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**The Dissertation Committee for Mario Venegas Certifies that this is the approved  
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**Organizing in the Trenches: Tactics, Discipline, and Accountability in  
Texas Left Social Movements**

**Committee:**

Michael P. Young, Supervisor

Mounira Maya Charrad

Harel Shapira

Eric Tang

Emilio Zamora Jr.

**Organizing in the Trenches: Tactics, Discipline, and Accountability in  
Texas Left Social Movements**

**by**

**Mario Venegas**

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## **Abstract**

# **Organizing in the Trenches: Tactics, Discipline, and Accountability in Texas Left Social Movements**

Mario Venegas, PhD

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Supervisor: Michael P. Young

This dissertation asks: how do activist and organizers understand the craft of organizing? What is organizing to them and what practical challenges do they encounter? In exploring these questions, I answer a larger theoretical question: how do styles of organizing shape the relationships of power in the organizations that organizers and activists build? I argue that styles of organizing shape power relationships, in particular decision making in three key conjunctures: tactics, discipline, and accountability. Katznelson's notion of trenches sensitizes scholars to understand how relations of power, competing factions, and ideological differences shape community and labor. That is, styles of organizing are guided by ideology, vision, and tactics that help unions, nonprofits and community organizations to outmaneuver rivals and enemies like employers, political figures, as well as internal rivals within their organizations. Through in-depth interviews with 35 activists, as well as archival data, I examine the styles of organizing that came out of the Alinsky, New Left, and Marxist schools of activism in three key movements in Texas: the Chicana/o movement, LGBTQ movements, and public sector unions. I identify

tactics, discipline, and accountability as three key conjunctures with their own internal tensions and practical dilemmas that activists navigate as key aspects of organizing. The Chicano movement in Texas illuminates the tactical warfare between activists with Alinskyite, New Left, and Marxist philosophies to organize the movement. Alinsky's dominance in the movement through its confrontational and intimidating tactics also established inequalities that persist to this day. Activists navigate internal tensions in discipline and accountability, such as negotiating between permissive discipline or sectarian purging among LGBTQ activists and negotiating between transparency and image-management among public sector union activists. By studying the craft of organizing in the Alinskyite, New Left, and Marxist styles, I set out to illuminate the mechanisms of organizing, what it consists of, and examine the practical organizing challenges that those engaged with transforming society encounter. Lastly, I contribute to the social movements literature by exploring internal movement dynamics and centering endogenous factors in the way movements develop, splinter, and persist.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction: Social Movements, Organizing, and the Cases of Texas**

In this dissertation, I begin with an empirical question, drawn from experiences both in the field as an activist, and from my own personal experience. I ask, how do activist and organizers understand the craft of organizing? What is organizing to them and what practical challenges do they encounter? In exploring this question, I aim to answer a larger theoretical question: how do styles of organizing shape the relationships of power in the organizations that organizers and activists build?

To answer these questions, I argue that styles of organizing shape power relationships, in particular decision making in three key conjunctures: tactics, discipline, and accountability. As such, how one organizes and brings together people matters. However, this point is not novel, since there are vast branches of feminist, ethnic studies, labor studies, and Marxist literatures that explore this question from their own angles. What is new however is that I locate three key conjunctures where power relationships intersect with where styles of organizing play a major role in shaping the practical challenges that activists encounter. I identify tactics, discipline, and accountability as three key conjunctures with their own internal tensions and practical dilemmas that activists navigate as key aspects of organizing. By studying the craft of organizing, I set out to illuminate the mechanisms of organizing, what it consists of, and examine the practical organizing challenges that those engaged with transforming society encounter.

In many ways, by answering a practical question, I can answer a theoretical one, and provide both theoretical contributions to the social movements literature and concrete illustrations to those who are involved in activism and organizing.

In exploring these questions, each chapter of this dissertation contributes to the literature on social movements in different and novel ways, but with an underlying theme. Generally, the sociological literature in the US on social movements tends to take a structuralist and exogenous lens to explaining why movements emerge and why they take the course they do. This exogenous approach considers factors such as the availability of resources and the capacity to mobilize said resources; the windows of opportunity that exist in a political arrangement, such as declarations of war, or any global pressures from abroad. While the cultural, and in recent years the networked turn have made significant insights, there has been little attention paid to internal factors of why movements emerge, splinter, grow, and develop the way they develop. As such, each chapter contributes to this growing branch of the literature to provide not only internal explanations but also practical insights into the ways organizers and activists understand and put to practice the craft of organizing.

To further ground this dissertation, I make a distinction between social movement organizations and nonprofits, as it is easy to conflate the two. Social movement organizations tend to marshal resources such as people, materials, for the service of movement campaigns, often with a political purpose and form part of a broader network of organizations in a movement (McCarthy & Zald 1973). Nonprofits on the other hand are not necessarily movement organizations in that they engage in protest and political

action, but instead marshal their resources often in providing services (Farnia 2008; Hall 2003). As Nina Farnia described, nonprofits cover a vast range of organizations, from nonpolitical to research organizations to philanthropic organizations (Farnia 2008). While there are nonprofits that get involved in social movements in some capacity, there are functional distinctions. For instance, on one hand is ACT UP, which marshaled resources to protest the inadequate response to the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s (Gould 2009). On the other hand is AIDS Services of Austin, which currently provides affordable testing but is not involved politically. Moreover, nonprofits tend to invest their energies in securing funding from other institutions such as government agencies and philanthropic organizations to continue providing services (Hall 2002). Some scholars have criticized this approach as removing time and resources from organizing and building a base (Woolford and Curran 2012). As such, this dissertation examines the dynamics of social movement organizations as organizers and activists navigate the practice of organizing.

I explore these questions by drawing on three social movements in Texas. I chose Texas, over New York, NY or Chicago, IL, or Berkeley, CA for the following reasons. One, there is not enough work done in a state with a history of conservative and corporatist politics, and by extension southern states and other areas often ignored by the towering legacies of these cities. Two, I follow an insight that is often forgotten in Antonio Gramsci. He wrote about the Southern Question in Italy, and how the industrialized north tended to not only ignore but racialize the agrarian south of Italy and pondered why it is not only necessary but difficult for Italian Marxists to build an alliance with southern Italian peasants (Forgacs 2000, p. 173). He also stressed, that not taking the



south seriously would mean disaster for northern Italian Marxists because it turned out that it was southern Italy that had most consent for the fascist Mussolini regime (p. 137).

This insight to understand the southern question resonated with insights I discovered in history, political science, and law. The work of V.O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* explored similar dynamics in the US South, and that book, along with the work of Judith Stein on the political economy of southern racism, and my time as a research assistant on corporate ascendancy in the Republican Party at the UT Law School helped me understand Texas and why it is a very unique case study to understand politics and social movements there. Lastly, for practical reasons, it was less expensive for me to do research in a state where it was easier to expand my networks and tap into the knowledge of informants from central, east, and north Texas. I have learned significantly from informants in labor and community activism.

Texas, despite a history of racial terror, a focal point in the conservative ascendancy of the 1980s, and one of the largest economies in the US, has also a buried but rich history of progressive and Leftist organizing across community and labor. For instance, Emilio Zamora Jr explores the history of Chicano socialists in Texas, from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as he explores the variegated forms of Mexican organizing. Ranging from the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) to mutual aid societies, and the chapters of LULAC, there has been organizing among Mexicans and Chicanos in Texas all throughout the state's history (Zamora 1975, 1993). Moreover, there is also a history of labor organizing in the state, from the biracial unions of dockworkers in Galveston, TX that brought together black and white workers during

enforced segregation (Andrews 2008), to the pecan shellers strike in San Antonio organized by Emma Tenayuca in the 1930s, and the organizing of black cafeteria workers to desegregate the labor force at Stephen F Austin College in Nacogdoches in the 1980s (Lewis 2017). Texas also has a history of black power organizing in Houston during the 1960s (Garcia 1989), it was one of the major pillars of the Chicana/o movement (Cotera 1975; Montejano 2010; Navarro 1995), of farmworker strikes and marches from the United Farmworkers in 1965, to the marches led by Tony Orendain in the 1970s as the Texas Farmworkers Union (Bowman 2005; Jepsen 2005). In many ways, Texas provides a rich historical background to understand the ways that many activist in the state responded to conditions of racial terror, segregated job markets, shifting industries from cotton to oil to computer technology, and to globalization with corporate consolidation and job outsourcing. However, all these movements and the activists that played a role in organizing them did not organize the same way, as there are various styles of organizing that shaped the way actors related to each other, consolidated power, abused power, and mobilized accordingly.

I examine the styles of organizing that came out of the New Left, Marxist, and Alinsky schools of activism. These were prominent styles during the 1960s and their legacies endure today. My historical chapter places these styles in historical context and provides the narrative arc for the two chapters to follow in this dissertation. Understanding these styles of organizing also means understanding that they operated not only in community politics, such as urban removal, police violence, but also in labor politics in the ways unions operate, and how leaders relate to members in various labor

campaigns. I attempt to bridge community and labor by exploring these styles of organizing and in doing so, address a key area of political discussion: class and community politics.

### **GLOBAL FRAMEWORK: BRIDGING LABOR AND COMMUNITY**

Ira Katznelson (1980), building on Antonio Gramsci's idea of the war of position, posits that the way people understand class and community in the United States is bifurcated. That is, there is a separation between work and community, captured pithily in the phrase that at work one is a teacher, but at home they are a black woman. Katznelson conceptualizes labor and community not as separate spheres, but rather as trenches, in the Gramscian sense, where ideological battles, power contests, and competing agendas are part and parcel of building power and hegemony in these two areas. Going beyond just calling internal politics as "in-fighting", I explore through my chapters how activists navigate and understand internal politics in these areas of life, and the practical challenges they face as they build organizations that can mobilize for collective actions in both community and in labor.

By understanding community and labor as trenches, we can also understand that styles of organizing are guided by ideology, vision, and tactics that help unions, nonprofits and community organizations to outmaneuver rivals and enemies like employers, political figures, as well as internal rivals within their organizations. Secondly, this view sensitizes scholars to understanding the relations of power, material distributions, competing factions, and ideological differences that permeate and crisscross

both community and labor. That is, rather than reducing class and labor politics to just an identity, and community to identity issues, the notion of trenches with the competing politics provides a textured view of the competing factions among ethnic groups, who not only go to work but also form part of community groups. As I demonstrate with each of my cases, I build on this framework to show how power is organized in three key conjunctures that activists, both in community and in labor navigate in their practice: tactics, discipline, and accountability.

#### **CASE SELECTIONS: CHICANA/O MOVEMENT, LGBTQ MOVEMENTS, AND PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS**

I select three distinct social movements to illustrate various points of practical challenges that activists face in the craft of organizing. Methodologically, I draw on in-depth interviews with activists, organizers, and advocates in the LGBT movements in Austin, Dallas, and San Antonio Texas. I also draw on in-depth interviews with labor activists in Texas in Austin and Houston, covering life histories and their experiences with organizing. This process brought me to a total of 35 interviews. In addition, I rely on archival and historical materials to historicize my dissertation and present one of my chapters. I draw on secondary sources such as the work of David Montejano, Marta Cotera, Mario Garcia, and Armando Navarro that documented the Chicana/o movement in Texas. I also draw on primary sources such as the *Jose Angel Gutierrez Papers*, the *San Antonio Express*, *Texas Observer* periodicals, and memoirs and biographies of Chicana and Chicano organizers like Willie Velazquez and Francisca Flores. All of these sources were located at the Briscoe Center for American History in Austin.

The first chapter of this dissertation historicizes the rest of the study, and examines the ways activists with Alinskyite, New Left, and Marxist philosophies competed to organize the Chicano movement. The Chicana/o movement played a prominent role in Texas, in particular in San Antonio and south Texas, as Mexican Americans organized communities there to confront de-facto segregation, substandard schooling, and political disfranchisement. From 1965 to 1978, the Chicana/o movement in Texas underwent various phases and encountered different styles of organizing both in the organizations that leaders formed, as well as the rivals and enemies they encountered.

The Alinskyites dominated the movement through the use of confrontational and intimidating tactics, but also established internal inequalities of gender and leadership that persist to this very day in social movement activism. Guiding me here is William Sewell, who combines insights from Anthony Giddens, and Pierre Bourdieu to understand how people sustain structures but also how people can bring about change to these structures. Sewell's insight that people make structures by harmonizing schemas with resources sheds light on how organizers like Rosie Castro, Jose Angel Gutierrez, and Willie Velazquez incorporated audacious tactics to galvanize Mexican Americans under a new identity: Chicano, which would defiantly attack the racist segregation of Mexican Americans in San Antonio. I develop the concept of tactical dexterity as the capacity for actors in various movements to incorporate tactics based on the reading of the social and political environment in order to outmaneuver external enemies and internal rivals. The philosophy of Saul Alinsky played a prominent role, since the key leaders of the movement not only brought Saul himself to San Antonio in 1965, but also

incorporated many of his intimidating and pressure tactics to resolve local issues in the barrios. In addition, they competed against a burgeoning Chicana feminism that had New Left insights from the Anglo women's movements, and also against Chicano and Anglo Marxists who wanted to compete for control of the direction of the movement. This chapter, in addition to exploring the tactical dexterity of the Texas Chicano movement, also establishes how the organizing philosophy of Saul Alinsky became dominant in Texas, setting the ground for the next chapters to come.

With Alinsky as a dominant school of organizing in Texas, such as the interfaith alliance, and Industrial Areas Foundation, New Left and Marxist styles nevertheless remained active. New Left organizing, with an approach to prefiguring one's behavior to the liberated society, and experimenting with new ways to relate, played a big role in the women's and gay and lesbian liberation movements. These legacies, such as the use of consciousness raising groups, consensus style meetings, and more introspective approaches to the ways oppression and violence manifest in daily life, brought about new practical tensions for activists and organizers to confront.

Fast forwarding to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I examine LGBT movements in Central Texas in their use of the "call-out" and other means of public exposure to address internal inequalities and corruption within organizations. Drawn from the introspective New Left ideology that focuses on reforming the self, and calling out inequalities, activists navigate two conflicting views of discipline. They navigate between an inclusive and restorative view of justice on one hand, and a stringent ideological gatekeeping that weeds out errants and creates sectarian dynamics on the other hand. Underlying this tension is a

focus on discipline. As such, I draw on Phillip Gorski, who synthesizes insights from Michel Foucault and Max Weber to develop a theory of social discipline that is attentive to both institutional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal discipline. Gorski's theoretical framework provides concepts to understand the forms of discipline that activists in these groups navigate and try to make sense of. From gatekeeping and intensive discipline that purges dissenters out, to a more inclusive and dialogic discipline, activists involved in these causes navigate a tension on how to address and challenge inequalities in their own organizations. In addition to exploring these tensions, I make a case for understanding the call-out as a tactic for not only disciplining problematic acts but for demanding accountability.

In the third chapter, I trace Alinsky's legacy and influence on the labor movement. As scholars and activists like Rin Ku Sen and Jane McAlavey have pointed out, Alinsky style organizing often created top-down organizations and consolidated power to a select few. Moreover, as critics like Benjamin Marquez and Frank Bardacke point out, Alinsky's ideology and vision was to ultimately funnel dissent into the cul-de-sac of pluralist politics, leaving intact the institutions that disfranchised minorities and the poor to begin with. Given this legacy, Jane McAlavey and Frank Bardacke pave the way for the third chapter by showing that Alinsky's influence shifted labor politics significantly, giving rise to New Labor, and unions that mobilize members but reduce them to symbolic poster children and reduce their decision making power. However, Marxist organizing persisted in the labor movement, led by socialist and communist organizers like International Workers of the World. One key style of organizing is the

CIO model that McAlavey describes and advocates as ‘whole worker’ organizing. This tension between New Labor and CIO model organizing sets the stage for the third chapter.

The final chapter explores how labor activists in public sector unions understand accountability, by placing front and center the relationship between leadership and rank-and-file members. The labor movement, often ignored by social movement scholars, provides rich insights that inform how power consolidates, how collective action is structured, and how people create social structures, in particular in settings where labor organizing is repressed by hostile forces like employers and legislators. In exploring the case of Texas State Employees Union (TSEU-CWA) and American Federation of State City and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), I argue that accountability is a relational tension where actors navigate between two moral pulls. On one end, responsibility towards leadership and on another responsibility towards members.

I draw on the concept of relational labor, as well as Mel Dubnik’s framework of accountability to name this tension relational accountability. That is, accountability is not only relational, but also dialectical. It is an integral part of organizing and just like organizing, is a social relationship. I explore the practical tensions between calling for transparency and managing a public image. In image management, being a good employee and embodying integrity protects leadership and union members from anti-union propaganda and helps them recruit members since they have people that come to them for help. The responsibility is on members to the leadership to sustain this relational dynamic. On the other end, transparency places responsibility to the leadership to respond



to rank-and-file members to account for their decisions and actions. In some cases, calls for transparency can be met with hostility from leadership. By exploring the ways activists understand organizing and accountability in labor unions, I center accountability as another major area where activists encounter practical tensions and challenges.

These three cases provide insights into the conjunctures rife with practical and internal tensions that organizers and activists navigate as they practice their craft. In the trenches of community and labor, understanding dialectical tensions in tactics, discipline, and accountability shed light into the craft of organizing. Organizing, as Marshall Ganz (2002) wrote about in a brief essay for *Social Policy*, is about weaving relationships and coordinating bonds in order to facilitate collective actions for strategic purposes. In this process, I draw on Sewell, Gorski, and Dubnik to illuminate three conjunctures where organizers and movement activists must build their craft. And finally, by showing these internal dynamics, this dissertation aims to build a broader theory of organizing that acknowledges the relational labor that goes into organizing. Feminist scholars have rightly pointed out in their critique of the male-dominated public and private division the relational labor that many women put into organizing. In addition, I show the dialectical tensions that activists and organizers encounter as they navigate relationships and build unions and organizations that are not only democratic but also outmaneuver and win over the powers that be.

I invite you, reader, to another story of Texas beyond the corporate logos and colonial narratives of conquest. Come to the Texas of working people, of all colors, genders, sexualities making sense of their history, of their conditions, and of the insights

that past figures left behind. For it is no longer the history of those who passed, but it is ours. The MLK's and Emma Tenayucas have lived their history, so we must live ours and make it, in conditions not of our choosing.

## **Chapter 2: Tactical Warfare and Movement Building: Alinskyism and Tactical Dexterity in the Texas Chicano Movement, 1965-1978.**

### **ABSTRACT**

*I examine internal processes that helped Alinskyism become a hegemonic style of organizing among Chicanos in Texas over New-Left and Marxist styles. I argue that Alinskyite Chicanos outmaneuvered rival activists through what I call tactical dexterity. Tactical dexterity illuminates how actors transpose cultural schemas with organizational knowledge to craft tactics that build political power, negotiate status, and expunge rivals to control resources. Sewell's framework of structuration illuminates the diversity of tactics and ideas that activists can use to prevail over ideological rivals. The Mexican American Youth Organization and the Raza Unida Party illustrate the political maneuverings of activists to organize Chicanos in Texas. Leveraging cultural schemas to force recognition of Chicanos and to remove Marxists with institutional knowledge in conventions illustrate the creativity of Alinskyite organizers. These moments provide an opportunity to reveal processes through which one style of organizing prevailed over others.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper examines the processes that make one style of social movement organizing dominant over others. In Texas in the 1960s, activist movements inspired by distinct social movement and organizing styles, competed to represent Chicano identity and aspirations. Among them, one model emerged as dominant by the early 1970s. I ask, what internal factors enabled Alinskyism to become a dominant and standardized style of organizing, in particular the Chicano movement in Texas? At a time when New Left and Marxist movements were challenging the dominant social order in the US, how did Alinskyism become a dominant mode of organizing among working-class and communities of color? (Engel 1998; McAlavey 2015; Sen 2003; Rogers 1990). One key factor that made Alinskyism a popular organizing style is its creative use of

confrontational and pressure tactics (Bardacke 2011; Engel 2002). I ask how can we explain the creative adaptation of tactics by Alinskyites across various contexts?

Alinskyism denotes an organizing style that focuses on nonideological, single-issue campaigns focused around winnable demands that are run by well-staffed organizations led by a trained organizer (Bardacke 2011). This style emphasizes the creative use of confrontational and intimidating tactics to pressure power holders to accede to these demands. Alinskyite campaigns target short-term problems like redlining with the goal to empower oppressed communities and improve their immediate material conditions. In an interview with *Playboy* magazine, Alinsky elaborates that organizations are the only way to get power to achieve anything:

“Now, power comes in two forms — money and people. You haven’t got any money, but you do have people, and here’s what you can do with them” (Alinsky 1972).

Alinsky’s successful community campaigns extending from the 1930s to 1970s won him national recognition as the “dean of community organizing” (Boyte 1983, p. 34; Engel 1998, p. 637). Through his Chicago-based project, The Industrial Areas Foundation, Alinsky turned organizing into a profession with its own literature, training institutes, and career ladder for prospective community activists.

This model came to dominate social movement organizing for several decades until internal and external critiques generated new waves of experimentation in organizing. Alinsky’s brand of activism influenced various movements across the US. Some of these movements include the United Farm Workers in California led by Alinskyites Cesar Chavez and Fred Ross (Bardacke 2012; Ganz 2009); Catholic activism

in the 1960s guided by Monsignors George Higgins and Geno Baroni (Engel 1998, p. 639); and the Chicano movement in Texas (Montejano 2010; Navarro 1995). Through the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Alinsky's style of organizing became institutionalized across the nation through faith-based and community-based groups like Interfaith Alliance, Valley Interfaith in Texas, National People's Action, and the Industrial Areas Foundation all over the United States (Bretherton 2017; Swarts 2008; Wood 2003; Wood and Fulton 2015) as well as in labor (Osterman 2006) and internationally in Britain (Warren 2009). Alinskyism was a dominant form of organizing until recent identity-based and ideological forms of organizing such as Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and DREAMers challenged and revised this model in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Enriquez and Saguy 2016). In the face of its growing influence, critics have identified problems created by Alinskyism, such as internal sexism against women and undemocratic tendencies like purging internal dissenters (Bardacke 2011; Sen 2003). Most damaging, critics argue that by not challenging the structure of American politics that systematically excludes the poor and marginalized from elite-controlled institutions, Alinskyism funneled discontent and dissent into the cul-de-sac of pluralist politics (Bardacke 2011; Marquez 1990).

Despite these critical studies of Alinskyism, scholars have yet to use the history of this dominant form of organizing to theorize the role of organizing styles in the development of US social movements. Social movement scholars have overlooked the endogenous dynamics between competing styles of organizing within social movements. I explore the endogenous processes that made Alinskyism a hegemonic organizing style

among Chicano activists in Texas from 1965 to 1978. Texas, despite its conservative political history, has a rich and long historical legacy of Leftist Mexican organizing (Alter 2015; Zamora 1975, 1993). The Chicano movement played a key role in transforming the activist arena in the 1970s, as Alinskyism helped establish a new mode of activism (Montejano 2010).

To understand how movement organizations transform the activist arena, I highlight the creativity of tactics that made Alinsky influential and how subsequent activist cohorts adapted these tactics to their movement context. I use William Sewell's theory of *structuration* to help explain how Alinskyite actors outmaneuvered rival Marxist and New Left activists through a process I conceptualize as *tactical dexterity*. From 1965 to 1978, across various phases of the Chicano movement in Texas, Alinskyites used various tactics that pressured outside actors, countered the rise of internal rivals, and seized organizational control of the movement. I explain their success as the consequence of a process of tactical dexterity. In pivotal moments as the movement developed in Texas, Alinskyites creatively adjusted cultural schemas and institutional knowledge, enabling them to gain advantages over political elites and rival Marxist and New Left activists.

To illuminate the creative dynamics of the tactical dexterity of Alinskyism as it shaped the Chicano movement in Texas, I use secondary and primary historical sources to explain three key historical moments in the Chicano movement's trajectory. One, the rise of MAYO (Mexican American Youth Organization) in the mid-1960s and its battle with the Mexican American political establishment, embodied in the leadership of Henry

B. Gonzalez. Two, the period of 1970-1972 when internal tensions emerged within the movement between New Left and Alinskyites, leading to Chicanas organizing to counter the male-dominated organizations and rules within MAYO. And three, the waning phase of the movement captured in a 1978 conference that escalated into conflict among ethnic nationalists, and Chicano and white Marxists. Across these three moments, I examine the tactical warfare between rivals to illuminate the creative use of schemas and resources by Alinskyites that enabled them to sustain and expand their organizational power within all over the Chicano movement.

I conclude this examination of the cunning use of tactics by Chicano Alinskyites with a discussion of how it can contribute to a more general understanding of the role of organizing styles in shaping the vision, tactics, and ideology of social movements. In the next sections, I review the literature on social movements, with attention to the cultural approaches that inform the field today. I suggest the need to focus on the role of creativity and organizing styles to explain the building of strategic capacity and organizational power within movements. To this end, I develop the concept of tactical dexterity by drawing on Sewell's theory of structuration.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Over the past five decades, the sociological literature on social movements shifted away from the study of movement ideologies, aims, and motivations to an effort to explain why movements emerge and people mobilize in the first place (Walder 2009). From this mobilization-centered focus, theorists developed explanations to make sense of why

movements emerge that ranged from the rationalist and materialist perspective of McCarthy and Zald's resource mobilization theory; to the political process turn of Tilly, Tarrow, and McAdam; and to the cultural/cognitive framing turn of Snow (McAdam 1982; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tarrow 1994; Tilly 1978; Snow 1986). Pivotal to all these theoretical turns was the question of mobilization. With exception of Snow, the dominant paradigm revolved around structural conditions. Largely ignored were the people that made movements happen, and the actions they took.

A more recent branch in the literature examining the internal life of movements seeks to address this shortcoming. Polletta's (1998) analysis of narratives in the spread of civil rights sit-ins sees ideational forms as sustaining movement cohesion and disciplining members within movements. Benford's (2002) work on narratives as social control illustrates how activists discipline and sanction each other using narratives and myths to justify the structure of movement organizations (p. 53). Ghaziani and Gould, to name two other notable examples from the culturalist camp, examine the internal, generative dynamics of movements, including the productive role of conflict and debate within movement organizations (Ghaziani 2009), and the cultural rituals that foment emotions and ties of solidarity within movements (Gould 2009).

These cultural approaches to social movements, while enriching our understanding of the role of frames and narratives in social movements, do not go far enough in incorporating how ideology and other cultural factors organize and control movement resources. There is little analysis of how people use culture in relation to organizational control and leadership. One important exception is Ganz's (2009)



empirical and theoretical analysis of the United Farmworkers in California. He constructs a framework to understand how movement organizations can develop resources like ethnic ties and churches to outmaneuver more resourced organizations (p.14). Developing these organizational and biographical resources creates strategic capacity for movement organizations that enables them to use diverse and creative forms of social action not readily available to more established organizations. Thus, Ganz argues that a small union like the United Farm Workers could outmaneuver other labor organizations like the AFL-CIO in organizing Mexican American farmworkers in California during the 1960s<sup>1</sup>.

Ganz's framework, while illuminating on the sources of strategic capacity, ignores processes that enable actors to transfer ideas to new contexts and does not fully elaborate how these processes work in applying tactics and strategies to various contexts. What is missing is a framework to understand how activists craft tactics that can intimidate, shock, or outmaneuver other competing actors (rival activists groups and enemies). I aim to further develop Ganz's framework of strategic capacity in the social movements literature by drawing on concepts from William Sewell Jr's theory of structuration.

There is a growing body of work that incorporates the ideas of Sewell on cultural schemas into the analysis of social movements (Benford 1997; Berezin 1997; Clemens 1997; Clemens & Minkoff 2008; Enriquez & Saguy 2016; Ganz 2011; Jasper 2004; McAdam & Sewell Jr 2001; Polletta 2004, 2008; Wilde 2004). I add to this growing

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth mentioning that the history of the UFW is an example of the success of Alinskyite pragmatism. Ganz, as an organizer under Chavez, is describing and theorizing the Alinskyite approach.

literature to explain what factors helped make Alinskyism a hegemonic form of activism over Marxist, and New Left styles in the Chicano movement in Texas.

### **SEWELL'S THEORY OF STRUCTURATION**

William Sewell Jr's (1992) theory of structure and agency addresses the perennial problem facing sociological theory of explaining both structural stasis and the (constrained) capacity of agency to effect structural change. Drawing from Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration, and from anthropological insights on culture, Sewell redefines structures as composing of two mutually sustaining parts: cultural schemas and sets of resources "that empower and constrain social action and tend to be reproduced by that action" (p. 27). By *resources* Sewell includes both human resources (emotions, physical strength, dexterity) and non-human resources (objects, both naturally occurring and manufactured-- from land to weaponry) that can serve as media of power (p. 9). Sewell defines *schemas* as generalizable procedures that actors can apply to a variety of contexts, and that exist at various levels such as norms, and cultural beliefs (p. 7-8). What makes schemas different from resources is their virtual existence. As elements that cannot be reduced to any particular practice or any location in space and time, schemas "can be actualized in a potentially broad and undetermined range of situations" (p. 7). Sewell also distinguishes between schemas and institutional rules, in that publicly fixed rules are actual rather than virtual and as such constitute a resource and differ from Giddens' virtual sense of schemas (p. 8).

Sewell conceptualizes structures as a dialectical relationship between *resources* and *schemas*. Structures exist only when resources and schemas mutually sustain and imply each other over time (p. 13). Indeed, schemas are effects of resources and resources the effect of schemas. Borrowing an example from Bourdieu, Sewell explains that resources such as how a house is decorated and organized can inculcate schemas of how the gender division of labor works, and schemas like the gender division of labor can organize resources in how the household is organized: the location of the kitchen, where rooms are located, and where gendered actors congregate (p. 14).

To address the problem of stasis inherent in structural sociological theories-- that structures remain stable and only change from without rather than within, Sewell provides a handful of five key “axioms” to understand the relationship between resources and schemas in how actors both sustain structures (stasis, stability) and create (structural) change. Three of these axioms are highly relevant for this paper. One, schemas are transposable to other contexts. “They can be applied to a wide and not fully predictable range of cases outside the context in which they are initially learned” (p. 17). Some concrete examples include telling a joke to a new audience or applying a new battle tactic in an unfamiliar territory. Agency, for Sewell, entails “the capacity to transpose and extend schemas to new contexts, is inherent in the knowledge of cultural schemas that characterizes all minimally competent members of society” (p. 18).

Two, there is uncertainty and unpredictability in accumulating resources (p. 18) such that transposing schemas to new contexts does not always lead to anticipated resource outcomes. Transposing new schemas such as protest tactics, or new relations of gender

creates an uncertainty in how some actors may respond to these new arrangements, or how media may respond to new tactics in the public eye. As Ganz aptly demonstrates in his study of how the leaders of the United Farm Workers prevailed in their struggle against a much larger and better resourced union, movement actors must constantly deal with uncertainty as they devise strategies that will help them achieve the goals they want with the limited resources they possess (Ganz 2009, p.9).

Finally, resources are polysemic (Sewell 1992, p. 18). They have a multiplicity of meanings that actors can attribute to them (p. 19). Any kind of resource in any particular arrangement, like a movement organization, can be interpreted in various ways, and these meanings can empower various actors to re-arrange resources to embody new schemas. For instance, Chicana activists in the Chicano movement, noticing internal sexist relations in the course of organizing resources to fight for equality, acted on gender inequalities by rearranging resources such as pay, leadership, and status recognition, and even moved to take their own resources away altogether. Their acts to contest the sexism was a challenge to the hierarchical organizations that relied on the work of Chicanas but undervalued them in the overall arrangement of power and decision making. These three axioms simultaneously acknowledge the structural arrangements of resources and the capacity of agents to transpose, sustain, or contest schemas and interpret resources in ways that instantiate new schemas.

Sewell's theory explains the creativity of activists and how they handle *both* resources and ideas as they strategize about new lines of action. It provides an account of structure building that allows for the ability of agents to sustain those structures and

change them. Social movements, and the organizations that are integral to these movements, do not form by themselves. As key studies on movement organizations show, leaders play a significant role in shaping the internal dynamics of movement organizations such as generating commitment, developing new leaders, and providing activism that transforms the everyday lives of participants (Andrews, Ganz, Baggetta, Han, and Chaeyoon 2010; Baggetta, Han, and Andrews 2013; Han 2014). Movement leaders actualize movements by transposing schemas to new contexts, rearranging and capturing resources, reproducing recursive relationships of schemas and resources, or contesting these relationships to form new arrangements. Organizing, then, is not only a continual performance but one where leaders and members sustain the resources they can capture, and counter rivals who may try to poach resources from their organizations. Ganz encapsulates this relationship between organizing and movements by placing leaders as people who can channel emotions, weave relationships, and organize resources (Ganz 2002, p. 16). Activists can transpose schemas, such as implementing Alinsky's rules in community organizing campaigns. They can contest schemas, such as challenging sexism and inequality reproduced by cultural schemas of gender and gendered arrangement of resources. And they can sustain schemas, such as banishing ideological rivals within the movement, through structured rules and procedures. Sewell's work helps social movement scholars generalize Ganz's insights by providing theoretical tools to understand how organizing, as a continuing performance of adapting and sustaining schemas to resources, helps build movement organizations, and how actors- in particular leaders, can be in a position to change the structures of these organizations and

institutions from which they arise. In confronting social and political uncertainty, movements sit between i.) Harder and deeper structures like conventional language or institutions; and ii.) The dynamics of individual agency that shape how movements develop, splinter, or remain unified.

There is a growing literature of empirical work building on Sewell's theory demonstrating how schemas travel from one context into another. Young's (2002) study of the cultural adjustment of schemas of confession and sin to launch sustained and interregional protests against intemperance and slavery in the 19<sup>th</sup> century provides a historical case in how schemas travel. Clemens and Minkoff (2008) explore how labor unions adopted fraternal forms of association to build their organizational structure and ideas of solidarity, illustrating how actors transpose schemas to new organizational contexts (p. 158). Another more recent empirical case is Enriquez and Saguy's (2016) examination of the 'coming out' schema at work among undocumented youth mobilizing for the DREAM Act (Enriquez & Saguy 2016). A growing line of empirical studies illustrate how movements emerge as actors employ schemas in new contexts as they make sense of the uncertain political situation in which they find themselves.

Despite this growing empirical literature, there remains insufficient theorizing on how cultural schemas of movement organizing develop, where they come from, and how actors transpose them to different movement contexts. The works of Jane McAleavey (2015) and Luebke and Luff (2003) on organizing have rightly stated that organizing is often treated like a black box. I add to this growing literature by applying concepts from

Sewell to explore how Alinskyism as an organizing philosophy shaped the tactics and dynamics of the Chicano movement in Texas.

Building on Ganz and Sewell, I conceptualize philosophies of organizing as schemas-- that is, rules that arrange resources based on ideology, vision, and tactics. Organizing philosophies arrange how actors relate to one another, what an organized movement-entity looks like, and what kinds of ideas guide tactics. There were at least three fundamentally different philosophies of organizing shaping mobilizations on the Left in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, each with their own genealogy in earlier movements. Saul Alinsky's style of community organizing out of Chicago; New Left approaches to organizing that emerged from the student, Black Power, gay and lesbian, and women's liberation movements; and Marxist varieties of organizing that developed in the Old Left groups like the Communist Party and some labor unions.

Alinskyism, the method of organizing that Saul Alinsky developed from the 1930s until his death in 1972, consists of rules for activists to follow if they want to build political power in impoverished and ethnic urban communities. Alinsky's ideology is codified in texts such as *Rules for Radicals*, in organizing trainings offered by the Midwest Academy, and in practical lessons passed on by influential organizers who trained with him--- e.g., the teachings of Cesar Chavez and Geno Baroni. While claiming to be non-ideological, Alinsky's organizing philosophy implicitly accepts political theories of American pluralism. It assumes that institutions are fine or at least fixed and teaches that it is the people that need to be changed, activated and organized (Bardacke 2011, p. 80). There is no pure current of Alinskyism as an organizing philosophy, but

rather a diaspora with numerous disciples and dissenters who adapt Alinsky's main schemas differently to their own distinct contexts (p. 68). Belonging to this diaspora, Chicano activists in San Antonio adapted Alinsky's rules with the ethnic nationalism of La Raza Unida (United Race) to build political and organized power in their communities.

The broad, and pragmatic approach to institutional politics characteristic of most Alinskyites is informed by the major rules for organizing set down in *Rules for Radicals* (Alinsky 1971):

1. "Power is not only what you have, but what the enemy thinks you have."
2. "Never go outside the expertise of your people."
3. "Whenever possible, go outside the expertise of the enemy."
4. "Make the enemy live up to its own book of rules."
5. "Ridicule is man's most potent weapon."
6. "A good tactic is one your people enjoy."
7. "A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag."
8. "Keep the pressure on. Never let up."
9. "The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself."
10. "The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon the opposition."
11. "If you push a negative hard enough, it will push through and become a positive."
12. "The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative."
13. "Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it."



The purpose of these rules is to help the organizer build leaders from a community and enable them to resolve local problems in their community through focused, winnable single-issue campaigns. This pragmatic approach to organizing eschews radical political ideologies and encourages tactics to intimidate and pressure power holders.

The New Left sensibility in organizing that emerged in the 1960s was quite different. It focused on prefiguring the behavior and relations of a future liberated society. It self-consciously reached beyond the common sense, the *doxa*, of the communities it organized. Seeking horizontal leadership, in some cases even leaderlessness, and shifting attention from challenging political institutions to changing the self and exposing how domination plays out in intimate life were some of the hallmarks of New Left organizing (Breines 1989; Yates 2015). Its vision, in no small part, focused on changing the individual and activist communities to then change society, through introspective and reflexive thinking to ensure that individuals do not recreate the oppressive structures in routine life. Thus, New Left ideology, in particular the more radical strains sensitized organizers to how oppression could be reproduced in everyday life and encouraged actors to call-out those acts for public accountability. Some examples of New Left approaches included the consciousness raising groups of the women's liberation movement in the later 1960s and early 1970s (Rosenthal 1984).

Finally, Marxist organizing within organizations like Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Communist Party USA, focused on developing an ideological and intellectual framework to understand the world, and thus raise the consciousness of people to help

them see the problems of capitalism and join the militant working class vanguard fighting to end capitalism. Comprised of Leninist, Trotskyist, and sometimes Stalinist flavors, the Marxist organizers that engaged the Chicano movement emphasized scientific socialism to understand the world and the material conditions exploiting Mexican Americans. Their tactics involved organizing with unions to help workers strike against key industries central to the larger economy that would put the most pressure on capitalists and wrest the most concessions for workers. The ultimate vision of these groups is the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement with socialism or communism, worker control of the means of production.

Using Sewell's theoretical framework, sociologists can explain the processes that enabled these rules of activism to travel from one context to another, and how these processes made movements come alive and shaped their internal dynamics. Activists, encountering the uncertainty of new contexts, implement a diversity of tactics, strategies, and visions as they aim to mobilize power within communities. Sewell provides a supplemental theoretical toolset that relates the cultural and the material social phenomenon dialectically in order to understand how activists and organizers implement tactics as they organize their own communities.

### **CONCEPTUALIZING TACTICAL DEXTERITY**

Drawing on Sewell's framework, I conceptualize *tactical dexterity* as the capacity for movement actors, in particular leaders, to mix and incorporate ideas and tactics from other contexts to organize institutional resources such as moneys and mobilize people

power for a strategic purpose. Building on Ganz's notion of strategic capacity, tactical dexterity is a process where actors transpose schemas from various sources be they ideological or organizational, in order to navigate uncertain terrains for a strategic purpose. In the case of activists, they are able to marshal institutional resources (routine rules like laws, Robert's Rules of Order, material objects, money from foundations and government grants, people organized through churches and schools, emotional commitments, physical labor) with cultural schemas like *carnalismo* (ethnic brotherhood), feminist notions of equality, and stories in order to build power.

Using Sewell's framework, sociologists can explain how actors apply schemas from one context to another and control and organize resources with these newly applied schemas. I apply this framework to the case of the Chicano movement in Texas in the 1960s and 1970s to illustrate how *tactical dexterity* enabled Alinskyite activists like challenge external enemies and outwit internal rivals and provide an organizational structure that spoke to concrete and felt needs of Chicano communities.

#### **CHICANA/O MOVEMENT IN TEXAS: ALINSKY AND ETHNIC NATIONALIST TRANSPOSITIONS**

The Chicana/o movement emerged in the 1960s across the US Southwest. The movement developed across different political, economic, and cultural contexts to address issues affecting Mexican Americans. It mobilized around various particular issues in different states providing multiple fronts for the growth and assertion of a collective identity that transvalued the negative connotations of Chicano. For instance, the Delano grape strike led by the UFW in California (Bardacke 2010; Ganz 2009). In

Texas, the context for the Chicano movement was one of disfranchisement, segregation, and substandard schooling for Mexican Americans in cities like San Antonio. Inspired by the farmworker strikes in California and farmworker marches in the Texas Rio Grande Valley, Mexican Americans began to organize in a state with a rich but buried history of Left organizing (Montejano 1987; Zamora 1993).

In San Antonio, a meeting of five individuals with ties to political offices in San Antonio's government, marked a beginning of the movement in this predominantly Mexican American city. Known as *Los Cinco* (The Five), Willie Velazquez, Jose Angel Gutierrez, Mario Compean, Juan Patlan, and Ignacio Perez researched the principles of organizing (Navarro 1995, p. 85). They learned about power structures, black power ideology, and read radical authors like Frantz Fanon. They read Robert's Rules of Order for parliamentary procedure to learn how to control public meetings. They also studied *Reveille for Radicals* by Saul Alinsky. Impressed with his philosophy, the Cinco succeeded in bringing Alinsky to a symposium at St. Mary's University in 1967 (p. 85). They applied what they learned to confront political institutions to disrupt powerholders at their own game. Jose Angel Gutierrez and Mario Compean, in particular, adapted Alinsky's rules of organizing to identify single-issue campaigns that could be won and to intimidate political enemies resisting these campaigns. They combined these lessons from Alinsky with ideas of ethnic nationalism borrowed from the growing black power movements (Montejano 2010, p. 59), and more generally to build political power in San Antonio's Chicano communities.

The Cinco formed the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) to attack everyday problems in San Antonio barrios, such as police violence, gang warfare, and the underfunding of schools. MAYO played a major role in the West Side barrios, helping unify various gangs by peacefully resolving disputes. From MAYO emerged La Universidad de Los Barrios (UDLB), a school for youth offering an alternative curriculum of radical philosophy, history, and the arts; and the Committee for Barrio Betterment (CBB), a political organization designed to challenge the political machine of San Antonio's business elite machine, the Good Government League (GGL). These Chicano organizations mobilized material and human resources from the VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) Program, one of President Johnson's War on Poverty programs (p. 64, 269).

Los Cinco transposed schemas from two different activist currents to build their own organization and to control resources. MAYO leadership combined Alinsky's political pragmatism with ethnic-nationalist ideas of *La Raza*<sup>2</sup>, and *carnalismo*<sup>3</sup> to fashion their own organizing principles and style and to build political unity in the West Side barrios. Through this creative transposition and combination of schemas, MAYO mobilized Mexicans and Chicanos in barrios to resolve particular problems like gang warfare. They organized gang leaders into a council that channeled and defused disputes through a sports league (p. 58). MAYO also organized support in barrios under single-

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<sup>2</sup> La Raza literally translates to the "race" but its meaning is about a sense of peoplehood for those of Mexican descent, less so of a racial category in the US sense.

<sup>3</sup> Carnalismo refers to an ethic and sense of brotherhood among Mexican American men to look out for each other

issue campaigns like fighting racist policing to consolidate organizational control over community resources. The ideas of *carnalismo* and *La Raza* resonated with the commonsense experience of residents of the barrios. Activists invoked these cultural schemas to rally support around a sense of collective protection and an organization geared to resolve everyday problems of inequality in the barrios. MAYO leaders saw Mexican-American political elites like Henry B. Gonzalez as part of the problems Chicano communities in San Antonio faced. They attacked these established politicians for favoring the interests of business elites and perpetuating the racist policies Chicanos faced. As MAYO built a powerful organizational structure around these schemas and mobilized resources, it engendered internal conflict within the movement it increasingly controlled.

In 1971, MAYO faced a split as it evolved into two separate organizations. These two pathways reflected two increasingly conflicting sensibilities: one following an institutional political direction to win electoral power and shape official policy for Chicanos, and the other to respond to pressing concerns within the barrios. In 1972, capitalizing on the success of Chicano candidates defeating entrenched Anglo politicians in local elections in Crystal City and San Antonio, MAYO activists launched La Raza Unida Party (RUP) as a third political party to compete against Democrats and Republicans in elections across Texas (Garcia 1989; Montejano 2010, p. 193). The other organization that emerged from the split in MAYO was the Brown Berets, which focused on neighborhood watches and community protection from both police and gang violence.

The resulting split in resources (people, emotions, locales, labor) reflected a class division between college-educated MAYO members and working-class Chicanos from the barrios. In this context of organizational splits and growing factionalism, Chicanas began to organize their own New Left-inspired space within the movement. Out of this space, they mobilized a struggle for recognition within the movement leading to the formation of *Mujeres por la Raza Unida* (Women for the United Race) within RUP, and a Chicana branch of the Brown Berets.

In 1974, RUP launched its gubernatorial campaign that ended with the arrest of its charismatic candidate, Ramsey Muñiz, on drug trafficking charges. By 1978, RUP was losing momentum in building a large political movement, in part due to interference from the Democratic Party. RUP was at the same time competing against internal rivals from both Anglo and Chicano Marxist organizers who wanted control of the direction of the party.

Despite this decline, MAYO inspired organizers in Central and Southern Texas continued to build organizations. In 1971, Ernie Cortes trained with Saul Alinsky in Chicago and continued his style of organizing in the state through organizations like COPS (Communities Organized for Public Service). Willie Velazquez, a member of the original Cinco and an Alinskyite, founded the Southwest Voter Education Project (SVREP) to conduct voter registration campaigns and mobilize barrios politically. Alongside these projects, a younger generation of neo-Alinskyite organizer built faith-based community organizations under the Industrial Areas Foundation in Texas. These newer projects adapted the rules of Alinsky to address internal critiques of the classical

style of organizing. For instance, one key tenet of faith-based community organizing is that the people directly impacted are the ones organizing and making decisions, instead of using an outside organizer to build community power as was hallmark of classical Alinskyism (Osterman 2006, p. 631).

In the 1980s, the power centers of the Chicano movement dwindled but a new generation of organizers, inspired by the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s, seized positions of power in political institutions across the state (Rosales 2000). Through this new cohort of activists and politicians, a modified Alinsky-style of organizing remained a dominant mode of community and political organizing, as competing New Left and Marxist styles disappeared or became marginal.

Throughout this historical trajectory even during the classical Alinskyite period when MAYO's influence was at its zenith, the Chicano movement in Texas was fraught with internal and external struggle. The movement's course was shaped both by fights with external enemies from the Anglo and the Mexican American reformist political establishment, and internal competition over the control of movement resources with rivals set at odds over gender and class divisions and ideological battles. The ideological and organizational struggle within the movement involved three major factions with distinct organizing style: 1) The dominant Alinskyite perspective that used ethnic nationalism as its guiding cultural schema in the late 1960s to lead the movement in its emergent phase 2) a growing New Left feminist sensibility from 1971 to 1972 that sought to transform the gendered relations of organizing within the movement; and 3) Chicano and Anglo Marxists from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Center for Autonomous



Social Action (CASA) that advocated for a sharply anti-capitalist bent to the movement during the 1970s. In this movement dynamic of internal conflict, MAYO's Alinskyite approach favored pragmatic action over the prefigurative style of the New Left feminists and the rigid ideological framework of the Marxists. An ardent ideological approach tended to characterize Marxist activists within and around the Chicano movement, contrasting with an Alinskyite emphasis on winnable campaigns rooted in the common sense of the community. MAYO's approach also contrasted with the introspective prefigurative approach of New Left activists, as it prized tactics of confrontation and intimidation in building political power. Battles among these movement factions played out in press conferences, on the streets, in conferences, and local elections.

To explain how Alinskyites outmaneuvered these rival factions, I focus on three key moments in the history of the Chicano movement in Texas. The first is the tactical warfare between Alinskyite militants and the assimilationist Mexican American political establishment of San Antonio, culminating in press conference wars between Henry B Gonzalez and MAYO in 1969. The second is the internal struggle of Chicanas to contest sexism within MAYO. And lastly, the procedural tactics to purge Marxists from the Raza Unida Party.

### **FIGHTING THE OLD GUARD: TACTICAL WARFARE BETWEEN MAYO AND HENRY B GONZALEZ**

In 1967, as MAYO established itself as a political force in San Antonio, the Cinco implemented Alinsky strategies for organizing the barrios. Within two years, the fledgling organization managed to attract hundreds of members from various sectors of

San Antonio society: youth in schools, former gang members, social workers, mothers, and municipal workers. The Cinco learned the hard way Saul's rule of "Never go outside the expertise of your people." They first tried coming with their own agenda, but the people did not understand them when they talked about fighting imperialism or an abstract racism (Navarro 1995, p. 99). They adjusted quickly, pivoting to issues that were salient to their communities, such as gang warfare and substandard schooling. MAYO also proved adept at applying the Alinsky rules of ridiculing enemies. The Cinco used a dead rabbit during a march to symbolize that justice had been killed in San Antonio, and later threw dead rabbits at the governor's feet when he spoke in public (p. 99). They relished employing acts that scared their enemies and publicized the audacity of Chicanos daring to speak back to power. The political scientist Armando Navarro asserts that Alinsky's rule #9, that threat of an action is often scarier and more powerful than the action itself "was one of the favorite and most frequently followed in MAYO's organizing efforts" (p. 100). MAYO accompanied this tactic with a militant rhetoric of "killing the gringo" borrowed from a black power sensibility (Montejano 2010, p. 60)<sup>4</sup>. The combination made for many enemies and invited censure from local news media, but it also commanded respect in the communities MAYO organized. MAYO learned to play a "war of nerves" that kept their enemies off balance and conveyed the message to other Chicanos that the Anglo was not as powerful as they believed.

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<sup>4</sup> I draw heavily on David Montejano's book *Quixote's Soldiers*. Citations to his work will be placed in footnotes.

Within the pragmatic Alinskyite style of organizing, MAYO developed a novel approach to protest and politics. This approach was syncretic. MAYO not only drew on Alinsky's rules but also on New Left tactics of asserting identity. A combination of two schemas shaped the new organization's confrontational tactics and public assertions of Chicano power: Alinskyite pragmatism with ethno-nationalist militancy. A guiding schemas that came out of this combination was that of *carnalismo*. Literally translated to "brotherhood", this notion combined a militant identity assertion with a pragmatic approach to problem solving. This combination was critical to the new organization's success in tightly controlling limited community resources. The Cinco structured the movement organization with a key resonant schema of ethnic pride and a pragmatic schema of aggressive problem solving that rallied local San Antonians to the movement. MAYO's audacious actions and rhetoric mobilized Chicanos, especially its youth, into both social and political action.<sup>5</sup> This wave of activity directly confronted the political establishment of San Antonio and its most prominent Mexican American politician, Henry B. Gonzalez.

Earning fame among Mexican American and African American residents for his strong stance against segregation in the 1950s, Henry B, as many knew him, appeared to become a supporter of the Anglo establishment in the late 1960s with his work on local and state business initiatives.<sup>6</sup> His efforts on these initiatives and on the HemisFair project--a commemorative event of San Antonio's founding--earned him support from

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<sup>5</sup> Montejano, p. 81

<sup>6</sup> Montejano, p. 84

Anglo business organizations. In promoting the HemisFair, he criticized any attempts to highlight the poverty and inequality of San Antonio.<sup>7</sup> Willie Velazquez, one of the Cinco, had worked for Henry B until disagreements over the farmworkers' movements and student walkouts led to a fallout. Willie's split with Henry B turned personal, leaving the congressman feeling betrayed.<sup>8</sup> He considered Willie a mentee, treating him almost like a son. Gonzalez attacked MAYO in public, red baiting the group for their militant rhetoric. When MAYO planned a march in Del Rio, Texas in March of 1969, newspapers spread the charge that its leaders were Castro-trained militants intent on overthrowing the local government.<sup>9</sup>

MAYO leaders worked to turn this smear attempt to their advantage. Their tactical dexterity to this end was exemplified in the interactions around the Del Rio March. Leo Cardenas, a journalist from *San Antonio Express*, described the planned action: "Hundreds of persons are expected to jam the Del Rio Civic Center Sunday morning for adoption of a Del Rio "manifesto" and then march...About 200 persons from San Antonio, Houston, Laredo, and the Valley had arrived here Saturday night in preparation for the march."<sup>10</sup> With this march, MAYO seized the local media spotlight, generated publicity for it's the notion of La Raza Unida, and challenged Henry B of

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<sup>7</sup> Montejano, p. 84

<sup>8</sup> Montejano, p. 86

<sup>9</sup> "Castroites in March, HBG Says" *San Antonio Express & News* March 29, 1969; see also Don Dailey "Del Rio Mayor Hits Outside Organizers" *San Antonio Express & News* March 29, 1969

<sup>10</sup> Leo Cardenas "Del Rio 'Manifesto' March Slated Today" *San Antonio Express & News*, March 30, 1969.

compromise with the establishment politics of the Democratic party<sup>11</sup>. Exchanges between MAYO leaders and Henry B's team publicized in the press involved heated denunciations of each other. These exchanges provided MAYO with an opportunity to amplify its militant rhetoric and frame, the distinction between La Raza of working-class Chicanos and "sell-out" elite Mexicans. The tactical warfare between Henry B's team and MAYO was asymmetrical, as Henry B was able to mobilize the police, local newspapers, the FBI, and use undercover informants, as well as public innuendos to attempt to discredit the growing Chicano movement. In contrast, MAYO leadership relied on combative rhetoric, intimidation tactics, and the mobilization of large numbers of people. MAYO's response exemplified Alinsky's notion that there two sources of power: money and people and that with people power, activists can generate other means of enforcing a collective will (Alinsky 1972).

MAYO's April 1969 press conference proved a brilliant adaptation of Alinsky's rule #13 of "pick a target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it." In this conference, the leaders of MAYO, Jose Angel Gutierrez, Mario Compean, and Norman Guerrero (dean of Universidad de los Barrios) gathered to express their dissatisfaction with the Anglo political system. They publicly questioned the "manliness of a certain congressman" and called for the elimination of the Gringo.<sup>12</sup> The latter provoked ire from reporters present, who thought the press conference was to respond to Henry B's red-baiting accusations.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Leo Cardenas " 'Cactus Curtain' Up at Del Rio" *San Antonio Express*, March 31, 1969. See also "Texas' Sleeping Giant-Really Awake This Time?" in *Texas Observer*, April 11, 1969.

<sup>12</sup> James McCrory, "MAYO Jefe Raps 'Gringo' Policies". *San Antonio Express*, April 11, 1969.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Thomposon "Top of the News". *San Antonio Express*, April 12, 1969; "Gonzalez Reveals Threats". *San Antonio Express*, April 12, 1969 p. 10-G.

Particularly shocking was Gutierrez's call to eliminate the Gringo, if self-defense required it, and that Henry B proved himself to be a Gringo. Henry B responded with a press briefing of his own. He associated MAYO and its growing militant cadres with hooligans and warned that they may try to disrupt Fiesta Week activities, a tradition in San Antonio that celebrated the battles of Alamo and San Jacinto.<sup>14</sup> Willie Velazquez led a press briefing in response to Henry B's claims of associating MAYO with Fidel Castro, a red-baiting tactic that Henry B's team employed. Part of the response was to ask Henry B to name any Marxists in MAYO's ranks, and as such create distance from any Marxist factions.<sup>15</sup> Velazquez accused Henry B of red-baiting them, a tactic that reflected part of the Cold War context of that time, as well as Alinsky's non-ideological style of organizing.

This confrontation came to a violent climax at a Henry B speech in St. Mary's university in February of 1970.<sup>16</sup> During this speech, Henry B, noticed there were MAYO members present and suspected the event was a set-up. He warned the students about the Chicano movement and defended the pride of being an unhyphenated American. Many students present, including MAYO members, found his comments condescending and walked out in protest. As they walked out, Henry B taunted them by calling them *pendejos* (assholes) and taunted George Velazquez, Willie's brother, with "if you're a man, come over here".<sup>17</sup> George walked up to Henry standing three feet from him on

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<sup>14</sup> "Gonzalez Says Fiesta Disruptions Planned" *San Antonio Express*, April 12, 1969 p. 10-G.

<sup>15</sup> David Montejano, p. 103

<sup>16</sup> Montejano p. 108.

<sup>17</sup> Montejano, p. 109

stage.<sup>18</sup> Henry B dared him to throw a punch, when Albert Bustamante, an aide to Henry B, came from behind and punched George. Willie had to hold George back from retaliating and led him off the stage (Sepulveda 2003). The battle of press releases continued, with the *San Antonio Express News* recounting Henry B's side and the Velazquez brothers releasing an open letter explaining George's side.<sup>19</sup>

These confrontational tactics helped MAYO consolidate its base of support. By transposing Alinskyite and ethno-nationalist schemas to a context where Henry B and the media portrayed Mexicans as docile and festive, MAYO was able to shock local media and jolt supporters into mobilization with the radical assertion of a new identity: Chicano. The use of dead rabbits to symbolize the death of justice, tough masculine rhetoric, and emasculation of enemies came from Alinsky's tactics of direct action. They had roots in Alinsky's experience with mobsters in Chicago (Engel 2002). Gutierrez and the Cinco added an ethno-nationalist twist to Alinsky's method as they deployed his tactics to control the nerves of their more resourced opponents.

The confrontation spoke to class differences between Mexican Americans in San Antonio. Whereas middle-class residents and older generations had faith in the incrementalism of Henry B, working-class and youth supporters of MAYO saw a more militant approach as necessary to effect change. However, in organizing social workers, former gang members, students, and new political actors, the organization was quickly

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<sup>18</sup> Bill Graham, "Man Threatens HBG" *San Antonio Express*, February 28, 1970, p. 1-A

<sup>19</sup> Leo Cardenas "HBG Says Walkout Planned" *San Antonio Express* March 1, 1970 p. 6-S; Paul Thompson, "Top of News" *San Antonio Express* March 1, 1970 p.1

beset with internal divisions that could not be contained just by its assertion of *carnalismo*. Class and gender divisions became prevalent as the organization grew and soon led to Chicanas and working-class Chicanos to wage internal struggles for transforming relationships and rearranging the relationships of schemas and resources within the organizational structure.

### **MACHO O GABACHO? CONTESTING LA FAMILIA**

For Sewell, one of the ways to understand the vulnerability of a structure to change is by appreciating the polysemy of resources. That is, resources generate multiple levels of meaning. Resources, when distributed across groups and contexts, can refract multiple ideas about how the world works, who is in power, and who is not (Sewell 1992, p. 18). In this section, I examine how Chicana activists understood and challenged their role in MAYO. I look at their struggle during MAYO's phase in the early 1970s of becoming a third political party, "La Raza Unida Party" (RUP). This internal struggle involved a battle for recognition and transformation of relationships and resources under two competing schemas: New-Left Anglo feminism which called for a radical reworking of gender relations to challenge patriarchy, and the Chicano notion of *La Familia*<sup>20</sup>(the Family) as a foundation of Mexican resiliency under Anglo oppression.<sup>21</sup> *La Familia*, one

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<sup>20</sup> For leaders in MAYO, *la familia* was a notion of Mexican resiliency. However, as an ethno-nationalist ideology, it also justified unequal gender relations that left out women from recognition in doing some of the most important work of organizing. Chicanas like Rosie Castro and Gloria Cabrera contested this notion by organizing, either by wresting recognition from within, or separating altogether as Alex Flores wanted to. And more than just an ideology, the organizing of Cabrera and Castro helped transform that notion and break the constrictive shell it imposed on the work of women involved in the Chicano movement.

<sup>21</sup> Montejano, p. 155



notion out of the ideology of Chicanismo came out of the syncretism between the ethno-nationalist view of the family with the Alinsky pragmatism, in spite of Alinsky's anti-ideological approach. I focus on two key moments where these clashing schemas guided opposing tactics and threatened to split the movement: One, Gloria Cabrera's use of political leadership in the San Antonio Savings Association boycott that earned her recognition as a leader among Chicano activists. And two, a meeting among Chicanas in Houston in 1971 that ended in a factional dispute between feminist Chicanas and ethno-nationalist Chicanas on the question of divided loyalties: who to target? The *macho* (men) or the *gabacho* (Anglo)?

Rosie Castro, a movement activist from San Antonio, noted that Mexican American women have a long history of organizing resistance.<sup>22</sup> However, women largely played a support role, in these protests as men were front and center on the public stage of the movement. For instance, Chicanas would be relegated to doing secretarial work or making food while male members would handle public appearances and campaign in the Committee for Barrio Betterment. These gendered roles created a familiar division of public and private that feminist scholars have sharply critiqued (Fraser 1990; Hill Collins 2000). This division of front and backstage roles that reinforced a male dominated leadership in the early years of MAYO was implicitly justified by the cultural code of *La Familia*. Despite men romanticizing women as "Aztec princesses" in the movement organizations, the gendered division of labor rendered women's work and support largely

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<sup>22</sup> Montejano, p. 153

unnoticed. In her memoir of Chicana history, Marta Cotera (1976) asserts that women's training in grassroots activism helped them develop an egalitarian consciousness that empowered them to re-negotiate gender roles in MAYO (p. 20-21). Further, some Chicanas came into contact with Anglo feminist ideas through the women's liberation movement. For these Chicanas, feminist prefigurative values of autonomy from men, came into tension with the traditionalist view of *La Familia* creating divided loyalties and bringing criticism from other Chicanas about the insensitivity of white feminism towards the intersecting oppressions faced by Chicanas. The experience of organizing and being actively engaged helped women like Gloria to break the submissive shell that the male-dominated MAYO leadership reinforced, speaking to key insights on how organizing can help women and marginalized groups to fight back against fear and vulnerability in their everyday lives (Cossyleon 2018, p. 2) In response to this tension, Gloria Cabrera creatively utilized *la Familia* as a leverage to negotiate a more powerful role for women in the movement, and to contest gender relationships within the movement to accommodate the outside feminist pressure of rejecting male structures.<sup>23</sup>

Initially, women of MAYO took an unthreatening stand regarding the leadership of men, as reflected in the name of their newspaper, "El Rebozo" or the Shawl, which signified modesty and loyalty to La Raza.<sup>24</sup> Chicanas, however, were restless for long deserved recognition for their efforts in movement building. Despite a history of doing the indispensable grunt work in building organizations-- talking to neighbors, recording

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<sup>23</sup> Montejano, p. 155

<sup>24</sup> Montejano, p. 157

meeting minutes, etc.—these contributions remained unacknowledged. An opportunity to assert their leadership and skills came when San Antonio mayor Walter McAllister made a televised insult on NBC's "Huntley-Brinkley Report" in August 1970. The mayor said that in contrast to the rowdy Chicanos in Los Angeles, the Mexicans in San Antonio prefer to sing and dance.<sup>25</sup> His remark prompted a boycott of his bank, the San Antonio Savings Association (SASA) led by women<sup>26</sup>.

As the picket lines grew through September of that year they prompted police counteractions.<sup>27</sup> The confrontation ended with the arrest of Gloria Cabrera, and other picketers for "disturbing the peace."<sup>28</sup> With her arrest, Cabrera earned respect and authority among the male organizers and got elected to a leadership position in the Committee for Barrio Betterment (CBB). Gloria, along with Rosie Castro, then led a CBB slate of candidates in city council elections. They were the first women to run for local office in San Antonio.<sup>29</sup> Castro and Cabrera's electoral campaign prompted contempt from some men both inside and outside the movement, but they leveraged their experience in the bank boycott to earn respect and recognition from other men. The electoral campaign also prompted resistance from some women. By taking the insider approach and successfully winning within the parameters of established Chicano

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<sup>25</sup> Montejano, p. 157

<sup>26</sup> Alice Murphy, "Pena, Sutton Vow Return After Arrest" *San Antonio Express*, September 10, 1970 p. 1, p. 20-A

<sup>27</sup> Clements, Jesse. "On the scene: 'Get him, Get him,' Cried the Crowd" *San Antonio Express* September 11, 1970, p. 12-F.

<sup>28</sup> Murphy, Sept 10, 1970 p.1; Leo Cardenas, "10 Arrested After Melee at Frost National Bank" *San Antonio Express*, September 11, 1970, p. 14-A

<sup>29</sup> Montejano, p. 161

organizing and culture, Chicana women of San Antonio clashed with the Chicanas that wanted to create autonomous organizations apart from men. This tension surfaced in a conference in 1971 in Houston.

A key tension divided these Chicana attendees of the conference: leave RUP and form their own group in the vein of some Anglo radical feminist strains? Or remain inside and transform the relationships of the organization as Cabrera and Castro had sought to do? This tension between the Anglo New-Left feminist sensibility and the loyalty to the Alinskyite-inspired Chicanismo unfolded in the Houston conference attended by about 600 Chicanas from twenty-three states.<sup>30</sup> Disagreements broke out over resolutions that demanded eliminating double standards on sex, free and legal abortions, and recognizing the Catholic church as an oppressive institution.<sup>31</sup> Radical feminist resolutions split the conference, prompting about half of the attendees to walk out and stage their own separate conference to emphasize combating racism, not sexism. Those who stayed viewed the ones who left as male-identified women.<sup>32</sup> The split largely followed a divide between women from the barrios, and university educated women.

In her memoir, Francisca Flores, a conference attendee, quotes some of the criticisms voiced by Chicanas from the barrios: ““Chicanas you are thinking of yourself first—that’s an Anglo trip.”; “You’re changing too fast where there should be no

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<sup>30</sup> Francisca Flores, “Conference of Mexican Women in Houston- Un Remolino [A Whirlwind]” in *Chicana Feminist Thought: the basic historical writings* (ed) Alma M. Garcia

<sup>31</sup> Ana Nieto Gomez and Alma Barrera “Chicana Encounter” in *Chicana Feminist Thought: the basic historical writings* (ed) Alma M. Garcia; see also Marta Cotera, “La Conferencia de Mujeres Por La Raza Houston, Texas, 1971”, in *Chicana Feminist Thought: the basic historical writings* (ed) Alma M. Garcia

<sup>32</sup> Montejano, p. 165

change”; “Where is your allegiance to the movement?”<sup>33</sup> While the conference split women into opposing camps, it sensitized all to the gender relations of their organizing. Whether by separating in autonomous feminist organizing or by combatting sexism within the male-dominated organizations of Chicanismo, both groups going forward pressed for change in gender dynamics, both rejected being bound to backstage and supportive roles.<sup>34</sup> In Texas, the dominant approach was the insider method of using the pragmatics of organizing to wrest respect from men for doing the central work of movement building (Zamora 2017). The Texas women who walked out and resisted separatism leveraged their loyalty to MAYO/RUP to enhance their influence from within, a characteristically Alinskyite pragmatic move.

These two events illustrate a key tension between the ethnic-nationalist/Alinskyite framework and the New-Left women’s autonomy framework of organizing. As Chicanas debated whether to build their own separatist organizations under the guide of Anglo feminism or create their own space within the Chicano cultural schema of *La Familia*, they made ideological and strategic choices. Chicanas interpreted their own labor and energy as a key resource that MAYO and RUP were not appreciating or recognizing. The tactical dexterity for Chicanas like Cabrera was evident in how they did “men’s work”, leading public protests in the SASA boycott, to leverage MAYO leadership to recognize their ability and status as women organizers and leaders of the organization. Chicanas forced men to recognize them within the men’s own game and system of earning respect.

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<sup>33</sup> Francisca Flores, “Conference of Mexican Women in Houston- Un Remolino [A Whirlwind]

<sup>34</sup> Montejano, p. 166

This tactic, however, conflicted with another tendency of Chicanas to prefigure radical gender roles by establishing separatist organizations; that is, to remove their own resources (labor, emotional energy, materials, etc.) from macho organizations and create autonomous organizational structures under the schema of feminism. The struggle to transform MAYO and RUP brought the schemas of radical feminism in conflict with the notion of femininity in *la familia*. These moments illustrate Chicanas transposing schemas at work in re-structuring the relations within Alinskyism's organizing style.

Alinskyism's genius, for good or bad, is in its creative use of existing schemas to control resources for organizations that can build power. This moment in the Chicana/o movement illustrated an internal tension of conflicting schemas that vied for transforming how resources and people relate to one another, illustrating a general tension that can transform movements. These conflicting schemas and tactical innovations illustrate the tactical dexterity of Chicanas to transform their organizations and challenge power relations therein.

### **PURGING MARXISTS: PROCEDURAL TACTICS IN SUSTAINING SCHEMAS**

Alinsky in the 1972 *Playboy* interview stated, "they [elites] got money, you got people. Let me show you what you can do with people." For the Cinco, learning the Alinsky style of organizing people entailed mastering the procedural knowledge of organized meetings. For example, they read Robert's Rules of Order and implemented these rules into their meetings. Through these rules, Gutierrez could craft tactics to ensure membership loyalty within established Chicano organizations. He used his mastery of

organizational procedures to remove dissenting activists, using arcane rules governing affidavits and pledges to purge rival members.

Saul Alinsky, in his career as a master organizer, emphasized the need to distance radical organizing from the communists. As the Raza Unida Party started to spread in the 1970s out of Texas and to other parts of the Southwest, they competed in local and state elections as a third political party. No longer under the control of MAYO, RUP developed a growing presence in regional Chicano conventions that brought together delegates from Texas and also from California, Colorado, and even states far from the Southwest like Idaho, Washington and Illinois. In these events, sharp ideological conflicts emerged between Marxists and Alinskyites.

Bert Corona, a Mexican American in California was a prominent Marxist with a longer history in Chicano activist circles. He trained with the Community Service Organization, founded by Fred Ross and others, and supported by Alinsky's IAF in northern California in the late 1940s. This same organization also trained Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta in their formative years (Bardacke 2010). In his memoirs, Corona commented that one of the stated goals of Alinskyite organizing was to keep the "red" from establishing a base in Mexican American communities. "I knew that when they referred to the "reds," they meant those Mexicans who were either working with the CP [Communist Party] or involved with ANMA, the Asociacion Nacional Mexico-Americana" (Garcia 1994, p. 164). Corona cited some of Saul's favorite anti-communist phrases in sayings: "We're out here to organize the Spanish-speaking in conjunction with the Catholic church. Don't for one minute think that we sympathize with the reds in any

way, shape, or form.” Despite such rhetoric, Corona encountered minimal red-baiting in his organizing work and his Marxist sympathies progressed (p. 165).

Corona’s influence found a base in California with CASA (Center for Autonomous Social Action), a Marxist-Leninist organization with a focus on combatting regressive immigration bills in California<sup>35</sup>. Marxist inspired Chicanos struggled to find a similar base in where Texas Marxist organizing was mainly carried out by the Anglo SWP and some fledgling influence from CASA and independent Chicano socialists. However, as RUP expanded out of Texas, its Alinskyite organizer increasingly came into contact and conflict with Marxist Chicanos.

This conflict between the Alinskyites and Marxists, in particular a fight over the influence of SWP within Raza Unida Party, marks a critical moment of internal tensions and decline of the Alinskyite control over the direction of the political movement. It illustrates attempts by classical Alinskyite Chicanos to sustain a nationalist-pragmatist schema in the face of socialist challenges to control a party that by 1978 was falling into disarray. These conflicts took the form of procedural battles to expunge Marxists and organized disruptions during conferences. In this section, I focus on key moments during this period to illuminate tensions between the two competing factions and how some activists attempted to transpose schemas to control the resources of the organizations involved and thereby re-structure the Chicano movement.

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<sup>35</sup> Ignacio Garcia, *United We Win*, 1989, p. 100



In a June 1972 conference that assembled RUP supporters from Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and California, delegates voted on a resolution not to endorse the Communist Party USA or the SWP. Many of the assembled delegates viewed the SWP as an Anglo-controlled organization and a threat to the core philosophy and unity of the Chicano movement.<sup>36</sup> The philosophy delegates saw at stake was *carnalismo*. Jose Angel Gutierrez articulated this philosophy in a 1971 La Raza Conference at a community college in Oakland, CA, setting the tone for the 1972 conference. In the 1971 La Raza Conference at a community college in Oakland, CA, Gutierrez stated his opposition to alternative radical ideologies by asserting that Chicanos already have one of the strongest ideologies around: “carnalismo y hermandad” [camaraderie and brotherhood] (Garcia 1989, p. 99). Gutierrez appealed to the pragmatic approach of adhering to guiding ideas that the people already understood, rather than to abstract and obscure political theories found in Marxist newspapers like the SWP’s *The Militant*. This assertion of cultural nationalism, along with the formal vote to not endorse CP USA and SWP, served to defend the schema of *carnalismo* as an organizing philosophy, as a philosophy for managing the movement’s resources that resonated with the lived and practical experiences of Chicanos. Gutierrez’s defense of this philosophy aimed to sustain RUP’s structural arrangement of resources (activists, delegates, money, emotions, labor) under a schema of cultural nationalism that would exclude intervening and competing approaches from re-arranging these resources.

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<sup>36</sup> Garcia *United we Win* 1989, p. 102

Gutierrez in the 1972 conference put forth two new rules that angered some delegates. Ignacio Garcia (1989), in his history of the RUP describes these rules as follows:

He introduced a two-part loyalty affidavit that every delegate had to sign in order to vote in the convention. The form seemed designed to eliminate the Chicano delegates who were working as a front for other parties or organizations, particularly sectarian left groups like the Socialist Workers Party. The other rule affected Chicano newspapers and other for-sale periodicals. Anyone who wanted to sell any written materials in the Coliseum had to turn over all the proceeds to the convention organizers (p. 107).

Through these two tactical moves, Gutierrez purged activists and infiltrators from rival Marxist groups from the conference. He turned procedural rules into gatekeeping, effectively determining who could shape the direction of the political movement. It was a moment of creative agency. Gutierrez kept the convention loyal to the schema of cultural nationalism, by transposing schemas of procedural rule for the strategic end of controlling movement resources. It illustrates Sewell's notion that agency "arises from the actor's knowledge of schemas, which means the ability to apply them to new contexts" (Sewell Jr 1992, p. 20).

Events in Oakland did not, however, cease ideological challenges. In a series of conferences extending through the 1970s, RUP repeatedly became mired in ideological

factionalism and organizational splits.<sup>37</sup> One key source of this persistent tension was the rivalry between Gutierrez and Corky Gonzalez. The two powerful leaders drew support from different regional bases, and they held different notions of Raza Unida cultural nationalism, on which they would not compromise. These tensions led to splits among Chicano groups in the Southwest, each with a competing vision of what it meant to unify the movement.

The years 1975 through 1977 marked a period of decline for the Raza Unida Party, even as the Ramsey Muñiz campaign for Texas governorship was gaining support from black power activists and the SWP. This decline was symbolized by the arrest and indictment of Ramsey Muñiz on drug possession charges with intent to distribute.<sup>38</sup> His arrest exacerbated distrust within the party and amongst activists as they struggled to explain either that Muñiz was framed by the government or that he did not represent RUP.<sup>39</sup>

In 1978, with RUP parties in states like California facing internal organizational factionalism, Gutierrez, a county judge for Crystal City at the time, made a call for a conference on immigration to be held in San Antonio. The flyer announcing the San Antonio conference called on delegates to gather in order to respond to the Carter administration's proposed congressional bill to build a border fence.<sup>40</sup> The conference, titled "International Committee on Immigration and Public Policy" requested \$25,000 in

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<sup>37</sup> Garcia, *United we Win*, p. 147

<sup>38</sup> Garcia, *United we Win*, p. 197

<sup>39</sup> Garcia *United we Win*, p. 199

<sup>40</sup> Call to Action flyer, J. Angel Gutierrez Papers, Box 44 Benson Latin American Collection; Oct 24, 1978 Austin American Statesman, clipping J. Angel Gutierrez Papers, Box 44 Benson Latin American Collection

total funding for the conference.<sup>41</sup> Lacking the necessary funds due to splits in RUP, Gutierrez was forced to turn to SWP for resources to organize the conference.<sup>42</sup> At this conference, opposition to the bill was strong, but it wasn't united, with several organizations competing for leadership over the effort. This competition was divided among three lines: Marxists, nationalist-Alinskyites, and moderates.

Based in California, CASA-HGT shifted to a Marxist-Leninist ideology that viewed the Chicano movement as misdirected and did not recognize Chicanos as a separate national entity from Mexicans in Mexico. Trotskyists were behind the SWP, and varied Chicano organizations comprised independent Marxists. Delegates from moderate organizations like MALDEF and LULAC also attended the conference, as well as RUP Alinskyites under Gutierrez.<sup>43</sup>

The conference held in November led to heated debates among these factions, alienating the more moderate mainstream organizations such as MALDEF which ended its participation early. In these debates, CASA supporters accused the Chicano movement of not having a political strategy to achieve their vision. They argued that the goals of the movement were defined by a stratum of leaders disconnected from working-class communities: that is, by students, youth, and professionals.<sup>44</sup>

Another factor fueling conflict in the conference was that SWP and CASA-HGT members used the conferences as an opportunity to recruit attendees to their

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<sup>41</sup> Letter requesting funds, *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> "Factionalism Splits Chicano Movement" November 16-22, 1977 *In These Times* clipping, Box 44, *ibid*

<sup>43</sup> Garcia, *United we Win*, p. 213-214

<sup>44</sup> Garcia, *United we Win*, p. 214

organizations. SWP disrupted meetings and make more enemies. This angered Gutierrez who at first defended their participation, even though he had sought to exclude them from past events. Fuming, Gutierrez wrote in a letter to Rudy Acuña, another Chicano leader in California about the problems in organizing the conference. One problem he expressed was “power plays, exclusion tactics, sabotage began happening to people under banners of “Chicano only”, “no communists.”” There was no small irony to this gripe from the man who mastered such tactics in years earlier. He also complained about money when it came to who has say in the conference: “Rudy, if I raise the money and invite you to a conference, I expect to have the most say about what goes on. Pass the word around, if you need to, so that infantile movement delinquents don’t show up to activities I sponsor expecting to have an equal say at less than half the price!”<sup>45</sup>

A dilemma gripped the RUP leaders, as their ideology of ethnic nationalism appeared wanting when compared to the scientific materialism of the Marxists for classifying issues like US border policy or the exploitation of Mexican labor. RUP leaders viewed Marxist groups as opportunists who lived in sectarian circles far removed from the lived experience of barrios. However, RUP intellectuals could not keep up with the Marxists on ideological debates since they had little theory to depend on and most of them had sensibilities that aligned with the Marxists to begin with.

The warfare between the socialists and the Alinskyite nationalists illustrate an instance where a faltering party is open to ideological and tactical assault by factional

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<sup>45</sup> 1977 Dec 1st, Letter to Rudy Acuña, Box 44 Jose Angel Gutierrez Papers. Benson Latin American Collection

groups seeking to capture movement resources and re-structure its core schemas. The conference exposed serious internal division, with attempts by some to shift the conference in the direction of CASA, and others in the SWP disrupting the proceedings altogether. This conflict took place at a time when the RUP was falling into disarray in the wake of Muñiz's arrest, and exposed Gutierrez as weakened by his past feuds with SWP. From that point forward, the Alinskyite philosophies to manage resources became brittle and contested grounds for various factions to try to win over.

#### **AFTERMATH: NEO-ALINSKYISM AND CONTINUING CHICANA/O STRUGGLES**

By the end of the 1970s, the modes of Chicano activism had transformed, as movement events in Texas help illustrate. RUP faltered in Texas and the Southwest, but in its wake, Alinskyites consolidated and institutionalized their gains (Rogers 1990). Established leaders such as Rosie Castro and Jose Angel Gutierrez continued organizing outsider political campaigns but also moved to institutionalize their influence, as signified by Gutierrez's move to establish Center of Mexican American Studies at University of Texas at Arlington, Rosie's two children, Julian and Joaquin, in institutional San Antonio politics, and Willie Velazquez's voter registration project for Mexicans and Mexican Americans (Sepulveda, 2003). Benjamin Marquez (1990) asserts that Alinsky's influence in the Mexican American community in Texas was vast and its organizational legacy long. However, classical Alinsky's pragmatist focus blinded these organizations to how capitalism and political disfranchisement generate the daily problems the method sought to resolve (p. 366). As critics like Frank Bardacke point out, Alinskyism assumed the

political system was perfectly fine, that it was the people who were at fault for being inert and needed an outside organizer to stir them into collective action (Bardacke 2011, p. 80). Lastly, as Rin Ku Sen pointed out, Alinsky's focus on single and non-divisive issues often neglected the people that needed most organizing, such as the poor and people of color as their issues could not be presented as non-divisive (Sen 2003).

In addition to MAYO and RUP, a second generation of Alinskyite organizations that built on flaws in classical Alinskyism emerged in Texas: COPS (Communities Organized for Public Service) led by Ernie Cortez, the Valley Interfaith led by Imelda Muñoz, and Willie Velazquez's voting registration initiative (Hart 2001, p. 20; Montejano 2010). Faith-based and institution-based community organizing developed in Texas during the 1970s, long after Alinsky's death, led in part by Industrial Areas Foundations and Interfaith (Swarts 2008; Wood & Fulton 2017). These Alinsky-inspired organizations built on the flaws of the classical Alinsky model and restructured their organizing to reflect trends of leadership development, and problem solving. Moreover, Alinskyism was a key link between labor and parts of the New Left like SDS's moderate wing and the United Farmworkers (Gosse 2002, p. 291). From these links, New Left insights on internal oppression helped improve the neo-Alinsky wave in the 1970s after Saul's death, for during his life time, Saul was very much against the New Left movement that he swore to never organize with African Americans again (Miller 1987, p.15). For instance, Bradshaw, Soifer, and Gutierrez (1994) develop a model that incorporates Alinsky's pragmatic approach with feminist insights for communities of color (p. 32).

Continuing in the 1990s, Chicana/o organizing persisted in efforts by Chicana/o students to strengthen Chicana/o Studies departments in the US, as Armbruster-Sandoval documents in three cases in California (Armbruster-Sandoval 2017). Nevertheless, these moments in history illustrate what made Alinskyism so supple and powerful in shaping organizations and consolidating political power for working people. The appeal of Alinskyism is that one need not be an ideologue or expert to change their destiny and make decisions for the betterment of their community. Its appeal was also its capacity to use local and resonant schemas to mobilize people and resources. To this day, neo-Alinskyite organizing, in its faith-based and institution-based forms has reached broader appeal that there have been efforts to organize among Muslims in the US (Fulton 2018) as well as efforts to implement this form of movement building in Britain (Warren 2009). These growing efforts speak to Alinsky's continued success in helping marginalized communities to build political and social power, yet leave flaws that scholars and critics point out (Bardacke 2011; Marquez 1990; McAlavey 2015; Sen 2003).

#### **CONCLUSION: ALINSKYISM AND STRUCTURATION**

The Chicano movement in Texas, as one chapter in the classical Alinskyite phase, illustrated moments of internal tension over ideologies of organizing between the Alinsky/ethno-nationalist schema and the New-Left and Marxist schemas. I argued that Alinskyism's *tactical dexterity*, that is, its creativity in transposing schemas and adjusting routine institutional knowledge across contexts enabled Chicana/o Alinskyites to intimidate rivals, contest exclusionary sexist schemas and demand organizational



recognition, and purge Marxists. While outmaneuvering competitors and political enemies, tactical dexterity also entails the promotion of organizational survival until rivals fade from the political scene, as the case of the SWP illustrates. Sewell's framework of structuration provides a broad framework to understand this process of tactical dexterity as the creativity of actors who adjust cultural schemas in a fight to control movement resources. To be sure, contextual factors like the Cold War hysteria, other movements at the time, and available resources such as VISTA Minority Mobilization programs mattered in providing the context and environment Chicana/o leaders confronted. However, I explore a process that people like Rosie Castro and Jose Angel Gutierrez crafted from transposing ideas to confront the political and social context of their time. This creative process enabled them to not only build an active organizational system to build power, but also to purge ideological rivals, and to contest internal sexism. I explored the creativity of transposing tactics and schemas from other contexts, such as mobster pressure tactics, or feminist ideas of egalitarianism, or routine parliamentary rules for Chicana/o leaders to turn what they have (people, money, churches, schools, staff) into what they need (Ganz 2009). Alinsky's protean tactical approach to building organization and adopting tactics played a key role in turning the broader political context and extant resources into building an institutional infrastructure to challenge McAllister and HBG's machines, and expose the rampant racial and gender inequality that Chicana/os faced. In the context of funneling institutional resources such as the VISTA program (Montejano 2010, p. 72), moneys from the Ford Foundation (Marquez 2000), and the red scares of the Cold War, the Chicano movement illustrated

how structuration happened through leaders who could channel these resources and political context to help build not just a new identity, but also build political and social power. Internally, this struggle to control resources through fundraising, leadership decisions, and relationships illustrate how people create structures that reflect and adjust schemas of gender, class, and race in social movements.

Sewell's framework allows analysts of movements to synthesize the symbolic-- frames, narratives, and ideology-- with the material, such as resources and organizations, while giving room for agency. This paper examined moments in the history of the Chicano movement to illustrate internal dynamics of structuration at play and to explain why Alinskyism, in its earlier classical phase, became the hegemonic form of organizing in the movement.

### **Chapter 3: Between Community and Sectarianism: Calling-out and Negotiated Discipline in Prefigurative Politics>**

#### ABSTRACT

This paper examines how activists negotiate tensions in disciplining errants who transgress norms in prefigurative politics. I argue that through the disciplinary process of calling-out, activists negotiate a key tension between building a community that is extensive and inclusive or exclusive and intensive for its members. Derived from consciousness raising groups in New Left activism, call-outs are a rhetorical tactic that expose oppressive acts in etiquette, speech, action, or procedure. This tactic, used in physical and virtual space, is a form of normative discipline where challengers, accused, and any third parties negotiate between reintegrating the accused or expelling them from the spaces. Drawing on in-depth interviews with queer activists and allies in Austin, TX, a city with deep New Left activist legacies, this paper focuses on how the accused and third parties react to call-outs and how these responses shape whether the process leads to an integrative, purgative, or disputed resolution. From passive acceptance, belligerence, and dialogic dispute, different modes of the call-out enable and constrain how challengers, accused actors, and third parties can negotiate a resolution to these transgressions. Call-outs nevertheless risk creating sectarian dynamics when they are used to berate, shut down dialogue, and fracture groups by weaponizing identities. By drawing on Gorski's theory of discipline, this paper adumbrates how actors discipline each other and in doing so navigate internal tensions between leniency and stringency, inclusion and exclusion. It establishes a powerful disciplinary practice within prefigurative politics that make these tensions malleable.

## INTRODUCTION

In response to Sandra Bland's death under police custody, a private Facebook group formed in the summer of 2015 to organize local activists in Austin, Texas around the experiences of brown and black women. Within hours of its creation, with scores of invites to women still pending, Lorena, a local poet-activist, asked how many trans women were in the group? An administrator responded: 'none that we are aware of, but you're welcome to be the first.' Reading the response as offensive, Lorena called out the group for tokenizing her and making her not feel safe in this new activist space. Within minutes of the call-out, others rallied to support Lorena and chastised the organizers and anybody who tried to defuse the situation or reduce tensions. The group quickly escalated into heated arguments over the charge and in short order to its demise.

Days after this heated argument, an online exchange between Deborah, one of the organizers of the group, and Lorena framed the collective tension.

Lorena: Why aren't you upset about this? Why don't you have my back? If you were invited into a group of all white women and you were the only person of color and you asked how many women of color are in this group and they tell you, 'none that I know of but feel free to be the first', wouldn't you feel so mad and so tokenized and upset?

Deborah: No, if I felt that it was worthwhile I'd give it more than 6 hours to see who else would come into the group and I wouldn't make assumptions about the feelings of the administrators trying to dismiss you.

Lorena: Well, you like being the token. How could you not feel so upset about this?

Deborah added that the organizers had looked past Lorena's combative tone to welcome her into the group and that they had invited other trans women who had not yet accepted their invites. In response to the group's demise, Deborah posted a rant on Facebook about the role of 'call-out culture' in fragmenting activist spaces, disposing of people, and creating a toxic dynamic that was making activists around her fearful. Deborah's post was received by some in local queer circles with appreciation, but others rejected her critical view of Lorena's call-out. As one respondent to the post commented, 'you're being intentionally vague about the person you're talking about; she's a trans woman of color, you can't critique her because she is the most oppressed of all the margins.'

Lorena and Deborah shared a history of social justice activism in Austin. They had worked together in the past to call out racist and sexist dynamics in Occupy Austin and participated in a public gathering that called out a racist pageant show put on by a local drag troupe. Their friendship ended with this Facebook incident. Their dispute illuminates conflicting views and practices that shape progressive activism today: an opposition between on the one hand, creating an activist community that is extensive and inclusive yet risks being overly permissive; and on the other hand, exclusive and intensive yet risks being overly sectarian (Feenberg 1984; Mansbridge 1986). This tension, present in the clashing views of Deborah and Lorena, raises pressing questions for the prefigurative politics of progressives: How do activists committed to anti-oppression politics and their allies negotiate practices of inclusion and exclusion? And in response to transgressions against anti-oppression politics in act, etiquette, and speech,

how does discipline work in building or undermining a ‘beloved community’ of activists (Breines 1989)?

Drawing on in-depth interviews with queer activists and allies, I argue that the call-out<sup>46</sup> is a rhetorical process of normative discipline through which activists negotiate processes to integrate or exclude errants<sup>47</sup> in their work, relationships, and groups. In this paper, I examine three key modes of the call-out that vary according to the rhetorical interaction of challengers, errants, and third parties that react to being called-out: passive acceptance, belligerence, and dialogic dispute. The different modes are not determined simply by the challenger’s articulation of the initial call-out. The response of errants and third parties can expand or contract the capacity for dialogue, shaping whether challengers and others involved can offer redemption or expulsion. Through its various modes, this negotiated process of normative discipline can allow challengers to redeem errants into the groups with a transformed understanding of their errors or expel errants from communities. Thus, call-outs expose an internal tension between inclusion and exclusion faced by activists engaged in anti-oppression politics. In this rhetorical process, challengers negotiate between leniency by allowing perpetrators to continue their ways or using call-outs as punitive devices that give errants little opportunity for negotiation

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<sup>46</sup> While a “call-out” may refer to public announcements in European activist contexts, respondents in a US context use the term to refer to rhetorical devices of challenging oppression in any manifest form: speech, act, procedure, etiquette.

<sup>47</sup> Errant can mean someone who behaves wrongly from a normative standpoint and can span minor transgressions in etiquette to egregious cases like racist violence. In this case, to err from anti-oppression politics in act and behavior.

despite attempts by the latter to create dialogue, creating sectarian dynamics that can intimidate other actors.

The process of calling-out exposes transgressions in public. How errants, challengers, and third parties interact in this disciplinary process shapes its variegated outcomes. In exploring how movement actors discipline each other, analysts can learn how they navigate internal tensions between leniency and stringency, inclusion and exclusion. Indeed, through disciplinary practices, actors can negotiate internal schisms in prefigurative politics, illustrating a dynamic process that shapes how they resolve transgressions and conflicts.

### **PREFIGURATIVE POLITICS AND THE INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

Prefigurative politics has come to mean a politics that links means and ends in movement organizing (Maeckelberg 2011; Polletta 2002). It is characteristic of New Left activism and realized in social movements, counter-institutions, and demonstrations (Boggs 1977; Breines 1989; Dixon 2014). Prefigurative politics embody personal and anti-hierarchical values in consciousness and practice (Dixon 2014; Maeckelberg 2011; Yates 2015). US scholar Chris Dixon defines prefiguration as putting vision into practice through struggle with the intention to shape one's activities so that it manifests their vision (2014). This conception entails four counter-cultural dimensions: countercultural lifestyles, institutions, organizing, and interaction. These four dimensions characterize not only institutional means to sustain visions such as feminist bookstores, community health clinics, but also principles of organizing and interaction such as egalitarian and

inclusive language, new ways of relating and struggling. One feature of New Left movements is to build a community that ‘called for equal and caring relationships’ (Breines 1989, p. 49) in and beyond the movement.

UK sociologist Luke Yates (2015) outlines five processes shaping prefigurative politics that provide activists and scholars with criteria to judge and analyze prefiguration: ‘collective experimentation; the imagining, production and circulation of political meanings or frames; the creating of new and future-oriented social norms or ‘conduct’, their consolidation in movement infrastructure; and the diffusion and contamination of ideas, messages and goals to wider networks and constituencies’ (2015, p. 2). Of these five processes, the creation of new norms and conduct sensitizes sociologists to examine the socializing practices of activists. Sustaining new norms of conduct in social interactions within struggle include practices like using correct pronouns, establishing inclusive procedures, and building safer spaces. Yates and Dixon call attention to the interactionist dimension of prefiguration, particularly how actors talk, relate, present themselves, and struggle with each other. How actors treat one another is interpreted with political meaning, as something to keep improving on, encouraging actors to correct and expose transgressions in their practice (Breines 1989, p. 48).

US scholar Andrew Feenberg asserts that one political goal of the New Left was to make a new world, by creating a new person: it was no longer the revolution that created new people, but its converse: new people would create the revolution (1986, p. 122). This view looked to consciousness raising groups, and personal introspection in order to examine and challenge modes of domination introjected into everyday life. The



goal was to transform the way people related to one another and self (p. 124) and to uproot internal problems like racism and sexism enduring in New Left organizations like SNCC and SDS, or anti-lesbian violence in feminist circles (Evans 1980).

To illustrate the work of challenging oppression reproduced in activism, Japanese scholar Kyoko Tominaga examines the factors that hinder and enable prefiguration and horizontality in protest encampments (2017, p. 270). Of these, familiar chores like cooking socialized newcomers and provided them with opportunities to participate in protest activities. However, how these tasks were organized and the that governed them followed a capitalist order. They created hierarchies of experience that reproduced the dominant social order and brought inner conflict among activists (p. 276). Tominaga's case illustrates moments when hierarchies and discriminations in the protest camp were reproduced, such as the segregation of lavatories into female and male, and rooms for 'staff only' (p. 277) and triggered open meetings to resolve these issues.

In analyzing the internal dynamics of social movements, the sociological literature does not neglect the tensions that exist in moments of transgression, be they in etiquette or more egregious actions like intimate partner violence (Chen et al 2011), so much as fail to deeply examine these moments in order to generalize about their significance in the course of movements. There is insufficient theorizing on how procedures like the open meeting work, how forms of discipline work to socialize actors in these spaces, and how actors negotiate the resolution of transgressions, as well as vulnerabilities that arise in resolving transgressions.

Dixon speaks to a key internal tension when he alerts readers to the dangers of prefiguration. One of these dangers is what he terms ‘secular puritanism’ where activists scrutinize behavior and create status hierarchies to exclude others for not being ideologically committed or militant enough (p. 106). However, what Dixon describes as puritanical is not new, as it has historical connections to early New Left dynamics and deeper roots in religious sectarianism. Sectarianism, as US scholars like Cedric Johnson (2001) and Jane Mansbridge (1984) illustrate, is one of two pathways out of an internal movement tension: building an extensive activist community that by necessity tolerates some degree of transgression, or an exclusive sect of the ideologically pure and committed that tolerates no transgressions to its doctrine. Disciplinary practices to socialize activists into the values and practices that align with movement values and ideology undergird this tension between community and sectarianism. These tensions exist in LGBTQ movements in the United States and provide empirical cases to examine how activist groups navigate these dynamics.

### **Prefiguration in Queer Activism**

Gay and lesbian liberation movements in the US emerged within the context of New Left cultural politics to counter the stigmatization of sexual identities and to articulate new ways of relating, loving, and expressing sexuality. From these new political orientations emerged conversations about open relationships, sexual expression, and experiments in the creation of a radical way of loving (Weeks 2000; Brown 2006). Part of this approach was to recognize and reclaim stigmatized identities within as well as

outside the movement and rethink the ways people related to one another, such as challenging racism, transphobia, and biphobia. Emergent in the New Left logic of challenging cultural codes, the label “Queer” was reclaimed and affirmed by later generations of LGBT radicals as they attempted to further explore the ways power and domination are imbricated in everyday life, from rituals of deference to language.

This aim to affirm identities in movement practices was evident in *Act Up* where members would sit on each other’s laps during meetings or flirt with police officers when arrested, thus framing activism as ‘world-building’ (Gould 2009, p. 185).

For LGBTQ activists prefiguration is one critical tactic to forging a ‘beloved community’ of activists that can re-invent the ways they relate and love each other (Breines 1989; Gould 2009). Through this practice, they challenge social conventions and create counter-institutions and groups to sustain these ideals of liberation, from music festivals to bookstores and performance groups, and online through exchange sites, personal pages, and activist organizations. Among LGBTQ radicals and their networks of interconnected causes, the internal tension between community and sect is readily apparent. Activist interaction reveal a tension between trying to build an inclusive community for queers of color, trans individuals, and gender non-conforming individuals, and becoming a sect of the ‘woke’ that does not tolerate any transgression. An example of this tension surfaced in the Facebook group I described at the start of this paper. In these debates and internal tensions lie unresolved legacies that speak to the many directions LGBTQ movements may go, such as revolution or assimilation, and what collective identities to undertake and embrace (Gamson 1995; Ghaziani 2008).

While these tensions and debates are not new, there is insufficient examination of how actors understand and negotiate these tensions in their activist work during moments of rupture and transgression. There is a lack of theory building on the disciplinary practices of prefiguration, particularly how actors interact when errants violate values of anti-oppression in speech or act. This paper builds on scholars like Tominaga to examine the processes that aim to mitigate the reproduction of inequality and oppression in the practice of prefiguring liberated relationships and interactions. An unexamined theme is how actors attempt to expose and resolve transgressions in political practice. In shaping prefigurative politics, I shift attention to disciplinary practices, as these serve to mold the interpersonal behaviors of actors involved in these politics.

### **THEORIZING PREFIGURATIVE DISCIPLINE**

In *The Disciplinary Revolution*, US sociologist Phillip Gorski synthesizes theoretical insights from Weber, Foucault, Elias, and Oestreich to develop an analytic framework that adumbrates how discipline operates from different vantage points: from below and above, from the inside and the outside (2010, p. 32). He distinguishes two levels (individual and social) and two modes (normative and coercive) of discipline. By combining these two distinctions, he specifies four types of discipline: '(1) self-discipline (individual and normative); (2) corrective discipline (individual and coercive); (3) communal discipline (social and normative); and (4) judicial or institutional discipline (social and coercive)' (p. 32). Following Weber, these are conceived as ideal types. There

is no pure type of discipline in practice, and sociologists should expect these types to mix, blur, conjoin, or appear as fragments in their empirical observations.

Gorski's framework provides conceptual tools to examine normative and horizontal discipline that is enforced by peers and the self. Of these four types, self-discipline, corrective discipline, and communal discipline speak to how actors enforce prefigurative politics within movements, as these types seek to transform the self and the community outside of legal institutions like courts and police. This Gorskian conceptual framework helps illuminate techniques of discipline and the various forms it can take within in social movements.

Discipline, both individual and collective, coercive and normative, illuminates a set of practices that movement activists utilize to address problematic acts in etiquette, ideology, and action. For instance, the notion of *infinite responsibility* among anarchist groups entails constantly checking one's own conduct and that of others, creating conditions of vigilance among activists (Day 2004, p. 11; Portwood-Stacer 2013), illustrating self-discipline and communal discipline. In communes, a system of mutual surveillance exists wherein members could accuse someone of deviance and have them appear before a panel for evaluation of their conduct (Kanter 1972, p. 71), illustrating communal with corrective discipline. The experiences of religious groups, political sects, and communes illustrate these typological distinctions in the various sanctions and mechanisms through which actors discipline one another and themselves.

Disciplinary forms at the normative in both individual and collective, as well as coercive at the individual level underpinned the innovative cultural practices of New Left

movements in the US, specifically its focus on personal change. However, one tension in building a reflexive community is between being too permissive and tolerating predators and corrupt leadership or being too stringent and intolerant of transgressions driving away those hurt and who do not survive such intensive environments (Breines 1989; Chen et al 2011).

A reflexive focus on the self and experimentation with new forms of organizing left these efforts vulnerable to sectarian dynamics that created exclusions and vanguard groups of the devout (Dixon 2015; Feenberg 1986, p. 125; Johnson 2003). Some sectarian practices included “trashing” in feminist circles (Freeman 1976), purges of ‘petit-bourgeois’ and ‘lesbian’ dissenters in socialist circles like Marlene Dixon’s Democratic Worker’s Party (Lalich 2009), black power groups gripped by the Marxist-Nationalist debate privileging doctrinal purity over more concrete issues (Johnson 2001), and in some contemporary cases, online harassment and death-threats in queer feminist circles (Cross 2014; Dzodan 2011). Yet at the same time, not challenging cultural codes and problematic expressions of injustice creates a permissive environment in fostering unsafe spaces. Errants can do considerable symbolic and material violence if these issues are not exposed and challenged, such as domestic violence within activist circles (Chen et al 2011). Navigating between the strict, exclusive discipline of the devout and the tolerant permissiveness, sociologists can understand how this tension plays out in the way activists discipline one another and themselves.

Movement groups gripped by a sectarian dynamic often used guilt, shame, and rhetorical ad hominem attacks to purge dissenters and enforce a vanguardist dynamic.

Vanguardism, a tendency that imbued certain oppressed identities with moral authority, manifested in student movements of the 1960s elevating workers to revolutionary status (Feenberg 1986 p. 130). Rhetorical devices to expose exclusions according to identity or status were chief strategies in New Left politics to challenge assumed conventional hierarchies in the distribution of attention and recognition. However, these same rhetorical devices could be used to enforce a sectarian turn in these kinds of activist interactions by silencing and expelling others for choices in their private life such as dating or associating with outsiders (p. 130).

This dynamic created a chilling effect in queer feminist circles that drove out those who did not survive the high-stakes psychic struggle (Feenberg 1986, p. 131) and rewarded those skillful in manipulating these rhetorical means as ‘divas’, ‘fierce’, and ‘brave’ (Cross 2014; Flores 2014). These dynamics shaped discipline as coercive and punitive with no tolerance for dialogue or opportunity for transformation for anyone. For activists like Deborah, dynamics like these, in what she labels ‘call-out culture’ have driven people away from activist communities, as she states: ‘I’ve had black people, trans people, brown people, queer people come up to me and say “Yo, I don’t feel safe in community with this clique of people who are like the Call-out Masters”’. These experiences and testimonies of activists being harassed online and purged from groups have shaped conversations on social media in the US and in activist blogospheres (Dzodan 2011; Cross 2015; Flores 2014; Lee 2017; Smith 2013; Tran 2013).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Austin, Texas presents a key case to illustrate the ways activists interact in the process of calling out transgressions. Austin has been a site of emerging counter-cultural politics, from the Christian existential movements of the early 1960s seeking authenticity in a managerial capitalist society, to the various student, black power, anti-nuclear, labor, socialist, and feminist movements in the period of New Left organizing (Benford 2002; Rossinow 1998; Snow et al 1986). Austin had the second largest chapter of SDS in the US and was one hub of major New Left political and intellectual activity, from its underground newspaper *The Rag* to the archives of C. Wright Mills (Rossinow 1998), and to the various marches by black and chicano movement activists (Krochmal 2016). These legacies of New Left activism inform practices and tactics for contemporary cohorts living in a deeply conservative state dominated by corporate and Christian fundamentalist politics.

The city's growing queer activist networks, embedded in these legacies of New Left activism, provide a case to examine how activists understand and navigate internal tensions in their anti-oppression politics. I conducted 24 in-depth interviews with queer activists and allies in Austin, TX and three with activists from Seattle, WA and Oakland, CA. These interviewees' identities and roles span a wide range of political activity (see Table 1). I include the out-of-state interviews because their experiences with call-outs and 'call out culture' speak to a nation-wide issue. Also, the experiences activists have with various blogs and electronic accounts illustrate that these disciplinary practices



operate in online spaces such as Tumblr, Facebook, and Twitter, extending their geographical scope well beyond the local politics of an any particular city or region.

My interview-based Gorskian analysis presents textured ways respondents use, understand, and experience forms of discipline in their activism. Via testimonies, respondents assume their life as a narrative whole to illustrate how they use cultural and social devices in their everyday life (Swidler 2001, p. 222). Interviews also provide analysts with mental categories that frame the meanings respondents attach to these practices (Young 2006, p. 168), and they provide glimpses into locales that I could not readily access in real time and space. Departing from Gorski's focus on institutional forms of discipline, I conceptualize call-outs as a disciplinary process that can provide opportunities for both errants and challengers alike to create dialogue, making this disciplinary tactic negotiable and contingent.

#### **CALL-OUTS: A NEGOTIATED DISCIPLINARY PROCESS**

As respondents in my interview sample see it, call-outs are a rhetorical tactic to expose any form of oppression in everyday life, be it in etiquette, in speech, in action, or procedure and hold errants accountable with public pressure. Building on the New Left legacy of raising consciousness to prefigure the ideals of liberation within activism, they see call-outs as attempts to correct transgressions of movement ideals within the movement. Inés, a local young activist in Austin involved in women's reproductive justice and affordable housing , describes the practice as demanding vigilance of the self

and of others. Inside a coffee shop, Inés shares with me the dangers of replicating racist, transphobic, and sexist tendencies in activist spaces:

People aren't willing to recognize that the way they are behaving are replicating systems of oppression. It's something that I think requires a lot of *vigilance* even when we try and create alternatives to what we experience in the everyday world (emphasis my own).

This vigilance is a form of intensive discipline as it carries a normative component of monitoring the behavior of oneself and of others for rules and principles of social justice that are affirmed and voluntarily accepted by fellow activists.

Calling out is a tool of normative discipline used among peers and by leadership. Those who deploy it seek alterations in social practices such as etiquette, procedure, language, and relationship dynamics that align with their beliefs in prefiguring a better world. In keeping with the spirit of New Left prefiguration, queer activists today continue to bring attention to how oppression is imbricated in the everyday life activism. This justifies consciousness-raising within movement groups to identify problematic dynamics such as how much space actors of privileged identities occupy when talking, who is excluded in meetings, and the usage of oppressive language. To monitor these dynamics requires devices such as call-outs to challenge and address transgressions, whether accidental or not, to principles.

Some respondents, aware of critical debates surrounding 'call-out culture' opt to use the term '*calling-in*' (Tran 2013), a gentler intervention with the intent to create dialogue and educate errants and not to simply dispose of them. To Jean, a 54-year-old

educator active in various queer organizations in Austin, calling-out ‘usually stops a conversation and it's usually about putting somebody on the defensive, where I think “calling-in” invites them to a conversation’. Inés along with eight other respondents in my sample, also drew this distinction between calling-in and calling-out. This suggests a wide effort within queer activism to make sense of how to discipline errants without the sectarian dynamics of moralizing, shaming, and excluding the impure from the truly radical.

Call-outs can exist in various arenas and in different ways within those arenas: public comments on social media, public addresses, , public disruptions of events, in private conversations, flyers, talk-backs at events, and open letters. These varieties all seek to expose transgressions and force errants to be accountable, via public pressure and exposure.

Michelle, a 34-year-old activist from Seattle during our interview said that call-outs must be done in public to mend the hurt that transgressions may cause others around them: ‘People are being impacted by dynamics like misogyny, so they need to see that somebody is doing something for them to ensure their safety in the [public] space.’

What makes call-outs an interactive and negotiated form of discipline is that errants can respond to being called out if they can overcome the emotions of embarrassment, shock, and confusion. These responses can escalate or reduce tensions during a call-out, which shapes how much room for dialogue there can be between challengers and errants.

Jade, a 26-year-old activist from Dallas, relates that call-outs are successful if the person apologizes and acknowledges their mistakes; however, she also stated that they are not successful when the process escalates into arguments, and third parties interfere. There is an element of public exposure inherent in all call-outs, which to recipients can be jarring if they are not prepared. Some immediate reactions include confusion, shock, and indignation. How errants respond after these emotional reactions can shape the extent of dialogue that errants and challengers have in the process.

Deborah, the organizer from the Facebook dispute during our conversation on calling out, emphasizes the importance of understanding that nobody is perfect in their politics and of meeting errants where they are in their political consciousness. 'I feel that's really important in terms of relating to someone, the fact that you're not perfect because that helps to break down barriers that are going to come in that act of calling out'. As examples of these barriers, Deborah mentions defensiveness, shock, belligerence, and embarrassment for being exposed to a public.

In call-outs, key factors such as the format (town halls, online comments, etc.), response from errants, delivery from accusers (tone, style) and the extent of transgression (minor to egregious) shape various outcomes of this negotiated disciplinary process. In what follows, I examine how errants react and respond to being called-out, as these responses help shape the capacity for dialogue and negotiation in this form of normative discipline. In particular, I examine three key ways errants respond, from belligerence to passive acceptance to informed dispute. Indeed, errants can work for redemption from challengers and improve their politics or be expelled by them and third parties with no

chance for learning, or dispute the process of calling-out challenging it as unjustified. These responses provide snapshots of a dynamic and contingent disciplinary practice that actors can use to address transgressions in etiquette, act, or speech.

### ***Mea Culpa: Passive Acceptance***

One key way respondents in my sample report reacting to being called out is via passive acceptance, apologetics, and recognition of their mistakes. Some, via embarrassment, can earn grace from the person calling them out. Through this response, errants can de-escalate tensions and not let the process grow into anything bigger than a reminder, a passive scold.

Esteban, a 55-year-old activist who helped found a queer people of color organization in Austin shares one instance when he misgendered a fellow activist, Sophie, by accident. Sitting on a couch in his living room, Esteban related a moment at a dinner for a reproductive justice organization when he mistakenly referred to Sophie as ‘he’ and the following unfolded:

My friend, the white flamboyant friend, called me out and then Sophie chimed in. They didn't attack me but *they pointed it out*, and he said-she said something like “what is it, that I just don't pass?” but I immediately said “I'm so sorry, I should know better I'm sorry”, and *my face got so red* that she-he-she reached out and said “that's okay”. I felt the beads of sweat just coming down because here I am, I'm fifty-five and *I've been through all this and I still didn't get it right* you know

what I'm saying? So that was a little bit of a learning experience I hope I don't do that too often again (Emphasis my own)

Through the apology, and explicit acknowledgement to know better, Esteban managed to reduce any more tensions and recognized the mistake in addressing Sophie, which is part of modeling relationships of recognition and inclusion. Despite stumbling with the appropriate pronouns in our interview, Esteban learned his lesson, as the beads of sweat demonstrated that evening. Via the embarrassed red face, Esteban earned grace from Sophie when she reached out to Esteban said 'that's okay' after the embarrassed apology.

While earning grace, sympathy, and a welcoming opportunity for redemption is one way to correct for transgressions in etiquette, these are not guaranteed. Call-outs do not have to be delivered kindly, even for breaches of etiquette and behavior, as it happened to Cynthia, a 20-year-old activist playwright in Austin. Cynthia shares when she was writing dialogue for a play during a theater workshop, one of the coordinators noted Cynthia wrote 'are you crazy?' and said: 'can you change that? It's ableist'. Cynthia responded with shock, 'oh! Got it!' In retrospect Cynthia shares 'the only reason it didn't blow up into something more is because I have that vocabulary as a member of the queer community who is more mindful about words and their weight.' When navigating queer spaces, Cynthia says that 'I generally keep my mouth shut because I don't want someone to yell at me or dismiss me.' To prevent any tensions from escalating, Cynthia passively accepts many comments with little questioning. She also accepts the blunt delivery to disciplining her language, even after she expressed concerns

with the way call-outs are unhelpful when delivered bluntly with no opportunity for dialogue.

Through these responses of passive acceptance, errants can earn a second chance and carry with them a vivid memory of how they erred, even if being called out was an uncomfortable process, as the embarrassment of Esteban illustrates. Passive acceptance illustrates how this form of normative discipline shapes the behavior of participants in addressing one another, showing that participants imbue the way they speak to and treat one another with political meaning, and view etiquette as something to improve in order to prefigure norms of equitable engagement (Breines 1989, p. 48). Passive acceptance is one way for respondents to de-escalate tensions which otherwise can lead to more punitive measures. However, those who respond defensively can make the situation tense and earn stringent responses.

### **Disputing Call-outs: Belligerence**

Responding to call-outs with belligerence can escalate tensions and often end with no opportunity for dialogue, and in some cases, severing bonds with challengers and resulting in expulsion from their networks and groups. Errants can lose capacity for dialogue when they respond with belligerence and defensiveness to the public pressure of being exposed for problematic acts. To illustrate, Jean and three respondents attended a public meeting organized by local Latina activists at an Austin theater venue, where they

witnessed a call-out of a local drag troupe of mostly white artists for performing a Chola<sup>48</sup> pageant days earlier at a different venue. Jean recounts:

Two hundred people showed up, it was awesome. Now, if I'm a white man who does drag and I'm in a town hall meeting and a woman of color stands up and lets you have it, is that calling out or is that her telling the truth to you? Now the white man probably thinks he is being called out, and the truth is he just got his blinders tweaked, right? Could they [the woman of color] have done it differently? Yes. Should they have done it differently? No! I think in activist spaces, when do we get to be real? like really be real and talk about the pain that we're having and not sugar coat it.

A logic of collective pain fuels these forms of calling out that seek to get errants to acknowledge their wrongs, particularly in cases of egregious transgressions like sexual harassment and racist minstrelsy. Deborah shares that one of the troupe members, in response to being called-out for racism said, 'This [town hall] is a witch hunt!', which drew more condemnation from attendees like Deborah's friend, Lorena. Deborah recounts her former friend's response:

One of my friends said "no, fuck this! Something is wrong with people putting up Chola pageants". A friend of mine, a Chicana woman wrote this open letter stating, "this is why I'm not supporting this, this isn't cool and just because one or two of you white Latinos happen to identify as Hispanic or you happen to have

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<sup>48</sup> Chola refers to a Latina urban aesthetic in a US context.



one Chicana person who supports you and does burlesque at your show doesn't make it okay for you to put on a fucking Chola pageant with no concept of what violence it's inflicted on this subset of people”.

The indignant response by the troupe members increased tensions as the comments by audience members and this open letter attest, and the troupe lost any opportunity for dialogue and earned the group's collective ire as a result.

Responding with belligerence diminishes the chances of dialogue and increases likelihood of expulsion. In these cases, the disciplinary process of calling out leads to a purgative outcome, removing errants as unwilling to learn and transform their own political understandings. To Jean and Michelle, calling-out becomes necessary to sustain the safety and wellbeing of the groups harmed. Even if it hurts errants, respondents view these moments as bearing witness to injustice and forcing errants to own up to their transgressions or face expulsion for their refusal. For the Austin drag troupe, this dynamic led to an outcome of condemnation and expulsion as the troupe lost support from local communities, and with little opportunity for learning, due to their refusal and inability to overcome reactions of shock and indignation. Passive acceptance is not the only alternative, however. Those who dispute a call out can work through heated reactions to establish dialogue and attempt to reach a resolution.

### **Disputing Call-outs: Dialogic Approach**

Respondents who can overcome reactions like embarrassment and indignation can transform some of the collective pressure into an opportunity for dialogue. Michelle, in

our interview adds that call-outs are not for everyone to use, as it takes skill in conflict resolution to control the process. To her, it is a difficult skill to have composure when responding to call-outs but it is one that respondents can develop to craft thoughtful responses and expand dialogue for both participants. For Michelle, online interactions allow for this element, as it gives respondents more time to overcome the shock and confusion than in face-to-face interactions.

Dash, a 21-year-old activist involved in socialist and police brutality activism shares an instance when he responded to being called-out for tokenizing women in a meeting of the Socialist Collective Action. The call out came after he suggested to the group that they have female comrades to table with them for the organization. He clarifies:

They thought I said it's important to have women on the table so that other women will come and talk to the Socialist Collective Action. If that's what I was saying then that was a legitimate call-out, but it wasn't what I was saying, I was just relaying the concerns which I thought were legitimate when talking to Rebecca [female comrade] about tabling as a way for our female comrades to develop as activists.

After that misunderstanding, Dash learned to criticize call-outs if they are not substantiated, as it happened when he and Patricia, a black activist, got called out for advocating on behalf of her murdered brother during a blacklivesmatter event in Austin in 2015.

We were there with Patricia, Terry's [killed by local police] sister, to tell people what happened to him and to get some signatures for a petition. Someone said, “this is a march about black women, why are you trying to talk about what happened to this black man?” and in that case I think it's legitimate to criticize that call-out. Patricia was there, and she was one of the people that was going around with the petitions. Telling a black woman not to advocate on behalf of her brother is incredibly contradictory.

Dash and Patricia told the person about the case which changed the accuser's reaction from indignation to apology. Dash, along with Michelle, Jade, and nine other respondents in my sample advocate for creating dialogue around call-outs to resolve tensions. For them, call-outs can be used as a reflexive tool, as an opportunity to make “errants” understand their errors and transform their behavior and for challengers to reflect on their public challenges. For Dash, call-outs are an important means to correct for youthful ignorance, as he has been rightly called out for past bigoted comments. In effect, these disciplinary efforts aim to socialize activists into the norms of the spaces they navigate. While errants may attempt to control the process and create more dialogue for clarification, or to dispute a call-out, these attempts fail when dealing with sectarian dynamics like vanguardism, particularly when challengers deliver call-outs with no room for dialogue, and errants cannot steer the outcome.

### **Monologic Call-outs: Sectarian Dynamics**

When faced with sectarian dynamics like vanguardism, doctrinal purity, or power plays, targets of call-outs can attempt to establish dialogue but to no avail. Call-outs have the capacity to end relationships when used to berate and punish and shut-down space for dialogue and reflection. Attempts to create dialogue in moments of transgression can be met with intransigence, as happened in the Facebook group discussed above. When Deborah and other organizers were asking for concrete solutions, there was little engagement from Lorena's supporters. Deborah recounts:

A number of people asked, not to the person specifically but even to her friends, "how could we have made this better? What does inclusivity look like to you?" and there was no acknowledgment of those questions even, there was no engagement beyond the berating. "If you can't see how you've fucked, up we're not gonna tell you how, and you can't ask us for direction because that's tokenizing."

Oscar, one of Lorena's close friends, shared during our interview that Lorena felt indignant and hurt that they treated her like a token, citing that trans women get excluded from so much activism. Critics of call-outs often end up scapegoating women like Lorena for being too rowdy and angry (Cross 2015). However, the intransigence to respond to the organizers' call for dialogue illustrates a militant vanguardist discipline that does not tolerate any transgressions against identities or tone, regardless of the identity of the people engaging in the call-outs, as allies like Oscar also participated in the Facebook arguments.

Despite attempts to establish dialogue, or reach a compromise, call-outs under vanguardist dynamics reflect a very harsh discipline that sunder relationships and can lead to separatist dynamics, and a fragmentation of movement networks and organizations. Cynthia speaks to this sentiment when she relates: ‘I feel a lot of the members of the queer community are rather separatist.’ The Facebook group, which attempted to bring women activists across the region fragmented and shut down after the wave of call-outs from Lorena’s supporters. These forms of discipline, which Cynthia has passively accepted in most instances, create a strict and tense dynamic for actors in these spaces and sometimes end up pushing them to leave altogether. These dynamics replicate similar sectarian tendencies in earlier movements that actors were poorly equipped to confront, (Feenberg 1986; Johnson 2001; Lalich 2009; Mansbridge 1986) shifting the community/sect tension in all prefigurative discipline towards a distinctly punishing and purging purpose.

#### **NEGOTIATING TENSIONS: REFLEXIVITY AND DISPOSABILITY**

Deborah, in the outside patio of an East Austin coffee shop, shares in retrospect how ‘call-out culture’ has alienated fellow activists and ended ties with friends: ‘We need to figure out what we’re willing to dispose of people for. What mistake is mistake enough to completely crush or dismiss someone over?’ Through disciplinary practices such as the call-out, this paper illustrates how this generation of activists is attempting to address a tension that past generations wrestled with or were poorly equipped to understand and overcome. That is, between being too lenient and allowing violence and bigotry to

continue unchallenged within activist spaces or being too stringent and attacking transgression and transgressors in the name of purity leading to sectarianism.

How actors make and respond to call-outs, and the different dynamics that flow from these interactive processes show that the community/sect tension is dynamic and contingent in the process of disciplining errants for transgressions. However, reaching a reflexive outcome of change is a difficult pathway as it requires all actors to create and sustain dialogue, and a degree of curiosity and humility from errants and challengers, as Dash attempted in responding to call-outs in his work. Despite these difficulties, errants can attempt to create dialogue to address various dynamics, but how challengers using these call-outs respond to these attempts, and how third parties participate, as it happened in the Facebook group, can render these attempts futile.

Informed by debates among social justice activists both online and in person about ‘call-out culture,’ the queer activists I interviewed are actively struggling to negotiate tensions between inclusion or exclusion in moments of movement transgressions, moments when acts of speech, etiquette, or violence disrupt the normative assumptions of their prefigurative politics. For these activists, call-outs are a rhetorical tactic to resolve problems and transgressions in their groups and serve to enforce a normative discipline among its participants. In showing how these queer activists and their allies interact in the process of a call-out, social movement scholars can learn how activists navigate the internal tension between building an inclusive community or turning to sectarian exclusion. That is, navigating an inclusive community that can be too permissive and tolerant, such as sexual predators in sexual liberation circles of SDS

(Evans 1980; Gitlin 1987) or encountering sectarian dynamics that drive out the impure and do tests of moral hygiene, which historically gripped women's liberation, black power, new communist movements, and queer activist spaces (Cross 2014; Feenberg 1985; Flores 2013; Freeman 1976; Johnson 2003; Kauffmann 1990; Patai 1992; Mansbridge 2009; Reed Jr 2001).

Rhetorical practices like the call-out adumbrate a disciplinary dimension in prefigurative politics where their enforcement makes internal tensions and potential schisms contingent and dynamic. How actors discipline one another provide insights to how internal tensions of community and sect are negotiated, illustrating that actors who engage in prefiguration navigate a fragile line on how to restore justice to people affected, without disposing of errants. Nevertheless, disciplinary processes that aim to transform errants and raise their consciousness in a way that is dialogic are difficult to sustain, as human elements like emotions and reactions are also part of the process, providing practical dilemmas in making a beloved community and another world possible.

Table 1: Community Respondents

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Sexuality</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Location</b>
Esteban	Male	Latino	Gay	Board member	Austin, TX
Abraham	Male	Black	Gay	Activist	Austin, TX
Canute	Male	White	Straight	Ally, activist	Austin, TX
Dash	Male	Indian	Straight	Ally, activist	Austin, TX
Ines	Female	Latina	Straight	Board Member	Austin, TX
Jude	Female	Black	Lesbian	Organizer	Austin, TX
Bert	Male	Black	Gay	Activist Blogger	Dallas, TX
Daniel	Male	Mixed	Queer	Blogger	Austin, TX
Tino	FTM	chicano	Queer	Artist	Oakland, CA
Mark	Male	White	Bisexual	Religious activist	Lakeway, TX
Daisy	Female	White	Queer	Organizer	Oakland, CA
Jean	Genderqueer	White	Queer	Activist, educator	Austin, TX
Matt	Male	White	Straight	Activist, ally	Austin, TX
Jessie	Male	Latino	Gay	Board Member, Advocate	Austin, TX
Felipe	Male	Latino	Gay	State Worker	San Antonio, TX
Sheila	Female	Black	Bisexual	Poet, Activist	Dallas, TX
Oscar	Male-questioning	Chicano	Queer	Activist, Blogger	Austin, TX
Paul	Male	Black	Gay	Activist, Board member	Austin, TX
Cynthia	Female	Black	Bisexual	Activist, playwright	Austin, TX
Jess	Female	Mixed	Bisexual	Activist	Dallas, TX
Roger	Male	Black	Gay	Playwright, Organizer	Dallas, TX
Jade	Female	Black	Bisexual	Activist	Dallas, TX



Table 1 (Continued)

Deborah	Female	Latina	Queer	Organizer	Austin, TX
Michelle	MTF	Multiracial	Queer	Activist, Organizer	Seattle, WA
Hector	Male	Latino	Straight	Activist	Austin, TX
Henry	Male	White	Straight	Activist	Austin, TX
Patricia	Female	Latina	Straight	Activist	Austin, TX

Figure 1: New Left Disciplinary Tensions

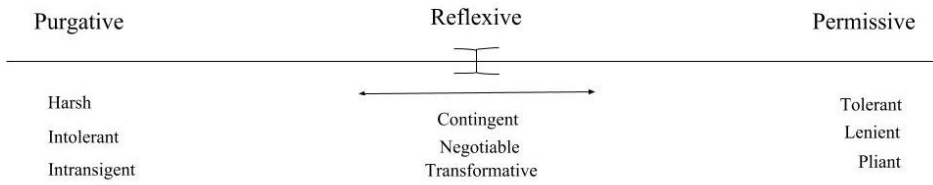


Figure 2: Call-out Formats

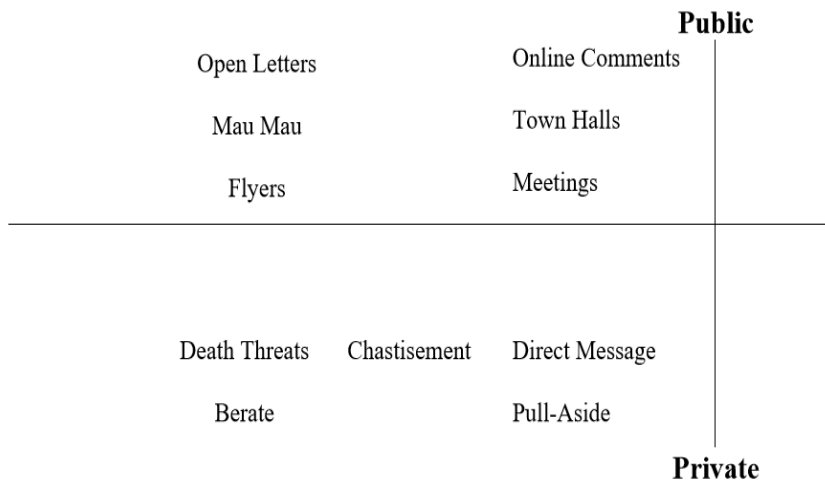
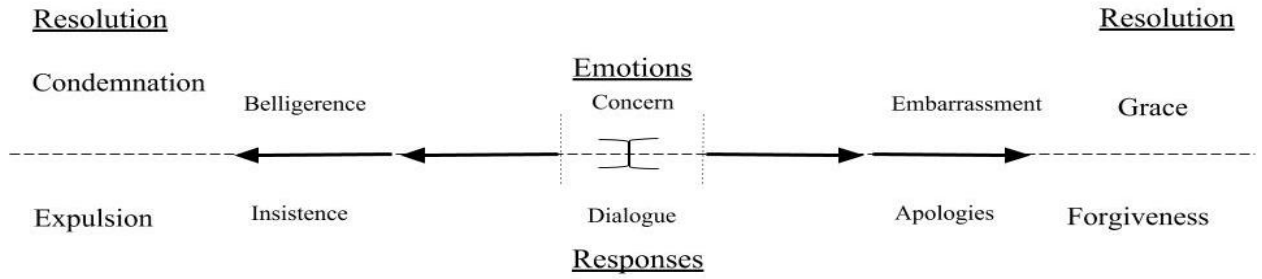


Figure 3: Errant Reactions and Outcomes



## **Chapter 4: Transparency and Image-Management: Organizing and Accountability in Public Sector Unions in Texas**

### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper asks, how do union members and leaders understand and practice the principles of organizing? In exploring the meaning and method of organizing, how do they understand accountability between leaders and members? In this chapter, I argue that accountability is a relational tension where actors navigate between two moral pulls: on the one hand, responsibility towards leadership; and on another, responsibility towards members. I draw on Nancy Baym's concept of relational labor, as well as Mel Dubnik's framework of accountability to name this tension relational accountability. That is, accountability is not only relational, but an integral part of organizing and just like organizing, is a social relationship. In the context of the labor movement, with public sector unions, the moral pull to leadership and members manifests as a tension between transparency and image management. Drawing on in-depth interviews with labor organizers and activist in two public sector unions, I explore the practical tension between calling for transparency and managing public image. Integrity and being a good employee helps protect leadership and union members from anti-union propaganda and helps manage their image in a hostile political environment. The responsibility is on members to the leadership to sustain this relational dynamic. Transparency places responsibility on the leadership to respond to rank-and-file members to account for their decisions and actions. By exploring the relational dimensions of accountability, this paper explores how members and organizers in public sector unions navigate the work they do and attempt to keep their unions strong in a hostile political environment*

### **LEADERSHIP AND RANK-AND-FILE: A TENSE RELATIONSHIP**

A central concern shared by labor scholars, activists, organizers, and supporters centers the tense relationship between the rank and file membership and the leadership of unions. In the recorded histories of leadership suppression of rank and file insurgency, this internal tension has been an animating and contentious principle among labor movement scholars and reporters (Early 2011; Moody 1998). One instance of this tension is the purging of democratically elected leadership in a Los Angeles Service Employees International Union (SEIU) local 399 by SEIU top leadership during the 1990s (Tait

2005, p. 200). In response to corrupt nepotism and the “old-boy network”, Mexican, black, and white custodial workers formed the Multiracial Alliance to run against existing officers and won but the local president denied the results. Despite hunger strikes outside SEIU’s headquarters, the international union leadership placed the Los Angeles local under trusteeship, thus voiding the election, and replaced the worker-based Multiracial Alliance coalition with its own appointed staffers loyal to the SEIU president (Tait 2005, p. 200). Kim Moody refers to this tension when he refers to the leadership stratum in labor organizations like the AFL-CIO as divided from the rank-and-file by a *polyester ceiling* (Moody 1998). That is, a bureaucratic class of consultants, researchers and lobbyists mingling with union leadership create a barrier that excludes rank and file members from participating in key decisions. In some cases, attempts from rank and file members, such as the insurgencies of the 1970s across various sectors, and attempts for democratic reform have been met with violent repression (Brenner, Brenner & Winslow 2020). Even Cesar Chavez at one point engaged in repressive purges of rank and file members and overlooked beatings of key oppositional leaders like Cleofas Guzman within his union (Bardacke 2011, p. 699; Ganz 2009; Early 2011, p. 42-43).

These incidents inform an ongoing debate on how to organize unions, and how styles of organizing shape the way leaders and members relate within unions. Labor organizers and scholars like Jane McAleavey have made a distinction between CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) style of organizing, that was prominent in the 1930s and which led to major victories for workers in the Great Depression, and the New

Labor style of organizing inspired by the philosophy of Saul Alinsky that shapes the direction of unions like SEIU and UNITE-HERE (McAlavey 2017, p. 40-41).

Kim Moody distinguishes between social unionism and business unionism, with the former forging ties in with working-class communities and supporting their struggles and the latter forging ties with management and enforcing labor contracts (Moody 1998). There is of course a very real and ugly side to the opposition to rank and file insurgencies, with a long history of employers and union leadership using violence, death, and intimidation to put them down. These tensions continue to animate movements to organize unions to this day.

While siding with rank and file over oligarchic leaders appears the obvious virtuous choice, Laura, a member in leadership at Texas State Employees Union, shared with me during our interview a story that complicates this relationship of accountability. Laura described an incident in the union during the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s. As the union was working to organize prison guards in state penitentiaries, a group of guards acted to tattoo HIV positive prisoners with HIV on their foreheads. Some guards in the union agreed with this action, and union leadership was forced to take an official position. Union leaders Eliseo Medina and Danny Fetonte contacted the San Francisco Gay Rights Coalition to bring speakers to not only educate guards but to forcefully stand against stigmatizing inmates. As word of leadership's actions got back to locals, it was distorted for some as a message that the union was encouraging homosexuality and Danny Fetonte had to go talk to the locals to clarify the position leadership was taking. Tim, an organizer of the union and Laura's husband, accompanied Danny as his

bodyguard to these meetings because there was a history of irate members of locals on oppositional voices. As Laura recalled, half of the attendees walked out of the meeting and the other half stayed to listen to Danny. The union lost considerable membership as a result of the incident.

While sharing this story, Laura asked: “So if you say: ‘No, we’re not going to support this. As a matter of fact we’re going to do everything as a union to fight against this’, are you first of all denying the power of the rank-and-file? Second of all are you going to lose those members if you come out with that stand on the issues?” Laura’s questions encapsulate the tension between how leadership and rank and file relate and raise key problems about how to think about this relationship and who and what both parties are responsible to. Under what conditions can and should leadership override rank and file decisions? Given particular struggles against homophobia, sexism and racism, do we need to rethink the relationship of accountability between union leadership and the rank and file? Was the decision to stand against the prison guards top-down, and ergo repressive?

I highlight these tensions to illustrate how in efforts to reform unions along democratic lines, the relationship between members and leadership can help scholars conceptualize how relationships are structured in unions, and how accountability is also structured as a result. My guiding research questions to explore these tensions are: How do union members and leaders understand organizing? And in exploring the practice of organizing, how do they understand accountability between leaders and members? Examining these questions can help scholars understand how the organizing styles of

unionism shape these relationships and how actors conceive of accountability in their practice. I center the role of relationships and the relational labor that goes into these organizing endeavors to explore the dynamic tensions in hierarchical organizations like unions, especially in hostile political environments that make it even more difficult to organize and act collectively.

By drawing on Nancy Baym's concept of relational labor (Baym 2015), as well as Mel Dubnik's (2012) framework of accountability, I argue that accountability is a relational tension where actors navigate between two moral pulls: on the one hand, responsibility towards leadership; and the other, responsibility towards members. I term this tension *relational accountability*. That is, accountability is not only relational, but also an integral part of organizing and just like organizing, it is a social relationship. In the context of the labor movement, public sector unions provide an empirical case to explore this tension. Actors navigate relational accountability as practices of transparency and image management, both in tension with each other. This tension plays out in various debates, actions, campaigns, caucuses, and meetings.

I draw on in-depth interviews with members and leaders of public sector unions to illustrate a key point. I show how union organizers navigate between, on the one hand, calling for transparency and ensuring leaders are responsible to the members, and on the other hand, image-management, where decisions are about protecting the reputation of the union in a hostile environment of anti-union propaganda. That is, members are responsible to the leadership.



I draw on the concept of relational labor to illustrate the logistics and modes of communication behind how union members organize, and to shed light how the practice of organizing entails weaving and coordinating relationships. I also draw on Mel Dubnik's conceptual framework on accountability to show the moral pulls across various institutional settings. For Dubnik, accountability is a social relationship because there is a relevant other involved, and as such there is a moral pull, a sense of responsibility to, in these relationships.

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE: ORGANIZING IN COMMUNITY**

In the sections to follow, I review the literature on social movements with attention to leadership and how they have treated organizing. I then shift to the labor studies literature by highlighting the roles of organizing, its historical trajectories, and the key debate between leadership and rank and file. In bringing these two literatures together, I argue that neither have fully explored the relational aspect of organizing. To address this neglect, I articulate my theoretical synthesis of relational labor and accountability to illuminate a hidden yet unrecognized aspect of what makes social movements in community and labor come about.

Social movement studies regularly rehearse and heavily cite a broad and well explored stream of research that examines the external factors driving mobilization and course of movements. These externalist and structuralist approaches have generated literature that I will not review here. More recently, the social movements literature, across sociology and political science, has seen a growing stream of research that

examines the internal factors of movement formation and mobilization (Gamson 1995; Ghaziani 2008; Gould 2009; Goodwin 1997; Goodwin & Jasper 1999). Of particular interest for this study is the literature that examines the lineage and growth of organizing, in both community-based and labor movements. In a brief essay for *Social Policy*, Marshall Ganz (2002) defines organizing as the capacity for organizers to weave relationships, identify leaders, sustain commitment, and build leadership (p. 1-17). In its most basic sense, organizing consists of identifying existing relationships to develop leaders in communities and coordinate these relationships and resources to collectively act in response to problems and indignities.

Some studies trace the sources of organizing in the US to a base in institutions like churches that can incubate social movements, with organizing going as far back as 1776 (Skocpol, Ganz, Munson 2000). That is, institution-based organizing refers to organizing that taps into the routine relationships, rules, and procedures that already exist in institutions like the workplace, churches, state agencies to build coordinated actions. From that insight, the key thesis that institution-based organizing can create committed leaders and members has inspired studies that bring leadership and organizations as a key explanation for why movement organizations mobilize people (Andrews, Ganz, Baggetta, Han, & Chaeyoon 2010; Baggetta, Han, and Andrews 2013; Han 2014). This stream of literature places an emphasis on the role of leadership in shaping the direction of organizing. Marshall Ganz is a prominent advocate of this thesis (Ganz 2009; Ganz & McKenna 2018).

Hahrie Han builds on the premise adding that while leadership matters, organizations create leaders and activists through two key distinct modes of engagement. First, there is mobilizing activism where organizers make phone calls, sign members up, attend meetings, or contact elected representatives, that is, a transactional approach to activism (p. 95). The second mode seeks “transformational outcomes that focus on the ways that collective action changes the affects, outlooks, and other orientations of individual and groups” (p. 96). Jennifer Cossyleon (2018) has empirically demonstrated that transformational activism, when done in the context of faith-based organizing, helped alter the outlook of black and Latina women as they focused on family issues like providing childcare and confronting racist schooling practices (p. 2). This form of transformational activism taught black and Latina women to overcome fear, vulnerability, and despair, and stick up for themselves through collective action (p. 11).

Within the institution-based organizing literature, there are studies that document the influence of the Chicago-based community organizing developed by Saul D. Alinsky and popularized texts like *Rules for Radicals* and *Reveille for Radicals*. Alinsky’s style of organizing emphasized appealing to people’s self-interest as opposed to any ideology and elevated the organizer as the key agent of social change (Bardacke 2010, p. 70). With a focus on non-ideological and single-issue campaigns, the goal of Alinsky’s organizing campaigns was to mobilize poor and racial minorities to engage with political institutions using pressure tactics in order to resolve local and focused problems (Engel 2002). Yet, undergirding this pragmatic approach was a theory that (unwittingly) funneled organizing into pluralist interest-group politics and, in some cases, created a leadership class that

failed to challenge the same pluralist system that created the problems that organizing campaigns sought to change (Marquez 1990, p. 366)

Alinsky's work, developed into a vast network and infrastructure of institutions that trained organizers across various fields of community and labor activism (Engel 2002; Fulton & Wood 2012; Hart 2001; McAlavey 2015; Osterman 2006). The influence of Alinskyite organizing has influenced various social movements in the United States. Starting in Chicago with organizing the Back of the Yards neighborhood to respond to police violence and juvenile delinquency (Engel 2002, p. 60). Alinsky's teachings and disciples spread nationally shaping the farmworkers movements in California and Texas (Bardacke 2010; Ganz 2009), as well as the Chicano movement across the US southwest (Montejano 2010; Navarro 1995).

Alinsky's influence has also extended into religious activism inspiring the growth of organizing among liberal Protestants and Catholics, and even within Muslim communities (Engel 1998; Fulton 2018; Swarts 2008; Wood and Warren 2002). Through the growth of organizing schools and foundations like the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), and the Midwest Academy, Alinsky's style of pragmatic and non-ideological activism became institutionalized in the area of community politics; however, over the decades it faced significant criticisms for encouraging top-down leadership that suppressed dissent, and projected within organizing (McAlavey 2015; Sen 2003). In Texas, Alinskyism has become a hegemonic style of community activism through the Mexican American farmworkers movements (Bardacke 2010), the Chicano movement (Marquez 1990; Navarro 1995), and a second-generation of Alinsky trained IAF and

Interfaith-Alliance organizers like Imelda Munoz and Ernie Cortes (Rogers 1990). This legacy continued long after Saul's death in 1972 and has not only become a dominant style of organizing in community politics, but also in labor politics.

An important takeaway from Han and Cossyleon research is that how one organizes and the style of organizing one engages in matters in how leaders and members relate to one another. We have learned a lot from this literature about the central role of organizing in movement dynamics, but I argue that it does not pay sufficient attention to the practical tensions activists and organizers face in their craft. It leaves Ganz's insights of the relational dimensions of organizing under-theorized, which I seek to develop in this paper.

### **Organizing in Labor**

As Joseph Luders notes, while community organizing has received growing attention in social movements literature, the labor movement and its traditions of organizing have been largely ignored by social movement scholars (Luders 2010). Reflecting what Ira Katznelson identified as the separation of community from labor in the ways Americans think about class (Katznelson 1981), there has been a separation between community movements and the labor movement, as if they exist on entirely separate fields with no relation to one another. Jane McAleavey is one recent scholar that takes the labor movement seriously as part of a social movement.

Labor organizing, compared to community organizing, has until recently been something of a secret history (Luebke & Luff 2003). Labor organizing has often met

repression and in some instances violence from employers and state actors. As a result, labor organizers have had to be crafty and cunning in how they organize workers. Luebke and Luff examine key organizing texts such as William Z. Foster's *Organizing Methods in the Steel Industry*, stories of mine workers in the Appalachian south, and memoirs of United Rubber Workers and Textile Workers Union organizers. As an example, they illustrate the use of passive and active organizers among United Mine Workers to weed out anti-union workers on the mines (p. 425). The passive organizer would act against the idea of a union and cozy up to bosses. While the active organizer would sign up members, the passive organizer would keep the members' identity secret and be informed of anti-union workers. The passive organizer would then tell the boss that the anti-union worker was pro-union, thus firing the worker. This cunning tactic and the overall organizing with miners unfortunately led to the Ludlow Massacre in 1913 orchestrated by the employers (p. 425). Luebke and Luff make a call for further historical documentation of the various strategies of organizing across industries.

Labor historians and sociologists have documented the various sit-in strikes and the rank and file insurgencies of workers against not only bosses but also against union leadership during repressive conditions of the Great Depression and in the 1970s (Brenner, Brenner & Winslow 2010; Piven & Cloward 1979). Notable examples are the less known rank and file insurgencies against Jimmy Hoffa and the mob-tied Teamsters that films like *The Irishman* erase out of the history (La Botz 2010), as well as the mineworkers insurrection in Kentucky that was organized by widows and disabled mineworkers (Winslow 2019). Underlying these confrontations against labor leadership

lies a tension between two styles of union organizing: business unionism, with its legalistic focus on contract enforcement and collaboration with management, often a strategy in the AFL-CIO; and a more grassroots unionism that connected rank and file workers with community groups and struggles to build a base of support, embodied in the CIO-style unionism under John L Lewis, and William Z Foster (p. 31-33).

The movements of the 1960s and 1970s such as the women's liberation and the farmworkers movements in California have played a key role in changing the organizing strategies of the labor movement. Vanessa Tait (2005) examines the independent unions and organizing drives of impoverished workers who were outside the AFL-CIO models of organizing during the 80s and 90s. She documents the rise of social movement unionism, inspired by feminist grassroots organizing and transitions from New Left activists into labor that fomented a style of organizing independent of the legalistic/bureaucratic model of the AFL-CIO. Another historical study illuminates this dynamic quite well in the Mexican American women take-over of the Campesino Center in South Texas after the UFW cut funding for the it in 1975 (Jepson 2005, p. 691). In this moment of crisis, the Mexican American women who were often relegated to the backstage work at the Campesino Center took over the leadership and began organizing to transform the union. Their organizing involved political education for women members who could take their experience in organizing to their colonias in south Texas, which were some of the most impoverished areas in the state (p. 692). While these instances speak to a different approach to labor organizing that connects to community issues, other influences also played a role in transforming business unionism and

adapting elements of organizing for major unions after the 1980s and Ronald Reagan's assault on labor.

Jane McAleavey, along with historians like Frank Bardacke document the influence of Saul Alinsky in the labor movement. One mark of his influence is the tactic of the corporate campaign. The corporate campaign is a tactic that involves Alinskyite pressure tactics to target key aspects of an employers' leverage points like media attention, publicity, politicians, and suppliers (McAlavey 2016, p. 51). The uncredited authors describing this tactic at *Labor Research Review* argue that the roots of this campaign trace to the UFW movement in the grape boycotts of the 1960s (*Labor Research Review* 1993, p. 10). For instance, they cite how Ray Rogers of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers (ACTWU) pioneered this technique of disrupting employer's financial relationships (*Labor Research Review* 1993, p. 12). By targeting areas like suppliers and vendors, media attention, politicians, and shareholders, labor organizers pressure employers to accede to union demands (McAlavey 2016, p. 51). This method of organizing, according to McAleavey, leaves workers out of the decision-making process and reduces them to a bargaining chip (p. 51), often reduced to be symbolic poster children of the campaign (p. 53). In addition, McAleavey argues that New Labor and its modern mobilizing methods were an outcome of McCarthyism, which decimated much of the CIO and leftist models of organizing, Saul Alinsky's influence through his red-baiting, and the 1947 Taft Hartley Act which severely limited militant grassroots organizing and enabled business unionism to thrive (p. 38). Corporate



campaigns, in what used to be supplementary to union campaigns, became a dominant mode of organizing in the rise of the Alinsky-influenced New Labor (p. 43).

Labor scholars and reporters like Steve Early and Kim Moody trace the rise of New Labor to the split in the AFL-CIO in its first contested election of 1995, and the rise of the New Unity Partnership that split from the AFL-CIO in 2005, consisting of unions like Service Employees International Union (SEIU), UNITE-HERE for hotel and restaurant workers, and AFSCME (American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees). New Labor, comprising largely of these unions, utilized corporate campaigns and often conducted negotiations behind closed doors, leaving workers out of the process and reduced to telegenic “authentic messengers” used in public relations campaigns (McAlavey 2016, p. 53). Kim Moody termed this separation between expert leadership and rank and file workers as the “polyester ceiling” (Moody 1998), and Steve Early documented across various cases in the US the internal struggles and repressive tactics of the SEIU during the 2000s in his investigative journalism (Early 2011).

Underlying these tensions is a contested debate among labor scholars, activists, and organizers about the relationship between leadership and rank-and-file members. McAlavey advocates and leads workshops on what she calls the “whole worker” model (McAlavey 2016, p. 28) that revitalizes the CIO model of the 1930s by placing workers front and center and by emphasizing organizing as the ability to build a base of support not only among workers but within their communities. This model contrasts with New Labor, which Tait (2005) and McAlavey (2015) document in their case studies of SEIU locals in California, Connecticut, and Washington.

While the whole worker model has been circulating in the speaking circuit in labor movement circles such as the *Labor Notes* newsletter and workshops, there has been a similar historical iteration of this model in Texas. Emilio Zamora, in his text *The World of the Mexican Worker* documents the networks of mutual aid that Mexican workers created in response to the exclusion that they faced from the AFL-CIO (Zamora 1993, p. 86). These mutual aid networks embodied an ethic of mutuality that went beyond the workplace but extended to the community (Zamora 1993, p. 86). He also documented the rise of radical unions like the Federal Labor Union No. 11953 in Laredo, that not only had ties to the communities across the border, but also had a cross-national revolutionary platform that went beyond the narrow scope of trade unionism (Zamora 1993, p. 110). Nevertheless, these organizing approaches place rank-and-file workers as central in leveraging power, but also integrate workers in the community networks to provide support for strikes.

Undergirding this contentious debate between the leaders and members is a question of how leaders relate to their members, in particular when unions attempt to reform along democratic lines. Missing from this side of the labor literature is how accountability is conceptualized under these approaches, and what are the practical tensions actors encounter when they relate to the union's hierarchical structures.

Exploring the organizing literature and how organizing developed in both community and labor accomplishes two key goals: (1) integrate the insights of the labor movement into theories of social movement organizing, and (2) connect how styles of organizing shape the relationships between leadership and membership across both

community and labor, thus placing relationships front and center in the analysis.

Moreover, what both the labor organizing and the community organizing literatures do not fully elaborate is how to think about these tensions in a way that is dynamic, where scholars can explain more complex and contradictory instances, such as Laura's story of the union removing homophobic prison guards from its ranks. As such, I use the case of two public sector unions, each with their own attempts to be democratic, to examine a more relational approach to organizing that can speak to practical tensions underlying these insights in both social movements and labor studies literature.

#### **RELATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The social movements literature and labor studies literature both examine the role of organizing but they have not examined in sufficient detail the work that organizing entails, and how and why different approaches to organizing, with their own guiding philosophies can shape the ways activists relate to leadership and the practical tensions they navigate in this process. One concept that illuminates the practice of organizing is relational labor.

The concept of relational labor has seen some usage in Canadian and Brazilian social movement literature to explore the ways actors build and sustain relationships as they build organizations that can facilitate collective action (O'Shaughnessy & Kennedy 2010; Mische 2015). As part of a relational turn in American sociology, there is a growing feminist literature on emotional labor (Hochschild 1983) and the under-recognized labor that women and queer activists and organizers have put into building the

relationships that hold together movements such as the Civil Rights movement, the Chicano movement, and the labor movement (Cossyleon 2018; Cotera 1974; Frank 2014; Hill-Collins 2000; Montejano 2010). I draw on key insights from this work to build on Ganz's approach to organizing as entailing the weaving of relationships.

Nancy Baym (2015) in the field of communications presents a study of the relational labor of musicians. She defines relational labor as the:

“regular ongoing communication with audiences over time to build social relationships that foster paid work. “Relational” is meant to emphasize effort that goes beyond managing others' feelings in single encounters, as is usually the case in emotional labor (Hochschild 1983), to creating and maintaining ongoing connections. Relationships built through relational labor can entail all the complex rewards and costs of personal relationships independent of any money that comes from them.” (p. 16).

Sara O'Shaughnessy and Emily Huddart Kennedy (2010) develop the similar concept of *relational activism*, using the case of women's environmental groups to illustrate it. For O'Shaughnessy and Kennedy, “relational activism is a long-term form of activism that utilizes relationships among networks of like-minded individuals and blurs the distinction between public and private-spheres by using daily behaviours as the locus for social and environmental change” (p. 553). Key to this insight is the centrality of relationships and the work that goes into cultivating these relationships, which forms a basis in much of labor organizing training manuals like *A Troublemaker's Handbook* by

Jane Slaughter and *Secrets of a Successful Organizer* by Alexandra Bradbury and Mark Brenner published by *Labor Notes*.<sup>49</sup>

Building on this work, I conceptualize organizing as a relational form of work. That is, organizing consists of weaving relationships, forging relationships, mentoring, coaching, staying in contact with workers, and coordinating relationships. Under the CIO model that McAlavey advocates for, as organizers build these networks of relationships, they do “structure tests” to test the leadership of the organic leaders they find. These structure tests consist of events like sticker campaigns, photo shoots, socials, gatherings, to build membership for a union in a workplace, and to test the capacity of leaders to build an organized collective (McAlavey 2016, p. 39). By understanding organizing as relational labor, scholars can be sensitized to both the public and the informal and often unacknowledged labor that women organizers engage in (Cossyleon 2018; Evans 1980; Hill-Collins 2000; Montejano 2010; Zamora 2017). Finally, understood as relational, scholars can be more sensitive to the dynamic tensions at play in sustaining relationships, such as accountability. In their book *Organizing for Social Change* Papa, Singhal, and Papa (2006) examined dialectic tensions in the practice of organizing in South Asia and the United States, with relational tensions like control/emancipation, fragmentation/unity, oppression/empowerment, and dissemination/dialogue (p. 61).

Understood this way, scholars can pay attention to interactions, experiences, and relationships that labor activists and organizers use to talk about and make sense of their

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<sup>49</sup> Both books are for sale on the *Labor Notes* website, which provides articles and discussions about organizing from a rank-and-file point of view. Both books are in this author's possession.

work. How they relate to each other; how they forge new bonds, sustain these bonds; how they manage tensions, and how they handle disagreements becomes a central part of the work that organizing entails and the meanings they assign to this work. Examining the relational side of organizing can enable scholars to pay attention to dynamics that occur in interactions, including how to hold one another accountable, and what accountability means to them. Accountability, a term that Ganz left undeveloped in his essay on organizing, is a starting point for theorizing what it means in the context of organizing.

#### **IDEAL FORMS OF ACCOUNTABILITY, A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The philosopher Mel Dubnik draws from a theory of ethics to develop the concept of accountability in more nuanced detail. Dubnik develops accountability as having various forms. He argues that we often take the term accountability for granted or do not go deep enough in theoretical discussions of it.

Outside of the Anglophone languages, Dubnik argues that there is no such word as accountability. The word does not exist in romance languages like Portuguese or Spanish (p. 69). Dubnik defines the Anglo-Norman view of accountability as the condition of being able to render a counting of something to someone (p. 76). He posits that being accountable is a social relationship, since there is a relevant other to render a counting to. It is also a condition that can be imposed from outside through force or legal mandate, or through feelings of guilt and loyalty from within.

Dubnik further posits that accountability, in its various forms, also contain moral pulls. Moral pulls are defined as the need to respect the values of others (p. 75), as

opposed to moral pushes which are the internally motivated desires to do good regardless of outside values. From these two definitions of moral pulls and pushes, Dubnik posits a framework that highlights four types of accountability in four institutional settings: political, legal, organizational, and professional. Relevant to this paper are the organizational and the political forms of accountability. In organizational settings, the form accountability takes is *answerability*. That is, the ability to answer to superiors in a hierarchical organization and manifested as obedience (p. 78). In political settings, accountability takes the form of *responsiveness* (p. 79). That is, political figures strive to serve public needs, and aspire to something loftier, like loyalty to the working class or to self-determination as has historically been documented in socialist and ethnic-nationalist politics (Johnson 2007; Montejano 2010).

While Dubnik's framework offers ideal types, reality always mixes a combination of these concepts. Unions occupy a place between the political and the organizational, as they are an organized entity with coordinated staff and members. They also serve a political purpose by engaging with the National Labor Relations Board for the private sector, and state legislatures for the public sector and vet politicians to represent their interests.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> It can be argued that unions also occupy a professional and legal framework of accountability. While that can be the case for some unions, the unions I dealt with and what respondents shared speak far more to the political and to organizational.

## CONCEPTUALIZING RELATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Given these two concepts, organizing by definition builds organizations, as it is a process to coordinate people into collective action that is managed and coordinated through formal organizations with leaders and members, in some cases having a hierarchy of command. As there are various methods and philosophies of organizing, there are also various forms of structuring relationships within these organizations. For instance, Jo Freeman and Wini Breines have written about the leaderlessness form of organizing that New Left activists experimented with during the 1960s and 70s (Breines 1989; Freeman 1972). Saul Alinsky's pragmatic method, incorporated into New Labor, sought to create organizations that mobilized people to pressure employers using boycotts, media and political pressure. The CIO model codified in texts like William Z Foster's *Organizing Methods in the Steel Industry* seeks to create organizations with active bases that not only mobilize but also expand their base across labor and community and can create massive actions. These approaches to organizing structure relationships among activists, leaders, and outside parties, as each have their own guiding strategies for how to talk to people, and how to form relationships in the community and the workplace.

Despite these different organizing approaches, unions are organizations, built by organizers, with political institutions such as elections (NLRB elections, as well as caucuses and assemblies). Unions are organized structures with their own internal hierarchy, institutionalized roles for leadership and rank-and-file members, and processes for the distribution of material resources. I conceptualize unions as a web of relationships



guided by organizing methods. These methods structure how members and leaders relate to one another. As such, I conceptualize *relational accountability* as a relational tension with a key duality: on one end with answerability (organizational) and on another with responsiveness (political). As I will illustrate, this tension manifests in the relationship between leadership and rank-and-file members as a tension between two forms of accountability. On one hand transparency- that is, responsiveness; and image management- answerability on the other hand. Both leadership and rank-and-file members navigate this tension in the way they interact in meetings, challenge one another during disagreements, and forge relationships in their organizing.

#### **METHODS: RECRUITING AND GATEKEEPING**

I rely on in-depth interviews with organizers, activists, and union members of public sector unions in Texas, in particular TSEU (Texas State Employees Union) and AFSCME (American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees) locals. These unions organize state agencies such as health facilities, prisons and jails, municipal offices, and state services like child protection and state supported living centers. The structures and institutions that these unions organize provide an empirical case to examine the practical tensions of accountability. In-depth interviews record the narrative experiences of actors and provide a retrospective account where analysts can capture the webs of meanings and frames actors use to understand the world around them (Small 2009; Swidler 2010). My experience with recruiting participants entailed navigating

informal gatekeeping, which made it difficult to not only get access, recruit for interviews, and to change my initial case study altogether.<sup>51</sup>

For instance, Matthew,<sup>52</sup> an organizer from Denton, TX that I met in December advised me that labor organizers tend to be very guarded as to who they let into their circles. To get any form of access, I had to prove my relationship to the labor movement by being a union member and participating as a delegate for my union's general assembly. I also participated in lobbying the state legislature on the union's behalf. I proved my credentials in order to have credibility with potential respondents in other unions. As such, recruiting respondents worked best for me by tapping into organizing networks of activists and union members who I met through these activities and who could connect me to other activists all over Texas. For instance, Tom, the organizing coordinator of my union, helped me speak with a few retirees and members in leadership.

Through my union membership and participation, I established connections with various activists in the state. I traveled to Dallas for a one day organizing school hosted by Labor Notes at the CWA (Communication Workers of America) union hall; to

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<sup>51</sup> During the labor portion of this dissertation, I originally wanted to examine the case of the Teamsters and Teamsters for Democratic Union as a case study of union reform movements. The process of getting any access went to no avail, since they knew nothing about me, and the only sources I had were secondary from books and periodicals. I contacted two locals in Dallas and Fort Worth, including a local Teamster activist whom I was referred to by two organizers. I received no response from either party. Given the popularity of the movie *The Irishman*, and the time sensitive nature of the international union campaign to oust Jimmy Hoffa Jr, I changed my research strategy to focus on public sector unions, tapping into existing networks that I have cultivated since 2017. These experiences speak to the gatekeeping mechanisms in the labor movement to weed out potential enemies of labor that often infiltrate and sabotage labor. Exploring these gatekeeping tactics, are fruitful subjects for another article.

<sup>52</sup> Matthew, and all names mentioned therein are pseudonyms to protect their identities

Houston to reach out to TSEU union activists; and to Denton to introduce myself to the labor organizers across different unions in a meeting.

Clyde, an organizer in Houston for TSEU helped me establish interviews by inviting his members to meet with me and hold a group conversation. Matthew reached out to me through one of my respondents and invited me to Denton to a meeting of union activists from various locals in the area in December. I met Matthew on December 3rd along with various organizers and members from Teamsters, UNITE-HERE, AFSCME, IWW, and TSEU to name some.

During our phone conversation in December, Matthew advised me to change my wording to not mention the word “accountability” because organizers there would react defensively if I did. Matthew also advised me to recruit during January rather than in the holidays since many members and organizers also have routine lives and families that they are not available during the holidays. In attempting to recruit more participants, I spoke over the phone with Marty who is a member of the Houston Central Labor Council. In that conversation, I stated my goals and Marty interrogated me to state my relationship to the labor movement and why I am doing this project. After questioning my intent, he asked me to summarize what I just shared in an email, to then send to him, and to focus on public sector unions since those were the interviews I had collected the most. He also advised me to write something for *The Nation* or *In These Times* to shed light into contemporary labor struggles in Texas, such as the UNITE-HERE airport workers who protested the working conditions at United Airlines in Dallas in July and

August 2019. This encounter highlighted Matthews' advice on navigating labor circles, as well as the gatekeeping that goes on.<sup>53</sup>

In addition, I recruited respondents involved in AFSCME, one of whom invited me to attend their monthly meeting in February. However, they postponed my attendance and asked me to come to their late March meeting, given they had primary elections coming in early March. One member reached out to me for an interview.<sup>54</sup> Given the gatekeeping and reticence of some activists to make time, and considering the history of research fatigue that academics exert onto activists and organizers, I collected 8 interviews (See Table 2) with respondents in three key unions: TSEU (6), AFSCME (1), and SEIU (1).

In-depth interviews consisted of life histories in their time during the labor movement, as well as any prior experience in other movements. In the course of the life history, we talked about their experiences with organizing as a whole. Participants talked about what is organizing to them, what makes it difficult, any initial challenges they faced, and how they have come to learn their craft. In the interviews respondents also discussed what accountability meant to them, and shared examples of what accountability meant.

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<sup>53</sup> From their point of view, this gatekeeping process is warranted given a history of labor repression and bad faith smearing by management and state legislatures, as uncomfortable as I felt at the time. It was also illuminating on the difficulty to recruit and reach out to participants, which made collecting interviews difficult.

<sup>54</sup> I had two respondents involved with unionizing their nonprofit organizations and wanted to share their story. However, due to COVID19, they had to suspend their interviews and focus on the immediate response to the situation.

In what follows, I present the ways activists and organizers understand accountability and the relational labor that organizing consists of.<sup>55</sup> Through key stories, I illuminate the practical tensions they navigate between transparency on one hand, and image-management on the other.

### **BACKGROUND ON PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS**

I present the experiences of organizers and activists at various levels of union structures. While one interview represents the experience of a private sector union and has great insights to share, I focus on two public sector unions. The Texas State Employees Union (TSEU- CWA local 6186), a local of Communication Workers of America (CWA), was established in 1982. While CWA is a national union spanning a broad range of workplace organizers and helping unionize various sectors, both public and private, TSEU is a Texas-based union. Representing state employees all over Texas, they organize state workers in health and human services, state supported living centers and hospitals, universities, state retirees, and child protective services<sup>56</sup>. Major campaigns involved raising salaries for state employees, regulating tuition increases for universities, and protecting publicly funded pensions from being privatized into 401(k)s. In addition, they work with legislators through their political action committee where they vet candidates that support state workers and can endorse candidates who meet such criteria, regardless of political party affiliation.

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<sup>55</sup> I present respondents by describing whether they are union members or members in leadership position. To protect their identity, I do not specify the leadership position they occupy.

<sup>56</sup> About TSEU, see here: <https://cwa-tseu.org/about-tseu/>

TSEU has had a history of seasoned organizers running union operations. One of these organizers was Eliseo Medina. Eliseo worked in Texas for the CWA after he left the UFW in the 70s. At the time, the UFW was in decline partly because of Chavez's autocratic power and retaliation against internal dissenters in the union (Bardacke 2011; Early 2011; Ganz 2009). Eliseo moved to Austin by 1982 and worked as Organizing Coordinator for TSEU where he appeared prominently in lawsuit cases against forced lie detectors against state workers.<sup>57</sup> He was the organizing coordinator for TSEU from 1982 until 1986, and Danny Fetonte, an East Texas TSEU organizer, took over that position.<sup>58</sup> In a state that is historically known for low taxes, low services, as well as a state that is right-to-work and has made collective bargaining illegal, the union organizes and fights to protect public services from being privatized, improve the benefits and salaries of state employees, and protect retirement benefits for its retirees. Members at TSEU can vote in various caucuses for their legislative agenda, vote at the union's general assembly, and also vote by mail for electing union leadership.<sup>59</sup>

With headquarters based in Washington DC, AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) organizes city, state, and county employees across various agencies and departments. From voting registration to parole officers to city hall employees, AFSCME has locals nationally in the US and in Puerto Rico to

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<sup>57</sup> Texas State Employees Union Newsletter, August 1985 Volume 4 No. 7; Texas State Employees Union Newsletter, February 1985 Vol 4 No 3

<sup>58</sup> Texas State Employees Union Newsletter, April 1986 Volume 6

<sup>59</sup> As a member, I participated in these events, including the union's own Lobby Day to speak with elected representatives. I also did logistical work in mailing letters with union literature. The stories older members shared about the union and organizing as a craft were illuminating: such as organizing segregated construction workers in the era of segregation in Mississippi.

protect public services and secure benefits for their employees. While they are an international union, each local has their own constitution, builds their own structure, sets their dues, and elects their own officers.<sup>60</sup> AFSCME was one of the unions that along with SEIU and UNITE-HERE, formed the New Unity Partnership faction that broke away from the AFL-CIO in 2005, and constitute New Labor (McAlavey 2016).

Nevertheless, as a large international union, each local has some degree of autonomy in how they run their union. In Austin, TX the union holds meetings once a month at the Texas AFL-CIO<sup>61</sup> and has a membership base spanning across a wide range of departments in public services: police officers, city hall workers, nurses, parole officers, voter registration deputies. Their leadership and membership hold committee meetings to vet political candidates and votes to give their endorsements to those who are amenable to fighting for the interests of public workers. Kamryn, a newly minted member of AFSCME, shares that they, along with union members who are also involved with the Austin chapter of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), are attempting to transform their AFSCME local to be more democratic and have a rank-and-file type of leadership.

The experiences of respondents in these two unions reflect various approaches to organizing as they attempt to adapt to a hostile political environment. Texas has had a history of repressing labor organizing and a well-organized conservative political machine taking hold of legislative and executive power in the state. As such, TSEU and AFSCME vet and endorse candidates that support public sector workers' demands and

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<sup>60</sup> About AFSCME: <https://www.afscme.org/about/we-are-afscme>

<sup>61</sup> Per email conversations with a member in leadership who invited me to attend

will fight for protecting public sector benefits and wages. In addition, decades of anti-union propaganda have shaped the perceptions of workers that the unions have invested in dispelling myths such as whether it is legal or not to actually join a union.<sup>62</sup> Laura, a TSEU member in leadership shared that they sometimes have to tell people that not all unions are syndicates run Jimmy Hoffa style-- corrupt with a mobster type of organization- often popularized by the film *The Irishman*. Given this political context, these unions and their members have various views of organizing and accountability that shape how they relate to each other, to leadership, and how they handle disagreements as some members attempt to make their union democratic and grassroots based.

#### **RELATIONAL LABOR OF ORGANIZING: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS, NUMBERS GAME, AND LEADER ENGAGEMENT**

Building on Ganz' insight that organizers weave relationships to consolidate resources and to coordinate collective action (Ganz 2002), respondents in my sample all share that organizing is both a personally involved process of managing and building relationships. For Mauricio, organizing is personal in that organizers forge relationships with workers to build a network of activists that can respond collectively to challenging conditions. As a former DREAMer activist that organized for Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in South Carolina, connecting with people at a personal level is something that Mauricio sees as a requirement in organizing,

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<sup>62</sup> TSEU has a Q&A that dispels misinformation about unions: <https://cwa-tseu.org/about-tseu/faq/>



“If you don’t connect with people at a personal level, then you can’t really move them to, you can’t have a conversation about making a change in their everyday lives. For me, I went into the mindset of “I need to talk to people as people”, I don’t need to talk to them as like “I need this number”, I need x number of people in order to get my job done.”

There is relational labor involved in congregating people, sustaining communication with them, scheduling events, weaving relationships, coordinating communication and asking people to do actions like signing petitions. Building face to face interactions and trust with workers is a prerequisite in building organizations, as Mauricio places a primer on quality over quantity.

In my interviews with TSEU members in Houston, two members had a discussion about the role of social media in organizing. When asked what organizing is to them, Sergio, a member in leadership and longtime union member interjected that organizing is not social media. Originally from Monterrey, Mexico, Sergio has lived in Houston for 47 years and has been a union member since 1989. He qualifies that social media is useful but does not replace the tried and true methods of organizing:

“Facebook is okay, but I know we get a lot of new organizers sometimes and when I use social media, I guess you could actually sign up people that way, no one would have a problem with that. But really the old fashioned way of charting, making phone calls and talking to people one on one; that is the old fashioned organizing that could mean having a picnic in some of the places or happy hours someplace, and talk one on one.”

To this point, Natalie, an African American native of Jackson, TX and a young active member since 2018 defends social media. Natalie has received information via Facebook and text messaging that has given her information that she would not otherwise be able to access without the prior networks. Natalie shared that she feels more comfortable receiving information about candidates through text than through door-knocking, as she said she would not answer the door if someone knocked. She makes a case to organize using all available methods and that there is a strength in social media in allowing activists to reach larger audiences. Sergio interjects and repeated that charting, and phone banking should be primary sources of organizing, as it has worked for him over the years. In this brief exchange, Natalie conceded that all should organize with whatever strengths they have, whether it is making phone calls or talking one on one, to build a broader base. I return to this exchange in another part of the findings, but this exchange supports a key insight. Sergio and Mauricio emphasize the importance of face to face communication as the building block of organizing, that is, the relational labor of connecting to audiences to build relationships.

Nearly all respondents in my sample viewed organizing as centered on building relationships. The relational labor of connecting with workers and their existing networks facilitates collective actions, such as signing up new members, or gathering active members for organizing committee meetings. These findings support Ganz's view, and also illuminate the relational labor that goes into it, both by organizers who get paid to do so, and activists who help organizers in providing their knowledge of relationships at the workplace and in the community.

Part of relational labor in union activism is the practice of charting, where organizers map the workplace to identify potential new members, as well as those who are anti-union. Esther, an older member in leadership at TSEU, and member of local Labor Councils in Texas shared insights into charting. Esther explained that charting helps organizers to navigate relationships, and to make that chart, they rely on workers' knowledge of the site. "The organizer doesn't know everybody and so what they rely on, and part of the charting is, 'oh yeah, I know this person, but this person knows this person and they're good friends and maybe we can talk to this person instead of me talking to that person". Using existing relationships, organizers tap into the knowledge of workers to not only identify potential members, but also facilitate conversations using workers themselves to do the talking.

The theory of the case for people like Esther is to start with small asks, such as signing petitions, posting stickers, and talking with legislators. These collective tasks speak to McAlavey's insight of testing the capacity of potential leaders with small collective tasks. However, coordinating these actions requires coordinating relationships and communication, illuminating the relational labor at play in the practice of organizing.

Kamryn, a white young member of AFSCME who recently joined in 2019, shared the necessity of building mutual aid networks among union members. Doing so, Kamryn believes, would build a sense of community that can provide meaningful interactions among members. They share that one way doing so is by "creating these kinds of systems where we can offer networks of free childcare, and things like that. I believe they're already doing things like that in like Mexico and Central America which hopefully I'll be

able to speak with a few of those women on Sunday.” By building these mutual aid relationships, Kamryn believes that AFSCME will be able to forge ties with community groups and build its base of support.

Kamryn, who is also a member of DSA, expressed a disdain for top-down leadership and they, along with some members of AFSCME are in the process of reforming their union, with help of DSA to make it a more democratic and rank-and-file organization. Kamryn believes that by building community, workers can escape the alienation that capitalism creates. Kamryn’s organizing and viewpoint are informed by their leftist politics that they learned from DSA.

While building relationships, as Kamryn illustrated with the mutual aid effort, are a central component in the relational labor of organizing, some expressed concern on what Mauricio identifies as a salesmanship model of organizing. In his time organizing for SEIU, Mauricio felt dishonest in trying to sell the union to workers and unionize a certain number by a fixed deadline. For him,

“the conversations that I wanted to have with people, and on my first day I just wanted to know about the person. But the SEIU wanted results by like week 3. For us, those things are a process and you don’t fast forward those things....I always felt like I was selling something when I was working for SEIU. I always felt like I was selling a product in trying to, I was like hungry for this person to buy what I was selling. And working for NIYA [National Immigrant Youth Alliance] I never felt like I was selling something.”

He expressed concern in the way SEIU, and nonprofits were using the language of social justice such as inclusion to sell the organization. As an activist and organizer, Mauricio came from a radical DREAMer organization that criticized immigrant nonprofits for the way officials used immigrants as poster children and did not let them have any say over the direction of the political goals. Mauricio here criticizes what McAlavey and Han describe as the mobilizing model of activism; that is, the model focused on not only signing up members but doing menial work while executive decision-making and base building is out of the reach of members. He left SEIU after two years, and dedicated himself to getting his undergraduate education, after years of organizing with the DREAMer activists and then with labor.

Laura, an older white TSEU member in leadership shared a document her husband wrote about the state of the union. Laura and her husband, Tim, were involved in the Kentucky mineworkers' insurrection in the 1970s and Laura helped document those struggles in what became the film *Harlan County USA*. As a longtime activist and organizer, Laura grit her teeth in the anti-war movement and to some extent the women's rights movements in the 1960s. The document her husband wrote expressed concerns with the union's focus on quantitative growth. Tim wrote: "Our organizers work hard, but the stress levels about getting numbers is extreme. The work climate is not supportive, and organizers are driven by the fear of not making the targeted number."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Untitled document outlining internal issues the union is facing, along with five key new principles to effectively organize. In author's possession.

Tim's document makes the case that the loss of memberships as a result of globalization has made business unionism reign supreme. The document also speaks to a return to a model of organizing that builds meaningful relationships in the lives of workers both in and out of the workplace and calls for a democratically run union and committed to building a base outside of the workplace with community struggles. Both Mauricio, Laura, and Kamryn speak to a model of organizing that centers relational labor in creating meaningful relationships and treating the union as one's own instead of a third party. These concerns reflect a tension between New Labor's approach of using expert advocates, big data, and a numerical approach to organizing, and the traditional approach that is based on meaningful relationships and active base expansion beyond the workplace (McAlavey 2016). Esther, Mauricio, Sergio, and Kamryn also acknowledge that building relationships take time and are mediated by social activities like potlucks that foster one on one communication.

These experiences speak to the relational labor of building an organized workforce that is politically engaged and active in the politics of their unions. How members relate to leaders matters in shaping the views of each other. Kamryn for instance expresses that leadership is amenable to DSA's left agenda. When asked about what the relationship with leadership has been, Kamryn responds:

“Honestly not bad. While I recognize that AFSCME is very top down, leadership is actually pretty cool with DSA ... Lisa, [in executive leadership] like she's basically a democratic socialist w/out the name. She's all for Bernie, Medicare for All, Green New Deal, considering the fact that she's kind of in power. Then

there's Jolynne [in executive leadership], who I don't know well enough; she's the one who suggested DSA and AFSCME should have a partnership."

Lastly, leaders can also build that relationship with members by closing the distance between them in the organizational hierarchy. Esther shared that what motivates workers to sign up is to be there with them as someone in leadership. Indeed, she would go to the workplaces and introduce herself to state employees like she did in Lubbock, Texas to give a face to the union. As Esther explained:

"I'd go to Houston and help out in Houston and people would see me also in Houston, in Dallas, in Lubbock. I just went to Lubbock and I was on the loading docks at Texas Tech, and one of the members came in and said, 'I signed up people and when they showed up, they saw that you're one of us and you're real and you're not just the president. You know what's going on and they were excited that you came to talk to them, and you came down.'"

Esther makes herself accessible to the members. They have her phone number and while she may not answer their calls immediately, she can listen to their message and respond as soon as she is able to. Undergirding this approach is an insight that the leadership is connected to members and not a distant, obscure other that exists in abstraction. This practice speaks to an insight in Tim's document; that the union belongs to workers, and to speak to workers like it is their union, instead of a third party. McAlavey makes a similar point in her text on how organizer training must place emphasis on ownership of the union (McAlavey 2016, p. 89). However, this view is also in conflict with the numerical approach that most unions, including TSEU adopt per Tim's essay on the state of the

union. The union, in navigating the practice of organizing and in responding to a globalized political economy, navigates a tension between on one hand, the style of the CIO model of organizing, and on the other hand, the business unionism approach to organizing by numerical weight.

These perspectives illustrate that organizing in labor is a form of relational labor that entails navigating and coordinating relationships and bringing existing relationships into collective actions like mutual aid networks, petitions, and making phone calls. Key to this labor is forging relationships, a relational labor that has gone ignored and undervalued by activism in the 1960s and 1970s, and of which feminist literature has written extensively (Cossyleon 2018; Cotera 1974; Hill-Collins 2000).

Marshall Ganz (2002) makes a closing point in his piece on organizing that organizers develop relationships between members and leaders based on accountability and mutual respect (p. 17). Yet relationships are rife with tensions that organizers navigate in the practice of organizing collective actions. I explore what accountability looks like next, and how respondents view and navigate what accountability means.

#### **RELATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY: TRANSPARENCY AND IMAGE MANAGEMENT**

Participants in my sample expressed two views of accountability that reflected the position they occupied in the union's structure. One view centers transparency, where leadership is responsive to members and must account for their decisions and actions. Another view is image-management. This view, built on notions of integrity and being a model employee, is one where the union leadership and members protect the union's



image against anti-union views and smears from hostile forces. While a necessary defense mechanism in anti-union contexts, that approach can also elicit defensive reactions when members, in particular younger ones, call out decisions and actions by leadership.<sup>64</sup> I explore this tension and the ways participants understand and make sense of these two views of accountability.

One view of accountability among union members is that of image management. That is, leadership ensures every member embodies the values of the union to not only promote itself as a progressive force, but also dispel anti-union sentiments and propaganda in Texas, which has historically been hostile to labor. One way to express this form of accountability is by being a model worker that is responsive to the union and has the integrity to protect them from intimidation on the job. This approach also protects members from intimidation by employers in the workplace.

A key barrier to organizing workers is management and supervisors intimidating workers from learning about unions. When Esther began organizing in El Paso during the 1980s, she witnessed supervisors tearing down posters she posted that listed the rights of employees. “They made it hard to talk to people, and the supervisors would be standing there glaring at them if they were talking to people.” Esther and her close friend, Olga, would often meet supervisors glaring at them with their arms crossed to prevent them from talking to their workers at Health and Human Services. Esther shared she would say

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<sup>64</sup> When I told organizers at a meeting about my project, Isabel, an organizer shared her experience coming into labor where she called out leadership at an AFL-CIO meeting for younger organizers. There, one older and seasoned member from another union scolded her and told her, “you keep things in the hall” when it came to pointing out grievances. This ethnographic reflection, while not formally in my interviews, became my animating puzzle for exploring these conflicting views of accountability.

hi to them and walk past them because they knew there was nothing the supervisors could do to them. To Esther, the reason they couldn't do much to them is because "[w]e made sure we were their top workers. Since we'd be scrutinized we'd be the top workers and that in workwise, if they [other co-workers] needed anything, they would come to us and we would get it done and we were the people that other people looked to."

By being top workers, Esther wielded the respect she earned as leverage to protect her from being smeared as troublemakers, since other workers looked to her for help. This form of accountability ensured they, as members and leaders, protect the image of the union and convey to outsiders that the union is composed of good workers who advocate for social and economic justice. Another layer of integrity is ensuring members and politicians follow through with what they pledged they would do. Esther had experience working with legislators who would not follow through on their promises or pledges. For Esther and Joseph, a retiree and early member of the union since 1984, accountability is about integrity. This view centers the moral pull to the leadership, as members also internalize this view.

Natalie, along with Ken, a Houston native who also is involved in environmental activism against petrochemicals in the city, both deferred to Sergio, a longtime member in leadership during the group interview. When asked about accountability, Sergio made an earlier point that to be accountable is to be a good employee at work, which Natalie and Ken both agreed with and built on his point. Natalie shared that to be accountable is to be responsible for the union's image at work, since as activists:

“you do become the union lady and whatever in the office... and so there was a sense of accountability that was attached to that. If I’m talking about certain things, I make sure that I present it in a way that’s appropriate. I do try to be where people are looking at me for whatever reason. In this instance being activist for the union I have to make sure I’m being representing and being accountable for myself”

Natalie’s view of being a good role-model mirrors the same rationale that Esther shared. Being good employees protects union members from being accused of troublemakers, and ensures that by building a base of good employees, they have a form of integrity that cannot be smeared by opponents of labor. The moral pull is towards the leadership, who represent the union statewide and nationally as well, so members are responsible to leadership in being model workers. That Ken and Natalie were deferential to Sergio also illustrates the hierarchical relation of accountability, making members answerable to the leaders. This view of accountability has an internal logic that helps the union protect itself from outside threats as well as ensure that members also answer to leadership in organizing and signing up members. However, when responding to challenges from their own members, this view comes into tension with calls for transparency.

Another view of accountability is transparency. This view demands that leadership be responsive to members and is present in instances when members question leadership and demand to know why leaders do what they do. The moral pull is centered on the rank and file. Drawing on Dubnik, leadership is responsive to rank-and-file members in a political sense: answerability. The tension in how members and leaders

relate to each other becomes manifest in the interactions that follow. Mauricio, in his time at SEIU, shared an instance when he called out his SEIU local management for their racial exclusion of candidates for organizer positions, despite the SEIU local hosting racial inclusion workshops. At a meeting to discuss who would be hired in the organizing team, Mauricio asked:

“Well, weren’t you guys talking about making this more of an inclusive environment and hire more people of color so that there’s more voices being represented? So why are you guys looking at all of these white candidates? And not really focusing on trying to reach out to people of color?”

After the meeting, management asked to meet with him and told Mauricio he came off aggressive and made other union staff uncomfortable. Mauricio added that his local wanted to talk about inclusion but “they don’t want you to talk about it, they don’t want to hear it from the POC [people of color] staff”. This instance, along with others he witnessed of staff filing grievances, only for the union management to let the case pend for months, is what led him to leave working for the local. He felt it was dishonest for a local to advertise social justice only to practice inequality in the internal politics of the union. His approach to transparency came out of his time in NIYA. “NIYA was a good example; they were genuine and always transparent even to the people who were not happy with the way their tactics that they used. They were happy receiving the positive and negative.” For him, transparency was a guiding view to keep relationships honest and accountable to each other, both between leaders and members.

During Kamryn’s time at AFSCME, they transitioned from viewing the union as flawless to seeing top-down machinations that they did not agree with. Kamryn’s perspective has been informed both by working with DSA but also by reading Jane McAleavey’s works on rank-and-file unionism. Kamryn shares an instance that broke their romanticism of the union. Nearly arriving late to the AFSCME PAC (Political Action Committee) meeting in November 2019, Kamryn recounted the tension that they felt in an argument to recommend Jose Garza or Margaret Moore for District Attorney so that the Texas AFL-CIO could give an endorsement. The discussion got heated with shouting and arguing, and the PAC meeting ended in a split vote where the union gave a split endorsement to both. Kamryn recalled that half of the room was cops and Moore’s proxy stayed in the room when the candidates were supposed to be out while the PAC deliberated. To Kamryn, the decision making was very top-down since the PAC meeting already excludes those who do not pay extra in dues to join. Kamryn witnessed Ricky, an AFSCME member in attendance calling out the system:

“He was like, ‘I just think we need to make sure that this is truly democratic’. And literally the woman who was leading the whole thing, Ruth she was like, ‘I took offense to that, because this is democratic’. And we were like “sure it is” (laugh). It was intense, that was so intense and I still need--I meant to write a report about that to call it out a little bit but I never got around to it.”

Kamryn recalled that this experience helped them to see the union as a place that needs reform. With police in attendance, and a very top-down approach to decision making, Kamryn’s training with DSA has sensitized them to these dynamics.

That the response from leadership was discomfort and offense, speaks to how members' call for transparency can be met with hostility or dismissiveness which makes this form of accountability difficult to sustain and to practice. In these events, asking for transparency can reveal that power relations between leadership and rank-and-file are unequal and are met with hostility if challenged. However, this tense relationship is complicated and full of difficult decisions to navigate, as rank-and-file do not always have the moral pull.

Returning to the story of the union standing against the prison guards that acted to tattoo HIV-positive inmates, Laura meditates on the dilemma TSEU leadership faced. Do they capitulate to the guards who were rank and file members? Or do they oppose their actions, even if it meant losing members? In Laura's account of the story, there is an instance of when leadership fought to demonstrate inclusion by standing up to stigmatization. Esther, when asked about this story, corrects me in sharing that the prison guards were AFSCME members at the time. During this incident, TSEU and AFSCME leaders met together in order to avoid a conflict of organizing workers. Upon these meetings, both unions agreed that AFSCME could keep the prison guards and parole officers, while TSEU could focus on other state employees.

This decision by the union leadership, against the actions of some rank-and-file members show that this relationship is not always one sided. Rank-and-file ideas may not always be progressive ideas, and it is dangerous to romanticize the power of rank-and-file members. Rather than treating transparency and image-management as one having more importance than another, this instance demonstrates a relational tension between these

two views of accountability. How leadership and members relate to each other enables scholars to understand the dynamics that leadership and members encounter in negotiating decision making and building power.

Additionally, this fracture line between transparency and image-management is also a generational divide. Younger members like Mauricio and Kamryn experienced the transparency approach, and often advocate for it, while older members like Sergio and Esther view the image-management approach to accountability as a means to protect the organization. The responses to calls for transparency, as Kamryn witnessed, reveal this tension. On one hand, demanding leadership be responsive to members where the moral pull is towards members. On the other hand, asking members to be model employees to protect the union, can also preserve a status quo in holding on to power, as Natalie and Ken repeated Sergio's views. Accountability is thus a relational dynamic in the practice of organizing that can illuminate tensions in how leaders and members relate. By viewing this relationship as dialectical and dynamic, relational accountability can help scholars understand the contradictory manifestations of this relationship in a way that gives puzzling situations like the prison guard incident a coherence of their own. The case of these two public sector unions can teach scholars how unions balance power as they survive and attempt to grow in a hostile political environment.

#### **DISCUSSION: A RELATIONAL APPROACH TO POWER AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

This paper builds on an insight Marshall Ganz left off in his 2002 essay by elaborating what accountability means to members of public sector unions. In exploring the relational

dimensions of organizing, and the practical tensions activists in public sector unions encounter, I explored the ways accountability relates to organizing relationships. In particular, how leadership and rank-and-file members relate to each other matters because this relationship is fraught with a dynamic tension between on one hand, image-management and on another transparency. While studies of social movements acknowledge the importance of leadership (Andrews, Ganz, Baggetta, Han, & Chaeyoon 2010; Baggetta, Han, and Andrews 2013; Ganz & McKenna 2018; Han 2014), less studied is the ways leaders and members relate to each other and how they navigate power dynamics within this relationship. One way to understand how power is organized and centered is by understanding how accountable leaders and members are to each other. This relationship reveals how power is organized in various movements, and how leadership responds to actions from rank and file members, including calls for transparency. Exploring this tension matters because it helps illuminate instances of leadership repressing rank-and-file insurgencies that demand a democratic union or organization, as historical studies and investigative journalist accounts demonstrate (Bardacke 2011; Brenner, Brenner, and Winslow 2010; Early 2011; Ganz 2009; Jepsen 2005; Luebke & Luff 2003; Moody 1998; Tait 2005; Winslow 2019). However, this tension also helps illuminate instances when rank-and-file members act in ways counter to unions' progressive values, such as the prison guards' attempt to stigmatize HIV-positive inmates, or the ongoing debates on whether to organize police officers given the racially violent histories of police violence.



Through the concept of relational accountability, I reconceptualize a term often used in activist discourse, and under-theorized in studies of social movement organizing to pay attention to its relational dimensions. I build on Dubnik's study of accountability, and on Nancy Baym's concept of relational labor to define relational accountability as a process that is done in relation to a relevant other be it leadership, a romantic partner, or to political parties and interest groups. The case of public sector unions illustrates that accountability is a relational dimension to the work of organizing, since it entails that actors involved demand accounts of each other in the work of building an organized base that can engage in collective actions. Accountability does not happen in isolation, and by focusing on either one party involved, we lose sight of the bigger process.

In the case of labor, given a historically documented tension on the role of leadership and rank-and-file, relational accountability explores this tension from the point of view of the moral pull- who is responsible to whom? On one hand there is the view of image management, where leadership and members use integrity and the respect that being a model employee provides to outmaneuver intimidating supervisors and management, and protect the union's image from anti-union propaganda, as Esther and Natalie experienced. Integrity provides a form of protection from physically intimidating management, and also provides a form of leverage to use against politicians and members who do not follow through on their actions and pledges. Esther captured this form of accountability pithily: "if they say a friend of state workers, then you show us how you're a friend of state workers". The moral pull, that is, the need to respect the values of others,

lies with leadership, making members and those who say are for public sector employees responsible to leadership.

On the other end is transparency as a form of accountability. That is, asking leadership and anyone in a representative position to respond to constituents and explain their actions. This form of accountability places the moral pull onto members, demanding that leadership be responsive to the needs and calls from members. This pull between transparency and image-management, however, is at constant tension. While membership can call out leadership and demand transparency for their decisions and actions, leadership can respond with hostility and demand obedience from membership, as Kamryn witnessed. Yet at the same time, while membership can make demands on leadership, leadership can also respond by reprimanding and re-educating their members, in particular when actions involve discriminatory practices that run counter to what the union leadership believes. Laura and Esther's account of the union's response to prison guards attest to this instance.

By understanding accountability and organizing as relational, scholars of social movements can better understand the practical tensions that activists and organizers face in the work they do in coordinating relationships, forging relationships, and navigating relationships, even with those one does not agree with. Kamryn is learning to navigate how to reform their union that also accepts police and parole officers, which runs counter to Kamryn's training as a socialist in DSA. Understanding these contradictions requires scholars to think dialectically, that is, in a comprehensive view that views dualities in relation to one another, with instances of transparency conducted by leadership, or

instances of image-management practiced by members. Papa, Singhal, and Papa capture this view in their text *Organizing for Social Change* by asserting that “dialectic struggles between competing opposites are fundamental in organizing for social change processes” (p. 39). That is, in the practice of organizing relationships, it is the co-existence of contradictory and opposing impulses that make relationships flourish and grow (p. 40). Building on Mikhail Bakhtin, dialectic tensions are inevitable and present in all relationships (p. 46), which illuminates the practical dimensions that organizing entails. This paper provides such an attempt, in exploring the relational dimensions of accountability and how activists and organizers in public sector unions understand accountability in their work.

Organizing, as this study adds to a growing literature, is a personal and intimate form of labor that requires weaving relationships, navigating conflicting views and tensions, as well as coordinating power. Moreover, organizing is guided by styles and philosophies that dictate how to weave relationships and under what guiding principles these relationships should be structured. Jane McAlavey, along with other labor scholars and reporters explore these distinct styles. Whether it is the Alinsky top-down model that has influenced New Labor, or the CIO bottom-up model of the 1930s, both styles are at play in TSEU and AFSCME in how they sign up members, and the lineage they follow. By exploring the relational dimensions of accountability, this paper explores how members and organizers in public sector unions navigate the work they do and attempt to keep their unions strong in a hostile political environment.

Table 2: Labor Respondents

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Union</b>
Mauricio	Male	Mexican	North Carolina	Organizer	SEIU (Formerly)
Laura	Female	White	Austin, TX	Leadership	TSEU
Joseph	Male	White	Austin, TX	Activist	TSEU
Esther	Female	White	El Paso, TX	Leadership	TSEU
Natalie	Female	African American	Houston, TX	Activist	TSEU
Sergio	Male	Mexican	Houston, TX	Leadership	TSEU
Ken	Male	White	Houston, TX	Activist	TSEU
Kamryn	Genderqueer	White	Austin, TX	Activist	AFSCME

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion: Power in the Trenches**

*“Now, power comes in two forms — money and people. You haven’t got any money, but you do have people, and here’s what you can do with them” (Alinsky 1972).*

Alinsky’s quote, despite his method of organizing facing significant criticisms, pithily captures two major ways of organizing power to bring about any kind of change. In my work at the Law School I explored how those with money consolidate power and are able to shape society, economy, and politics to their wishes. For example, the tort reform movement of the 1980s, led by corporate lobbyists and key industries, managed to not only disembowel the civil justice system but also create a privatized system of justice enabling them to escape public scrutiny (Daniels and Martin 2015; Galanter 2005; Gifford and Jones 2016; Gross, Medvetz, and Russell 2011; Mencimer 2006). In this dissertation, I explore the side of organizing with people to show that organizing at the grassroots level requires organizing relationships, and in doing so, those who seek to work with people and organize to build a base, at some point confront practical tensions in this endeavor.

In three cases of social movements in Texas: Chicana/o movement, LGBT movements, and labor movement, I argue that styles of organizing shape power relationships, in particular decision making in three key conjunctures: tactics, discipline, and accountability. As such, how one organizes and brings together people matters. I identify tactics, discipline, and accountability as three key conjunctures with their own internal tensions, practical dilemmas, and approaches to navigating these key aspects of

organizing. By studying the craft of organizing, I set out to illuminate the mechanisms of organizing, what it consists of, and examine the practical challenges that those engaged with transforming society encountered. I paid attention to the organizing styles that came out of the Alinsky, New Left, and Marxist schools of activism. As these styles had a lineage of disciples, dissenters, and distinct ideologies, they were also prominent in the organizing strategies of social movements in Texas whose legacies endure today. More than just a black box, organizing has rich historical lineages of its own, with many schools of thought not mentioned here. Some of these ideologies include popular education, liberation theology, and a host of radical traditions in the black, brown, and Native American movements, as well as those from Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia.

The Chicana/o movement in Texas provided a rich historical case to situate how activists of different organizing styles competed with one another for control over the resources and direction of the movement in San Antonio. The movement encountered different styles of organizing in the organizations they formed but also in the rivals and enemies they encountered. Of these, the Alinsky, New Left, and Marxist styles were most prominent. I developed the notion of tactical dexterity as the capacity for actors in various movements to incorporate tactics based on the reading of the social and political environment in order to outmaneuver external enemies and internal rivals. This concept enables scholars to pay attention to how ideas travel, but also how actors incorporate these ideas as they implement tactics to intimidate, pressure, purge, and negotiate with rivals and enemies. The decisions to implement tactics, and which direction to go were

replete with power relations that recreated inequalities in class and gender. Tactics, and the overall discussion of strategy is one key conjuncture of power that organizers wrestled with and must navigate, as I demonstrated in this chapter.

While Alinsky's organizing style became hegemonic in Texas (Marquez 1990), New Left and Marxist style remained active, and evolved to various branches and forms. On the New Left side, as the politics of identity in the gay and lesbian liberation movement evolved, so did approaches to organizing and experimenting with relationships and leadership. The prefigurative approach of New Left politics nevertheless reveals a conjuncture rife with tensions in the area of discipline. I argued in this chapter that queer activists and their allies navigate a disciplinary tension between an inclusive but in some cases permissive view of discipline, and on another hand a stringent ideological gatekeeping that weed out errants and creates sectarian dynamics. I locate discipline as a central conjuncture. I illustrated this conjuncture with cases on how queer activists and their allies handle instances of problematic acts, from racism to tokenism, acts that go against the prefigured notions of liberation and inclusion.

Lastly, through the labor movement, I argued that accountability is another conjuncture rife with tensions, in particular between the rank-and-file members and the leadership of these organizations. I argued that accountability is a relational tension where actors navigate between two moral pulls of responsibility: on one end, transparency where leaders are responsive to members; on another hand, to image-management where members are responsive to leadership to protect the image of the union. Key to protecting the image of the union is the idea of being a model-worker, as

being someone that others turn to for help protects them from anti-union supervisors. I identified accountability as another conjuncture where organizers and activists navigate the relationships they have with one another and the extent to which they are responsible to each other.

In these three chapters, I illustrated how the trenches of community and labor not only are contested sites, but also share elements in common. Both community and labor think about questions of accountability and approach them differently. I illustrate by way of an ethnographic insight. My conversation with Matthew over the phone over how to approach labor activists brought a point to bold relief. When I approached community activists in LGBT movements, guided by a discourse of social justice and having had years of openly talking about accountability in many blogs and discussions, I assumed that labor would be having similar discussions and discourses. To my surprise, Matthew advised me to not mention the word “accountability” as that would scare off labor organizers. What also brought this point to bold relief was the experience Isabel shared during a union meeting. At a young labor activist meeting at the AFL-CIO, an older seasoned activist from another union scolded Isabel and told her that “you keep things in the hall”, in response to Isabel recounting calling out leadership at her union.

These experiences illustrate that while there are similar concerns on accountability in both community and labor, their approaches differ given different histories of repression and organizing in these sectors. Both community and labor, understood as trenches, provide insights into how actors organize, make sense of competing ideologies, and try to consolidate power to not only challenge oppressive



conditions, but also shape their destiny and bring about life-altering structural changes. Understanding the dynamics in tactics, discipline, and accountability shed light into how activists in both community and labor build power to challenge powers-that-be, but also deal with internal rivals. These insights speak to Francis Fox Piven's (2008) notion of building power from below; that is, an interdependent form of power that that is "rooted in the social and cooperative relations in which people are enmeshed by virtue of group life" (p. 5). As such, organizing relationships and its various styles play an important role for people who are excluded from main sources of power in the United States. That is, people disfranchised by political institutions, exploited in economic labor markets under often authoritarian conditions, and humiliated under various forms of discrimination and violence across racial, gender, class, and sexuality lines. Guided by Fox Piven's essay on building power through interdependent networks, Katznelson's idea of contested trenches, and the chapters that comprise this dissertation provide points of departure for comparative studies in future work.

### **THE POLITICS OF ORGANIZING: A COMPARATIVE RESEARCH AGENDA**

First and foremost, because the Covid19 pandemic has suspended most research, I plan to continue conducting interviews with labor activists in TSEU and AFSCME to further develop the themes in the labor chapter. In collecting these interviews, these stories will develop the insights and lessons in organizing to understand how accountability works in public sector unions. Moreover, these interviews will form part of a larger archive that documents the life histories of contemporary labor activists in Texas

today. Despite the dangers of a global pandemic, and the economic and social impacts this will have globally, my chapters also provide points of departure for historical-comparative work that will develop more general theory on social movement organizing.

For instance, out of the Chicano movement I plan to build on the concept of *tactical dexterity* to examine how ideas of organizing and tactics travel across ideologically distinct movements to spur mobilizations. I compare the case of the Chicano and Puerto Rican movements in the 1960s US to examine key factors that enabled two ideologically distinct movements to use similar confrontational tactics with creative dexterity as they organized their respective neighborhoods. Understanding how tactical ideas travel and how activists implement these ideas will help reframe debates on mobilization on the role of cultural ideas in shaping social movement politics. Through a comparative-historical study, I plan to examine MAYO (Mexican American Youth Organization) in San Antonio with the Young Lords in New York City around the same time period, 1965-1970s.

The Chicano and Puerto Rican movements had distinct origins and guiding ideologies but responded to similar conditions of urban inequality and racial discrimination. The Chicano movement in Texas was predominantly nationalist, although there was internal tension between politically pragmatist Alinskyites and culturally identitarian and Marxist ideologues (Cotera 1976; Navarro 1995). Meanwhile the main strategic tension in Puerto Rican movement organizations like the Young Lords was between anti-imperialist and Marxist class ideologies; the colonial status of the island, or the broader class-based project of solidarity? (Marquez 2000; Torres & Velazquez 1998)

Despite these ideological differences, their movement organizations employed confrontational tactics such as throwing dead rabbits at governors' feet, tough rhetoric, and taking over public buildings to demand attention to urban violence in their neighborhoods. To investigate this similar use of tactics, I ask: Why did these two ideologically different movements implement similar confrontational tactics? In answering this question, I aim to answer the theoretical question of, how do ideas of organizing and tactics travel across ideologically distinct movements?

Secondly, out of the labor chapter, I plan to compare the rank-and-file insurrections in labor unions in the United States during the 1970s with similar insurrections in Italy. In Italy, the movement called *Autonomia* many labor activists and members won benefits and restructured their unions in democratic and grassroots way (Cleaver 1979). I compare these two instances to ask, why, despite both countries being situated in the global north, with their own southern question (Gramsci 1920) and having similar industrial developments, did the rank-and-file insurrections in the US were suppressed whereas *Autonomia* in Italy was successful?

Lastly, comparing the experiences of LGBT movements in community politics, another future project is to examine the experiences of LGBT activists in the labor movement. Miriam Frank's book *Out in the Union* provides great historical examples of queer union members navigating the norms of union culture, and building on the ethnographic insights I acquired with Isabel and Matthew, a future study can compare these two experiences of queer activists and explore how they experience discipline in both community and labor politics. Doing so would develop insights from Gorski,

Foucault, and Weber and contribute to a theory of discipline and illuminate the mechanisms of how activists and organizers think about and navigate disciplinary mechanisms in their work.

### **CLOSING THOUGHTS**

The insights of Jane McAleavey, Francis Fox Piven, V.O. Key, Adolph Reed Jr, Judith Stein, Cedric Johnson, William Sewell Jr, and David Montejano all brought me back to the starting point of this dissertation: the southern question posed by Antonio Gramsci. The insights these thinkers posed helped me flesh out the mechanisms of organizing and situate my study in a state that has a rich, complicated, and interstitial history. Texas, historically lying between three racial groups of blacks, Anglos, and Mexicans, and now with a much broader, diverse coalitions of moneyed interests but also popular organizing, provided a rich site to explore dynamics of organizing that many in northern post-industrial sites would be remiss to ignore.

As Gramsci warned in his essay on why southern Italian peasants easily consented and supported the fascist regime, understanding southern politics and organizing, in areas of the US that have historically been sites of racial violence, populist uprisings, and changing political-economic orders are key integral sites of building power. In this dissertation, I explored the case of Texas to add to a larger tapestry of scholarship that explores political dynamics and forms of organizing in contexts that present unique challenges like political and social hostility to labor and community, and in some cases, like here in Texas, seats of strong moneyed interests and corporate power.

While it may be easy for some activists that gritted their teeth in Chicago, or New York or Los Angeles to dismiss those who lived in places like Idaho, Georgia, or Iowa, this experience lent me insights to explore and shed light onto a less discussed but also difficult environment in mobilizing and organizing under more hostile conditions. Understanding organizing and social movements in these contexts will provide, as I hope, key insights that apply to organizing nationwide and not only enrich the social movements scholarly literature, but also give practical insights for generations of organizers to come, both in community and labor as global conditions and political-economies change in these tumultuous times.

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