the Honors track already marked him as one of the "smart" kids—a designation which bothered him. His parents had a negative reaction to his sister's participation in anti-fur and pro-animal rights protests, so Nathan knew that the idea of membership in an activist subculture would upset his parents. Many student activists share his concern about the pressure student activism would bring to bear on their life at home and school.

Much like Havoc, Nathan, Ruth, Darby, and Amanda, Nell's activism required diligent daily negotiation at home. As an environmental and anti-war activist, Nell was in the political minority at home and in school. Nell's parents are divorced, and although she saw her mother frequently, she shared a home with her father and brother while on break. Nell's father is a Physical Education teacher and the high school boy's basketball coach in her school district. She filters her standing in the family through the current historical context of the "perpetual war" and her father's need to maintain his hard-earned public reputation:

> My brother and my dad are constantly ganging up on me. Joking around, teasing me, like "why don't you move to Iraq?" You know, the typical meathead comments. You know my dad is a goofy guy and he's fun but he's also really respected in the community. His basketball teams have the best records of any of the teams at our high school, and so he's always like "What would everybody say?" He doesn't really mind about the activism because I think he's secretly proud of me because I'm standing up for what I believe in even if we don't agree.

In addition, her father minimized and even criminalized her activism by frequently referring to her as "Patty Hearst."[9] As long as Nell failed to conform to the political will of her family or town, she will suffer what she calls the "teasing" and "ganging up" by certain family members. Nell was clearly emotional when she discussed the delicate balance of staying true to activism and being a "good daughter." She was hurt by but downplayed the impact of the "meathead comments" her dad made, suggesting that they were typical of "jocks" like him. She links her father's shame and will to hide any pride he had for her activism to his rank in sports culture at school and to the historical post 9/11 context. Nell's activism is recognized not as part of the collective identity of her family or democratic citizenship but as a boundary of self-definition and independence.

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[9] Patty Hearst is the daughter of publishing magnate William Randolph Hearst. She was kidnapped in 1974 by the Symbionese Liberation Army and later appeared to sympathize with her captors and join their cause was shown in promotional material with a beret and a machine gun (and had changed her name). Eventually, Hearst, who had attempted armed bank robbery, was apprehended with other SLA members in the Bay area.

Managing Bureaucracy: Opportunity and Agency

Even though schools, especially k-12 schooling, largely ignore activism in both the formal curriculum and in the extracurricular life of the school (Zinn, 2005), participating in student activism can foster student agency. Linnea, who did not have a chance to practice activism until college, illustrates how experience in extra curricular groups helps students develop skills to navigate bureaucracy:

> NO, NO! There weren't any examples of that that I saw. I came to college and was amazed that people did activism in high school. I was like, "There were outlets for such things in your high school? That's great!" The more experience you have, the better you are at dealing with the establishment.

Time and time again, activists in this study echoed Linnea's key critique that k-12 education made little to no room for activism. Nell had a similar experience when it came to exposure to activism in her k-12 education. When I asked whether Nell had any opportunities to see activism in her k-12 experience, she too, gave me a flat out "no" for an answer. But whether they became activists in high school or college, the more experience student activists have negotiating institutional bureaucracy, the better they are at working the system. All of my key respondents participated in extracurricular activities. As a result student activist experience in extracurricular activities provided skills to help students better navigate the system.

Navigating Road Blocks

School bureaucracy sets up road blocks that create difficulties for students who have an action-oriented agenda. Nell, who gained experience through her involvement with student government, characterizes school as a system of regulation and red tape that requires organization and focus:

> I think being organized comes from the fact that in high school I was very involved in student government. I was student council treasurer so I had to be organized. But also it was a hindrance at the same time because for a long time I

have been obsessed, almost, with the rules and bureaucracy and working within the system and that's not always the best tactic or means to get things done.

Below, Darby discusses the ease with which she negotiated school bureaucracy in her k-12 activist work and compares it to her experience in college. In elementary and middle school, planning and executing extracurricular events was a collaborative process. The library readily lent materials and she easily secured permission to set up an Earth Day table in the lunchroom. In college, the goals were the same but permits and paperwork made the process more difficult:

> Yeah, we did all kinds of things. We borrowed the button-making machine from the library and made SAVE THE EARTH buttons. And rubber stamps were big back then and we did the rubber stamps on paper as bookmarks and we sold these things during lunch. Then people got to know…I think it's interesting now, looking back, it was so easy to just be like, "I want to set up a table and we want to sell these Earth things." But now thinking about all of the bureaucracy here. Like, "You can't sell this, you have to have a permit, you have to write up a thing." AWWWWW. It's CRAZY. It's hard.

Institutions demand different levels of accountability and action when it comes to using space, and college activism requires students to know how to navigate an often impersonal, frustrating institutional maze. Darby's experience negotiating road blocks gives her certain savvy about managing the bureaucratic process:

> If you're going to do a die-in, you have to have them in a specific location…there are some designated areas on the campus where there are strict rules. I know the grass across from the Student Center is not regulated but the Quad is. There is that area in front that is okay. But it's like, this area is okay and that area is not okay. I thought of this cool thing we could do if we ever wanted to challenge the idea of reserved space. Alright, private property fine, but how much money does every student pay to go to this university? It belongs to us as well, so, I thought it would be cool to find the measurements of the quad and divide the area by the number of students so you know how much space is yours…like one square foot is mine. And every SAvE person could denote their boundaries and be like, "This is my square. I paid for this square of the quad and I can do whatever I want right here." And we can all collect our squares and put them together and that becomes our space. I'd like to do that but I'm running out of time. Maybe when I come back.

Universities regulate space in a variety of ways. In order to subvert the regulations, Darby

suggests that students must understand and work within institutional structures. They can use their understanding of and experience with institutional boundaries, like private/public space and tuition, to creatively manage the bureaucracy. Students also use the power of collective action to push against and manage school rules and practices. As Darby points out students are constrained by another institutional boundary-- the school calendar.

The academic calendar and scholarly requirements make demands on and regulate students. Extracurricular activities also make demands on and regulate student academic and social lives. As activism became an integral component of their social life, my key respondents worked in various ways to balance schoolwork and extracurricular participation. An excerpt from an interview with Amanda shows how the school calendar can define the borders of activist work:

> This semester was amazing. It was so hard-core. A lot of stuff got done. The attention has been raised. We had the conference. Even if we taught a couple of people, even if from our conference, the Northeast Regional Conference, it's going to be this whole Northeast Regional Coalition now and its just growing.

The school calendar helped Amanda and others define the success of their extracurricular work. During this "hardcore" semester, SAvE members planned and executed a Regional conference and felt good about accomplishing their action plan within the constraints of the semester.

For my key respondents, the ability to participate in extracurricular activities was shaped by a dedication to academics. Although several of my key respondents had a desire to join SAvE, the demands of their schedule and classes often took priority. Nathan wanted to join SAvE but, at first, his class schedule regulated his participation:

> I first came to the kick off meetings. I just saw fliers for that and so I went down alone. But I couldn't be in SAvE last semester because I had class during the meeting times.

Tory's academic responsibilities also controlled his participation in extracurricular activities:

This is my second semester. I came in majoring in architecture. I liked it and I did well in it but I decided that it wasn't my thing because it didn't really allow me to get involved at all. I couldn't really go to the forums at all.

Similar institutional restrictions on participation apply in high school, as Linnea recounts:

Actually I had no time for any kind of extracurricular groups, especially ones that were not valued by the establishment, because they had us in all of those AP courses and college level math. I was advised to play as many sports as possible and join National Honor Society and all this other stuff in order to get to college.

Ambitious future focused students often have a packed schedule and make strategic choices about extracurricular activities that prioritize activities that will "look good" for college admission. Once in school, students like Nell had to manage their time between school work and their recreational life. In order for Nell to dedicate time away from her studies, the activity had to meet her standards for focus and commitment on the part of others:

Well I came to the first three meetings last year and because of school work, I wasn't able to commit much and, well, none of the campaigns really jumped out at me. There wasn't a lot of dedication for each of the campaigns and it wasn't really solid.

As Nell argues academic commitments did not so much get in the way of participation as they helped shape the type of participation students selected. Activism became both an integral component of social life and a serious activity that warranted balancing with academics.

Group Membership

While the calendar can help define success or failure, extracurricular activities provide opportunities for students to build connections outside of the classroom. Participation tests student agency and ability to work independently and as a collective. Group membership helps students manage relationships with others and with the institution. Socializing and the structure

of groups help student activists learn valuable lessons about friendship, loyalty, and democratic process.

In her first year Nell struggled to make friends. Instead, she put effort into maintaining a long distance relationship. Because she went home so frequently, she did not take the time to involve herself in on campus activities:

> I went home every weekend. I was still with my boyfriend and that was a motivator as well, but it was really hard my freshman year. I had a roommate and we would hang out and talk but she got a boyfriend half way through the year so she would spend all of her time with him. I would spend a lot of time on the computer, IMing with friends.

Eventually, through membership, in SAvE Nell built strong connections with other students. Student activists sometimes traveled off campus together to attend educational conferences and actions. SAve membership helped Nell to develop deep social connections at school:

> Last year I was still a loner outside of SAvE. I would be invited to the SAve parties and the occasional action, and this summer when we went to the Mid West to the summer training institute, it was like a week straight of Milo, Tory, Jim and Ben, and that kind of cemented my friendship with them, I think. You can't spend seven days with someone without either liking them more or much less. Usually more, though (laughter).

Going off campus was not always easy. As Emma points out, student activists who sought to build stronger bonds with local community activists sometimes found it challenging. The students were looking for guidance from their more seasoned community counterparts, many of who were former SAvE members, but did not find it:

> It's strange. I've noticed from this year to last year, sort of the rift between university campus activists even if they are doing community stuff and ex-student activists off campus. For instance, people in the Cambridge Cooperative. I have heard that we are not doing the kind of activism that they are interested in. But it kind of boggles my mind because there is so much that they have to offer and to teach us. Like, Tory and a couple of other people have gone to their potlucks that they have on Sunday night. I wish that they would take a more active role with us. It is too bad, because we, at least I, have a lot to learn still. And, there's just so much that they can teach us.

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Support from veteran members of an organization is crucial to the strength of an organization. Typically, in high school there is usually someone who provides students in extracurricular groups with guidance on what to do when and how to do it. In college, groups have advisors or coaches with varying levels of direct involvement with the group. SAvE's structure differed from that of a typical college club. Their non-hierarchical, consensus-based organizational structure required students to navigate group membership and participation in a more collective, collaborative format.

In schools, adult advisors or coaches guide extracurricular activities like a club or sport and handle much of the bureaucratic negotiating and management necessary to keep the group going. Parents, too, function as gatekeepers. Among other things, they conduct fundraisers and volunteer as chaperones to support the extra curricular activities. SAvE, as most college clubs, had a faculty advisor. Members consulted with him but for the two years I was in the field, I never saw him.

Unlike other college clubs, SAvE was a non-hierachical, consensus-based organization. In my field notes I wrote quite extensively about group practice at weekly meetings and actions. A non-hierarchical structure set SAvE apart from other groups but often set them back, and required constant adjustments and reflection. Many members, especially new members, lacked an understanding of this type of organizational structure and without a central authority or way of explaining the process to members who were used to other meeting structures, facilitation of meetings was a long and frustrating process that resulted in lengthy discussions rather than delegation of duties or actual action planning.

A non-hierarchical structure is a badge of pride for an organization that operates in a rule-heavy institutional bureaucracy, and this was the case for SAvE. Student activists gain

subcultural capital every time they push against institutional rules and practice. But internally, the group struggled with the non-hierarchical group/facilitated meeting structure. Members who are invested in and understand the process benefit more that those who are not.

SAvE is a school sanctioned organization that, along with its own mission statement and principles, must abide by certain codes, rules, and practices of the institution. Where most campus groups elect officers (president, vice president, secretary, treasurer), SAvE does not elect or appoint a power structure to run the organization; instead all members of the group share leadership duties and they assign a facilitator to run each meeting. SAvE also uses consensus model of decision making. This structure places responsibility for decision making on the collective and awareness of participation on the individual.[10] The SAvE handbook describes consensus this way:

> The fundamental right of consensus is for all people to be able to express themselves in their own words and of their own will. The fundamental responsibility of consensus is to assure others of their right to speak and be heard. Since our society provides very little training in these areas, we have to unlearn many behavior patterns in order to practice good consensus process (see "Overcoming Oppressive Behavior," in this handbook). Consensus does not mean that everyone thinks that the decision made is the most efficient way to accomplish something, or that they are absolutely sure it will work. What it does mean is that in coming to that decision, no one felt that her or his position on the matter wasn't considered carefully. Hopefully, everyone will think it is the best decision; this often happens because, when consensus works properly, collective intelligence does come up with better solutions than could individuals.

SAvE argues that institutions do not prepare individuals to be critical, cooperative thinkers and consensus builders. Rather, individuals are taught to take sides and to work for a win (or vote). Consensus is not voting because:

> Voting is a means by which we choose one alternative from several. Consensus, on the other hand, is a process of synthesizing many diverse elements together.

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[10] Each meeting participant is encouraged to "self check" using guidelines that include watching your tone and body language, staying on topic and keeping comments brief and concise, maintaining an awareness about your level of participation and comments to be sensitive and stand in solidarity with others.

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Voting assumes that people are always competitive and that agreement can only be reached through compromise. Consensus assumes that people are willing to agree with each other, and that in such an atmosphere, conflict and differences can result in creative and intelligent decisions. Another important assumption made in consensus is that the process requires everyone's participation, in speaking and in listening. No ideas are lost, each member's input is valued as part of the solution, and feelings are as important as facts in making a decision. It is possible for one person's insights or strongly held beliefs to sway the entire group, but participation should always remain equal.

Consensus is collective decision making that takes individual feelings and ideas into consideration. Voting is engineered to one side winning at any cost without due consideration of how the ideas are generated. SAvE uses consensus to "achieve better solutions, but also to promote the growth of community and trust." The collective decision making process privileges the power of community, and at the same time empowers individual ideas and contributions. Fighting power in this way helps students to learn new ways to negotiate institutions and bureaucracy.

Conclusion

Student activists work to promote awareness of inequality, environmental degradation, war, and unbalanced relations of power. In their work, student activists bump up against unbalanced relations of power and often struggle to establish legitimacy in the contested spaces of family, school, and peer groups. These students learn how structures govern youth acceptance and identity by imposing hierarchies for identity construction and belonging. Activism provides students with opportunities to negotiate institutional and group boundaries and with lessons about power, identity, bureaucracy, agency, membership, and group work. Activism also provides students with opportunities to balance schoolwork and leisure activities.

Navigating institutional rules, regulations, and relationships shaped student understanding of systems and supported a cohesive political and social presence on campus. The more experience

students had with school norms and bureaucracy, the better able they were to balance rules and regulations set by institutions and within their organization. Moreover, the complexities of doing activism reveal how experience and commitment to working the system is a practice of radical democratic citizenship. Mobilizing as a collective, these activists create alternative identities that challenge the normative notion of what students and democratic citizens look like.

CHAPTER 6
Identity Privilege: How Activities and Practices Complicate Privilege

Practices at weekly meetings and events allow student activists to participate collectively in each other's experience, and demonstrate how students learn to link concepts and concerns--that seem unrelated--to their own experience. Yet, activist gatherings and events also point to a chasm of uninterrogated privilege. When I observed white student activists hosting an African drum circle or listened to them speak about "beautifying" nearby working poor Black neighborhoods with graffiti, I wondered whether students interrogated the connection between these practices and their racial and class identity. When, time and time again, I witnessed a male spokesperson representing the group and the women taking notes or preparing food, I wondered how the group addressed power and gender identity.

This chapter examines how SAvE's activities and practices, like the caucuses, conferences, and weekly meetings, provide opportunities to engage with the discomfort of privilege and power often brought on by the very pedagogical strategies used to address privilege. It explores how youth make meaning of identity privilege in their collective effort to oppose legacies of oppression and social injustice. The chapter argues that activism brings to the surface student struggles with identity that highlight a complicated and messy awareness of the way privilege—structural advantages conferred by race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability--shapes group process, activities, and roles. It shows how students talk around privilege, and find whiteness both paralyzing and surprising. In this chapter we see students, who think of themselves as good people, using white talk, although they do not identify it as such. Rather, they are scratching the surface of issues like whiteness and gender, and this chapter gets at the complicated and sometimes dirty work of activism.

First, I focus on how group members make sense of activist practices with relation to privilege. Then I examine the relationship between whiteness and gender identity to privilege and power in the group. Lastly, I focus on a weekly ritual ice breaker called "The Go Around" to reveal how group practices display tension between individual and group identity.

Activist self-education

Activism, as education for progressive citizenship, is a site of struggle for political agency set against a backdrop of power and privilege. By actively working both on and off campus to address structures of privilege that have structural control over student identity, SAvE members are charged with practicing what they preach. Weekly group activities, caucuses, and retreats become forms of self-monitoring, providing peers a place to define, deconstruct, and live their goals. They also define struggles that are present within the group and what issues need to be addressed in their group life.

One role of SAvE is to educate the public on issues that matter to them. Students in SAvE "table" in public to disseminate information on a particular issue like Styrofoam use in dining halls, environmental racism in the local community, or militarization on campus. They host rallies, teach-in's, and movie nights to raise awareness and recruit members. They have weekly meetings to work on campaigns, plan actions, network, and socialize. As they practice political participation SAvE members engage in self-education, too. Weekly meetings and actions often center on power and oppression, so understanding how privilege works is essential to their activism.

As Ben points out below, group activities like conferences and retreats openly focus on discussions of oppression and privilege and are a vehicle to teach members about how power and privilege work. Ben acknowledges that discussions of privilege are neither easy nor

commonplace for most students but, since uninterrogated privilege exists in this movement, it

must addressed:

> Hey folks, it's heart-warming to hear many people say that they had a great time,
> even though there was a lot of tension at points as the things we talk about are not
> "easy" commonplace discussions. One of the reasons we talk about them is
> because things like white privilege, male privilege, etc. have been ignored or
> neglected for a long time. And placing ourselves in these sometimes
> uncomfortable discussions, we learn and continue on our path to continually
> challenge the oppressions that face our world.

Ben names racial and gender identity as two sites of privilege, among others, that deserve

attention. Amanda also acknowledges that privilege is a topic of concern and struggle during

group activities like the caucuses. For one, she argues that the constantly evolving membership

of the group demonstrates the need for purposeful attention to and a sharper definition of

privilege:

> After the white caucus on Tuesday I think we need to define privilege and we
> need to be on the same page. Milo was like, "Don't you think we are?" And I
> was like, "No." Lisa just got here three weeks ago. And you've been doing this
> for your whole life and there's no way we can be on the same page about this.

Over two years of fieldwork, I observed how structures of the organization like the weekly

meetings, events, and the caucuses, highlighted student struggles with privilege. As students

interact, privilege was defined and contested. Discussions and activities at retreats, conferences,

caucuses, and weekly meetings unearthed complications and contradictions of privilege, raising

the question: "Are we who we say we are?"

Activism and Education in a "Laboratory of Privilege"

Defining privilege is a complex part of subcultural life for the student activists, especially for

systematically privileged students who make challenging whiteness or class a part of their

agenda. Systematically privileged students can stand in solidarity with systematically

marginalized students against institutional discrimination and oppression but admitting the

benefits conferred by race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability is at the core of seeing privilege. Applebaum (2004) contends that in order for whites to "form alliances with others to challenge the structures that provide meaning for whiteness" they must recognize a need for vigilant attention to and practice of interrogating their "social positionality" or privileged position in culture (p. 319). Privileged individuals can be anti-racist allies once they recognize the structures that give power to white privilege. Further, no matter their benevolent goals, privilege is best interrogated when "whites work to continually unearth and work against the ways in which they….are complicit in perpetuating racist systems" (Applebaum, 2004, p. 319).

Milo, when looking back after his college graduation, concluded that college activism is practiced in a "laboratory of privilege." In his words, campus life was "not the real world." He argued that the consequences for practicing activism on campus differ from real world practice because as a campus activist you do not risk arrest, job loss, or other financial hardships. College students, many of who are privileged in multiple ways--some by the fact that they can afford college--often separates their life as students from life in the real world. Milo sees a gap between schoolwork and real work, and between campus and the world that lies beyond those boundaries. He acknowledges students' desire to do activist work off campus, in the real world, while they are students. There is dissonance between student life and "the real world" but the conflict between individual ideology and the goals of the collective reveals the murky chasm of uninterrogated privilege that students in this study are working to bridge.

Milo makes a distinction between activists who do real work and those who do charity work. Nearly a decade before social media critiqued groups like KONY 2012, Milo indicted charity work as a symptom of benevolent white privilege because of the lack of structural analysis of poverty:

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I don't give to charity. I think charity is bullshit. It's terrible. The worst is feed the African children. It's not let's examine why these people are poor, it's white people saying, "Let me throw some money at them so I feel better." You go look up these charities on the State Attorney General's list and only 4% of the money goes to potentially helping any kids. The rest of it goes to the huge bureaucracy that hires white people to run this whole charity thing. To pay Sally Struthers, to pay for the commercials, to pay for these hand written letters, all the stuff. But even helping it is like putting a Band-Aid on a gaping wound.

Milo contends that how you go about the work of activism is important. He indicates that there is a difference between doing work for others—what he calls charity—and doing anti-racist work for yourself, to better understand your role in structural oppression. This is activism. Below, Milo makes reference to how activists go about understanding and acting in a way that shows they understand how systems of privilege work:

But middle class people don't want to deal with it. But it's not just middle class people; it's an American privilege thing. They don't want to understand why an economy that is literally labor for the rest of the world is so dirt poor to the point of starvation. There's stuff out there that considers itself activism and it's really charity. On the flip side of this is the struggle that has a thousand different forms, that circles the globe. There are people who say, listen, we have an economic system that is on the one percent model where 99% of us work to keep the one percent happy. This is a system that can only exist under a complete divide and conquer strategy that employs racism and sexism and heterosexism and classism to keep it going. Because if we all just sat down and had the conversation, we would say why are 99 of us working for this one percent.

According to Milo, once certain activists join the "real world," the benefits of identity privilege make it easier for them to participate in the system of oppression they formerly opposed:

Oh yeah it's much easier to escape. The more privilege you have the easier it is for activists to go plug back into the system and say, "Okay, I'll forget about these things if you give me a good job, if you give me the good car, if you make it so my kids have health care. Fuck the rest of them. I don't have to have solidarity with them, that was a choice I was making and I'm not making that choice anymore." For a black working class person, like my friend, she goes back, they can't offer her health care for everybody in her community, they can't offer her realistic jobs for everybody in her community. So she can't leave that. That's her family.

Milo advocates a structural analysis of privilege that he hopes fellow activists will adopt, but members often have trouble assimilating it into their practices. Ann

Identity Guilt

Many of my white, upper middle class respondents associated privilege with class, race, or gender. Yet, whether I interviewed them directly or observed it first hand, student activists had difficulty admitting to a "conscious identification" with privilege (Perry, 2002, p. 73). Their participation in SAvE helped activists to acknowledge the power of whiteness and material privilege but often identity guilt prevents them from reconciling with their place in the power structure. Students were trapped by this way of thinking. And because the context of activism is identity based, whiteness was paralyzing. Nathan, like many other campus activists, understands his relationship to-- but is ashamed of--privilege:

> I: Do you want to have a class description attached to the area where you live?
>
> N: Yeah, I definitely do think it does contribute to who I am as a person but I wish wouldn't have to say that's how I would identify.
>
> I: You struggle with that?
>
> N: Yeah.
>
> I: As in you don't want to say you're an upper class guy from a white suburb with half a million dollar homes?
>
> N: Yeah, right, right. It's, I definitely (pause) I am like, I am definitely in the upper middle class, I guess in Provinceville. It's definitely like very, very upper class in the area. A lot of luxurious living and I'm somewhere in the middle there but definitely very privileged. It's a tough question because I just wish that those distinctions didn't have to exist, that it wouldn't matter. Like because people make assumptions about you, no matter what class you come from. I'd rather not have that prejudgment there.

Nathan resists privilege as an integral mark of self-identity. His hesitation demonstrates the power of identity politics on college campuses and in activist circles. He suggests that people

from all walks of life fall victim to judgment because of identity-based distinctions such as race and class. White guilt articulated to material privilege often served as motivator for student activists to "give back" or "do something" about structural inequities. Identity guilt also motivates students to explore and contest their identity.

In our first interview Anne talked about how only recently, after graduating from a private college and joining SAvE, was she forced to come to terms with her identity:

> Okay, I guess I am white, I guess I can identify as white, whatever that means. I identify as a woman, I guess but I don't know. It's funny, I just got asked for the first time, like, a couple months ago what gender I identified as for the first time ever, so. I guess I hadn't ever really thought about it until then. So I guess a woman, but I don't know. … Compared to the other people in SAvE I am older and I am conscious of that so I guess I identify as older and not a student. I am twenty five. Um, I don't know, I am very undecided about sexuality, like perpetually. About disability…I don't know, I am very interested in disability rights stuff but like I guess I identify as an able-bodied person.

Anne's indecision is palatable and her hesitation to qualify her racial, gender, and sexual identity is predicated upon her strong anti-racist, class-conscious activism. Anne describes her family as materially "poor" on occasion--especially when her father was a getting his doctorate and her mother "wasn't doing anything." But she also claims that her parents were "really well-off." In a second interview she struggled when asked to identify her class status saying she has "class privilege" because she was raised in a "sort of middle class family" but she is now 25 and working a low wage job with no benefits and realizes that she "can't count on her parents for money." Anne walks me back through her family history to figure out her relationship to privilege and suggests that SAvE helped to see how discussions of class are "really complicated" and "we don't know how to talk about class well in this country… because we're not supposed to acknowledge it or something." Even though Anne buries her privilege in the claim that no one really knows how to talk about it, SAvE provided Anne and other students with experience

outside of school or work that allowed them to explore the relationship between privilege and identity.

Benevolent Activism

SAvE activists take an "anti-oppression" stance in most of their work. This stance includes addressing the way power and identity work to oppress individuals and groups. While they believe deeply in the intersection of power, oppression and identity, activists often struggle to analyze the complexities of this intersection. Instead, many students put their identity privilege at the center of their activism and practice. For example, as Amanda raises the question, "Why aren't there more minorities?" in activism, she argues that "the struggle is everyone's struggle and it seems strange to me that it's usually the white middle class students who are taking charge." Her comments reflect a certain dogmatic response that puts the spotlight on identity privilege and lacks an analysis of structural barriers to a university education for minorities, or any consideration of historical or social contexts like policing of minorities v. whites. Often, student activists' benevolent instincts and shallow analysis of identity paper over a more complex analysis of power and privilege.

Some students in SAvE worked on a campaign that involves city residents who are embroiled in a dispute with the county over building a waste treatment facility in their neighborhood. The Oxford Ave. campaign is SAvE's only off campus campaign that partners students with members of a nearby working poor Black community who face environmental racism. When I asked Havoc what made him choose Oxford Ave. campaign, he said:

> It's just you know, I guess when you're coming from an integrated school, you
> see it. You know, people talk about oppression and race, and you do see it. I look
> at my school board and it's pretty much all white except for the occasional black
> person. And you put that into the Oxford Ave. form and we've got the white
> county executive here who does not care about these people and that happens
> every place.

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The majority of SAvE students did not choose the Oxford Ave. campaign rather they selected the on campus anti-militarization campaign. Havoc's benevolence is motivated by the experience of "seeing" the margins–in his case it was seeing oppressive racial borders come to life in high school and again in the community that surround his college. Havoc, who is white, genuinely wants to help "these people" (presumably Black people). He witnessed an unbalanced power structure at his "integrated school," where, even though the school was predominantly Black, the decision making power was in the hands of the white minority. Through his choice of campaigns, Havoc propelled his "drive to make a change" and to correct racial injustice. He understands that whiteness influences an oppressive structure but, in the end, the connection he makes between race and oppression is reduced to a black and white dichotomy that blurs rather than sharpens an intersectional and structural analysis of racism. Havoc's hope that his whiteness can influence racism places white power and supremacy back in the center of the concern.

In high school, Havoc noticed obvious racial division in the physical space of the school. He said, "It was odd. The Black kids would leave through the east door and the white kids would leave through the west." Havoc's experience in school made him uncomfortable and helped him to understand his whiteness, and race, as a part of his self-identity. In her study, Best (2000) points out that the majority of white kids struggled when asked about diversity. Unlike Havoc, they find comfort primarily in organizing peers based on social categories and almost never made "references to any racial meaning" (p. 139). Although Havoc and others spoke awkwardly at times about their racial and gendered (among other) identity, SAvE—as a group of predominantly white students—acknowledged and placed a high priority on taking responsibility for this work.[11] Best (2000), in discussing race and privilege, writes "…for white students, to

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[11] SAvE organized caucus and consciousness raising groups like the "Men's Group" of which Havoc is a member.

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acknowledge race means to acknowledge a set of taken-for-granted privileges based on race. The privileges derived from living as a white person in contemporary U.S. society are so embedded within everyday life that they are almost impossible to identify by white students unless the issue is forced by students of color" (pp. 139-140). In Havoc's case, the more opportunities he had to "see" race through oppressive conditions in school and then again in his work as an activist, the more he wanted to use his identity privilege to do something to change those conditions for others.

SAvE's education about power happens on two levels. They educate the public about their core issues and they plan and attend conferences and caucuses to educate group members about issues of identity privilege that arise from these educational activities. During my years with the group, one incident in particular stuck out as an example of the problems SAvE members had with analyzing race, power, and privilege. Darby describes the incident as the time when "African American students tried to shut down the SAvE film program" on war. When I asked Tory how SAvE helps people to "see race" he used the example of the same conflict with the SAS:

> I think this specific event helped but how I see it was different than what it was made out to be. I think SAS (Students for an African Society) had some legitimate claims but at the same time, we did attempt to cover the issue of race and the war. If you look at the schedule of events there was a speech from Martin Luther King about race and war. And then they are protesting against our thing that includes that? There are some discrepancies there that weren't well thought through before SAS pulled this. But at the same time, we probably should have made sure that this was covered in Joplin Chapel, in a small discussion. It wasn't on the flyer. It was flyer that we put out the night before the event in an emergency and we didn't list the subject as part of the schedule. I think that's where a huge problem came from. At the same time, there are some legitimate claims that like, honestly, we are a group of white kids that are organizing this anti-war rally and we didn't include the issue of race and the war in the Joplin Chapel thing. I don't think it's just a coincidence. I mean, there were some difficulties in trying to get people to come speak. It's not like one of us would stand up and say, I'll talk about race and the war. So I don't think that we know exactly what is going on, but at the

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same time, I don't think we get as much credit, as we deserved. As far as in general, as far as seeing the issues of race. I think we are able to see it because of the whole anti-oppression approach that we are trying to take.

Like others, Tory puts whiteness at the center of a discussion on race. In Tory's analysis, SAS lacks empathy and understanding for SAvE's anti-oppression efforts. SAvE members can see race because they take an anti-oppression stance and, because they were rushed to create publicity, simply forgot to reference race on their flyer. Tory blames SAS for not giving SAvE credit for giving a nod to race—after all, they included a discussion of a speech by MLK, a Black man (which, in his mind, covers the intersection of race and war). Further, he suggests that SAS does not understand the role of identity politics in who can and cannot speak about race.

I ask Tory whether he believed SAvE learned anything from the SAS protests. He said that SAvE learned that they have to collaborate with groups like SAS when organizing an event, but qualifies his response by suggesting that groups like SAS have responsibility, too. Tory even argues that there is historical hostility between Blacks and whites that prevents a friendly working relationship but glosses over addressing the "real issues" the undergird the complexities of oppression faced by groups like SAS:

> I think it would be beneficial, if not key and like really building a strong movement. It really does make some things impossible to do. Like organizing that event. If we can't work with you, then… I'm not really sure, because it's a two way street. At the same time it's also not going to work if we're going to have the only African American woman be our liaison between the two groups, it's not going to work that way. Just like I don't think we're going to be able to walk up and say "let's be friends". That sort of thing. I think it's historical, because there are real issues that underlie everything. Try to take as much of a pro-active stance as we can. Trying to get involved in what they are doing and whatnot. But I think it's something that we should be talking about but I think it's too engrained to just point it out and fix it.

Darby also deflects blame from SAvE suggesting that there are certain individuals, like those in SAS, who have to be handled like a person who has issues:

In terms of negotiating between what different groups want, I think it goes back to my background experiences in high school and middle school. I got involved in a group called PAL (peer assistance leaders) in 7th or 8th grade and got back into it in high school. With that, you go to trainings to learn to talk with people who have difficulties, issues with depression, how to be sensitive and guiding in some respects in a really subtle way. Because if you're speaking with someone, and they are having problems and they don't want to talk to an adult guidance counselor, that's sort of one of the things you can be used for as a PAL. Um, you can't just be like, "these are your problems and this is what you need to do", they have to come up with it for themselves. I think I paid really close attention to that kind of stuff because it's really important to be able to speak with people and maneuver ideas.

SAvE's effort to collaborate becomes a process of negotiation that requires students to analyze a situation on their own and not rely on the other groups to pinpoint or solve their concerns. Communication is a key factor when working to skillfully broker a compromise. Tory suggests that a good way to address old habits is to have a retreat in the beginning of the semester so students can remove themselves from school:

I think this is something that the retreats might be good for. With these new people coming in we have the opportunity to start with new people. I think we should start next year, if not in the first week, the first month a retreat just to get away and learn.

Like others, he sees retreats as a form of group education, not a mere social event. But student activists place their identity privilege in the center of these educational events, loosing valuable opportunity to discuss their compliance in the project of oppression and racism.

Gendered Work

As the group educates members to advocate for the disenfranchised, internal power dynamics expose the disenfranchisement of its own members. Some student activists suggest that behaviors and tactics of the group leaders often reflect a "do as I say, not as I do" culture. Conflicting gender dynamics in meetings, however, *can* help members to see identity privilege, especially sexism, in action. At the expense of a deeper, group analysis of power and activism,

female activists in SAvE explored how gender dynamics complicate the work they do. In the end, as students work to change the accepted structure of manhood and patriarchy in the movement, hierarchies of gender remained cemented and organizational change remained elusive.

Amanda, who initially rarely spoke up in meetings, notes the contested space of gender during weekly meetings. Here she remarks on how gender privilege is unmasked in meetings during power grabs:

> When I leave the meetings, I do talk them over with Havoc a lot. I am comfortable talking with him and not necessarily in the group. But a couple of times I have stood up in the group when Milo was taking way too much power. I was like, "You need to back down. Who are you to say what needs to be done?

At one meeting about six months into my participant observation Janet expressed concern that no one challenged the fact that women consistently volunteered for note taking duty while men served as meeting facilitators. She argued that "men as leaders and women as silent secretaries" held up an "old gender stereotype," one that the group was supposed to "fight against." In one interview, Tory reflected upon sexism in the organization as if this problem was a concern of the distant past:

> Well, a year ago, I wasn't here but this is what I heard from Ben and Darby. I guess there were some outstanding problems with sexism in the group. I think they were having a lot of meetings at the Cambridge house. There were a lot of older, activist-types who were part of it and they called specific individuals out and named people over email. This was the big thing that stood out in the groups' mind about sexism. There are still problems today and I've got an idea about what problems people have and I'm not really sure where that stems from. It's more about individuals, just the way that we go about our life, the way people talk.

Tory suggests that the behavior of individuals-in this case--how some women in SAvE felt ill-treated by some men, is at the root of sexism but discounts that perhaps group practices or activities contribute to systematic power imbalance. He notes how "it's typical that women end

up volunteering for cooking and guys are always volunteering for building things" but does not comment any further. Notes from my fieldwork show numerous examples of how activities and practices, like weekly meetings and conferences, both bring gender role struggles to the surface and attempt to address them.

This incident to which Tory referred began as an email thread initiated by a female member of SAvE--who has now graduated but continues to do activist work off campus--accusing some male members and the organization itself of sexism. The writer observed that it was the men who did most of the public speaking on behalf of the group and that the invisible labor of taking notes, heading committees, and cooking at events, fell on the women. The writer also referred to sexual harassment of females by certain male offenders. As a result current SAvE members who are the subject of this research decided to host a Regional Conference to deal with, among other things, issues of gender in the group and, in addition to workshops, planned to have separate male and female caucuses.

In spite of their efforts to address gender roles, during the Regional Conference I witnessed several example of how gender continued to organize duties and actions. I volunteered to assist Paul, who was in charge of coordinating food at the SAvE Regional Conference. Conference organizers were expecting hundreds of college students from around the state. They wanted to provide at least four free meals over the weekend and charge a minimal registration fee. This would involve soliciting donations from local businesses, dumpster diving, and forgoing catering by preparing the food ourselves. In the weeks before the conference although he said was making "contacts," Paul made no effort to help plan, acquire donations, or prepare meals--all that fell on me. At one point when I questioned his involvement Paul said to me, "Just get supper on the table." It was then that I made clear that I would only be responsible for breakfast on both days.

On the weekend of the conference, I set up breakfast in a large group meeting room both Saturday and Sunday from 9:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. On Saturday, Milo arrived just as the window for breakfast was ending. Upon realizing there was no coffee left he looked at me and screamed at the top of his lungs, "There's no fuckin' coffee? I need my coffee! I guess I'll have to go on a coffee run and get my own coffee. Who is with me?" Codes that govern behavior in SAvE are often circulated and produced, not merely through adhering to by-laws, but by individual ideology and practices that complicate activist work. Here the contradiction is that as Milo and Paul spent the weekend advocating access and equality they also exercised patriarchal superiority.

In the struggle to integrate the personal and political, to balance individual ideology with the aims of the group, gendered work and patriarchal rule was often the norm. Many women struggled in silence or as a collective to address the gender power structure of the group. But rather than openly challenge the dynamic, women often addressed the power imbalance with a worn out "boys will be boys" resignation. They argued that female activist's desires are different from those of male activists --further defining rather than complicating gender roles and identity. Women called out male members for being too controlling, loud, radical, sexist, or violent, and sometimes expressed a need for safety, peace, respectful communication, and permission to participate in less radical actions and still be valuable members. According to Amanda, benchmarks for what she called "macho" behavior existed in the group:

> I still don't think I'm as radical as say, Milo who is just completely, you know, macho…I think someone who wants to go out there and ruffle feathers for the sake of ruffling feathers. And he really does care A LOT about a lot of issues and I think he's really well read on a lot of issues. So he's not afraid of disturbing or getting into arguments to get his opinion across or get some action done.

Macho activist behavior involves bravery, risk taking, and disregard for personal safety.

Amanda characterizes certain actions as brave because she see herself as "someone who probably would never get involved" in violent direct action because she is "afraid to be arrested." Because the group does not agree on a cohesive vision to accomplish their goals, approaches to activism are organized by gender where informed recklessness becomes the manly standard and non-violent action is read as weak or girly.

Amanda discounts her own leadership by suggesting that it was the safe way out of doing the work of real activism. Amanda's own activist work is articulated to personal safety and doing good. By juxtaposing her work with that of fellow macho agitators, she feminizes the type of activist work she does:

> Becoming chair of the conference was big. It was something that was safe for me. I like working with people a lot. I think that is what drew me to the Oxford Ave. campaign. I am really interested in working with people, and help educate them. So for me that was one of the safe moves that got me involved.

Amanda argues that certain individuals, who are concerned with safety, need to feel secure before they perform the more dangerous work. She outlines the hierarchy of work with letter writing at the bottom and agitation, to which good activists aspire, at the top:

> And once you feel secure enough to go in and do the agitating, then go do it. But letter writing is safe. You might not get the immediate results you want but it's safe and it doesn't harm you at all. That's how I started. I wrote letters. I went to the USA (Undergraduate Student Association) at my two year school and that's where it started. And as you get more comfortable, you can move up.

Part of the problem with feeling secure with activist practices is wrapped up in the way power works in the group. Jane describes sexist treatment that creates a demeaning atmosphere for women and clashes with her definition of leadership:

> I don't work well with Zeek. I don't work well with him because he seems really degrading and is negative towards certain ideas-especially those floated by women. He gets angry when something he suggested doesn't happen. He doesn't have good leadership. And so that's what's kind of, that's why I haven't gone to the meetings. His presence is very alienating at times. He's not a good listener.

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Zeek's attitude is so demeaning that Jane, in order to avoid confrontations with him, began to avoid meetings. But, rather than confront Zeek, she sacrificed her own needs and interests by remaining silent and absent. Dominating and intimidation shown by Zeke did not fit with Jane's idea of leadership, rather she adheres to the conventions of behavior for the group as outlined in the SAvE handbook. According to the SAvE handbook, facilitation of meetings:

> "…doesn't mean to lead, control, or direct. Facilitate simply means to make easier. In a practical sense, the job of a facilitator is to help create a space that is comfortable and productive for a group of people. Facilitators make meetings, discussions, and events of all sorts run *smoothly*. Within this document, the word "meeting" could be exchanged with some variation with "group discussion", "conference call", or other group events. The facilitator should be someone who doesn't have a strong opinion to express on the meeting's topics. If you want to say something, call on yourself in turn, but make sure you don't use your role to dominate the discussion. Furthermore, you should not allow people with race, class, gender, or other subtle or non-subtle privilege to dominate a meeting unchecked."

Going Rogue

Some activists considered individuals who operated outside of group norms as "rogue." Going rogue implies that individuals who assert their authority and ideology over the group agenda are individualists and patriarchal, and the unchecked male privilege that often dominated during facilitation of meetings was one example. Sometimes, when a member went rogue others tried to rein in their behavior, often invoking group rules and norms to remind members of the identity of the collective. As the Fall Regional Conference was fast approaching, one evening a portion of a regular SAvE meeting was dedicated to deciding who was going to run the various caucus meetings at the conference. During one point in the meeting, the caucus up for discussion was the working class caucus for people who identify as working class. Milo, who was facilitating asked, "Who is going to lead the working class caucus?" A new member replied, "How do you know if you're working class?" Milo said, "If you don't worry about going hungry

or homeless." Ben raised a concern with this definition and added, "We're all college students so we all have privilege. Not one of us identifies as working class. So should we have an alternate group to the working class?" Milo quickly replied, "I'll name it the fucking rich bastards group."

Milo often used an aggressive and opinionated style to influence the group's agenda and purpose. In this case, he nearly shut down a valuable discussion of class. A serious query voiced by a new member opened a "teachable" moment. Milo's sarcasm and dogmatic views cut short what was surely an important discussion of privilege. No one reminded Milo of the rules of facilitation nor did they challenge him for the remainder of that meeting. In one of several interviews, Darby spoke about Milo's facilitation style this way, "Some things I object to when Milo speaks or wants to get his point across is that he is very forward and abrasive and that's not our thing." Darby suggested that Milo's rogue behavior clashed with SAvEs' democratic, non-confrontational structure of facilitation, and referred to Milo's abrasive stance as "hypermasculine."

Community education is a key part of SAvE's strategic pedagogy and members try to accommodate instead of alienate others when they conduct a group action. But when actions of individual members conflict with the group charter it reflects on the whole group and gets in the way of effective teaching and communication. Darby calls out certain group actions as "very affronting and loud and obnoxious…and wrong." She says, "that it is primarily males who are interested in this kind of tactic." According to Darby, disruptive tactics have their place but when interpreted by certain male members of the group they become antithetical to the group's pedagogy of dialogue and communication:

> For example, I don't know if you heard about when we went to the CIA recruiting meeting. I wasn't involved in the planning of this because I was really sick. I was really pretty pissed off at the tactics that we ended up using. We wanted to do sort of disruptive things in the same way that the CIA used these sort of disruptive

tactics against activist groups in the 1960's – I think it was called Operation Chaos. I understand the connection between we're going to go in and have cell phones go off, we're going to ask questions, we're gonna…but Milo was like, "This is awesome, we'll just start repeating words they are saying" as a disruptive tactic so they trip up on what they are saying. And in the end, I think it was a disaster because the other people in the meeting, instead of saying, "Oh, wow, I really should question the merits of the CIA", they are saying, "Oh, my god, these activists are so annoying and rude" and then there was no dialogue and no communication.

Sometimes nostalgia informs activist pedagogy and helps to shape group norms and practices. In the 60s and 70s, feminists emerged to address the notoriously aggressive male-centered work of student activist organizations (Polletta, 1997, Meyer and Whittier 1994). SAvE members who talk about resurrecting the activist energy of the 1960s cause friction with long-term goals and tactics of the group. Darby recounts a conversation she had about reconciling the impact of individual ideology--often predicated on violence--with the image and intent of activism:

> I mean I've had discussions with Tory about how to build a movement, there were times when he was sort of like, "I don't know if that's my goal, to build a mass movement" and I'm sort of like, "Then what are you doing?" And we're all having this conversation about what is the right way? What is our goal? I mean if our goal is to have a revolution and change the system, how are we going to get there? If we're not going to build a mass movement of people, that is a critical mass, then what do you suggest? And she saw the movie Jack made. He's sort of hard core, green anarchy, anarchism, fuck the system. Stuff like that. He showed his movie, I think it's called "Fuck the System," just a couple of weeks ago. I didn't go see it but I am sure that it was a lot of protesters rising up against the cops and like mass mobilizations and black block and really hard core things, that deserve the title "FUCK THE SYSTEM," and Tory was like, "Oh, my god that was awesome, they were in this alley and all of these protesters decided to turn around and get on the cops." And you know, he was like sort of trying to grapple with the idea of violence in activism. And we talked about this on the way back from potluck. You know I was just trying to make him see that, yes, violence is a tactic that at some point may be useful, but before you employ it, you have to make sure that it is the very best and only way to do it and that who is it alienating. Yeah, there's a big controversy over the use of violence in the Seattle protest, and I read some things that Michael Albert wrote about whether that was divisive within the movement and whether the energy and rage behind property destruction, or whatever, could have been put into supporting your fellow comrades against the police and acting in that way as a barrier would have greatly strengthened the movement, you know. People felt that their message was

violated. It's also really hard in all of these things because part of what we're trying to do is not to restrict people's needs and the way they see things. It's like if we're censoring things within an activist community, that's still working against censorship in society, then how do you reconcile that?

Both activists are conflicted about the role of violence in activism. They understand that activism involves individual free will and group accountability but wonder whether the tension – especially around the use of violence--will divide or strengthen the movement. The question remains unanswered and is part of an on-going dialogue. According to Darby, however, to some extent women in this movement are silenced by the entrenched, institutionalized masculinity of activism:

> You might feel that way, but you can't always say it. We are working against something that is so established and so institutionalized that you have to be smarter than that. Like, I don't know what an analogy would be. I won't even try. I mean, I do agree that there is a definite gender split. You can see it. The newer boys look up to the older men. And you know are inspired by these awesome movies about rebellion and resistance.

Darby argues that in order to outsmart institutional sexism women must resist going rogue and come together to support each other and the group. SAvE members decided to hold Women's meetings:

> …and that's why I'm really glad that the women's meetings start up. I participated last year in the MAJOR sexism discussion. An activist in the community who was around for a while was like "We've got to have the sexism discussion, we've got to talk about this and it never happened." Finally she was like "I'm sick of this, this is how it always is: Women's issues are always pushed to the background because we have to deal with imperialism and colonialism and capitalism, and all of these huge things, and racism, and oh, well, the sexism things can wait. These people are in our community, the activist community, and, you know we can't keep ignoring this." This was an email that called people out and was all over the listserv and I knew the four guys that she called out. We were always waiting on bated breath for the newest emails to hear what people are saying. And some voices were conspicuously absent and it was crazy, so we split into Women's meetings.

The stress caused by the sexism was productive. It initiated the caucusing process and helped women work as a collective--especially Darby who now understood her role as a mentor. The

majority of the women who raised the issue were in their twenties and Darby--as a freshman--knew she had to keep the discussion going:

> And um, this year, I was like the one that was getting the ball rolling, and bringing things up, you know I took a Women's Studies course and I've taken sociology courses and I have this background now. I was like this is so weird;' I'm like the oldest.

Not only did the complications of sexism create a defined role for Darby, but it influenced her choice of coursework. As a university student, she experienced both sexism in SAvE, and had access to coursework that would help her better understand gender and power. Unfortunately, the energy behind the women's group within SAvE was lost to an already full agenda, time constraints, and attendance problems. Time and time again, women in the group expressed a need to caucus. Men, too, especially after the positive experience of the Men's caucus at the Regional Conference. Both groups recognized the need for discussions about sexism and masculinity and for individuals to work toward a consensus on issues that affected the group, but the students were too busy to follow through.

Individualism and Group Practice

Over time, along with Darby and others, I recognized that certain veteran members of the group formed a powerful hierarchy that shaped participation, gender roles, and the social and political direction of the group. For example, veteran members carry the folklore of radical activism to the new members each semester working to inform group actions and dynamics. The energy and aims of the group tend to follow the most vocal, radical individuals and, in spite of their democratic aims, it is the charismatic, veteran leaders who set the tone of the group. The Go-Around often highlighted the tension individual identity privilege asserted over the group's collective identity.

Over the course of two years, in most meetings, Milo preached the gospel of anarchy while

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reminiscing about radical activism in the decades long before he was born. Milo wanted to "bulldoze shit" and "light shit on fire" and felt that extreme, radical action was the best way to enact social change. "Reformers," on the other hand, work within the system and, in Milo's eyes, were less radical. Even though Darby was equally charismatic and passionate about activism, she often organized and promoted more diplomatic and less risky collective actions.

Gender roles in the group were not fixed in the sense that all men were radical and all women were reformist. Women can be patriarchal and radical but in the eyes of most respondents, individual activism was gendered (and communicated by masculinist ideology and privilege). Radical activism and risk taking was held up as heroic, masculine work. Reformist tactics were feminized as the domestic labor of the organization. Radical action was characterized as individualism and reformist action was considered group work for the greater good. Tension between radical individualism and collective reformism brought to the surface the ways in which gender and whiteness conferred uninterrogated privilege and power.

Members who saw identity privilege at work had a strong desire to discuss its implications for group goals, ideology and actions. They used women's caucuses and retreats to call out gender privilege, but their attempts to subvert the normalization of gender roles often failed. In public and behind closed doors, women complained the loudest when others did not follow through on everyday tasks like letter writing, recruiting, and maintaining communication that contributed to the greater good of the group. To people who favored collective reformist action, individuals who solely participated in risky actions were not considered team players. On the other hand, these same people often forgave men for dropping the ball and failing to follow through on making contacts and completing paperwork, but they lavished praise on them for their brash individualism, actions, and speech.

Attitudes, Action, and Group Work: The Go-Around

Group activities convey certain conventions of behavior and reflect individual ideas and attitudes. They also reveal how student voices work to create a collective dialogue about identity privilege. For the most part, activists fail to see how their talk—about themselves and about others-- has consequences. Even though the intentions of student activists are good, in the end, it is how students act that counts. Although some activities at weekly meetings, like the Go-Around, are meant to break the ice and help the group bond some highlight the real work that the group must do to align intentions and performance. In nearly two years of observation the Go-Around proved to be a mirror reflecting the complexity of SAvE's internal struggles around privilege, whiteness, and status, and with its external struggles with to be anti-racists allies.

The Go-Around was an important a part of the organizational structure and SAvE members rarely deviated from using the familiar ice breaker format to start weekly meetings. At each meeting, students arranged their desks in a large circle. A member would then propose a Go-Around question that each student in the group was expected to answer in the public forum. Questions included "What color is your toothbrush?" "Who is your favorite writer?" "Have you ever been robbed?" "What's new and different?" "What month are you passionate about?" "Say something about your first kiss," and "Beard or no beard?" As Amanda suggests, the Go-Around questions are not just about interrogating popular culture preferences but set a tone and standard at SAvE meetings:

> There are parts of the SAvE meetings that are always intimidating. I'm like what answer can I say that will be accepted by them that won't be criticized by them? You know, if it's too mainstream they'll be like NO! it has to be more radical.

The Go-Around was a check-in that signified individual identity and ideology. While the activity is meant to be a risk-free way for students to reveal something about who they are and

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how they think, it operated as a surveillance mechanism that measured individual ideology

against group norms. In Amanda's words, the group used this activity to check to see whether

"your politics the same as ours."

Sometimes, the Go-Around establishes a social hierarchy of identity and group membership.

Weekly questions can inquire about "favorites" like music, literary quotation, poet, radical

activist, professor, undergrad or graduate class, place on earth, vacation place, and so on.

Because this is a public testimony, the Go-Around often became an unintended competition that

revealed structural privilege and status. For example, embedded within student responses to a

question about their favorite music is a glimpse at their material privilege. Students spoke of

access to technology (iPod/mp3, stereo and computer equipment, CD or DVD collection),

expensive cars, and fancy, media and rumpus room-equipped homes and bedrooms. When

students answered a question about their favorite place on earth, you hear how well traveled

some students are (Brazil, Belize, Colorado, Adirondacks) or where their summer camps and

second homes are located (from Vermont to the Virgin Islands). Further, when asked about their

engagement with literature, music, or poetry students tried to one-up each other by making

obscure or obvious references that they felt would help their social capital. Yet, whether students

talked about frequent visits to New York City's theatres or attendance at concerts, quoted Gandhi

or Che, and recited Yeats, Carson, or Dylan, hierarchies were created between the haves and

have-nots, the radicals and reformists, and the veterans and newbies.

The following exchange at one meeting demonstrates the tension between the awareness and

denial of privilege, the benevolent aims of activism, and group goals. During a Go-Around at a

SAvE meeting in the spring of 2004, Rick from New York answered the question, "What's new

and different?" by proposing that SAvE members go to an abandoned house near the Oxford

Sewer Project to "paint it." He explained that the house is scheduled for demolition, that the family who lived there had been evicted, and some graffiti was covering the now boarded up dwelling. Rick suggested that SAvE members join together but "don't roll down there as a big crew. Perhaps two or three people to design and write." Rick explained that this "wasn't exactly legal but the effort is about "beautification of the site" rather than publicizing the event, we should keep this action "on the down low." "We would be taking a risk, but we could have a cool party afterwards," Rick said.

Fifteen or more people were in attendance that evening and the Go-Around came to a grinding halt. Anne spoke out of turn and balked at the idea wondering, "Who are we to decide what is right for this neighborhood," adding, "How do we know the marks you see as 'not graffiti 'aren't some neighborhood kids' tags?" Rick said, "We can assess that when we get down there." Kristen replied, "Just how are you going to decide on its aesthetic value?" Anne followed up saying, "Who gets to say? Us college students from over here? We are white kids. White kids." Rick replied, "Wait. Why are we white kids? We are graffiti artists!" I add, "But you are white." Rick answered, "But some of the greatest graffiti artists are white." Anne insists that whiteness is a form of privilege and Rick denies his whiteness by foregrounding his desire to help others with his artistic talent. This type of white talk evades recognizing how these students are systematically privileged, and reveals how activism can be construed as benevolent charity work.

What started out as a simple ice breaker ended up as a struggle over identity, privilege, and group norms. Rick demonstrated how some youth have the privilege to ignore whiteness and render race inconsequential. Even as Anne and Kristen brought whiteness and privilege into the discussion, Rick failed to see how his idea has consequences for others—including the group. In

his mind, group action did not require an assessment of privilege and power; it was only the intent that mattered. For the majority of the group who remained silent, this was a tense and unfamiliar territory. Rick, who clearly felt attacked, never returned to a meeting that semester.

Sometimes even the most innocuous questions ended up highlighting how member's struggles with identity privilege. The following question about a toothbrush both reinscribed and challenged heteronormativity. When the Go-Around question, "What color is your toothbrush?" was posed, I had been taking notes for months about the contradictory nature of the activity and how the conflict it created with group goals was rarely addressed. Answers to the question ranged from color (red, blue, green, etc.) to type (manual to electric) to no toothbrush to one female who answered "Well, the one at my boyfriend's house is red and…" As she marked herself both as heterosexual and "taken" the group oohed and aahed. When the next female had her turn to answer, she said, "I use my girlfriend's toothbrush when I sleepover." The group went silent. Although the Go Around is spontaneously generated --"Anyone got a question for the go-around?" the weekly ritual reveals how members make sense of sexuality, gender, race, class, and other social constructions. In this case, student responses to the heterosexual girl affirmed her sexuality while the silence after the lesbian member spoke left a fog of uncertainty hanging over the meeting.

Sometimes the students used the Go-Around to boast about how radical and edgy they are but these declarations often served to affirm how privilege is conferred by whiteness. In the following example, I show how an activist's language demonstrates the tension between portraying oneself as a good activist and exercising uninterrogated privilege. In the Spring, SAvE had a group retreat focused on "white privilege and race." Students struggled with how to speak about race with any authority, and were concerned that a majority white membership hurt

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their credibility as anti-racist allies, so they decided to have a retreat to address these issues. During the retreat, Jamie posed the Go-Around question, "Have you ever been robbed?" There was a long uncomfortable pause after the question, and many veteran members who had attended the retreat looked at each other before speaking. Havoc, a veteran of the group and a member of both the men's and white caucuses, went first and said, "I robbed a Woolworth." His answer flipped the focus of the question to highlight his own so-called middle school criminality. He later told me that he was concerned that the question would turn into an indictment of black youth.

Nonetheless, other students communicated experiences that served to normalize their cultural values and worldview that crime only happens in bad neighborhoods and is perpetrated by "thugs" and drug addicts. For example, Jim said, "A crackhead tried to sell me some dope once while I was near a thugged out corner store." Tory said, "I grew up in a really nice neighborhood." Jim seemed to imply that drug users and "thugs" are not white. Tory implied that crime does not happen to people of means (read: white) and people who live bad neighborhoods pose the threat (read: Black).

Other responses contributed to placing whiteness at the center of all that is good and right but implying that the city is an undesirable place that breeds undesirable people. All students who had something stolen said it happened only when they were in college because it is near a "sketchy neighborhood." Ben said that he had his "camera, cell phone, and candy bars stolen" from his car while at school. Jamie said that his "1987 Nissan got jacked" at school. The discourse of criminality went unaddressed, centering their whiteness at the expense of stigmatizing the other.

The unintended consequences of the Go-Around sometimes reinforced disconnect between group intent and actions. Toward the end of the second semester of my first year of observation, Zeek became agitated when Leah posed the Go-Around question, "What month are you passionate about?" Before anyone had a chance to respond, he interrupted the process and said, "How is this Go-Around useful? Wouldn't we be better served to use this activity as education about the movement? For example we could ask questions like "What's your favorite green space?" or connect the questions to larger issues that reflect the spiritual thread of this group. I don't like that this is used as a way to get to know each other's social habits." Zeek was known for a self-promotional, abrasive style that was especially dismissive of women. Milo, who key respondents note was a mentor and motivator, but who often hijacked meetings with his aggressive style responded saying, "Yes, we should be more threatening and dangerous. This is our golden era and we are charged with introducing trouble and danger to SAvE. We have larger goals and strategies to meet these goals, and now we have to work on tactics. We're playing it far too safe. This ain't play people, it's a struggle." By suggesting that Leah's question was not useful or aggressive enough, both Zeek and Milo exercised what they understood as their authority to set the tone and agenda for the group. Milo and Zeek argued that current tactics lacked teeth and seriousness, and reminded group members of their responsibility to shake things up. They often constructed members' outlook as childish and weak, feminizing those who did not live up to his standards.

That same day, Milo went on to question everyone in the room--one by one--using a confrontational tone and wild gestures to ask, "Why are you here?" Student answers revealed their understanding of activism as benevolent charity or a personal desire to do activist work on the behalf of others. Emma answered, "I'm here for a better world for me and for the next

generation." Havoc said, "I don't know a lot about the issues and I'm here to try and grasp them." Tory replied, "I want to learn from those here with experience." Andy added, "I'm pissed off and want a better world." Mark, a visiting high school student said, "I'm sick and tired of all of the petty shit. I want to do something to change something locally, in the US and in the world." As students responded to Milo's commanding query, the tension was growing. Some decided to break the structure of Go-Around to challenge the question and reassert group rather than individual focus. Mary disagreed with Milo's assessment of group goals saying, "I don't think people need to justify themselves to Milo." Lori stepped in to rescue Milo, cutting off Mary and suggesting that his question was important and deserved an answer. Lori's show of solidarity with the patriarch of the group sharpened a line of distinction that was emerging.

Ben tried to sum up the attitude of members on the other side of the divide, suggesting that there is room in the movement for all perspectives. He answered, "This movement isn't about being freaked out. Let's get fired up. We should not apologize about how we think." Another member pointed out that the name of the group demonstrates common group, "It's SAvE. People come here to learn about the issues. People want to understand their roles. We should be able to talk and come together as a group." Darby agreed offering, "A lot of people want to talk at an intimate level." Captain, a laid back member of the group who often brought his Nalgene bottle to meetings filled with beer instead of water said, "We all have different roles besides putting spikes into tree, besides these radical tactics and actions you do. Sometimes people won't listen to you if you're just talking. Everybody plays a role." Lori jumped in again to rescue Milo and argues that radical action is exciting. She said, "Getting swept up in the chaos of Quebec was the most memorable time in my life," Milo acquiesced saying, "these people are as good as any people I've worked with my whole life." During this moment, tension was high, but it was

productive as conflict often is. No matter what side of the radical divide they were one, this was

an opportunity for members to articulate their interests and location in the group. This conflict

led to a discussion of group hierarchies and solutions to address them.

Zeek, the person who initiated the critique of the Go-Around is a former student who

currently works with a community agency on issues regarding sewage treatment and local

environmental racism remained silent but other members saw this tension as productive. Alex

argued that in order to help everyone learn, SAvE--as a group--needs to "flatten knowledge

hierarchies by conducting teach-in's on materials and disseminating information." Darby, who is

always working to tie conversations and people together said that she was "happy about the

constructive criticism" and agreed that we needed people to be on the same page." Darby argued

that "all roles are equally important and that there are exciting educational family oriented things

to do next semester when people return from break." Milo felt the need to clarify his forcing the

issue by pointing out group strengths saying, "There is energy within us that we're not tapping

into. I was asking people to justify themselves and that's just fucked up." Finally Jolene, a

middle-aged African American community activist who came to the meeting with Zeek, added

this:

> Since I'm the oldest here, I'd like to say something. You need to recognize that
> being in school is a privilege. You're all in school. We only have one world and
> we're all working for it. This is all we get. Everyone should do something. And
> I'm glad to see young people taking care of the world. You take care of the world
> and that is doing something.

Jolene's reflection recognized SAvE's ongoing struggle with privilege and group cohesion,

concluding that their systematic privilege can be used to make a difference, if students work on

recognizing it. In a meeting the following January, Ben, a veteran member and facilitator

remembered the meeting as a "long and painful but productive" illustrating just one way tension

within the group pushed members to be more thoughtful about what their attitudes, ideas, and actions reveal about activist work.

Conclusion

Activism as group life is also a form of schooling for privileged youth--one that has the potential to bridge the gap between the disconnected realities of school, individual experience, and group work in the "real world." Student activism is complicated by the contradictions of uninterrogated privileges, so it is important to acknowledge the way group activities can serve as a contested space where social inequities, and relations of power and privileges are rejected, interrogated and reinforced. As a group, student activists can challenge and complicate privilege conferred by identity by examining their own activities and practices. Even as students are confronted with contradictions of their own privileged identities, their commitment to an anti-racist, anti-oppression agenda can push them to better understand their role as privileged actors in a world of injustice.

Those activists who understand that can easily slip into charity work--or just another form of benevolent white privilege—must work to teach new members of the group how to sharpen their critique of their role in structures of privilege, and to be attentive to the way talk and action reveals their privileged subjectivity. Still students, even veteran members who offer critiques of privilege and whiteness, struggle with their own compliance with gender roles, patriarchy, and the project of white privilege. Until all students understand that activism requires individuals and groups to address and engage with their compliance in *all* structures of privilege—no matter how difficult and messy, students will remained trapped in the contested space between doing meaningful activist work as a critically conscious participant, and charity work where benevolent white privilege reigns.

CHAPTER 7
Significance of the Study and Suggestions for Educational Practice

Growing up in the 1960s I remember hearing the phrase, "children should be seen and not heard." Today, with social media and advances in technology, youth have more opportunities than ever to express their opinions. But when it comes to raising their voice for a cause, which youth take a stand? This study examines college students who speak out against American involvement in war and for environmental justice. The purpose of this research is to explore how a certain group of college students make sense of activist identity, how these activists negotiate institutions, and the role of privilege in their activist work. In this chapter, I review the significance of this study, summarize the findings, and discuss implications for further study.

Activism as Informal Education

This study examined how college student activists from the northeastern United States produce activism and resistance, and how they represent themselves as resisters. After two years of observing and interviewing college age youth as they navigate both their formal education and informal activist schooling, I am reminded that youth are engaged in a complicated dance with resistance, identity, power, and privilege. Students in this study are not merely "proclaiming their disagreement and disobedience" against mainstream reality, but are important meaning makers and social agents who use the informal education of activism to bridge the gap between mainstream institutional and subcultural realities (Bozilovic, 2010, p. 53). From the research data I conclude that activist education complicates notions of identity and what it means to be an engaged scholar in a tense and an historical period of heightened nationalism and patriotism. Additionally, the study reasons that because student activists are seen as subcultural youth, they frequently struggle for legitimacy as they negotiate boundaries at home and at school, yet their

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activist work supports them as they navigate the institutional boundaries that govern youth and activism. This study also finds that power and privilege present complex issues for student activists especially because identity privilege is often revealed, reproduced, and taken for granted in the predominantly white, patriarchal, relatively privileged, college student activist communities.

Throughout this study I build the argument that activism is not defined by a single event or activity, or the activist by a singular identity or individual, but by a series of performances, practices, and events that get coded as activism. This research argues that student activism is civic education for critical consciousness. For example, activist work creates conditions for youth to engage with and learn from the complicated and messy boundaries of identity, social structures, and privilege. As student activists tackle issues they confront power relations within the institutional and social contexts of education and culture, and they experience how their social identity connects to, and is sometimes complicit with, structures of power. Additionally, when activists are faced with the way power, identity, race, and gender work within their own organization, they learn informal lessons on social identity and civic engagement. Student accounts reveal how activists makes sense of the complexities of resistance, identity, power, and privilege, and how activism and group membership serves as a type of informal education at the intersection of these frameworks.

Reframing Representations of Youth Who Resist

College student activists of SAvE have college attendance in common, and they share certain identity privileges, but they are not merely a mob of vocal, defiant youth. Activism is often simply framed as resistance. These findings show student activists engaging in meaningful action to affect change, which involves critical inquiry, and self and public education. The data also

show how viewing activism as change work unmasks complications of resistance, identity, and privilege, and provides students with strategies to better understand and navigate activism, group work, and social relations at the root of their resistance.

The literature review demonstrates how media and institutional representations of subcultural youth style, practices, and activities often paint subcultural youth, youth who resist, and student activists with the broad brush of moral panic and deviance. Representations of activism and social movements, sometimes generated by activists themselves, often cause tension between activists and non-activists, especially as students worked to mediate these representations. In order to show how student activists from SAvE made sense of and negotiated activist identity, chapter four used data from interviews with key participants and participant observation in the places where students did their activist work. The meaningful action and change work of activism forced students to negotiate the boundaries of identity and membership, and to interrogate the way activist identity markers--and their own words and deeds--informed their work.

As they embraced, struggled with, and challenged the activist identity "mold," activism helped students made sense of the gatekeepers of dominant norms on campus, in their families, and in SAvE. Students used language, style, and privilege to navigate structures of power, and membership sustained and challenged students as they faced the complexities identity activism brought to bare. For SAvE members, "activist" is not merely an identity, but a lifestyle of change work fueled by participation in a community committed to engaged scholarship and to an energetic, sustained involvement with political issues and people. SAvE defined environment broadly, including the natural world and social environment. In this way, the practice of broad stewardship challenged stereotypes of environmental activists as clandestine radicals who tree sit

and burn buildings or as whiny, privileged white kids. Instead, activism is articulated to critical consciousness, anti-racist work, shared responsibility, engagement in institutional policy and structures, and membership in legitimate extracurricular activities.

Students found assumptions about activist identity both useful and burdensome. They employed strategies like code switching to link their social identity, language, and style, to context and assumptions. For some youth, code switching in the form of slang, for example, is an attempt to subvert linguistic hegemony of the parent culture. This research argues that code switching is a skill that can be honed and supported in education. Because youth have power as insiders in their own culture, honors curriculums and extracurricular experiences in clubs and organizations provide opportunities for all youth to enhance and practice engagement with power, language, style, and culture. If we view code switching as a savvy strategy rather than a defiant practice, educators and youth workers can reframe educational resistance as engagement, and provide challenging educational opportunities for, and seek to learn from, youth who question power.

Seeking Legitimacy: Schooling Lives of Student Activists

College athletes and Greeks are school-sanctioned groups that historically act as a campus brother/sisterhood. In contrast, SAvE members were often seen by peers as a collective of "freaks" on their own campus, illuminating students' complicated negotiation with social and institutional rules, finding community, doing socially just work, and developing a critical consciousness. Through activism, students navigated structures that regulate youth compliance, acceptance, and identity and--along the way--learned valuable lessons about community and the practice of democracy and citizenship.

Chapter five demonstrated how, at the same time student respondents critique schools and

other institutions as sites that reproduce social inequalities, they benefitted from their participation in these institutions. It argued that student activism acted as a school within a school where students negotiate real world issues in, as Milo suggests, a "laboratory of privilege." The data concluded that, because the people and institutions students critique are often the very ones they rely upon to sustain their activist education, identity, and organization, student struggles with legitimacy are complex and shifting.

Experiencing Privilege

Chapter six showed how most students in this study see activism as a *process* that unmasks structural hierarchies and provides them with a reality check, often shocking them into a world of critical inquiry. Students in this study struggled to deal with race, class, gender, and other privileges granted by their social identity. Often the disparities of gender privilege were easier for some activists to critique than their struggles with racial and class privilege, yet activist work gave students an opportunity to work through issues related to power. Encounters in the extracurricular classroom of activism compel these student activists to interrogate their privilege, while at the same time it requires them to engage with privilege so that they can maneuver within the boundaries of social structures and institutions. Defining what counts as education also requires students to turn outside of the boundaries of the classroom in order to fill the gaps left by formal, institutionalized curriculums. In an environment they help create, these student activists seek out ways to acknowledge and mediate privilege with a self-education on a platform of peer pedagogy owed to their commitment to activism in the post 9/11 US.

Implications for Educational Practice and Further Study

How can studying activism and student activists inform educational practice? Some educational institutions already openly support the efforts of student activists. This past Spring

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marked the 11th year of the Wells College Activist Symposium--which is billed as a celebration of scholarship and engagement. On Swarthmore's website, their Student Activities page has a link to "Activism and Politics," and features details about the groups and activities available to students inclined to activism. But many institutions--especially k-12 schools--are increasingly policing youth space and practices and frame student resistance as disruptive and rebellious rather than as an opportunity to engage in critical thinking and scholarship. In addition, k-12 education increasingly focuses on teaching to assessment—both theirs and their teachers, which means little time for extracurricular participation and unscripted inquiry and exploration. One way to further this work is to examine how access to a broad variety of extracurricular activities and advanced curricular tracks can support and supplement learning, critical inquiry, and citizenship for students. Another is to examine the role of social media and digital literacy in the lives of students. While schools and other institutions debate and regulate use of technology in the lives of youth, the reality is that youth are invested in--indeed rely on--today's mobile gadgets and technological innovations. Youth constantly push and challenge the boundaries and ever-changing rules of technology, social media, and digital literacy are no exception. Still, a gap exists in youth who have access to technology that allows them to exercise control over their own learning, communication, identity, and creativity and those who do not.

As I complete this project, I am--once again--frequently reading for pleasure. I fancy memoir and historical fiction and at my local library I picked up Seth Rosenfeld's 2012 book *Subversives: The FBI's war on student radicals and Reagan's rise to power"* which, in part, looks at how the FBI and major political figures like Ronald Reagan joined forces to exert power over the Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley. Rosenfeld (2012) writes about the way "public concern about subversion at the university was also stoked…by the

House Un-American Activities Committee's hearings" and described then Deputy District Attorney Edwin Meese III's "outrage" regarding the tactics of anti-war student groups (p. 326). Rosenfeld recounts Meese's anger with the way the Vietnam Day Committee used "an elaborate communications system, often with walkie-talkie radios, to direct various portions of the demonstrations" (p. 326). Reading this today, in an age of ever advancing and efficient cyber communication--where modern day protesters have turned to social media to ignite revolution--Meese's concerns gave me pause. After all, back in the 1960s, police and government officials also employed advanced technology, using portable walkie-talkies to enhance communication and improve coordination of services.

But the world has clearly changed. I wonder what might have happened had my informants had access to the social media and technology used by today's activists. During the time I conducted research, although the capability existed, text messaging had not emerged as a common form of communication among college students (imagine a campus where students are not glued to a mobile device as they move about!). Outside of meetings, my informants communicated by email listserv, phone conversations, casual meet ups, and newsletters. SAvE had a website but they had trouble generating interest and traffic. Texting, social media and blogging were not even on their radar. Text messaging soared to popularity around 2002, just as I was leaving the field. Facebook was launched in 2004 and Twitter appeared on the scene in 2006, well after I completed my research. I wonder how my research would be different had these technologies been in place. I wonder whether SAvE would not have folded a few years after I left the field had students been immersed in the life of technology as they are today. I am interested in how youth use social media and acquire digital and media literacy, so further study is something of interest to me.

Peer to Peer: Extracurricular work, citizenship, and education

   Extracurricular life and student activism in k-16 has the potential to foster socially just

education and provide students a place where knowledge production is encouraged and action is

required, and where connection to the institution and to each other is essential to the growth of

the larger community. Uninterrogated representations of activism make it difficult for students to

do activist work in schools. This research reinforces the need to support student desires to

critically engage in change work or pursue their own subcultural interests by creating

institutionally sanctioned space for their ideas. Not all students are athletes or mathletes.

Whether youth are interested in hip-hop, skateboarding, gaming, vampires, gardening, or

feminist culture, this work advocates supporting educational activities where youth can

legitimately experiment with identity, question rules, be recognized, engage in critical thinking,

and practice citizenship. Like inclusion in education, this work seeks to disrupt entrenched

institutional binaries of good and bad youth that label kids with classifications and create

hierarchies of power and status in education.

   Activism is not merely an extracurricular activity but a platform for informal schooling and

peer pedagogy of engaged scholarship. In general, extracurricular education provides a place for

students to explore and express their ideas, and work together outside of typical schooling day

and experience. In particular, student activists argue that extracurricular education is informal

education that promotes peer pedagogy, leadership, critical thinking, social skills, action-oriented

participation, and a particular type of identity work. It also provides a place for students to find

community especially, as Havoc argues, in a world where they are increasingly alienated by

technology and consumption:

> I think activism and consciousness raising are complex. I think on some levels it's
> performing. I think on some levels it is sort of natural. We're social creatures. It's natural

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that we want to belong. A lot of the people belong by seeking out community in this country that is an alienating shopping mall culture devoid of community. Activism is a way of getting community and also raising your consciousness.

Students who participate in extracurricular activities, and as activists, learn to better negotiate institutional roadblocks and social structures that govern youth. This work hopes to contribute to on-going study of how youth help each other make sense of and navigate institutional power—especially subcultural youth and urban youth who attend public schools. Student activists like Rose, Darby, Nell, Amanda, and Linnea learned from their extracurricular struggles with school bureaucracy, family, and with each other. As group membership revealed relations of power, rules, and regulations, it also provided students with the support and opportunity to manage the demands of school, and the practice of socially just citizenship.

Extra curricular experiences in organizations like Girl Scouts, school-based environmental and LGBT clubs, and sleep away camps, along with curricular opportunities like AP and Honors help shape students ability to negotiate systems of power and practice resistance within those systems. This study advocates further exploration of how youth make sense of extracurricular activities and the role these organizations play in the schooling lives students. Moreover, I advocate investigating how subcultural and urban youth define informal organizations and education.

Additionally, these findings show that the participation and value of subcultural youth experience is often questioned—especially when held up to traditional or mainstream school activities and events. In general, extracurricular experiences and skills are not always equitably valued, quantified, or qualified, and often only serve as placeholders (albeit powerful ones) on a college application or resume. The findings of this study dovetail with the current push for

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granting credit--in the form of digital badges[12]--for out of school learning. Youth who do not or cannot participate in sanctioned school activities can earn credentials for participation in after school programming, job training, and on-line learning. The same goes for youth whose out of school work is not valued—like that of students in SAvE. Digital badges opens up doors for urban and subcultural youth to initiate and participate in meaningful projects, gain skills, and receive acknowledgement for their effort.

I started doctoral study because I was interested in the role of ideology, popular culture, and privilege in the schooling lives of youth, and this work has piqued my curiosity about access and equity in urban education, and the extracurricular lives of youth. I continue to wonder how youth make sense of gender segregated classrooms and how they understand programs like Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Say Yes to Education, and more. I will continue to investigate the role that formal educational "innovations" play in bridging the gap between the schooling lives and the "real world" of youth.

Broadly, this study argues that student activism opens up possibilities for thinking differently about youth, youth subcultures, and social justice education. As the complexities of identity, power, and privilege are highlighted by the very pedagogical strategies activists use to address power and privilege, student activism brings to the surface informal lessons for youth on power, privilege, community, and democratic participation. In this way, activism is a vehicle where youth teach youth to engage as citizens, and where adults who participate in the governing of youth space can learn to better understand youth identity and resistance.

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[12] See Mozilla's Open Badges project for an explanation of badges. http://openbadges.org/en-US/

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Education

Syracuse University   Syracuse, New York
- Ph.D.   Cultural Foundations of Education, School of Education
- C.A.S.   Women's Studies, College of Arts and Sciences
- C.A.S.   Counselor Education, School of Education
- M.S.   Counselor Education, School of Education

Towson University   Towson, Maryland
- B.S.   Health Education

Research Interests

Schooling, gender, and popular culture. Media and digital literacy. Qualitative and action research. Activism, ATTP, EdTPA, and the Common Core.

Certifications
- New York State Public School Teacher Certificate #1379245
- Permanent Certification Area: School Counseling

Professional Experience

Onondaga County Public Library System @ Mundy Branch   Fall 2010-present
Youth Services
- o   Urban youth literacy and program development. Content creation team. Summer Reading Program Task Force. Site supervisor for MLS students. Community connections development and services. Social media mgr.

Manlius Pebble Hill School, English Department   Fall 2008-Fall 2010
Faculty   Spring 2003
- o   Design, implement, and assess English 7, English 11, AP Language, and ELL/ESL courses. Club advisor, International and local trip chaperone, Tutorial advisor.

Nazareth College, Dept. of Language, Literacy, and Technology   Spring 2009
Visiting Instructor
- o   Design, implement, and assess hybrid online/campus course on Teacher Action Research for pre-service teacher candidates and in-service teachers.

SUNY ESF, Writing Program, Dept. of Environmental Studies   Fall 2006-Spring 2008
Visiting Instructor   Fall 2001-Spring 2003
- o   Learning community faculty. Design, implement, and assess in EWP 190: Writing and the Environment & EWP 290: Writing, Humanities, and the Environment. ESF in the High School, NYC.

Syracuse University, School of Education, Cultural Foundations   Fall 2001-Spring 2004
Teaching Associate/Instructor   Summer 2002-2005,'07
- o   Teach, support, and assess courses designed for pre-service teacher candidates and in-service teachers including The American School, Schooling and Diversity, Youth, Schools, and Popular Culture, Qualitative Research and Media Literacy

Conference Papers/Presentations

"Activist Pedagogy, Risk, and Collaboration," submitted to American Education Studies Association annual conference. Baltimore, Md. October 2013.

.

"Getting Schooled: The Extracurricular Education of Student Activists," New York State Foundations of Education Association annual conference. Hamilton, NY. April 5, 2013.

"The Way Forward in (Foundations of) Education: Narrating Institutional Structures with Critical Cultural Literacy and Active Mentoring," New York State Foundations of Education Association annual conference. Buffalo State University, Buffalo, NY. March 30-31st, 2007.

"*Are You Who You Say You Are? Sustainable Activism in the 21st Century,"* The 6th Annual Wells College Activist Symposium. Aurora, New York. March 2, 2007.

"Who's Street's? Our Street! Youth (Sub)Culture, Education, and Activism in the Post 9/11 U.S." Pathways to Knowledge Lecture Series. Syracuse University. April 11, 2006.

"Show and Tell: Mediating the Spectacle of Privilege." New York State Foundations of Education Association Annual Meeting. Rochester, New York. April 2006.

"This is What Democracy Looks Like! The Politics and Pedagogy of Educating for Social Change." American Educational Research Association. Montreal, Canada. April 2005.

"*Facing the Wind: Activism and White Privilege*." The 4th Annual Wells College Activist Symposium. Aurora, New York. March 4, 2005.

"The Welding of Art and Ethnography." Conference on Interdisciplinary Qualitative Studies. Atlanta, Georgia. January 2005.

"Fabricating the (Feminist) Teacher: A Pedagogy of Improvisation." American Educational Studies Association. Kansas City, Missouri. November 2004.

"'Educating' Urban Youth: How Policing of Public Space Articulates Inequality." Sociology of Education Association. February 2004, with Huei Hsuan Lin, Ph.D.

"La Vie Boehme: Strangeness and Intimacy in Participant Observation." Ethnographic and Qualitative Research in Education. Pittsburgh, Pa. June 2003

"Through the Looking Glass: Shifting Selves and Multiple Dimensions of Ethnographic Terrain." Symposium, American Education Studies Association. Pittsburg, Pa. November 2002.

"Either You Are With US or Against US:9/11 Tribute Comics and the Habitats and Inhabitants of US Terror Firma." Popular Culture Conference, Syracuse University. June 2002.

"Sweathog Pedagogy: Welcome Back Kotter and the Representation of Teaching as a Subversive Activity." American Educational Studies Association. Miami, Florida. October 2001.

Core Qualifications

- Teacher preparation, education and assessment
- Middle school and high school teaching
- Instructional best practices
- Innovative lesson plan and curriculum
- Differentiated instruction
- Student directed parent/teacher conferences
- Youth program planning and design
- 21stc digital technology and social media
- School counseling and intervention

Affiliations

New York State Foundations of Education Association
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