

**ANARCHISM AND PREFIGURATIVE POLITICS IN THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT: A  
STUDY OF OCCUPIED SPACE, HORIZONTAL STRUCTURE, AND ANARCHIST  
THEORY IN PRACTICE**

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Occupy Wall Street began on September 17, 2011, when hundreds of people with grievances regarding the current political and economic system in the United States, and inspired by the Arab Spring and anti-austerity protests overseas, occupied a park in the financial district in New York City. Over the next several weeks, Occupy groups formed in cities across the U.S. and around the world as tens of thousands of people joined the movement. Participants used horizontal organizing structures and carried out practices in the occupied spaces meant to deconstruct concentrations of power and forge new economic, political, and interpersonal relations. These approaches characterize anarchist theory in practice today. Anarchists established the Occupy model but the majority of participants did not identify with the philosophical tradition. Participants struggled with making the non-hierarchical structures work, and most occupations were evicted by winter 2012, foreclosing the possibility of using the spaces as laboratories for further social experimentation with small-scale solutions for societal transformation. However, the member-led, space-taking approaches of the Occupy model continue to inspire anti-austerity protesters today.

In this dissertation, I examine what happens when a mass movement uses anarchist approaches. I interviewed 57 participants of the Occupy Movement in three cities: New York City; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Oakland, California. Analyzing conflicts revealed deep political disagreements among participants about the way society should work. I argue that participants must have political affinity and a commitment to the practices meant to enact shared values, including: a willingness to engage in ongoing experimentation, which requires a suspension of static, authoritative knowledge about the best way to struggle; a desire for harmony instead of unity; and an embrace of conflict as part of a culture that accepts a fluid and unstable existence, desiring liberation through continuous negotiation. I find both prefigurative and instrumental approaches were present and strategic, and that conflict centered on trying to maintain their co-existence. I challenge scholars' misrepresentations of anarchism, and examine what constitutes anarchism today, discovering it is better described as a balancing act between prefigurative aims and a desire for autonomy.

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## **PREFACE**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This dissertation is about what happens when mass movements use anarchist approaches. Specifically, it is about the conflicts and collaborations in the Occupy movement in three cities, as participants struggled to prefigure new ways of relating to one another politically, economically, and interpersonally. But on a deeper level it is about social movement participants' desires for freedom alongside collective liberation, or egalitarian access to resources and opportunities, and the way these desires play out in a movement. It is about hope and a belief that trying out new ways of doing things is necessary to build a future fundamentally different than the present. It explores opposition to societal institutions that operate from a neoliberal logic and the corresponding attempts at experiments to prefigure alternatives.

Anarchist movements currently best embody these aims while grappling with the tensions and contradictions between self and collective. I use the Occupy movement as a case study to better understand anarchism in practice today and the drive by social movement actors for a more free and just world. By looking at what happens when anarchist approaches are used in a mass movement, I uncover some obstacles to making these approaches work in large groups where participants hold a diversity of beliefs. I find conflicts and clashes over anarchistic tactics and strategies not only between anarchists and movement actors who are not necessarily grappling with the tensions of freedom and equality, but also among anarchist movement actors themselves.

Conflicts illuminate real points of disagreement that must be reconciled for anarchist approaches to work in a mass movement. In contrast to claims that a horizontal decision-making structure is appropriate for a mass movement, and that radically inclusive participation is necessarily desirable, I argue that participants must have political affinity and a commitment to the practices meant to enact shared values, including: a willingness to engage in ongoing experimentation, which requires a suspension of static, authoritative knowledge about the best way to struggle; a desire for consonance instead of unity; and an embrace of conflict as part of a culture that accepts a fluid and unstable existence, thus desiring liberation through ongoing negotiation rather than a final, always elusive, state of peace.

I also argue that the tensions among anarchists serve as a bellwether of the choice points to come as mass movements struggle to adapt tactics and strategies that will enable collective liberation. Closer examination of these tensions among anarchists is useful for social movement scholars and participants to understand where the lines can be drawn and what the possibilities are for transcendence.

In this chapter, I provide background on the Occupy movement, and the three cities that are the focus of my dissertation. I then explain what I mean by the anarchist approaches in Occupy, the modern anarchist movement in the United States, and the anarchist strands within Occupy.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I first review the literature on anarchism and an anarchist approach to sociological study. I then discuss the lack of attention by scholars toward anarchism and its influence on social movements, and the incomplete understandings of anarchist movements put forth by scholars who bring anarchism into their research. I explain how my dissertation addresses both gaps, offering a more robust understanding of movement dynamics and

prefigurative aims in Occupy, and providing a more nuanced description of anarchist strands in mass movements, which is important for understanding the limits and possibilities of diverse political collaboration.

In Chapter 4, I explain my research methods beginning with a discussion of how I operationalize anarchism and the study of anarchists in my dissertation. I discuss my access to the field, my methods of data collection and analysis, and I reflect on the validity of my research and ethical considerations.

In Chapter 5, I discuss my findings from Occupy Wall Street (OWS), Occupy Pittsburgh (OP), and Occupy Oakland (OO), explaining the prefigurative importance of the occupied space for anarchists in Occupy. I describe how the experiments were meant to prefigure alternative economic, political, and social models of interaction, and how they posed a challenge to traditional tactical repertoires of the Left, resulting in conflict *between* anarchists and other participants, and *among* anarchists. I argue that these conflicts complicate binary understandings of movement strategies – prefigurative versus instrumental – by showing that both were present in Occupy, and that conflicts among anarchists uncovered specific clash points where pursuing one strategy over the other would result in the foreclosing of their continued co-existence.

In Chapter 6, I focus on the horizontal structure of Occupy, as an example of prefigurative approaches. I first describe the structure and its various mechanisms. I then explore the ambivalence among anarchists in embracing horizontalism in a mass movement, which I argue points to an intra-movement debate over the compatibility of anarchist approaches in a mass movement and whether radically inclusive projects are desirable or necessary. Next, I examine four cases of conflict among Occupy participants over the horizontal structure. I argue that these conflicts reveal deep political differences and incompatible desires about the ways the

world could work, and that these differences are not openly confronted or examined when analyses assume common goals and thus evaluate whether the approaches will result in those goals. By contrast, my approach sought to understand the meanings participants ascribed to the approaches and elicited participants' understandings of success. For example, I find that anarchists saw conflict resulting from General Assembly statement guidelines as the successful operation of a process meant to facilitate personal consciousness-raising alongside practical ongoing negotiations, as part of a practice of both self-transformation and collective societal freedom. Non-anarchists saw the same conflict as a breakdown in process, signaling the non-viability of these structural practices. This suggests a need for greater commonality in the understanding of anarchist approaches, as well as in political values and aims, for these approaches to work in a mass movement. I argue that horizontal approaches are compatible with the expressed aims of anarchist participants who desire new cultures that embrace conflict, reject unity in favor of a fluid harmony of aims subject to ongoing revision, and an integration of experimentation in tactical approaches. However, these characteristics desired by anarchist participants are not necessarily compatible with current cultures of the Left.

In Chapter 7, I consider claims by scholars, media, and Occupy participants that Occupy Oakland was the “most anarchist,” examining the characteristics of OO that led to this claim. I argue that this was due to a locally-based, racially diverse, anti-state image; a greater autonomy of the space than was present in other occupations; attention to decolonization as consistent with anarchist thought; and more visible attempts to expand liberatory space. I discuss how my findings reveal tensions – for example, between autonomous and prefigurative desires – that illustrate attempts by anarchists to reconcile theory with practice and bridge seemingly incompatible activities. I also discuss how this analysis presents a more nuanced explanation of



anarchist movements in the U.S. today, which is vital to considering whether anarchist approaches can work in mass movements.

In Chapter 8 I consider the implications of my findings and discuss directions for future research.

## **1.1 THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT**

On September 17, 2011, hundreds of people discontented with the political economy occupied Zuccotti Park in Manhattan's Wall Street financial district in New York City. Over the next several weeks, Occupy groups sprouted in cities across the United States and around the world. Many of these occupations began on a global day of action on October 15 for groups around the world to hold marches and demonstrations in unison. Tens of thousands of people participated (Adam 2011). Many Occupy groups claimed local parks, or the properties of government, banks, and corporations for the sites of their occupations. Some were quickly evicted, such as Occupy Oakland, but participants resisted and continued trying to take and hold space.

Throughout October and November, occupations existed in hundreds of cities and some cities in the U.S. that did not have a physical encampment continued to meet and hold General Assembly meetings as part of the larger movement. By January 2012, most physical occupations had been evicted but many Occupy groups continued to meet for several more months through the year. One Occupy website hub co-managed by a participant of Occupy Pittsburgh listed 1,444 locations around the world as having an Occupy presence, as of August 5, 2012 (directory.occupy.net).

Despite its popularity in the U.S., Occupy should not be seen as a national movement but rather as part of the newest wave of contention, which also includes the uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East in 2010 and 2011, and resistance to austerity that had been sweeping Europe (Juris 2012). Additionally, the momentum to carry out a large-scale occupation in the fall of 2011 was likely influenced by the occupation of the Wisconsin State Capitol in February, earlier that year, that drew 100,000 protesters opposing a budget bill that would negatively impact workers by imposing limitations on collective bargaining. Earlier, in 2008 and 2009, the student occupations of administrative buildings on university campuses across California, in New York, and elsewhere, protesting college tuition hikes, pay cuts, and administration investment disclosures, also likely contributed to the increasing popularity of the tactic of occupation in the United States. Of course, occupation as a social movement tactic is not new. Occupy was part of a newer wave of contention that simmered through anti-austerity protests leading up to and boiling over with the 2008 global financial crash, building on the uprisings of the Arab Spring and discontent from people around the world over decreasing democracy and increasing privatization of education, health care, basic utilities, housing, and so on, and the negative effects of increasing poverty and brutal policing necessary to accompany these changes and snuff out dissent.

### **1.1.1 Occupy Wall Street**

The idea to occupy Wall Street began with the Canadian anti-consumerist counter-culture magazine *AdBusters*. One night in the spring of 2011, while walking his dog, magazine editor and co-founder Kalle Lasn dreamt of a ballerina posing atop the “Charging Bull” – a sculpture near Wall Street in Manhattan. He liked the juxtaposition of “the capitalist dynamism of the

bull...with the Zen stillness of the ballerina” (Schwartz 2011). In the background, a crowd of young rioters in black hoodies emerged through a cloud of tear gas, projecting an image of chaos and empowered discontent. Published in *Adbusters* that June, the text of the ad read, in bold red and white letters: “What is our one demand? Occupy Wall Street. Bring tent.” A reissue of the ad in July inserted “September 17.”<sup>1</sup> The ad was accompanied by a “tactical briefing” email *Adbusters* regularly sends to its electronic subscription list (Schwartz 2011). The meme began circulating widely through social movement circles.

Micah White, *Adbusters* senior editor, connected with New Yorkers Against Budget Cuts (NYABC) to explore possibilities for actualizing this Occupy idea. NYABC, in partnership with other economic justice groups, had already organized Bloombergville, a two-week occupation earlier that summer of the space in front of city hall, attempting to call attention to – and to stop – looming budget cuts. The group was already planning a rally for August 2 at Bowling Green, a small public park in Manhattan, and agreed to incorporate planning for a September occupation.

Meanwhile, New York City anarchists had been meeting all summer at 16 Beaver Street for an ongoing reading and discussion group, or a “salon,” referencing similar Manhattan anarchist gatherings of the early twentieth century hosted by well-known anarchists such as Emma Goldman. They were discussing what was unfolding in North Africa, the Middle East, and across Europe, bringing in their personal observations from participating in these demonstrations, or learning about them from friends and family in those regions, and discussing

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<sup>1</sup> Lasn chose this date somewhat arbitrarily, settling on his mother’s birthday, during a period in which the political atmosphere would still be conducive to mass protest channeling anger about the financial crisis and building on the uprisings earlier in the year. OWS organizers, however, expressed irritation at the choice of day, a Saturday, noting the absurdity of calling for a disruption of Wall Street on a day that most Wall Street workers would not be at work.

the possibilities for actualizing similar collective action in the United States. They learned of the upcoming NYABC meeting and planned to attend.

At some point, the August 2 meeting was reframed as a General Assembly (GA), borrowing from the European radical tradition, yet this GA took the form of a rally. Many anarchists and autonomists in attendance, including anthropologist and anarchist organizer David Graeber, became frustrated with the un-democratic form of the assembly, which they saw as a co-optation of the directly-democratic assembly concept. Graeber recounts in an interview what the original plan was that day: "...the coalition showed up on Aug. 2 and said they would do a rally and then show up on Wall Street with a list of demands that were total boilerplate – a massive jobs program, an end to oppression, money for us not for whatever. They were nice people, but it wasn't very radical, just the usual demands" (Fiegerman 2011). Graeber described NYABC as a coalition of NGOs, unions, students, and socialist groups.<sup>2</sup> He recalled that one socialist group in particular, the Workers World Party – creators of ANSWER, the anti-war coalition – had taken over the meeting, marking it with their branding through banners and giving the usual speeches.

One unsatisfied attendee made her way to the stage that day, urging others in attendance to forgo the traditional rally format and instead hold a General Assembly similar to those held in Spain, Greece, and elsewhere that summer. Organizers ushered her off stage so the rally could continue as planned. Graeber and other anarchists in attendance decided to hold a GA anyway, making their way to the other side of the green and inviting people around them to join (Fiegerman 2011). Several rally deserters had prior experience facilitating horizontal organization, having cut their activist teeth in the Global Justice Movement of the late 1990s and

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<sup>2</sup> Some Occupy anarchists also reported being involved in NYABC.

early 2000s. Others had just returned to New York from Spain, Greece, Egypt, and Tunisia, having participated in the occupations in those regions earlier in the year (Klein 2011). Over the span of a few hours, despite irritation from the rally organizers that attendees began to slowly trickle over to the new GA, the “New York General Assembly” was formed. Over the next several weeks, a group of approximately 80 people met near Battery Park and Tompkins Square Park (Schwartz 2011), working out formative logistics, such as the horizontal structure and consensus process, and a strategy that included a refusal to come up with a set of concrete demands (Bennett 2011). The participants of this newly formed GA hatched plans for an occupation on September 17, the date chosen by *Adbusters*. Buzz for this action was created with the help of online movement networks, including an Anonymous<sup>3</sup> video to garner support for participating in the action (Sledge 2011).

On September 17, 2011, members of the Tactical Committee, charged with determining the actual site of the occupation – drawn from seven possible options – settled on Zuccotti Park, a plaza, three-quarters of an acre, in Manhattan’s financial district. Due to its status as a designated privately-owned public space, it was zoned to be kept open for “passive recreation” around the clock. After scouting some other possible occupation sites, discovering that police were already occupying those spaces with dogs and barricades, including the “Charging Bull” sculpture, the Tactical Committee distributed the message that the site had been chosen. Slowly throughout that morning occupiers began trickling in; the crowd swelled to over 1,000 by afternoon. That night, around 300 people camped in the space, following a General Assembly (Schwartz 2011).

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<sup>3</sup> Anonymous is a loose network of unidentified individuals who use their technological skills to disrupt the operations of governments, corporations, and other targets.

Liberty Plaza, as participants quickly renamed Zuccotti Park, became home to a sea of bodies and tents over the next few weeks. Participants organized food tents that served regular meals, a medical tent, a library, information tents, and more. They solidified Working Groups (WGs) to serve leadership functions around meeting structure and facilitation, finances, action-planning, sanitation, and food coordination. Other WGs formed to work on making spaces safer for people marginalized due to oppressions such as sexism, heterosexism, and racism (Schwartz 2011). One group, Occupy the Hood, was started in OWS by two black participants as a way to attract other people of color and amplify their voices in the Occupy Movement. It grew into a network with a presence in many major cities across the U.S. (Ross 2011).

The decision-making and coordination in the camp followed a non-hierarchical, or horizontal, structure in which there were no leaders or bodies calling the shots. Decisions continued to be made by modified consensus (Schwartz 2011). By September 29, OWS had agreed upon and produced a “Declaration of the Occupation,” which communicated a broad perspective while eschewing a list of concrete demands (OWS 2011a). The statement took a stand against mass injustice, criticizing the undemocratic nature of the structures of economic and political power responsible for housing foreclosures; poisoned food and environmental destruction; bank bailouts; discrimination based on age, sexuality, gender, skin color; the treatment of animals; colonialism; war and the weapons industry; and oil dependency, to name a few. It called for better pay and safer working conditions, accessible healthcare and affordable education, more privacy, freedom of the press, and regulated funding of politicians. Participants intentionally kept the statement broad and open, to be inclusive and to create space for people to resist in a myriad of ways. The declaration called for people around the world to assert power,

urging: “Exercise your right to peaceably assemble; occupy public space; create a process to address the problems we face, and generate solutions accessible to everyone” (OWS 2011a).

Throughout September and October, many marches from the park shut down streets and disrupted traffic. On September 24, young women were maced by NYPD officers as part of a police crackdown on protesters that was heavily criticized in the media as a show of excessive force by the NYPD. Anonymous uploaded a video to the internet of the incident, which resulted in mass sympathetic support online, attracting more media attention to OWS and more participants to Zuccotti Park. Other marches intertwined with groups of activists around social justice issues ranging from the transit workers union to protesters of the armed forces recruiting station. Rallies saw many famous speakers from public intellectuals Noam Chomsky and Cornel West, to filmmaker Michael Moore, and musician Tom Morello of Rage Against the Machine. On October 1, more than 700 people were arrested on the Brooklyn Bridge.

However, many conflicts were erupting in the occupation. As *The New Yorker* put it: “...in early October, as the national media seized on the Zuccotti Park story, the rest of the ninety-nine per cent started showing up. The G.A. had to tackle three new challenges simultaneously: holding ground; managing a semi-permanent village; and guiding a much larger cacophonous political conversation. All this had to be done with almost no heat, running water, or electricity” (Schwartz 2011). Indeed, many factors created a high-stress environment. However, participants struggled to modify the structural approaches to accommodate a politically diverse body. For example, by late October, core anarchist organizers in OWS began discussions around implementing a spokescouncil model (see Chapter 6) meant to streamline General Assembly decision-making.

In November, Mayor Bloomberg ordered the clearing of Zuccotti Park, citing health and safety risks. Police cleared the OWS site in the early morning hours of Nov. 15, arresting hundreds of protesters. Police barred journalists from entering the area, including a CBS helicopter in the airspace above the park. The eviction was later revealed to be part of a nationwide security effort, coordinated by the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, local police, and financial corporations, to clear Occupy camps over several weeks (Wolf 2012). On November 17, in response to the eviction, more than 30,000 people demonstrated around the city. There were several unsuccessful re-occupation attempts by participants on New Year's Eve and during the winter and spring of 2012.

The movement struggled to find its legs without a physical space, now lacking an occupation to carry out prefigurative practices, and slowly the horizontal structure began to change, too. There was pressure from wealthy, well-meaning supporters to move toward more hierarchical forms of organization. For example, the leftist ice cream moguls Ben and Jerry, in partnership with former Nirvana manager Danny Goldberg, sought to donate \$2 million to OWS to set up a permanent headquarters and a foundation to support Occupy projects through grants (Binelli 2012). This exasperated core anarchist OWS organizers, further straining the original values they held dear: a commitment to horizontally structuring relations and attempt to do things – economically, politically, socially – differently as a necessity for building a radically transformed, alternate possible world.

OWS actions continued throughout the spring, summer, and fall of 2012. Many Working Groups that were left over from the initial phase, as well as new Occupy off-shoot projects, continued to thrive. In October of 2012, Hurricane Sandy hit New York City and caused massive destruction. Through Occupy email list-servers that remained post-Occupy, people quickly



coordinated emergency response efforts. These included setting up resource distribution locations for things like food, clothes, and blankets, and coordinating the collection and distribution of these necessities, as well as construction teams, street medics, and general 24-hour support. This organized relief effort was known as Occupy Sandy and, in line with OWS approaches, focused on “mutual aid, not charity” (OWS 2011b). These self-management and mutual aid principles led to the creation of small projects and cooperative, neighbor-led efforts. Occupy Sandy participants organized Long Term Recovery Organizations in the areas hardest hit by Hurricane Sandy, including Brooklyn, the Lower East Side, the Rockaways and Staten Island. Many of the mechanisms connected to the horizontal structure of Occupy Wall Street diffused, such as the hand signals from the General Assemblies.

The speed, ease, and success of the Occupy Sandy response was arguably due to the horizontal, decentralized character of Occupy and its corresponding practices which emphasized individual empowerment and fostered a culture of innovation. Whether there was an accompanied diffusion of the underlying politics – those fiercely opposed to neoliberal ideologies – is an area for future research. Many other projects and demonstrations since the fall of 2011 have adopted the Occupy name. But Occupy Wall Street, as the encampment that captivated the international imagination and called attention to vast inequality and accompanying systemic discontent, had ceased to exist.

### 1.1.2 Occupy Pittsburgh

One day in September of 2011, Benjamin<sup>4</sup> came upon a Facebook page for Occupy Pittsburgh. A Jewish man in his late 40s who had been active in social movements for years, Benjamin had been following the occupation of Zuccotti Park and was hoping for other locals to get the ball rolling in Pittsburgh. For personal reasons, he did not want to be the one to start the movement here but he knew it had to happen. The presence of a Facebook page meant that there were others he could work with. Benjamin contacted the page creator and, along with a handful of others who sent messages of interest, they launched Occupy Pittsburgh.

The original organizing team consisted of only two people with organizing experience so they sought guidance from Occupy Wall Street organizers on running a General Assembly (GA). On October 5, more than 300 people gathered at the First Unitarian Church for the first GA, agreeing to adopt a general framework of horizontal organization and modified consensus decision-making, based on the model of Occupy Wall Street in New York City. Attendees broke into smaller working groups to take care of tasks such as investigating sites for a physical occupation, creating a proposal for a statement of non-violence that the politically diverse body could agree upon, and training a core of facilitators to keep future meetings running smoothly. Two more GAs followed, as some participants planned logistics for an upcoming occupation and others worked on the mass march, which included seeking a permit from the City of Pittsburgh.

On October 15, 2011, thousands of people marched through the streets of Pittsburgh as part of a demonstration meant to coincide with the international day of action intended to kick off another wave of occupations connected to Occupy Wall Street (Gurman and Silver 2011).

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<sup>4</sup> Pseudonyms have been used throughout this dissertation to protect individual identities.

Beginning with a rally at Freedom Corner in the Hill District, a symbol of Pittsburgh's Civil Rights struggle, Pittsburghers embarked on a two-mile march. The crowd consisted of environmental and animal rights activists, evident by their signs and banners, as well as advocates of women's and immigrants' rights, and twenty-somethings donning Guy Fawkes masks. Marchers clad in black and gold Steelers football jerseys mixed in with burly men in matching union sweatshirts from SEIU and the Steelworkers union. There were many signs opposing corporate bribery and corruption, bank bailouts, and capitalism in general. A diverse number of flags punctuated the sea of marchers: red-black-green Pan-African flags, American flags, and red-and-black anarcho-syndicalist colors waved in the wind.

The crowd marched to Market Square in downtown, where internationally-recognized Pittsburgh rapper and community activist Jasiri X led the crowd in chants and performed his song, "Occupy (We the 99)." After this rally, the crowd continued on – this time without a permit – to Mellon Green, a downtown park owned by Bank of New York (BNY) Mellon. Marchers relaxed in the small park and held an impromptu speak-out as different people told of their anger at injustice and their reasons for marching. A drum circle formed as some members of the crowd drifted away. By evening more than 100 occupiers pitched tents and began an encampment. In a press release, OP referred to the park as an "urban open space," and pointed to a city ordinance, which "mandates privately owned plazas and parks be open without restriction to the general public." The burden was on BNY Mellon to evict campers. In a move widely viewed by OP participants as an attempt to avoid negative publicity, the bank did not call for police involvement at this time.

Over the next four months, OP maintained a presence at Mellon Green, renamed People's Park. Participants held regular GAs at the camp and nearby locations, and launched many actions

to make local connections to larger political and economic injustices, including marches to other downtown banks, politicians' offices, and the city's convention center during a conference of profiteers of the Marcellus Shale gas-drilling industry.<sup>5</sup> Nestled between towering skyscrapers topped with corporate logos, flimsy tents stood strong against the worsening weather as winter settled in. Cardboard "roads" that connected a food tent to a medical station to a People's Library became increasingly muddled. Shivering bodies persevered, twinkling their fingers in agreement with each other, sharing life stories of experiences with inequality late into the night.

Like other occupations, Occupy Pittsburgh adopted the Occupy mantra, "We are the 99%," intended to attract wide participation and project a sense of unity. However, participants struggled with persistent conflict at the camp, which included making the horizontal structure work. Early in December, BNY Mellon posted eviction notices for campers to clear out of the park. Campers persisted and a lawsuit filed by the bank dragged on for the next two months. On February 2, 2012, an Allegheny County Common Pleas Judge ruled that occupiers must leave Mellon Green. On February 8, avoiding forced removal by the police, OP officially left People's Park, vowing to continue the movement in other forms. Some participants continued to meet for the next several months, and some continued to publish the movement newspaper *Occupy Pittsburgh Now*. By the fall of 2012, Occupy Pittsburgh ceased to exist.

### **1.1.3 Occupy Oakland**

Occupy Oakland began in early October 2011, when a small group of mostly young radicals began meeting to talk about claiming a physical space in Oakland, California. These conspirators

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<sup>5</sup> This anti-fracking action was organized by the Shadbush Environmental Justice Collective.

sought to connect with and build on the momentum of Occupy Wall Street to bring more attention to the problems specific to their poor, gentrifying, debt-ridden city known for rampant police brutality and a radical history that boasts the birth of the Black Panthers and the last citywide strike in the United States.<sup>6</sup> A week before the actual occupation took place in Oakland, participants began hammering out the details of the infrastructure that could be set up quickly after an opening rally.

On October 10, 2011, Occupy Oakland debuted publicly with a rally that attracted hundreds that afternoon, despite the rain (Kuruvila, Ho, and Tucker 2011). The action was held in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples Day, to express solidarity and take a stand against colonialism. The protesters took over Frank H. Ogawa Plaza in front of City Hall in downtown Oakland, holding a speak-out with amplified sound that lasted into the evening. Dozens of protesters erected tents. The space was renamed Oscar Grant Plaza, for the man killed by Bay Area Rapid Transit police on New Year's Eve 2009.

Within the first week, Oscar Grant Plaza hosted many of the features of the other occupations: a kitchen – with spontaneous BBQs in addition to meals throughout the day, information tents, a supply tent, art-making spaces, first-aid, a library, a free school, a children's area, an Internet connection, space carved out for General Assemblies of 200-300 people each night, and a DJ booth that provided the beats for spontaneous dance parties. Working Groups quickly formed to take responsibility for necessary functions such as security, mediation, and facilitation. A People-of-Color caucus met daily, and a Queer Working Group and an Anti-authoritarian and Anti-capitalist caucus formed. Unlike most of the other occupations, OO rejected the adoption of non-violence as a tactical principle.

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<sup>6</sup> The citywide strike took place in 1946.

Over the next two weeks, thousands of people took part as participants launched marches to the Oakland Police Department headquarters, rallies, and actions at banks, such as Chase and Wells Fargo. The grandnephew of the labor leader Cesar Chavez got married at the occupation. As it grew in size to 150 tents on the grassy area of the Plaza, some members expanded the occupation, taking over the smaller, nearby Snow Park.

On October 20, the City issued a notice to OO forbidding overnight camping, citing violent assaults and intimidation. The first police raid took place in the early morning hours of October 25. Police cleared both parks, arresting more than 100 people. OO held a march in response to the raid, to reclaim the Plaza. Police responded with tear gas and shot protesters with “less lethal weapons.” During the repression, Iraq War veteran Scott Olsen was injured by police; they fractured his skull with a projectile. On October 27, thousands of participants held a candlelight vigil for Olsen and a smaller contingent retook the plaza. Marches in solidarity with Occupy Oakland occurred in cities across the U.S. and elsewhere, including one in Cairo where protesters marched from Tahrir Square to the U.S. Embassy.

Soon after, OO participants announced plans for an upcoming General Strike, and on November 2, somewhere between tens of thousands and 100,000 people rallied in Oscar Grant Plaza and marched to the Port of Oakland, shutting it down for the day (Hamilton 2011). Participants celebrated at the port and the day included speak-outs, food sharing, teach-ins on economic inequality, and property destruction of banks and a Whole Foods. That night, dozens of people attempted to take over an abandoned Traveler’s Aid Society building following a rowdy march in which participants erected barricades and set them on fire. Police used tear gas and other chemical weapons, and stun grenades, to quell the actions. More than 100 people were arrested, including journalists reporting on the events.

The occupation at Oscar Grant Plaza became known by participants as The Oakland Commune in spite of increasing opposition from some local sectors. In early November, the Oakland Chamber of Commerce called for the eviction of the Plaza while the City Council met to consider a resolution in support of OO. More than 100 people spoke for and against the resolution, signaling its contentious existence. Eventually the Oakland Police Department issued an eviction notice.

The second camp raid took place on November 14. Hundreds of police cleared the plaza, and Mayor Jean Quan's legal adviser and deputy mayor resigned. Snow Park was cleared on November 21. However, OO participants continued to come back to the plaza, holding ground when possible. In late November, a small group of participants with the Vigil Committee sought a permit for the plaza, unbeknownst to many OO members and the GA. The permit outlined the terms of space use and ended up serving as pretense for police repression, as clear lines were drawn over what was legal. In December, during a 2-week period alone, police made 40 arrests as they came through the camp looking for permit violations.

On December 12, OO participants and supporters again shut down the Port of Oakland, as part of a coordinated shutdown of West Coast ports. On January 28 there was one last concerted attempt to retake space en masse for Occupy Oakland. Thousands of people marched through the streets of Oakland and attempted to take the abandoned Kaiser Convention Center. However, police repressed the action and more than 400 people were arrested that day. Actions under the name of Occupy Oakland continued during the spring, including lively May Day demonstrations, as in other cities. However, Occupy Oakland also faded away as the year wore on.

### 1.1.4 The Importance of the Three Cities

I examined three cases in different cities in the U.S. that had thriving occupations during the fall of 2011. All three cities have a number of features in common which makes them suitable for comparison. They are all larger urban areas, the physical occupations lasted several months and occurred in highly visible locations in city centers, they all received extensive media coverage, hundreds of people were involved in each occupation, and they all took place in the context of overwhelmingly democratic areas with strong labor movements. The Occupy groups in each of these three cities also included self-identified anarchist participants, utilized horizontal structures, and practiced prefigurative experiments in the occupations.

Each case also contains unique characteristics. New York City is where Occupy Wall Street began and provides insight into how the anarchistic approaches came about and were first transmitted to a larger group before branding the movement and spreading around the country. Because the development of New York OWS impacted the adoption of approaches by local occupations in other cities it can be used to compare how occupations transformed differently in other cities.

Occupy Oakland has been portrayed by movement media and mass media as the most militant of those occupations around the country, defending its space through the heaviest and bloodiest repression of all in the U.S., and confrontationally claiming new space *en masse* when evicted. The framing of Occupy Oakland by its participants has also remained explicitly more anarchistic, opposing capitalism in general and the state by mobilizing philosophical language that characterizes modern anarchist and autonomist visions (i.e. “The Oakland Commune”). This differs from the occupations in NYC and Pittsburgh that balanced radical claims with more populist messaging (i.e. anti-corporate “greed” and a desire for “more oversight”). Participants of



the Oakland occupation additionally broke away to begin occupying abandoned spaces in the city with the intention of creating social centers – an action that directly connects the Occupy movement with the anarchist/autonomous tendencies of the anti-austerity movements in Europe.

Occupy Pittsburgh inserts an interesting variable to examine; the very tactic of physical space occupation and the use of horizontal structures were contested at the start of the local movement and internal dynamics often played out around these movement disagreements. While disagreements and criticisms over space and structure existed in other Occupy groups, in Pittsburgh a substantial proportion of participants who saw themselves as part of the movement rarely set foot in the physical camp and even considered it irrelevant to the Occupy movement from the start.

Additionally, Occupy Pittsburgh did not experience constant overt police repression and eviction attempts, unlike the other two cities. In my interviews with participants in Oakland and New York, actors frequently cited the evictions and ongoing threat of evictions as the primary reason such conflicts erupted over the smooth functioning of prefigurative experiments in the camp. Occupy Pittsburgh provides a case where participants were relatively free to engage in prefigurative practices, yet conflict plagued this occupation, too. As one Occupy Pittsburgh participant put it, “[The police] left us alone to destroy ourselves. Besides BNY Mellon, we didn’t have an immediate enemy to unite against so it was easier to turn against each other. It was the smartest thing they could have done.”

## 1.2 ANARCHISM AND OCCUPY

Anarchist scholars refer to “the Anarchist Turn”: a move from the hierarchical Marxist politics of the twentieth century to the horizontal anarchist politics popularized in the twenty-first (Blumenfeld, Bottici, and Critchely 2013), citing Occupy as an illustrative example (Bray 2013). Indeed, the Occupy movement has been framed by some media and scholars as explicitly anarchistic. For example, an article in the *LA Times* characterized OWS as exhibiting a “controversial, anarchist-inspired organizational style” (Pearce 2012) and sociologist Dana Williams (2012) says, “the most immediate inspiration for Occupy is anarchism.” An article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* is titled “Intellectual Roots of Wall St. Protest Lie in Academe: Movement’s Principles Arise from Scholarship on Anarchy” (Berrett 2011).

### 1.2.1 The “Anarchist Approaches”

Social movement actors who identify with the anarchist tradition often utilize approaches in social movements that correspond to anarchist beliefs. In Occupy, participants claimed physical space in which to prefigure and practice new relations that would not replicate relationships of domination. One example of this was the use of horizontal structures and processes.

These approaches, which became known as the Occupy model, were not new. They were influenced by some of the practices and sentiments in the uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East earlier in 2011 (van de Sande 2013), as well as the encampments throughout Europe – known as the “movement of squares” – notably 15M in Spain and the years of occupations of public squares, abandoned buildings, and houses facing foreclosure, as part of large scale protests against austerity (Abellan et al. 2012; Juris 2012; Maeckelberg 2012).

The Alterglobalization Movement, or the Global Justice Movement (GJM), of the late 1990s and early 2000s honed the use of horizontal structures and their organizational mechanisms (Graeber 2009a; Juris 2008; Maeckelberg 2012). Many Occupy participants cited the forms established – the horizontal structure and decentralized, leaderless processes – as explicitly adopted from the GJM as masses of people around the world demonstrated against the destruction wrought by increasing economic globalization. The GJM was a highly diverse network of actors that became visible through opposing neoliberalism at the World Trade Organization in 1999 in Seattle. The approaches diffused widely, first being utilized locally and then regionally and internationally at everything from protests at summits of the world’s leaders, to the World Social Forum (Smith 2004) to alternative gatherings to the WSF (Wood 2012).

The takeover of factories in Argentina after the economic collapse in 2001 by workers who then ran their workplaces along horizontal lines drew more attention to the practice, catapulting the buzzword “horizontalism” into many communities on the Left (Sitrin 2006). Going back further, influences can be recognized in the decision-making forums of the Civil Rights movement, the prefigurative spirit of the Port Huron Statement in the 1960s – the founding document of Students for a Democratic Society – and further developed by Women’s Liberation collectives in the late 1960s through the 1970s (Breines 1989; Cornell 2011; Polletta 2002). In the 1980s, these approaches were practiced in anti-nuclear organizing (Epstein 1991), intentional political communities (Cornell 2011), and the squatters struggles, as they occupied space to live and foster new cultural spaces (Milstein 2010). Non-hierarchical practices and anti-authoritarian experiments can be traced back even further to Catholic Worker groups, Quaker gatherings, and other examples of communities of people resisting tyranny throughout history and around the world. The Occupy Movement is merely the most recent mass movement attempt

to practice prefigurative politics and horizontal organizing structures, currently characterized as anarchist, which arguably do actualize the philosophical roots of anarchist thought. I will now explain in further depth the prefigurative approaches to space and the horizontal organizing structure used in the Occupy Movement, and their connections to the modern anarchist movement in the United States.

### **1.2.2 Prefigurative Space**

Occupying a physical geographic region is of historical importance to anarchist and autonomous traditions, known as “reclaiming the commons” or the establishment of an autonomous zone. Its tactical purpose is to carve out an area in which to experiment with and prefigure new relations necessary to break from normative, hierarchical relationships that enable and require coercion. The emphasis is on continued experimentation, not a blueprint or one-size-fits-all solution.

Within the Occupy movement, the reclamation of space served purposes that resonate with anarchist aims. Participants often prioritized the continued occupation of space over other tasks, such as producing clearly defined goals and demands around which to coalesce. One reason for this was that participants saw the creation of autonomous space as a precursor to articulating any demands, opening up the necessary space to begin dialogue with others who were angry about the political economy but rarely communicated face-to-face about alternatives to the system. In this sense, space existed as an alternative to popular mediums of communication such as Internet forums, which exclude those without regular (or frequent) online access or know-how about how to use various online forums and further isolate people from each other via anonymous interactions. It also served as a forum for participants to directly share and gain exposure to a variety of political ideas and viewpoints, outside of the censored and filtered

televised and print mass media that manufactures a false consent (Herman and Chomsky 1988) around worldviews, citizens' experiences, and political possibilities.

In addition to opening up space for dialogue, the sharing of perspectives, and the new political-economic possibilities, the emphasis on space was for experimenting with the creation of many other new relations, as an intentional break with the status quo within social movements and society at large. The very prioritization of holding (and using) space over other goals had subversive potential to psychologically challenge participants' socialization, the societal expectation that movements create specific demands and then work directly toward them.

To examine what happens when a mass movement of people from many different traditions and perspectives adopt an approach of reclaiming space to prefigure and practice new relations, I investigated the meanings participants assigned to this approach. I elicited participants' goals in occupying the space, their experiences with the physical space, their feelings about the approach, and whether (and how) their feelings changed over time.

### **1.2.3 Horizontality**

The Occupy movement became known for adopting a horizontal or "leaderless" structure and using consensus decision-making processes. Anarchists often advocate for such organizational structures and processes as a way to constrain coercive hierarchical relationships, and as a means of practicing direct democracy. The horizontal structure is an example of prefiguring new relations but I examine and discuss it separately because it was such a large part of the Occupy movement, sometimes seen as a stand-alone feature. Many participants – those who did not value prefigurative practices in the space – often considered the decision-making structure separate from the space experiments, expressing a greater commitment to wanting to make General

Assemblies and other organizing coordination work. In other words, the horizontal structure is the Occupy example of prefiguring new *political* relations, as opposed to economic or social. Thus I discuss it as the practice, processes, and mechanisms of decision-making in the Occupy movement.

While anarchists reject the idea of leaders, many embrace the qualities of leadership and the practice of leadership-building in these leaderless movements. Building on the structures honed by feminists, radical pacifists and anarchists over the twentieth century, anarchists today organize within horizontal structures, utilize versions of consensus decision-making processes, and emphasize egalitarian relations. Thus, top-down models of leadership are rejected. Many anarchists cringe at the use of “the L word” because of its hierarchical connotations. However, descriptors of radical alternatives are often inaccurate, referring to anarchist organization as “structureless,” leaving the door open for perfunctory criticisms of unchecked power imbalances or invoking claims of disorganized chaos. In actuality, many modern anarchist groups develop complex organizational forms that facilitate accessible discussion and strategizing, collective decision making, and concrete plans for task completion. These models often include rotating (and recallable) roles, space for procedural challenges, leeway for individual autonomy and creative innovation, and mechanisms for accountability. These forms are understudied. Much social movement scholarship focuses on the structural contexts of leadership (Ganz 2000), agency and interactions between leaders and participants (Morris and Staggenborg 2004), the biographical and social compositions of leaders (Nepstad and Bob 2006), and the impact of leadership styles – including leadership teams (all) – on strategies and outcomes. Occupy provides an opportunity to examine what happens when horizontal structure and anti-

authoritarian leadership are used in a mass movement, as egalitarian processes aim to achieve the tasks that are often associated with leaders or leadership groups.

#### **1.2.4 Anarchists in Occupy**

People who identified themselves with the anarchist tradition and sought to put into practice their beliefs and values were very much a part of the Occupy movement. However, due to the unstable nature of anarchism as a tradition with contested meanings and contradictory emphases, there were different currents of anarchists within Occupy.

In his introduction to a book on anarchists in the Occupy Movement, anarchist writer, editor, and publisher Aragorn! (2012) describes four general strands based on different strategic or political outlooks that existed prior to the Occupy Movement but characterized anarchists within the movement.

First, insurrectionary anarchism can be characterized by a rejection of strategy in favor of inserting oneself in social struggles with the aim of increasing tension rather than finding points of commonality with others to work towards a specific goal. Insurrectionary anarchists focus on “attack,” or a confrontational activity that opens up space for norms to be broken. For example, unpermitted marches are a common tactic of insurrectionary anarchists because they defy the order that currently exists and provide an opportunity to experience the refusal of expectations to follow rules, and they increase tension among actors who desire an enforcement of order and those who want to defy it. However, it should be noted that many anarchists (and non-anarchists) plan and participate in unpermitted marches for varying reasons.

The next anarchist strand is characterized by an emphasis on prefiguration and a corresponding focus on carrying out activities that are ethically consistent in means and ends.

This is strategic in that the aim is to experiment with and model new structures that can replace the old. Anarchists who center prefigurative politics choose projects that fit this strategy. Many of the practices that Occupy participants carried out in the occupations, including the General Assembly, are examples of this strand. The anarchists advocating for prefigurative practices as an embodied anarchism make up this strand.

Another anarchist strand that existed is class-struggle anarchism. As Aragorn! puts it, “Class-struggle anarchists believe that a rupture of the existing order will only occur as a conflict, perhaps even a war, between workers (as a class) and owners” (vii). He notes that this strand has been more critical of the Occupy Movement than the others, especially the messaging about “the 99%” which redraws the lines of conflict in a way that conflicts with a more nuanced and complex anti-capitalist class analysis and does not provide the commonality necessary – such as a workplace – to organize against those upholding a capitalist system. Many anarchists from the 19<sup>th</sup> century fall into this categorical strand, and many class-struggle anarchists today celebrate the connection they feel to this tradition. For example, they hold May Day marches and radical history tours that educate interested parties about historical anarchist events and people, such as the Haymarket martyrs in Chicago in 1886, or the attempt by anarchist Alexander Berkman on Henry Clay Frick’s life in retribution for killing striking steel mill workers in Homestead, PA, in 1892. Red and black flags are an aesthetic preference of class-struggle anarchists, signaling a combination of socialist and anarchist ideas, whereas insurrectionary anarchists tend to gravitate to solid black.

Finally, Aragorn! puts forth the category of practical anarchism. Anarchists in this strand also focus on daily activities but not necessarily as part of a strategy; they believe that truly transformative change is found in a radical change in daily lifestyle. In contrast to prefigurative



anarchists they do not posit strategy or spend time discussing or developing theory. Rather, their careful, highly intentional, individual activities are their greatest, and perhaps sole, concern as anarchy in action. In Occupy, anarchists closest to this strand were often spending the vast majority of their time cooking and serving meals, staffing the medical tent, and facilitating mediation, for example.

In my study, I talked with anarchists who identified with each of these strands and sometimes hybrids. Many of the founders of OWS clearly characterize the prefigurative strand, while in OO insurrectionary anarchists were far more abundant. However, I believe these categories are useful as a map of ideal-types, for social movement scholars to better understand the different emphases of anarchists today, not strictly bounded identities that people can be easily lumped in to. This is valuable for scholars to home in on the tensions and conflicts that social movement actors struggle with, as a way to understand how movement tactics and strategies transform and why people do what they do. Many anarchists I talked to did not fit neatly into one category or another and indeed expressed ambivalence when I asked them about their political identities. For example, it was common to hear responses like, “I’m an anarchist. I guess I lean toward more insurrectionary, nihilist anarchism,” paired with convictions like, “Occupy was so important because we were building a new anarchist society in the occupations to replace oppressive structures.” If the categorical strands are mutually exclusive, it would not make sense for a respondent to express both of these sentiments, as they indicate insurrectionary and prefigurative emphases, respectively. But it was common for participants to express a combination of analyses or desires that characterize separate categories throughout their interviews. This speaks to the complicated relationship between ideology and identity, and the messy, imperfect sociological practice of studying a group of people who claim common

theoretical beliefs while acting in many ways that do and do not “match” the purported aims. It also speaks to the somewhat arbitrary nature of identity labels – often assumed based on personal relationships, desires for belonging, social circles, aesthetic or activity preferences, geographical location, and other factors unrelated to a theory-in-practice concern.

Anarchism is frequently left out of discussions of social movements despite the participation of many anarchists in those movements, shaping the trajectories. As a consequence, misunderstandings and superficial analyses of anarchism as a tradition and current movement abound. Even many narratives of OWS lack a connection to anarchism. This was partially facilitated by the conscious decision of anarchists involved in OWS – particularly those in media Working Groups – to not explicitly link every action or decision to "anarchism" as they communicated messages to the media and the public, choosing instead to convey anarchist ideas. This helped perpetuate those ideas, without having to deal with the label's baggage (Bray 2013), and is arguably the goal of most anarchists – reshaping relations along more anarchistic lines, regardless of their labels. However, the consequence is that many narrative-crafters missed how important anarchists and anarchism were to Occupy. My dissertation brings the anarchy back into the story of Occupy.

## **2.0 ANARCHISM**

In this section I speak to scholars of social theory, explaining what anarchism is and has been to the study of society. I review the work to connect the anarchist and sociological traditions and explain how my work builds on this project.

### **2.1 THE ANARCHIST TURN**

Throughout the development of modern philosophy, anarchy was reinterpreted from the etymological meaning of “no government” to “chaos” and “disorder.” This betrays the assumption of many social theorists that the state, or a similar centralized authority, is necessary for social organization. However, as anarchist movements and anarchist tendencies within mass movements have become popularized again in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, scholars have begun to provide a corrective to how anarchism has been understood, and how an anarchist analysis and anarchist practices can be and have been used to better understand, and ultimately transform, society.

On May 5 and 6, 2011, months before the Occupy movement took over the first park on Wall Street, scholars spanning academic disciplines gathered at the New School for Social Research in New York City for a conference on the “anarchist turn” in political thought. The presentations were published in *The Anarchist Turn* (Blumenfeld, Bottici and Critchely 2013) and contributed to the growing field of Anarchist Studies. Scholars from disciplines including

history, political science, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, gender studies, geography, and psychology have been developing this field with renewed vigor over the past decade. A conference on anarchist studies takes place every few years in Loughborough, England, bringing together anarchist scholars from around the world. Regional networks now exist, such as the North American Anarchist Studies Network, which holds annual conferences and hosts a website and list-serve that facilitates support among scholars and provides a forum to discuss scholarly topics around anarchism. Other groupings of independent intellectuals, such as the Institute for Anarchist Studies, which began in 1996, provide grants for researchers and writers who are developing anarchism as a set of theoretical tools to better understand and change society. My dissertation follows in this vein, contributing to an anarchist turn in social theory and practice. I will first explore what anarchism is, demonstrating its relevance to the sociological analysis of society.

## **2.2 WHAT IS ANARCHISM?**

Anarchism is difficult to pin down: any single, tidy definition would be misleading. A common schematic situates anarchism as a middle ground between individualism and communitarianism, and many argue that it is a type of socialism (Guerin 2005; McKay 2008). As classical anarchist thinker Mikhail Bakunin explained, “We are convinced that freedom without Socialism is privilege and injustice, and that Socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality” (McKay 2008:21). Some scholars locate the roots of anarchy in ancient civil societies, others cite its origins as a political philosophy in the Enlightenment, and many see its implicit workings in everyday practice. All relate anarchism to a practice of freedom. In what follows, I will discuss

the basic concepts that have characterized the anarchist tradition, locate common anarchist ethics and guiding principles in contemporary conceptions, and review the overlap with similar theoretical areas of study.

### **2.2.1 Basic Conceptions and a Historical Tradition**

The most basic concept in anarchism is that of freedom. The ancient Greek word for anarchy means “without a ruler” (McKay 2008:19). Thus modern thinkers employ anarchism as a quest for self-governance over one’s actions, which translates into an ongoing practice of freedom. This necessarily means grappling with questions of coercion and consent, as the individual must be free from imposed authority. It also entails contending with notions of justice and harmony, as individuals act within a framework of relations with others. These questions practically are manifested in experiments with decentralized, non-hierarchical network structures, an ethos of voluntary association, practices of direct (as opposed to circuitous or representative) action, and some form of a commitment to mutual aid.

These ideas characterize philosophies throughout history. Some scholars point to anarchist ideas in conceptions of a natural order evident in Taoism since sixth century BC in China, and later developed in Buddhism (Graham 2005; Marshall 2010). They trace a libertarian strand through the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. William Godwin is often cited as having articulated the basis for classical anarchism in his book *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* in 1793, questioning the rationality of the state and arguing for a system of governance based in human reason (Bamyeh 2009; Graham 2005; Marshall 2010).

In the nineteenth century, various thinkers, now known as the classical anarchists, developed alternatives to the exploitative nature of capitalism and the state, often targeting other

authorities, such as the Church or state-sanctioned social relations, in their criticisms. For example, the Frenchman Pierre-Joseph Proudhon developed mutualism as a political economic alternative, and in “Property Is Theft,” he explained how private property actually diminishes freedom because it takes away from communality, a necessary element to an equal and free society. His conception of such a society requires great organization and an order that springs from will, work and reason, not a governmental authority. The Russian Mikhail Bakunin introduced collectivism and federalism, building on Proudhon’s writings (Graham 2005; Guerin 2005; Marshall 2010).

Another Russian, Piotr Kropotkin, saw a fit between anarchism and the modern social sciences and argued that collective human behavior and institutional relationships (such as capitalism and the state) could be studied in the manner in which naturalists approach nature. Drawing from revolutions and attempts at order, he argued that history has shown, scientifically through cause and effect, that exploitation is a characteristic of centralized organization; those in power always act with their own interests in mind. Kropotkin believed this inductive analysis illustrates their inseparability. Thus we can’t abolish one without the other; political and economic changes must happen together. Like many other classical anarchists, Kropotkin was a revolutionary, in addition to a theorist, and fought to create new organizational forms that are ever changing – the way life forms are, decentralized and with an emphasis on self-governance (Graham 2005; Guerin 2005; Marshall 2010).

A contemporary of the socialist-leaning anarchists of that time period, the German Max Stirner is often pitted against the others as the proponent of an individualistic brand of anarchism revolving around the self (Graham 2005; Guerin 2005; Marshall 2010). Stirner rejected attempts to link anarchism with collective liberation. However, he saw the self as a starting point and

argued for a “union of egoists” which compels an injurer to do no harm, not out of fear of punishment, which he rejects. Rather, he believed, “conscious egoists would eventually see the advantage of making peaceful agreements through contract rather than resorting to violence. The aim after all is to enjoy life” (Marshall 2010:231). Order would be unimposed, as people would interact without coercion for selfish reasons, not out of a sense of collective ethics.

Other anarchists focus on the same questions without rejecting an ethics. As the famous anarchist Emma Goldman once said: "The problem that confronts us today, and which the nearest future is to solve, is how to be one's self and yet in oneness with others, to feel deeply with all human beings and still retain one's own characteristic qualities" (1969:213-214).

Some conceptions of anarchism focused on spiritual underpinnings – God as an expression of the moral ideal – and a bridging of pacifism and anarchism, such as those developed by Leo Tolstoy and later, Mohandas Gandhi. Anarchists were heavily involved in labor struggles throughout industrialization, playing an instrumental role in the struggle for an eight-hour day, suffering executions of movement leaders in Chicago’s Haymarket affair (Marshall 2010). Francisco Ferrer and other anarchists sought to revolutionize the practice of education through the Modern School Movement in a non-competitive, non-coercive environment, beginning at the turn of the twentieth century and continuing in “free school” experiments throughout the United States following Ferrer’s execution by the Spanish government (Avrich 2006; Marshall 2010). Immigration by anarchists to North and South America spread libertarian ideas that developed uniquely in different regional contexts. Emma Goldman and other anarchist women of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries extended the critique of coercive authority by the state, capitalism and the Church to include gender oppression. They worked tirelessly for women’s access to birth control and employment,

lodging critiques against the institution of marriage, puritan views of sexual morality, and even the campaign for women's suffrage, arguing that free people should not have to pander to institutions such as the Church and the state (Marshall 2010). *Mujeres Libres*, or Free Women of Spain, worked for the emancipation of women within anarchist labor unions before and during the Spanish Civil War – widely viewed as a temporary but successful experiment to create an anarchistic society (Ackelsberg 2005). The social movements of the 1960s and onward – especially civil rights, student and anti-war resistance, women's liberation, environmental justice, and nuclear disarmament – were influenced by and helped shape the anarchism of today (Cornell 2011; Epstein 1991; Marshall 2010; Milstein 2010). Some contemporary anarchist scholars look to these movements to explore where the processes, tactics and strategies of contemporary anarchist movements came from, specifically in the United States.

Many histories of the U.S. anarchist tradition note a movement cleavage that begins around the 1940s and lasts until the 1960s, although the ideas continued to thrive (Graham 2009; Marshall 2010). The lack of anarchist activity during this period could be attributed to many factors. First, the rise of fascism in Italy and Spain, obliterating anarchist resistance in those regions, dealt a psychological blow to anarchist movements in other countries, including the U.S. The earlier Bolshevik victory in Russia resulted in an increase in popularity of Marxist communist tendencies in the U.S. Additionally, the U.S. government repression of radicals during WWI continued into the 1920s and 1930s, weakening movements and resulting in the deportation of prominent anarchist writers, organizers and agitators. However, anarchism continued in other forms. In the 1940s, the anarchistic secular socialism that radical pacifists developed after WWII and the influence of Gandhian philosophy (which had been influenced by Thoreau and Tolstoy's Christian anarchism) carried on the anarchist tradition during this period.



In the 1950s and 1960s, mutual influence occurred between anarchists and the Beat culture and the civil rights movement. In the 1960s, explicit anarchist strands appeared in response to the Vietnam War and U.S. imperialism but were submerged again in the late 1960s as student and national liberation movements became more hierarchical and authoritarian in response to state repression. In the 1970s, the women's liberation movement and the anti-nuclear weapons movement embraced an earlier anarchist desire for egalitarian relations, experimenting with non-hierarchical organizational forms (Epstein 1991). These experiments with anarchist ethos continued and matured through the 1980s and 1990s in the form of mutual influence between anarchist endeavors and punk subculture, squatter's movements, intentional community projects, and forest defense efforts (Cornell 2011; Milstein 2010).

Since the mid-1990s, anarchist movements have re-emerged and gained visibility with the rise of the global justice movement, anti-war efforts, and currently the anti-austerity and Occupy movements (Gordon 2008; Graeber 2009a; Milstein 2010). An example of a current effort to inspire today's movement practitioners to draw lessons from the past to inform the present is the anarchist publishing cooperative AK Press, in partnership with the Institute for Anarchist Studies, which publishes an Anarchist Interventions series. In one book from that series, *Oppose and Propose!: Lessons from Movement for a New Society*, Andrew Cornell (2011) examines an organization that he believes had the most remarkable influence on modern day radicalism, continuing earlier anarchist efforts, expanding on them and bridging them to today. The Movement for a New Society (MNS) was a national network of feminist and radical pacifist collectives that grew out of a Quaker anti-war organization. The MNS ran from 1971-1988 and, while not boasting more than 300 members at its height, is responsible for many of the practices today associated with anarchism. The MNS insisted on a correlation between means

and ends (which distinguished them from contemporary Leftist parties), encouraging lifestyle choices that were consistent with the world they wanted to create. The network popularized many practices now referred to as pre-figurative that are entrenched in explicitly anarchist communities. They popularized consensus decision-making, DIY skill shares, and workshops to dismantle personal interconnected oppressions. They experimented with creating modern worker cooperatives and other anti-capitalist alternatives, and they practiced communal living. Placing vital importance on both lifestyle practices and organized resistance, MNS members participated heavily in the anti-nuclear movement. They promoted affinity groups for mass action (people of like goals banding together to take care of one another) and jail solidarity (prisoners bargaining collectively for specific conditions and demands). The MNS even came up with the spokescouncil model as a method of organization for radicals in the U.S. Cornell sums up their purpose as a concerted effort “to develop an experimental revolutionary practice that attempted to combine multi-issue political analysis, organizing campaigns, and direct action with the creation of alternative institutions, community building, and personal transformation” (Cornell 2011:14).

This brief survey of historical thinkers and movements provides some examples of those cited as shaping and influencing anarchist theory and practice. I have mentioned them to provide a brief glimpse into past anarchism, as contemporary thinkers continue to draw from and build on these legacies in their arguments for how anarchic projects and strategies should be shaped today.

Some scholars, such as British author Peter Marshall, paint the historical anarchist tradition with a wide libertarian brush due to their valuable engagement with epistemologies of freedom and their contradictions within the basic conception of freedom (Bamyeh 2009;

Marshall 2010). However, many draw the lines more narrowly, rejecting the inclusion of capitalist-leaning tendencies, claiming the desire for a “free” market neglects necessary structures that would ensure a common good (McKay 2008; Milstein 2010). Some even reject actors that do not employ a class-struggle form of anarchism (van der Walt 2009). Yet even Marshall ultimately disqualifies libertarians who accepted state-based and capitalist approaches from the anarchist milieu (Marshall 2010).

Many scholars who study anarchism identify with the tradition. However, some classic works by non-anarchists attempt an outsider, critical point of view. Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm (1959) provides an early exploration of movements that he refers to as primitive, including Andalusian anarchists in this category. Hobsbawm researched uprisings in Southern and Western Europe, post French Revolution, that he considered to be understudied but having great importance. He sees them as pre-political and archaic forms of social agitation that may eventually evolve into more organized forms of resistance. However, his conclusions are contentious among other scholars of anarchism who consider his analysis flawed, claiming that his privileging of Marxist forms of organization as the learned, advanced types – and other forms of organization as lesser – creates a bias that prohibits an accurate understanding of anarchist action (Esenwein 1989; McKay N.d.; Mintz 1982; Kaplan 1977). Jerome R. Mintz (1982), a historiographer of Andalusian anarchism, criticizes Hobsbawm for relying on "a preconceived evolutionary model of political development rather than on data gathered in field research . . . In short, he explains how anarchosyndicalists were presumed to act rather than what actually took place, and the uprising at Casas Viejas was used to prove an already established point of view. Unfortunately, his revolutionary model misled him on virtually every point” (1982:271).

Temma Kaplan (1977), who researches the role of gender and sexuality in political culture and has studied Spanish anarchism and other forms of directly democratic movements in the world, has contributed to this historical correction, rejecting Hobsbawm's simple characterizations as "too mechanistic to explain the complex pattern of Andalusian anarchist activity. The millenarian argument, in portraying the Andalusian anarchists as fundamentally religious, overlooks their clear comprehension of the social sources of their oppression. [Instead] the degree of organization...accounts for mass mobilizations carried on by the Andalusian anarchists at the end of the nineteenth century" (1977:210). Ian McKay adds to this discourse, "The thesis that the Spanish Anarchists were 'primitive rebels,' with a primitive understanding of the nature of revolution is a common one amongst Marxists" (McKay N.d.). Other non-anarchist scholars also critique Hobsbawm's conception that formal organization indicates a more advanced social movement form, arguing instead that organizational leaders can actually hinder a movement by limiting its power to disrupt (Piven and Cloward 1977).

This brief survey of the anarchist tradition shows its long history as a philosophy and practice of freedom without imposed authority. Anarchism, located somewhere between individualism and communitarianism, has clearly influenced – and been influenced by – other social movements throughout the centuries, such as anti-war, anti-fascist, feminist, and environmental movements that sought a radical transformation of self and society. Such influence and theoretical continuity are important to understand how anarchism has evolved and why other social movements operate in particular ways.

## **2.2.2 Contemporary Common Ethics and Guiding Principles**

Over the past decade, anarchist scholars have been focusing on anarchism's relevance as an idea that offers plausible alternative forms of organization, setting the terms of debate in social movements today due to the shifting borders of globalization. Cindy Milstein (2010:13), a member of the Institute for Anarchist Studies and a heavily-involved participant in Occupy Philadelphia, outlines a contemporary conception of anarchism as "...a dual project: the abolition of domination and hierarchical forms of social organization, or power-over social relations, and their replacement with horizontal versions, or power-together and in common...a free society of free individuals." Current anarchist works detail experiments with direct democracy and other forms of self-organization. They provide examples of movements building horizontal power and new economic relations, as well as personal relations regarding the production and consumption of culture, information sharing, kinship structures, and freer conceptions of desire and intimacy. These works point to gains and successes, and grapple with obstacles, challenging anarchists to break out of stale practices and work harder toward new reconstructive visions that create a new society in the shell of the old. Anarchists value voluntary association, federation, cooperative and creative impulses, accountability, spontaneity and harmonious multiplicity (as opposed to homogeneity and uniformity). Anarchism as a philosophy of freedom is the "ethical compass" (Milstein 2010:47), she says.

Common ethics and guiding principles such as these are found in conceptions of the anarchist tradition today. In this section, I will discuss those articulated by some of the most commonly cited authors on anarchism.

Perhaps a broad definition that captures characteristics of many forms of anarchism could be the one provided by writer Ian McKay (2008). He explains anarchism as aiming to create a

society without economic, political or social hierarchies. It encompasses theories and attitudes that reject capitalism and compulsory government. An anarchist society would be a directly democratic, free society capable of maximizing human potential and freedom within a framework of collective responsibility, mutual aid and solidarity.

Anarchism is widely referred to as an idea and practice to freely realize a fuller humanity (Bamyeh 2009; Blumenfeld, Bottici and Critchely 2013; Graeber 2009a; Graham 2013; Hammond 2015; Marshall 2010; Milstein 2010; Shantz and Williams 2013). Milstein refers to anarchism as the nagging conscience that people and their communities can always be better (Milstein 2010). Scholar Mohammed Bamyeh sees this practice as a science, specifically “a practical science of humanity” (Bamyeh 2009:23), in which we endeavor toward how the world should be. Rather than invoking the mechanisms of science to analyze the past and argue for a specific future, Bamyeh argues that ideas only come into being through doing, and anarchy could be understood as the practice of realizing a fuller being, not constrained by domination. We must, of course, be constantly re-evaluating whether these practices are justified along the way.

As opposed to the common use of anarchy as a synonym for chaos, most anarchist writers emphasize the value anarchists put on order or organization, specifically self-organization and unimposed order (all). Milstein even points to the common symbol for anarchism – the Circle A – to illustrate this: the A is the placeholder for the Greek “without authority” (she updates and expands the root to mean an absence of domination and hierarchy) and the circle, an O, is the placeholder for organization or order (Milstein 2010).

Many contemporary anarchist scholars include a desire for equality or egalitarian relations in their conceptions of anarchism, while some point to their difficult coexistence, locating anarchism as a dynamic middle ground. Milstein reconciles the tension between

freedom and equality by explaining that the practice of anarchism is “a juggling act as part of the human condition...people collectively self-determine their lives to become who they want to be and simultaneously create communities that are all they could be as well” (Milstein 2010:14). There will always be uneasiness and an ongoing struggle to find the balance. Anarchism, she says, is where that struggle takes place.

Another prominent anarchist author Uri Gordon (2008) understands anarchism in a way that is particularly useful for scholars of the social sciences. He explains anarchy as a contemporary social movement and an intricate political culture, which includes shared organizing structures, tactical repertoires, cultural expressions and a political language that articulates resistance to a range of modern oppressions.

Some anarchists use the terms anarchism and anti-authoritarianism interchangeably, which has opened them up to criticism that they are against all authority. Bamyeh (2009) explains this aversion, carefully distinguishing between forms of authority that are legitimate (customary practical authority and contractual practical authority) and illegitimate. Examples of the former could include a child who defers to a parent or guardian and a patient who seeks aid from a doctor with medical expertise. Illegitimate authority, which is coercive and non-consensual, could include state sanctions – fines, brutality, or a jail sentence – against an actor for refusing to take an action, such as paying taxes, or for partaking in an action, such as occupying a state senator’s office in an act of civil disobedience in disagreement with a policy or law.

Of course, one does not need to identify as an anarchist to be practicing anarchy, as most anarchist writers note. Bamyeh specifically discusses the spaces in civil society, as an alternative to the state, that point to its ongoing existence and the hope for its future (Bamyeh 2009). Peter

Gelderloos (2010) illustrates, with nearly 100 examples from a wide range of times and places, that anarchy has and will continue to work, regardless of what we call it. He adds that the question of “whether anarchy could work, seems itself to be Eurocentric. Only a people who have obliterated the memory of their own stateless past could ask themselves whether they need the state” (2010:9).

Some scholars study anarchistic resistance, locating opposition to centralized control as an alternative to the current system. James C. Scott examines the ways states have historically come to govern and control. In one work on the peoples of upland regions in Southeast Asia, Scott explores their decision to be “stateless by choice” (2010). He is well known for exploring how those in power make spaces legible in order to simplify them for easier control (1998). He traces the move from indirect to direct rule and the ways the state has been able to broaden its purpose. Scott examined nature and space, such as the development of scientific forestry in Germany, urban planning, and bee keeping. Even linguistic terms were altered to ensure uniform measurements, conveniently standardized for the market. Scott looked at policies such as tax-exempt status, which ensured the continuation of wealth by those who already had it, shifting the financial burden to farmers and peasantry. The remaking of cities for easier policing of residents and repression of insurrection has been essential in the process toward greater control.

Scott is not against planning. He is against the imperial imposition of standards that do not come from local knowledge, and do not value informal processes, flexibility and an acceptance of diversity and unpredictability. Scott illustrates how the standards that have been created are for greater top-down control. For example, local dwellers are able to understand and navigate complex networks of alleys in the area in which they live. The alleys may seem like a confusing, overly complicated maze to outsiders but they are already legible to the locals. Or, as



another example, locals may have a series of names for each individual of a community that clarifies for the community an individual's time and place in life. The relationship of those names to the users of the names is perfectly understandable to that individual and those in their community already. However, outsiders with power will redraw maps and impose surnames on locals to be able to better understand and control them. Scott acknowledges that local customs can be oppressive, too, but his main argument is that uniform standards ultimately make for an untenable social order when they dismiss practical knowledge (1998).

However, unlike anarchists, Scott does not see the state as the enemy of freedom, necessarily. He is interested in pointing to the ways decision-making mechanisms are negotiated and necessary, even if dismissed as "statist," and revealing the ways contracts can serve protective and even liberatory functions (2012).

It is important to note how anarchism differs from other popular progressive forms of change. One aspect that characterized many forms of anarchism in the past and continues to today is that of an ongoing practice of freedom that could not put forth a blueprint for a future society, due to its very nature as a practice in which outcomes will be uniquely determined and subject to constant revision. If projects and actions are the result of an exercise of negotiations that maximize freedom, subject to re-evaluation and change at every turn, a precise vision is not possible or desirable. This sets anarchism apart from many modern liberal strategies and demands, as does the latter's faith in representative democracy. If a new decision-making structure is necessary for individuals to act freely, simple reforms to society and a system of electoral representation is inadequate. Although some scholars point to contemporary anarchists' strategic decision to compromise their values and cast a ballot to avert a worse situation brought on by an opposing candidate (Gordon 2008). Many anarchists also advocate varying forms of

direct democracy. As one South African anarchist federation explains, “Voting only allows us to choose our masters. Free people organize and govern themselves” (Zabalaza N.d.). This points to the departure from other Leftist movements who lobby the state for changes; anarchists instead pursue a strategy of collective self-organization to meet each other’s needs without a centralized authority. Thus, the former often focuses on “equal rights” while the latter instead emphasizes “liberation.”

The versions of anarchism that are widely referred to as a type of socialism today differ theoretically and practically from Marxism in their rejection of an interim state, or dictatorship of the proletariat, that Marxists and other state-socialists believe must occur in the transition from revolution to an ideal society. Thus, anarchists do not embrace the notion of a vanguard or party that will seize power. Sometimes other differences between the traditions, or the branding of a theorist’s idea as socialist as opposed to anarchist, stem from movement in-fighting, sectarianism, and personality differences among proponents of the different schools of thought. For example, ideas that get lumped under attempts to update cultural Marxism, and thought that came out of the Frankfurt School in the early to mid-twentieth century, do so because the authors or critics are either unfamiliar with the anarchist tradition or socially unaligned with the anarchist milieu (McKay 2008).

Anthropologist David Graeber (2009b) argues that Marxism, unlike anarchism, is compatible with the top-down nature of academia and therefore the hegemonic curriculum for the academic radical left. He cites Pierre Bourdieu’s (1993) insight, “if the academic field is a game in which scholars strive for dominance, then you know you have won when other scholars start wondering how to make an adjective out of your name” (Graeber 2009b:106). Indeed schools of anarchist thought (such as anarcho-syndicalism, platformism, insurrection,

cooperativism, etc.) are referred to by their organizational form and not attributed to one important man. Graeber sees the difference in the very fabric between the two traditions. He argues that anarchists who were contemporaries of Marx did not see themselves as inventing a new idea but rather expanding on a long tradition of resistance to structural violence and domination, and a belief that humans could organize their lives autonomously. He considers Marxism “a theoretical or analytical discourse about revolutionary strategy” and anarchism “an ethical discourse about revolutionary practice” (Graeber 2009b:106):

[Anarchists] have never been much interested in the kinds of broad strategic or philosophical questions that preoccupy Marxists, such as, “Are the peasants a potentially revolutionary class?” (anarchists tend to think this is something for peasants to decide) or, “What is the nature of the commodity form?” Rather, anarchists tend to argue about what is the truly democratic way to go about a meeting, at what point organization stops being about empowering people and starts squelching individual freedom. Is “leadership” necessarily a bad thing? Or, alternatively, about the ethics of opposing power: what is direct action? Should one condemn someone who assassinates a head of state? Is it ever okay to break a window? (Graeber 2009b:106).

However, some social theorists do not see the current value in drawing from nineteenth century thought. As Philosopher Todd May (2009:11) explains: “...given the contortions made in order to bring Marx into alignment with current thinking, one might wonder whether it would be better simply to seek a new tradition in which to embed their thought.”

Other scholars have sought to examine and bridge the differences between Marxism and anarchism in modern practice, using the Wobblies and the Zapatistas as a starting point (Lynd and Grubacic 2008). However, some anarchist writers point out that such syntheses are not necessary because they originate from Marxists’ misunderstandings of the anarchist tradition, accusing anarchism of being disorganized, without theory, and being too broad to be coherent, yet simultaneously claiming an ability to critique it as a monolithic entity. Abbey Willis (2010) suggests reframing the debate and explains, “there are articulations of anarchism that have a

strong structural analysis and visions for a future society and how to get there. I would name these articulations class-struggle, pro-organizational anarchisms that employ an intersectional analysis and that struggle against domination, coercion and hierarchical control on the structural, cultural and conceptual levels. I'm not sure why these articulations of anarchism would 'need' Marxism."

In terms of the question of revolution, over the past few centuries many anarchist writers argued and struggled for a revolutionary rupture to open the space for a more anarchically-structured political and economic system. However, they noted that it would not achieve the desired result if individuals' exercising their power if education and hands-on experiments with decentralized decision-making were not happening along the way (Guerin 2005). While some past anarchists believed a revolution was not desirable or necessary, the idea of rebuilding a new society in the shell of the old seems to have gained more popularity in our contemporary arena of increased globalization. Many anarchist scholars today focus on the constructions of "spaces of anarchy" (Bamyeh 2009), temporary autonomous zones (Bey in Marshall 2010), "quiet revolutions" in everyday anarchy (Ward 2004), "revolutionary transfer cultures" (Ehrlich 1996), or the forging of new personal and institutional relationships alongside or in outright rejection of physical struggle. Some anarchist writers believe there is no hope of winning a struggle against authoritative bodies with superior military might, and that anarchy can come about incrementally. Others find strategic value in pushing for physical ruptures that directly challenge or disrupt state or corporate power, such as insurrectionary anarchism. Often, anarchist writers argue for disruption alongside the creation of dual institutions (Gordon 2008; Marshall 2010; Milstein 2010), adapting Lenin's concept of "dual power" to fit anarchistic aims (Shantz and

Williams 2013). Some believe a revolution must occur because systems of repression cannot be reformed away (Gelderloos 2010).

Common ethics and guiding principles of anarchism exist among many scholars, including autonomous self-organization and a desire for an absence of hierarchy or coercion in social, economic, and political relations. Many scholars focus on direct democracy and voluntary association in their conceptions of anarchism, and most value the aim of harmony or synergy amidst an ongoing, healthy tension, rather than unity. Some scholars of anarchism emphasize libertarian thought, leaving open a wider range of economic possibilities, while others firmly reject any form of capitalism arguing its inconsistency with a tradition opposed to dominance and coercion. Most of the scholars I have cited regard anarchism as an ethical compass, or a constant practice to realize a fuller humanity, and holds possibility for a better alternative to our current system. Anarchism is generally distinguished from other traditions with similar or overlapping values because of its emphasis on practice and ongoing experimentation toward numerous new forms of organization, rather than offering a program or blueprint for the future. It is important to understand this rich tradition and complex body of thought that developed alongside the discipline of sociology, and is similarly concerned with understanding society, in the hopes of being able to transform it.

### **2.3 THEORETICAL OVERLAP**

Over the past few decades scholars have infused anarchist thought with various theoretical traditions, enlivening contemporary debates among anarchists and in some cases reshaping anarchism or developing new versions of anarchist thought and ways to understand society.

Some scholars have developed post-anarchism which combines post-modernism and post-structuralism with anarchism. Others argue that current conceptions of anarchy allow space for such a fusion. Still others point to an impossibility of coexistence of these strands with a recognizable theory of resistance, while still other scholars focus on the connections between anarchism and intersectional theories of oppression in feminist, gender, and queer studies.

Some scholars work to locate contemporary anarchist theory within the theoretical developments of the mid-twentieth century. Gabriel Kuhn (2009) investigates a relatively recent interest by anarchist scholars in the relevance of post-modernism and post-structuralism to the anarchist tradition. He explains post-structuralism as a body of theory developed by French thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and post-modernism as a socio-cultural condition. Anarchists could evaluate the usefulness of the former (for anarchism's aims of abolishing the State) and use the tools of the latter to understand cultural dynamics in contemporary society. Kuhn outlines theoretical points that have the potential to strengthen and inspire anarchist practice, such as a critique of truth, the subject and representation, and a dismantling of boundaries that separate theory and praxis. For example, if anarchism is an ongoing practice of lived negotiations toward theoretical conceptions of freedom, without a blueprint to prescribe, post-structural critiques of authoritative forms of change could strengthen anarchist practices through ongoing challenges to "truth," facilitating a continuation of anarchist experiments – a practice that more closely corresponds to the anti-authoritarian meaning of anarchism. Such an insight is elaborated by Andrew Koch (1993) in his essay "Poststructuralism and the epistemological basis of anarchism."

Todd May (2009) sees Michel Foucault (1977, 1990), in particular, as enhancing the anarchist tradition. He notes that some anarchists have used Foucauldian ideas to extend their

critique of oppressive power relations into arenas besides the state in which domination exists, such as gender and race relations, and institutions such as the family and school. It is important to note that such an extension has merely popularized a wider conception of power in anarchist circles, as many anarchists had been extending the critique to gender and other arenas long before Foucault. However, even with this analytical extension, many anarchists still fall into the trap of conceiving power in simple, one-directional terms that imply some force of coercion and its conscious application. Foucault's contribution, says May, is in offering a more nuanced conception of the ways power operates: multi-directionally, in a more subtle manner than overt coercion, anonymously, and creatively (rather than just restrictively). A deeper understanding of a more complex network of power relations illustrates how oppression can exist without oppressors, which has implications for anarchist resistance. For example, such an understanding aids projects that seek to dismantle internalized oppression in the forging of new consensual relations, or in restorative justice efforts that seek to negotiate collective justice for everyone involved; if there is no "bad guy," necessarily, but a complex web of shifting power imbalances, what are the best ways to work toward a common justice or non-coercive relations?

Some contemporary self-defined post-anarchists also claim an affinity with autonomist Marxism. The journal *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies* recently devoted an entire issue to the topic of post-anarchism (Call 2010). Included in the ranks of post-anarchist autonomist thought is *Gramsci is Dead* author Richard Day (2005), as well as the Tiqqun Collective and the Invisible Committee – whose writings such as a French radical philosophy journal and *The Coming Insurrection*, respectively, have inspired especially rambunctious modern radical movements, particularly in Italy, Spain, France, Greece, Canada, and the U.S., with revamped ideas of communization, which reject the current neoliberal political economy in

favor of a decentralized networked system in which property and resources of a specific geographical area belong to the community instead of the individual. Insurrectionary strands of thought can be found in journals such as *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, and seen in efforts such as CrimethInc. Ex-workers Collective, a loose-network of mostly North American radicals who have been active over the past decade in various organizing and resistance projects, sleek propaganda creation and distribution, and the journal *Rolling Thunder: an anarchist journal of dangerous living* (CrimethInc. 2010). Sandra Jeppesen (2011:23) explores the roots of CrimethInc.'s "post-punk economics and the 'disavowal of the economic' [in the ideas of Pierre] Bourdieu, post-situationist politics, anti-capitalist modes of textual production and distribution, and anarchy as an anti-ideology." Over the past few years, CrimethInc. (2010) has gained a reputation for producing extremely detailed analyses of mass demonstrations and other efforts by resistance movements from an anarchist perspective.

Scholars are also discussing the overlap between anarchism and theories of intersectional oppression in feminist, gender, and queer studies. While anarchists had been anticipating an intersectional approach to oppression analyses by decades – for example, the nineteenth and early twentieth century anarchist women who argued against class reductionism long before the 1960s-1980s women's liberation movement – modern anarchist, queer, and feminist movements could benefit from a more explicit alliance with each other, as the theoretical commonalities gain more attention from movement participants (Maignashca 2014; Shannon and Rogue 2009). Theories of intersectionality that emerged from feminist thinkers in the 1980s posited that "our social locations in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation of origin, ability, age, etc. are not easily parsed out one from the other..." and they inform "hierarchies...[that] intersect in



complex ways and are not easily separable” (Shannon and Rogue 2009). Anarchism, with its focus on abolishing coercive hierarchical relationships, has much in common with this notion.

Likewise, intersectional feminist approaches could benefit by incorporating anarchist ideas, such as a critical analysis of the state, and a discussion of how the replacement of hierarchical structures – such as representative government or capitalist business models – would lessen inequalities among women and all human beings (Shannon and Rogue 2009). For example, some anarcha-feminist groups work on alternatives to state-based law and punishment in addressing violence against women, which links racial and class inequality to gender inequality (Gaarder 2009; Kaltefleiter 2009). Other researchers examine alternative structures and processes, such as the collective editing process of anarcha-feminist writing collectives that pose alternatives to feminist endeavors that mirror hierarchical societal norms (Withers 2011).

An increasing number of anarchist efforts also draw on queer theories, especially anarcha-feminist collectives and queer collectives such as Bash Back, and an Anarchist People of Color network (Olson 2009). These efforts attempt to emphasize the importance of race, gender and sexual oppression, by qualifying “anarchism” with race, gender, or sexuality modifiers that may otherwise be lacking in local anarchist movement contexts. The emerging attempt to bring anarchist studies and queer studies into conversation is spearheaded by *Anarchism and Sexuality: Ethics, relationships and power*, by Jamie Heckert and Richard Cleminson (2011:3). Heckert and Cleminson desire to bring an anarchist ethics to sexual relationships and operate along three guiding principles. First, they promote the conception of anarchism as a diverse practice of shared ethics, which they list as: “agreements to respect a diversity of tactics, support for cultural and ecological diversity in the face of neoliberal imperialism, and resistance to any orthodoxy.” Second, they understand anarchism as against hierarchy, for a radical equality of horizontal

structures and fluid power dynamics, and the commitment to a constant renegotiation of relationships. I have already discussed both of these conceptions in more detail above. Finally, the authors posit the importance of amplifying subjectivities, rather than broadcasting unifying narratives, in an increasingly globalized struggle against oppression. This is crucial if we want to avoid recreating hierarchies. They explain, “In addressing the sensitive issues of intimacy, love and desire, the essays and poems in this book both argue for and demonstrate this ethic of listening as an alternative to statist patterns of representation and discipline” (Heckert and Cleminson 2011:4). The book traces little known attempts in anarchist histories to practice these principles, details modern experiments in forging autonomous queer spaces as tactics of anarchistic social movements, and shows research possibilities that exist in the examination of literature that brings topics of gender and sexual desire into conversation with anarchistic societal relations. As an example of the latter, one essay examines the ways Ursula Le Guin’s dystopian science fiction grapples with questions of love, desire, gender relations and revolution.

The book also contains an interview with Judith Butler, delving into her relationship with anarchism. Butler explains her attempts to ground her earlier theories in the practices of movements that resist stability and discusses the work of Anarchists Against the Wall, an Israeli direct action group that works in solidarity with Palestinian resistance, as an illustration. Juxtaposing “gay libertarianism,” with its racist immigration policies and phobic relations, to “queer anarchism,” Butler says the latter holds the possibility for delegitimizing and disrupting state power that perpetuates violence and imperialism. Heckert directly asks Butler about the connection between her earlier work on performativity of gender and her more recent interest in anarchism and other radical social movements. Butler reframes the question in terms of a more general matter of reiterative performances, and discusses similarities to the reiteration of law and

the possibilities to disrupt the re-founding and re-instituting of state violence. Another interesting instance of Butler's involvement with current movements that may be challenging traditional, more stable models of resistance recently occurred. In the first issue of *Occupy Theory* (a compilation of theoretical writings by, for and about the Occupy Wall Street movement) Butler penned an article, "For and Against Precarity." It remains to be seen if she will continue to work on bridging the theories she is known for with emerging forms of struggle. Yet the handful of articles engaging queer and anarchist studies show the possibility of queer anarchism as a way to critically assess hegemonic discourses around sex and gender, and other forms of domination.

Other scholars examine the merging of anarchism and queer theory through empirical cases. Jack Halberstam links historical conceptions of intersectionality within anarchist thought to current desires for more liberatory anti-authoritarian relations, citing the Occupy movement and pop cultural music lyrics and videos as evidence (Halberstam 2013). In "Queering Anarchism in Post-2001 Buenos Aires," Gwendolyn Windpassinger (2010) examines contemporary Argentinian anarchisms. She finds that the economic crisis in 2001 opened up space for societal transformations. Alternatives were necessary for economic production, community decision-making, and policy implementation. A civil society began to thrive as abandoned workplaces were squatted for housing, workers recuperated their workplaces and began to run them cooperatively, and new forms of decision-making were practiced in neighborhood assemblies. However, as the economy recovered, these transformations began to reverse. Windpassinger noted that people lost interest in the assemblies and were complacent with the government taking over decision-making. However, she said the structures impacted anarchism in Buenos Aires in ways unseen since the Argentinian anarchism of the early twentieth century.

Windpassinger considers anarchism to be a philosophy that questions hierarchies and critiques exploitation and domination. Anarchism is a dedication to equality and a practice of strategies for change. She explains that hierarchy is to anarchism what patriarchy is to feminism, and notes that anarchism has never been just a philosophy but is also an ethics of action. The practices undertaken in Argentina, after the economic collapse, such as assemblies and the cooperatively run businesses, are modeled on horizontalism, “a consensus-based approach to decision-making, which anarchists see as prefigurative for building a non-hierarchical, anarchist society” (Windpassinger 2010:496). Although the varied, explicitly anarchist groups and projects share these general beliefs, Windpassinger’s survey reveals that the community is not homogenous. A diverse collection of groups and projects overlap – and sometimes greatly differ – in their political perspectives.

One of those differences in political perspective is the introduction of queer theory into some conceptions of anarchism. Proyecto Fetal (PF), a queer anarchist feminist group in Buenos Aires, argues “the sexual binary is an ideological apparatus of the State, which, as a social construct, produces a fiction whose objective is to falsify economic, political and ideological differences as facts of nature, and thereby perpetuates them” (Windpassinger 2010:499). As contemporary anarchism was also shaped by earlier feminist anarchists, such as Emma Goldman, PF insists that queer ideas are essential to an understanding of anarchism, as a philosophy in opposition to hierarchy and domination. The state alone is not an adequate target for an anarchist, they say; there is a web of interconnected oppressions that must be addressed. The group draws from Judith Butler (1990:13), who explains, “[t]he effort to identify the enemy as singular in form is a reverse-discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms.”

In Buenos Aires, a major rift exists between anarchist groups such as PF and class-war anarchists who privilege the attack on economic hierarchies. The latter consider struggles for gender and sexual liberation too academic (citing the PF members' references to postmodern feminist and queer writers) or too bourgeois (if they have time to fret about gender inequality, they must be economically well-off). According to Windpassinger, such a critique betrays ingrained sexism and heteronormativity within these anarchist circles. She argues that *Proyecto Fetal* makes an important point: that a philosophy that aims to abolish hierarchy must go beyond the simple goal of a stateless society and struggle against other forms of oppression. Thus, a fully anarchist practice must necessarily be queer.

Windpassinger concludes that queer theory can challenge the more essentialist strands within anarchism, and anarchism can challenge the strands in queer studies that are homocentric (focusing solely on non-normative sexual identity and practice), neglect gender, promote sexual transgression that is consistent with capitalism (and other dominant normativities, such as an embrace of the state through patriotic framing, which betrays privilege and practices exclusion), and/or lack a material engagement by remaining in the theoretical realm rather than applying knowledge to society.

Ben Shepard (2010) specifically focuses on these latter points in his essay, "Bridging the Divide between Queer Theory and Anarchism." He observes the theoretical gains made by anarchists and applied to social movements over the past decade, and laments the lack of applicable queer theory in today's movements for change. Using two case studies – the New York-based Church Ladies for Choice and the Radical Homosexual Agenda (both queer, neither explicitly anarchist) – Shepard identifies several overlapping themes in queer and anarchist realms of study. First, both traditions tend to reject the paternalistic state. Instead, they favor self-

organization in the pursuit of alternative spaces for social connection, a do-it-yourself approach to community building, an emphasis on use over exchange and pleasure over procreation. Secondly, Shepard sees a shared desire for a politics of freedom. He teases out instances in which the group members of his case studies practice mutual aid and a collective self-determination, express a rejection of patriarchy and a desire to make choices about one's own life, and articulate the need to move beyond hierarchical and naturalized arrangements of socially constructed identities. Third, Shepard perceives a common critique of the normative assumptions about the world. The groups place an emphasis on practice instead of fixed social or cultural identities, and support alternative social groups, sexual self-determination, and safer promiscuity. Fourth, they see radical potential within pleasure: with a "shared social eros" (Shepard 2010:516), communities can create and sustain alternative social relations of care. Finally, they demonstrate an internal culture of resistance. Anarchists refer to this as creating autonomous publics co-existing within structures of the state, for example, Bamyeh's "spaces of anarchy" (Bamyeh 2009), and other anarchists discuss temporary autonomous zones. Queers refer to this new culture as a counter public. Shepard also sees grounded issue links – such as reproductive health and sexual self-determination efforts, public assembly struggles, battles against social prohibitions and vice squads, and resistance to the criminalization of protest and dissent – that could provide cases for further inquiry. Shepard continues in the same vein as Windpassinger, exploring how anarchist and queer theories are mutually beneficial to each other and can inform anarchist and queer movement practices.

Sandra Jeppesen (2010) builds on the overlap and possibilities with queer and anarchist theory and practice in her article, "Queer Anarchist Autonomous Zones and Publics: Direct action vomiting against homonormative consumerism." She examines the ways an erotic

performance, a punk zine, and a direct action actively resist not just heterosexism but also sexual normativity. Her examples blur the lines of normatively acceptable behavior by putting the public and private in crisis, and they connect anti-capitalist sentiment to critiques of homonormativity and gay liberal consumerist culture. For example, Jeppesen describes a sex performance exhibit at a gay bar, in which the naked form – usually relegated to the “private” sphere – is liberated and made centrally visible in a “public” space. The content of the performance metaphorically challenges gay consumerism through a sex act. Jeppesen explains:

The “top,” or the dominant capitalist ideology, force-feeds products to the receptive consumer or “bottom.” As “the bottom struggles to keep taking in more than he really can,” as in middle-class debt-driven consumerism, and “the top is careful to give him just enough to stretch his capacities,” the same way capitalism stretches our capacities, “a dynamic is established between them in which they carefully keep at the threshold of gagging” against consuming too much (2010:467).

The cases Jeppesen analyzes also document the more recent efforts that came out of Gay Shame actions a decade ago – such as *Queers Bash Back* – showing the increase of queer anarchist collaborations. Assessing the queer aspects of modern anarchistic efforts and investigating the anarchist tendencies in modern queer resistance movements are two potentially rich areas of research for social movement scholars.

The conception of anarchy I have been employing is not limited to an alternative political and economic scheme, but a practice that challenges normative structures. The queerness explored includes – but stretches beyond – a focus on relations of gender and sexuality. A queer anarchistic approach could be a useful tool to destabilize normativity and open space for alternative desires, a multiplicity of subjectivities, and more fluid systems of relations. It should now be clear that classical social theory, as well as the more recent developments of queer studies, intersectional analyses, and post-structural thought, should be in conversation with the anarchist tradition due to their similar aims and overlapping character. I will now provide a

detailed review of the premier effort to explicitly marry sociological and anarchist traditions, and then segue into my contribution toward this project.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

As I have shown in this chapter, there has been a recent tendency by scholars to put anarchist thought in conversation with various theoretical traditions. First, this highlights similarities between traditions, which could have practical implications for alliances and movement-building between queer, feminist, anti-racist, and explicitly anarchist efforts, which should be of interest to social movement scholars. Secondly, it has renewed understandings of intersectional oppression within arenas of anarchist thought, which sheds light on conflicts within modern anarchist movements over the tendency by some strands to privilege one oppression over others, contradictorily recreating hierarchies. Finally, the engagement with post-structural thought has enhanced anarchist understandings of power, by pointing to its multi-directional and subtly coercive nature. This should be of interest to scholars studying anarchist projects that focus on altering interpersonal relations or strategize for egalitarianism without fixed targets.



### **3.0 AN ANARCHIST SOCIOLOGY, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND ANARCHISM, AND ANARCHISM IN OCCUPY**

My dissertation speaks to three audiences: sociologists, anarchist scholars, and social movement scholars. This chapter reviews existing literature on an anarchist sociology, the framing of anarchist movements today, the lack of attention by scholars toward anarchism as an influence on the global justice movement – a precursor to Occupy – and the renewed attention toward the anarchist influence on the Occupy movement. I explain my contributions to each area.

First, I argue that sociologists could benefit from an incorporation of anarchist thought and practice into the study of society. I build on the work by Shantz and Williams (2013), who propose a marriage between sociology and anarchism. I begin this section by explaining the anarchist turn, establishing what anarchism is and has been in scholarship on social theory, and illustrating the relevance of anarchist thought to societal analysis. My review of the literature adds support to the project of Shantz and Williams to develop an anarchist sociology.

Secondly, I address anarchist scholars. I argue that my dissertation challenges scholarship on anarchism by complicating the ways anarchist thought and practice has been framed. The predominant descriptions of anarchism and anarchist movements do not present a full picture because strands that actually exist are often not included or fully explored. But these strands were represented in Occupy and thus helped shaped the practices and debates. I argue that a representation of anarchism as legitimate, legible, and loveable may result in broader support but

is dishonest, as anarchism is actually contradictory and uncomfortable. Current framings can result in false movement unity and hinder our ability to more fully understand movement dynamics as social movement scholars. In this section, I also consider whether more clearly defining anarchism is an anarchistic project. I end the section by additionally challenging two tendencies by anarchist scholars: the elision of concepts of domination and hierarchy (which results in a confused, unclear analysis when seeking to understand practice) and arguments for a re-socialization of anarchist norms without discussing other necessary – yet oft-putting – elements to ward off recuperation of those norms into current social structures of domination.

Thirdly, I address social movement scholars, arguing for greater attention to anarchist movements. I review the movement literature of social movements that prefigured Occupy – specifically the global justice movement that began in the late 1990s – and illustrate that movement analyses have tended to exclude anarchism, preventing fuller understandings of movement dynamics. I argue this has also resulted in incomplete understandings of how Occupy emerged and why it took on the horizontal structure and a prefigurative politics approach. In this section, I review the absence and marginalization of anarchism in social movement studies, explaining the damaging results. This includes a survey of the global justice movement period, in which anarchist thought and practice was making a resurgence among social movement actors, and a review of relevant literature on the Occupy Movement, the site of my research, and when this resurgence became most explicit. I briefly review the existing inquiries before homing in on neoliberal logics, prefigurative politics, and egalitarian social movement strategies, arguing that an anarchist lens better explains the attempts to translate theory into practice.

### 3.1 AN ANARCHIST SOCIOLOGY

Sociologists Jeff Shantz and Dana Williams (2013) aim to anarchize sociology in their book *Anarchy and Society: Reflections on Anarchist Sociology* because they believe in a radical transformation of society that centers values of autonomy, anti-authoritarianism, self-organization, voluntary association, solidarity and mutual aid. The authors make the case that while both anarchists and sociologists study society, operationalizing sociological findings typically translates into reform while anarchist analysis leads to a radical transformation. They argue that a more anarchistic analysis of society, and greater attention to past and current anarchist efforts, could put forth visions of order that are non-statist (as the state is a formalized form of domination) and further the development and spread of liberatory alternatives.

The authors define an anarchist sociology as “the action-oriented study and theoretically-informed transformation of societies” (2013:9) and discuss what it could look like: a subject to be studied, a subfield (think ASA section, with its own journal, reading lists and research canon), a caucus of people who want to foster the study and advance its reach, an ideological orientation (like Marxism or feminism) or theoretical perspective for studying society, or a tool to develop transformational strategies. They also demonstrate the benefits of re-centering sociology upon anarchist values, for example, considering the possibilities of bridging state-based discourse around “rights” (2013:13), and developing conceptions of freedom based in anarchist ethics (2013:12-13).

Comparing the Enlightenment Left-intellectual origins of anarchism and sociology, the common practitioners and the differences, Shantz and Williams are able to synthesize the most useful and radical aspects of each. They tease out some distinctions in the intertwined traditions drawing from classics like Weber and Marx, and contemporaries such as Patricia Hill Collins,

skillfully weaving together sociological and anarchist traditions – historically existing alongside one another – into a colorful fabric with more potential for societal transformation. For example, early anarchists and sociologists were both concerned with emerging bureaucracy. While Weber sought an understanding based on a legal rationale of modern authority, requiring conformity and self-regulation, Emma Goldman and other anarchist thinkers came from a perspective that saw more social control as “scientific” regulation and arrived at understandings that instead highlighted relations of mutual aid and cooperation. They engage with the ideas of anarchist thinkers whose analyses plant them firmly in sociological theoretical ground. Peppered throughout are nods to contributions by sociologists whose inquiries could attract anarchists interested in furthering societal examination.

Shantz and Williams home in on two areas of sociological concern – inequality and the process of norm socialization – and offer a different approach. They argue that although sociological analysis has the potential to uncover the roots of social problems and provide ideas for radical social transformation, much of it is still looking in the wrong places. For example, sociologists tend to focus on inequality, which is a symptom of relations of domination, a main focus for anarchists. These insights challenge analyses content to grapple with surface problems. This is an important start to strengthening sociological inquiry, but I argue they could use more consideration in their development.

### **3.1.1 Challenging Anarchist Scholars**

In this section, I first discuss two problems anarchist scholars face when articulating anarchism and discussing anarchist movements: a tendency to present an attractive, yet incomplete, version of anarchism, and a need to reify anarchism for its use as a category of analysis. I argue that

other anarchist strands of thought and practice do exist and must be included to better understand movement dynamics. I also argue there is value in considering definitions of anarchism that focus on its use as drawing attention to difference, deconstruction, and destruction rather than aiming to pinpoint a positive, clear definition.

Next, I extend the implications of using anarchism as a lens of difference and consider two approaches by anarchist scholars to examine the construction of counter-power by anarchists: one as the focus on *aims* by anarchists to create a new hegemony (anarchist norms as alternatives to current hegemonic norms) and the other as a focus by anarchists on *methods*, incorporating an ongoing practice to break down dominating power relations. I argue that the former (the counter culture aim) is only a possibility if participants can ward off recuperation and the latter (the practice) was a major focus of Occupy anarchists.

In this section, I also examine another common pitfall of anarchist scholars: a tendency to conflate domination and hierarchy. I argue that this leads to a fetishization of non-hierarchical structures.

Anarchist scholars tend to frame anarchist thought and anarchist movements as presenting and practicing a logical, desirable proposition for the reorganization of society. As an anarchist, I appreciate the project as a counter to the long-running tendency by non-anarchist scholars to perpetuate misunderstandings of anarchism. However, the work necessary for an examination from a social scientific perspective requires a reification of anarchism. I argue that the common, neat definition has two flaws.

First, the neat definition of anarchism that anarchist scholars frequently put forth is flawed in its overemphasis on principles and movement strands that could be easily embraced by non-anarchists, such as mutual aid and empowerment through direct participation, and its under-

emphasis or outright exclusion of the confrontational elements that are inherently part of anarchist thought and practice but could hinder mass adoption of anarchist perspectives. I will now review recent works on anarchism and Occupy by explicitly anarchist or anarcho-friendly scholars – that is, scholars who are clearly sympathetic to anarchistic ideas – and how my research differs.

David Graeber is an anarchist scholar, anthropologist, author of many works on the global justice movement, and one of the original organizers of Occupy Wall Street and architects of its structure that has come to be used interchangeably with anarchist practice today. He has written extensively on the anarchist roots of Occupy (2011, 2013, 2015). In an article for Al Jazeera (2011), he explains, during the height of the Occupy movement:

I should be clear here what I mean by ‘anarchist principles.’ The easiest way to explain anarchism is to say that it is a political movement that aims to bring about a genuinely free society – that is, one where humans only enter those kinds of relations with one another that would not have to be enforced by the constant threat of violence. History has shown that vast inequalities of wealth, institutions like slavery, debt peonage or wage labour, can only exist if backed up by armies, prisons, and police. Anarchists wish to see human relations that would not have to be backed up by armies, prisons and police.

Although Graeber focuses on freedom within an environment of consent, other principles commonly connected to anarchism by scholars on Occupy include: anti-authoritarian, non-hierarchical relations; voluntary association; self-organization; autonomy from the state and other political organizations; anti-capitalism; mutual aid; and solidarity (Bray 2013; Gibson 2013; Graeber 2011; Hammond 2015). Differences exist in the weight scholars give to different principles, and sometimes the explicit inclusion of specific practices based on those principles. For example, a desire for consensual relations is inherent in scholars’ definitions of anarchism but the practice of consensus is not always included. Some scholars preface the use of the consensus practice as anarchistic as long as it is practiced in a non-coercive environment (Gibson

2013) or practitioners embrace an anti-oppression politics, and establish protocols for exclusion if participants are disruptive (Bray 2013). However, some anarchists explicitly reject the inclusion of “consensus,” “prefiguration,” and “direct democracy” as part of anarchist thought and practice. I argue that it is important to explore this.

Many anarchist scholars either do not include confrontational anarchist efforts in their discussion of anarchist movements or they do not fully explore these strands. Shantz and Williams (2013) briefly mention Bash Back, for example, an anarchist transgender and queer group found in many cities in the U.S. during the 2000s. The group confronts mainstream gay activists, advocates physically confronting homophobic people, and embraces property destruction. Shantz and Williams point to Bash Back’s integration of intersectional analyses and refer to their activities as confrontational direct action empowerment but do not go any further in exploring how the group is not typically embraced – due to their approaches – by other likely allies on the Left.

As another example, in his book on the anarchism of Occupy Wall Street, Bray (2013) emphasizes the diversity of beliefs of people who make up the anarchist movement and briefly explores the Black Block. It is a tactic utilized by some anarchists and non-anarchists, in which participants dress in black to obscure their identities to avoid surveillance and retaliation, challenge spatial boundaries (such as marching through areas the police refuse to permit), and sometimes partake in property destruction either as a symbolic form of protest or to raise costs for political figures or corporations. However, Bray does not delve into the ways insurrectionary, nihilist, or primitivist thought that exists among some of this contingent may influence anarchists’ behaviors. To better document modern anarchist movements, I argue that scholars must turn their attention to marginalized strands of thought and these movement contingents that

exist. These less “respectable” strands that have aims in contrast to winning popular support influence and shape anarchist thought and practice today. To not include them in examination of anarchist thought and anarchist movements may result in more converts to anarchistic perspectives but it does a disservice to more nuanced social movement understandings, and also can result in alliances that are not based on full understandings.

Secondly, and perhaps ironic to discuss in a social-scientific academic work, the clarification of anarchism as a stable and legible category of analysis is *unanarchistic*, in pinning down and thus foreclosing the possibilities of anarchism as a morphing, unstable practice-in-flux. The clarification sits uncomfortably with anarchist scholars like myself, although may not be as much of a problem for scholars unconcerned with straightforward definitions. There is much to be gained by incorporating anarchist analysis into a study of society and examining anarchist movements. Thus reification might simply be a cost anarchist scholars must pay to further intellectual discussion around a more anarchistic societal transformation.

Some anarchist scholars struggle with this tension. Mueller (2003:122), uncomfortable with putting forth a tidy definition and attempts to fix the meaning of anarchism, asks, “How does one define something that draws its lifeblood from defying convention, from a burning conviction that what is, is wrong, and from the active attempts to change what is into what could be?” Mueller’s sensitivity stems from and causes him to focus on different understandings of power as multi-directional, ubiquitous and productive, following the influence of post-structuralist thought on anarchism. Correspondingly, Mueller casts current anarchist efforts as practices of opposition. However, he eventually argues for the construction of a counter hegemony as a strategy for social change.



Anarchist scholars often focus on either anarchist aims to construct a new culture (which requires explication of a list of new, desired norms), or on anarchist methods as an ongoing practice that will result in a new culture (which does not require explication, beyond anti-authoritarian ideals, because new, desired norms will emerge as a result of a commitment to undoing relations of domination in everyday practice). This reflects a tension among anarchists, as some aim to build this new, defined culture, others concentrate solely on a practice of power deconstruction, and others focus on opposition. This tension leads to paralysis, as anarchist participants fail to find common ground on which to move forward together. I now consider two examples of the scholarship illustrating the positive versus negative dichotomy and explain how a missing piece – an embrace of conflict, indeed a *need* for ongoing conflict – is a key to conceptually bridging these different foci and a potential solution to render the different aims-in-practice as complementary rather than in opposition with one another.

In their development of an anarchist sociology, Shantz and Williams (2013) focus on the former – the intentional creation of new anarchistic norms – exploring anarchist and sociological ideas about norms and socialization as barriers and potential avenues for social change. The authors discuss how current societal norms reinforce domination, rather than anti-authoritarian relations or mutual aid. They illustrate how anarchist norms differ from other Leftist norms. For example, they examine the ways norms perpetuate non-liberatory relations that become entrenched as harmless or even positive rituals, such as lobbying an authority to figure out how to do something rather than empowering ourselves to take action. Teasing out anarchist norms they touch on current anarchists' strategies for re-socialization and also grapple with challenges to eliminating domination in our shared understandings, including a lack of positive reinforcement for those practicing alternatives, structural constraints such as professional

expectations required to do one's job, and the comfort and ease of the status quo, especially for those already privileged.

However, Shantz and Williams (2013) do not grapple with a problem facing anarchist efforts that focus on the creation of new, value-based cultural creation: anarchist norms are already being integrated into our lives, as alternatives to hierarchy, in ways that maintain the underlying structures of oppression. For example, the "sharing economy" sells us capitalistic forms of mutual aid and corporations are decentralizing their structures, selling it as greater worker autonomy. But the goal is to extract greater productivity, as the lines between work and leisure blur. This recuperation facilitates less overt forms of domination, as it bolsters status-quo-operation-as-usual, as it wins over those who desire less dominating relations, luring them with the warmer, fuzzier version of exploitation, reasoning that incremental reforms are all we can hope for. This can pacify dissatisfaction and squelch dissent. How can alternatives remain conflictual to ward off recuperation of these new norms? Perhaps an embrace of conflict and confrontation is another norm to add to the project of re-socialization.

How does the strategy of new norm and new culture creation remain contentious? Some scholars focus on the methods as an ongoing practice that result in a new culture. Maeckelbergh (2011) does not use the word anarchism explicitly to characterize recent global justice and anti-austerity mobilizations in Spain. But in her explanation of the importance of a horizontal structure for facilitating a continuous deconstruction of power relations of domination, she emphasizes the need for such structures and projects to remain contentious so as not to be recuperated into systems of inequality.

I argue that the conceptual dichotomy between a scholarly focus on the forging of new norms versus the practice of breaking down power relationships could be bridged by thinking of

these as aims anarchists have – some prioritizing one over the other – that are working in conjunction toward the same goal. In practice, this perspective could ease tensions among anarchists over a positive versus negative approach by agreeing on one emphasis – the need for ongoing conflict. I believe this could be viable as even the anarchists working for a loosely predetermined set of new norms are necessarily open to revision of those new norms.

Similarly, Leach (2013) compares the conflicts that erupt in anarchistic structures in Occupy Wall Street and contemporary German movements. She examines how participants sought to remedy the conflicts. In Occupy, she explains, participants aimed for greater formalization, constructing increasingly intricate and complicated mechanisms for accountability, while German movement participants aimed for less formality and more attention to creating a culture of trust, and one that embraced conflict with the aim of addressing issues head-on and seeking solutions particular to the issue. Leach concludes that greater formality betrays an environment of increasing mistrust and results in excluding those participants on the margins. In contrast, the fostering of a “fight culture” creates space to deal with conflict and an emphasis on organizing around affinity helps to strengthen bonds and trust among participants, resulting in smoother organization.

Leach’s argument (2013) is an updated response to claims of tyranny within structurelessness; arguments that unfolded in the 1960s and 1970s with Freeman’s (1972) “The Tyranny of Structurelessness” and Levine’s (2012) counter argument “The Tyranny of Tyranny.” Leach’s revisiting of these movement conflicts speaks to their renewed relevance, as anarchists and others again seek to replace structures of domination with structures built on liberatory relations.

However, anarchist scholars sometimes fall into the trap of facilitating a fetishization of liberatory structures. For example, Shantz and Williams (2013) claim a connection between domination and hierarchy that I argue must be distinguished. In explaining how anarchism could aid sociology, they argue that sociological analysis is focused on the effects, not the causes of inequality. In contrast, anarchist thought examines relationships of domination, of which inequality is merely a symptom. They provide an excellent breakdown of how domination underlies intersectional oppressions across macro, meso, and micro-levels, and the necessity of ongoing performance of domination for inequality to continue. They argue that a focus by sociologists on “haves” versus “have nots” misses an opportunity to more deeply explore relationships of domination. The authors argue that remedying instances of inequality does not point toward a better world. For example, policy shifts to help people make more money do not fundamentally alter an unequal system by lessening the degree of inequality of individuals within that system. Instead, the authors propose a Grand Theory of Domination, a controversial move for anarchists, yet a useful one, as anarchism critiques general patterns of domination as consequences of authority. However, Shantz and Williams could benefit from more attention to distinguishing between hierarchy and domination as the elision can obscure the way power operates. Alternatives to hierarchical models have become popular in many everyday realms but do not necessarily contest domination. Blurring can lead to fetishization of structure and thus more resistance to challenging the relations occurring within that structure. The authors do cite Jo Freeman (1972), of course, to warn of unchecked tyranny in non-hierarchical structures. But without a more nuanced discussion, they imply that non-hierarchical structures are preferable to hierarchical ones, as long as formal mechanisms are present to ensure the sharing of power. However, scholars such as Leach (2013) are finding that complex formal mechanisms can also

lead to more marginalization and relationships of domination. Shantz and Williams could strengthen their argument by focusing on uprooting relations of domination in culture regardless of the formal structural arrangement, and in each relationship – personal/social, economic, and political – without necessarily creating more formalized mechanisms.

In contrast, Smith and Glidden (2012) follow Freeman (1972) and draw from Polletta (2002) when discussing the non-hierarchical structures of Occupy, examining greater formalization of structures and increasingly complicated mechanisms in Occupy Pittsburgh. They argue that there is a need for better, more effective methods for participation and democratic decision-making. They focus on "consensus techniques" that they argue may work well in friendship-based organizing but tend to exclude newcomers and people most directly harmed by systems of inequality. Smith and Glidden connect this rigid insistence on consensus techniques to the views and behaviors of anarchist participants. However, an examination of anarchists' support for the consensus process and support for consensus by non-anarchists is necessary to make a solid claim about the connection between anarchist thought and practice.

### **3.2 SOCIAL MOVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP AND ANARCHISM**

In this section, I review what social movement scholars tell us about anarchism and its place in contemporary social movements, identifying gaps in the literature despite the subject as a growing area of study. I explore the absence and marginalization of anarchism and anarchist movements in social movement literature. Leaving out these tendencies does a disservice to social movement studies because it paints an incomplete picture of movement participation and influence. A more nuanced understanding could better explain social movement dynamics.

I then review the literature on Occupy, homing in on the connection of neoliberal logics and more recent scholarship on prefigurative politics, and arguing that an anarchist lens better explains the attempts to translate theory into practice.

### **3.2.1 Absence and Marginalization**

Many well-known social movement scholars do not study anarchist social movements. Some study broader movements that include anarchist strands or have been influenced by anarchism, such as the global justice movement, but they focus on the movement strands that are not anarchistic, such as those actors lobbying for large governmental reforms. When anarchism is discussed, it is often in the context of nineteenth and twentieth century movement history, or as a fringe element that does not hold much relevance to the larger movement of which it is part. I will now discuss that phenomenon and how it does injustice to the study of social movements.

Sidney Tarrow (1998) is one of the scholars who incorporates anarchist movements into his analysis. In his chapter on mobilizing structures, he seeks to distinguish among the diversity of organizational roles in movements. In a section examining models that are structured enough for sustainability but flexible enough to link participants and remain contentious, he mentions anarchists when he points to nineteenth-century European contention to illustrate different forms of organization. He describes anarchists' non-hierarchical federated forms. When Tarrow discusses the twentieth century, he then distinguishes between social democracy permanent organizations, anarchists, and community-based movements – all with different organizational structures and ways of operating. However, within these categories he does not acknowledge the overlap and mutual influence. For example, Tarrow lumps new social movement groups into the third community-based movements category, not addressing the fact that anarchist groups of the

1960s and 1970s could very well be part of this category, too. This creates the impression that anarchist movements were a thing of the past, focused solely on labor concerns.

Charles Tilly and Lesley J. Wood (2009) cite anarchism once, in their discussion of early twentieth century Argentina, when anarchist federations originated general strikes. Wood (2012), however, does thoroughly incorporate anarchist movements and influences within the history of the global justice era, as one of the few exceptions.

In the social movements primer on identity, culture, and the state by Meyer, Whittier, and Belinda Robnett (2002), one essay includes reference to anarchism. In discussing the process of identity as a radicalization of activists in the 1960s in the U.S., Rebecca Klatch (2002) mentions anarchism as a political identity claimed by anti-government activists. This signaled a process of transformation that denoted a specific worldview, a movement commitment, and identity as part of a community.

Searching for “anarchism” or “anarchists” turned up no results in many other well-known movement theory works (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; McCarthy and Zald 2009; Piven and Cloward 1977; Smith 2008; Snow and Soule 2010; Tilly and Tarrow 2007). I then searched for key terms that may be related to anarchism, such as “autonomous,” “libertarian” (the term has a Left leaning connotation in Europe, in contrast to its Tea Party alignment in the United States), “anti-state,” “anti-capitalism,” “socialism,” and “prefigurative,” without much luck. A search for “anti/alter-globalization” and “global justice” movements, “Battle of Seattle,” and protests against the World Trade Organization produced more results.

Some scholars refer generally to alter-globalization movements and protests to point to a change in the orientations of social movements. For example, scholars discuss an internationalization that occurred in the 1990s when local claimants expanded their targets to

include higher-level objects that affect a greater population. This played a role in a construction of a collective identity of social movements against large institutions with multi-national reach (Tilly and Wood 2009). These examinations of new orientations include a focus on decentralized network structures that overlap with styles of organization that stem from anarchist philosophy and had been honed and practiced by anarchists, as well as many feminist and peace groups, over the twentieth century (Cornell 2011; Epstein 1991). Scholars sometimes refer to these characteristics of the global justice movement as a renewed emphasis on prefiguration (Maeckelbergh 2011).

Some scholars trace the trajectory of prefiguration as a social movement characteristic from early twentieth century anarchist, peace, and religious groups through the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s and 1970s, to women's and environmental groups and modern anarchist efforts (Breines 1989; Cornell 2011; Epstein 1991; Gelderloos 2010; Polletta 2002; Sitrin 2006). Although anarchists were part of the global justice movement and clearly influenced its trajectory, and scholarship on anarchism makes a solid case for its connection to prefigurative politics, there is little to no mention of anarchist groups or efforts, or the adoption of anarchistic styles, in a sizable portion of social movement scholarship about the global justice movement (Smith 2008; Snow and Soule 2010; Tilly and Tarrow 2007; Tilly and Wood 2009). Discussing anarchist tendencies and influences in the global justice movement, without explicitly referring to them as such, contributes to the invisibility of anarchism.

Often, the focus within the global justice movement is on professional transnational organizations, actors concentrating on UN resolutions, and efforts appealing to state bodies for reforms (Bandy and Smith 2005; della Porta and Diani 2006; Smith 2008). An examination of the increase of formal organizations makes for a compelling illustration of the increase in the



number of cross border connections but it leaves out part of the story. A lack of investigation of anarchist influences on the structures of the global justice movement or inclusions of anarchist efforts as part of the movement contributes to a marginalization of explicit anarchist tendencies in efforts for change. Social movement scholars are often involved in organizing efforts, and their work is referenced by activists seeking movement analysis and insight. If scholars are unaware of anarchism and its place in global justice, or their readers and fellow activists are unaware or misinformed, anarchist groups will be marginalized. Many anarchist groups continue to deal with demonization propagated by negative media representations. In some cases, this is compounded when groups or leaders with more conservative or narrow reform goals attempt to marginalize anarchists due to their radical demands. Studies that include an analysis of anarchist efforts and contributions can be more representative and make for less divided, stronger movements.

Another tendency is for anarchist efforts to only be explicitly recognized within the subject of violence, or, at the other extreme, as non-action-oriented cultural elements, peripheral to strategies of contention. In working through whether support structures of social movement organizations are active challengers or simply service providers, Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani (2006) trace the roots of the Italian social centers to autonomist and anarchist traditions of the 1970s. They explain the centers are part of the new horizontally structured organizations to emerge that do not directly challenge political powerholders but sought to support cultural challenges and practice new lifestyles in a new counterculture. These organizations eventually evolved into outward-looking organizational models, they say, including projects such as Indymedia in this category. There is only one other mention of anarchism in this introductory reader to social movements. In describing the diversity of the global justice movement and the

forms of mobilization women, environmental, and labor groups inserted into the overall dynamics, they note that civil disobedience largely remained nonviolent except when police reacted to attempts by “fringe anarchist groups” at summit protests. When references to anarchist efforts only the grace the pages of social movement books in relation to attacks suppressed by the police, and referred to as “fringe,” a skewed perception about anarchist involvement in these movements is relayed to the reader, and possibly a biased conception of anarchism as a philosophy and practice.

As I have shown, anarchist social movements have been largely absent from social movement scholarship. In many cases in which anarchism is explained, it is either discussed in nineteenth and early twentieth century history, relegating the practice to the past. In other accounts, it is misrepresented as a disorganized, apolitical cultural tendency, or the violent fringe of other movements. These misrepresentations render anarchism as invisible, or play into divide-and-conquer state repression attempts, leading to more fractured movements. A careful examination of the past and continuing influence of anarchism on (and within) modern movements is necessary.

### **3.2.2 A Growing Area of Study**

As discussed above, anarchist studies is now a growing area of research. In this section, I will focus on its growth in connection to social movement scholarship.

Some scholars are discussing the alternative globalization movements in addition to anarchism and other tendencies (Chesters and Welsh 2010; Epstein 2001; Farrer 2006; Graeber 2002; Juris 2008; Wood 2012). They see the movements as being characterized by anarchist ideas and practice. Anthropologist David Graeber (2009a) published a detailed ethnography of

the global justice movement, analyzing symbolism and representation, and illustrating the inner-workings of structures and processes that shifted the operation of power relations in organizing. Attention to the ways anarchism influenced the global justice movement, and movement influences in general, aids in understanding not only how these movements came to be, but sheds more light on the actors within. These areas deserve closer examination as they could help explain why and how events, strategies, conflicts, and alliances – in addition to structures – emerged in movements influenced by anarchist traditions.

Graeme Chesters and Ian Welsh (2010) define the alter-globalization movement as “a network movement, with significant nodes and clusters consisting of social movements, social movement organizations, groups and individuals, expanding across a multidimensional space with both material and virtual manifestations” (2010:25). They delve into overlapping currents such as anti-capitalist and autonomist traditions. The latter places self-organization and a rejection of political parties and institutions at their center (Chesters and Welsh 2010; Katsiaficas 2006).

This points to significant overlap with anarchist principles, but some scholars perceive them as two different traditions. Cristina Flesher Fominaya (2005:31) defines autonomism as a movement “organized in a horizontal network form and underlain by the principles of self-organization, direct/participatory democracy, autonomy, horizontality, diversity and direct action.” This definition appears to echo the same principles of anarchism, as described above, minus the explicit addition of anti-state and anti-capitalist sentiment, although many participants argue that capitalism and the state are incompatible with the autonomist definitional principles and thus implied. Flesher Fominaya argues that anti-institutional global justice movement

participants adopted autonomism as a way to transcend baggage – negative public perceptions of ideology – that limited organization and movement building. She says:

The downplaying of ideology-based identities facilitates the inclusion of more people in the “same” movement, while the reduction of ideology as a central defining force for activists is in itself a legacy of autonomous movement and the dissolution of the “old” political categories. The more libertarian or anarchist tendency of the Spanish movement, however, has in turn received a discursive boost from the global movement, which legitimizes historical anarchist principles without labeling them as such, therefore making them legitimate and palatable even to the actors on the more classical Marxist-Leninist institutional Left. In this way the global movement alters local and national categories and divisions without resolving fundamental differences between forms of political practice (2007:342).

Although social movement actors could benefit from avoiding ideological labels, and scholars could gain insight into movement dynamics by avoiding the tendency to overemphasize ideological claims within movements, it remains a quandary for movement actors and scholars who find use in learning from the anarchist tradition and foster a vibrant culture of explicitly anarchist analysis. The label anarchist is also useful to employ in cases where it helps to clarify actual political differences so as not to gloss over difference and project a false unity among actors. Additionally, without the word, either the idea is lost or the conversations become convoluted as shorthand, as an idea is no longer available.

Empirical work exploring the intersections between anarchism and other schools of thought is increasing. In addition to the research being carried out by scholars interested in the intersections between anarchism and queer theory, as detailed above, some scholars are teasing out anarchist thought in faith-based social movements (Kemmerer 2009), the animal liberation movement (Best 2009), in Riot Grrrl actions and practices (Kaltefleiter 2009), and camps for climate action (Schlembach 2011). Others are examining the contributions that anarchist scholars, such as libertarian socialist social ecologist Murray Bookchin, have made to current

radical movements (Tokar 2010). Studying how anarchism has shaped these movements can help explain their structures, processes, conflicts, and strategies.

Some scholars are using traditional social movement theoretical tools to examine anarchist thought underlying current movements. For example, one study by Neil Hughes (2011) looks at the 15M Movement in Spain – the ongoing anti-austerity protests that began on May 15, 2011 – examining its emergence, the role of social networks, movement structure and action repertoires. He finds that the decentralized character positively impacted rapid mobilization. Another analyzes the direct action strategies and mutual aid efforts of Food Not Bombs groups, concluding that the anarchistic principles exemplify the forms of modern resistance to alter relations of consumption and the fulfillment of needs (Heynen 2010). In other words, the group members' anti-capitalist and non-hierarchical beliefs informed their practices, prefiguring the radical democracy relations they ultimately seek to bring about. Some use research on anarchist feminist movements to reflect on contemporary personal and collective identities, community and difference. For example, Martha Ackelsberg (2009) challenges the usefulness of static identity conceptions when movements that claim anti-oppression theories are lacking in practice, resulting in members identifying with multiple traditions simultaneously. One study applies classical sociological conceptions of stratification to examine how class informs the politics of a contemporary anarchist collective (Robinson 2009).

Other scholars are concerned with the anarchistic elements in movements and communities that do not explicitly claim anarchist labels (Bamyeh 2009, 2011; Scott 2010). As Mohammed Bamyeh explains, "...what makes any resourceless revolution into a relentless machine is not its name, nor its ideology. It is the persistence of a very old, basic expectation of citizenship and participation, an expectation whose intuitive nature and pure form is discovered

again after having been mystified in the idiom of one discourse or another” (Bamyeh 2011). Most recently, Bamyeh has analyzed the dynamics of the Arab Spring, posing a direct challenge to some social movement theoretical tools such as resource mobilization and political opportunity structure theories. According to Bamyeh (2011), in Tunisia there was no structure of opportunities that enabled the revolution. It was anger and desperation; the actors were responding to closed possibilities. What’s more, the actors themselves were unaware of resources and opportunities. Bamyeh observes that the revolution took place due to creativity, rather than available resources. The resources were invented as necessary. He is not claiming that existing resources were not drawn upon, simply that they cannot be used to explain why an uprising took place. The new, anarchistic mobilization forms are driven by creativity, instead of available resources, thus our modes of analysis must change to accommodate shifting circumstances. Bamyeh is taking a different approach to studying movements rather than trying to fit movements into a preconceived theoretical box.

Other scholars have been modifying social movement tools to examine ideational influence. Jeffrey Juris (2008) explores the connections between classical anarchism and the alter globalization movement, specifically looking at the mobilizing in Barcelona at the turn of this century. He challenges analyses that regard social movements as identity-based and argues instead that the global justice movement combines anarchist principles and a late-capitalist networking logic. He claims this distinction has important analytical consequences; if we neglect to understand the fluidity in identity claims and processes, we misunderstand the nature of current movement experiments and contemporary political subjectivities. In another example, Alex V. Barnard’s (2011) study of freegan dumpster divers in New York City counters social movement theories about traditional movement practices. That scene tends to attract many

anarchists due to its anti-capitalist ideology. He finds that unconventional tactics, often chalked up to tools of identity formation or framed as cultural trappings, also have strategic components. Beyond alternative identity claims, freeganism enables recruitment and movement building to turn public opinion against capitalism and environmental degradation.

It is clear that anarchism as a valuable yet understudied area is getting more attention. My research builds on the study of anarchist influence on other Leftist movements today. Current scholarship has sought to explain, through new approaches to identity construction and fluid identity conception, *why* anarchism as a defined ideology may not be as explicit in movements today. Some scholars have examined the adoption of anarchist approaches by the global justice movement, broadly. As anarchist thought continues to underlie the structures and processes shaping the strategies and directions of newly emerging forms of social protest, and anarchist actors continue to use the word in connection with these forms, it continues to play a role in the resultant conflicts, alliances, obstacles, and opportunities. For these reasons, my examination of *what happens* when anarchist approaches are taken up by mass movements in which all or most of the participants do not identify as anarchists is vital if we are to understand movement mechanics and the impact of the approaches on participants and movement trajectories.

A 2012 issue of *Cultural Anthropology* is devoted to the Occupy movements and global uprisings that demonstrate increasingly popular anarchistic social movement forms. Guest editors Jeffrey Juris and Maple Razsa (2012) stress the need for further examination of the political forms underlying the occupations to examine their challenges and contradictions. The editors explain in the introduction:

A particular set of tensions and strategic dilemmas have...plagued the Occupy movements, including a divide between newer and more seasoned activists, the difficulty of recognizing and negotiating internal differences, a lack of common political and organizational principles beyond the General Assembly model, and the difficulty of

transitioning to new tactics, strategies, visions, and structures in a post-eviction era. In short, activists are now faced with fundamental questions about how to build a movement capable of actually transforming the deep inequalities they have attempted to address (Juris and Razsa 2012).

I argue for a greater understanding of these newly emerging movement forms to contribute to strategic discussions among activists within these movements, reinforcing the political relevance of social movement studies. As scholars we must examine the content and degree of agreement around approaches in movements. How do movement participants understand horizontal, prefigurative, direct action approaches? How do their beliefs inform and transform practices, and how does this impact social movement outcomes and possibilities?

### **3.3 THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT**

There is extensive literature on Occupy and the connection to its precursors – the Indignados and the Arab Spring – and how those occupations helped to shape the tactical character of Occupy through participants’ perceptions of what was important or successful (for example, see Castañeda 2012; Kerton 2012; Romanos 2013; van de Sande 2013). But in this section I engage with the literature that falls within my area of examination on anarchistic and prefigurative approaches to space and structure in Occupy, and the precursors that I argue shaped Occupy, such as the global justice movement, a rejection of neoliberal logics, and pre-Occupy prefigurative experiments.

Many scholars have examined the spatial aspect of Occupy. They find that physical occupations served immediate organizing needs, providing a physical logistics center in an increasingly virtual landscape (Calhoun 2013), which enabled ways for the movement to grow



by involving new people and connecting them directly with more experienced participants (Gitlin 2012). The spatial dimension attracted initial attention and participation, and is thus responsible for the success of the mobilization (Hammond 2013).

The occupied spaces also provided a physical location for participants to experiment with new relations, creating inclusive structures that placed importance on the means as well as the ends (della Porta 2012). Often referred to as “prefigurative politics,” these ideas and practices aimed to prefigure another world in the present by challenging inequalities on a micro (interpersonal) and macro (institutional, structural) level (Maeckelbergh 2011; van de Sande 2013). As explained above, many past movements emphasized prefigurative politics and experimented with horizontal structures, including feminists, Quakers, anarchists and autonomists, as well as advocates of anti-nuclear, environmental, alterglobalization and racial justice efforts (Breines 1989; Cornell 2011; Gelderloos 2010; Poletta 2002; Sitrin 2006). But Occupy widely popularized some of the practices, such as the use of a “leaderless” horizontal organizing structure, which attempts to redesign the way power operates by facilitating a continuous decentralization of power (Leach 2013; Maeckelbergh 2011).

Several scholars call for closer analyses of Occupy to better understand the theoretical limits of space-taking and prefigurative approaches (Pickerill and Krinsky 2012). Some find that the act and messaging of occupation served to re-inscribe a colonial mindset and exacerbate existing tensions among indigenous groups and others working for liberation (Kilibarda 2012; Brady and Antoine 2012). Some claim that the decision-making forum is inefficient and too demanding to accommodate diverse participation, does not offer scalable solutions for managing serious conflict, and is not organizationally sustainable (Rohgalf 2013; Smith and Glidden 2012). Still others urge thinking beyond a scalar binary (Glück 2012) and argue that the messy and

uncertain model in itself is necessary to liberate a political imagination and rethink our ideas about what democracy could be (Szolucha 2013). I argue for continued inquiry into the conflicts over prefigurative approaches.

A glaring hole in the Occupy literature is that there is very little about anarchist currents within the Occupy movement. Scholars explore the ways participants in occupations do not necessarily share the same goals, and conflict comes from competing ideas for using the space to foster community versus using it to achieve other tactical aims. However, they conclude this is a tension that is productive and healthy (Aitchison 2011) and that the experience of participation helps to transform the political self-development of those involved, which creates and strengthens activist networks (Salter and Boyce Kay 2011). I instead argue that incorporating an examination of anarchist thought and the beliefs and behaviors of anarchist actors could uncover political differences that exist but are not necessarily productive and healthy, suggesting alternative solutions to conflict.

A sociological study of anarchism within the Occupy movement is important because it can better explain the conflicts that took place, due to participants' differing political aims and understandings of Occupy tactics. Few studies of Occupy do this although there are exceptions. For example, an examination of Ireland's Occupy Dame Street uses anarchist understandings of public space to better understand the use and aims of direct action tactics (Kiersey 2014). It could be illuminating to borrow from anarchist thought – such as maintaining a negotiated unstable existence between aims for freedom and equality – to better understand Occupy.

### **3.3.1 Neoliberal Logics, Prefiguration, and Anarchism**

Both anarchist movements and the Occupy movement are described as integrating prefigurative politics into their practices. That is, on-going experiments to prefigure another possible world in the present, paying attention to the means by which participants struggle to do so, seeking a correspondence between means and ends, rather than hoping to build a new system in the future. Practitioners of prefigurative politics believe this is important to do because neoliberalism characterizes systems in society today.

David Harvey (2005) describes neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (2005:2). Politically, the state facilitates neoliberal economic operation through maintaining legitimate currency and laws that rely on private property rights and allow for a capitalist market to function, and ensuring enforcement through the military and police. The neoliberal movement has far reach, as many proponents are in influential positions in institutions such as the media and education, in addition to holding political office and residing on corporate boards. The neoliberal approach spans nations with the help of international regulating bodies such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization – main targets of protest for the global justice movement of the mid-late 1990s and early 2000s.

In his 2005 work, Harvey fills a gap in explaining the origin and rise of neoliberalism. He traces it back to the late 1970s and early 1980s, when there was a move toward a new economic configuration. This included the 1980 election of President Ronald Reagan in the U.S., who played a large role in rolling back the gains and limiting the power of workers, deregulating

industry – which had international impact – and supporting major changes to monetary policy by another neoliberal proponent and new head of the Federal Reserve. International allies in key regions of power – due to resources or influence – helped spread the ideology, including British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping who liberalized China’s community-ruled economy.

Harvey explains that neoliberalism is more than just a principle to direct and manage economic relations; it has become an ethical guide and hegemonic mode, as neoliberals believe that social good can be maximized through marketplace transactions. He says, “it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world” reaching into spheres including “divisions of labor, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes, ways of life and thought, reproductive activities, attachments to the land and habits of heart” (2005:3).

However, there are contradictions inherent in neoliberalism and Harvey points them out: its practices result in monopolies and a centralization of corporate and financial power across borders. This has served to deepen existing inequalities and produce some unrest. Additionally, neoconservatives, who are influential allies to neoliberals, believe a degree of coercion is necessary to restore order and have been successful at combining unregulated economic relationships with a heavy, militaristic hand, which would otherwise be less intrusive, in line with the neoliberal preference for a weaker state.

In addition to noting the negative effects and impacts of the spread of neoliberal practices, it is important to note that other philosophical principles of neoliberalism also underpin many Leftist social movements, such as calls for dignity, and the fight for freedom of speech and choice (Harvey 2005).

This raises many questions about how to understand this creeping neoliberal hegemony and what to do. For one, from a solidly liberal tradition, has neoliberal ideology taken principles of social good and corrupted them (deepening inequality, arguably not a social good) by operationalizing economic freedom and weakened states? Or have movements against neoliberalism ironically integrated neoliberal modes into their strategies and approaches against neoliberalism? The answers to these questions dictate different approaches and solutions. Social movements against neoliberalism contain both: 1) participants (and corresponding visions) who hold dear concepts of state-guaranteed freedom and believe political economic restructuring of greater safety nets and more regulation will address inequality and social ills, and 2) participants (and corresponding visions) who hold dear concepts of non-statist freedom and believe a political and economic systemic overhaul must happen, beginning with a restructuring of social-psychological relations and small-scale experiments with new political and economic institutions. The latter category includes anarchists and other proponents of prefiguration. All the proponents are indeed interested in freedom, suggesting a need for differentiating the kinds of freedom that anarchists strive for versus the freedoms that lead to greater inequality. In other words, anarchists pursue freedom that goes beyond individual concern and deals with the collective good that will always be balanced against individual freedom.

Due to this perspective, some scholars refer to anarchism instead as coming from a pre-liberal or post-liberal tradition (Bamyeh 2009; Graham 2005; Marshall 2010) that returns to a smaller-scale arena of direct participation in decisions, honoring variation over standardization (local knowledge) and focusing on existence within a fluid, tenuous state of ongoing practices that balance the individual and the collective toward greater desirable conditions for both/all. Thus, many disagreements between anarchists and non-anarchists stem from whether cementing

static institutions (anarchists believe there is no one-size-fits all model) or giving away the ability to negotiate these spaces to a governing state are a solution, as they result in a reification of problems and solutions, a loss of freedom, and necessary enforcement. Many disagreements between prefigurative proponents (which includes many anarchists) and non-proponents stem from a disagreement about whether neoliberal logics have crept into the ways we make decisions and seek alternative solutions, and thus must be rooted out through practice and resocialization if we are to succeed at creating a world that maximizes individual freedom and collective well-being.

Although Harvey does cite anarchist movements as working against the market ethic and neoliberal practices (2005:185-186), he usually engages with “anarchy” as a state of disorder from a lack of governance, in line with the common international studies conceptions. Anarchist thought is consistent with a lack of governability, yes, if ceding autonomous decision-making to an outside body is the working definition of governance. However, consensual systems of order – which could serve the same desired functions of governability (such as providing decision-making forums with agreed upon parameters amongst groups of people) are not incongruent, and some scholars provide a different perspective for thinking of the problems of ungovernability (Bamyeh 2005).

Harvey’s (2005) aim in detailing the rise of neoliberalism is so that opponents can begin to construct alternative political and economic arrangements. By the 1990s, movements to counter neoliberalism’s political economic effects had begun to attract mass support (della Porta 2015; Wood 2012). The neoliberal shift is oftentimes referred to synonymously as “globalization,” and thus, protests against these changes were frequently referred to as “anti-globalization.” Later, anti-globalization social movement actors sought to shift their identity to

“global justice” or “alternative globalization” to avoid impressions from the general public (which would limit their appeal and movement-building potential) that they were against networked efforts across borders. Movement actors believed the new frames more accurately stated their aims and could be understood outside of a narrow conception of a neoliberal economic system.

Many global justice movement proponents, particularly anarchists and those who were part of countercultural spaces around explicitly anarchist activity, prioritized a commitment to working in an open, collaborative, network-organization style within horizontal structures, prioritizing the use of physical space to practice new values and develop new ways of relating. Juris and Pleyers (2009) call this “alter-activism.” Although the global justice movement in the U.S. waned after the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and was overshadowed by the anti-war movement (Hadden and Tarrow 2007), this prefigurative spirit lived on in explicitly anarchist projects and networks.

Prefigurative projects also developed in non-explicitly anarchist efforts during this time period. For example in Argentina, after the financial crash in 2001, horizontalism came to characterize alternative forms of labor struggle as workers took over their factories and ran the factories in a non-hierarchical way. The Argentine example became popularized as a model of other possible structures for economics, politics, and social relations, where power is shared while producing necessary materials to take care of communities (Sitrin 2006).

In 2011, when many global justice movement veterans established the Occupy model, the prefigurative trend gained popular attention again. Recent literature on prefiguration includes research on “horizontalism,” “direct democracy,” and “radical democracy” as practices of

prefiguring a new world. These were often cited as prefigurative practices within Occupy, although scholars sometimes did not frame them as such.

Some studies focus on the strengths of prefigurative strategies, using case studies to support their claims. For example, two cases in Occupy London illustrate conscious strategic thinking of participants in rejecting leaders (Howard and Pratt-Boyden 2013). Other scholars focus on how occupation is necessary to facilitate participatory democracy practices (Lubin 2012). Some draw from Occupy's methods to critique other institutions, such as by juxtaposing traditional community mobilization logic of action in service of a predetermined goal with "trusting the process" and arguing the latter could usefully intervene in community health psychology (Cornish et al. 2014:60).

Other studies continue to debate whether prefiguration is strategic, concluding that prefiguration is a "dead end" (Rohgalf 2013). Smucker (2013) refers to the prefigurative components of Occupy as expressive, collective ritual and an identity performance that has many benefits, such as building solidarity among participants, but that must give way to larger strategic framework. However, these arguments do not take into account the aims and intentions of the actors themselves which is important in a consideration of whether action is strategic.

Still others argue that prefiguration is strategic in the case of recent occupations. For example, Abellan, Sequera, and Janoschka (2012) examine the activities in the occupied Hotel Madrid, as part of the 15M movement that was a precursor to Occupy. They claim that the practices posed a challenge to capitalism and neoliberalism by shifting discourse around property rights and giving tangible direction to the initial Indignados mobilization. Yates (2015) examines and rethinks theories of prefiguration by an investigation of autonomous social centers in Barcelona. He argues that scholars can better understand prefigurative practices by looking at the



relations and tensions between a set of political priorities. He argues that prefiguration is not just a descriptive term for movement activities but as a concept of analysis to better understand action. The activities themselves are not just about building alternatives; actors' intention for diffusion of these practices plays a key role in their importance as political activities of struggle. Yates argues against a focus on means and ends, as actors are not proposing concrete ends but focusing on the necessity of intentional quality of practice to be able to produce desired outcomes. In contrast to Maeckelbergh (2011), who posits the strategic nature of prefigurative practices is due to an intentional, ongoing deconstruction of power in each relation, Yates argues that activities to ensure the political relevance (as seen through diffusion, for example) are necessary for it to be strategic, and that prefiguration proponents today are doing just that.

Some scholars, instead of focusing on whether or how prefigurative politics is astrategic, argue for a strategic articulation of the prefigurative. Brissette (2013) warns of the tendency to privilege means over ends in prefigurative practice, which does not contest the structure and relations of the world outside of the experiment. She discusses the ways Occupy Oakland participants sought to prefigure freedom in the occupations and she rejects arguments that Occupy was a state versus civil society dichotomy, claiming this can obscure the reinscribing of statist ways. However, she does not further explore the ways statism can creep in to relations striving for minimum order within communities prioritizing freedom.

Often scholars praise or challenge prefigurative approaches but do not incorporate an anarchist analysis, or consider the potential conflicts with anarchist aims held by participants. Scholars use case studies to point to the strengths of Occupy approaches, identify an obstacle, and then propose a solution. However, without an anarchist analysis or consideration of conflicts among anarchists, the solution remains theoretical and may not work in practice, given the

diverse make-up of participants, which includes anarchists. For example, Brucato (2012) evaluates direct democracy practices and concludes they are practical, claiming these horizontal approaches can work in movements as long as there is more unity around the 99% messaging. But this conclusion relies on an agreement among movement actors that a radically inclusive movement is desirable. However, an examination of actors' beliefs and aims could reveal disagreement; do participants share a commitment to a unified mass movement or simply to the use of a superficial slogan ("we are the 99%") to attract initial attention?

In fact, much scholarship lacks a closer examination of participants' political beliefs, which could trouble scholars' conclusions and even the framing of their inquiries. For example, in response to cynical and disillusioned conclusions about prefigurative projects, Szolucha (2013) delves into the complexity of the attempts for "real democracy" in the Occupy movement dynamics, specifically in Dublin and the San Francisco Bay Area. However, she uncritically links democracy with prefiguration, which results in an inability to explore the ambivalence toward valuing "democracy" by many participants. In another example, drawing from experience at OWS to call for self-change and language change as vital to the practice of radical democracy, Syrek (2012) proposes ways to cut through sarcasm and cynicism – citing these reasons for conflict in the occupation. But he does not consider if there are differences among participants over whether an embrace of conflict should be part of the necessary process of a linguistic shift.

Failure to examine specifically what participants were arguing against and responding to can result in conclusions that do not apply to the movement. For example, Hickel (2012) critiques Occupy for its "liberalism," or a concern with freedom and the belief that people are, or should be, equal, which, he argues manifested in the consensus structure and no-demands platform and Occupy participants' valuing of diversity, inclusiveness, cooperation. He

juxtaposes this freedom to critiques of liberalism that non-hierarchy means chaos, and concludes that participants misunderstand power. He focuses on the use of consensus process by Occupy participants to illustrate this misunderstanding of power, claiming that it forecloses the possibility of hegemony – which he argues is necessary for contesting power. Yet, Hickel's argument assumes a consensus among Occupy participants around Occupy practices and thus sees conflict as the inability of those processes to achieve an imagined unified aim, rather than a struggle among participants to change Occupy processes. Rather than taking a theoretical approach to understanding the breakdown in the structure and its viability for liberation, an examination of whether Occupy participants shared a commitment to the practices would be useful.

Other scholars put forth viable solutions to practical problems with mechanisms without using an anarchist lens. Boeri (2008) examines the Babels language translation and interpretation network in the World Social Forum and global justice movement, highlighting the recent historical trajectory of prefigurative politics. She concludes that a hybrid of both top down (principles to practice) and bottom up (practice to principles) approach is necessary if prefigurative practices are to successfully diffuse and be considered useful and viable. She argues that it is important for practitioners to remain flexible, adapting structures and practices to the local context. However, it could be useful to examine whether this difference in perspective – a commitment to flexible adaptability versus fixed rules – is actually a political difference that scholars do not talk about (as seen here) but could better explain the unfolding dynamics. Understanding why participants engage in certain behavior is key to better understanding the relationship of prefiguration and horizontality in theory and practice to be able to evaluate the chances of success.

Still other scholars put forth nuanced perspectives for researchers to better evaluate mechanisms, but again, without using an anarchist lens. For example, Maharawal distinguishes between different types of radical inclusion – one, a version in line with Hickel’s assumption (2012) and the other a “radical politics of inclusion” (Maharawal 2013:178) that incorporates an ongoing struggle based on an understanding of privilege, oppression, and a need to address and deconstruct power on an ongoing basis. Szolucha (2013) critiques the tendency by scholars to gloss over temporal processes when we think of prefiguration as combining the ideal in the present. But, she argues, it is in these “living temporality” processes that we could learn about how not to fall into the trap of constructing satisfying yet flattening narratives of erasure. She hesitates to claim lessons for what to do in the future aside from the recognition that complex, contradictory moments are when the necessary unexpected can occur, but a focus on fostering creative potential of these messy spaces, rather than trying to clarify them, is important for keeping space open for political imagination. Both of these critiques are important and useful, but connecting these conclusions to an explicitly anarchist approach could aid scholars in better understanding the relationship between ideas and behavior, and theoretical conflicts that could emerge as participants sought to put their theories into practice.

### **3.4 CONCLUSION**

My review of the literature on anarchism in social movement scholarship adds support to the project of Shantz and Williams (2013) to develop an anarchist sociology. In agreement with Shantz and Williams I argue that sociology and social movement scholarship should engage with and incorporate anarchist thought and practice because this could make sociology more useful

for understanding and pointing to solutions for social change. However, my dissertation also complicates Shantz and Williams' development of an anarchist sociology, and the assumptions of other anarchist scholars.

The Occupy movement was widely framed as focusing on inequality. The contributions of anarchists within Occupy (in shaping its structure and characteristics, and centering its prefigurative aims) did not get nearly as much attention yet provide an example of the intervention Shantz and Williams are calling for sociologists to pay attention to – and directly confront – domination as the root of inequality. Shantz and Williams are correct in this redirection of analysis for sociologists but should take more care in not conflating domination and hierarchy, as it could lead to new structures that reproduce relations incompatible with anarchist aims. My dissertation focuses on the anarchist strands in Occupy, as my unit of analysis, to enrich social movement studies with a better understanding of the anarchist thought, practices, and movement dynamics that impact mass movements today. While I draw from the foundations established by Shantz and Williams, my findings complicate some of their assumptions, deepening an anarchist approach to sociology.

## **4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

I engaged in ten months of fieldwork in Pittsburgh, PA, New York City, and Oakland, CA, from October 2012 to August 2013, to interview participants who were active in the Occupy Movement in those cities during the fall of 2011. My fieldwork built on impressions I gained as a participant of Occupy Pittsburgh in the fall of 2011. I collected news articles and movement media, transcribed interviews, and coded and analyzed these documents from the summer of 2012 through the spring of 2015.

In this chapter, I discuss how I operationalize anarchism and anarchists, the ethical precautions I took when interviewing participants, and how I gained access to the field. I then detail my data collection and data analysis. Finally, I reflect on the validity of my study, the limitations of the method, and ethical considerations and their impact on my research.

### **4.1 OPERATIONALIZING ANARCHISM AND ANARCHISTS**

Operationalizing anarchism is tricky, as the idea itself often refers to a tension between seemingly contradictory ideas. The approaches in Occupy – specifically the use of the space for prefigurative practices and the horizontal organizing structure – are referred to as anarchist by some today but have a history in other movements, too, and are used by many who do not call them anarchist. To further complicate matters, people who claim an anarchist identity may not be

putting anarchist theory into practice in a coherent or observable way while others may be advocating anarchistic methods without claiming an anarchist identity. Many scholars today distinguish anarchism in thought versus practice, “Big A anarchism” versus “small a anarchism,” respectively (Gibson 2013; Graeber 2013; Epstein 2001; Neal 1997). Some talk about anarchism today as a new form of anarchism that is more about practice and less concerned with ideological labels (Graeber 2002; Gordon 2008).

Anarchism can be an idea, a practice, or an identity. I operationalize anarchism as a theoretical stance against domination that involves a desire to counter statist and capitalist institutions and solutions, and challenge dominating interpersonal relations, based on a shared understanding of interconnected oppressions in a heteropatriarchal, white supremacist, class stratified social system. Anarchism as a practice is the methods used to decentralize concentrations of power over others and engage in relations that propose alternative ways of relating. In practice, in Occupy, this means the horizontal structure for deliberation and the experiments in the occupied space aiming to counter coercive relationships. Anarchism as an identity is when a participant claimed “anarchist” as a label that best describes their political views.

I consider someone an anarchist if they endorse the idea and believe their actions are putting the idea into practice. I consider someone an anarchist if they support and engage in practices that decentralize concentrations of power, whether or not they believed the Occupy practices succeeded in doing this. For example, some anarchist participants were more critical of the Occupy practices than other anarchists and refused to participate, claiming the practices were “not anarchist” because they were not succeeding in a decentralization of power. I do not

consider someone an anarchist if they participate in the practices but do not value the anarchist ideas underlying the practice.

Identity is more complicated. I consider someone an anarchist if they endorse the idea and claim the identity of “anarchist.” However, I also classified as “anarchists” those who did not claim the label but identified as “anarchist-leaning,” “anti-authoritarian,” or “anti-state, anti-capitalist, communitarian.”<sup>7</sup> When I refer to “non-anarchists,” I mean those who firmly rejected anarchist thought and identity, regardless of their support for or engagement in the practice.<sup>8</sup>

I also included as anarchists those who expressed an affinity with anarchist thought and practice but rejected all identity labels as limiting or not meaningful. This was necessary to do, as I was using “anarchist” as a category of analysis, and I was not specifically looking at identity construction in my project. However, much interesting work could be done in this area. It suggests a growing general tendency among participants of the Occupy movement to reject identity labels. It also deserves closer examination of the interesting correspondence between thought and being: many people who feel affinity with a political philosophy that centers a negative relationship of rejection and deconstruction (*an*-archy: without a ruler), that is difficult to pin down, also reject a stable, static identity. But this is outside the scope of this project.

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<sup>7</sup> When I introduce a participant in the text, I use the label preferred by that participant. In other words, I discuss their contribution as part of the category of anarchism but I use their label as a descriptor to respect their wish to identify with a different label.

<sup>8</sup> Some non-anarchists would tolerate and engage in the practices and refrain from openly criticizing them due to particular benefits, such as allowing for greater creativity or empowerment, or due to the popularity of the practices among other participants. To reject the practices would not be strategic because it would mark them as uncooperative.



## **4.2 RESEARCH ETHICS**

I applied for and received “exempt” status from the University of Pittsburgh’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Before each interview, I explained to the participant that their participation in the study was voluntary, that there were few risks to the research, and that they may decline to answer my questions or conclude the interview at any time. I personally conducted all of the interviews and limited the interviews to one session per person. I did not record identifying information beyond the demographic information in Appendix A. I maintained all data in a locked area only accessible to me.

## **4.3 ACCESS TO THE FIELD**

From October 2012 to August 2013<sup>9</sup> I interviewed 57 people who were participants of the Occupy Movement during the fall of 2011. I was able to easily identify and approach Occupy Pittsburgh participants who represented a wide range of roles and opinions due to my participation in the Occupy movement. My status as a respected, long-time member of Pittsburgh’s peace and justice social movement community lent me legitimacy and gave me access to participants who had worked with me in the past or were familiar with my social movement work or former organizational affiliations.

It was more difficult to construct a mental map and access Occupy movement players and debates in Oakland and New York City. However, I had many connections with social

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<sup>9</sup> I interviewed one additional person, included in this total, in March of 2016, who was unavailable for an interview between October 2012 and August 2013.

movement participants from my experience in the global justice and anti-war/counter recruitment movements from 2000 on. During that time period, I traveled frequently and networked with activists in other cities through meetings and conferences, summit demonstrations, and because the groups I was involved with regularly traveled to put on skill-share demonstrations for groups in other places. I drew on these connections to understand the Occupy movements in those cities and I relied on them to initially connect me with participants. This proved to be more fruitful in California than New York because many of my contacts had moved to the West Coast or they had connections to people in the Bay Area. But I was fortunate that the New York City Anarchist Book Fair was occurring during my fieldwork and I took advantage of that event to approach people for interviews.

My prior experience and connections with anarchists was extremely important in securing interviews from Occupy Oakland participants. At the time of my fieldwork, the FBI had recently conducted raids of anarchists' homes as part of an investigation of anarchists in the Pacific Northwest who had been involved with Occupy, one of several investigations targeting anarchists across the U.S., and the Federal government was convening a grand jury (Murphy 2012). Thus, anarchists were suspicious of talking with any outsiders about their affiliation with Occupy, fearing they would be targeted to appear before the Grand Jury to discuss their activities and alliances. People I worked with in the past vouched for me as a trustworthy individual who was not an informant for the state.

## **4.4 DATA COLLECTION**

### **4.4.1 Interviews**

In total, I conducted interviews with 57 Occupy participants (28 from Occupy Pittsburgh, 13 from Occupy Wall Street, 16 from Occupy Oakland). I selected interviewees through snowball and purposive sampling, asking interviewees for referrals and also seeking out participants who could speak to different sides of debates that I learned about in my interviews. I primarily approached interviewees through email but I also called some contacts and approached some participants in person at social movement events.

I began conducting face-to-face interviews with participants from Occupy Pittsburgh (OP) and Occupy Wall Street (OWS) in Pittsburgh, PA and New York City during the fall of 2012 and winter of 2013, and I spent several weeks in August 2013 in the Bay Area, interviewing Occupy Oakland (OO) participants. I conducted Skype interviews in the summer of 2013 with OWS and OO participants. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and 2.5 hours. For the face-to-face interviews (53), I met the interviewees at a location of their choice. This included coffee shops and book stores that were often the former sites of Occupy meetings, the sites of the former occupations, and sometimes the interviewees' homes. I conducted the Skype interviews (4) in my home office. I digitally recorded each session and frequently wrote memos after the interviews about key themes that I wanted to further explore.

I initially sought to identify between 10 and 20 participants from each local occupation group. However, I ended up interviewing more participants from Occupy Pittsburgh because Pittsburgh is where I began collecting data and my broad research question and areas of inquiry (Appendix A) yielded much information that did not at first lend itself to determining a clear

point of information saturation. Once I made a decision to home in on specific areas of inquiry, I found that 10-20 participants in New York and Oakland were sufficient for my purposes.

I captured a pool of people who participated in different Working Groups, which varied by occupation, including: Action (or Direct Action), Art, Bottom-liners, Communications, Conflict Mediation, Education, Events, Facilitation, Financial, Food, Foreclosures, General Statement, Hospitality, Labor Liaison, Legal, Location, Logistics, Marginalized Communities and Allies, Massage Therapy, Media, Medical Tent, Night Watch/ People's Watch, Non-Violence Statement, Outreach, People of Color, Social Media, Structure, and Winterization. Some respondents identified as “just a general participant,” and were not involved in any of the Working Groups.

I interviewed men (34), women (16), and people who identified as gender non-conforming (7) who ranged in age from 18 to 70. [Broken down by city: OWS 7:5:1; OP: 16:7:5, OO: 11:4:1.] Thirty-eight interviewees identified their racial ethnic identity as white [OWS 8; OO 10; OP 20], five as Jewish [OWS 2; OO 1; OP 2], and fourteen as people of color [OWS 3; OO 5; OP 6]. See Tables 1 and 2. Less than one third of interviewees in each city had never been involved in social movements prior to Occupy. Twenty-two interviewees regularly camped at the occupations and thirty-five did not.

**Table 1.** Occupy Interviewees by Gender

	<b>OWS</b>	<b>OP</b>	<b>OO</b>
Women	5	7	4
Men	7	16	11
Gender Non-Conforming	1	5	1

**Table 2.** Occupy Interviewees by Race

	<b>OWS</b>	<b>OP</b>	<b>OO</b>
White	8	20	10
Jewish	2	2	1
People of Color	3	6	5

My sample also included people who came from a diversity of political backgrounds, covering a wide range of responses for goal and meaning comparison. They self-identified politically in a number of ways including: anarchist, anarcho-communist, anarcha-feminist, anarch-queer, anarcho-syndicalist, anti-authoritarian, anti-state, anti-capitalist, class-war anarchist, communitarian, Democrat, Independent, insurrectionary, Leftist, negative anarchist, nihilist, “small D democrat,” straight-edge, socialist, and member of a specific socialist party. Often they identified as a combination of these categories. Some participants rejected political identity.

Many participants had prior experience in social movements – some as veteran organizers and others as casual attendees at events. These movements included: global justice, anti-war, animal rights or liberation, environmental justice, anti-racist struggles, feminist groups, labor organizing, squatters struggles, anarchist projects, prisoner solidarity work, public transit campaigns, occupations at universities, and anti-austerity movements in Mexico and Europe. Some participants had never considered themselves part of a social movement before.

The interviewees participated at different time periods throughout the occupation; some were part of the occupation prior to the original encampment through the eviction, others dropped out after several weeks, and others joined after it had already begun.

Because I was interested in a well-rounded understanding of the salient debates and turning points within each occupation, I frequently asked interviewees to refer me to fellow participants who represented conflicting sides of debates or contentious issues they identified as important. Most participants readily complied, often prefacing with comments warning me of the tense relationship between them and the person they were about to refer, and sometimes laughing about how the referral would come across to the participant who had clearly been on the opposite pole of an issue.

As my snowball sample developed, I intentionally sought to strike a balance between people who identified as anarchists and people who did not. However, as discussed above, many participants did not initially (or, sometimes, ever) explicitly claim an anarchist identity but expressed an affinity with anarchist thought and practice. This resulted in a sample with more anarchist or anarchist-leaning participants than was representative of the Occupy movement in general.

The interviews were in-depth and semi-structured, designed to reveal participants' understandings of the approaches used in the local Occupy movement. I began with the research question, "What happens when mass movements use anarchist approaches?" and asked each interviewee a series of questions about the space occupation, the horizontal organizing structure, and the actions of the Occupy movement (see Appendix A). At the beginning of each interview, I also provided the participants with a general outline of events unique to their local occupation to help with memory recall and aided them in placing their contributions chronologically (which helped me understand them, contextually). Many participants volunteered additional events or important dates that should have been included on the timelines (see Appendix B).

#### **4.4.2 Observation**

I drew from impressions I formed as a participant in the activities of Occupy Pittsburgh from September 2011 through February 2012. This included experience reading the Facebook page discussion online, attending meetings and General Assemblies, participating in rallies and marches, and spending time at the occupation camp, engaging in conversations with participants. I wrote many reflections while at the camp, before my dissertation research formally began, as weekly writing assignments for a course on anarchism at the University of Pittsburgh that semester. I drew from these weekly writings and personal recollections as background understandings as I developed my project proposal.

I did not directly or officially observe Occupy Wall Street or Occupy Oakland during the fall of 2011, as I had not yet begun my dissertation research. However, out of personal interest, I kept abreast of the actions and internal debates online and through anarchist network communications such as list-serves and personal conversations.

#### **4.4.3 Mainstream and Movement Media**

As mentioned above, I constructed a timeline (see Appendix B) of the events at each occupation from media articles, blogs and discussion board debates, and Wikipedia. At the time of my fieldwork, a Wikipedia chronology for Occupy Pittsburgh did not exist so I developed one from a comprehensive search of articles in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the *Pittsburgh City Paper*, and the Occupy Pittsburgh website. Wikipedia chronologies did exist for Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Oakland so I used these as templates, adding events or major decision-points from information I gathered from news articles, Indymedia, and official websites of the occupations,

which archived the statements passed by the General Assemblies and sometimes the Working Groups. I also added information to the timelines provided to me by participants when they reviewed the timelines at the interviews. I incorporated all of this information in my ongoing analyses of the interviews.

## **4.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

I used an interpretative epistemological analytic approach to examine the meanings participants gave to their experiences, going beyond a simple accounting of events (Maxwell 2005). This approach privileges the perspective of the participant's reality (Taylor and Bogdan 1998). I began this process by transcribing the recorded interviews and then coded the transcripts using qualitative data analysis software. I initially inductively coded interviews line-by-line to understand how participants valued space-taking tactics and the use of horizontal structure, probing their experiences with these approaches to understand patterns and distinctions among their responses. These codes numbered in the hundreds. They included categories directly answering my questions, such as "value of the space," "horizontal structure," and "anarchist practice," and points of contention that I suspected I might want to return to, such as "security team" or "anti-prefiguration." This also included other important, emergent concepts such as "radical inclusivity," "empowerment," and "trust." After noticing recurring themes, I coded the interviews again, deductively, paying attention to the relationship between participants' political beliefs and their activities throughout the occupation. I selected the codes that emerged frequently and dealt with concepts that I found to be under-explored in my review of the



literature on anarchism and social movements. I printed data from these codes and kept them in folders so that I could easily access and review them while I wrote.

I regularly wrote analysis memos after conducting interviews, coding interviews, and reading or watching media about the three Occupy movements. This helped to capture my thinking at different points throughout the research process to facilitate analysis (Maxwell 2005). I also fastened print outs of codes, interview excerpts, key words, questions, and memo excerpts to my dining room walls, using this visual canvass as a place to contemplate my ongoing analysis. This enabled reflection at different times throughout the day and night, when I was not specifically working on the project, and these reflections sometimes further developed when I was in a different head space which allowed me to consider fresh perspectives.

I wrote memos to extract emerging themes and to further develop concepts into an organized argument. The process was useful for identifying patterns; I titled the memos according to their main themes and later was able to group them into folders of similar concepts. Printing out these categorized memos and treating them as parts of a larger argument helped me to construct more complex claims.

## **4.6      ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **4.6.1    Validity**

There were thousands of participants in the Occupy movement across the three cities and the number of core organizers was likely between several dozen and over 100, depending on the city. Thus, it was important for me to consider whether my sample size was representative. I feel

confident that it was in Pittsburgh because my direct participation lent insight on this, allowing me to be sure to include people who influenced the shape and direction of the movement and those who participated but did not take a lead role. In New York, studies by Bray (2013) and Milkman, Luce, and Lewis (2013) list the names of the core organizers included. In Oakland, local news media identified many of the committed participants. With this information, and claims made by interviewees, I am confident that my sample includes people who took on lead Occupy roles and those who did not. Also, due to my approach – asking participants to refer other participants on opposing sides of conflicts – I feel confident that I was about to capture a diverse, well-rounded sample of participants of varying perspectives who contributed to the trajectory of the movements. While there were more participants in OWS and OO than in OP, my sample sizes for OWS and OO were smaller than OP. But I continued interviewing until I reached a point of saturation in New York and Oakland, to lessen doubt that I was missing out on influential or salient perspectives.

It is also important to consider whether the information I received is accurate. Participants were relying on memory, and they could be prone to self-aggrandizement – especially if they considered me a fellow Occupy participant from a different city, they might have felt the need to present their occupation as more exciting. And especially in Occupy Oakland, participants may have felt pressure to live up to the “most radical” image and prove its legitimacy. I tried to minimize these threats to validity to the best of my ability in two ways. First, I was careful to probe claims that seemed based on emotional appeals and required factual information to fit their grand descriptions. Secondly, I tried to corroborate claims with multiple participants and by comparing their characterizations to news articles and blog posts, engaging in

a triangulation strategy of collecting data from multiple sources to minimize bias and maximize more secure, generalizable explanations (Fielding and Fielding 1986; Maxwell 2005).

#### **4.6.2 Limitations of the Method**

There were several limitations of the methods I used in this study. First, by interviewing participants after the occupations had ended, and after at least a year had passed, I collected more polished narratives that participants likely constructed to rationalize conflicts and draw tidy conclusions to make sense of phenomena that I might have interpreted differently, as an observer with less personal stake in establishing a position of peace. For example, a participant who had engaged in heated battles with other participants may feel a desire to explain the past conflicts in a charitable way that maintains lines of communication with others in the community. Or, a participant might have refined a position that helped them justify their behavior retrospectively in Occupy; behavior that may not have made sense to themselves or others at the time, leading to very different interpretations by fellow Occupiers. Had I interviewed participants during the occupations, or directly after, I could have worked with interpretations less mediated by the sense-making the passage of time allows.

Secondly, I only examined Occupy movements in three cities but many other cities across the United States and elsewhere had vibrant, complex Occupy movements that faced different types of repression and other obstacles, and included many anarchists. Anarchist scenes in different regions have different characteristics. For example, in more rural areas, green anarchist influences are more prominent. Including more cities in this study could have shed light on different debates, priorities, and aims of the modern anarchist movement in the U.S.

Finally, if I had lengthened the interview collection timeframe of my fieldwork, I could have included more people of color in my sample. While I am confident that the racial-ethnic breakdown was representative of participants in Occupy Pittsburgh, I gleaned from reading and watching news media that Oakland and New York likely had more participation of anarchist people of color. However, given the climate of fear of surveillance, anarchist people of color were perhaps more likely than their white counterparts to maintain a low profile, as they have historically been subject to greater repression.

#### **4.6.3 Ethics**

One ethical concern I am faced with is that I identify with the anarchist tradition. Although I worked hard to retain the meaning of participants' experiences from their own social locations, I cannot entirely separate my interpretative analysis from my own assumptions (Davidman 1997). An advantage to this is that my position as a participant in anarchist movements over the past decade has allowed me to see many misunderstandings about and mischaracterizations of non-hierarchical organization and direct action tactics used by the radical Left from social movement scholars and non-anarchists. My perspective helped with analysis, as I deeply understand anarchism and was able to probe into areas that are otherwise glossed over or taken for granted as traditional social movement norms. I believe "insiders" are uniquely poised to not only gain special access into a community but to provide deeper insight than a non-native is equipped to do. But I am unavoidably biased toward anarchism. I hope I have taken care to maintain a critical approach, challenging my observations and demanding solid evidence for each claim. To mitigate my biases, I regularly read Occupy research and commentary not written by anarchists nor taking an explicitly anarchist approach to challenge my conclusions. I also workshopped my

findings and analyses chapters with a group of non-anarchist academic peers, some who had experience with Occupy, to check my claims. I sometimes struggled with writing up my analyses, separating myself from my interviewees, as there were several times interviewees echoed theories I had formed and vice versa. My hope is that this ongoing struggle and constant consideration was sufficient to keep me vigilant.

I do not believe that my affinity with anarchism resulted in overlooking or minimizing critiques by non-anarchists. In Occupy Pittsburgh, for example, I felt personal frustrations with the approaches and I grasped the complexity of movement dynamics. Although I identify as an anarchist politically, I straddle many different social movement communities in Pittsburgh due to my past movement experiences. I have great respect for many non-anarchist fellow participants and continue to be engaged in difficult discussions about strategies, tactics, and goals, collaborating and conspiring with people of many different political identities, as there is no such thing as a clear “anarchist position” on any issue. I am ambivalent about how tenable many approaches are – particularly some of those used in Occupy and characterized as “anarchist.” My goal is not to advocate for one specific approach in every situation, but to find ways social movements can work toward a better world, regardless of how scholars label them.

I am, however, still conflicted about my insider access as an anarchist. As mentioned above, it was not as difficult for me to gain access to anarchist interviewees than it would have been for a non-anarchist, due to my movement experience, connections, and familiarity with anarchist cultures. I am familiar with and sensitive to a history of state repression of anarchists and other radicals, including the government’s use of informants to gather information about individuals, their groups, their activities, and their interpersonal relations and use that information to disrupt movement dynamics and destroy organized resistance. Many anarchists

continue to be wary of people they do not know asking questions about their actions and beliefs for this reason. In addition to a fear of state repression, many anarchists today are additionally wary of academic researchers because anarchism has so long been misrepresented by non-anarchists in inaccurate and derogatory ways. Thus, I knew it was important to address both of these concerns upfront. Additionally, I had experience being part of and observing interactions-gone-wrong over the years by people unknown to other movement participants asking questions in ways that communicated suspicion.

Due to these experiences and observations, I was strategically cautious in approach, often prefacing my interview requests with personal information about my background that established my credibility as someone who had been involved with anarchist projects, was not a state informant, and could be trusted to use information in a way that would not intentionally (out of malice) or unintentionally (out of ignorance) misrepresent a person's beliefs. In fact, most of my convincing had to do with explaining to interviewees that anarchist movements and perspectives are often left out of social movement research and that I was presenting them with an opportunity to remedy this gap.

However, I struggle with this special access and feel conflicted about the inherently exploitative nature of eliciting information through rapport (Stacey 1988). While I believe it is the case that anarchists are better-suited to interview other anarchists because they can provide a more nuanced analysis than a researcher who is new to anarchist ideas, the special access anarchist researchers may have, gaining trust and eliciting privileged information due to their seeming credibility and the unlikelihood of "getting it wrong," could dangerously put interviewees at ease, letting down their guard and divulging information that could be used against them and their movements. Foes gaining a better understanding of anarchist cultures

could make them easier to infiltrate. Even better understanding the values and interpersonal dynamics within social networks is something that could be manipulated by those who have a vested interest in disrupting how movements operate, interfering in the work they can accomplish.

Kathleen Blee and Tim Vining (2010) discuss the ethical considerations for social movement researchers and the risks to participants, especially in the environment of post-9-11 increased surveillance. They note the problems with confidentiality and informed consent, and conclude that researchers must take as much care in data collection as possible and ultimately weigh the risks with the benefits of obtaining research on radical movements.

In my research, I sought to minimize danger to movement participants as much as possible. I did not record any personally identifying information from my interviewees that could link them to the specific data, I did not record time and date of interviews on transcripts, and I minimized online communication and prioritized face-to-face coordination of meetings. While the latter posed more of a difficulty for me with New York and Oakland, I first sought to remotely set up interviews with people who did not identify with anarchism, prior to arriving in those cities, where personal communication was easier with those who did identify as anarchists. Furthermore, for people I did not know, I did not ask their names. I asked interviewees to not use names of other participants during the interviews, or to use code names if that made it easier for them to recount their experiences. I also carefully considered my questions about direct action tactics. I regularly reminded interviewees not to discuss illegal activity with me.

However, I still question whether it is perhaps safer for research subjects to be wary of how the information will be used, as they are more likely to do if they do not feel as close to the interviewer (Stacey 1988). It is difficult for anarchist sociologists to instill caution and regularly

remind our interviewees of the professional lines (a researcher still as much more power and control than the research subject) and the dangers of how that information could be used while gaining trust to put interviewees at ease and gather information.

Although I believe that it is useful for social movement scholars to have a better understanding of anarchist movements and their influence and impact on mass movements, I struggle with whether a better understanding of the hidden dynamics of state and capitalist agents, and other opponents of a freer, more equitable world, is less risky and more useful to those interested in radical transformation. In other words, anarchist scholars could be of more use to anarchist movements by focusing their examination on adversaries to these aims, such as the police and white supremacists.



## 5.0 THE IMPORTANCE OF SPACE

In this chapter, I explore how the valuing of space by anarchists in Occupy reveals much about the modern day anarchist movement. This exploration is important because it fleshes out anarchism in the U.S. and contrasts with some simpler characterizations of the anarchist movement by social movement scholars.

I begin by identifying the reasons Occupy participants valued the space. I then use the case of Occupy Wall Street (OWS) to demonstrate how anarchists valued the space for prefigurative purposes to radically transform both internal (personal, psychological) and external (structural, institutional) relations as part of an ongoing strategy. Next, I explore how Occupy participants sought to challenge and change activist practices. I use the case of Occupy Pittsburgh (OP) to illustrate the ways Occupy anarchists contrasted prefigurative experiments and tactics with the traditional tactical repertoire of the Left, referred to as “Organizing as Usual.” I then use the case of Occupy Oakland (OO) to explore the nuances of this dichotomy, as conflict *among* anarchists in OO complicates a simple binary and highlights a need for both prefigurative and instrumental, means-to-ends approaches. Anarchists in Occupy desired both approaches and conflict ensued when decisions were perceived as foreclosing future prefigurative possibilities.

## 5.1 THE VALUE OF SPACE

Both anarchist and non-anarchist participants valued the occupied space for many reasons. Participants discussed the space as a tactically important organizing logistical hub, a tool for mass-education, a symbolic protest, and a necessary confrontation.

All participants saw the space as an important hub for organizing and movement logistics. It was a networking tool, a place for internal growth and education that facilitated the harnessing of emotional energy toward action. Logistically, it served as a location for meetings, as an action staging ground, and a place to make signs and other politically-themed art. Space also was a platform for networking that enabled activists to meet others and come up with campaigns or integrate new, curious people into existing struggles and connected movements. One man noted that Occupy Pittsburgh brought his neighborhood community group into contact with groups of young women of color and environmental groups that were likely allies but had not been working together. Jay, a New Yorker and socialist participant who had been active in social movements for 40-50 years felt ambivalent about the space, due to the interpersonal conflicts that took place. However, he admitted its unique importance: “Once the park shut down, the media went with it...You could see it reverting back to the same problems that we've been facing [for decades]...small meetings, splintering off of groups...never coming together.” The park enabled people to take collective action in ways that are not possible without having the space. The prolonged nature of the occupation was key, as these groups would not have had time to develop lasting connections if they were meeting at a conference or temporary rally.

The occupied space served educational purposes for the movement, as it enabled people to share stories and learn from one another through informal conversations as well as formal workshops, and it also served as a literature distribution point, both through the library and tables

set up next to their tents. People regularly engaged in conversations over the books, flyers, and zines. Skill sharing and skill building occurred among participants who used the space to contribute medical, cooking, facilitating, and action planning expertise. Emotionally, the bustling atmosphere – particularly in the first month of each occupation – kept the energy and momentum going which facilitated the emergence of spontaneous actions. The space also served as an outlet to express anger, and to be part of a larger local community. Because each Occupy was part of a brand – Occupy groups in different cities adopted the OWS name and way of doing things – it was a way for Occupy in other cities to be included in a larger movement sweeping different parts of the world, and in turn, this linking to Occupy lent strength to the larger Occupy voice.

The mass educational component of the camp was important to participants as a way of bringing attention to local and national issues through media interviews, signage decorating the camp, available literature, and conversations as people passed through. It popularized alternative values of mutual aid and ways of organizing through horizontal decision-making and the challenging of private property. Many participants claimed that the camp brought these practices to people on a larger level, beyond social movement circles and radical collective projects. Adopting the Occupy brand helped highlight local connections to larger patterns of inequality – an opportunity many Occupy participants in Pittsburgh and Oakland took advantage of in the media.

Symbolically, the camp was a visible display to register dissent and express dissatisfaction with general inequality, and both local and large-scale concerns, ranging from anti-capitalist sentiment or anger about the Citizens United ruling, to the disappearance of public space in each city. As one interviewee in Occupy Pittsburgh put it, “The camp was a physical manifestation of a sore that won’t heal...We have a tendency to become numb to things we see

everyday so that camp was shaking people out of their everyday acceptance of gross inequality.” Some even saw it as a registering of how serious they were – “even willing to risk arrest” and prove dedication through the colder weather in order to build the movement.

The space was also an overt confrontation, physically taking space from the powerful elite and reclaiming it for the people. Interviewees expressed their desires to irritate or shame those in power, forcing them to see and think about the opposition everyday. Interviewees referred to this as “taking back the city” in Occupy Oakland or “taking from the bank because the bank takes from us,” in Occupy Pittsburgh, as they hoped to force the hand of the bank and the city. One OP interviewee explained, “It’s an open challenge to business as usual...all these people going to their jobs and office buildings, they can’t help but see something that has been re-appropriated for a different common purpose, for people to self-organize and figure out what to do in common about situations in society that they feel are wrong and they want to change.” Similarly, in Occupy Wall Street, “having a space so close to the Stock Exchange was a provocative gesture.” Some participants who had been active in the global justice movement noted that Occupy was a direct challenge to the type of policing that began after September 11, 2001, when police herded protesters into “free speech” pens, cordoned off with metal fences. This protest-control method became popular in mass demonstrations in the years after, such as the protests against the World Economic Forum in 2002.

## 5.2 SPACE AND PREFIGURATION

Almost all anarchist participants additionally valued the space for prefigurative reasons,<sup>10</sup> referring to the space as a lab of experimentation where participants could practice non-normative relations. Participants discussed two dimensions to this prefigurative project: personal liberation from internalized logics and structural/external liberation through the forging of alternative institutions. In this section, I illustrate how this works, what it looked like in practice, and why participants believed that the two liberations must go hand-in-hand as part of a strategy, rather than as chronological steps. I examine participants' understandings of and experiences with prefiguration and argue that there are two, interconnected necessary dimensions that were present in Occupy and key to anarchists' prefigurative strategy: 1) modeling another possible world to both inspire hope and build the movement, and to establish dual institutions to replace those in existence, and 2) undergoing a constant exposure to these practices which precipitates the psycho-social undoing of neoliberal socialization. I reevaluate the claim by some scholars and the media that Occupy's decision to reject demand-making represented a shift of demands from external to internal. In fact, "no demands" was logically consistent with #1, as I will demonstrate, and underpins the strategy. As part of these two interconnected dimensions of prefiguration, prefigurative proponents adhere to a return to "the small" as a rejection of current societal structures, one that stems from constant exposure (#2) and is a perspective shift required for a general plan for creating alternative relations and institutions (#1).

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<sup>10</sup> Although not all anarchists embraced the term "prefigurative," after carefully analyzing their interviews, I argue that the visions they advocated for fit within a broad understanding of what I and many scholars refer to as prefigurative aims.

In terms of Occupy practices in the encampments, many participants explained that carving out the space to self-organize allows people to learn and practice new ways of relating to one another outside of consumerist, proprietarian, hierarchical norms. This challenges internalized socialization of neoliberal logics and is a form of self-liberation. In other words, participants are deconstructing learned socialized behaviors. The assumption is that the way we go about making political decisions, and garnering resources through work and consumerism, is based on an internalized neoliberal logic: competition over cooperation, self-driven concern versus taking care of one another, alienation versus connection.

Prefigurative practices are about a structural liberation, a way to build possible alternatives to existing institutions. As one OWS participant put it: “[OWS was] a community that was sincerely trying to have a democratically run society, even in a microcosmic kind of form.” Some participants noted an additional third dimension: its importance as setting an example, or demonstrating alternative possibilities to the rest of the public. Noel, a 44-year-old man, was impressed with what he was reading about the unfolding experiment in Zuccotti Park. He wanted to be part of the conversation and decided to head into to New York to check it out. While he had no intention of staying very long, he then spent the next three months in the occupation. Noel explained:

Zuccotti Park was sort of a Petri dish of what a democratic society could look like that was horizontal and that was not...about obedience to hierarchies, but had a more humane approach to human relationships. I found that immensely important just at a personal level, but I also think for proving to other Americans that society like that is possible.

Here, Noel cites the prefigurative dimensions of Occupy that he appreciated: the attempt at a small scale model alternative; the personal impact in his own thinking and ways he had been used to relating as he was able to practice relating in a more humane way, facilitated by a horizontal structure; and its use as proof to the public that another world is possible.

Participants erected tents in the spaces, and those tents embodied dimensions of prefigurative politics. For example, the occupations had a Mess Tent where participants could procure meals, drinks, and snacks. This was not simply a way to provide service; participants saw it as the practice of replacing capitalist exchange of food through free distribution according to need. The Comfort Tents served a similar purpose and symbolism. Supporters donated items such as socks, hats, and toothbrushes and participants took these when they needed them. Some participants noted that this facilitated frequent disputes that resulted in a challenging of private property conceptions and consumer desire as they were confronted with how to define “need” and what constituted “hoarding.” While participants used the corporate media as a tool, they also erected Media Tents and worked to establish their own communications infrastructure and documentation, a dual institution approach. There were also tents for childcare and a Med Tent for free health care. Participants noted that having these services, and having them staffed by volunteers who were doing it out of care (not for money nor a directive by a higher-up) helped to foster the very practice of taking care of each other collectively. It could provoke a psychological shift away from a culture of individual selfishness. Living in the space required constant negotiation so that people could arrive at mutually beneficial ends.

Other spaces within the occupations facilitated prefigurative practices. The General Assemblies – the regular meetings where participants shared information and made decisions – were an example of practicing new ways of “doing politics” or making decisions that affected the collective. This extended to seeking to deal with conflict through mediation, rather than involving the police. Occupy Wall Street had bike-powered generators at the occupation that powered items such as laptops and kitchen appliances, as a micro-model to alternative energy use and consumption. People’s Libraries served as free access to educational materials,

promoting an alternative relationship to education, as lines were blurred between what constituted informal “hanging out” and more structured “learning.” People picked up books or zines that interested them, and this resulted in impromptu political discussions and debates.

This resocialization is both a model for alternative ways of life (economically, politically, environmentally, socially) and a necessary, continual guide to participants’ visions and actions. Without an ongoing challenge of models, participants believed that people will recreate neoliberal institutions. Thus, practicing “new” relations that differ from neoliberal practices are absorbed into the culture and become normalized.<sup>11</sup> This is why prefigurative proponents did not think of the practicing of new relations as a “consciousness raising step” that will activate new participants and build the movement but must soon give way to more concrete political planning; the concrete political planning must necessarily be shaped by the practice of new relations at every turn so those plans or new institutions do not replace the old with similar forms.

For example, participants discussed the practice of engaging in participatory direct democracy in the General Assemblies as a way to resist political corruption because the GAs rejected influence by those with money or status who commonly control modern-day neoliberal politics. Melanie, a 26-year-old anarchist who devoted much of her time to facilitating General Assembly meetings at Occupy Wall Street, explained the case of when a donor expressed interest in giving OWS a large sum of money. The decentralized nature of distributed power/voice in decision-making in those assemblies, which necessarily included those very skeptical of the potential for control by people with capital, resulted in the participants accepting the donation on the condition that there were no strings attached; it could be used however OWS deemed

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<sup>11</sup> Some anarchists were trying to establish new norms based on non-neoliberal logics (Shantz and Williams 2013) and others were interested in a more queer project of navigating an existence of skepticism to norm solidification. My findings indicate that in practice many anarchists are comfortable living with a tension between these two approaches – which is arguably anarchistic.



necessary. By contrast, if a donor had a relationship with an accountable leader or small group, that donor could exercise influence – even informal – over the use of the money so the money would not be accepted. The donor’s influence might include suggestions for how to use the funds and the leader or committee might agree to maintain good relationships with that donor. In other words, “practicing new relations” was built into the decision-making structure, as distributed decision-making power limited the influence of money.

As discussed earlier, one of the architects of the structure adapted by OWS was David Graeber, author of the book *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*. A *BusinessWeek* article about Graeber’s book explained: "Money...turns obligations and responsibilities, which are social things, into debt, which is purely financial. The sense we have that it's important to repay debts corrupts the impulse to take care of each other: Debts are not sacred, human relationships are."

Many OWS participants discussed new initiatives – such as community agreements – that came out of practicing new relations in the space. Community agreements can and have arisen from more traditional political arrangements in which disparate groups attend regular meetings and come up with agreements. But such processes rely on community “representatives” who are familiar and comfortable with the regular meeting format, have public speaking skills, and have time in their schedules. They are representative democratic models rather than direct democratic models in which those most impacted make the decisions affecting them. In the latter, those affected deal with conflicts and have to pitch in to figure out how to create a solution.

Such agreements were important and effective for camp issues such as setting drumming hours. Noel, who spent most of his time staffing the OWS library and therefore was directly affected by conditions at the encampment, recalls, "When the occupation first started, they were playing [drums] 18 hours a day!" Residents of lower Manhattan complained, as did participants

who could not sleep or have meetings. Those who were affected came to an agreement, rejecting a representative version of deliberation in favor of modeling a more egalitarian form of decision-making, which also made the agreement more likely to sustain.

Abby, a 24-year-old woman who spent much of her time on the OWS press team, connecting journalists and participants and writing press releases, recalled that because the space was outside of the laws typically governing spaces and relations, participants had to deal with the issue of safety, both in terms of supporting each others' needs and in drawing lines that were respected by all members. Talking about when people without homes and people struggling with mental health came to the occupation, she explained, "We really wanted to support these people, they are suffering from the most injustice in society," and local doctors who were part of Occupy stepped in to help, due to their direct experience and understanding of the need. But Abby explained how this did not prevent violent conflicts from erupting. She emphasized that direct democratic community agreements were key to making solutions work in these instances. She said, "If we're going to create a society in an intentional space, people are going to need to feel safe. Telling violent people to stay out is legitimate enforcement. The NYPD isn't."

The second dimension of the prefigurative strategy of Occupy is the constant exposure effect. Many participants emphasized how the psychological shift would not have occurred without a prefigurative space where people were constantly exposed to one another and were thus forced to work out conflicts. For example, Caleb, an anarchist who had been part of the squatting, tenant unionization, and anti-eviction work in Manhattan's Lower East Side, had been drawn to OWS because of the physical occupation. He saw space-taking as necessary for a democratic, public forum. He got frustrated at the attitude of some participants that, "we're not here to solve problems of homelessness and deal with drug addiction, we're not capable." Caleb

believed these problems are going to occur regardless and need to be dealt with better than just putting people in jail. He explained, "Living and working together got people to realize we had other problems, too," citing homelessness, drug use, violence, sexism, racism and our tendencies to outsource solutions that do not end up directly addressing the problems. Just meeting would not have instilled this understanding. He said, "We can only get so far when we only get together once in a while..."

Due to the environment fostered by the space, participants reported engaging in thoughtful discussions that many who were veterans of past movements claimed to have not experienced before Occupy Wall Street. Some specifically cited how these conversations did not happen at global justice summits between the late 1990s and mid-2000s, even when the demonstrations around a particular summit lasted for several consecutive days and protesters established convergence centers for attendees to use for meetings, meals, and sometimes lodging. The prolonged nature of the occupations in Occupy – lasting for several weeks or months, depending on the occupation – was necessary for those discussions to occur and those relationships to form.

The constant interactions and challenges sometimes resulted in new solutions. For example, Charles, a 31-year-old anarchist law student who was at Zuccotti Park from the second day on, recalls how participants came up with new way of dealing with the police. In the first weeks of the OWS occupation, police entered the park and took down the political signs. Participants discussed whether to block the police or to just make more signs. They decided to video record this happening and broadcast it to show people about repression, which Charles thought was a creative move and showed the thoughtfulness that people put into dealing with the police, "a newer way of doing politics than was done on that level before."

This is not to say the space was an *ideal* model for the future, and I find that participants who were committed to one dimension of prefiguration – modeling another possible world to provide others with hope – but did not value the importance of undoing socialization or subjecting themselves to constant exposure experienced the most frustration with conflict in the camp. These participants tended not to identify as anarchists. For example, Rosa, a 70-year-old longtime New Yorker, helped organize and participate in Bloombergtown, the occupation precursor to Occupy Wall Street. She explained that the space "was so good that it was attracting a lot of people who were not coming for the politics but for the services. So poor people were coming in large numbers, homeless people, and sleeping there. They felt safer there... 'you treat us better than people at other places.'" But she was not in favor of this because she believed that OWS did not have the resources to deal adequately with all these issues. Referring to the anarchists she concluded: "They were going to try to demonstrate this complete equality, which of course you can't do when you're in an unequal society, but it was well-intentioned." Rosa's sentiment was echoed by other non-anarchist participants who did not include the social service system in their critique of a neoliberal society that must be completely overhauled. Thus, she did not want to prioritize using resources to deal with issues stemming from homelessness. Rosa, like other non-anarchists I interviewed, makes a strict distinction between "doing politics" and "providing social services." By contrast, anarchists view these as inseparable. From her quotes above, Rosa believed anarchists were trying to achieve "complete equality." However, anarchist participants I spoke with did not have such a lofty *goal* in mind when they spoke of the importance of service-providing in the occupations; instead, they were focused on the *practice*, as the first step in starting to change relations between people. Anarchists spoke about the need

to break down the idea of “providing” services, which emulated a top-down charity model, in favor of practicing relations of mutual aid instead.

Noel notes that although Zuccotti Park was diverse, there were definitely areas that were majority black and majority white, “in ways that were disturbing, and that reflected all sorts of social patterns that we see in the world around us.” This highlights the ways that there was much work to be done, in terms of dismantling relationships of domination. The difference I observed between proponents and critics of prefiguration had to do with how far the participants believed domination reached and where time and energy should then be directed. Non-anarchists emphasized problems with external institutions and structural relations and sought to direct resources accordingly. In contrast, anarchists thought internal/interpersonal and external/structural relations must be conquered simultaneously since institutions could not be transformed without also carefully considering whether steps toward transformation were recreating relationships of domination. In other words, “the master’s tools cannot dismantle the master’s house,” as Audre Lorde (1983) once said.

One element of Occupy was regularly dismissed by some scholars and the media on the grounds that it did not make demands. The criticism saw not making demands as a failure to engage with power and a desire by participants to shift the demands onto each other. I did discover many instances of participants placing importance on making demands of one another to change interpersonal relations. However, I also found that the refusal to make demands did *not* replace a desire to directly confront power. Abby is a good example of articulating a desire to both demand changes of each other and dissolve the current structures:

There’s so much more potential with what we can create and just making the current structures obsolete than in demanding things of unaccountable people. So if we’re going to demand anything, we’re going to demand it of ourselves.

Abby expresses hope for rendering current structures obsolete, and self-change is part of that, but continues:

You can't demand something from an unaccountable bunch of people who the corporations seem to be pretty unaccountable. So why would you demand something of them when you need to be the one to go out and create the solutions and the alternative structures? I think that's something that really surprised, the people were thrown off by Occupy Wall Street, because we weren't saying, "okay you go tell this other person to do something on your behalf." You actually have to get involved, do the work and make the change you want to see.

Abby explains that the need to build new ways does not mean pressuring others to do it for you, and that this perspective shift was difficult for many outside OWS to understand. She and others point to how this is currently happening in cities around the world, with people instituting alternative economies with their own currencies and their own banking systems and projects addressing self-governance and care-provision.

Abby's sentiment, expressed by many anarchist participants, implies a new way of contesting power in the modern-day U.S. society, but does not preclude other avenues of contesting power as well. First, making "no demands" was part of a strategy to build new institutions without direction by the state and corporations, a key tenant of anarchist, liberatory practices. Second, the refusal to ask authorities to make changes does not preclude attacking those authorities, a point lost on many critics. Many participants were waging a war of popular opinion against authorities to target and dismantle existing power by building a movement of people who reject political and economic reform in favor of building their own new worlds. The failure to put front-and-center a narrative about the failure of institutions was not an inability to contest power, but a strategy to empower people and promote a new perspective.

Some participants did target institutions for destruction. For example, actions by Anonymous were widely supported by Occupy participants, as indicated in my interviews.

Anonymous gained attention in 2008 as a shadowy network of hackers that targeted corporations, governments, and other powerful individuals, carrying out actions such as shutting down websites and publishing private information to disrupt the activities of those in power. The famous Guy Fawkes masks associated with Occupy were an earlier Anonymous signifier, indicating the continuity of these tactical approaches, and the widespread support by Occupy participants. While many participants voiced hope that there would be an eventual mass perspective shift to a new, non-liberal way of operating in society and building new, alternative structures, they simultaneously expressed fear that those in power would not give it up willingly and that there might be a need for covert (or overt) forms of resistance against remaining enemies.

It is not correct to see “no demands” as a failure by Occupy participants to contest power. However, it troubles a simple framing of Occupy as “prefigurative,” as confrontation is not typically included in forging new relations of respect with one another. In Occupy, a commitment to confrontation and a desire to destroy institutions existed alongside prefiguration practices and desires, most clearly in the perspectives of anarchist participants. This was actualized most visibly through claims for and a concern with “autonomy” (see Chapter 7).

The strategic prefigurative approach of Occupy is a challenge to arguments that bigger is better, but challenging the system rather than retreating from society. Lucy, an Occupy Oakland participant who discussed an attempt to occupy a farm in the Bay Area said the aim with the occupation was to:

...take concrete preparatory action so the communities getting hit hardest by climate change and neoliberalism can build political power...we don't have to be fooled into thinking that building our movements to scale is measured in the same numbers the right wing is using: people and money. It's about building sustainable communities...our own water, food, and building political power.

Lucy believes that taking care of one another and meeting basic needs was the goal of the occupation and the way to build power. They thought that success should not be measured by increasing numbers of people or large amounts of money:

If you build sustainability, you will come up against state power. So, not just pick a fight to provoke confrontation but do what you need to do and the state will lash back, so be prepared. You could tell the story of Occupy Oakland in that way. People taking back common space, trying to build a patchwork community bringing many together and that experiment how to sort things out together, and then we butted up against state power. It was a really valuable experiment of how do we do what we need to be doing... Learn together, practice participatory democracy so we can get better at it.

Lucy saw the focus on creating a new community as necessary for building new relations and a sustainable community that could prepare to defend itself against repression, but also a form of contestation that could provoke repression.

At first glance, critics may see Occupy as an updated version of the 1960s back-to-the-land communes, a “dropping out” of societal participation to start life anew. Occupy took elements from that model and made it strategic in two ways. First, Occupy attempted to create a new world in urban centers, working with, reaching out to, and integrating/incorporating people, including those who were homeless, previously apolitical, and/or dissatisfied with or alienated by modern society. Secondly, since these urban centers are considered valuable and contested by government and financial interests, Occupy participants prevent them from operating as usual.

In this section, I have shown how anarchist participants in Occupy valued the space for prefigurative and strategic reasons. Interestingly, Occupy participants in New York were more likely than those in Pittsburgh or Oakland to value the prefigurative dimensions of the camp regardless of their political identities. All spoke of the encampment itself as fulfilling logistical desires, expressing a frustration that there are not open spaces in the city to where people who have political leanings in common (such as a frustration with capitalism and government) can



come together, network, and talk. Most participants also noted that a prefigurative space must be unmediated or managed by capital, i.e., not set up for making money. They wanted a space that includes a cultural environment free of capitalist, consumerist relations.

In Occupy Pittsburgh, only the participants who were previously apolitical and described themselves as new to social movements came to appreciate the space for prefigurative reasons. The prefigurative desire by anarchists in Occupy to challenge underlying neoliberal logics and forge new relations was a draw for people who had not been previously involved in social movements. These participants developed an awareness of distinctions between public and private, which raised questions about social control and helped them develop an analysis of power. All emphasized their *experiences* in this space as leading to a greater valuing of prefigurative politics.

### **5.3 PREFIGURATIVE POLITICS VERSUS ORGANIZING AS USUAL**

Occupy anarchists contrasted prefiguration with the traditional tactical repertoire of the Left, often referred to by participants as “Organizing as Usual.” Conflicts ensued between participants who sought to enact prefigurative tactics in the occupation and participants who drew from a familiar, established tactical repertoire. This difference existed across the three cities. In this section, I explore the contrasting tactical aims and use examples from Occupy Pittsburgh to illustrate the difference.

The proponents of prefigurative politics saw the occupied space as essential for forging new relations while the participants who did not value practicing new relations in the space considered the space important only as an organizing hub and a way to initially gain visibility.

This resulted in different tactical aims that were incompatible with each other. In Pittsburgh, People's Park is where many of these conflicts played out. It served as a physical setting in which to practice horizontal relations, but, because the purpose of the space was debated by those connected to OP, participants valued it for very different reasons.

My interviews show that people's political identities and prior experiences with mobilizations shaped their goals, determining whether they valued prefigurative politics. For participants who were new to social movements, their valuation of prefiguration depended upon whether they had experienced a personal transformation during the occupation.

OP participants who had prior experience organizing in social movements and identified politically as Democrats, Independents, or socialists with a party-politics background generally saw the occupation as a creative way to call attention to the Occupy movement but did not express faith in the social experiments that participants were carrying out in the space, such as the horizontal or "leaderless" structure. These participants cited past experiments—often from the 1970s—that failed and cemented their beliefs that a unified, vertical organization is necessary to confront and transform power. These movement veterans understood that many previously inactive participants were attracted to the movement because of the space experiments, such as the horizontal structure, and thus went along with it tentatively, using it as an opportunity to try to organize the new mass of people into a campaign and, in some cases, bring them into their already established organizations. This category also includes social movement newcomers who were initially attracted to the space experiments and/or horizontal structure but became disillusioned as conflict arose, or who were skeptical from the start and did not report any transformative experiences. The former reported getting involved with the mobilization because the experiments were intriguing, and staying involved because they initially experienced the

processes as empowering. The latter were inspired by the sudden collective expression of discontent, but were skeptical about or hostile to the decision-making structures. One participant explained, “It seemed like these rules from Mars kind of came down and we all pledged allegiance to them at the first General Assembly...It was like, ‘We will adopt your structure’...it was just a trip because it was very alien to most people.” Another participant likened it to a biological disease that must run its course.

Other OP participants who were veteran social movement organizers but identified politically as anarchists, autonomists, anti-authoritarians, or communitarians sought to use the encampment as a laboratory for social experimentation in order to transform interpersonal and group relations as a necessary step in altering what they considered to be larger oppressive power structures. Their desire to continuously transform how power operates interpersonally and structurally manifested in different styles of organizing approaches based on logics that are alternatives to neoliberal logics. Prefigurative proponents were seeking to shift socio-psychological processes through experimentation. Like the OWS originators, they also were politically committed to, and experienced with, horizontal “leaderless/leaderfull” approaches. These participants got involved with OP because they saw how non-hierarchical organizing structures inspired people to get involved, and saw that such structures could be used to promote a new way of doing politics. As one participant put it, “OWS lent horizontality legitimacy that caused it to be tried by other groups in a way that scattered anarchist projects across the country could not do, influentially.”

Proponents of prefiguration often referred to traditional organizing approaches as “Organizing as Usual” or “more traditional Leftist ideas,” “the Leftist script,” or “old ways of doing things.” This category included tactics such as establishing centralized, vertical or

hierarchical power structures; seeking permits for events<sup>12</sup>; gathering endorsements; holding rallies; pre-planning coordinated arrests; arguing through a “free speech” frame; engaging in organizing as a career; being concerned with electoral politics; lobbying (such as circulating petitions); institutionalizing a group; establishing steering committees; and working to make membership more legible to those outside the organization.

The prefiguration participants were dissatisfied with these tactics that were increasingly introduced into OP as time went on. As Elena, who got involved in Occupy after a multi-year break from activism, explained:

It got tedious. Let’s go to this place, have a couple people speak and yell some chants at someone who can’t hear you and then leave. It got old... yelling at a building is going to make people go home and cry. They’re going to be like, ‘This is absolutely hopeless, that person is not going to listen, I give up.’

She felt that the actions after the initial October 15 demonstration, marches to politicians’ offices followed by chanting and speeches were disempowering and risked losing participants who wanted new and creative actions to keep momentum going. She said this was the reason she dropped out of anti-war organizing years before.

Interviewees who had not been involved in social movements before OP, and even some who described their political beliefs as more mainstream, reported being “fascinated,” “intrigued by,” and drawn to Occupy because of the use of the horizontal structure and its supposed ability to include more voices. As time went on, and veteran organizers relied more and more on the usual tactical repertoires rather than prefigurative tactics, they lost their draw. Social movement newcomers who were initially attracted by the empowering nature of the structure reported experiencing personal transformations (“moments of conversion”) that resulted in a commitment

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<sup>12</sup> See Mike King (2013) on the contentious nature among OO participants over seeking permits for events. He calls this “negotiated management,” a form of social control by some movement participants that restricts dissent and has been used to further repression of other movement participants.

to prefigurative politics and eventually, anarchism. One of the youngest occupiers, Sally, a 19-year-old with no prior social movement experience, wandered into the camp one night out of curiosity and ended up staying for months. She explained that the camp enabled a transformative consciousness-raising for her that she would not have otherwise sought out, and required sustained engagement that is not available at a formal meeting. She explained the mental shift:

It was peoples' willingness to urge me to talk because my response was always, 'Well, I'm not really politically active, I'm just here to learn and educate myself on a perspective that I don't really know.' People were so willing to talk, to tell their stories and wanted to hear about mine. Through those conversations...I realized a lot of issues I was having as a female, as a student, as somebody from a very working class family, were not individual issues but were social issues. That first week I quit feeling alone in that and quit feeling like my individual struggles were only individual when they are on a much bigger level.

Other newcomers who became proponents of prefiguration came into the movement with a distrust of organizing-as-usual, citing it as their reason for not being involved in social movements prior to Occupy. Indeed, two movement veterans recounted their surprise at encountering so many new people at the first GA who lacked interest in filing for the city's permission to camp. Sean, an anarchist in his late 20s, who valued prefigurative politics and spent much of his time facilitating, recalled the realization as a moment of hope and inspiration:

Whenever the question of permits got brought up at any of the GAs, it was mostly met by groans. There was like a small number of people that was really adamant about that but the majority of people, who were mostly people who had never been involved in anything before, didn't really care to talk about that. They knew what they wanted to do and didn't really care whether or not they had permission.

He went on to explain that he was attracted to Occupy Pittsburgh, saw it as "incredibly full of potential," and decided to stay involved because of the seemingly widespread sentiment against worrying about being lawful – a disposition that pleasantly surprised him, but one that he was not used to as a radical who seldom worked with others who shared his views. He saw this as a potential mobilization that breaks out of legally-binding frameworks. His perception of this

sentiment as widely-held at the first General Assembly was corroborated by Benjamin, one of the OP founders who did *not* value prefigurative politics, and was concerned with keeping actions legal and peaceful and felt he was in the minority.

The tension between “new” and “old” ways of doing politics was clear to some participants. One OP participant saw confrontation as necessary for the progress Occupy was making. He explained that the original taking of space was a threat but that the bank’s aversion to a stand-off and risk of bad publicity in the first two months imposed a framework of following laws among some occupiers who even proposed sending BNY Mellon a thank you letter for not evicting them:

Occupy was partially successful at stepping out of normal prescribed activist roles in ways that people talk about and think about things. But there was also a tension [with people who] were always working sometimes consciously, sometimes not, to reassert that kind of legalistic way of thinking and acting within it.

He notes that the desire to expand activists’ tactical repertoires was contentious among some members. He saw the tendency to focus on being lawful as slipping back into roles that people have become conditioned to accept.

In Occupy Oakland, the divide between prefigurative proponents and those in favor of drawing heavily on traditional tactics also existed, but did not break down neatly along the same ideological lines as it had in Pittsburgh. Two Oakland anarchists illustrate this difference. Gordon, a 43-year-old anarchist and Bay Area native, discussed the port shutdown in December as an example of failing to remain tactically innovative, instead slipping into organizing-as-usual, which then put OO on a predictable path that no longer emphasized a commitment to new ways of relating. He explains:

...as far as I’m concerned [the port shut down] was a mistake. It was the kind of mistake you make when you’re in a coalition. Mistake because it was basically, instead of doing this new thing called Occupy, it was doing this old thing called union struggles. It isn’t

bad universally, but it's bad because it's a bunch of people who have no idea what they're talking about participating in decades...of "dock workers versus the companies" sort of a fight... there was an example of the anarchists losing focus and other groups, like the Old Left and the Marxists, not losing... The post-closure of the camp could have looked like 5 different camps. It could have looked like moving a whole ship somewhere else. Or who knows what it could have looked like because...the next major event they did was the closure of the ports.

He says that this collaboration between the union and new Occupy participants who had not been involved with social movements was a mistake for two reasons. First, the collaboration mirrored usual union organizing approaches that do not establish more horizontal relations among participants. He argues that union organizers implore people to join *them* in *their* struggle without working to establish relations based on a mutual and interconnected liberation. Secondly, he was critical of the focus on intervening in an action meant to call attention to workers' struggles because this meant that time and energy was no longer focused on figuring out how to expand Occupy Oakland after the evictions.

This perspective contrasts with other Oakland anarchists who also valued prefigurative politics but viewed the collaboration differently. When asked whether the port shutdown was a good thing, a 30-year-old anarchist, Elizabeth, exclaimed:

Girl, we fucking shut down all the West Coast ports! In response to the second eviction! We were like, "Watch this, we're Occupy Oakland, we're gonna call for a West Coast Port shutdown and get other people to do it," and we did it...it's the largest port in the country, we're going to fuck up international shipping!

For Elizabeth, the main gain was the ability to show strength and power. This fits with the no-demands, Do-It-Yourself value of prefigurative politics – that participants can directly act to carry out their goals (in this case, shutting down the ports and halting international commerce) without petitioning authorities to do it, an experience of autonomous strength and a rejection of the role of authorities as illegitimate representation. Yes, participants joined with an ongoing labor struggle in a traditional way: masses were rallied to attend a union-sponsored action by

union representatives. The building of mutual relationships of solidarity were not attended to, but Occupy participants gained something new from this action – the experience of DIY power – so the collaboration arguably fits with prefigurative aims.

The remaining point of contention between the two anarchist perspectives in Oakland is whether the union collaboration set OO on a particular path that foreclosed or made more difficult new, autonomous actions and strategies. Several OO participants claimed it did. Even those who stood behind the port shutdown admitted that, in hindsight, this may have been the case citing that the “best thing that came out of it was the revitalization of the labor movement.”

Such an insight complicates the simple dichotomy between prefigurative approaches and “Organizing as Usual.” My evidence shows that both approaches can be present in an action, tactic, or strategy. Thus participants could easily choose an instrumental approach that could foreclose the possibility of enacting in the future the prefigurative experiences they value. In determining which action-paths to choose, socialization is strong: a well-trodden organizing strategy may feel like a known quantity and contain the allure of having yielded past success, thus making success seem more probable in the future. My examination suggests that ongoing resistance to the familiar was difficult but necessary to sustain a prefigurative strategy.

It could be argued that the common call by prefigurative proponents for *something new* to happen was unlikely to be pursued by non-prefigurative participants who preferred already established paths of action. Participants are less likely to embrace an action for which there is no blueprint, so finding new, self-determined ways can be a daunting task. Prefigurative proponents believed that many participants’ actions were not just due to desires for the already-established approaches. Rather their failure to search for the not-yet-imaginable was rooted in neoliberal logics that underlie everyday interactions and push people to choose the path of least resistance.



This divide among anarchists in Oakland over the function of the port shutdown may have to do with the very different political environment in the San Francisco Bay Area, where the dominant cultural atmosphere is more progressive than it is in Pittsburgh and New York. Many anarchist interviewees expressed frustration at this environment which they described as a hegemonic “Organizing as Usual” ethos, perhaps explaining their fear that prefigurative possibilities could quickly disappear. Thomas, a 44-year-old homeless anarchist, was initially drawn to OO because of the possibility of breaking out of this organizing-as-usual environment. He said:

That’s what drew me and its explosive nature and the fact that it transcended those typical like social roles of activists, of you know, the nonprofit-y Left in the Bay area, a sickening break on any radical politics and this defied that and it didn’t place the demands first, you know, they basically said we have the right to do whatever the fuck we want, you know, demands can come later. This can be an opening for anybody to step forward, which completely contradicted and caught the local progressive like... you know, the government in town like has labeled itself progressive and it completely caught them off guard.

Thomas initially concentrated his involvement on disseminating solidarity statements to local small businesses and people around downtown who were not involved in Occupy, arranging food donations with area co-op bakeries, and spending time talking to Safeway workers in the middle of the night about the general strike. He did this because of his frustration with the organizing culture in the Bay Area, as he explained:

I mean... it’s kind of my disgust with the Left talking to itself. I want... this was an opportunity to break out of that, so that’s where I put my energy, outside the camp during that interface...

Other anarchist participants in OO echoed this wariness, a desire not to work with “activists.” They contrasted activities such as working with people who are losing their homes with actions simply meant to attract media attention. These activities are not mutually exclusive, and Oakland anarchists did not dismiss all attention-getting tactics. But they focused on the

differences, and how some organizing corrupted potentially liberatory relationships. They contrasted community organizing where non-activists are treated as equals, and deciding actions and solutions together, with campaigns led by paid organizers who use traditional tactics. They saw paid organizers as sometimes having valuable strategizing experience that could help a community “win” a particular demand, but saw a more important question in what “winning” means, how demands are developed to represent a large body of people and whether this is possible, and whether making demands of an authoritative body is the most desirable path. In other words, they critiqued the drive toward making demands as the commonsense aim of organizing.

Some paid-organizers work directly with non-activists to construct strategy. But Oakland anarchists point to hierarchical decision-making as restricting non-activists to the role of consultant with paid activists making final decisions. As Thomas put it:

Instead of it being a transformative kind of synergy, that happened... transformation of people coming to us for help, people stepping out of roles doing stuff they hadn't done before, it's settling back into tried and true, you know, like very static roles.

He echoed the sentiments of prefigurative proponents in Occupy Pittsburgh who were dissatisfied with “Organizing as Usual,” because it settled for familiar tactics as opposed to transformative ones. He continued:

Fighting the banks, and like capital... is one thing, but fighting the cops inside these people's heads, their own preordained expectations is the real enemy, you know? If I had ten people with a much more flexible, you know, or a much more demanding, you know, expectation or, you know, weren't as satisfied with a life of pattern, we could be doing like so much more, you know?

Thomas's insight gets to the heart of the prefigurative proponents' critique of “Organizing as Usual”: that the patterns of expectations are powerful and destructive because

they go unaddressed and continue to foster oppression even as participants struggle against external institutions.

## **5.4 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I have shown that anarchists in Occupy valued prefiguration and I demonstrated how they enacted a prefigurative approach as part of a strategy to change both internalized relations of domination and societal structures and institutions that maintain a system of inequality.

My argument departs from scholars' criticism of "no demands" as indicating a lack of strategy in Occupy. Social movement scholars have dismissed prefiguration as non-strategy due to its rejection of demands or its inability to contest power (Breines 1989; Epstein 1991; Polletta 2002; Rohgalf 2013; Smucker 2013). I argue against viewing Occupy's prefigurative aims in this limited way. In Occupy, demanding change of each other and modeling new ways was not mutually exclusive with strategies meant to dismantle social institutions that it regarded as unfit for an egalitarian society. Additionally, the choice of location and character of the occupations served as a direct confrontation with those in institutional power. Furthermore, many conflicts in Occupy between anarchists and non-anarchists are better explained by clashes that occurred when prefigurative proponents tried to challenge traditional organizing approaches. Conflicts among anarchists reveal that both prefigurative and instrumental approaches did exist within Occupy, and problems occurred when decisions to pursue the latter endangered the continuation of the former.

## 6.0 THE HORIZONTAL STRUCTURE OF OCCUPY

The horizontal structure that shaped the organization of Occupy is an example of prefiguration because it was meant to prefigure an organizational form that future society could take. Scholars explain horizontalism as a leaderless form of decision-making in groups (Hammond 2015; Graeber 2011; Maeckelbergh 2011; Shantz and Williams 2013). Anarchists desire a society without an authoritative governing body, believing that humans can make decisions in a direct, participatory way. Since this means that mass unity is not always necessary or desirable, anarchism exists in tension between individual freedom and collective well-being. Even the individualist anarchist Max Stirner believed that an individual will seek freedom for their own well-being but that individual well-being is in jeopardy if the action disrupts the collective harmony; thus the individual will act with the needs of the greater collectivity in mind. In Occupy, anarchists sought to prefigure new political relations of individual and collective well-being through horizontal structures.<sup>13</sup>

In this chapter I begin by describing the horizontal structure in Occupy, which includes the General Assembly space, the Working Groups and Spokescouncil organizational forms, the various hand signals used by participants for communication, the consensus process, the mechanism of the People's Mic, and the role of statements passed by the General Assemblies. I

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<sup>13</sup> This prefiguration is “political” as it concerns the organization of society, which includes decision-making *and* the need for a lack thereof. I differentiate this from Occupy attempts at prefiguring economic and social relations, which I discuss in chapter 5.

first explain these structural elements, how they came to characterize Occupy, and how they were attempts to put anarchist values into practice. I briefly discuss disagreement among anarchists over embracing horizontalism as an anarchist concept. I then examine the conflict that ensued in four cases. I find that these conflicts illustrate an underlying political disagreement among participants about the ways society could work. This conflict broke down along the lines of anarchist and non-anarchist values, sometimes between anarchists and non-anarchists, and sometimes among anarchists themselves. Analyzing participants' experiences and building on scholarly claims, I argue that a horizontal structure does not work for a mass movement unless participants share strong political affinity and a commitment to the practices meant to enact these shared values. Finally, I discuss the implications of my conclusions – that radical inclusivity is not necessarily desirable for social movement organizing. Using the concept of “do-ocracy,” I propose that a perspective shift in organizing is necessary for anarchist values to be enacted; that the focus should be on fostering a movement culture that embraces conflict, aims for harmony over unity, and integrates a daily practice of on-going experimentation for greater freedom in a more equitable world. This culture differs from the approaches to decision-making and the “politics” of everyday life embedded in the current culture of the Left.

## **6.1 ELEMENTS OF THE HORIZONTAL STRUCTURE**

The horizontal “leaderless” structure of Occupy was an experiment with non-hierarchical forms of organization and decision-making. The Occupy form was widely referred to as an experiment in direct democracy – a decentralized, networked structure in which people learn democracy by doing it. The idea was to make decisions in a way that did not reproduce the deliberation forms

and leadership structures that participants were opposing. No leaders were identified to challenge widely-held assumptions that leaders are necessary for something to work (Castells 2012).

Castells reconstructs an ideal type of Occupy organization in his book *Networks of Outrage and Hope* (2012). He and his research team identify key Occupy features, including General Assembly meetings, a common deliberation process, hand-signals used during the meetings to facilitate the process, Working Groups, and spokes-councils. Below, I combine Castells' information with my own research and observations to explain the elements of the horizontal structure.

First, the Occupy model includes regular General Assemblies (GAs). These meetings – open to everyone – were held in public spaces (often at the occupation itself). They served to give participants an opportunity to share information, express their beliefs, coordinate logistics and actions, and debate issues or concerns relevant to the camp. The frequency of GAs varied by occupation and over time. For example, some occupations held GAs every day, others began with daily meetings and then moved to a bi-weekly schedule. The exact structure also varied by occupation although Castells found that almost every occupation website and GA guide described the GA as a “horizontal, leaderless, consensus-based open meeting” (Castells 2012:180). This meant that everyone in attendance could participate and make proposals. The facilitator (or team of facilitators), a role that usually rotates to a different person for each meeting, would begin a meeting by stating the agenda and asking for additions or alterations. Agenda points might include formal proposals for actions to be taken within the camp, dealing with a concern, or staging a protest, for example. Proposals at the GAs were meant to deal with action-items that affected the entire occupation. The agenda also included space for open discussion and information-sharing with no expectation of consensus agreement.

For formal proposals, the process was: the facilitator opened discussion until they perceived repetition of responses by participants, or a participant put forth a formal proposal for action. At this point, the facilitator clearly stated the proposal and tested for consensus, asking participants to indicate their approval or disapproval through a show of hands or hand-signals, described below. If the assembled body was in total agreement, or if the facilitator perceived that a specified percentage of agreement had been reached, consensus was achieved. Then the facilitator moved on to listing the action steps required to operationalize the proposal, and people or groups could speak to these points, sometimes modifying them, and agreeing to take responsibility for carrying them out. If there was disagreement (gauged by a large percentage, depending on the occupation, referred to as “modified consensus”) the facilitator re-opened the floor for participants to raise concerns and propose modifications to the proposal. Next, the facilitator asked for a show-of-hands on which participants chose to stand aside, or refrain from registering support for the proposal but allowing it to go ahead due to non-blocking concerns. This opened space for all participants to see how much support the proposal actually had and proceed accordingly, and to ask questions about a lack of support if it existed. The underlying assumption was that participants were committed to coming up with solutions that everyone – or almost everyone – could agree upon. For example, if participants or the facilitator perceived an abundance of “stand asides,” they might suggest more modifications or that the process return to the discussion phase until a proposal with more support could be articulated. After the facilitator solicited stand-asides, they asked for “blocks,” which were a way for participants to stop further progress of an action if they were not okay with the proposal going ahead for serious reasons that they believed would interfere with the expressed aims of the proposal or contradicted their deeply-held values or the expressed values of the group.

Participants used hand signals to communicate their approval of or disagreement with a proposal or sentiment being voiced by others indicated by “twinkling,” or wiggling their fingers upright in the air, or displaying a “thumbs down” sign (or sometimes twinkling their fingers downwards), respectively. They raised their hands to be put on “stack,” or the ordered list of people to speak, usually kept track of by the facilitator or a designated “stack-taker.” Often the stack was “weighted,” which meant women, transgendered people, people of color, and people who had not yet spoken jumped the stack order and spoke before more regular participants or white, cis-gendered men.

People who wanted to lodge a “direct response,” providing a piece of factual information that might aid in deliberation, held up both fingers as if pointing ahead, and alternated movement, to attract attention. For example, if a speaker was uncertain about the location of an event but proposed possible action based on the event, another participant could use the direct response hand signal to speak next (jumping stack) to provide the relevant location information.

Another regular hand signal included the “point of process,” formed by holding up two hands to form a triangle. This was used to call the meeting back to order when speakers disregarded the decision-making process or agenda format. For example, if a participant observed that another proposal needed to be passed prior to the one currently being debated, or if a speaker began publicizing an upcoming event as an announcement during the consensus process for a proposal, another participant might use the “point of process” to facilitate decision-making. “Stand asides” were usually registered by hand-raising at the appropriate time. “Blocks” were communicated by a participant raising their two arms up in the formation of a sideways cross.



Another key feature of the Occupy model was Working Groups (WGs), or smaller groupings of participants that served many purposes. Sometimes they were tasked with implementing action steps of a GA decision. For example an Action WG could work out the logistics for a mass action, bring proposals for actions to the GA, and ensure that tasks such as mapping a march route (and alternative march routes, in case of police interference) were taken care of. Working Groups were also formed to help the occupation run smoothly, for example, the Food WG coordinated food preparation and distribution, and the Facilitation WG trained participants to facilitate, provided facilitation at the GAs, and came up with draft meeting agendas. While the exact name and tasks of WGs in different occupations varied, most of them dealt with logistical concerns such as media, food, facilitation, outreach and publicity, security, legal support and other matters, sanitation, action planning, medical support, and finances.

Working Groups also formed among marginalized groups. For example, WGs based on non-white, non-male, non-heterosexual identities met, discussed issues overlooked by the GA or concerns related to marginalization, and asserted a collective voice into decisions being made by the General body.

In some occupations, the WGs were formally agreed upon at the GAs and groups that did not have this status were considered to be Affinity Groups (AGs). In other occupations, WGs were recognized when they formed outside of the GAs, too.

Some occupations implemented a spokes-council model and integrated it into the GA. This decision-making structural tweak was meant to enable smoother coordination among the various working groups and other smaller bodies, alleviate the need for every Occupy participant to attend each GA to have a voice, and give more weight to participants who were consistently invested in the work of the occupation. It also made it harder for individuals to block agreements

and prevented the processes from being derailed by newcomers who did not have a stake in earlier decisions. Much like the spokes on a wheel, a person was chosen as a "spoke" from their Working Group, caucus, or – in some occupations – affinity group to represent their grouping at a particular GA.<sup>14</sup> The spokes all sat in the middle of the GA. Everyone who participated in Occupy was welcome to attend the meeting but the spoke was a representative for that particular meeting. Sometimes this role was filled on a rotating basis, sometimes the spoke would be more permanent, depending on the desires of that particular grouping. Sometimes the spoke was empowered to make decisions on behalf of the grouping, other times the spoke was there to provide and gather information to be taken back to the grouping. The spoke was recallable if the group's members felt the spoke was not accurately representing their views. This model was controversial in some of the occupations; supporters noted its past history with successful coordination among large bodies<sup>15</sup> while critics claimed it centralized power.

Another regular feature of Occupy was the People's Mic, a human microphone mechanism for communicating information from one person to a mass audience without an amplified sound system. A speaker verbalized a phrase or short sentence and the audience nearest the speaker repeated the words so that the message was amplified enough for a large crowd to hear it. Sometimes the message took several repetitions to make its way further through the crowd to a larger audience. The People's Mic had its roots in protests of the global justice movement; protesters popularized the mechanism during jail solidarity demonstrations –

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<sup>14</sup> Sometimes this was more complex. In New York City, for example, the process was preceded by a meeting of clusters – a gathering of groupings with similar stakes or aims. The cluster came up with a proposal to present at the spokes-council and the cluster decided on a spoke to present that proposal.

<sup>15</sup> The spokes-council model was a regular feature at anarchist regional gatherings during the global justice era and beyond. For example, the model smoothly facilitated several-hundred-person meetings of an anarchist network that was held in Minnesota in 2008 to prepare for the Republican National Convention protests.

gatherings outside jail to support their fellow protesters who had been arrested. Lawyers and members of the legal support teams needed to communicate factual information, such as the status of the arrestees or communiqués from the police, to a large audience without being able to use electricity for amplified sound. This human microphone began to be used in NYC for practical reasons: amplified sound was not legal without a permit and OWS participants were not interested in seeking a permit. But there was also an allure to the People's Mic: many of my interviewees talked about how empowering it was to participate in communicating messages. This excited participants elsewhere than New York City, regardless of legal restrictions, and the People's Mic became associated with Occupy.

This brief description of the Occupy structure is an ideal type that closely matched what was reported about the NY Occupy manifestation. In practice it was more interactive and there were many deviations. The Occupy model emerged from the relaying of these practices and structure on Occupy websites and participation guides, instructional how-to YouTube viral videos explaining the process for newcomers, and through OWS organizers who traveled to other cities to provide support. Although many facilitators provided a brief run down about the process at the beginning of a GA, the model differed slightly from place-to-place as local groups adapted the model to fit their needs.

## **6.2 ORIGINS OF THE HORIZONTAL STRUCTURE**

The Occupy movement is famous for all kinds of things that it didn't invent. Practices like the general assembly, the people's microphone, the hand signals, and the tactic of occupation are a major part of what makes Occupy an exciting movement, but these practices are not new—they've just moved from the fringes of the social movement sector

to the mainstream... these practices are being used in a mass movement for social justice. That's new—at least in the United States (Leach 2013:181-182).

Participants in the global justice movement from the mid to late 1990s through the mid-2000s will immediately recognize similarities in the structure and practices of Occupy. OWS organizers drew from experiences in anarchist projects, and some had participated in public square occupations in Spain, Greece, and Egypt earlier in the spring and summer. These participants' experiences with anarchistic forms of organizing set the stage for the eventual Occupy in Zuccotti Park on September 17, 2011.

Thus, the Occupy model was anarchistic at its root. Mark Bray (2013) interviewed 192 OWS core organizers who were active in the first year of Occupy and found that 72% either identified as anarchists (39%) or claimed implicitly anarchist politics (33%). A core organizer himself, Bray did not have to rely on anonymous surveys or snowball sampling that included casual supporters who did little to shape the direction of the movement. Focusing on core organizers sheds light on the Occupy aims for horizontal, leaderless structures and processes. For example, it is common to find characterizations of the Occupy movement's participants as seeking to reform capitalism. But Bray's data indicate that 78% of core OWS organizers wanted to destroy capitalism. This difference in political aim informed the shape of the Occupy model and the trajectory of Occupy in New York, though it was not necessarily shared (or understood) elsewhere. Bray (2013:5) asserts that organizers worked to "make a case for an autonomous, non-electoral social movement working toward a non-capitalist economy that would replace the profit incentive with a prioritization of human need." Next I examine how this model attempted to put anarchistic aims into practice.

### 6.3 THE HORIZONTAL STRUCTURE: PUTTING ANARCHIST VALUES INTO PRACTICE

In Occupy, the horizontal structure and process were used to prefigure new forms of democracy and challenge the representative political participation systems in the United States and many parts of the world that many people see as efficient and the standard of politics. Many Occupy participants regarded horizontal organization as a potential alternative that could be adapted to fit the needs of local communities. But is horizontal structure inherently anarchist?

The ancient Greek word for anarchy means “without a ruler” (McKay 2008:19). Thus anarchism is a quest for self-governance. Because we live in a society, we must make decisions with others; anarchists emphasize doing so in a way that maximizes freedom by ensuring that the people making decisions are the ones most impacted by those decisions. This is one reason many anarchists call for a more “direct democracy” and try to avoid structural arrangements that allow some individuals to impose authority on others.

My findings confirm that anarchists experiment with decision-making structures that facilitate direct decision-making, and are critical of relationships of coerced domination. Anarchists believe that because power is constantly shifting, to act anarchistically is to pay attention to process. They aim to deconstruct concentrations of power at each stage of deliberation and in general organizational structures. Thus the *practice* of a horizontal structure and process is considered by many anarchists to be an anarchist approach to societal re-organization.

Scholars explain that horizontality, or non-hierarchical social organization, is both a theory of ideal power relations and the practice of those relations. Practitioners of the horizontal process embrace a “politics of multiple goals” (Maeckelbergh 2011:9), which necessitates a

“redesign [of] the way power operates...[through] new structures of decision-making that are learned through practice” (Maeckelbergh 2011:13). These new structures facilitate a continuous decentralization of power, challenging inequalities on a micro (interpersonal) and macro (institutional, structural) level. Actors continuously challenge and limit the centralization of power.

Many anarchist scholars today posit horizontal structure and consensus processes as inherent to anarchism (Hammond 2015; Graeber 2011; Shantz and Williams 2013). For example, Hammond (2015) discusses horizontalism, as one of the five tenets of anarchism, as a mechanism for making decisions in a more anarchistic way, bridging the individual and the collective. Leaderlessness requires self-organization. It is an alternative to hierarchical processes with its emphasis on equal roles and empowered participation; its ongoing practice prevents power accumulation.

In a horizontal structure, everyone shares in decision-making and there is no permanent leadership (Sitrin 2006). In Occupy, this was referred to as a “leaderless” or “leaderfull” aim, with leadership carried out collectively. For example, people rotated the task of facilitating meetings to avoid positions of power. At all three occupations there was a facilitation Working Group (WG) in which people who had experience facilitating meetings shared their skills with newer facilitators, and each member of the WG took turns facilitating a GA.

Another way this functioned in OWS was through the formation of caucuses based on marginalized identities, for example, the people of color caucus, women’s caucus, queer caucus, and disability caucus. There were proposals to give those caucuses more power than other groups so that they could check the structural, systematic power dynamics as they came up. Melanie, one of the anarchist architects of OWS, a 26-year-old woman who had been involved with social

movements since she was a teenager, noted that sometimes it worked and sometimes it did not but people had to be willing to address those things. She explained, “Power is always the root of everything. I mean, that’s why I’m an anarchist, I want to identify and combat concentrations of power and specifically power over other people, domination...in order to be really horizontal you have to evaluate those power dynamics and try to find ways of equalizing them.”

An additional example of this de-concentration of power was the People’s Mic. Charles, another anarchist participant in OWS, explained:

The People’s Mic was very effective at keeping grandstanding in check...you can’t make an eloquent speech over the People’s Mic. Cornell West would sound shitty over it. You can’t wax poetic, just get across what your point is and be done as soon as possible. It’s going to be broken up, you can’t build an emotional crescendo. You’ve got to think about what you say before you say it, not an emotional rant...So that’s another reason why communication worked better at OWS than in the past because groups that like to give speech denouncing everything and making a huge spectacle of the speech itself...they had to rely on pass the message. And if people don’t like your message, they don’t repeat it.

He pointed to the ability of the People’s Mic to shift power in communication: speakers must be brief and direct, not relying on emotional persuasion. He nods to his dissatisfaction with established groups that regularly utilize speeches (such as at a rally) as a way to hold an audience captive to their message. With the People’s Mic, these groups only convey their message to receptive audience members; each member can choose to participate (or not) in the relaying of that message through repetition.

In general, my data show that non-anarchist participants – especially those new to social movements or to the use of a horizontal structure – felt very empowered by the horizontal structure and its mechanisms, at least at first. In contrast, anarchists talked about the practical use of horizontalism and were irritated at its abuse.

## **6.4 THE HORIZONTAL STRUCTURE: DISAGREEMENTS AMONG ANARCHISTS OVER POPULARIZATION**

Some anarchist participants embraced horizontalism but many had mixed or hostile feelings about its use in Occupy. This was due not simply to the seemingly unbridgeable conflicts among participants, but to a concern that making the horizontal model popular to a mass audience, as in Occupy, necessitates a rebranding of anarchism to reduce its oppositional character. In Occupy, for example, some organizers tried to appeal to a larger audience by de-emphasizing the conflict that results from a leaderless model. This left adopters of the horizontal model feeling duped or ready to establish strict rules to avoid conflict. In other words, rebranding the horizontal model as empowering downplayed the conflict it produces.<sup>16</sup> Although anarchists may see difficult dynamics as necessary and desirable, non-anarchist adopters did not and tried to change horizontal structures to make them more peaceful, thus less anarchistic. Additionally, horizontalism became another “correct way of doing things” thereby ossifying it against the ongoing criticism and challenges which are necessary for changes and fluidity in daily operations.

In the subsections below, I flesh out these critiques of popularity, beginning with the ways horizontalism has come to symbolize a school of thought not shared by many anarchists, and how some anarchists see this school as aiming to make “anarchy” more palatable to a larger audience by rebranding. I end by exploring the criticism over fetishization or, how the model is

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<sup>16</sup> One interviewee insightfully likened this rebranding tendency to arguments for anarchism that try to separate the friendly mutual-aid anarchist from the window-smashing-anarchist stereotype. But both are part of anarchism and its history; both urges for destruction/opposition/challenge and creation/agreement are necessarily present within anarchism and playing up one and suppressing the other leads to an incomplete and dishonest adoption of a political perspective.



easily manipulated as *the* alternative to hierarchical models due to its popularity. But first, it is important to note that many anarchists in Occupy did exemplify scholars' claims connecting horizontalism with anarchism.

Many anarchists I interviewed saw horizontalism as part of anarchism. For example, when I asked Lucy, a 36-year-old genderqueer anarchist from San Francisco, to define anarchism they first responded, "You mean, what does it mean *besides* horizontalism?" indicating the synonymous character. Lucy saw the horizontal structure as a manifestation of self-organization. In New York, Connor, a 32-year-old anarchist in the Direct Action Working Group, explained that horizontalism is "a form of collective organization that's sensitive to power dynamics and the accumulation of power, and at least in theory tries to disperse power within a group. And that's what makes it an anarchist form of organizing, its anti-authoritarianism." Connor and many other anarchist participants emphasize that the practice of a horizontal structure is necessary to undo a lifetime of socialization into hierarchical relationships of domination. Connor adds that this practice allows participants to "feel the affect and the physicality of a different form of social relations," which are necessary for new norms of a more egalitarian world. This sentiment, echoed by many pro-horizontal anarchists, points to both an understanding of horizontalism as an anarchist philosophy in practice and a necessary tactic for undoing socialization that serves to perpetuate domination in many forms. Many anarchists concluded that so many problems occurred in Occupy because participants did not have much experience with undoing this socialization and trying to relate to others in ways that challenge their internalized drives for power or tendencies to compete with others or react in punitive ways.

### **6.4.1 Critique #1: Symbolizing One School of Anarchist Thought**

Some anarchists expressed discomfort that anarchism is defined by horizontalism when, in fact, not all anarchists embrace it and many anarchists object to being identified with a specific structure as opposed to a fluid struggle. Illustrating this sentiment is Gordon, a 43-year-old mixed-race anarchist from the Bay Area who had been active as an anarchist in social movements for 25 years. He explained:

For me, horizontality or however you want to say it, feels like post-anti-globalization jargon imported from either South America or from the Graeber universe. So I'm hostile towards it, both as jargon that doesn't actually come out of the place where I'm from and as something that I read as having a particular political orientation...a new way to talk about democracy.

There are two things going on here. First, he criticized the rhetoric of horizontalism because it symbolized a particular anarchist strand – the anarchist movement within the Global Justice Movement – that he did not feel represented his focus or his version of anarchism-in-practice. This school has been popularized by the extensive writings of participant scholars, such as David Graeber, and refers to the GJM practice of coordinating decentralized, networked action frameworks through spokes-council bodies and affinity groups to protest summits of international financial institutions. These practices, popular with anarchists in the GJM, diffused into a larger social movement audience and were not necessarily seen as anarchistic approaches anymore by some anarchists and non-anarchist new practitioners. Some anarchists saw the popularization and subsequent morphing of approaches as moving away from anarchistic practices and they dropped out of the global justice movement. Others were skeptical from the start and did not get involved. Some chose to spend their time working on projects outside of the global justice movement.

Secondly, Gordon and other anarchists skeptical of the popularization of anarchist approaches saw this as rebranding anarchism – through the reclamation of popular words like “democracy” – to make it more palatable to a larger audience. Gordon and many other anarchists believed that anarchy – the absence of a state and the destruction of comforting societal institutions we rely on and take for granted – can be quite scary, and sugar-coating it does a disservice to the terrible conflicts that will likely ensue in the absence of a state, and the hard work necessary to forge new ways of being in the world.

Ultimately, most anarchists expressed ambivalence about what happens when anarchist approaches become popularized to a mass audience. Many anarchists who had been part of the Global Justice Movement and initially advocated horizontalism in Occupy reported feeling less enthusiastic as time went on because the values they attached to the horizontal structure did not necessarily diffuse with the practices. This implies a greater agreement of collective skepticism by anarchists – those who were part of global justice efforts and embraced horizontalism *and* those who were not – of a mass-movement-building approach.

#### **6.4.2 Critique #2: Rebranding, Meaningless Democracy, and the Forced Unity of Consensus**

Some anarchists criticized horizontalism as the Occupy model because they saw it as an attempt to make anarchism friendlier to a larger audience, which ultimately prevents an anarchistic restructuring of society because of the trade-offs – a “lowest common denominator” politics – that must happen for its mass likeability. This points to a major tension within current anarchist movements in the United States. Some anarchists believe new ways can be forged to replace a state and its hierarchical, dominating institutions, *alongside* the state, which will eventually

whither away due to unpopularity or irrelevance as self-organized endeavors take its place. This requires mass popularization of alternative approaches. Other anarchists believe that new ways are already coming into conflict with statist ways of relating, and the project is not to popularize models which will be watered down and fetishized, but rather to destroy what currently exists and to open space for new forms. These new forms must also be continuously subject to challenge, critique, destruction, and reconceptualization. These anarchists believe it is not possible to conceive of the new forms in the present, while our actions and desires are dictated by dominating, statist relations that we have internalized.

Of all the anarchist interviewees, Gordon was most direct about his critique of new political terminology to appeal to a larger audience. He said:

I self identify as an anarchist because I believe that that word describes the different way in which I want to interact with people. By and large when people use words like horizontalism what I feel like they're doing is hiding their actual perspectives behind a new term they feel is more acceptable to a broader audience or to a new set of audiences. So that instinct to like include more people, get along with everybody, I personally, just as a personal human being person, don't trust that instinct. I call it politics or political thinking and basically consider it to be a problem, rather than a solution waiting for an audience.

Gordon claims the label of "anarchist," despite its popular demonization because it fits him and *because of* its demonization, because it wards off easy, uncritical acceptance of his views. He is suspicious of the tendency to want to get along with everyone as leading to compromised beliefs and hindering honest debate over differences.

A tension within Occupy (sometimes among anarchists) was over issues of unity and autonomy. Disagreement over unity could be seen in conflicts over the degree of consensus needed, and the reclamation of words like democracy to unite larger audiences. Some anarchists claimed the word "democracy" has come to mean anything empowering about political participation and thus has become meaningless. The reclamation of the word by other anarchists

they saw as an attempt to rebrand anarchism to make it likeable to a larger audience. Gordon explains his position as an anti-democracy anarchist: “Democracy is defined as a sort of loose thing that means we’re relatively equal and should appreciate that about each other.”

Most anarchists in Occupy believed that decisions are best made by the people who are affected by them. Some believed that branding this “direct democracy” communicates the idea to a large audience and wins supporters. Other, “anti-democracy” anarchists believe the message is unclear and overly-broad, and that the historical roots of democracy are in opposition to this idea; they favor an emphasis on autonomy instead.

Most anarchists in Occupy voiced ambivalence when it came to consensus. Proponents of the consistent use of consensus process include David Graeber (2011), who explained: “American anarchists have long considered consensus process (a tradition that has emerged from a confluence of feminism, anarchism and spiritual traditions like the Quakers) crucial for the reason that it is the only form of decision-making that could operate without coercive enforcement – since if a majority does not have the means to compel a minority to obey its dictates, all decisions will, of necessity, have to be made by general consent.”

However, few anarchists I interviewed offered such solid endorsements of the use of consensus in Occupy (and some expressed skepticism in general), particularly in regard to preventing a majority from coercing a minority. Some anarchists pointed out that there are other ways to pressure or coerce large numbers of people into agreement.<sup>17</sup> Others pointed to the “modified” process that Occupy adopted in which only a certain percentage had to be in agreement for something to pass as a way that a majority could override a *meaningful* minority.

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<sup>17</sup> For example, a proposal tied to the acceptance of a large financial donation might result in a specious agreement if many members wanted to move forward with a particular action but had voiced discomfort with accepting the donation and did not see it as tied to the forward action but knew others would block an agreement without the financial acceptance provision.

In other words, although a majority could win, enough dissent – even 15-20% – could signal a need for the group to split over some decisions or choose an alternate way forward that did not require agreement.

Most anarchists were ambivalent about how consensus in Occupy created a culture with helpful and harmful aspects. The benefits included personal empowerment, as participants came to realize the weight of their own opinions in decisions, and an environment in which people continuously learned that there are other ways to make decisions that rely on a collaboration not in competition with others.

The drawbacks included a compulsion towards superficial unity that suppressed dissent. These interviewees noted that unity is not always necessary yet some participants became zealous about it. Additionally, the consensus culture bred an attitude by some that every small decision had to be made by the large group, which was tedious and felt coercive to many participants who emphasized autonomy. This sentiment was usually tied to the critique that consensus should not be used in a mass struggle because not everyone shared basic agreements in values and aims, and consensus relies on a sense that there is a common belief set. Several anarchists pointed to the roots of consensus in Quaker communities, where an underlying shared set of beliefs do exist, not something that automatically transfers over to the 99%.

Another important distinction that some anarchists made – dovetailing with these critiques – was the separation between horizontal structure and consensus. For example, Connor reflected on his experience in OWS and concluded: “Yeah, you can easily have a group who will make decisions based on simple majority voting and simple majority... and be horizontal...there’s no essential link to horizontality.” Although Graeber noted consensus as the safeguard to minority rule and coercive enforcement, anarchists I interviewed wondered if

perhaps there could be other forms of decision-making that limit a concentration of power and emphasize autonomy (again) and harmony over unity – aims that echo a different kind of anarchism than one that claims consensus as an inherent characteristic. OWS anarchist Melanie added: “the main thing is that people aren’t coercing one another or dominating one another. So that can take many different forms.”

In response to anarchist ambivalence over “democracy” and “consensus,” and to a different understanding of a horizontal way of practice, OO anarchist 26-year-old Jeff, discusses the alternative to a focus on reaching a formalized consensus on a larger scale. He prefers the concept of the “Do-ocracy,” a term coined by a Bay Area hacker space: “If you want to do something, start doing it! If someone doesn’t like it, they’ll tell you and try to stop you. If they do like it, they’ll help you.” This mindset embodies two characteristics of anarchism cited by scholars: a commitment to autonomy and a perspective that sees anarchism as a continual process of interaction – that requires conflict – or, an ongoing practice of freedom. People act from their desires and constantly negotiate, without a set of laws that spell out what behavior is “right” or “wrong” (legally or morally) in any given situation.

It is important to note that the distinction is a difference in emphasis, not an opposite idea. Anti-democracy anarchists believe that emphasizing autonomy or invoking do-ocracy is a better way to talk about what many direct-democracy anarchists mean by “democracy” without having to use a word that has lost most meaning, or conveys a meaning at-odds with anarchism, or having to modify it with “direct.”

### 6.4.3 Critique #3: Horizontalism Is Easily Abused

Finally, many anarchists complained that the popularization of horizontalism made it difficult to criticize, obscured how domination operated within the structure (similar to the critiques of consensus), and made it possible for some participants to manipulate the process for their own advantage. These criticisms came from anarchists who explicitly rejected horizontalism (most vocally in the Bay Area) *and* those who embraced the structure.

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Nevertheless, anarchists who embraced the term horizontalism noted that it was not meant to establish *the* model for a better world, but was simply one possibility. According to Melanie, the first OWS document, written collectively by the New York City General Assembly, imagined many assemblies that could be changed and reinterpreted by various diverse groupings, as long as meetings were participatory, autonomous, and lacked parties and leaders.

Many anarchists reported how empowering horizontalism was, giving them hope that things actually could be different. For example, Noel, who had read quite a bit on historical anarcho-syndicalist experiments but had not participated in these organization styles before visiting Zuccotti Park, said, “I eventually realized it was like being on a team without a coach and thought, ‘Whoa, this can work in our lives!’”

Anarchists who rejected the terms “horizontalism” and/or “prefiguration,” and those who voiced support for using a horizontal structure and accompanying practices but did not use the word or make an explicit connection to their definition of anarchism, still valued the practice of working to undo socialization and sought to experience more desirable ways of relating to one another. Gordon, a vocal critic of both terms, described being “romanced” by the occupied space, inspired by the ways it allowed for people to pursue their own desires while being forced to



negotiate with each other because there was a lack of established protocols to solve problems. He also valued that the interactions took place in spaces unmediated by economic relationships. Contrasting relations between strangers in Occupy and a coffee shop, he concluded, "...that's the real thing, just the idea that human beings could actually be together and that did not involve exchange." Some explained their support of the horizontal structure as a desire to participate in a structure and process that was a better alternative to hierarchical decision-making. As Oakland anarchist Elizabeth said, "the point is exposure to new possible structures and de-normalization...it was just *a* framework that was better than other organizing frameworks we've used...if anything, it threw the usual organizing script for a loop that got people to question structure."

Anarchists did not prefer a hierarchical structure of decision-making over the horizontal model of Occupy. But many wanted something different. Their desires and proposed alternatives emerged in the conflicts in Occupy. I illustrate this below through a closer examination of four cases.

## **6.5 THE OCCUPY CASES AND THEIR CONFLICTS**

Many conflicts took place at the occupations, within the sites of the horizontal structure. These conflicts illustrate tensions around enacting anarchist values through the horizontal structure, both between anarchists and non-anarchists, and sometimes among anarchists.

### **6.5.1 Occupy Pittsburgh General Assembly Space: An Open Space for Experimentation or Organizing as Usual?**

In Occupy Pittsburgh, differences often arose between anarchist and non-anarchist participants. Anarchists often criticized what they referred to as “organizing-as-usual” and contrasted those tactics to prefigurative approaches. One structural site where this was illustrated was the space of the General Assembly. The conflict over the act of granting endorsements at the GAs embodied the differences between the desire for creating new ways of relating and organizing. Non-anarchists understood the GA as a coalition space where representatives of various groups shared information about their projects, garnering support from GA attendees. They saw this as a form of movement building. Members of this camp also regularly proposed symbolic statements that asserted which groups or issues were their natural allies and sought to use the meeting space as a planning session for getting these statements out into the public. For example, some members devoted time and energy to petition city council to officially declare solidarity with OP and OWS.

However, anarchists argued that using the GA space in this way was not in line with horizontal approaches. When members of a union or a local non-profit activist group presented proposals for OP to endorse their group’s upcoming action, they were met with fierce opposition from some anarchist participants. Non-anarchists were bewildered at these objections and sometimes dismissed them as naïve reactions coming from young people without organizing experience. But in OP opposition to members taking up time at General Assemblies to garner endorsements came from new and seasoned anarchists alike. For example, Brian, an anarchist organizer in his 30s with more than 10 years of experience participating in social movements, explained how the proposals came across:

[The union or non-profit representatives] are just coming to ask us for something because they want warm bodies. They don't really care about those people's politics, they don't really care about these people bringing anything to the struggle, and they certainly don't care about making connections between their members and us. So it's not really a working relationship in that case...

It seemed to him that endorsement gatherers just wanted people to attend their events, regardless of those people's beliefs or other contributions to the struggle. He contrasted this request with the desire to build a working relationship. He explains that if someone had proposed a meeting between OP members and janitors as part of their organized union, people would have been excited about and receptive to talking about ways to make that happen. He explained why:

We're supposed to be a horizontal effort, in which case we actually do want to make lots of connections between everyone who's part of Occupy Pittsburgh and these other movements and communities of resistance, but we're not particularly interested in making a connection with the president of whatever. Never were we asked for the version that builds relationships.

This sentiment relayed a frustration among anarchists that some non-anarchist members continued to try to use what they saw as a top-down tactic of gathering endorsements in Occupy Pittsburgh, which anarchists regarded as not forming authentic, lasting connections between communities. Brian expressed that people in OP desired stronger relationships, as evident by their commitment to a horizontal model, but representatives of endorsing groups never extended such an opportunity.

Anarchists in OP saw the GA as a space for participants to leave other group projects behind and focus on new ways to intervene in the political landscape. They complained that when the time came to talk about OP action, most of the space was taken up by representatives of other groups bringing up endorsement proposals or asking for OP members to get involved with their efforts. For example, Sean, an anarchist in his late 20s, explained:

It was basically asking for a rubber stamp to get turnout by using the name Occupy Pittsburgh, that was what was not very horizontal about it; it was just a top-down, one-way street. It's not like we were being asked to collaborate. There was no reciprocal aspect to that relationship. That relationship was simply you want to be able to use your name to further our effort. And a difficulty for Occupy Pittsburgh was that a lot of people there were trying to do politics in a new way that was getting beyond a Left-wing, generic activist-group-articulated thing that was beyond two party politics...

Sean took issue with this because he considered an endorsement of an organization's event or campaign as one-sided, a gesture that might deliver more turnout to the outside organizing group. Rather, he wanted to use the space to discuss ways to build mutually beneficial relationships between OP and various constituencies where members could collaborate and reciprocate. Other interviewees echoed this sentiment and expressed frustration that representatives of unions and non-profits were asking OP members to "accommodate" them and "slip back into a very non-horizontal way of doing things," rather than being willing to meet OP halfway. Using the space for endorsements and statement proposals also did not leave space for coming up with fresh strategies that anarchist participants desired. Brian summed up this position:

We have this space, what can we do with it? How can we shoot outwards from it and influence the environment, and the space around us, rather than being a walled-off space that essentially lends out small groups of people to other things. How can we put tentacles out into other spaces? That needed to be much more of a focus. That's one reason why it didn't occur. We just got locked in to the endless fights around those folks doing that.

Brian wished that the GA space had been used to strategize about creative ways to influence other entities, and believed it did not happen because the space was used to build other groups' events rather than tactical brainstorming.

Brian's frustration illustrates how the struggle between anarchist and non-anarchist participants over the use of the space led to distrust. Some anarchists considered it dishonest when union organizers took up large chunks of time at the GA talking about a worker issue or

campaign they were organizing around. This especially enraged anarchist participants when union organizers failed to disclose that they were getting paid to be at Occupy.

Interestingly, two unions with heavy involvement in OP played roles that were perceived very differently by many OP participants: one union's approach was described as more anarchistic than the other. Several interviewees noted that employees with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and One Pittsburgh, SEIU's local chapter of the Fight for a Fair Economy campaign, typically engaged in the behavior described above. By contrast, many anarchists saw the involvement of United Steelworkers (USW) employees as "[coming] closest to trying to interact with us in a more horizontal way...when they gave us stuff, it was very not-with-strings." These interviewees explained that USW members made space available at their headquarters for meetings, showed up with pizza, and made regular donations to help with whatever OP members decided. One interviewee emphasized how important it was that he was able to be publicly critical of USW efforts and that their support was not conditional on endorsement of events.

These different aims in using the space and the festering distrust led to defensive efforts by anarchist participants. For example, Brian explained:

My primary role [at GAs] was trying to defend the space from the imposition of top-down forms of organizing...my participation was attempting...to take an extremely hard and uncompromising line against efforts to close off the space to most people, and have the space be one in which various Leftists from activist groups and causes would simply use it for their own purposes.

Brian was clear about his disposition to defend the meeting space at GAs. He did not want the space to be used for discussion about other groups' efforts or endorsement garnering, activities he saw as serving entities outside OP.

Due to defensiveness from the anarchist participants, the consensus process made it impossible for others to achieve their aims. As a result, some non-anarchist participants sought to replace modified consensus with majority rule, in the hope that this would promote what they saw as the correct functioning of this space. This further angered many anarchists who saw such an effort as another rollback of processes that might allow for the forging of a new way of doing politics.

Perhaps the struggle over the GA space was due to a conspicuous lack of anarchist involvement in OP, compared to a strong anarchist presence and influence in other local Pittsburgh movements over the years.<sup>18</sup> Many OP anarchists I spoke with lamented how anarchists in Pittsburgh with years of organizing experience quickly gave up on OP and dropped out. They saw this as negatively impacting the ability of anarchists who stayed in OP to enact anarchist values by weakening their ranks in the face of non-anarchist opposition.

In Occupy Pittsburgh, perspectives on horizontalism differed between anarchists and non-anarchists. However, in Occupy Oakland, there was conflict *among* anarchists about the structure, which I examine below.

### **6.5.2 Occupy Oakland Principles: Smoother Coordination or Coalition Constraints?**

In Occupy Oakland, many participants confirmed that there was conflict among anarchists at the GAs around attempts to establish processes to coordinate amongst participants with very different aims and perspectives. On one side were those who had rejected or given up on

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<sup>18</sup> Much of the anti-war movement activity from 2002-2008 was coordinated by a collaboration between Pittsburgh Organizing Group, an anarchist organization, and the Thomas Merton Center (TMC), a peace and justice group. At that time, the TMC was run by many self-identified anarchists. Also, in 2009, the Pittsburgh G-20 Resistance Project, a local anarchist network, coordinated the main framework of action during one day of the 2-day G20 summit.

attempts to work within a larger group; on the other, were anarchists who wanted to continue coordinating with a larger body without losing their values and autonomy. This evoked current questions within anarchist movements: where to draw the line in coalitions, and whether such endeavors are fruitful or even possible. In Occupy Oakland, the conflict raised an additional question: Was the GA a space for making decisions together? These debates in Occupy Oakland took place in the context of increasing conflict around the use of property destruction tactics. Much discussion followed the attempted building occupation within Occupy Oakland, as participants clashed over differing perspectives on confrontational tactics, the definition of “violence,” and its moral or strategic use.

As a response to this conflict, several anarchist members of OO met and decided to propose a version of the St. Paul Principles – an agreement by a coalition of actors who do not necessarily share political affinity but agree to a level of mutual respect so that they can achieve their own goals within a larger framework of participants. This agreement was first made by a coalition of groups in St. Paul, Minnesota, who wanted to stage demonstrations against the upcoming Republican National Convention in the summer of 2008 but were aware of their differing aims and wanted to find a way to carry out their goals without being publicly attacked or sabotaged by other groups. The Principles included an agreement to refuse criticism in the media of other protesters’ actions, such as property destruction, and respect the “tone” of planned actions.<sup>19</sup> So, for example, the Black Block would not engage in property destruction during a union march that organizers framed as “peaceful,” seeking positive media coverage as their main goal. This helped the movement avoid playing into the “good protester/bad protester” dynamic.

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<sup>19</sup> Many anarchists around the U.S. saw this agreement as very successful and it was adopted in other cities for summit protests. For example, an anarchist network proposed the Pittsburgh Principles in 2009 when the G20 came to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to a peace and justice coalition that would be organizing a day of action during the summit too.

Instead, participants interested in smashing windows agreed to deploy those tactics in a different space or at a different time than the union march. This is commonly referred to as “separation of time and space,” and a respect for a “Diversity of Tactics” (DOT). It allows people to resist in ways that feel most authentic to them. An embrace of DOT rests on a belief that any one group or person does not know what is correct for everyone else. The conversation around DOT had been happening in Leftist circles since the global justice movement.<sup>20</sup>

Ezra is a 39-year-old anarchist who grew up in New York and cut his activist teeth in the Lower East Side squatting scene, before moving out to the Bay Area in the 2000s. He was one of the advocates of the Principles and was deeply invested in OO. Having been part of the uprisings against the Oscar Grant killing in 2009, he felt that participants should not criticize others’ tactics in public or talk about what happened while people were in jail. He also felt that people should discuss property destruction strategically, not moralistically, for example by discussing whether smashing a window achieves an aim, not whether it is morally correct.

In early November 2011, conflict in OO flared around property destruction after an influx of new participants, who were outraged by a police attack on Occupy during which Iraq War veteran Scott Olsen was seriously injured. This inspired new people to get involved and they tended to favor non-violence. When a working group came out with a statement that anyone doing property destruction could not be part of Occupy, Ezra and others felt that something had to happen. They proposed a DOT agreement that violent and non-violent actions should be separated in time and space. He explained what happened next:

It was horrible because basically we got attacked from both sides...the liberals were all like ‘everyone knows diversity of tactics means you guys like breaking stuff.’ And we

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<sup>20</sup> See Starhawk’s article: “Quebec City: Beyond Violence and Non-Violence” on the Quebec city FTAA protests of 2001.



were like, 'uh no.' And then the radicals were like, 'who's to say that somebody tells us where we can break stuff?' And it just descended into chaos.

Ezra noted that non-anarchists misunderstood a DOT agreement to mean that people just want to engage in property destruction and reacted by attacking those proposing it. He also noted the unwillingness by other anarchists to allow the collective to determine individuals' actions. He felt this was a very unfortunate experience, as the polarization meant there would be no compromise, no agreement, and no ability for the group to move beyond stalemate.

This also brings up an interesting distinction between some anarchists and non-anarchists in Occupy: their strategic use of police repression for social movement aims. Many Occupy Oakland participants saw the police attack on Scott Olsen as serving to uncover and widely publicize police repression and thereby help build a movement. However, many anarchists expressed wariness at this tactic. They thought that people who join a movement due primarily to their outrage over repression will not necessarily share the values and aims of the movement but will then be able to shape its strategy and trajectory. Even though anarchists such as Ezra remained committed to trying to work with non-anarchists, their wariness of new recruits signals a dismal future for collaborative efforts.

The proposed Principles agreement did result in gains for anarchists regardless of its failure to pass. Emily, a Bay Area anarchist in her 40s, was also one of the people who proposed the St. Paul Principles. She similarly recounted how the proposal failed. But her aim in proposing it was different than Ezra's. She did not expect it to pass but wanted to use it to have a more nuanced conversation around what participants thought was good and bad, right and wrong. She asked, "Is there a way these things aren't mutually exclusive? It's important we don't get stuck in polarizing reactions. The binary conversation around violence simply serves the state and media" because it echoes the oversimplified narrative and results in a very divided movement.

Ezra noted that for him, the one good thing that came out of this debate was a “commitment to not rat anybody out to the cops...” For him, having a conversation about respecting a diversity of tactics, even if it did not result in establishing a way to coordinate among participants with different aims, was a gain. Avoiding internal policing of the movement by offering members up for arrest was achieved. Ezra saw this as a way to enact some anarchist aims within Occupy, even if entirely constrained in other ways.

A split existed among anarchists who wanted to use the St. Paul principles to coordinate people with diverse perspectives and those who saw the principles as pointless. This latter group argued against “coalition work” with people who do not share their ideas. They started out skeptical of the GA and became even more convinced that it was not desirable during the debates over “violence and non-violence.” They then sabotaged decision-making at the GAs. One anarchist who was supportive of DOT agreements recalled several anarchists who opposed the Principles attending GAs to torpedo any agreements and derail the process. She referred to this as a “bad attitude.”

Some OO anarchists perceived an actual break when many participants stopped attending GAs and started doing their own autonomous activities, such as the takeover of the Travelers Aid building, an action that had not been proposed at a GA. Others insisted that in a climate of state repression there is a need for surprise if actions are to be successful. They insisted that horizontal structures did not require consensus decision outcomes.

This tension around a desire or need to coordinate with other actors who do not agree on major questions was not unique to Occupy Oakland. It occurred in the conflicts over space between anarchists and non-anarchists in Pittsburgh. It existed as well in the GAs in Barcelona during the Spanish *Indignados* movement, one of the precursors to Occupy. Aptly titled *Fire*

*Extinguishers and Fire Starters: Anarchist Interventions in the #Spanish Revolution*, an anonymous author and participant in the Barcelona occupation critiqued the ways the GA granted legitimacy to actions and proposals that were agreed upon at the GA. This created a distinction between legitimate or sanctioned actions and proposals, and served to squash the more anarchistic “multiple centers for creation and initiative-taking” that otherwise might exist. The author calls instead for using the GA as a space to simply share information about what groups or individuals are doing, and ask others for support. This is, in fact, all the GA space *can* be used for, if it is to remain an anarchistic organization, according to the author.

Invoking the critiques of “democracy” articulated by Occupy anarchists, the *Indignado* author sees a push for unity, centralization, legibility, control and statism as *unanarchistic* behaviors: “Again and again in the plaza, we saw a correlation between democracy and the paranoia of control: the need for all decisions and initiatives to pass through a central point, the need to make the chaotic activity of a multitudinous occupation legible from a single vantage point—the control room, as it were. This is a statist impulse.”

### **6.5.3 Occupy Pittsburgh Statements: Laws to Enforce or Guidelines to Provoke Conflict?**

Another important element of the horizontal structure was the statements from Occupy and the GAs. Anarchists and non-anarchists saw the statements as performing different functions. When participants in Occupy Pittsburgh discussed statements by the General Assembly, many non-anarchists saw them creating rules while anarchists saw them as guidelines to shape debate. Several non-anarchists reported that problems arose when there was not a way to hold someone accountable for saying or doing something in violation of the statement against oppression. By

contrast, OP participant Angela, who valued anarchist thought and practice and was active in the Marginalized Communities and Allies Working Group that worked on that statement, explained:

It was important because some people there didn't have exposure to marginalized communities so getting that into people's minds...it didn't stop it from happening but it resulted in lesser levels because it created a tone that people were vocal about when people would say racist, classist stuff.

She saw the statement as an integral part of the process of individual transformation. In a society that privileges white, hetero, male, able-bodied identities, a declaration against oppression could undo socialization into these privileges. For her, the statement was a way to keep conflict alive and negotiated, not to punish someone who strayed from an agreement. Many anarchists in OP reported that the agreements were successful, suggesting they were considering the conflicts over the agreements to be part of its successful functioning.

#### **6.5.4 Occupy Wall Street Spokes-Council: The Power of Facilitation**

Finally, tensions existed in Occupy Wall Street among anarchists over the implementation of the spokes-council and whether it was an anarchistic form of organization. In other words, does the structure facilitate relations of domination? This conflict illuminated anarchists' fears of co-optation in Occupy with an influx of movement participants in a space of anarchistic organizing structures. In the case of OWS, participants who were resistant to a spokes-council directed their blame toward the Facilitation WG for using their unacknowledged power to push the proposal through.

Later in the fall, OWS participants who were very active at the GAs proposed the spokes-council model to coordinate the various WGs and other bodies. Most anarchists, as well as non-anarchists, saw this as a positive development. For example, Rosa, the OWS socialist participant

with decades of organizing experience with labor and workers' rights, had been skeptical of the anarchistic framework at the start of Occupy but appreciated a move toward more formalized organization with the spokes-council. Another OWS participant, Noel, explained the transition:

[The spokes-council was] an idea again that has anarchist roots and that was done successfully in Spain in the recent Spanish movement, and so we had a model to follow for that. And the idea with the spokes assembly was to create a kind of smaller version of the general assembly where more everyday, practical, business kind of issues could be hammered out more effectively and easily without having to have a consensus of the entire park. So it was really a kind of a very pragmatic decision.

Noel explained that the implementation of a spokes-council made practical sense because it allowed Occupy to coordinate and make day-to-day decisions more easily. He noted its anarchist roots and adoption from its recent use in Spain by the *Indignados*. But he recalls that it was a very contentious move:

But it was hugely controversial because of many people who felt that it was exclusionary, that it would... even though the principles of it were about being inclusive and being non-authoritarian and horizontal, many people who didn't quite understand it in general or were skeptical of it even as a proposal, they fought it tooth and nail right from the start.

Noel interpreted resistance to the spokes-council as being about exclusion, when, from his perspective it was meant to facilitate inclusion. He concluded that the rejection came from a misunderstanding.

Other anarchists opposed the spokes-council (and eventually the GA) because they felt that those meetings were bureaucratic and overly structured. These anarchists also opposed being inclusive or open-to-everyone. Thus, there was not a misunderstanding among anarchists over how the spokes-council was supposed to work, as Noel asserted. Rather, OWS anarchists disagreed over whether meetings should be inclusive.

These anarchists additionally directed their irritation at the Facilitation WG for having the sway to encourage enough other participants to adopt the model. This uncovers another example

of modified consensus posing problems – and being arguably unanarchistic – when a significant minority feels coerced into agreement.

Much like in Oakland, in New York anarchists disagreed about working with a politically diverse coalition. Those who wanted to implement the spokes-council wanted smoother coordination and the model did end up pleasing non-anarchists. But the detractors saw the cost of concessions as being too high. Were they just trying to derail proceedings or were they so fed up with others' reverence toward the structure that they decided to boycott it?

## **6.6 A TYRANNY OF STRUCTURELESSNESS OR A TYRANNY OF RADICAL INCLUSIVITY?**

The conflicts described above are often cited by scholars as reasons why horizontal structures are not viable. The conflicts can be interpreted as being about disruption from naïve or ill-intentioned participants who do not understand how organizing works (as in the cases of OP and OO), or about too little accountability, or exclusive attitudes and a need to make leadership power more transparent (as in the cases of OP and OWS, respectively). But it is important to examine the disagreements among participants over more fundamental questions of the *degree* of actors' autonomy, desires for structures that allow greater creativity (as a political value and aim), what accountability *is* and what it looks like, and how and *when* to deal with informal power. In this section I tease out the similarities in conflicts in Occupy, and offer a different perspective that has implications for social movement organizing.

These different understandings of the conflicts in Occupy may be a case of history repeating itself. Jo Freeman's article on the *Tyranny of Structurelessness* (1972) ignited lively

debates over structure that continue to this day. In the 1970s, as a response to her experience in a women's liberation collective in Chicago, Freeman argued that "leaderless" structures do not work. She saw informal non-hierarchical structures as being appropriate for consciousness-raising (CR) but not political organizing. She argues that CR is simply a first phase in a project that participants grow out of. If participants do not change the organizational structures as they move into political organizing, elitism emerges without formalized, more hierarchical structures, and this means there is little accountability.

In the 1970s, Cathy Levine (2012:65) countered Freeman's claims, arguing against a "tyranny of tyranny" that squelches creativity and individuality in favor of prescribed roles and thus the ability for us to relate to one another. She explained that ready-made alternatives suggest easy answers when there are none as we try to create new ways of being in the world. Instead we need to continue to interrogate the structures embedded in our psychologies because they are derived from values and living patterns that we must uproot. She says, "...unless we examine inner psychic shackles, at the time we study outer, political structures and the relationship between the two, we will not succeed in creating a force to challenge our enemy; in fact, we will not even know the enemy."

Thus, Levine believes that consciousness-raising – which, in the case of Occupy, is a stand-in for prefigurative practices – is *not* a first step to give way to other steps but something that must happen all along the way. She gave three reasons for this. First, CR is needed to root out dominating socialization. Without doing this, we will not even know how to build new ways. We therefore need a structure that allows for this ongoing challenging and emerging creativity to find new ways of relating. Secondly, CR channels anger into energy and builds the movement. In the case of the women's movement, it helps women turn anger into constructive energy. In

Occupy, this is accomplished when people experience empowerment through direct participation, connecting their personal experiences to the larger project at each step, rather than through a pre-requisite phase. This allows for movement building to happen at multiple, rather than single, trajectory points. Levine might argue that a 2-step program could actually create an unproductive hierarchy between an enlightened group that is permitted to participate and those who are not ready. Thirdly, CR helps create a new culture that is necessary to foster values that counter current hegemonic values (or neoliberal values of competition, individualization, isolation, etc.) and replace the current culture that fosters those values. Because culture creation is mutually constitutive by participating actors, Levine points out that those we struggle with side-by-side will be giving us the hardest times and so we need to work with each other to deconstruct counter-productive relations. So, contrary to working on developing more formalized relationship structures, new relationships *should* model friendships, calling into question the formality of structures. Levine explains that accountability can and does happen in less formalized friendship structures, countering the elitism that Freeman claims emerges:

...the absence of structures in small, mutual trust groups fights elitism on the basic level – the level of personal dynamics, at which the individual who counters insecurity with aggressive behavior rules over the person whose insecurity maintains silence. The small personally involved group learns, first to recognize those stylistic differences, and then to appreciate and work with them; rather than trying to either ignore or annihilate differences in personal style, the small group learns to appreciate and utilize them, thus strengthening the personal power of each individual.

Anarchists in OWS echoed these claims. For example, OWS anarchist Melanie explained, “if you formalize roles and tasks and like people say they’re going to do things and they don’t do things, then there are lots of ways that you can hold people accountable to that. You can use restorative and transformative justice practices. You can use mediation... there are a lot of things that you can do that aren’t like hierarchical or... like punitive models.” Indeed,



these practices were tried in all three occupations. But participants valued them to different degrees. Some saw them as taking too much time and sought more formalized structures as a way to more expediently deal with structures. This illustrates that some participants valued alternative forms of accountability and others did not.

OWS anarchist Connor explained that holding people accountable also took place in less elaborate ways, as participants were encouraged to “call out” irresponsibility and regularly asked people to “step back” when they failed to come through on bottom-lining an activity. By contrast, he said:

Whereas if you were in a sort of vertical mode of organizing, you could have just said, “I really think your power is too concentrated in your hands.” Someone can just go, “Well, I’m the president. That’s what I’m supposed to do.” So I think this idea that there’s no accountability in horizontal modes of organizing because power isn’t formalized, I think is an empty criticism, at least from my experience.

Connor believes that a formalized hierarchy actually allows people to get away with not following through because they have legitimate authority, and their place in the hierarchy is already cemented, so popularity at that moment is not relevant. In other words, if an irresponsible leader is elected, they are legitimately entitled to fail, which Connor regards as worse than an environment where anyone is open to criticism and recall.

Following Levine’s lead, Darcy Leach (2013) compares the organizational structure of OWS and two German groups – Unmovable Mass and the Autonomen – and finds that a group can be *less* open to marginalized voices the more structured it is. She highlights the importance of cultivating an egalitarian *culture* over creating more structural complexity for the openness, efficiency and sustained activity of a group. Leach takes Freeman to task for arguing against a strawman, as “leaderless” groups are not trying to avoid structure or division of labor but rather

they aim to avoid formal hierarchy and systematic inequalities of power.<sup>21</sup> Leach is interested in types of structures that maximize participation and prevent domination by any one group or individual. She says, “the real problem is not how to avoid the tyranny of structurelessness, but how to sustain structures of tyrannylessness” (2013:183).

She finds that German groups develop a “fight culture” of informal norms instead of trying to institute more and more complicated structural rules. “The culture encourages dissent, collective reflection, not taking oneself too seriously, the sharing of knowledge and skills, and an etiquette of ‘giving up power’” (2013:188-189). She continues:

While their structure does leave the door open for an informal oligarchy to emerge, in most of the groups I have worked with or interviewed, the fight culture keeps hierarchies in check without paralyzing the group in debates over process or leading to protracted infighting and factionalization. The movement is also somewhat more racially and ideologically diverse than the nonviolence movement, more resistant to oligarchy, and more consistently reflective about various forms of inequality within the movement. (2013:188-189)

Leach finds that after a minimum level of structure, the key is for groups to use less complicated models and make fewer binding decisions (which allows for more autonomy of affinity groups). Culture trumps complicated structures, she explains: “...what fuels prefigurative/anarchist movements are the values of solidarity, cooperation, mutual respect, and trust, and structural complexity is no substitute for a culture that fosters those values. Ultimately rules and regulations—no matter how egalitarian—cannot prefigure the new society” (Leach 2013:189).

Leach observed that OWS went the opposite direction, creating a more complicated structure and seeking arrangements and decisions that would bind more people. I also observed this trend in the occupations. First, this trend occurred as an attempt to appease non-anarchist

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<sup>21</sup> Systematic is key here, as there will always be ever-shifting inequalities of power that can never be rooted out entirely.

participants who were not necessarily committed to horizontalism. However, this privileges complicated structures rather than creating a culture of values, what I refer to as a rejection of radical inclusivity. Secondly, conflicts in Occupy happened as some anarchist participants tried to prevent the trend toward structure, or to build a new culture, consciously or not. These conflicts are often misunderstood as problems that emerge from disorganization and “structurelessness,” rather than as evidence of prioritizing culture-building, as Leach describes. I find that Occupy anarchists pushed for less organization through what I refer to as a type of do-ocracy, and they fostered their own version of a “fight culture” – which included a comfort with, or embrace of, conflict.

## **6.7 A REJECTION OF RADICAL INCLUSIVITY**

“One thing I liked about Occupy is that it included everybody. One thing I didn’t like about Occupy is that it included everybody.” – Ben, a 28-year-old Occupy Pittsburgh anarchist who started the Hospitality Working Group

Building a new culture requires a political affinity among participants and a shared commitment to the structures or the values underlying the structures. In Occupy, a horizontal structure failed to work in a mass movement because the participants utilizing it did not share political affinity, an understanding of the ideas behind the structural mechanisms, or a commitment to prioritizing anarchist values.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> To be clear, I am not claiming that non-anarchist participants rejected values such as anti-authoritarianism or autonomy. The key word here is *prioritizing* the values; I argue that the prioritization concretely manifests in different ways of organizing, moving beyond an “Organizing as Usual” that looks like the approach I flesh out in Chapter 5. It requires a perspective shift on what “organizing” means or looks like.

Many participants expressed the view that for horizontal structures to work in the future, there must be a greater shared commitment to the approaches. I specify that a shared understanding of the approaches is first necessary. Both anarchist and non-anarchist participants voiced commitment to achieving their goals, which were not necessarily the goals of others. In some cases, participants were unaware of others' understandings and intentions, which led them to inaccurate conclusions about others' actions. Many who valued the space for purely tactical reasons did not understand or even resented those fighting to configure a community there. There were differences also in interpreting how a horizontal structure was to function. Some participants saw it as simply a way to make decisions and rules without leaders. Others saw it as a way to challenge and alter the very content of what can or should be decided. As one OP anarchist participant explained, "It was so difficult because people were very used to leaders and structures that require passivity and non-participation. You can't just one day decide to abandon it." In other words, continued practice of the structure is key to altering power-seeking tendencies. But one first has to commit to *desiring* such an undoing.

Some participants may not desire an undoing because of socialization, others may be politically against it. In a group interview with three OWS anarchists who all identified with different anarchist tendencies, this common desire was evident, despite these differing tendencies. As Melanie, who described her politics as anarcho-communist, explained:

These practices and labels go viral and are interpreted in very different ways and some ways that are counter to my own intentions. I think horizontality only works if people are actually engaged in this self evaluation of power dynamics and if they care about being anti-authoritarian...if you have both anti-authoritarian and authoritarian people trying to practice horizontality the authoritarian people are going to win out because they'll concentrate all the power for themselves for their financial power, media platforms...

Melanie notes that problems occur when the horizontal mechanisms are interpreted differently, and that the model is easy to sabotage if participants are not committed to evaluating power

dynamics. Tyler, a New York nihilist or “negative anarchist,” also anticipated problems, due to political differences, “In OWS you had Big D Democrats and insurrectionary anarchists all on the same page for a brief moment, which was kind of bizarre. But it will inevitably fragment...” Connor, who is against the claiming of political identities but “like[s] to do anti-authoritarian and anarchist things,” agreed that a horizontal structure would not fit everything and everyone. He concurred with Melanie and Tyler:

...there are people who are invested in control and domination and people who are trying to destroy those things and horizontality is not for them. But there are ways to subvert horizontality the same way that there are ways to subvert control, and knowing that and having a very like liberal inclusivity model will like ruin any sort of horizontal structure because there’s nothing to prevent like any sort of control domination from entering, destroying, ruining horizontal practices.

Connor likewise pointed to the ways people who were not committed to doing politics that rejected dominating relationships, and vying for positions of power over others, could easily manipulate a horizontal structure. He concluded that radical inclusivity and horizontalism were not compatible.

Others point to the basic fact that logically, consensus will not work in a politically diverse body. OWS anarchist Charles explained:

I think it was a legitimate decision at the beginning, when the biggest thing was trying to make people feel like they were empowered. Those new people feeling empowered became a problem when they didn’t actually share the political goals of most of the people. That’s just one example but that definitely was an issue, where there were like opposite political philosophies that can’t actually build consensus around what you are trying to consense around. So you can find points of common agreement, you can do a march with them maybe. But over a long period of time those deep political chasms are going to be a huge problem. So that’s where consensus failed.

Charles recognized the positives of using a horizontal structure in being able to empower individuals and gain new members but the structure would no longer work if those individuals did not share enough in common, politically.

My examination of the problems with using horizontalism in a mass movement contrasts with Maeckelbergh's argument (2011) that a prefigurative approach is the best strategy when there are multiple goals. However, she is perhaps partially correct: a prefigurative strategy may work well when participants have multiple goals – and I add share an *understanding of* and *commitment to* the structure in which they are practicing their politics. I have no doubt such challenges and efforts were not always communicated clearly or respectfully, as is the nature of unfolding conflict in heated situations. But the stripped down substance of what lies at the basis of these disagreements is solidly founded in very real, different political desires. The anarchist prefiguration proponents are not naïve, as they were sometimes characterized by others in interviews, but rather many have years of political organizing experience in diverse settings. Nor are they interested in building a distant utopia at the expense of addressing the political and economic institutions around them. Indeed, their critique of established tactical repertoires as a politics-as-usual that conflicts with an ongoing practice of freedom is key to undoing capitalist socialization and transforming both actors and institutions which, they argue, must happen simultaneously.

This conclusion conflicts with an aim of radical inclusivity. Indeed, many of the anarchist participants concluded from their experiences in Occupy that radical inclusivity is no longer a desirable aim for them in organizing, and some maintained this position from the start, as described in the OO struggle over adopting an agreement that allowed for a Diversity of Tactics. For the anarchists who were skeptical of horizontalism from the start, the Occupy experience cemented their convictions that radical change will not happen through a mass movement in which everyone agrees on a structure, way of fighting, or way of doing things. For the anarchists who embraced horizontalism, some lamented how horizontalism did not work in such a large

group, citing ways obstacles might be overcome next time. Others explained how the experience left them uncomfortable and unsure of the future. Others moved firmly in the direction of the skeptics: horizontalism will not work with the masses.

Illustrations abound of the difficulty of trying to use horizontal mechanisms with a group that did not see eye-to-eye. For example, in OWS, several anarchists discussed how the spokes-council tried to give more power (i.e. more floor-time to talk at the GAs, ability to “jump” stack) to the POC caucus, women’s caucus, queer caucus, and disability caucus so that they could check the structural, systematic power dynamics as they came up. Melanie observed, “Sometimes it worked, but people had to be willing to address those things.”

In an interesting case, an OP participant who identified as an anarchist but had not been involved in social movements in the past, did not join the social circles of anarchists at the camp, and dropped out of Occupy mid-fall proposed the same organizational structures as anarchists deeply embedded within the movement circles. This supports a stronger connection to a correspondence between anarchist theory and practice. Beth, a 33-year-old recent transplant to Pittsburgh, responded to my inquiry as to whether horizontal structures could work:

I think [so], if people are committed to the structure. That’s the first agreement that has to happen. With that comes a shared definition of power and how it works...I’ve thought about structures for how to give people the affinity and autonomy they need within a larger unified structure. So if, say, like an upside down pyramid. The largest group is everybody. The smaller the group is, the more they have in common. So the first drop down might be people who agree on a larger area. Then within that small group, maybe they break up again into issues that are smaller like tactical agreement.

Beth spent time thinking of ideas for how a horizontal structure could work in the future, and concluded they could as long as there was a shared commitment to ongoing power decentralization, organizing around affinity, and agreements that allowed for autonomy. Beth

continues on to talk about the need to “build up relationships of trust” for these structures to work, a nod toward prioritizing the fostering of cultural norms.

As discussed earlier, the 99% necessarily means the inclusion of a very racist and sexist body of people. As one OP participant put it: “If everyone is included, there is no affinity.” Another OP participant saw the use of the model in a politically diverse mass of people as a mistake: “With things like large group consensus with a group of people who had no basis for consensus, that wasn’t the best idea.”

From their experiences in Occupy, many anarchists concluded that not everyone can or should work together. Melanie summarized the contradictions and drew conclusions that were similar to other Occupy anarchists:

...people have to have a common understanding of what it means to practice horizontality and really be committed to it. It can’t be... it’s not everything for everyone, you know. Like it actually has particular politics associated with it and, yeah, people can opt into that or not. Yeah. I think we got trapped into this kind of tyranny of inclusivity. It’s like, you know... this catch-all of like, well, you can be liberal or you can be libertarian or you can be an anarchist or you can be a Marxist Leninist, but we’re all using horizontality. I mean it just doesn’t... it doesn’t make sense, right? ...I guess I’m not very interested in doing that right now. I’m more interested in having intentional groups in spaces with people that I agree with.

She explicitly connects an anarchist politics to the use of a horizontal structure, and did not think it was “for everyone.” Although she was one of the original OWS organizers, she no longer sees it as logical for the diverse political groupings to use that structure, due to a difference in politics, and saw the push for doing so, for including everyone, as a tyranny itself. Her conclusion from her experiences in OWS was to move away from mass-movement organizing. This sentiment was echoed by many other anarchists in OWS, OP, and OO.

An aversion toward radical inclusivity challenges controversial movement organizing based on building the biggest contingents possible. Instead anarchists aim to organize in smaller



groups with greater political affinity, and coordinated networks or federations. It also points to an internal disagreement: is the aim to convert everyone to anarchism and live according to anarchistic structures and practices? Or is the goal to simply carve out the spaces for people to freely associate and organize within the structures they choose, which will inevitably be changed into non-anarchist structures? The differing aims indicate different approaches: the former characterizes anarchists who want to continue to attempt horizontal structures within mass movements, the latter characterizes the conclusions of most Occupy anarchists I interviewed.

## **6.8 DO-OCRACY AND NEW CULTURES OF RESISTANCE**

So what would alternative organizing models look like? What reforms must be made to the structures used in Occupy that many anarchists concluded were preferable and more anarchistic; models that some anarchists fought for from the start? While many Occupy anarchists maintained that the horizontal structures could still work in the similar forms in which they were practiced in Occupy *within* small and large groups of other anarchists, very few voiced support for using the structures again in a mass movement setting. As explained above, the overwhelming conclusion of Occupy anarchists was that mass-movement building is not currently a desirable goal, based on their experiences in Occupy, and some held this as a prior belief.

In this section, I demonstrate how the anarchist values of autonomy and a shared fight culture were lacking in Occupy, rendering the horizontal model unanarchistic. I argue that the model's application to a politically diverse, radically inclusive mass audience resulted in the sacrifice of these anarchist values. I explore the concepts of "do-cracy" and embrace of conflict

as indicating a new approach to organizing, and part of fostering a new culture of resistance. I argue that these are necessary for a radical transformation to a freer yet more egalitarian world.

These values-as-practice underlie the structures anarchists use among themselves and, had they been practiced in Occupy, they would have characterized a more anarchistic version of the horizontal structures utilized by Occupy participants. Such a shift may have resulted in a smaller and less politically diverse body of participants (as many anarchist respondents acknowledged and accepted). My aim in this examination is to demonstrate that more is necessary for horizontalism to embody anarchist principles, contrary to what some scholars claim, and disputing the media's characterization (and the views of some non-anarchist participants) of the Occupy structure as a strong or accurate representation of anarchist organizing. The horizontal structure in Occupy may have been originally conceived of as a way to put anarchist values into practice and was certainly *more* anarchistic than top-down organizing models but had a long way to go to be adequately considered a representation of an anarchist structure.

Two basic concepts shaped anarchist practices that Occupy anarchists either explicitly pointed to as lacking in Occupy, or implicitly, as revealed through internal struggles: autonomy and a shared fight culture. The first of these, autonomy, can be instrumentalized through the attitude and accompanying organization of a "do-ocracy." Had a do-ocracy perspective been embraced or embedded in the spirit of Occupy and most of its participants, it would have changed how the structure functioned. As introduced earlier, in the critique of democracy and consensus, do-ocracy is the attitude, proposed by OO anarchist and Bay Area computer programmer Jeff, "If you want to do something, start doing it! If someone doesn't like it, they'll tell you and try to stop you. If they do like it, they'll help you." Jeff is emphasizing autonomy for

people to act in ways they desire. He assumes a culture of comfort with conflict, where assertiveness is the norm and disagreement is a healthy tension, a part of everyday life. If a culture is fostered in which people trust each other and care about each other, people will support someone whose concern is that someone else's actions are oppressing them. If said actions are not actually oppressing someone, it is not an issue, as a desire to determine the course of action is only relevant within the realm of being directly affected by that action. People can and do disagree. The goal is for individuals to act in ways that feel most authentic, while remaining vocal and engaged, regularly arguing their beliefs with each other. The ultimate aim is harmony, not unity.

Many Occupy anarchists expressed that this idea – that the people most impacted by decisions should be the ones with authority to make those decisions – did not play out in Occupy.

For example, OWS anarchist Charles recalled:

So in terms of non-hierarchical structures for decision-making and organizing in the future, the way to do that is by having, for the principle not being that every decision being made on consensus but the principle being that decisions should be made by the people most impacted by them. The people most impacted by them should have a say in the decisions to the degree they are impacted by them. So if you are impacted hugely, you should have a consensus block on it... If you are not impacted you should not have a say in it... Another example I saw when I first started people were debating how to do what march that most people weren't going to be at who were making the decision about that march, this was the second night, we debated for 4 hours about whether or not we're going to march from Wall Street but it turned out very few people there were actually going to march anyways... It was clear most of us shouldn't have been part of that decision...

Charles echoed the belief of other anarchists that decisions are best made by the people who are affected by them, and if a horizontal structure is to work in the future, this must be valued over consensus. He recalls participating in a long meeting about the logistics of a march that, as it turned out, he and others would not even be attending. It is an example of what *not* to

do; he does not believe his opinion or the opinions of others, should have been relevant to planning that action.

In Occupy Pittsburgh, anarchists and those who shared anarchist politics without claiming the label, also proposed the idea of “just doing it,” not deferring to the collective body’s authority. As Angela explained:

I remember how often, you’d be at the GA and people would be like I propose that we do X, Y and Z or worse yet, propose that *I* do X, Y and Z. Just go do it! We don’t have to all agree that that’s what you should do for you to go do it. By all means, go do X, Y and Z. You don’t need to tell us that. You can tell us that if you want...but you don’t need our permission to do it. It’s really hard for people to think about doing something without other people okaying it for them, and not deferring to other people’s authority or collective body’s authority.

Angela remembered how the GAs frequently consisted of people wanting everyone to arrive at unified agreement on what anyone should do. She preferred people to act autonomously and did not expect that permission be sought or given. She pointed to the ways this instinct is also one we are socialized with, nodding to the need for uprooting hierarchical relations to prefigure a new society. Instead of conceiving of the GA as a body to reach unified consensus, grant permission, and issue directives, many anarchists offered an alternative process similar to the one proposed by the anarchist critic of the Barcelona occupation. This exemplifies the do-ocracy attitude, complementing the mindset with an autonomous form of organization.

However, as Angela noted and Jeff implied, a do-ocracy requires certain culture norms, such as an embrace of conflict, and a different approach to everyday decisions, a difference in orientation to what decisions actually apply to us and a rejection of an entitlement to legislate for everyone. A do-ocracy departs from a statist mentality and brings it back to every decision on a case-by-case basis. The emphasis on autonomy and the need for a new culture to support viable

autonomous structures makes this anarchist perspective difficult to simply swap in for a familiar way of relating or organizing. Hence the need for on-going prefiguration.

“The opposite of war isn’t peace...it’s creation!” – Mark in “La Vie Boheme,” in the musical *Rent* (Larson, Chbosky, and Columbus 2005).

The second basic concept that shapes anarchist practices but was not embraced by many Occupy participants is a shared cultural comfort with conflict and on-going tension, as described above. Anarchists are perhaps more likely to be comfortable with regular conflict than other activists because they walk a tightrope between the ideals of individual freedom and collective equality, which requires constant, on-going revisions, and destruction of models and relations to make way for endless creations of new ways. Such an orientation does not fit neatly into formal rule-bound structural frameworks; indeed it is a different approach to organizing and relating to one another.

For these reasons anarchism is better understood as a culture than a specific practice. As Leach argued, attending to fostering a new culture is necessary for stronger and more diverse movements. I concur and emphasize the conflict embrace as a key point in fostering a culture on which other values of trust and mutual aid can be built. However, this latent culture failed to diffuse to most non-anarchists in Occupy and, as most participants did not prioritize the building of a new culture, resulted in a strange mismatch of a structure being utilized that was inappropriate for many of the participants. My conclusion is that for a horizontal structure to work, it requires an autonomy-emphasizing, conflict-embracing anarchist culture in which to thrive.

Noel explains that for him, taking on a new perspective was key to fitting in with the structure. He was new to using a more horizontal process but eventually became inspired that work could be achieved this way. For the first 4-5 days, he just saw “pure chaos” but eventually “caught on to how it’s working and that you have to kind of embrace the chaotic aspects of it, and learn to be comfortable with that. And you also kind of have to learn to...to unlearn your impulse to look for leaders or to look for hierarchy...It’s so deeply ingrained.”

A note on conflict: it is complicated. Throughout this chapter, I talked about it in productive ways – as necessary for ongoing negotiation – and unproductive ways that paralyze the processes and prevent progress. In the latter, conflict can hinder movements, such as when the horizontal structure was compromised by participants who were not committed to it. In this argument in this section, that it is necessary to embrace, I am referring to conflict as desirable for individuals to be able to practice freedom. But even this distinction is not so simple. At first blush it may seem that compromising the structure is not so desirable. But maybe it is, maybe even these are not mutually exclusive. Perhaps this conflict in Occupy – responsible in some cases for the failure of a horizontal structure and movement-in-this-form to persist – is just pointing to how divisions *must* happen, according to the needs and desires of people involved. In this sense, even the failure of Occupy happened anarchistically.

The horizontal structure in Occupy was just one experiment, meant to be just that: an experiment that should be tried and continuously tweaked, a never-ending work in progress. Oakland anarchist Elizabeth said:

We had more power in the city than anyone else for a few weeks. But this doesn’t mean [OO] was socially horizontal. We don’t live in a post-race or post-gender society just because of consensus...power impacts what is consensual or not. The only way it can work is if you put in a horizontal structure and then there are many revolts within that structure. Revolution has to be a series of uprisings instead of one kind of classified thing.

Elizabeth warns against assuming that a politically horizontal structure will be socially horizontal. For a horizontal structure to work, she believes it must involve the ongoing destruction of whatever model is in place, so new ways can always be tried.

This new, necessary culture of resistance is about living a messy, constant experiment in each step of life, forging new ways without set rules and structures, not focusing on perfecting a structure, cementing it, and then relying on it. It requires assertiveness, a comfort with conflict, an expectation of on-going negotiation, and a peace with fluidity and illegibility. For these reasons, an anarchist way of doing things is baffling to many (at worst) and daunting (at best) because it is an experiential perception shift, not a new box to replace the old. It “demands the impossible,” as the title of Peter Marshall’s book on the history of anarchism accurately states. But many anarchists in Occupy continued to work toward these aims.

Although the horizontal structure practiced in Occupy was not accurately exemplifying anarchism-in-practice, thus making many of the conflicts unproductive, some of the conflicts that arose did launch anarchist arguments into the mainstream, which some Occupy anarchists appreciated. For example, Angela, who identified with several political traditions but agreed with anarchist beliefs and found her strongest allies in OP to be anarchists, concluded:

I think that one of the saving graces of Occupy was its anarchist tendencies...because there was a lot, at least in Occupy Pittsburgh, ideological conflicts that centered around the appropriate relationship to the state. Are police our friends? Is it appropriate to call child social services? Who is activated by the state? What’s our relationship to property? ...those conversations were productive conversations...I actually wish there had been more productive conversations between those kinds of leanings...

Angela saw a silver lining to the conflicts between anarchists and non-anarchist in Occupy, even if they were not the type of conflicts that directly resulted in greater freedom and harmony. They introduced non-anarchists to anarchist arguments against the state in different forms, such as the

concept of private property, and child social services or the police as enforcers of different forms of state violence and institutionalized inequality.

## **6.9 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I explained the elements of the horizontal structure used in Occupy and how they were attempts to put anarchist values into practice. I identified anarchist critiques of horizontalism and examined four cases of conflict that reveal political and philosophical differences about putting anarchist values into practice or, in other words, alternative ways for society to function. I find that Occupy anarchists wanted fewer rules and more attention to building a new culture, in line with what scholars conclude has worked in other social movements. In Occupy, this could be seen in a “do-ocracy” attitude and an embrace of conflict (and, in the space, fleshed out in Chapter 5, the prefigurative relations in the camps). However, I argue that prioritizing culture over increasingly more complex structures will not work in a mass movement, as participants are not all committed to the values that would shape common norms in the new culture.



## **7.0 THE “MOST ANARCHIST” OCCUPY**

Occupy Oakland is important because both mainstream and movement media referred to it as “most radical,” which was often used interchangeably by Occupy participants with “most anarchist.” Examining what this meant in theory and practice helps scholars better understand the desires and actions of anarchists today. This chapter shows that the label “most anarchist” meant four things: 1) a successful connection to local movement history that established a radical narrative thread from the past to the present, and resulted in a racially-diverse, strongly anti-state character of the occupation; 2) autonomy *from* the local liberal political culture and the generic Occupy messaging and autonomy *for* participants to build their own spaces; 3) attention to decolonization concerns; and 4) the expansion and de-centralization of liberatory spaces.

### **7.1 RADICAL LOCAL HISTORY**

In Occupy Oakland, participants’ claims about its “most radical” character always emphasized the local, which included reclaiming radical history and making a connection to that history. The connection to radical history was sentimental, such as the many instances of participants discussing the Oakland origins of the Black Panthers, in the context of long-standing problems between citizens and the police. For example, Dylan, a 21-year-old anarchist, claimed to have met with former Black Panther leaders in the lead-up to Occupy. Many anarchists cited the

student occupations and tuition strikes of 2008 and 2009 as precursors to OO and some – like Dylan – had participated in earlier occupations at UC Santa Cruz.

The connections were also tangible, as black and white radicals grew closer during the protests, riots, arrests, and jail solidarity following the 2009 police murder of Oscar Grant. As Elizabeth, who was arrested during the uprisings, said: "The [Oscar Grant] riots became a movement. It was diverse, people found they could be in the streets together, eventually. At first white people were terrified...but the Oscar Grant movement gave it a different kind of confidence in the streets, with young people here." This resulted in diverse support for OO that many other occupations lacked, and led to an initial anti-police position that attracted many anti-state participants.

Bay Area anarchist and former squatter Ezra recalls, "From the start in Occupy Oakland, it was almost a coalition of mostly white anarchists and black anti-police folks." Emily, a 42-year-old anarchist filmmaker who had been involved in social movements for decades, said, "[OO was the] most diverse group of people on a larger, mass movement scale than I've ever worked with." When anarchist participants talked about diversity, they meant a particular *kind* of diversity. They were energized by relationships with black radicals who shared their anti-police, anti-state, and anti-capitalist sentiment and felt compelled to act on it.

The way OO began shaped its autonomous character. Several interviewees recalled that a local squatter called its first meeting. Many anarchists were involved and immediately took the lead. Drawing on their connections from working on the student strikes and the Oscar Grant uprisings they sought to put anti-police issues first. This framing helped keep the occupation racially diverse. As one anarchist put it, "when people saw you could pass the proposal to not let the cops in, to rename it Oscar Grant Plaza...also helped." As Elizabeth recalls:

So youth of color issues [were] the first and foremost. It wasn't even about banks. That conflict between the police and the state, and young people in Oakland, that was the first dialogue that was happening. For me, that defined everything about whether I was going to participate. It scared the shit out of white people. A lot of Leftists, it threw a wrench in how they would participate.

For Elizabeth, the anti-police focus was important as it determined who would participate, and shaped the narrative away from economic inequality or the “99%” messaging of OWS. She continues:

Before the occupation even took place, we'd decided in those assemblies right away to name it Oscar Grant plaza, which denotes riots for a lot of people, to not let police in, and not cooperate with politicians and political parties. After we occupied, if like one police officer appeared at the perimeter everyone would rush over and say get out. If people questioned that, they were shut down. Or a dialogue happened right away.

Rejecting police, politicians, and political parties laid the groundwork in OO's rejection of any interaction with authorities. Some OO anarchists said that this position fed an image of OO as made up of “anarchists and gangsters,” scaring away those who sought a respectable image to provoke support and thus reinforcing the different trajectory of Occupy Oakland as compared to Occupy movements in New York or Pittsburgh.

## **7.2 GREATER AUTONOMY = MORE ANARCHIST**

Examining OO participants' narratives about why they became and stayed involved and considering their actions, I find that the “most radical” character of OO meant emphasizing the *autonomy* of the space. Much of this was a direct response to frustration with the liberal Bay Area political environment, including a rejection of reform efforts and the non-profit industrial

complex<sup>23</sup> (INCITE: Women of Color Against Violence 2009) that many anarchists felt stifled radical possibilities. It was also a reaction to what many Oakland anarchists perceived as the reformist general messaging of OWS that focused on making banks, corporations, and the government more accountable. In this section, I discuss the importance of these rejections in the story of Occupy Oakland. Then I explore how keeping the space contentious enabled other types of autonomy. I then discuss attempts to create alternatives to statist self-organization through more anarchistic forms of autonomy in Oakland and Pittsburgh, which reveals a tension between anarchist values of prefiguration and autonomy.

Every anarchist I interviewed in Oakland made a point of separating the story of OO and OWS. For example, Jeff cited his reason for being involved was because, "Occupy Oakland was more about Oakland, and less about Occupy." Ezra referred to OO as having, "really good language about being anti-police...instead of it just being all about like the banks and this like stupid 1% language, like it was more about anti-capitalism and anti-police," pointing to a higher valuing of greater autonomy from the state. Close examination of participants' narratives indicates that claims about the OO rhetoric being "very different" from OWS meant that OO emphasized an anti-police and anti-state attitude, and claimed more autonomy than other occupations. For example, Dylan explains:

The Occupy Wall Street rhetoric resonated with us but not enough, not just "turn back the clock and the corporations to 2006." We didn't think that was a comprehensive analysis of the ills that we've been facing. It didn't represent the more radical viewpoints that don't think we can just reform the system to something better.

Emily emphasized that OO "was about basic economic needs not being met"... "not just about U.S. debt or disappearance of the middle class or 'we're the 99%'."

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<sup>23</sup> This term refers to the tendencies of non-profit organizations to obstruct radical movement building due to their reliance on funding from foundations and ties to the state.

Some anarchists asserted autonomy from OWS and the local social movement atmosphere by comparing past movements. Dev, a 30-year-old anarchist who had been involved in anti-war organizing in the Bay Area during the lead-up to the Iraq War in 2003, explained the difference between anti-war organizing in the Bay and OO:

[OO] had like a militancy to it right off the bat that New York didn't... Occupy New York always felt a little, at least from the outside, a lot more like Direct Action to Stop the War feeling? And the West Coast always felt more like "we're taking this shit down."

Dev compared the OWS social movement to Direct Action to Stop the War, a non-violent direct action group that began in the Bay Area in 2003 and organized thousands of people to shut down San Francisco's financial district when then-President Bush announced that the U.S. would invade Iraq. Dev contrasted the attitudes and aims of participants in New York and Oakland, implying that New York organizers were interested in a large, diverse coalition of social and environmental justice groups who emphasize non-violence and engage in mass action to meet a specific demand. By contrast, organizers in Oakland were not interested in such coalitions or in coordinating mass action or highlighting non-violence. Rather they aimed to stop the system from functioning indefinitely.

Dylan also believed OO was a break from the social movement scene in the Bay, necessary to move on from failing strategies. He said:

Occupy Oakland was the bastard stepchild of Occupy Wall Street. We had antagonistic relations with the OPD (Oakland Police Department). We were lighting a fire under liberals' asses and making them uncomfortable with the relatively cozy relationship with the police, the "peace police," non-profits getting permits and negotiating with cops. So Occupy Oakland felt like it wasn't trying to adhere to the norms of the past decade, which many of us thought had failed.

Dylan saw OO as different and less respectable (which was a good thing, for him) than OWS due to the OO focus on disrupting the local peace between police and non-profits, and their organizing-as-usual. He was attracted to OO because it was doing something different than what

he saw as past organizing failures. To him, a big difference was that OO emphasized different aims than OWS:

Most important was the daily complaints and needs for food, people who came by the camp. That took center stage, it wasn't like Occupy Wall Street. It wasn't a university experiment feel, it wasn't peacenik anti-war folks but everybody, people who needed the most help were there as well. Voices, like folks of color, poor, disenfranchised, people who had gone through foreclosures and lost their homes were being heard that hadn't been, had more to add to the conversation than other places.

For Dylan OO was about providing for everyone's needs, not just those of Leftist activists. He believed this was a different emphasis from OWS, implying that OWS did not succeed at incorporating the voices of the most disenfranchised people, possibly due to their lesser focus on providing direct services.

Not unique to OO, but perceived as such by local OO participants, was the strategy of embedding with the most disadvantaged people, such as by working with homeless people and those struggling with addiction. However, I did find fewer polarizing debates in OO about the importance of this commitment and activity than in OWS and OP, in which there was more contention about being a service provider. Those who opposed Occupy's role as a provider of social services thought they lacked the resources to do so and that it was a "distraction from the real goals" (such as building an organization and movement). Anarchists in all three occupations valued these activities and relationships as part of prefiguration.

A couple of participants contrasted OO with Occupy San Francisco (OSF), which further revealed the perception of a uniqueness of OO from the Occupy movement and underscored the tension between those who started OO and the local political environment. Lucy, who lives in San Francisco and spent time at both occupations, said that OO played a different role: "Occupy Oakland developed itself as an autonomous zone in ways Occupy San Francisco did not." According to Lucy, OO served as a flashpoint for police repression and functioned in a different

way, especially as communities of color played a large leadership role in OO. For example, the Arab Resources and Organizing Center, based in San Francisco, moved their Arabic classes to a tent in OO and people met there for weekly classes. Comparing OO and OSF, Lucy said the kitchen and childcare was more functional in OO than other Occupy movements and they perceived OO as a “more intact community, more people coming in who valued that. There was a more involved level of experimentation in the structures of direct, participatory democracy.”

Anarchists were attracted to Occupy Oakland by the idea that they could build an autonomous space that would require minimal defense because confrontation was assumed, at least initially. As Elizabeth explains:

Anarchists went in with the loose idea that we were going to pay attention to what was going on, and keep out people who were going to try to coopt it, and liberals who would run out young people.

She continues:

I'd never seen that diverse group of people in the camp, fighting, having parties, being in assemblies, being cooperative about keeping the cops out. We had an autonomous space in the city...We were cooperating about how to be in conflict with the city, the police, the mass media. We weren't cooperating in some nice way. We were cooperating in how to be confrontational...It was an eerie agreement, the level of militancy. It was easy to get everyone on the same page together. It was weird for the U.S. but it's what kept people together.

Confrontation was necessary to keep the space autonomous as well as to build new relations. Each element was mutually constitutive. For example, Elizabeth referred to the occupation of land as “taking a political hostage,” to keep the city from managing it, or liberals in Occupy from making it less of a threat to authorities; it also allowed participants to build community by enacting autonomous desires together. She said:

Sometimes the white middle class will come in and will politically manage it for the state and not let other elements express their confrontation with the material conditions of capitalism or their confrontation with the state. That didn't happen in Occupy Oakland. Anyone who tried was unable to. Even though we didn't have politicians there – they got

scared – the white middle class couldn't get in. There was so much space and power freed up.

Elizabeth had spent time in Oaxaca, Mexico, during the uprisings in 2006, and drew from her experiences there. In Oaxaca, the APPO – the main resistance organization – had political autonomy but women in the movement did not maintain social or psychological autonomy when they left the assemblies and went back to households with great gender disparities. She compared this to OO in which physical autonomy (no police) and political autonomy (the city was not able to dictate the terms of the occupation or intervene) allowed activists to work on social and psychological autonomy by breaking down micro power structures among individuals:

...we built up so much power and made it untouchable from the dominant power structures of the city of Oakland, the Chamber of Commerce, it was like taking a political hostage. Because once we had the space and decisions could be made there and people could find that social, existential, psychological meaning in interacting in that space, then we got political and social autonomy and people were willing to fight for that. The particular space – the plaza itself – may not have been worth that much, the physical autonomy alone wouldn't have equaled anything, but building these other things created a force that was rooted in the plaza...

For Elizabeth, the combination of social, psychological, and physical autonomy allowed political autonomy. This sentiment was expressed by many in OO. It does fit with other scholars' claims that physical, political, and social autonomy are all mutually constituting of greater power, and the way to ward against co-optation is to keep spaces contentious and thus hostile to those who would gain from deflecting attack (Maeckelbergh 2011).

After establishing a confrontational presence, OO participants said they could use the space to build "positive autonomy," that is, self-managing a community without re-establishing statist tendencies. This included an aversion to establishing alternative governmental decision-making. As Gordon explained:

The politics of the GA were the greatest successes as far as I'm concerned about Occupy Oakland is that the GA did not become an executive body. Almost every other



occupation you heard of spent a lot of energy trying to impart this executive body with powers. That was the fantastic thing about Occupy Oakland. There were definitely people who were trying to do that and they just failed.

Gordon cited a major success of OO as not having re-established a new governmental body, unlike other occupations, which required resisting attempts to do so, and instead utilizing the large meeting spaces for different purposes.

One site described as “greater,” “more radical,” or “more anarchistic” in Oakland was the security teams; it is useful to compare these to security teams in Occupy Pittsburgh. In both cities participants who regularly occupied the spaces were most attuned to the physical conflicts and safety concerns at the encampments and established volunteer teams to “patrol” the grounds and deal with dangerous situations. In OO, anarchists worked very hard to form security teams that were not a police force; OP participants were not as concerned with this. The difference appeared in how OO and OP defined danger. For example, OO participants accepted drug use, while many OP participants did not.

### **7.3 AUTONOMY AND FREEDOM: THE CASE OF SECURITY TEAMS**

In all three occupations, many participants camped at the space regularly. While some could do so with few problems, such as students working part-time or individuals without families to support, other campers included parents of young children, individuals with several jobs, and people with 9-to-5 office jobs who had additional family commitments.

The participants spending time in the space were attuned to problems created by the “99%” radically inclusive frames of Occupy that ignored sexism and racism. In OP, for example, this included racial discrimination in food distribution, sexually explicit “jokes” directed at

female campers, and non-consensual contact between campers in their tents at night. Campers experienced corresponding conflicts that sometimes became physical, and realized that there was no clear strategy to address such issues. Anarchist campers coordinated mediation sessions to address these issues; non-anarchists generally dismissed these as a distraction and another reason the camp should end. As time went on, anarchist participants favored ejecting people from the camp when mediation was not working. Non-anarchists, who did not value prefiguration, saw such ultimatums as inconsistent with the anarchists' purported prefigurative aims.

In Occupy Pittsburgh, People's Watch, a self-organized security team of participants, enforced camp boundaries. The effort originally began as Night Watch, to make sure police would not take campers by surprise if they evicted the occupation at night, as they had in other cities. Volunteers worked in pairs and took on multi-hour shifts, from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. As weeks passed and it seemed less likely that BNY Mellon would support a forcible surprise eviction, the principal aim of Night Watch shifted. As anarchists saw the police as the enforcement arm of a deeply unjust system, they supported safety measures enforced by "the people" themselves. Night Watch became People's Watch (PW).

With radios in hand, the PW team strolled through the camp while others were sleeping, ready to respond to any disturbances. Sometimes they de-escalated fights between campers or directed the occasional drunk heckler making his way back downtown after a Penguins hockey game. Sometimes the team responded to life-threatening situations. As Ann, a committed camper in her mid-40s, explained:

There was a couple who had a space heater in their tent and it caught on fire so it was actually filled with toxic fumes. So if we had not been walking the perimeter that night, they'd be dead. When we opened the thing it was full of toxic fumes. Me and the other guy who were [patrolling], we started to throw up.

Other times, PW had to deal with campers dealing drugs from their tent or engaging in violent behavior after returning to the camp from a night of drinking, repeatedly violating community agreements that campers made to each other early on.

Confronting and forcibly ejecting people whom many campers considered to be causing unsafe situations was not the preferred course of action for most campers.<sup>24</sup> However, when these actions became the topic of conversation at GAs, many anarchists argued it was sometimes necessary to do so.<sup>25</sup> They were met with objections from non-anarchists who noted its incompatibility with the 99% message. Ultimately, a desire for a movement of radical inclusivity was pitted against a strong belief by the anarchists in self-organized autonomy.

This division might appear to be counterintuitive, as participants coming from a more traditional organizing background would ordinarily be fine with exclusion and those interested in prefiguring a more just world in day-to-day actions might not embrace rejection. This seeming contradiction provides a glimpse into the complicated character of Occupy era political leanings, and deserves further examination. It suggests that non-anarchists desire a more inclusive political practice than their experiences have allowed, and that anarchists place as much value on autonomous self-organization as they do on prefiguring new ways of relating to one another and the world. Perhaps the “prefigurative politics” label is insufficient to describe this emergent politics, as it does not capture the influence of past autonomous movements.<sup>26</sup> This is, perhaps,

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<sup>24</sup> While there were certainly problems with uneven enforcement (some People’s Watch volunteers were more lenient with their friends) anarchist participants argued that these problems could be dealt with internally had OP continued. But the time was mostly spent arguing with non-campers, defending the need for some evictions to take place for the safety of the camp.

<sup>25</sup> This is not to say there was not tension among the anarchists about evictions. Disagreement existed as to where lines should be drawn, and whether violations regarding People of Color or non-normative genders and sexualities should be handled differently, but there is not sufficient space to adequately explore this here.

<sup>26</sup> See Katsiaficas (2006) for a history of the emergence and diffusion of German and Italian autonomous movements in the 1980s and their influence on anarchist movements.

another reason some anarchists are uncomfortable with calling their desires for changing relations “prefigurative” because they, too, see a contradiction and want to be able to allow for such actions. While anarchists strive to experiment with new structures and forge new relations in society that reflect values of cooperation and collective care, they also acknowledge a need to draw and enforce boundaries. But this differs from the line-drawing of traditional organizing styles. Rather than cementing and enforcing standardized policies, anarchists strive to exist and work within an ongoing state of tension or balance between individual autonomy and collective responsibility, which eschews one-size-fits-all solutions and requires constant negotiation. The approach points again to the difference between anarchists and non-anarchists in conceptions of how agreements are forged, and what accountability means.

By contrast, Occupy Oakland anarchists reported a lot of anti-security team sentiment in OO because participants felt that it was “cop-like.” Ezra recalls being convinced to do “safety” patrols instead, heavily emphasizing the name as a more anarchistic framing. Beyond the language, the name also emphasized the focus of the team: trying to prevent danger rather than “watching” and thus implying a regulation of others’ actions. He recalls it was, “mainly a de-escalation thing, not telling people what to do or not to do.” Other OO participants corroborate this and note that it was intentionally not anti-drug, as many homeless people did drugs and stayed out of people’s way and that was fine. People were confronted and escorted away if they were hurting or harassing other people but no “laws” or “rules” were made; everything was on a case-by-case basis.

OO framed discussion of security in “more anarchist” language than did OP, which contributed to the perception of OO as more radical. But the tangible difference in security in the two camps, in attitudes toward drug use, suggests the importance of regional and local aspects.

## 7.4 DECOLONIZE OAKLAND

Occupy Oakland made headlines for challenging the concept of occupation, as a contingent of OO participants and supporters used a “decolonize,” rather than an “occupy,” frame. Citing the fact that Oakland sits on the lands of the Chochenyo Ohlone, an indigenous community without legal status or rights, and to acknowledge the very real, brutal history of colonization in North America, an ad-hoc coalition of mainly people of color, including indigenous activists, approached the OO GA about formally changing its name to Decolonize Oakland. They asserted that many indigenous people associate the term “occupy” with violence in their own ancestral families, so the term normalizes occupations both abroad – such as those in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine – and at home – such as police occupation of mainly poor black neighborhoods and gentrification, in the Bay Area. Sharon, a 33-year-old organizer, spent most of her time with Occupy the Hood and Decolonize Oakland. She explains:

Occupation is usually a really, really bad thing, like the occupation of Palestine or even the occupation of the U.S., taking it from indigenous peoples. So, flipping that meme and saying, “We’re going to reclaim this for the people,” is really powerful.

Although the push for changing the name did not come from primarily anarchist-identified participants in the Bay, it contributed to public perception of OO as the “most radical” for challenging the Occupy brand. Moreover, most anarchists in the Occupy movement enthusiastically supported the “decolonize” frame, another reason Occupy Oakland appeared “most anarchist” from the outside.

The OO GA passed a “Memorandum of Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples” in late October of 2011 but a formal name change never occurred. There was much conflict among OO participants over this issue. Some participants did not want to let go of the popular term and others took issue with the way the demand was made. They claimed that the critique of the

rhetoric of Occupy was pushed by people outside the Occupy movement who were solely concerned with forcing unilateral change and asserting power over others. Most participants I spoke with – anarchists and non-anarchists – expressed sadness and regret over how the debates took place. Surprisingly, there was general agreement by almost all of my interviewees that the move was an ultimatum about changing the name and not much else. This was even true for a participant who was part of the demand. This could indicate that my sample could have been more diverse, or that time serves to lessen frustration and congeal narratives.

In early December of 2011, members of the Decolonize Oakland contingent posted a call on the Occupy Oakland website arguing for a formal name change. They urged OO to adopt a name that “reflects the society and culture we plan to build.” They explained the term “decolonization”:

Decolonization means connecting to the land and each other by growing and sharing food. It means connecting to the traditions of our ancestors and creating new forms of authentic human connection. Decolonization is a practice of healing from violence in forms such as slavery, occupation, and poverty. It is about raising our children to find beauty and meaning in their cultural identities. Decolonization means telling stories that emancipate our minds and dreams. It is education as a practice of freedom, not a lucrative career path...we have come together to decolonize our minds, restructure our relationships to one another, and build political institutions that meet the needs of all people.

This statement echoes the focus on prefigurative aims, especially the emphasis on provoking a psychological shift away from neoliberal logics and practicing new ways of relating to one another. Although Occupy Oakland never formally adopted the name change, the conflict over the framing served to educate and remind many Occupy participants and supporters around the country and the world about the history of colonization and the need for breaking down relationships of control. The latter focus distinguishes OO from occupations where many participants downplayed the importance of enacting prefigurative politics.

However, two elements of this struggle in Oakland and the concept of decolonization challenge current anarchist modes of thought and action: 1) the claim that segregation is anti-prefigurative and 2) leadership style. First, the statement by the decolonize contingent explicitly connects the act of occupying to segregation as “active forms of violence in our communities.” In other words, claiming autonomous space is operationalizing the same neoliberal logics participants seek to destroy. The contemporary anarchist movement emphasis on autonomy and autonomous spaces does not include this type of segregation in its critiques. This points to a philosophical debate in intellectual circles over whether anarchism is a form of liberalism.

Another point of departure between the claims in the decolonize statement and participants’ actions concerns the implications of stated values – deconstructing relationships of domination – versus an organizing style that often re-inscribes those relationships. The focus on deconstructing relations of power-over does not correspond with a tendency by much of the current Left organizing practices – a popular model within non-profits – that prescribe a type of leader/follower relationship in which people of color must determine the strategy to lead “white allies.” The model is justified as “anti-racist” but, to anarchists, it creates another hierarchy, a relationship of domination/submission, based on skin color identity. Participants – both white and people of color – in the current anarchist movements in the United States have been highly critical of this dynamic. They argue that struggles necessitate egalitarian relationships of mutual understanding and the liberation of all parties, thus anarchists favor an “accomplice” organizing approach as an alternative to “ally.” The widely-cited essay “Accomplices Not Allies:

Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex,” written by an indigenous author, is a popular statement of support for this horizontal collaborative approach.<sup>27</sup>

In practice, however, the division within Occupy Oakland over Decolonize did not run along ideological or racial lines, although some narratives asserted this. Anarchists and non-anarchists fell on both sides of the OO debates. Conflicts focused on process – *how* the interventions were occurring – more so than ideas. Yet, divides between insurrectionary-leaning anarchists and employees of area non-profit social justice organizations meant that some debates were framed as white critics (which included anarchists) not wanting to take the lead from people of color. This was not likely the case, however, as Decolonize had enthusiastic support from many anarchists, including white people and people of color. If a racial divide did occur, it happened when a very popular black activist with Marxist leanings came out strongly on the side of “Occupy” and many young people followed his lead. However, most participants did not perceive a clear schism by race or political beliefs. Sharon, a Filipino-American activist who had a foot in both camps explained this complexity. She was an employee of a local non-profit organization and had 15 years of experience with labor, environmental, and youth community organizing but also felt committed to doing “something different and unique” with Occupy. She was among several participants who argued for changing the name to “Liberate Oakland” as a middle ground in the debate between “Occupy” and “Decolonize.”

More consideration must be given to whether autonomous segregation and different leadership styles are congruent with prefiguration. However, this brief examination provides

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<sup>27</sup> This approach is embodied in a statement attributed to aboriginal author, artist, and activist Lilla Watson: “If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”



some insight into current anarchist movements and the tensions participants struggle with, as they aim to avoid replicating neoliberal relationships.

## **7.5     DECENTRALIZING OCCUPATION, EXPANDING SPACE**

A fourth reason Occupy Oakland was seen as “most radical” or “most anarchist” was its high-profile (although mostly unsuccessful) attempts to take over other spaces, and its militant character in re-taking the original space. OWS did attempt a handful of other occupations. Some were attempts at taking over other public squares in Manhattan but protesters were greatly outnumbered by police and these attempts ended quickly and without much commotion. Other occupations were framed as actions by off-shoot groups and tended to use traditional non-violent civil disobedience tactics with clearly expressed and limited goals, such as stopping housing foreclosure. OP had one attempt at a new occupation, but it failed. But OO participants literally tore down fences and confrontationally stormed new spaces, sometimes accompanied by fiery barricades. The conflicts that ensued over the use of force, fire, and overt police confrontation in OO help clarify two current anarchist positions: 1) that a violence/non-violence dichotomy is not a useful framework, and 2) that confrontational tactics stem from practical considerations.

In early November of 2011, on the night that thousands of Occupy protesters shut down the Port of Oakland, protesters took to the streets in downtown Oakland and attempted to occupy the abandoned Travelers Aid building one block from Oscar Grant Plaza that formerly provided aid to the homeless but had closed due to budget cuts. As police began moving in on the occupation, protesters erected dumpster barricades and started bonfires, hoping to slow down the oncoming police repression and to mark the territory as their own. Some smashed the windows

of area businesses. An anonymous communiqué posted to East Bay Indymedia on November 3, 2011 declared:

Last night, after one of the most remarkable days of resistance in recent history, some of us within Occupy Oakland took an important next step: we extended the occupation to an unused building near Oscar Grant Plaza. We did this, first off, in order to secure the shelter and space from which to continue organizing during the coming winter months. But we also hoped to use the national spotlight on Oakland to encourage other occupations in colder, more northern climates to consider claiming spaces and moving indoors in order to resist the repressive force of the weather, after so bravely resisting the police and the political establishment. We want this movement to be here next Spring, and claiming unused space is, in our view, the most plausible way forward for us at this point. We had plans to start using this space today as a library, a place for classes and workshops, as well as a dormitory for those with health conditions. We had already begun to move in books from the library.

For some OO participants, the building takeover was meant to extend Occupy and aim for sustainability by moving indoors during the colder months, setting an example for other cities. They saw the confrontational evening activities as a logical escalation of the protests, necessary to expand the space escalation. They also regard the protests as highlighting the problems with private property and illustrating that an essential role of the police is to protect the interests of those who control the resources. The communiqué continued:

We understand that much of the conversation about last night will revolve around the question of violence (though mostly they mean violence to “property,” which is somehow strangely equated with harming human beings). We know that there are many perspectives on these questions, and we should make the space for talking about them. But let us say this to the cops and to the mayor: things got “violent” after the police came. The riot cops marched down Telegraph and then the barricades were lit on fire. The riot cops marched down Telegraph and then bottles got thrown and windows smashed. The riot cops marched down Telegraph and graffiti appeared everywhere. The point here is obvious: if the police don't want violence, they should stay the hell away.

To OO protesters, the burning barricades in the streets and smashing windows were an extension of resistance – both a reclamation of space and a warning or threat to police to stay away.

On January 28, 2012, “Move-In Day” happened in which Occupy Oakland participants – a much larger contingent this time – attempted to re-establish OO and take a new space, as Oscar

Grant Plaza had been evicted for two months. Three thousand people converged on the streets, some with shields made from plastic garbage cans in the event of police confrontation, and marched to the vacant Kaiser Convention Center. When police tried to disperse the crowd, many participants persisted in their attempt to re-occupy space, tearing down a chain link fence, and fighting back by throwing projectiles. The action was ultimately unsuccessful and heavily repressed by the police. Oakland anarchists explained the failure in terms that suggest that they embraced confrontation for practical, not romantic, reasons. Most noted that the chosen building, an old, abandoned civic auditorium, was easily identifiable as the target and thus police were able to get ahead of the march and prevent the occupation. This necessitated physical force by protesters to break through police lines. Those with prior experience doing so reported lacking support in numbers, and some noted that experienced protesters in Oakland had given up on Occupy and were not present. As one Oakland anarchist recalled:

Some people showed up prepared to bust through police lines, but then when they actually got to the police lines, they didn't do anything. So it was like all this like kind of language and like bravado about it, but then they didn't do anything about it.

He was highly critical of the bluster about breaking through police lines in the planning sessions leading up to the action but then a failure to follow through. This echoes others' criticisms and calls attention to the existence of a cultural *discouragement* in anarchist circles around presenting confrontational attitudes rather than discussing physical force as simply necessary to achieve a particular aim.

Anarchists' assessments of this action also underscore their perceptions of the need to support newer activists. Hannah, an Oakland anarchist in her 30s, saw Move-In Day as an example of more experienced organizers letting newer people take the lead but with no support, so they had no back-up plans. After the police attacks, some participants blamed police

repression on the protesters who led the march into a violent situation. Many noted the tension in OO when police tear gassed the Move-In Day march in the afternoon, a departure from earlier practices of using such weapons only after nightfall. Participants who had relied on the tactic as a tacit agreement with the police blamed other protesters when the police used tear gas during the day. However, anarchists saw this blame as misplaced and talked about trying to figure out what to do when most protesters did not have experience with confrontation or violent repression by the state.

Some anarchists reported using presentations and zines about recent brutal police repression to help inexperienced activists make informed decisions about participating and protecting themselves and each other. They saw such public discussions as a way of teaching about police efforts to divide and conquer. Many anarchists felt such a responsibility to the public.

Occupy Oakland participants also took over other spaces, albeit with less fanfare. For example, some occupied Snow Park, several blocks away from Oscar Grant Plaza. Another effort was Occupy the Lake, an attempt to create a space on Lake Merritt buoyed by 50 gallon drums tied together. Some participants attempted occupations in other Oakland neighborhoods, including an occupation at an elementary school that created a library and a day care project. One occupation in the Bay Area re-focused Occupy attention on its prefigurative aims in a very concrete way: Occupy the Farm (OTF).

In the spring of 2012, as part of the ongoing resistance to plans by a real estate division of the University of California, Berkeley to privatize Gill Tract Farm in Albany, CA, students and community members cut the locks on the property, planted the land, and established an encampment. From the OTF website:

OTF critiqued all sorts of issues pertaining to food sovereignty by occupying ostensibly “public” land that was off limits to the public, and combining this action with legal, political, and media campaigns...The protests highlighted the development of farmland; biotechnology; lack of democracy in the UC; misallocation of research and extension resources; and lack of opportunities for participation in local, public, or commons land management. OTF even used the platform of their successful action to highlight the dispossession of indigenous people from the very land they were “occupying.”

Some Occupy Oakland participants drew inspiration from this occupation, citing progress on Occupy goals, such as feeding people locally and teaching people to compost and other sustainability skills.

## **7.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I have shown how conflicts with non-anarchists, as well as among anarchists, characterize anarchism today. This expands scholarship on anarchism in two ways. First, the anarchist strategy in Occupy was just as much about prefiguration as it was about autonomy. By closely examining the beliefs and actions of Occupy participants around the occupation, security teams, and an effort to decolonize, I show that anarchists in Occupy equally valued the two seemingly conflicting approaches: prefiguration (a concern with means-ends consistency) and autonomy (which necessitates self-defense, without prescribing the character of that defense). This calls into question a strict characterization of anarchism as prefigurative, revealing a possible re-prioritization of anarchist aims, and a struggle by anarchists to navigate autonomy without re-inscribing neoliberal modes. Secondly, by examining attempts to expand and decentralize space, my findings move beyond the tendency by scholars to center non-violence as a basic anarchist value by showing that “violence” versus “non-violence” is a false dichotomy for many anarchists.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

The anarchist approaches in Occupy were successful in igniting a mass movement of people due, in part, to timing. In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, masses of people were fed up with economic inequality and a lack of democracy, and some extended their discontent far beyond the political economy to broader relations of domination underlying everyday social interactions. To many people, the model of Occupy seemed new. It was able to quickly empower those who joined, and its decentralized character helped it to spread quickly, catapulting Occupy into the spotlight in a way that a traditional form of movement organization would likely not have accomplished. In this dissertation, I have examined the sudden popularization of a new (or, renewed) way of doing politics, and what happens when it attracts a mass audience. My findings tell us something about what is necessary for the viability of approaches that attempt to transform the underlying logics of society and its future institutions. They also tell us more about how contemporary anarchist movements in the U.S. today are grappling with the tensions between contradictory aims and practices. Anarchist perspectives may require a shift in thinking about ways to struggle, but ultimately open up new avenues for change that fit an increasingly diverse, post-modern, network-based society.

## **8.1 TRANSFORMATION MEANS THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE SAFE OR CONVENIENT**

In this dissertation, I explored the prefigurative politics of the occupied space and horizontal structure of Occupy. I found that anarchist participants valued the experiments as a way to transform political, economic, and social relations. Both prefigurative and instrumental approaches were present in Occupy and valued by anarchists as part of an overall strategy. But conflicts over tactical decision points revealed that anarchists feared that prefigurative possibilities would be foreclosed.

My study suggests that both prefigurative and instrumental approaches are necessary to achieve change. Instrumentation is a way to contest power. Prefiguration is a way to avoid replicating domination. This raises questions for social movement participants interested in radically transforming society. At each choice point, what actions could be taken to sustain prefigurative approaches, and how should anarchists spread the importance of prefigurative approaches in conjunction with more traditional campaign structures?

To value prefiguration alongside other strategies, it is necessary to shift the perspective of what constitutes success. As seen in Occupy, there are obstacles to showing the value of prefiguration. First, non-anarchist activists commonly believe that individual transformation must give way to more serious political campaigns over time rather than continuing to happen concurrently. They also commonly assume that making demands of the state and corporations is the best or only way to contest power. Some believe that hierarchy is more efficient than horizontalism, and that efficiency is desirable in activism.

Taking prefiguration seriously as the radical approaches of the Occupy movement show, is a serious commitment for activists. It requires long meetings and devoting one's life to a

struggle that seeks to change everything. Critics often say this excludes people who have less privilege or greater work and family responsibilities. Yet, there were plenty of such people who participated in Occupy<sup>28</sup> and many other radical experiments through history. Movements do not need to make radical accommodations for everyone to take part equally. People devote the time and energy when they believe movements are speaking to their needs and desires. Movements might be ignited by those with more time and resources, but if those movements speak to and prioritize broader needs and desires, circumstances will shift and so will the lines of “what is possible.” It is a mistake to focus on building movement structures that can accommodate any potential constraining factor, such as that someone might be left out.

The lesson from Occupy is that when anarchist approaches are utilized in mass social movements, they clash with approaches based on other logics, and are short-lived. Anarchist approaches conflict with models of activism that are less disruptive to people’s existing lives. However, it is my conclusion that the lure of empowerment gained from prefigurative practices, ultimately will draw more people to anarchism.

## **8.2 WHAT IS NECESSARY: SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS AND COMMITMENTS, AND NEW CULTURES OF RESISTANCE**

As part of their prefigurative aims, anarchists in Occupy sought to transform conventional organizing approaches, or “Organizing as Usual,” within the movement. This produced conflicts among participants, which revealed deeper political disagreements about the logics underlying

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<sup>28</sup> For a thorough critique of “Privilege Theory” by a group of people of color, women and queers in Occupy Oakland see the online essay by Croatoan (2012): “Who Is Oakland: Anti-Oppression Activism, the Politics of Safety, and State Co-optation” on the blog *Escalating Identity*.



activist culture. Anarchists implicitly sought to build a new culture of resistance based on values that were different than those currently held within the Left. This meant anarchists rejected calls for unity. Rather, they tried to foster a culture of diverse co-existence of desires and ongoing experimentation within vaguely defined frameworks. This was an expression of a politics that embraces individual difference and refuses to assume authoritative knowledge about the best ways to struggle in each situation. Anarchist culture thus requires embracing conflict and continued negotiations, as an ongoing practice of freedom. This is not compatible with the current progressive activist culture that privileges unity in strategy and narrative, nor one that views consciousness-raising as only a first step in organizing, and views conflict as a problem.

The implication of my study is that for anarchistic approaches – prefigurative experiments and horizontal organizing structure – to work in a mass movement, participants must both share greater affinity for these approaches *and* create a new culture that embraces conflict. The latter is a formidable aim, requiring a deep psychological shift since conflict is not a current desirable cultural norm. This new culture would also be less formal, based not on complex rules but on personal trust and affinity. It would mean approaching problems on a case-by-case basis and rejecting hard rules and elaborate processes, what I term legislation. It would also reject the tendency to legislate to pre-empt charismatic leadership or create accountability based on distrust. Future research could examine the psychological processes that happen in movements. For example, what prompts activists to want to control others? Why do activists assume that certain groups have power and authority and thus the right to enforce their aims? What could intervene in the escalating cycle of control, and how could this be implemented? How are anarchists currently working on such conflicts in ways that forego legislative solutions?

### 8.3 ANARCHISM AS A BALANCING ACT

I explored what “most anarchist” meant to Occupy participants, and found that it indicated a greater autonomy than was found in other occupations, attention to decolonization as part of prefigurative politics, and a militant expansion of decentralized space. This revealed a tendency in anarchist currents today to value prefiguration *and* autonomy – seemingly contradictory actions and aims. Rather than trying to solve the contradictions, anarchists sought to walk a tenuous line between them, making different decisions depending on particular goals in unique situations. Anarchists were thus putting into practice the modern conception of anarchism as a difficult-to-define, negative politics of opposition. This better explains anarchist practice than scholars’ claims that anarchists are inconsistent due to a lack of organizing skills or strategic knowledge.

Anarchism today challenges understandings of prefiguration. It is better described as an unstable ground of struggle, as participants balance between tactical and strategic poles of prefiguration and instrumentation, and between value poles of prefiguration and autonomy. This balancing act is anarchism in practice – a queered conception of social movement struggle that attempts to put theory into practice.

Anarchists in Occupy attempted to use structures and undertake prefigurative experiments with politically diverse participants. It moved some toward anarchism or more anarchistic ways of doing things but the conflicts and seeming impassible obstacles left others jaded, or more committed to hierarchical practices. Those already committed to anarchism found a concrete example of how it can catch on with a larger audience when timing is right and lessons on how to navigate such circumstances again. But most anarchists left Occupy feeling uneasy about radically inclusive experiments. The new advocates of anarchism that emerged in

Occupy will likely create new anarchist projects, albeit smaller and diffuse. It might include new anarchist networks that connect these disparate yet allied efforts into a movement. Some anarchists will do public education alongside these projects, hoping to further build the anarchist movement<sup>29</sup> for the next time a possibility like Occupy occurs.

#### **8.4     ADDING TO AN ANARCHIST SOCIOLOGY**

This dissertation adds to the development of an anarchist sociology, as described by Shantz and Williams (2013). It contributes to anarchist sociology by examining how people are dominated by assumptions of organizing styles and strategies, whether uncritical acceptance of hierarchical and non-hierarchical structures or authoritative knowledge about the most efficient or inclusive ways to struggle. It also contributes to an anarchist sociological theory by studying Occupy from an anarchist concern with relationships of domination and questions of freedom, both individual and collective. As Shantz and Williams envision, it also builds an anarchist subfield in sociology that involves both activists and scholars.

An anarchist sociology hopes for a radical transformation of society and thus takes seriously movements that are all too often dismissed as utopian. Anarchist scholars should resist the urge to make anarchism and anarchist movements seem legitimate or normative, instead analyzing struggles in their messy, uncomfortable, sometimes oft-putting, confrontational, other times charming, beautiful formations. Such representations of anarchism are necessary to learn from ongoing struggles. Rather than dismissing anarchists as “fringe” or “acting

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<sup>29</sup> Most anarchists I interviewed do not claim “movement building” as an explicit aim and thus would not describe it this way.

antagonistically,” or dismissing confrontational attitudes of anarchists merely as identity-construction or a lack of strategic thinking, it is important to examine conflict *within* anarchist circles, especially those relevant to movement strategy and connected to participants’ beliefs. For example, in Occupy, conflicts often reflected a question of whether a decision would foreclose continued engagement with prefigurative projects, a tactical and strategic issue, not an emotional one. Examining such choice points in one struggle can be beneficial to both social movement scholars and anarchists.

Anarchist sociologists must be open to thinking about strategy differently. A common understanding of strategy is a blueprint or multi-step plan for how change will happen from which tactics are chosen to map onto those plans. However, Occupy created structural frameworks within which people could organize autonomously. They now influence other mobilizations, as I reflected in a post for Sociology Lens (2013):

In the spring of 2013, protesters occupied Istanbul’s Gezi Park to oppose urban development. After Turkish police attacked the demonstrators, masses of people occupied Taksim Square and plazas in other Turkish cities, in outrage at the brutal state response and to express dissatisfaction with a much wider range of political, economic, and social concerns. Discontent had been brewing beneath the surface, waiting for the opportunity to manifest. [Also that summer,] the streets of Cairo erupted into rebellion again, a continuation of the Egyptian Revolution, as large numbers of people took to the streets to express dissatisfaction with what they considered inadequate solutions to the underlying problems that spurred them to action in the first place. In the U.S. people continued to build on new energy, post-Occupy, taking over spaces of those in power to protest the further commodification of education, the implementation of policies that restrict women’s rights to bodily autonomy, and laws that continue to institutionalize racism.

The details of these displays of resistance vary depending on context. But the influence of 2011 can still be felt in the tactics and sometimes the echoes can still be heard in the chants, messaging that is intentionally vague enough to be interpreted as either reformist or radically transformative. Intentional ambiguity can build movements while saving space for subversion, making material gains while pushing the limits on what future visions are acceptable or possible. We may have to listen carefully, so as not to miss it.

[Sociological examination of these terrain shifts suggests] to scholars that there is more to these movements than initially meets the eye. Mohammed Bamyeh (2013), in his analysis of the June 2013 rebellion in Egypt, points to the underlying logic of the

dynamism of the street. He explains, “The street has existed outside the state and organized parties as an alternative form of social and political life...typified by de facto pluralism; spontaneous organization; informal rules familiar to large numbers but not encoded in state law and often contradicting it; local knowledge as primary source of action; mutual aid; and an intuitive approach to solving problems.” Political leaders and intellectuals alike fail to understand this logic, says Bamyeh: “...they do not know how to think of the street as a source of lessons for political life. They think of the street only as chaos that needs to be controlled by those cultivated enough to know better.”

I think we could extend such insight to the chaos of Occupy encampments in the fall of 2011, which could help in better understanding current lingering attitudes averse to attempts at centralization and legibility... [While pondering the] lessons to be learned from the failures of most Occupies to sustain beyond the encampment phase, [we must question whether the failure to eventually produce concrete demands and a sustained organization was] really a failure at all. Were the breakdowns and impasses truly a result of lacking accountability, or this-or-that form of consensus, or do they point to something deeper? Is it possible they offer a glimpse of a creeping shift in sentiment by masses of people, unsatisfied with easy answers and the usual solutions? Perhaps a distrust of leaders and a hesitancy to congeal around legible policy proposals is [less] a breakdown in what form of consensus should have been used [than] an indicator that our imaginations are starting to open wider.

[Analyses of] structures and internal dynamics [teach] what experiments can work in different contexts, identifying obstacles and ways to overcome them. They expand our repertoire of experiments from which we can draw. But I believe we also have to be careful not to see chaos as in need of control, not to be too quick to push for defined measures that limit the unknown. These tendencies not only stem from distrust and fear, but such measures can stifle the creativity necessary to expand possibilities for futures. As one of the prescient messages of the Indignados proposed: *Nos movemos despacio porque vamos lejos*. We move slowly because we go far.

Bamyeh (2013) suggests that, for Egypt, new visions must arise that correspond to the flavor of the revolution, in all of its chaotic glory. He concludes that learning from revolution can produce new imagination, which is vital to creating alternatives. I believe we will continue to feel the impact of this newest wave of contention for years to come. As scholars, we play a role in shaping the narrative of lessons learned. I suggest we take our time and look closely with open minds, as new visions are necessary to satisfy a shift in collective and diverse desires.

The continuation of the “Occupy” idea indicates there is something that lives on: a continued desire to keep trying the new and unexpected. Future actions may take very different forms than those seen in the Occupy Movement during the fall of 2011. But the desire to continue experiments, evade obvious legibility, and aim for an element of surprise is a collective memory that is useful for those who want to transform society. Social movement actors face

challenges in setting up frameworks for their strategies. Anarchist projects could provide fresh examples for future social movements.

Conflicts within anarchist circles reveal salient points of contention to which movement actors and scholars should attend, to move forward in transformational ways. Future research should examine projects that are explicitly anarchist, where participants already share common values and cultures. This knowledge could produce more possible models – or anarchistic tools – for movement actors to incorporate into their approaches, modifying to fit unique circumstances, as they continue to struggle for another possible world.

Anarchist sociologists Shantz and Williams (2013:xiv) uncover an inspiring reflection from anarchist Emma Goldman that serves as an appropriate concluding thought for this dissertation and has eerie timely relevance today. Goldman says: "Today is the parent of tomorrow. The present casts its shadow far into the future. That is the law of life, individual and social. Revolution that divests itself of ethical values thereby lays the foundation of injustice, deceit, and oppression for the future society. The means used to prepare the future become its cornerstone" (Goldman 2003:262). More than a century later, Occupy underscores the need to take seriously Goldman's call for attending to the means of transformation.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE**

#### **Part I**

First, I would like you to look over this chronology of Occupy [Wall Street/Pittsburgh/Oakland]. Is it accurate? Is there anything that should be changed or added, anything left out?

I'd like to start out by taking just a few minutes, and hearing you talk freely about "the story of Occupy [Wall Street/Pittsburgh/Oakland]." From your perspective, what was it and why was it important?

When and how did you get involved with Occupy? How did you find out about it? How long were you part of it?

#### **Part II**

##### **1. Space**

- a. What was the reason for taking space, why camp out at the plaza (or anywhere else) at all? (What were the goals?)
- b. How did you personally feel about that? (In other words, did you value these goals? Why or why not?)
- c. Do you feel that the goals were achieved? (which ones, why or why not) If failures are pointed to, probe them. If not, ask if there were any missed opportunities with this space-taking approach.
- d. Could you elaborate on your involvement with the physical occupation throughout the fall?
- e. Did you sleep at the space overnight? If yes, how many nights would you estimate that you slept over at the camp?

- f. Now, I'd like to get at your current feelings. How do you feel about that approach of taking space now? (Do you [still] value it? Is it something that could work in a future campaign [if yes but differently, what would be different?])
- g. Do any examples from your experience in particular stand out that may have challenged, changed, strengthened, weakened, or complicated your views on this space-taking approach?

## 2. Horizontal Structure

- a. One idea that gained popularity with Occupy was this horizontal, "leaderless" or "leaderful" structure. Could you describe what that meant or looked like? (GAs, semi-autonomous working groups, modified consensus process)
- b. What was the reason for using that structure? (In other words, what were the goals?)
- c. How did you personally feel about that? (In other words, did you value these goals, or have a commitment to this structure? Why or why not?)
- d. Do you believe the consensus process is an essential part of the horizontal model? Why or why not?
- e. In terms of outcomes, were there any successes with this horizontal structure? (Were goals achieved? Which ones, why or why not?)
- f. Were there any missed opportunities with or obstacles to using this horizontal structure? (How could the obstacles have been overcome?)
- g. Which working groups were you part of? What did you do?
- h. Could you elaborate on your involvement with the General Assemblies throughout the fall?
- i. From what you can recall, what were some of the most important debates or major points of disagreement or contention, or key turning points within Occupy [Wall Street/Pittsburgh/Oakland]? Where did you come down on this/these? Why?
- j. Within the decision-making forums (GAs and other gatherings), who were some of the most active currents (organizations or constituencies – what groups of people were active players)?
- k. Do you recall if there were disagreements about how to run the actual occupation, between people who camped there and those who did not? (get into why, for each)
- l. Now, I'd like to get at your current feelings. How do you feel about the approach of using a horizontal, "leaderless" or "leaderful" structure now?
- m. Do any examples from your experience in particular stand out that may have challenged, changed, strengthened, weakened, or complicated your views on using a horizontal structure?



### 3. Direct Action

- a. Now, another term that was popularized in the media around Occupy was that of “direct action.” What does DA mean to you?
- b. What were some examples of DA in Occupy [Wall Street/Pittsburgh/Oakland]? Get at what the goals were for specific examples and whether they were achieved.
- c. Were they successful? (If so how, or if not, why not?)
- d. What were some failures or obstacles to using DA?
- e. How did you personally feel about the use of DA in Occupy? (In other words, did you agree with the actions and value their goals? Why or why not?)
- f. So, you expressed that you feel \_\_\_\_\_ about DA. Did your views change over the course of the occupation? Do any examples from your experience stand out that may have challenged, changed, strengthened, weakened, or complicated your views on DA?

### 4. Overall reflections

- a. Overall on a general level, what were the successes of Occupy [Wall Street/Pittsburgh/Oakland]? What went right?
- b. What were the failures or missed opportunities of Occupy [Wall Street/Pittsburgh/Oakland]? What went wrong?
- c. Now, stepping back and thinking about your experience of Occupy [Wall Street/Pittsburgh/Oakland], how would you say you were personally impacted, overall, by Occupy?

### 5. Questions on political background

- a. Were you politically active before Occupy? If so, how? What did your involvement look like (what issues did you organize around)?
- b. How do you identify, politically? (Probe this for specifics, how does participant define this identity.) Did this change during the course of Occupy?
- c. The approaches I asked you about earlier – occupying space, “leaderless” structures and consensus process, and direct action tactics – how do they fit with your political visions or beliefs?
  - i. If the participant did NOT identify as an anarchist: Another idea that got public attention through the media, as Occupies were springing up around the country, was anarchism. How do you understand anarchism? (what does it entail or mean to you?)
  - ii. Do you see any of those three approaches as connected to anarchism? Explain.

### 6. Demographic and miscellaneous information

- a. How old are you?

- b. What is your racial ethnic identity?
  - c. What is your gender identity?
7. Before we conclude the interview, is there anything you'd like to add about Occupy [Wall Street/Pittsburgh/Oakland], or Occupy in general?

**Part III (off tape)**

I'm trying to interview a really diverse sample of participants from Occupy [Wall Street/Pittsburgh/Oakland], people who were on all different sides of issues, people coming from a wide range of perspectives but were very much a part of the active currents. So, who would you suggest that I interview, to get a representative sample of that diversity?

Who were the people on other sides of the debates during key turning points, who represented a challenge to your perspectives?

## APPENDIX B

### OCCUPY TIMELINES

For Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Oakland, there was already a chronology of events on Wikipedia. I printed these out and used them at the beginning of interviews with participants in Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Oakland. At the time of my fieldwork, a chronology of Occupy Pittsburgh did not exist on Wikipedia. I constructed one from local newspapers. This is the final product.

#### B.1 OCCUPY PITTSBURGH CHRONOLOGY

##### October

**Oct. 5 (Wednesday): First General Assembly** at the First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh in Shadyside at 6:30 p.m. Around 300-400 people attended. Working groups formed.

**Oct. 9 (Sunday): Second General Assembly** at Schenley Plaza. About 150-200 people attended.

**Oct. 12 (Wednesday): Third General Assembly** at the First Unitarian Church. About 150-200 people attended.

**Oct. 15 (Saturday): Occupy Pittsburgh March.** About 2,000 people marched from Freedom Corner to Market Square followed by an occupation of Mellon Green. First camp GA held that

evening (night watch and other logistics set in place) with more than 100 participants. About 30-40 tents spring up throughout the night.

**Oct. 17 (Monday): Protest at Pat Toomey's Office** for voting against the American Jobs Act.

**Oct. 19 (Wednesday): Picket of BNY Mellon's regional headquarters** and about 100 people march to the Forbes Ave. office of PA Attorney General, demanding she investigate the bank's overcharging of pension funds.

**Oct. 20 (Thursday): Afternoon Action in Market Square.** About 100 students and workers staged a rally, march and street theatre performance.

Somewhere around here there was a first action at PNC bank. Look into this. Both NS8 and AS4 mention it in their interviews (but it's supposedly not in the media).

**Oct. 26 (Wednesday): Action at PNC Bank.** Several people entered the bank, wearing masks and carrying cameras, asking to open accounts. The tellers locked the doors and the bank remained closed for about an hour. Same day, **march to David Lawrence Convention Center to protest Marcellus Shale drilling.**

**Oct. 27 (Thursday): Protest of Romney's Republican Fundraiser Outside Consol Energy Center.**

## **November**

**Nov. 2 (Wednesday): Oakland March in Solidarity with Occupy Oakland.** Beginning in Schenley Plaza, more than 100 people marched, blocking traffic, chanting against police brutality, criticizing the police assault on Scott Olson. One arrest.

**Nov. 5 (Saturday): Downtown Rally at BNY Mellon Center.** Forty participants gathered for sermons, songs, and personal testimony. Forty United Steelworkers, in town for a conference, joined the rally in support.

**Nov. 14 (Monday): City Council Declares "Solidarity with Occupy Pittsburgh and the Occupy Wall Street Movement."**

**Nov. 15 (Tuesday): March and Protest against Developing Unconventional Gas Convention Downtown.** Five arrests.

**Nov. 17 (Thursday): March to Greenfield Bridge.** About 700 people rallied for jobs.

**Nov. 24 (Thursday): Indigenous Ceremony and Storytelling at Camp** as a counter-narrative of Thanksgiving, followed by dinner at local downtown church.

## **December**

**Dec. 9 (Friday): BNY Posted Eviction Notices** for campers to clear out by Dec. 11.

**Dec. 10 (Saturday): Action on International Human Rights Day.**

**Dec. 13 (Tuesday): BNY Mellon Filed a Court Action** seeking to evict the Occupy Pittsburgh encampment from Mellon Green.

### **January**

**Jan. 3 (Tuesday): Occupy Pittsburgh Members Interrupt Fitzgerald Inauguration Ceremony.** About 10 protesters begin a mic check before being pushed out of Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall.

**Jan. 10 (Tuesday): Hearing on BNY Mellon Eviction Lawsuit.** Followed by rally and march outside the City-County building.

**Jan. 13 (Friday): Occupy Your Mind begins at Space Gallery** to gather people for discussion, art, poetry and insights. To be held second Friday of every month.

**Jan. 16 (Monday): Martin Luther King Day March and Rally through Homewood.** Co-organized by Occupy Pittsburgh and others. In support of Jordan Miles.

**Jan. 20 (Friday): Rally in Market Square on Anniversary of Citizens United Supreme Court Decision.**

### **February**

**Feb. 2 (Thursday): Judge Ruled Occupy Pittsburgh Must Leave Mellon Green** within three days after BNY Mellon files a \$10,000 bond (they filed on Feb. 3).

**Feb. 6 (Monday): Judge Issued Supplemental Order Compelling County Sheriff to Oust Remaining Protesters.** Deadline for eviction passed at 11:15 (or 56) a.m. and dozens of tents remained. Earlier in the day, about 100 Occupiers held a press conference to declare victory.

**Feb. 8 (Wednesday): Occupy Pittsburgh Officially Left Camp Site,** leaving behind a wooden Trojan horse. About 30 people marched through the streets downtown.

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