Power, Oppression, and Group Difference Interrogation:
A Call to Social Justice Movement Organizations

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A Thesis submitted to

The Faculty of
The Columbian College of Arts and Sciences
of The George Washington University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

January 31, 2015

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UMI Number: 1582906

Dissertation Publishing

UMI 1582906

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

Abstract

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Especially since the "new social movements" of the 1960s and 1970s, the complexities of group status difference and oppression have posed major challenges to social movements aimed at justice and equality. This paper explores the potential for social movement organizations to approach race, class, gender, and sexuality in ways that resist essentialized identities and expose and challenge the dynamics of power by which structural oppression operates. Focusing on the Washington Peace Center—a social movement organization in the District of Columbia—as a case study, I utilize qualitative, oral history interviews to illuminate the process of group difference interrogation and anti-oppression activism over time. I find that justice-seeking social movements-- through an attention to standpoint, openness to the claims of other social movements, and proper consideration of the connection between local, national, and global issues—are capable of meaningful engagement across group difference that undermines complex and interrelated oppressions.

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Introduction

> The future of our earth may depend upon the ability of all women to identify and develop new definitions of power and new patterns of relating across difference. The old definitions have not served us. The old patterns, no matter how cleverly rearranged to imitate progress, still condemn us to cosmetically altered repetitions of the same old exchanges, the same old guilt, hatred, recrimination, lamentation and suspicion. (Lorde, 1984: 123)

In a world increasingly aware of cultural and group differences and faced with complex systems of inequality, these words of activist and scholar Audre Lorde resonate deeply. Though specifically written to address the needs of a feminist movement, this call is certainly applicable to all of us who inhabit a modern world continually confronted with the challenge of accounting for difference in ways that propel us toward collective social change for good. Spurred by this challenge, I aim to explore how differences in race, gender, class, and sexuality factor into the current work of activists organizing around issues of social justice. More specifically, this paper raises the question: how may social movement organizations address oppression across multiple group differences in ways that are crucial to their work in various social justice issue areas? This activist work is of particular interest given the popular image of a struggling contemporary progressive movement fractured by irreconcilable differences, divided aims, and competing identity claims. I argue that, as sites of social and cultural praxis, social movements are capable of answering Lorde's call to alter the landscape of power and to harness our creativity to reconfigure our collective behavior in relationship to one another in progress towards justice and equality.

As a case study, I turn to the Washington Peace Center, an existing social movement organization that has been engaged in peace and justice work for over fifty years. The activities of this organization have spanned the course of many significant social movements in U.S. history, including the "new social movements" that exploded national awareness around social group identity and discrimination. An examination of the center's history shows a significant expansion of its peace-centered mission to include and emphasize equality across race, class, gender, and sexuality. Today, the organization stresses the multi-issue nature of its work, the centrality of anti-oppression efforts to its mission, and the importance of connecting

issues across the local, national, and global levels. Prominent in this work is an approach to group status categories as rooted in social construction rather than in essentializing differences, and an ability to link the continuing significance of these categories to processes and systems of power. These practices have been adopted by the Washington Peace Center through gradual change and evolution, which I attempt to trace using activist testimony and historical documents. The data I collected led me to focus on three major themes that appear to be crucial to the Washington Peace Center's growth with regard to group difference and oppression: sensitivity to and appreciation for perspectives marginalized by power structures, interaction between and influence across other social movements, and connecting global and national issues to the local community. Before presenting my analysis and findings in detail, I will review some of the existing literature related to these themes in conjunction with social movement organizations.

This paper's analysis is framed in sociological theory, pulling predominantly from the study of social movements and of race, class, and gender. It will also utilize existing social science theory and research on identity politics. Central to my argument is the ongoing significance of certain types of social difference, in reference to which I use the terms "group differences," "status-based differences," or "status categories." By these terms I mean to denote the distinguishing human characteristics often used to mark individuals as inherently dissimilar, and to sort them into distinct social strata. Though many distinctions of this type exist and are cause for study and exploration (e.g. nationality, ability, ethnicity), I focus this paper predominantly on race, class, gender, and sexuality, as they have been most frequently addressed in the narrative interviews that form the basis of my research; they are also particularly salient and well-studied in the context of the contemporary United States and its social movements, within which my research is located. Similarly, as this location presents a unique social, cultural, political, and economic landscape, my sampling of theory largely draws upon Western scholars and thinkers, and a global perspective is generally lacking.

To set up my inquiry, I begin with an examination of new social movements and the implications of the widespread understanding of race, class, gender, and sexuality primarily in

terms of identity. Advocating for a shift towards understanding these categories of difference in terms of structural inequality, I review some feminist theoretical work that assists in this endeavor—standpoint theory, situated knowledge, and intersectionality. I then turn to existing empirical research within social movements that relates to the major themes identified in my findings. This is followed by a more detailed introduction to the social movement organization that is the focus of my study—the Washington Peace Center—and a discussion of the methods of my research and approach. I then present my data, organized around the themes outlined above, and conclude with a review of my findings and the implications of the study.

Literature Review

Before I review the existing literature more directly related to the organizational themes of my findings, I present an overview of new social movements and the implications of an identity-based focus on race, class, gender, and sexuality. By way of this overview, I make the case for a shift to focus on structural inequality that interrogates social group difference without reinforcing essentialized categories. I then transition to feminist theory on situated knowledge and standpoint; these theoretical contributions are powerfully linked to an activist awareness of power structures and perspective from social location. This gives way to intersectionality theory, which draws connections between different forms of oppression across difference, and encourages an examination of how social movements relate to one another. My review of this second theme is followed by the third, as I look at existing research on social movements' connections between local, national, and global issues.

Shifting From "Identity" to Structure

To enter into any discussion on the place of social group difference within social justice activism, one must acknowledge that the major debates around the issue have centered on notions of identity, or—more specifically—on conflicting notions of identity that have illuminated the complexities of the politics of difference. The language of identity is embedded in the widespread scholarly recognition of "new social movements"—a wave of

popular movements in the 1960s and 1970s, including those concerned with feminism, gay rights, and racial and ethnic identities. These movements were perceived by many theorists as different from traditional class-based movements, due to an apparent concern with cultural change and societal norms surrounding identity groups (Polletta and Jasper 2001; Vahabzadeh 2003; Wieviorka 2005). In other words, these groups mobilized not simply to attain greater material resources, but also in an effort to counter the oppression and discrimination they faced as a result of societal perceptions of "otherness." Based on physical or cultural attributes regarded as inherent and static, individuals in these groups experienced common barriers to equal treatment as a result of their group classifications. Seeking justice and equality, new social movements mobilized around a sense of solidarity in shared experiences, and often a feeling of pride in a collective identity bound in resistance, demanding respect and recognition (Melucci 1996; Polletta and Jasper 2001). The enduring activist focus on group difference used to mobilize sociopolitical change is commonly referred to as identity politics—a term often imbued with negative connotation among those who question the value of such practices (Bernstein 2005).

Though born out of well-evidenced, historical, and structural discrimination rooted in perceived difference, new social movements shed light on the potential power of particular brands of affinity, cohesion, and interconnection often bundled in the umbrella term "identity." Implicit in this conceptual bundle is the notion that group differences can be singularized and harnessed to form separate "identities" that aid in the attainment of equality. This concept of identity conveyed the movements' powerful ability to enrich the self-understanding and worldviews of individuals (Brush 1999), but at times tended toward oversimplification, exclusivity, and reification of perceived difference. These tendencies have been exposed in the inner and outer struggles of many new social movements: the feminist movement's challenge to inspire unity around gender identity across women of different races, classes, sexualities, and ethnicities (Ryan 2001); the American Civil Rights movement's neglect of those who departed from the ideal of male, middle-class, heterosexual black identity leadership (Holsaert et al 2010; Kates and Singer 2010); the exclusion of intersex, gender non-

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conforming, and queer individuals from movements built around sex, gender, and sexuality identities defined by binaries (Lorber 1999). The legacy of these challenges to activism continues, as shown by Dara Strolovitch, whose significant mixed-method exploration of US advocacy groups representing marginalized identities found that, despite sincere efforts to account for diverse constituencies, most groups tend to prioritize the needs of their most advantaged subgroups, and undermine the needs of those most disadvantaged by intersecting oppressions (Strolovitch 2007).

The practice of discrimination within the mobilization of the very "identity" groups intended to *counter* discrimination highlights a crucial need in justice work around difference— that without a deep criticism of the processes and dynamics of power that create marginalization, our mere recognition of group difference falls short. This need resonates with the many criticisms of identity politics by activists and scholars. Some criticize a preoccupation of special treatment that loses focus of more universal and important demands for greater equality in economic and political structures (Gitlin 1995; Hobsbawm 1996). Some reject the use of established categories, recognizing that the process of naming and differentiating between groups serves to confine and control them (Seidman 1997; Butler 1990). Others question a perceived investment in self-victimization (Brown 1995) or the assumption of moral authority by oppressed groups that limit opportunities for collaboration (Brown 1995; Tapper 1993). Still others have voiced dissatisfaction with the inability of identity politics to account for those individuals who do not fit neatly inside the boundaries drawn by identity categories (Crenshaw 1991). Despite the many challenges of this work, there seems to be consensus among many that justice is neither served by the alternative of ignoring difference, as the language of universality drowns out the voices of those with less power and numbers, relegating their claims as too particular to prioritize (Bickford 1997).

The challenge, then, lies in properly interrogating group differences and the causes of inequality across them. The strong historical link between group difference and identity has often drawn attention away from the injustice of oppression that is structural in nature and perpetuating of perceived group difference. In response, theorists emerging from structuralism

and post-structuralism have claimed a social constructivist approach that seeks to illuminate the processes through which identity categories are formed, maintained, and experienced, and that highlights the dynamics of domination and oppression (Gamson 1995; Bernstein 2005; Conway 2006). The resulting muddied waters of "identity" have led scholars Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2000) to conclude that the term has lost its social analytic capability, being regularly tasked to do both too much and too little in accounting for the complexities of difference. In a similar vein, Ivy Ken (2010) finds the language of identities insufficient in highlighting indications of the complex interplay of power. She calls for an understanding of race, class, and gender as social structures that organize our life conditions. For this reason, I resist the temptation to rely upon the language of identity in addressing the crucial question at which the many identity debates have arrived: How might we engage social group and status difference in ways that resist essentialism and oversimplification, while illuminating the dynamics of power that drive inequality?

Despite my hesitation regarding an analysis based in identity, I do not wish to overlook the powerful contributions of those identity scholars whose research on social movements takes us a step closer to answering this crucial question at hand. Each encourages criticism of established identity categorizations, and looks to the potential of engaging difference to unlock transformative democratic forces for the greater good. Susan Bickford (1997) draws from various feminist activists (Lorde 1984; Anzaldua 1987; hooks 1984) to show how identities may be embraced as empowering, effective tools to counter oppression, while simultaneously interrogated, intricately interpreted, and forged anew. Key to the approach of these feminist thinkers is the treatment of identity as continuously constructed, enacted in a public sphere, and fraught with lines of both difference and sameness (Bickford 1997). Bickford points to the potential of coalitions across and through these identities as an example of "specifically democratic intersubjectivity"—where political relationships may be both rooted in and transcendent of marked differences. Paul Lichterman (1999) focuses on "identity talk"—a self-critical process of engagement between individuals around identity that shows the potential to develop public-spirited citizens engaged across difference in a multicultural world. Jill

Bystydzienski and Steven Schacht (2001) examine radical coalitions aimed at changing interpersonal relations and social structures to create social justice; they conceive of coalitions as fluid sites of collective behavior, and investigate the ways that multiple identities are infused with political activism. These reflexive processes of difference negotiation, whether framed in the terms of identity or not, advance my exploration of how social movements engage in the justice work of challenging structural inequality while resisting essentialist identities.

Standpoint, Situated Knowledge, and Intersectionality

The attempt to unpack the social justice implications of group difference and status may be likened to untangling a web of theory and praxis across generations of activists and scholars. Through the process of collectively evaluating the shared conditions of their lives, activists in social movements have developed powerful assessments of injustice, and made important gains on the path to equality for marginalized groups. Among these gains have been institutionalized vehicles for disseminating the critical thought and analysis crucial to their activism. Labor movements have given way to education through unions and class-based theories in mainstream economics. "New" social movements have given way to increased representation in higher education and the development of popular Black and Africa studies, women and gender studies, and sexuality and queer studies departments, among others (Collins 2000). Though often informal in nature and seen in varying degrees, the ideas and theories developed in academic realms inform and influence the strategies and actions of activists and social movement organizations (Collins 2000; Hartsock 1996).

This exchange of influence can be seen between feminist theory, practice, and activism (Cancian 1996; Hartsock 1996). A history of feminist theory has posed significant challenges to scientific positivism and claims to truth and objectivity (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis 2002), opposing what Donna Haraway (1988) deems the "god trick"—the ability to see everything from nowhere. In much of feminist theory, the popular Western concept of transcendent objectivity is challenged by the assertion that all knowledge and perspective is

partial, and that we only approach objectivity through the claiming of a limited position and location (Haraway 1988). Thus, the term "situated knowledge" is used to illuminate the social context in which each individual and/or group operates and formulates knowledge. These claims are reinforced and expanded upon in feminist standpoint theory, which lays bare the stratification of society by race, class, gender, and sexuality, among other political structures. As Sandra Harding (1992) explains, one's social situation within a stratified society both enables and set limits on what one can know; furthermore, positions of dominance are most limiting of knowledge as they do not encourage critical examination of the beliefs upon which that dominance is built. Standpoint theory suggests, then, that in seeking knowledge it is best to begin inquiry from the lives and experiences of marginalized groups, as the most illuminating critical questions will arise from the locations they occupy.

This theoretical understanding resists notions of essentialized identity-based differences and refocuses our attention on dynamics of power. Standpoint theorists do not claim that some individuals or groups have inherent privileged or exclusive access to truth, but rather that truth itself resides in a collective of multiple situated knowledges (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis 2002). Our social location does not simply dictate our situated knowledge, but provides us with a starting point through its ordering of our life experiences, which may be more or less resonant with dominant beliefs (Harding 1992). The implication is that we have much to learn from other situated knowledges, and that our partial perspectives are neither simple nor static. Marcel Stoetzler and Nira Yuval-Davis (2002) emphasize that situated imagination is a crucial counterpart to situated knowledge; through dialogue between those who are differently situated, we can imagine the subjectivity of another. Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis see real implications for social change in this process, as it holds promise in the realization of common values across difference.

Sandra Harding (1992) acknowledges that while standpoint theory is well articulated in intellectual feminist writings, its arguments are found in all of the new social movements. She writes:

> A *social* history of standpoint theory would focus on what happens when marginalized peoples begin to gain public voice. In societies where scientific rationality and objectivity are claimed to

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be highly valued by dominant groups, marginalized peoples and those who listen attentively to them will point out that from the perspective of marginal lives, the dominant accounts are less than maximally objective (Harding 1993:54).

Indeed, this language mirrors much of what is valued by activists in many social movements— the collective diagnosis of social problems and proposed solutions by people outside formal positions of dominance and authority. Harding's analysis is certainly echoed in the popular rallying call among activists to "speak truth to power," implying that those situated outside the realm of power have important perceptions of reality that ought to be revealed to the powerful. It is not simply about knowledge for the sake of knowledge; it is a recognition that truth and justice are bound together—it is impossible to determine what is right without the acknowledgment of what is true. If those situated in dominance have no reason to doubt that our society's institutions serve all people fairly, then why would they look upon group oppression as a social justice concern? However, when we value those marginalized by minority status as those best positioned to perceive real injustice, then testimonies of everyday, lived experiences of discrimination and oppression demand a reordering of all those institutions that aim to be socially just.

These feminist theories have given way to activism and intellectual work that has unlocked richer understandings of group difference, oppression, and social justice. One of the most thought-provoking and complex areas of theory to emerge from the study of race, class, and gender, intersectionality holds much promise for our examination of social movements' potential in simultaneously tackling various arenas of oppression and injustice. First labeled by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1989) in a confrontation of the US legal system's inability to properly account for the discrimination faced by women of color, intersectionality has burgeoned into its own rich field of study. At its core is a conceptualization of various processes of differentiation as interacting and working together to create unique syntheses of situated power that are not accounted for when considering only one process at a time (Dhamoon 2011). The theory has deep roots in Black feminism, drawn from the experiences of women of color in the complex interplay of racism and sexism. Though scholars have presented intersectionality through a myriad of more or less helpful analogies and images (Ken 2007;

Dhamoon 2011), it is perhaps best imagined, as Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) suggest, as an analytic sensibility—significant more for what it *does*, than for what it *is*. This analytic sensibility invites us to explore in depth the channels of power that flow through and across difference. It approaches group status categories not as distinct or defined, but as permeated by other categories, and constantly made and remade by relationships of power (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013).

The emergence of intersectionality theory is intricately linked to the experiences, thoughts, and activism of Black feminists. Marginalized for generations due to their unique positioning within the hierarchical structures of American institutions, black women experienced, firsthand, the multiplicity of identity and its resulting oppressions—for example, the common practice of white, enslaving men raping and assaulting black, enslaved women is understood as simultaneously racialized, gendered, and class-specific abuse. Intensified through the further marginalization of women of color within the male-dominated civil rights movements and the white-dominated women's movements, Black feminist activists' approach to identity politics came with a strong dose of criticism as well as powerful insights into the nature of oppression (Kuumba 2001). The powerful and well-known statement from a Boston-based group of Black feminists known as the Combahee River Collective declares:

> …we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives (Combahee River Collective 1983).

In her seminal work *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill Collins (2000) emphasizes that the profound impact of Black feminist thinking lies in collective standpoint—in the situated knowledge that Black women are able to produce in response to common challenges. Collins utilizes this concept of standpoint to uncover the many ways—personal, structural, institutional—that Black women's oppression operates through the inventing, naming, controlling, and reproducing of their difference by powers of domination. Through the voices of those experiencing intersecting and complex oppressions, Collins is able to illuminate the intersecting and complex nature of power.

Rita Kaur Dhamoon (2011) points out that intersectionality allows for a progression in the focus of our analysis from identities, to categories of difference, to processes of differentiation, to systems of domination. She highlights these last two foci as the most capable of combatting hegemonic power, for, through their analysis and critique, they are able to deconstruct. The Combahee River Collective did not form out of a political strategy, and was not initially concerned with political group work. Drawn together by a sense of solidarity and life circumstance, these women, through their collaborative meaning-making, translated their shared experiences into a powerful critique of oppression, connecting their struggles with those of others fighting interrelated oppressions.

The role of activism is key here. Patricia Hill Collins emphasizes the efforts of Black women's activism to transform unjust social institutions as directly linked to Black feminist thought's reconceptualization of "social relations of dominance and resistance" (Collins 2000). The concepts and practices laid out in this section, developed through both academic and activist efforts, underscore not only the imperative for social justice movement organizations to confront group oppression, but also the pressing need to consider the interconnectedness of multiple group oppressions in order to undermine the power structures that sustain them.

A couple of empirical studies examining these feminist theories and methods at play within social movement organizations are worth visiting, as they offer hints as to what processes foster anti-oppression work. Chun, Lipsitz, and Shin's (2013) research on AIWA, a group advocating for immigrant women's rights, asserts that activism involves a dialogical process of generating ideas that carefully interrogate what differences matter and why. They conclude that:

> All politics are identity politics. All struggles over power concern the social meanings applied to constructed identities and identifications to some degree (Chun, Lipsitz, and Shin 2013: 937).

This finding suggests that whatever the particular social justice focus of a given movement organization, the concern for difference and oppression is both relevant and necessary. In her research on the activist organization Somos Hermanas, Anna Carastathis (2013) examines the implications of Kimberle Williams Crenshaw's (1991) suggestion that status-based groups are best thought of as potential coalitions. Carastathis notes that the group's intersectional

approach, focused on both intergroup and intragroup differences, enables political coalitions across status categories, forging a "liberatory politics of interconnection." Political coalitions formed in this manner suggest promise for social movement organizations, offering strength in both analytic capability and political resources.

Movement Interaction

Analyses of social movements prove challenging to researchers, first and foremost, because they are not unitary, clearly-defined entities. Lacking in formal membership, social movements offer no consistent standards to determine their exact timespan or scope. I would contend that all social movements involve the mobilization of large masses of people for collective public action over a sustained period of time; as such, they are steeped in evolving relationships, collaborations, coalitions, alliances, and networks. Interaction within movements is plentiful and often well-documented historically. Interaction *between* movements, however, has been an area of less popular inquiry, despite the increasingly nuanced understanding of the powerful analytic work of social movements, which would seem to encourage a connectivity through enduring and evolving ideas.

In one significant study of a Vancouver-based network of movement organizations and activists, William Carroll and R.S. Ratner (1996) find evidence of cross-movement activism, whereby some activists are engaged in activities with more than one social movement; exposure and social connection to these activists draw others into multiple movements as well. Interestingly, this practice is found to be more likely to occur between movements that share certain frames. The concept of framing has illuminated the dynamic work of social movements in actively producing and strategically deploying explanatory concepts; movements use frames to diagnose and interpret social problems to inspire and legitimize collective action (Snow and Benford 1988; Benford and Snow 2000). Framing a continuous process of negotiation among individual perceptions and understandings; it is a proactive and collaborative meaning-making among activists and social movement organizations (Gamson 1992; Benford and Snow 2000). Within framing theory, "master frames" are those broad enough in interpretive scope to

maintain flexibility and inclusivity across social movement organizations and differently focused efforts at social change (Carroll and Ratner 1996; Benford and Snow 2000). Carroll and Ratner find that movements utilizing a "political-economy account of injustice"—one that emphasizes the structural nature of injustice—are most likely to facilitate ties to other movements, often to each other. Within this study, these movements include feminism, labor, and peace. Furthermore, Carroll and Ratner suggest that these movements are thus best poised to foster counterhegemony—"a political project of mobilizing broad, diverse opposition to entrenched economic, political, and cultural power." These findings suggest that where there is a common root of injustice, differently focused movements may be strengthened by one another.

Other empirical research has called for greater attention to social movement interaction. One such study examines the role of the Coalition of Labor Union Women as a "bridging organization"—one that specifically seeks to link and mobilize around issues from more than one social movement (Roth 1997). Further insight is drawn from another study based on an organization using an intersectional analysis to mobilize and form alliances around issues of race, gender, and disability in genetic technologies; the researchers advocate for the application of intersectionality to movement-building for greater strength and effectiveness (Roberts and Jesudason 2013). The most in-depth account of movement-to-movement influence that I have encountered centers on the women's movement's impact on the U.S. peace movement. Citing the peace movement's adoption of feminist frames, tactics, and organizational structures alongside an increase of women in leadership roles, the study concludes that movements grow and give birth to other movements, often indirectly influencing via wider social and cultural impact (Meyer and Whittier 1994). These accounts of movement interaction and influence have great implications for how we understand the potential for social movement organizations to address multiple oppressions based in race, class, gender, and sexuality.

Local, National, and Global

Identified by Ivy Ken (2007) as a crucial theoretical premise of race, class, and gender studies, the localized nature of these status categories is key to a full understanding of how they are and may be addressed by social movements. Ken argues that race, class, and gender are "done" within specific, local circumstances, and rooted in the dynamics of people's everyday lives. While the concepts of race, class, gender, and sexuality are global and national in scope and in historical context, the injustice that accompanies them is manifest in a myriad of localized ways, changing over time. To overlook how power operates through difference at one level is to miss out on potent analysis and meaningful connections between issues.

This risk of narrow vision is a real one for those who accept the challenge to address wide-ranging issues of injustice. Faced with the issue of war and interstate conflict, it seems logical to focus energy and attention on international policy. In a significant quantitative study, though, Mary Caprioli and Peter Trumbore (2003) explore the connection of international violence with domestic issues. They find that states characterized by domestic inequality and discrimination against minority groups are more likely to employ high levels of force and hostility in interstate conflict. Domestic concerns are not too small in scope or too partial to have significant influence in this issue area when scaled out. The need to appreciate local contributions is paralleled by Dara Strolovitch's (2007) research introduced earlier in this literature review; among her findings is that national groups that have stronger ties to state and local organizations are more active on disadvanged sub-group issues. The "trickling up" of local concerns provided for a more informed and sensitive national activism.

In the study of social movements, particularly in most recent years, emphasis has been placed on those movements and actions that are international in scope. Kim Voss and Michelle Williams' (2009) study of locally-based, grassroots movements highlights the achievements these local efforts have made in extending democratic civil society to new institutions and organizations, and in the development and practice of meaningful community organizing. The researchers contend that these important contributions have been overlooked because

mainstream assessment of social movements is ill-equipped to tease out the importance of local social justice work.

The existing literature on these themes, though layered and lengthy, underscores the real and exciting potential of social movement organizations to offer a complex analysis of group difference and structural oppression; nuanced connections between issues of injustice, various oppressions, and differently situated groups and organizations; and democratic processes of engagement and reflection that aim towards justice, peace, and equality.

The Washington Peace Center: A Case Study

The Washington Peace Center's strength as an organization resides in its active and relevant contributions to the peace and justice movement for over 50 years, in its strong ties to many other activist organizations, and in the gradual transformation of its articulation of peace to include many facets of anti-oppression work. This last characteristic in particular is where its strength as a case study resides, as its reinterpretation of its mission to focus on race, class, gender, and sexuality is not quite typical of existing peace groups. Here I introduce the organization with some historical background and current context, hoping to illuminate the evidence of gradual and significant change in the organization. I then present the methods of my research.

Organizational Background

The Washington Peace Center (WPC) was founded by a group of activists after participating in a 21-month protest at Fort Detrick, MD against nuclear and biological weapons; looking to build continued support through community education, the group established its office at the Quaker Friends Meeting of Washington in Washington, DC (Hostetter 2008). WPC's history is marked by steady educational and organizing support for peace efforts in Washington, DC and beyond. The organization has made significant contributions to some of the largest and most influential protests and demonstrations in recent U.S. history including Students for a Democratic Society's First National March Against the War in Vietnam in 1965, the March for

Peace and Disarmament in New York in 1982, the Peace Ribbon demonstration at the Pentagon in 1985, the Mobilization for Justice and Peace in Central America and Southern Africa in 1987, the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1987, the Peace Rally and March at Malcolm X Park weeks after 9/11, and Occupy DC from 2011 to 2012 (Sigwalt 2013).

Though its impact is difficult to measure and its work falls outside the ordinary purview of the mainstream media, its influence has been periodically recognized in academic and journalistic work. WPC has been noted for providing the most active and respectable draft counseling in DC by the Washington Evening Star during the escalation of the war in Vietnam (Sigwalt 2013), for its coalition work in opposing US military involvement in Central America (Craft Peace 2012), for its ability to "mobilize several thousand protesters on short notice" in the wake of 9/11 (Noakes, Klocke, and Gillham 2005: 242), and for its leadership role in advocating for DC voting rights at Occupy DC (Kingkade 2011). Additionally, WPC's activities in the 1960s and 1970s drew scrutiny and surveillance from the federal government; along with a small group of antiwar and civil rights activists, the organization won a historic lawsuit against FBI agents and local police officers, granting remuneration for burglary and violation of civil rights through the actions of COINTELPRO, an FBI counterintelligence operation (Franklin 1986). WPC's historical records are included in the Swarthmore College Peace Collection, a research library intended to preserve documentation of nonviolent efforts to create social change (Swarthmore College Peace Collection 2014).

Recognized by many as one of the District of Columbia's oldest and most well-respected peace organizations, WPC maintains a prominent place in a network of contemporary institutions organizing for peace and justice (Toussaint 2008). Though its current staff is limited in size to two full-time and one part-time employee, WPC has year-round support from multiple interns and volunteers, and is guided by a 10-member Coordinating Board as well as a 15-member Advisory Council composed of activist allies and leaders from an array of progressive organizations including Jobs with Justice, the Institute for Policy Studies, ONE DC, and CODEPINK (Washington Peace Center 2014a). It is predominantly funded by individual donations, with some additional grant support, and offers fiscal sponsorship to over a dozen

smaller organizations working on peace and justice issues (Washington Peace Center 2014c). WPC's daily activities are focused on creating social change through education, shared resources, and direct action. They host monthly skill-sharing events that have provided training for over 250 activists annually, publish and distribute a biannual newsletter, and organize educational events on various political issues. WPC's sound and stage equipment is shared with other organizations for around 100 events annually, its public calendar of progressive action invites participation in an average of 30-40 posted events each week, and its annual awards ceremony for local activists typically draws about 300 attendees (Washington Peace Center 2014c).

WPC's frames and collective identity were in motion even before its official founding in 1963. The 1959 – 1961 vigil in opposition to biological weapons at Fort Detrick, to which WPC traces its roots, was organized by a group of predominantly European-American, Quaker religious activists (Hostetter 2008). This opposition to weapons of war drew upon a rich Quaker history of active commitment to pacifism, tracing back to a 17th century declaration to oppose war and physical violence in order to uphold peaceful, divine honor, and recognize God's presence in every individual (Bell 2011). In the context of the United States, this Quaker tradition continued through church members' regular public opposition to war, refusal to fund war, and conscientious objection to participate in military action (Chatfield and Kleidman 1992). The establishment of WPC's office in the Friends Meeting of Washington, a Quaker house of worship, by Quaker individuals fell in line with a strong master frame of religious and spiritual pacifism, translated into creative nonviolent action against government-led war.

Infused in this master frame was a moral sense of justice, which was applied through WPC's education initiatives in its early years in Washington, DC, garnering support from those not directly connected with the Quaker faith. The collectivity derived from the faith community of Quakers expanded at WPC, and solidified through a common commitment among those morally opposed to the unjust practices of violence and war. The organization focused its attention primarily on mechanisms of the state used to wage and sustain war with other nations. This mission carried WPC through public protests demanding nuclear disarmament,

assistance for conscientious objectors drafted into war, a commitment to civil disobedience to prevent the United States from military involvement in Central America and the Middle East, and an ongoing opposition to US military involvement and exploits.

Increasingly, though, WPC and its activists dedicated energy to movement activity outside of the realm of war and international military relations. In the late 1980s and through the 1990s, WPC intentionally examined its institutional understanding of its guiding ideals. A pamphlet produced from WPC's process of "redefining peace" states:

> Peace means more than not being at war. Peace means the absence of violence. It is the process of nonviolence—the process of creating justice. In a society at peace all relationships—personal and structural, physical and psychological, economic and social—are nonviolent. Nonviolence is a positive concept meaning the replacement of violence with processes that respect the rights and dignity of all people... (Unpublished 1992)

The same process prioritized the needs of local residents and communities, and connected militarism to domestic issues of injustice. This expansion of focus has stayed with WPC, and has seen further development. The organization's current articulation of its "Peace Principles" states:

> A world at peace is not just one without war and militarism, but one without racism, heterosexism, misogyny, economic exploitation, and other forms of injustice. We know that we can never truly have a peaceful and just world as long as such oppressions exists (Washington Peace Center 2012).

This re-interpretation and re-application of WPC's master frame had great effects on the organization. In addition to its opposition to military intervention and weapons production, the organization has since actively advocated for women's reproductive rights, Native American rights, LGBT rights, workers' rights, migrant rights, voting rights, universal health care, affordable housing, immigration reform, fair trade measures, greater global economic equality, the protection of free speech, an end to domestic violence, an end to racial profiling and mass incarceration, and an end to corporate control of US politics, among many other issues. Through the lens of WPC, these issues are interconnected, and are all crucial to the necessary work for peace.

WPC's more recent highlights in the media and in local and national activist circles indicate that it has taken on a leadership role in engaging an array of these issues that do not seem to fall squarely under the umbrella of traditional antiwar and peace concerns. These

issues include racial profiling and race relations (Dubrow 2013), gentrification in Washington DC (YoshiMi 2014), and public sexual harassment (renee 2012). More importantly, WPC has been identified by a variety of organizations as a critical resource for anti-oppression work, particularly as it has prioritized training and collaboration with local activists using an anti-oppression framework (All Souls Beckner Advancement Fund 2014; Jews United for Justice 2014; Clemens 2013; White People Challenging Racism 2014). This emphasis is suggested in WPC's self-identification as an "anti-racist, grassroots, multi-issue organization working for peace, justice, and nonviolent social change," and in an overview of WPC's history noting that the organization evolved to add local and domestic social justice issues to its focus (Washington Peace Center 2014b). As listed on their website, WPC's primary goal is "to strategically link local organizing for economic and social justice to national and international struggles toward establishing structures and relationships that are non-violent, non-hierarchical, humane and just" (Washington Peace Center 2014d).

WPC's website notes that their education initiatives promote "an intersectional response to war, injustice, and other societal problems" (Washington Peace Center 2014b). With this focus comes an understanding that manifestations of violence and injustice take on different forms across identity categories, and are in fact embedded in processes and systems of differentiation. WPC's growth into this level of awareness and analysis is what I aim to unpack through the data at hand.

Methods

During its 50th anniversary year, I worked as a summer intern with WPC on an oral history project to commemorate the work of its activists over time. The project was intended by WPC staff to capture the history of the organization through the stories of its individual members and explore its unique journey through the continuous work for peace and justice. An initial list of potential participants was generated by attendees of WPC's 50th Anniversary Celebration, who volunteered themselves and others to record oral histories for the project. This was supplemented by my thorough review of WPC's historical records, including

organizational newsletters and other documents, by which I identified a number of key contributors over WPC history, incorporating them as potential participants. Where contact information was available, I reached individuals by phone or email and invited them to participate in the project. With the assistance of WPC staff, I placed priority in interview scheduling on those individuals who would provide a range of dates of involvement and issues of interest in WPC history, as well as a range of perspectives based on position location within the organization. As a result, I interviewed a number of former staff members, board members, interns, volunteers, and associated activists for the project.

Sixteen in-depth interviews were conducted between June and August of 2013. All interviews were face-to-face except for one, which was conducted over the phone. Most participants were residents of the larger Washington, DC area, and at least tangentially still connected to WPC through ongoing activist work, links to other politically progressive organizations, and/or volunteer or financial support. Their ages ranged from 33 to 86, and their collective involvement with WPC covered most of its 50-year history. The sixteen participants included eight females and eight males. All were white, marking a certain limitation to the data in terms of perspective. However, as I address in my later analysis, this is consistent with the demographic makeup of the organization during the historical periods from which most of these narratives were pulled. As white individuals, these participants offer valuable perspective on WPC's growth in addressing identity difference despite the "invisible" nature of the privilege afforded its early activists on account of race. Though participants were not asked to self-report class background, their narratives reveal that an estimated three quarters of the sample came from middle-class backgrounds—three suggested working-class backgrounds and one decidedly upper-class; almost all attained high levels of education. Likewise, though not asked to identify their sexuality or sexual preference, two identified as queer or homosexual in their narratives. The participants—some having held multiple roles at WPC over time—included three current Advisory Council members, one former Advisory Council member, one major donor, nine former board members, two legal counsels, five former staff members, one former intern, three affiliated activists, and four volunteers. All participants signed a consent form

authorizing WPC's use of the interview material in future publications, as well as the storage of the interview records in a public historical archive for future educational and research purposes. Each participant was given the option to exclude any part of his/her narrative from public access. Throughout my analysis, I use pseudonyms to protect the privacy of each participant.

In the vein of oral history, the interviews were loosely structured, with each participant asked to share his/her personal story of involvement with WPC and with activism in general. At the outset of each interview, I presented the participant with relevant documents and photographs from WPC's historical records to aid in recalling memories and factual information. Where necessary, I utilized simple prompts and probing questions to expound further narrative. I recorded each interview in both audio and video formats and later transcribed them in their entirety. Additionally, documents from the WPC archive—including newsletters, pamphlets, fundraising letters, photos, flyers, and training guides—were perused for greater historical context. A number of these documents have been included in this paper's analysis.

My approach and methods centered on an analysis akin to the grounded theory method, though not strictly within the parameters set by "original" grounded theory that prohibit taping, as well as discussion of theory and literature review prior to analysis (Glaser 1978, 1992, 1998; Glaser and Strauss 1967). While recognizing and identifying topics and themes of interest to WPC as an organization—activists' memories, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of WPC, as well as their motivations for activism—I coded the data around processes and meanings as they began to emerge across interviews. Transcribing each interview as it was completed, I used an ongoing comparative method to flush out working open codes and categories of analysis focusing on the interplay of the meaning-making and progression of ideas across activists and their experiences. I favored the codes and categories that overlapped with data from additional interviews, and I practiced some degree of theoretical sampling during interviews, encouraging participants to elaborate upon areas of analytical interest if introduced or hinted upon in their narratives. Upon the completion of my data collection, I

reexamined the data using a more selective coding process, and grouped my results into the three distinct areas of focus laid out in this paper.

It is important to note that the use of oral histories was the result of a conscious choice by the WPC staff in recognition of the inherent value of the lived experiences and perspectives of activists. As a self-identified grassroots organization that seeks to strengthen the struggle for social change, WPC is keenly aware of the need for narratives alternative to those that have dominated United States history. Historian Howard Zinn eloquently articulates the crucial link between historical narrative and the aim of social movements:

> The result of having our history dominated by presidents and generals and other 'important' people is to create a passive citizenry, not knowing its own powers, always waiting for some savior on high—God or the next president—to bring peace and justice (Zinn 2004).

Explicit in Zinn's work and plainly evident in the work of WPC is the notion that perspective, undergirded by power, dictates which stories are told, and how and why they may or may not be awarded credence. This matter serves as both a central focal point of this paper and a fundamental purpose in the use of oral history.

Despite its criticisms around the limitations of the human memory, oral history has proven valuable not simply for its collection of factual information, but more importantly for its elucidation of process and interpretation (Sarkar 2012). In the exploration of meaning-making within the context of social movements, oral history lends itself to the teasing out of the method and progress behind the actions of social activists. Its use is particularly appropriate for an investigation of WPC—an organization long dedicated to the role of "clearinghouse" in the activist community, engaged not only in direct action, but even more importantly in the collection and distribution of activists and ideas. The history of WPC is the history of its activists. The narratives used in this study, while centered on WPC, meander a myriad of times, places, thoughts and experiences; these may, on the surface, seem extraneous, but each has been folded into a rich production of knowledge at this particular site, and is a contribution to our understanding of social movements.

It is critical to acknowledge, as has become customary in the practice of oral history, that the method is marked by reflexivity—narratives are told, even performed, to an

interviewer and a potential audience, and are shaped and guided by exchange with the interviewer herself (Thomson 2007). I collected these oral histories in the role of WPC intern—a role that implies my shared political beliefs and support for the work of these activists, and a role I did not attempt to challenge in my interactions with the participants. As a young, white, educated woman in this position, my presence and my guiding questions—undoubtedly shaped by my particular interests—have drawn out of these participants narratives that are unlikely to be exactly reproduced by a differently positioned interviewer. As Kathy Charmaz (2006, 2012) emphasizes in her discussion of constructivist grounded theory, to which my method is largely aligned, analysis is not protected by theoretical innocence or ignorance. My conclusions have been drawn from the ways in which my ideas concerning activism, social justice, race, class, gender, sexuality, and much more have interacted with the data collected in this study. I recognize that my control in collecting, analyzing, and presenting these narratives affords me a significant degree of power, which I hope to wield responsibly as I proceed throughout this paper.

Evolving Through Difference

Faced with evidence of an evolution in WPC's frames and interpretations of justice and peace, I use these oral histories to trace the process behind this evolution, particularly as it relates to categories of group difference. Through these snapshots of the inner-workings of WPC, we begin to see how a consideration of group oppression has expanded and enriched the theory and praxis of this small organization's work for social change. My analysis is grouped around three major themes, laid out in the subsections to follow. First, I explore WPC's relationship to and practices regarding standpoint, or perspective relative to social position. I highlight the sensitivity to this concept as crucial to a critical understanding of difference across status categories. Second, I consider the influence of other social movement activities and activists on WPC's recognition of and explanatory approaches to social injustice. I emphasize the connections made across movements as significant to WPC's change over time. Lastly, I examine WPC's focus on local issues of injustice in Washington, DC; the dynamics of

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race, class, gender, and sexuality made evident through this focus have had great implications for WPC's work pertaining to power and difference. These themed subsections are followed by a brief summary of my findings.

Standpoint through the lens of WPC

Though the exact language of standpoint theory as outlined in my literature review may be absent in WPC's history, its concepts have had a continued strong presence. The Quaker tradition, with which WPC was originally affiliated, is a setting where the notion of a collective truth made up of valuable partial perspectives truly resonates. Believing that each individual has a direct connection to God, Quaker services do not utilize a minister or leader of worship; any person in attendance may speak if he/she feels moved by God to do so. Quaker communities have long practiced consensus decision-making, whereby each community member is called upon to use his/her conscience to vocalize support or opposition to decisions impacting the community—decisions are only made if supported by every participating member. These practices uphold the notion that, despite differences, each individual offers a valuable contribution in a collaborative effort at uncovering truth. Perhaps through a common attraction to an activist-focused enactment of these values, WPC has retained a sensitivity to the importance of multiple positions. Furthermore, the understanding of these positions as not rooted in essentialism was perhaps enhanced by the Quakers' historic formulation of an alternative masculinity, conceived in opposition to cultural norms of masculine violence and domination (Bell 2011).

James, a long-time WPC activist and former staff member, and now historian, reflects on part of the organization's growth on this issue:

> *One of the things where we have, internal to the movement—and I think to some degree in society—made progress is in moving away from assumptions of patriarchal privilege within the movement. That the style of organizing… in the late 60s and early 70s in the anti-war movement, came out of male experience and male opposition to the draft. And that the feminist movement responded to that over time. And the Peace Center was one place where that flowered really well, partly because of Quaker origins, partly because women took responsibility there… But it was about an empowerment model that evolved with a heavy dose of feminist influence. And that wasn't always easy, and we had problems and misunderstandings, but certainly I think that's an accomplishment as an organization we can*

take credit for doing our best at… And that, I think, has added up to the longevity and resilience of the Center…

This assessment not only offers insight into WPC's treatment of gender-based differences, it also addresses the resonance of much feminist work with the ideals present in the early WPC. This connection was grounded in feminism's valuable insights regarding experience, perspective, and standpoint, and, despite conflicts, this connection endured over time.

Before WPC activists articulated an explicit commitment to feminist values, the importance of social position was apparent through the work of mobilizing for peace. Several participants shared memories of significant interactions through which they became increasingly aware of effects of war and violence as mediated through experience of race, class, and gender. Nell, former WPC board member and activist, describes a memorable incident in her early days of opposing the war in a middle-class, suburban community:

> *And one day I was at home, and there was a pounding on the front door. And I went to the front door and there was a woman in terrible distress, terrible distress, and she screamed at me, "You mean so much to me! They cannot play Abraham with my Isaac!" And then she ran, practically ran, away crying. And I thought: I better understand what this is about in a different way. Because there's so much happening here… And the importance of somebody who feels free to say what they think and what they feel… I'd take that on. Particularly the part about "speak up." If it was repeated any place else, that sort of pain for not being able to speak out—I felt sure she was not able to speak out in her home or workplace—and that was a motivation…*

The woman's reference to the Biblical imagery of Abraham sacrificing the life of his son at God's demand insinuates her very real fear for the life of her own son to the war at the hands of the government. Nell's recognition that this woman was silenced regarding her feelings and opinions over this, not only in public but also *in her home*, suggests the particular structural and cultural oppression of women in a patriarchal society at war. Becky explains that her concern for those who are silenced in this way was a significant motivation to pursue further work in activism.

Joshua, who interned with WPC as a teenager in 1965, reflects on those early days and his continued work with draft counseling in large, urban communities of color:

> *…most of the people who were coming in to the Peace Center were not—you know, were white people. That's certainly my recollection… There were black conscientious objectors, but very few— you know, the peace churches didn't have any real, uh, foothold in the black community… it just was not relevant. And again, the way the whole conscientious objector system worked—*

you write this nice little essay and then you explain it—that was not the way these [black] kids were going to be able to deal with the system.

Here Joshua recognizes the limitations of this area of peace work by highlighting race and class difference. Though it was a powerful and important tool, WPC's draft counseling came with an early awareness that the services were not equally accessible or helpful to all those affected by the war. In talking about "dealing with the system," Joshua acknowledges that the government's military draft was structured by white, middle-class males in positions of political power, and thus, the legal process of avoiding the draft was far from sensitive to the needs of differently positioned individuals. Joshua explains:

Basically, looking back on it, it was a process really geared toward articulate, literate, middle-class kids. You could write an essay—basically that's what you had to do—and touch all the bases, check all the boxes. And for a lot of people it was just… inconceivable that they could do that.

Only those with a certain educational and cultural toolkit were able to complete the process and be excused by the government from violent combat. For those marginalized as lower or working class and as non-white, this process was extremely difficult. In this instance, the differences of race and class quite literally dictated the life chances of the individuals at hand.

Recalling another illuminating encounter, James describes an unlikely interaction during the negotiations with multiple law enforcement agencies in the planning of the 1985 Ribbon demonstration to commemorate the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The brainchild of Justine Merritt—a religious peace activist described by one participant as "grandmotherly"—is remembered by many as a particularly moving demonstration. Public citizens were encouraged by the organizers of the event to decorate a yard of fabric depicting what they couldn't bear to think of as lost in the event of a nuclear war; 25,000 panels were submitted and tied together and held in a loop around the Pentagon and the Capitol building. James recalls the behind-the-scenes planning for the event:

There was this woman that we had to deal with in the Park Service… She was a large woman, always kind of grumpy, short with people. But in our last meeting she came to the women from the Center for New Creation… who were the lead organizers for the event… and said "Now, my son's in the Marine Corp in the Middle East and I'm concerned about him…Where do I turn in my section of the Ribbon?" And it was like, "Wow!" …We thought this woman was against us, but in fact, we couldn't have done it without her and she wants to participate in her way.

This woman's question was, in part, surprising to the activists because of her "grumpy" nature, but likely also because of the implications of gender and class present. Though the event was designed by a woman, largely led by women, and was influenced by feminist approaches to peace, this woman was an unexpected participant. Her presumably working-class status as a female in a male-dominated, blue collar job suggests her "otherness" as female. A woman in uniform, with a son in the Marines, is thought to be less likely to protest for peace, not only because of a connection to the military, but also based on presumptions of class background. Though it seems clear that the event was not designed for women like this one, her participation drives the recognition that she has just as much, if not more, to lose in a nuclear war than the average American, and that the ways that gender and class structure her realities should be reflected and examined by a national movement for peace.

As WPC encountered these voices, its analysis of war and other societal problems grew richer. There was a real recognition that the perspectives of people in different social positions were helping to uncover important truths in WPC's work. Amy spearheaded counter-recruitment efforts at WPC after the end of conscription. Bothered by the US military's recruitment presence in local public schools, Amy gained permission from the superintendent of DC public schools to offer education and counseling to students faced with the option to join the military. She partnered with Hank, a man who had previously served in the military, to educate these students about the realities of war and service. She speaks of Hank:

> *And Hank, you know, lived in Anacostia, and I would go pick him up and drop him off, and… We had this really wonderful bond, but we just came from such different worlds, and that was always challenging, but also really great. So I think I was just immersed in this learning most of the time.*

Here Jane recognizes that Hank's situated knowledge was incredibly valuable not only because of the experience inside the military he could offer students, but also because of the perspectives he could offer Amy as a person inhabiting a "different world" within her own city. She credits Hank with a great deal of her personal education during her time at WPC.

The emphasis on the value of multicultural representation is certainly not unique to WPC, and is not always helpful in work for equality. Collins (1998) explains how diversity may be commodified when an essentialized difference is attached to status, and the structure of an

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institution remains unchanged. Susan, former WPC director and long-time activist, also warns

of this process. She speaks from her experience working with WPC's Advisory Council:

> *I think a lot of mistakes that white organizations make is they find maybe one or two people of color they try to bring in on their boards or in some position of leadership, which is pretty often a recipe for failure because the dynamics of power aren't equalized enough to allow real shifts to happen. And what we did was we built an Advisory Council of about 25 people from every area of the city, every ethnicity in the city pretty much, almost every issue group in the city, and probably missing some of course, but it was a pretty dynamic space. It was the type of space and it was the place where I first learned that when you cross these historical lines of division, you release and generate a lot of power.*

Again, this statement suggests that the attention to standpoint helps to resist essentialism.

Susan's emphasis is not only on race, but also on location, ethnicity, and social issue focus.

Dynamics of power are a concern not only for society at large, but also within the context of

the organization. The "power" of the assembled council is derived from the collection of

situated knowledge and its ability to address these power dynamics.

WPC practices of deliberate democracy and consensus decision-making, sharpened over

time, helped to foster this type of environment. William, major donor and former board

member for WPC, describes his early experiences with similar organizational procedures:

> *For the first time in my life I saw a process by which there was a real encouragement for the shyest people to bring out their creativity in the questioning of what to do. And that was fantastic. I remember a moment when, uh, someone—a woman—had challenged a man about a sexist remark, and she was beginning to try to have a conversation. And I think he said something like, "Look, we've got to occupy this nuclear site soon; we don't have time to talk about this." And immediately, other people spoke up and said, "No, we have time. We'll make time for that. If we don't deal with our sexism, our racism, whatever, what's it gonna matter if we keep a nuclear power plant from going up?" That was really… just an "Aha" kind of moment—that things could actually work this way… It's about getting everybody's creative energy pooled to try to save ourselves.*

Robert, former WPC staff member, also reflects on the importance of this process at WPC:

> *It was very much, "Here are some tools, some concrete ways to approach problems that with which you can live the world you are trying to build." We were doing it. We were trying to live by the principles that we were advocating for. The point is, it wasn't just anger—there was also the sense of creating something positive. Creating community, creating a model of interacting. Even disputes, conflict. Dealing with it in the way that we wished one would do internationally.*

This attention to the inner dynamics of the organization allowed for additional changes that

enhanced and reoriented some of its efforts. The Advisory Council referenced above assessed

WPC's programs and generated ideas for how the organization could more effectively address

issues of racism and prejudice.

As a mostly white organization, WPC began to delve deeper into racial dynamics. Susan explains:

> *…we really began to say, "We need to do some anti-racism work," and that "That's going to be woven into everything we do." And again, there was no blue print. We started to educate ourselves and knew we were going to need some training, so, based on some recommendations, we chose the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond.*

This educational group from New Orleans trained WPC staff and volunteers on "undoing racism," exploring their own racist underpinnings and biases. The progress that came out of these efforts was not always easy. The difficulties in facing a history of white supremacy and its resulting trauma and anger are clear in Susan's account of being confronted and held accountable by leaders in the process who had been oppressed through racial discrimination:

> *I got my ass kicked a number of times by some of these powerful women on our board. And it was difficult and it was painful, and sometimes it didn't feel fair, but it was still an essential part of it. I've learned from it and now it's a part of me teaching white people.*

Just as Susan carries these formative experiences into her current anti-oppression work, so too does WPC. This process equipped the organization to more fully engage notions of standpoint through an analysis of privilege and the relative nature of power.

Much like recent work in intersectionality has highlighted its analytic capabilities beyond the focus on women of color and into statuses that are not marked by oppression (Carbado 2013; Riggs 2010), the exploration of intersecting identities by activists in social movements has uncovered ways to address statuses of power and privilege. WPC's process of engaging in self-reflexive considerations of race relations enhanced its understanding of white privilege; likewise, this notion of privilege has been applied by activists within the organization to gender, class, and sexuality, among other categories. As WPC activists have approached issues of peace and justice, they have done so in a context that has encouraged them to examine their social location with respect to both privilege and oppression. Richard, longtime community organizer associated with WPC, acknowledges his most influential feminist teachers as women of color who understand intersectionality. Their guidance has helped him account for the intersections of his privilege. He explains:

> *We have to be sensitive, we have to be empathetic… I'm a white guy. I do not speak for the Native American grandmothers. I do not speak for African People's Revolutionary Party. I do not speak for… the Mexican people. In my feminist work, I don't pretend to speak for women. I try*

to, the best that I can, address men when I'm talking about these issues… As a white male, I try to understand boundaries, you know? What can I do and what can't I do. And part of that is developing and maintaining friendships, talking with people, friends, so that if I step over a line, they're gonna shut me down, you know, and I'll learn that lesson.

With this privilege come great challenges to activists working for equality and justice. Ruth, former WPC board member and affiliate activist, describes some of the trying aspects of this work:

So it's continually, that need for me, to suspend the privilege in me, which is: "I think we should do it this way, this is the way it should be done". Because I believe that that goes back to—suspending that, moving away from that—to the revolution of society… It goes back personally to challenging that and, as well, socially and politically challenging that… You have to evolve with the issues. And as you peel the onion, the issues become more complex and deeply rooted in society, in values, and identities, and you have to be willing to address that and shift. As an activist, the most important thing is you have to be able to hand it off to somebody else... or you're not doing any good. You're just being a goddamned colonialist if you don't hand it off.

Likewise, Tyler, WPC affiliate activist and current Advisory Council member, describes the difficulty of coming to terms with privilege.

And the really hard part for me was seeing how I was playing into it. You don't wanna think of yourself as being racist and sexist and all these other things, but the fact is you're feeding into all these systems. And, like, being trained as a [white] dude in this country, I have a lot of behaviors that are really sexist and really racist. And so, you know, feminism and anti-racist work is something for me that I learned to practice, rather than saying like, "I am a feminist," or, "I am anti-racist." Saying like, "These are things that I practice."

Even while identifying as activists challenging structures of power and working for justice, Ruth and Tyler recognize the ways in which power is manifested in their actions and behaviors. With a keen sensitivity to their own positions of relative privilege, they attempt to deconstruct and debilitate the processes of oppression.

This intentional consideration of structural privilege and oppression is cultivated and underscored by activist trainings regularly conducted by WPC today. WPC staff working with an "anti-oppression" model invite activists of all kinds of coalitions to name different dimensions of their identities and map them on a continuum of marginalization to dominance within a continuum of circumstance ranging from situational to systemic. In this way, they recognize strong personal identification and also transform it into an ongoing discussion of structural forces. This analytic sensibility makes clear that no individual is "all-oppressed" or "all-oppressing" (Ken 2007). They regularly invoke the term "intersectionality" when drawing

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parallels between various forms of oppression, and are quick to name privilege when dealing with social categories. WPC has forged a dynamic community space centered on an intentional articulation of the connections between various structures of oppression, and the need to collectively resist them. In their own words, "A peaceful world is one that seeks, sustains and nurtures collective liberation both for those who have been historically marginalized and those who have been historically privileged." (Washington Peace Center 2012)

Interaction with Other Movements

Though WPC's foundational ideals and orientation helped to foster an environment conducive to an intentional and collaborative analysis of group difference and power, its evolution is also, in large part, due to its relationships with other social movements and organizations. Heightened by its location in the nation's capital, WPC's interactions and exchanges with social movement organizations and collective efforts at social change have been frequent throughout its history. From its inception, WPC has been composed of activists whose interests have not been confined to war/peace issues. In its earliest years, WPC operated through activists who supported the efforts of other movements, attending demonstrations such as the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (Hostetter 2008). Most significantly, though, it seems as though WPC's frames have been shaped and expanded by the frames of other organizations. To further explore this process of change, we must consider the connections through which WPC engaged with the ideas and messages of other social movement efforts.

Many of the social movements exploding in the 1960s and 1970s experienced a significant racial divide that was recognized and acknowledged by participating activists. Margaret, an activist and attorney who has offered legal services to WPC over many years, explains that there were tensions between anti-war groups and civil rights groups, particularly when large-scale, national anti-war demonstrations—consisting of mostly white people— were organized without regard for the local, predominantly black residential population of DC, which was affected by use of resources, security risks, and heightened police presence. As the Anti-

war Movement flourished, WPC took on a larger role as a local organizing hub and resource base for incoming national demonstration groups. As such, these tensions were, at times, palpable, and were furthermore exacerbated by the FBI through its Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO):

> So the Anti-war and Civil Rights Movements were going on at the same time. It was a crazy time… [The US government] didn't want those two movements to come together... The COINTELPRO program [was created] to help, among other things, keep these two movements apart… [There were] dirty tricks that were used in DC… They started this whole thing with the Black United Front…

Margaret, who represented WPC and other activists in the historic lawsuit against FBI agents for illegal surveillance and activity, goes on to describe how COINTELPRO posed as white anti-war activists and circulated inflammatory racist messages to the Black United Front, a national group working for African American civil rights. Incidents like this one contributed to a glaring challenge for those working nationally on peace issues to overcome regarding race.

Despite awareness and earnest desires to work across difference, the racial divide between movements persisted over time. James explains the climate in the late 1980s and WPC's efforts to begin to address race through coalition work:

> …Unfortunately, peace and even Central America were kind of seen as the white issues, and anti-Apartheid was the black international issue. And the '87 demonstration was an attempt to put South Africa and Central America on an equal footing, 'cause those were the two big demands. And the coalition was, at least tacitly, a coalition of religious and labor leaders. That didn't work out perfectly at the time, but it planted the seeds for a more conscious application of an anti-racist focus, as well as an empowerment model for what the Peace Center was doing. I don't think that was very well articulated as the purpose of the Peace Center until the late 80s, early 90s. And we went through a lot of slings and arrows and struggle to get to that point. That wasn't successful in and of itself in the 90s, but it meant a departure from presumptions that had led to a kind of self-segregation of movement activities in this city.

Even within the context of organizations focused on international issues with the same master frame of justice, group status categories seemed to dictate the frames deployed and priorities emphasized. Though WPC, among other organizations, made efforts to stress commonalities between groups, success was not immediate. Rather, it was through the interactions and conflicts in these efforts that WPC learned from organizations that were differently situated. The "departure from presumptions" to which James refers is key to the dialogical process of working through group differences in social movements. This ongoing work helped to bring WPC to its eventual anti-racism frame and enriched its analysis of oppression.

Not unlike the conflicts surrounding race, the mainstream US peace movement faced troubles centered on differences based on class, gender, and sexuality. Despite its longstanding critique of the ruling elite that wages war, the traditional movement has been challenged by activists for its lack of concern with engaging issues of domestic class struggle (Rose 2000; Piatelli 2009). Furthermore, the peace movement, as led by the middle class, has been criticized by its failure to include lower and working class groups in its leadership (Stout 1996). Through women's organizing, institutional violence such as war has been linked to the structural violence of patriarchy and personal violence against women (Alonso 1993). Unwilling to prioritize these connections and issues, male-dominated anti-war organizations stuck to a more narrow definition of peace work, prompting some women to form their own parallel organizations, marked by considerations of gender, and often class and race as well (Plastas 2011).

The social and political impacts of several social movements' efforts can be traced in the experiences of many activists cycling through WPC. Consider this anecdote from Sarah, a WPC activist in the 80s, concerning her earlier introduction to activism:

> In those years, also, it was the beginning of the women's movement. I became very aware of dynamics going on in my own family. I have a very vivid memory of going to a guerilla theater event at Michigan State University that had to do with feminism and illustrating sexist relationships. It just changed the whole way I observed what was going on around me… When I got to college, I kind of got involved in a lot of that kind of stuff.

Sarah was not alone in her experience of this shift in consciousness; many individuals drawn to a particular movement or organization through a master frame of justice found that the frames of other movements resonated with them as well. As Sarah makes clear, these interpretive frames are lenses through which perspectives may change. As activists' perspectives evolved over time, so too did the collective perspective of WPC and its approach to peace work.

Amy describes some of WPC's experience in this collision of frames, revealing how its activists were influenced by these ideas, and also took an active role in facilitating the connections between movements and collaborative demonstrations, recognizing common causes for progress.

> …It was also a great time to be at the Peace Center because you kind of saw this coming together of a lot of different things. The anti-Nuclear power movement was really gaining

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> *steam. And then that got hooked up with the anti-Nuclear weapons movement. But there were deeper questions being asked about, you know, sort of environmental perspectives, like 'What are we doing to the environment? And what are we doing to the earth? And how is that related to what's happening to women? All of these things were kind of coming together in a very exciting way. That just made me so happy because I felt like we were really getting at something very deep that needed to happen. So we were part of all kinds of different demonstrations and organizing that was going on...*

Amy describes creative demonstrations organized by women that wove together ideas and images of peace in a holistic way, and emphasized the connection of militarism to domestic violence. This opened way for the "heavy dose of feminist influence" to which James referred. WPC's leadership was increasingly critical of power and dominance, and particularly aware of these dynamics internal to their efforts and larger affiliated movements. Most individuals in the role of Director at WPC have been women, and these feminist frames resonated with them. At least one director was openly lesbian, and WPC was, at an early stage, active in the movement for gay rights, participating in demonstrations to oppose discrimination based on sexual orientation and in support of same-sex marriage. The articulation of WPC's anti-war stance grew increasingly connected to domestic issues and the lack of economic resources for the poor. Amy describes the messages they sought to communicate about war:

> *It was very much, "We're here because this is a symbol of this much deeper issue about the United States—its role in the world... [what] its actually expressing in the world, you know, the violence to the earth... the violence to the people who go into the military, the violence to the people who are in the countries that we're intervening in. And, you know, the budget—that we're spending all this money on the military, nuclear weapons—that means we don't have money to invest in our people in a way that would really enhance people's lives." All of that was brought together, so it wasn't just like, "We're protesting war"...*

This reexamination of violence led WPC to more fully articulate connections between local, national, and global issues—a point to which I will return in the following section. The entrance of domestic injustices into WPC frames strengthened its sensitivity to issues of class and poverty. Amidst the organization's meaning-making process regarding difference, these class-based power dynamics began to be challenged on both an individual level and a systemic level.

Energized by the confluence of new social movements, many young activists who were critical of authority and eager to engage new perspectives (Conway 2006), experienced fluidity across movements, and saw multiple causes as interconnected. Richard explains:

This is a generational thing, but from where I sit… maturing as an adult activist in the 70s—and many of us still, my age, feel the same way—we really didn't understand the idea of movements. We saw one movement; we did not make a distinction. And we were criticized for that, 'You're totally scattered. You can't make a difference. You have to focus on one thing.

The criticisms to which John refers are echoed today, particularly amid many different efforts at social change through social movement organizations and nonprofits competing for resources and concerned with measurable results. There is reason, though, to turn to this cross-movement activity for answers to the major social problems of today, as laid out in the claims of counterhegemonic potential previously vistited in my literature review. As an organization explicitly dedicated to movement-building, WPC, along with the activists familiar with it, recognizes the potential of this work, even at the expense of more measurable results. Indeed, facing serious hurdles over time and almost ceasing to exist as an organization, WPC has been rescued by activists unwilling to give up on the promise of its difficult work. Charlie is one such activist. He explains:

…In the early—I wanna say 2003-2004, a handful of us who—experienced local activists convened into an ad-hoc group by some folks who were concerned about the condition of the Peace Center. It had gone through some difficult times in terms of inner turmoil, and staffing, and money, and so folks were worried that the Peace Center might not hold together. So I got involved in earnest at that juncture… primarily as part of that group of people responsible for the Peace Center, putting it back on track, reestablishing us, getting folks to contribute to us, stabilizing staffing, growing the Board—and more importantly, not just, you know, making it healthier organizationally, but become again a really valuable activist presence in Washington, a crossroads for activists who are doing all kinds of things around all kinds of issues, they have to—they almost need to come through the Peace Center to do that meaningfully in Washington; I think that's really vital.

Charlie, who has continued to stay involved at WPC as a staff member and then board member, sees the synthesis of WPC's engagement across movements over the years as an invaluable resource to the activist community in Washington, DC and beyond. To attend to Charlie's point of WPC's "meaningful" work in Washington, I now turn to an examination of the organization's relationship with its local setting.

Attention to the Local

Though large, abstract notions of status categories have been interrogated through the work of WPC, these notions have been accessed through and rooted in the location of

Washington, DC. Much of the progress made in WPC's articulation of an anti-oppression framework has come from its inability to ignore local manifestations of oppression.

Amy's work on counter-recruitment strategies in the late 70s, offered her an education in race and class through the specificities of Washington, DC dynamics. Having fought to gain a presence in the DC public school system, Amy elaborates on her experience:

> *I ended up focusing a lot on young people and how they were being affected by militarism… Having grown up going to the DC public schools, we were struck by how they had turned the counseling centers into recruitment centers. You would walk into some of these counseling offices and all you would see was military recruitment posters. There was a particular emphasis on young people of color who didn't have a lot of other alternatives…*

Amy adds greater context to this statement as she later describes the "massive racism" present in the DC area, starkly seen with the heavy opposition of white parents to simple racial integration initiatives in the DC public school system, which consisted of 85% black students at the time, but remained largely segregated. She continues:

> *Then the DC schools are having to deal with all of these dynamics. Not having enough funding, and a lot of them having so many different challenges, and unemployment in the black community. What are the options for the youth coming out of the schools?*

Here Amy is recognizing the ways in which race and class are embedded into the specific structures and institutions of the District of Columbia, creating specific circumstances for young people of color.

> *I mean, you just scratch the surface, right, and there was just massive racism… I really support statehood for DC and… A lot of people opposed it because white people felt like they wouldn't have any political power because, of course, it would always be two black senators, right? And I was like, "Well, it's just like any other political process—everybody gets to go vote and then the outcome is what the outcome is." But it was like—I think a lot people were willing to have no political rights rather than deal with those political dynamics. You know, I was just, like, stunned over and over again, you know, like how powerful all of that was.*

To work on issues of militarism and recruitment without attention to these dynamics would have been meaningless in this environment; race and class were being "done" through the assertion of political power and economic forces, dictating the realities of these students' life chances and relationship to militarism.

Perhaps the most defining and influential moment for the WPC of today was an intentional decision to make local issues of injustice a front-and-center focus of the organization. Despite the visibility of these issues at various times in WPC's history, it took

particularly dire circumstances for WPC to make them a top priority. Luke, life-long activist and former WPC co-director explains:

> …One of the things that was heartbreaking about the peace movement in general, but especially here in Washington DC, was how unconnected it was to the majority population, which is the African American community… the introduction of crack cocaine into the context of poverty and desperation had led to the explosion of what was called a drug war, and in some sense it is—it's really a war about money, because, essentially, you have people that live in the midst of the richest city in the richest country in the world, and they're systematically denied access to those opportunities… And it was very painful… that the Peace Center wasn't focused on this. We were focused on the Middle East, we were focused on South Africa, we were focused on Central America, and all of those were important, but there was a war happening right here… If we didn't wrestle with the drug war and the terrible toll it was taking… how could we call ourselves the Washington Peace Center?

James echoes the irony in Luke's statement in his description of how these local manifestations of race and class exposed the incongruence of the circumstances regarding violence and peace between these differently situated groups:

> There was a period where every night we would drive by an arrest, you know, which would be five cop cars, police with guns drawn, and five black guys face-down on the street. And that was a real reshaping of the day to day life of the city… There [were] places where that was a priority issue—surviving that epidemic—and not the things that we were concentrating on, which, in that context, could seem esoteric.

This imagery is particularly striking in contrast with the testimony of most of the interviewed activists over their experiences being arrested for nonviolent civil disobedience. David's use of the word "esoteric" highlights the grand irony that would have defined WPC had it not evolved. It is an alarming difference that separates the white, middle-class, male going to jail for protesting war and the black male from an impoverished neighborhood face-down on the street, trying to survive. The leadership of WPC made the decision at that time to make the drug war and violence the main issue of the organization's newsletter, signifying that local issues were no longer tangential to WPC's mission.

The recognition of another "war at home" surfaced in a number of interviews with activists recalling the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s. Ruth recalls:

> I can remember one of the first AIDS marches…being a peacekeeper, being at the front of the line…and I felt like I was at a fucking death march. Because people were so sick in those days, it was just…I had to stop a couple of times just to sob. That's when there were so many fewer survivors, people were coming then for the first national march severely ill and hopeless.

The experience of this epidemic locally helped activists at WPC understand sexuality as a status in a deeper way. The prevalence of the disease among those who identified as

homosexual created a crippling stigma and dictated the lack of urgency with which it was initially met on an institutional level. On one level experienced as personal identity and lifestyle, this status became illuminated as a site of oppression when considered in a local context, uncovering important insights into systemic power.

WPC's growing sensitivity to local issues and needs fostered a greater understanding of the underlying forces at play in the organization of national demonstrations. Concerned about the negative impacts experienced by local residents of Washington, DC, marginalized by various iterations of status and disenfranchised by a lack of statehood, WPC has taken its collective knowledge and shared it with other organizations. After hosting a workshop entitled "DC's Not Your Protest Playground," WPC pooled input from various DC activists and organizations to create its "DC Organizing Principles"—a document attempting to draw connections between local, national, and global issues, and outline best practices for organizing that would address the noted problems (Washington Peace Center 2010). This document acknowledges local manifestations of race and class while locating them within local structures and institutions. In addition to calling for inclusion of local residents in decision-making and hiring practices, this document asks that the measure of success of any action held in DC include the advancement of local organizing on the issue in question, asserting that "every issue being protested in the nation's capital that is global, national, or local can be seen first-hand in the communities of the District of Columbia" (Washington Peace Center 2010).

This anchoring of national and global issues in the interrogation of local injustices is what keeps the justice work of WPC from getting lost in abstraction, and what maintains its critical reflexivity that resists the unconscious reproduction of oppression. Instead of a preoccupation with strategies to solicit the interest of African American and working class communities in anti-war efforts, WPC's engagement with local issues has illuminated how the effects of war and violence are mediated by these very statuses, as these groups disproportionately suffer from the budget cuts that accompany the crippling national costs of war. The trauma of militarization so long opposed by WPC is recognized by its activists as manifest in the over-policing of poor DC communities of color, and the political opposition so

long endorsed by WPC is weakened by the disenfranchisement of stateless residents and non-violent criminal records. Similarly, the celebration of physical dominance and force is certainly not limited to the military, but also woven into cultural norms of masculinity and heterosexuality that have implications for the safety and dignity of DC residents who are female, queer, and gender non-conforming. These, among many other connections between issues drawn by WPC, emanate not from perceived universal qualities or characteristics attached to identities, but rather from an understanding of how structural forces shape and reshape the life experiences of individuals and groups categorized by value-laden identity markers.

Summary

Though it may not be obvious to a casual onlooker how or why a peace organization came to critically focus on domestic issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality, these data uncover a rich and gradual process of group difference interrogation and critical examination of the channels of power flowing through social stratification and oppression. The work of social movements aimed at justice and equality lies in collaboratively diagnosing societal injustice and its causes, and addressing these in ways that advance solutions of positive social change. Through this work, WPC has encountered many challenges involving status-based difference and power, which it has confronted over time in thought-provoking and promising ways. These practices are the result of an ongoing dialogical process strengthened by the organization's commitment to the consideration and value of perspective—particularly of the marginalized-- and to internal practices that resist hierarchical power and foster democracy. WPC's journey through meaning-making and understanding injustice has been enriched by the infusion of narratives and frames originating from other social movements and activists with perspectives on oppression rooted in group status differences. As these narratives and frames have resonated with WPC's dedication to peace and justice, the organization's frames have evolved to articulate a sharp and sophisticated recognition of power dynamics and systemic inequality, often anchored in local intersections of various forms of oppression. Accompanied by a gradual

self-reflexivity, this recognition has challenged assumptions of universality and essentialized difference and aimed at more radical democratic work of coalitions and movement-building across various social positions.

Conclusion

Through its sensitivity to standpoint and situated knowledge, its ability to open its frames to influence from compelling social movements outside its initial focus, and its awareness and concern for the connections between local, national, and global dynamics, WPC has arrived at a critical conclusion both hinted upon and explicitly aimed at by the many activists and scholars behind the reviewed literature—that power and oppression rooted in perceived group difference is, by nature, a social justice concern that begs to be addressed by social movement organizations. WPC, though not born out of race-, class-, gender-, or sexuality-based oppression, has, through years of praxis and collaborative difference interrogation, adopted the analytic sensibility offered through the perspective of such oppressed groups. This sensibility has not only illuminated complex power dynamics, but has also recognized difference within difference, thereby debunking ideas of status categories as static and uniform. It has promoted the value of the situated knowledge of individuals and groups, influenced by unique social positions within the structures dictating shared realities.

In many ways, WPC is a powerful breeding ground for what Nira Yuval-Davis (2012) refers to as "situated imagination," which holds the promise of "transversal politics." In this process, dialogical collective knowledge, grounded in shared values, aids in the achievement of greater equality. She writes:

> While politics of solidarity can be directed by care and compassion to defend any victim of racialization, discrimination, inferiorization, and exclusion, transversal solidarity is an alliance of mutual trust and respect, recognizing but transcending decentered differential positionings of power (Yuval-Davis 2012: 52).

These oral histories make clear that WPC's history of activist work has awakened and encouraged the situated imagination need for its analysis of power. Likewise, this notion of transversal solidarity can be traced in its activists' vision of the purpose of the work. Susan explains:

> *…It's the synergy of people working together and creativity and community that leads to also shared values and common practices. Opportunities to grow through where we are oppressive and arrogant and egotistical, because that's what we were raised to be and it comes into play when we try to work in groups. So we need to hear each other and figure out how to heal and move forward. The healing and trauma work I'm recognizing as an essential part of this.*

Similarly, Luke describes the immeasurable potential of this work to further democracy and achieve the goals for a peaceful and just world:

> *So it's not a narrow vision where you have to be this or one single way, or you can't be part of what we're doing. It creates a space where we can get to know each other, where we can exchange ideas, where we can come become friends, become comrades in the struggle… We just need to find the political and moral will to pursue that seriously—and to have the smarts and the heart to connect with people to make that happen.*

Here, Luke's words resonate with Crenshaw's (1991) notion of "summoning the courage" to examine the exclusionary practices within movements wishing to present as unified. As Luke further states:

> *It is easy to stay in the kind of activist ghetto, particularly the white activist ghetto. But we do that at our own peril, we do that by betraying the ideals that we claim to hold.*

There is also a strong parallel here to Carastathis's (2013) elaboration on the potential coalitions exposed by the recognition of split identities and subgroups; indeed, WPC, drawing from a long history of coalition-building activism, has approached its work to healing newly uncovered contestations of power difference with an eye, always, on the potential for unity over uniformity.

To present WPC as a completed product of success is not my aim, and is certainly not useful to my argument. Just as the status categories and structures of race, class, gender, and sexuality are dynamic, interactive, and ever-changing, so too (I hope) are the social movements and organizations addressing them. The organization continues to question its own effectiveness in applying an anti-oppression framework. Months ago, it convened a gathering of 50 facilitators who focus on anti-oppression work in an attempt to pool perspectives and knowledge, and brainstorm effective ways to collaborate across issues. WPC is currently developing a new strategic plan to examine ways in which racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism may still be present within its organizational structure and practices; the staff is preparing for perhaps another process of "re-defining" its goals and visions.

My implication that WPC is a stronger and more effective organization as a result of its anti-oppression work is intentional. Several activists voiced opinions of this nature in their interviews, pointing to stronger and more numerous ties to other community organizations and networks; greater diversity in the WPC community, particularly with regard to race and age; and increased organizational stability in terms of staff and finances. Though leery of mere token representation, WPC recognizes diversity in its leadership as one measure of its success, aiming to reflect the diversity of Washington, DC; its board membership is half white and half people of color, including 5 women, 4 men, and one transgender individual. The board and Advisory Council also include members who are queer, members who are native to DC, and members who have immigrated to the US. WPC's collaborative and coalition work in 2012 included over 80 other groups and organizations (Unpublished 2012). Its recognition as a hub in the local activist community is reflected in the hundreds that attend its annual Activist Awards.

The difficulty in quantifying WPC's progress is not unrecognized within the organization; it poses a regular challenge for staff members in applying for grants with funders who are eager to see numbers measuring outcomes. What is also recognized, however, is that much of the difficult and necessary work of social change is not quantifiable in this manner. In a sea of single-issue nonprofit organizations beholden to measurable outcomes, perhaps the "fractures" perceived by scholars and activists in progressive efforts are not due to insurmountable identity claims, but rather in an unwillingness to allow these claims to reshape perceptions and interpretations of the unjust world that is to be changed. As William, major donor to WPC states:

> *We really don't want to stop our work because we can't become the totally merged, integrated society that we would like to be. We can't, we should not, I think, be embarrassed or feel humiliated or as if we're doing something wrong just because we can't find this ideal mixture of ages and sex and race. There's a process sometimes that is occurring, and we trust ourselves in that. The Peace Center struggled through that, and I think it came out better for going through the struggle. There will always be that struggle.*

As William recognizes, the important implications of WPC's past and present are not centered in having the correct formula for equality; what is crucial is the potential of its process. WPC's approach to social change has wrestled identity politics into a somewhat

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paradoxical solidarity built through difference. Through its struggles and imperfections, it enacts the cross-difference radical democratic work for which theorists have called. Despite the conflict and separation often experienced by social movements due to recognition of group differences, it is clear that this recognition, when engaged in ways similar to that observed through WPC, has the potential to unlock mechanisms through which equality and justice may be realized in new and exciting ways.

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