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ANTIOCH UNIVERSITY

NEW ENGLAND

Program of Interdisciplinary Studies

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**Endeavors in Solidarity: Lessons from Advantaged Group Members in Anti-Oppression
Work**

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**Endeavors in Solidarity: Lessons from Advantaged Group Members in Anti-Oppression
Work**

A Thesis

Presented to the Program of Interdisciplinary Studies

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In Partial Fulfillment

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Kelly Walsh

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Abstract

Systems of privilege and oppression operate throughout the United States and beyond, and affect all individuals in different ways and to varying degrees. The privilege (unearned access or advantages) experienced by one group of people is inherently linked to the oppression (systemic injustices or barriers) endured by another. Further, individuals can -- and most do -- experience both privilege and oppression in different aspects of their identity. Individuals experiencing oppression have long worked against the systems that harm them. Of interest in this exploration is the engagement of those who benefit from privilege. This study used an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis framework to examine what entices a person who is not directly affected by a systemic oppression to work towards its elimination.

This study considered what motivates, supports, and sustains individuals in this work by drawing on semi-structured interviews with nine Advantaged Group Members engaged in anti-oppression activism. Furthermore, it investigated advocates' origin stories, relationships with target group members, and mistakes made along the way, and interrogated the concepts of allyship and solidarity. Considerations of the commonalities and differences shared by activists working across different types of oppression, including racism, homelessness, incarceration, homophobia, colonialism, and more, were taken into account in this exploration. This study also examined the larger issue of how these lessons can be leveraged to encourage more people who experience privilege to join in their efforts by examining the ways in which Advantaged Group Members participate in this work.

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Introduction

Solidarity is more than a statement of sympathetic support or identity with a struggle, it is also a willingness to publicly share the costs & risks of protest.

(Smith, 2002, p.507)

Systems of privilege and oppression coexist as parallel phenomena. The privilege, or unearned access or advantages (Johnson, 2018; McIntosh, 2008), experienced by one group of people is directly related to the oppression, or systemic barriers (Deutsch, 2006), felt by another. Individuals who experience this oppression have long worked against the systems that subjugate them (Jenkins, 2016; Lemus & Stroebe, 2015). Of interest in this exploration is the opposite; here I examined what motivates a person who is not directly affected by a systemic oppression to work towards the eradication of that system.

For the purposes of this exploration, I use the term “advantaged group member” to refer to a person experiencing privilege in a given identity area, or a person who is not part of the group that is most directly and deeply affected by the type of oppression they work against. I chose this term over others such as activist, advocate, or ally as it encompassed a cross section of privileged individuals working across different types of anti-oppression work.

Fear of doing or saying the wrong thing prevents some advantaged group members from attempting to dismantle these systems (Edwards, 2006; Fair, 2015). Others fail to recognize the intrinsic advantages from which they benefit all together (Jenkins, 2016). And yet, despite the fact that any efforts by advantaged group members in support of target groups would appear to go against the former group’s self interest of maintaining the status quo (Van Zomeren et al., 2011; Deutsch, 2006), it is well documented that this type of support does occur in both academic (Brown & Ostrove, 2013; Case, 2012; Droogendyk, Wright, Lubensky, & Louis, 2016;

Jenkins, 2016; Smith & Redington, 2010) and activist discourse (DeGraaf, 2014; Fair, 2015; Glover, 2017; Utt, 2016).

So what of the advantaged individuals who do choose to act? What can be learned from their experiences? What barriers do they face? This study explores the motivational, support, and resilience factors of advantaged group members in anti-oppression work. I examine relationships with target group members and origin stories of these advantaged member activists, including how they first became engaged in this work; mistakes that they have made along the way, and lessons they have learned in the process. Additionally, while the aforementioned body of academic, peer-reviewed research on allyship and solidarity is growing, it is lacking research that addresses advantaged group members working across multiple types of oppression. This study also considers commonalities and differences shared by those who engage in liberation work across various types of injustice.

This study is intended to contribute to current discussions about allyship and solidarity by examining the ways in which advantaged group members participate in this work, as well as to consider how these lessons can be leveraged to encourage more people who experience privilege to join in their efforts to dismantle systems of oppression.

Definition and Discussion of Key Terms

In this section, I define the terms pertinent to this thesis exploration, specifically, *privilege*, *oppression*, *allyship*, *solidarity*, *intersectionality*, and *collective liberation*, and discuss how these concepts encapsulate my area of focus for this project.

Privilege. Privilege refers to a set of unearned advantages bestowed upon one group and denied to others based on membership in various categories (Johnson, 2018; McIntosh, 2008). Those categories include areas of identity such as gender, race, and sexuality. Privileges can

show up as the presence of something advantageous or the absence of something challenging (Case et al., 2012; Johnson 2018). A key component of having privilege is the opportunity to not notice or think about it (McIntosh, 2008, 2012), as those with privilege are taught to see their experience as the norm. This can also lead to ignoring or even denying the existence of privilege and its opposite, oppression (Case et al., 2012).

Oppression. Oppression is defined by Deutsch (2006) as “the experience of repeated, widespread, systemic injustice” (p.10). Looking at the root of the word ‘oppression’ Marilyn Frye (1983) describes entities that are ‘pressed’ as “caught between or among forces and barriers which are so related to each other that jointly they restrain, restrict, or prevent the thing’s motion or mobility” (p. 2). Oppression is antithetical to its counterpart, privilege, and as such, “for every social category that is privileged, one or more others are oppressed in relation to it” (Johnson, 2018, p. 32). Moving beyond interpersonal instances of prejudice or discrimination, oppression is pandemic, referring to organized systems and institutions, such as the judicial, educational, housing, and healthcare systems. Therefore, it is essential to understand that while all humans are subject to pain and suffering, this is not the same as oppression. Key to the experience of oppression is the lack of systemic power. Accordingly, “men cannot be oppressed *as men*, just as whites cannot be oppressed as whites or heterosexuals as heterosexuals, because a group can be oppressed only if there exists another group with the power to oppress them.” (Johnson, 2019, p. 33).

Allyship. Allyship is “an active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a person of privilege seeks to operate in solidarity with a marginalized group of people” (Anti-Oppression Network, 2015, para. 2). Allies are defined by Brown and Ostrove (2013) as “dominant group members who work to end prejudice in their personal and

professional lives, and relinquish social privileges conferred by their group status through their support of nondominant groups” (p. 2,211). They have a “desire to promote social justice actively” and a “willingness to offer support to nondominant people” (Brown and Ostrove, 2013, p.2,212).

Solidarity. bell hooks writes “support can be occasional. It can be given and just as easily withdrawn. Solidarity requires sustained, ongoing commitment” (hooks, 2000, p. 67). Solidarity refers to an expression of support for a group or individual based on a shared sense of humanity. Like allyship, solidarity involves advantaged group members, or those not directly experiencing a particular oppression, working alongside and in conjunction with those who do. Those working in solidarity can be described as “advantaged group activists who are committed participants in action to improve the treatment and/or status of a disadvantaged group” (Droogendyk et al., 2016, p.316). Though there is not much research differentiating allyship and solidarity, these two concepts are explored further below.

Intersectionality. Intersectionality refers to the ways in which various aspects of identity interact and overlap with one another (Johnson, 2018). Greenberg (2014) asserts that intersectionality involves “how people simultaneously hold pain and power in different arenas of identity” and reminds us that “every human carries both pain and power” (p. 16). Originally used to highlight the commingling oppressions experienced by Black Women (Crenshaw, 2015; Glover, 2017), intersectionality also refers to the ways in which the presence of multiple marginalized identities can compound their effect on an individual or groups of people. Tomlinson (2015) warns that this understanding of “multiple, compounded forms of oppression” (para. 16) is not enough; it must also be about what is done with that understanding. Therefore

intersectionality also represents “shifting power to create just and equitable communities” (Tomlinson, 2015, para. 16).

Collective Liberation. The quote “if you have come to help me you are wasting our time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together” is attributed to Aboriginal elder Lilla Watson, though she insists it was a group effort (as cited in Abdi, Shultz, & Pillay, 2015, p. 164). Collective liberation refers to “a world where all people are free from oppression” (Crass & Catalyst Project, 2012, p.4), and suggests an ideal reality where all people’s needs are met. This concept also accounts for the idea that advantaged group members should not engage in anti-oppression work to “save” target group members, but because their own humanity is threatened by oppressive systems (Crass, 2013).

Throughout this analysis I also used the terms “advantaged group member” and “target group member,” which refer to people who are experiencing privilege or experiencing oppression in a given identity area, respectively.

Taken together, the six concepts of privilege, oppression, allyship, solidarity, intersectionality, and collective liberation create a nexus of theory and practice in which I situate my thesis exploration. I viewed these six concepts as interrelated and, in some ways, interdependent; I used my thesis research to more thoroughly investigate these topics and the way they overlap and diverge.

Literature Review

For this inquiry I chose the term “allyship” to study the ways in which people who experience privilege work against systems of oppression, as it is the most common way this concept is defined in peer-reviewed academic literature. Additionally, allyship as a concept is well covered and much debated in popular culture and activist circles (Gay, 2016; Fair, 2015; Lamont, n.d.; Utt, 2016). Non-academic articles add depth to this scholarly exploration and democratize the voices that contribute to the discussion, as well as those who are held up as experts in the field. Taken together, these bodies of literature consider how these topics are addressed in these different arenas.

I begin with an exploration of the themes found in the academic literature on the topic of allyship. Where the practitioner discourse mirrors that of the scholastic rhetoric, I include those sources in this exploration. The subsequent section addresses additional concepts found in activist discourse around allyship that are not reflected in the academic exploration. This section also addresses how allyship differs from solidarity to further illustrate how these concepts are understood and debated.

Research Themes:

The research literature reviewed for this project was primarily qualitative research based in social identity development theory and grounded theory. It was largely conducted in the United States. This body of work demonstrated themes in the following six areas: (a) “ally” is not an identity; (b) allyship is challenging and ongoing; (c) allies must acknowledge their privilege to be successful; (d) allies are uniquely poised to address or confront other advantaged group members; (e) most effective allyship happens within relationships; and (f) the current

framework of allyship has limitations. In the following section, I explore each of these themes in greater detail.

“Ally” is not an identity. Despite the common tendency for advantaged group members to claim “ally” as an identity for themselves, research suggests that this is problematic (Brown & Ostrove, 2013; Utt, 2016). When advantaged group members claim “ally” as an identity, this can cause harm to historically marginalized groups if their behavior does not live up to their claimed identity (Edwards, 2006). This can also cause advantaged group members to become more complacent and ineffective (Becker, 2016; Greenberg, 2014), believing that the majority of their work is finished. In some cases, this relates to “allyship theatre” (Gay, 2016; McKenzie, 2015), the concept where advantaged group members are more interested with being perceived by others as an ally than with doing lasting work to bolster those they seek to support. Instead advantaged group members are encouraged to view allyship as an active engagement that requires sustained effort and commitment (Ancestral Pride, 2014; Becker, 2016; Glover, 2017) .

Allyship is challenging and ongoing.

One of the keys to being a good ally is a willingness to listen and to give credence to what people say about their own experience. This is not easy to do, since members of dominant groups may not like what they hear about privilege from those who are most harmed by it. (Johnson, 2018, p.129)

The current body of research suggests that if allyship is to be effective or seen as authentic, it must be lasting (Becker, 2017; Case, 2012). Allies that are viewed as most reliable and trustworthy are the ones who have stuck around (Brown & Ostrove, 2013). This, however, is not to suggest that this process is an easy one. Quite the opposite: much of the research included here touched upon the difficulties related to this type of work (Becker, 2017; Brown & Ostrove, 2013;

Case, 2012; Droogendyk et al., 2016). Becker (2017) elaborated, “Allyship is an iterative, ongoing process, and much like any iterative project, it requires feedback, reflection and the constant willingness to grow and learn” (p. 28). Case (2012) warned activists to prepare themselves for “critical self-evaluation that lasts a lifetime” (p.90) while other experts reminded advantaged group members not to expect a sudden transformation (Real Talk, 2018). However, activists who are truly committed to working against systems of oppression are encouraged to embrace the difficulties connected to this work, or at least come to terms with the fact that they exist (Johnson, 2018; Michael & Conger, 2009). Activists concurred: “expressing solidarity is not supposed to be easy. It is challenging. It is terrifying. It calls upon us to make difficult decisions, to risk our alliances, our careers, our reputations - perhaps even our bodies - on behalf of others” (Groom, 2016, para. 13). Johnson (2018) reminded advantaged group members that they are not alone in feeling challenged by this work. “Dare to make mistakes, to feel awkward and wrong and clueless and confused, out of your depth and full of doubt as you look over the edge of your competency. You have lots of company” (p. 131).

Allies must acknowledge their privilege to be effective. It can be challenging for advantaged group members to recognize their privilege. Sometimes systemic advantage in one identity area is masked by subjugation in another (Castania, Alston-Mills, & Whittington-Couse; Crenshaw, 2015). In other cases, advantaged group members do not want to think of themselves as complicit in -- or benefiting from -- oppressive systems (Deutsch, 2006). Despite being taught to not see their privilege (McIntosh, 2008) research suggests that advantaged group members are more effective when they acknowledge and understand their privilege. In some ways this is because doing so makes allies more compelled to act. For example, McIntosh (2008) asserts that “describing privilege makes one newly accountable. Now having described it, what will I do to

lessen or end it?" (2008, p.2). Similarly, Smith and Redington (2010) suggest that a thorough understanding of one's privilege in a sociohistorical framework helps allies understand "the necessity of addressing and dismantling the larger system rather than confining our focus to addressing individual elements" (p. 547).

In another instance, demonstrating a clear understanding of one's privilege helps advantaged group members to earn the trust of the target group members with whom they work. Droogendyk, Wright, Lubensky, and Louis (2016) urge advantaged group allies to "understand the implications of their own privilege" (p. 315) and suggest this "conscious recognition of one's advantaged group status and its accompanying privilege" (p.330) are critical to avoid causing more harm than good.

Allies are uniquely poised to address or confront other advantaged group members.

Much of the research indicates that advantaged group members should follow the lead of those people experiencing the oppression directly (Becker, 2017; Brown & Ostrove, 2013; Greenberg, 2014). However, there is one area where advantaged group members are encouraged to step to the forefront. Droogendyk, Wright, Lubensky, and Louis (2016) suggest advantaged group members have an "obligation and special capacity" to engage with other advantaged group members, especially those "who stand in the way of social change" (Droogendyk et al., 2016, p. 328). This responsibility comes in part because the physical and emotional "cost of confrontation is lower for them" (Droogendyk et al., 2016, p.328). Additionally, research suggests that advantaged group members may be more likely to be sympathetic to a cause if they hear about it from members of their in-group. When advantaged group members engage in anti-oppression work "they do more than add their voices. They also make it more difficult for others to dismiss

calls for change as simply being the actions of narrow special interest groups trying to better their position” (Johnson, 2018, p. 130).

Most effective allyships happen within relationships. Johnson writes, “it bears repeating that not doing it alone is an essential part of working for change (2018, p.129). Brown and Ostrove (2013) also stress the importance of “establishing a meaningful relationship with an ensuring accountability to those with whom individuals are seeking to ally themselves” (2013, p.2,212). This can build trust and help allies avoid alienating those whom they seek to support. “One of the most important things has to do with building relationships and then from those relationships trying to begin real dialogue” (Smith & Redington, 2010, p. 547). Becker (2017) continues: “to be an active ally involves active listening” (p. 28). Research argues further that advantaged group members are more likely to demonstrate solidarity with target group members when they share a larger common identity with the out-group (Gamson, 1991, 1992; Van Zomeren et al., 2011).

For advantaged group members, the importance of working within relationships goes beyond those that are forged with individuals experiencing the oppression. Research suggests that strong relationships with other advantaged group members engaged in anti-oppression work is also important (Smith & Redington, 2010; Utt, 2016). Abrash Walton (2010) contends that advantaged group members in the conservation field are “challenged to clarify our own values and to develop solid working relations of equality, respect, and trust with those who share these values” (pp. 20-21).

Smith and Redington (2010) argue that in-group support networks help advantaged group members “maintain their new levels of awareness and commitment when they are submerged in life-as-usual” (p.547) so that they might continue this work for the long haul.

The current framework of allyship has limitations. This body of research also suggests that there are flaws within the structure of allyship itself. Droogendyk, Wright, Lubensky, and Louis (2016) argue that advantaged group member involvement in resistance movements has the potential to cause more harm than good. Tendencies of advantaged group members to take over movements, seek out leadership opportunities, and neglect to consult the guidance of target group members may “obfuscate and trivialize the movement’s message.” (Droogendyk et al., 2016, p. 321). Allyship can also be conducted in ways that are performative versus substantive (Gay, 2016; McKenzie, 2015) or paternalistic (Grant, 2017), undermining any positive contribution advantaged group members may strive for. Each of these missteps may cause target group members to distrust advantaged group allies or even threaten their interest in participating in collective action (Droogendyk et al., 2016, pp. 317-318). Other research suggests that the framework is too rigid and excludes well-meaning advantaged group members who do not know how to begin. Greenberg (2014) speaks to a personal struggle: “I am questioning the idea of allyship in part because I have not found a way to incorporate it into my practice while continuing to bring my full self to the table in multiracial activism” (p. 14).

Practitioner Discourse

If solidarity feels easy and comfortable, you are not doing it right.

(Tomlinson, 2015, para. 16)

The accompanying concepts outlined in activist discourse regarding allyship and solidarity tend towards recommendation for how advantaged group members could do this work better. The themes identified include: (a) moving past guilt, (b) centering historically marginalized voices; (c) putting privilege to use; (d) mistakes are inevitable; (e) advantaged group members are

responsible for their own education; (f) we are all in this together; and (g) moving away from “allyship”. In the following section, I explore each of these themes in greater detail.

Moving past guilt. Crass writes that “[o]rganizing with people privileged by systems of oppressions still requires confronting feelings of inadequacy, isolation, and powerlessness, but it also requires working through denial, fear, guilt, and shame” (Crass, 2013, p. 14). As advantaged group members grow increasingly aware of the privilege they experience, the guilt they feel as a result can also intensify (Edwards, 2006; Morrison, 2013). Others feel guilt over the bias or prejudice they are embarrassed to realize that they harbor (Gerstandt, 2015). Either form of guilt can lead to a fear of participating in anti-oppression work (Fair, 2015; Hackman, 2016b). However, the necessary increased understanding of privilege and bias by advantaged group members does not have to lead to immobilizing guilt. Adams, Bell, & Griffin (2016) assert that it is both “possible and desirable” to grow this awareness without “inducing guilt as the primary response”(p. 202). Hackman (2016b) recommends replacing the concepts of guilt and shame with those of “curiosity”(0:49), “grief”(2:25), and “humility” (3:52) to better serve their personal and pedagogical development.

For advantaged group members that feel incapacitated by the guilt of their internalized prejudices, Gerstandt (2015) asserts that such bias is inevitable and emphasizes that it is not our initial reaction that matters most: “we are not responsible for our first thought, but we are responsible for our second thought and our first action.” (Gerstandt, 2015, para. 12). After all, guilt does not serve anyone, least of all the historically marginalized groups advantaged group members strive to support. Therefore, it is critical to move past or through the guilt and into action (Grant, 2017; Morrison, 2013.)

Centering historically marginalized voices. Khabeer wrote “You don’t need to be a voice for the voiceless. Just pass the mic” (tweet, 2017). Practitioner discourse frequently discusses the tendency of advantaged group members to take over movements or centralize their involvement (Gay, 2016; McKenzie, 2013b, 2015). Thurber, Fenlon, & Roberts (2015) remind advantaged group members to “interrogate the pull towards action” and be willing to question the desire to “take leadership or initiate action without authentic engagement with [target group member] leadership” (Thurber et al., 2015, p.17). Those target group member leaders also warn advantaged group members to be mindful of the space that they occupy and their tendency to prioritize their comfort over all else (McKenzie, 2013a).

Others provide concrete examples of what this looks like in practice during direct actions:

“Refrain from speaking to media and stand behind black folks. (DeGraaf, 2014, para. 3).

However, some research suggests that the effort to center target group member voices can go too far. Leondar-Wright (2005) reported that advantaged group members can shy away from engagement under the guise of not wanting to speak for target group members, but really this is a way to avoid facing up to their dominant role. This concept surfaced in the conservation world as well. Abrash Walton (2010) encouraged privileged activists to ask themselves whether or not their work was being done in partnership with local communities. She wondered, is the work “being done *to* or *for* a community as opposed to *by* or *with* a community?” (p. 21). Similarly, it can be tokenizing when well-meaning advantaged group activists overly recruit target group members for participation in their organization. Gabriella Cazerres-Kelly, an indigenous activist, reports that she has been offered leadership positions in various organizations “literally before I’ve even introduced myself” (2018, para. 11). She instructs advantaged group members not to “offer me a leadership position simply so you can brag about your diversity. Offer me a

leadership position when you've seen my skills in action and you believe I would be an asset to your organization”(Cazeres-Kelly, 2018, para. 12).

There is a delicate balance that advantaged group members must find when engaging in anti-oppression work, and those with privilege should not take this recommendation as a justification for not engaging at all.

Putting privilege to use. Peggy McIntosh asserts that privilege is “a bank account which I was given at birth, and did not ask for, but which I can spend down in the service of social justice” (McIntosh, 2012, p.196). The idea of using privilege for good is a controversial one in the practitioner discourse. Some argue that any use of privilege can serve to substantiate that privilege as it “relies on the continuation of systemic privileges rather than their destruction.” (Utt, 2016, para 20).

However, it is possible to utilize the access afforded by one's privilege to advance justice initiatives. Abrash Walton (2010) argued that advantaged group members in the conservation field are “uniquely situated to advocate effectively for change” (p.19). DeGraaf (2014) provided concrete examples of how advantaged group members can support members of historically marginalized groups: “if you see a cop harassing a person of color, come in and engage - they are least likely to arrest you” (DeGraaf, 2014, para. 5) and “put yourself between black folks and the police.” (DeGraaf, 2014, para. 3).

Mistakes are inevitable.

The truth is: You're going to screw up. Strive for justice anyway.

(Utt, 2016, para. 50)

Practitioner discourse suggests that advantaged group members are bound to make mistakes in their efforts towards a more socially just world (DiAngelo, 2017; Utt, 2016). These mistakes

could include using problematic language, inappropriately assuming leadership roles, talking too much in meetings, or organizing events spaces that are not accessible. Advantaged group members are encouraged to engage in corrective behavior and stick with the work despite the inevitability of making such mistakes (Leondar-Wright, 2005; Michael & Conger, 2009). By listening, being open to feedback, and approaching the work with humility, advantaged group members can become more effective allies despite the likelihood that privileged activists will make mistakes (Leondar-Wright, 2005; McKenzie, 2013b; Michael & Conger, 2009). Further, activists with privilege are encouraged not to worry about being perfect: “your goal is to speak up, challenge racist ideas, make mistakes, learn from them, and keep going.” (Real Talk, 2018, para. 11).

Advantaged group members are responsible for their own education. Advantaged group members are told that they cannot fully understand the experience of historically marginalized groups and therefore, some look to target group members to help them better understand this reality (Real Talk, 2017; Trombetta, 2018). This is problematic when it places the responsibility for advantaged group member learning and growth on members of historically marginalized communities. The burden of emotional labor is placed on those experiencing the oppression and suggests that an advantaged group member’s time is more valuable when advantaged group members expect marginalized groups to do this work for them (McKenzie, 2013b; Metta, 2017). Instead, it is preferable for those experiencing privilege to take the initiative to educate themselves and become better, more informed advocates (Morrison, 2013; Trombetta, 2018). Better still, advantaged group members should “seek to hold themselves accountable and be held accountable by members of oppressed groups, without placing the

burden for accountability on the oppressed” and expecting those who are most directly affected by the oppression to be responsible for their edification (Edwards, 2006, p.51).

We are all in this together. It can be said that working to eradicate systems of oppression is not an entirely selfless act. Advantaged group members are also negatively affected by systems of oppression. As Crass says, “Systems of oppression are designed to make almost everyone feel inadequate, isolated, and powerless” (Crass, 2013, p. 13). Paulo Freire (1970) asserts that “dehumanization...marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it” (1970, p. 28). This is not to imply that the negative effect of oppression on individuals experiencing privilege are the same -- or as bad -- as its effect on target group members (Edwards, 2006). Johnson reminds us that the deleterious impacts of privilege on those experiencing it “may *feel* oppressive, but to call this oppression distorts the nature of what is happening and why.” (Johnson, 2018, p. 33) Frye (1983) agreed. To suggest that “oppressors are oppressed by their oppressing” would be to say that the scope of oppression “includes any and all human experience of limitation or suffering, no matter the cause, degree, or consequence.” (Frye, 1983, p.1).

Therefore, advantaged group members are encouraged to acknowledge that their “liberation is bound up with the liberation of everyone else” (Hackman, 2016a, 2:54) and recognize that they have an “autonomous stake in our own liberation” (Thurber et al., 2015, p. 16).

Moving away from “allyship”. Some practitioners recommend moving away from the term allyship as a whole, (Hackman, 2016a; McKenzie, 2013a) as a result of the limitations of the concept of allyship discussed earlier. The term ally is so often used as an identity that it is

problematic. Rejecting the term “does not give credit for past acts without regard for current behavior” and “doesn’t assume future action” (McKenzie, 2013b, p. 139).

Another criticism of the term allyship is that it creates a comfortable distance between the advantaged group member and the reality of the oppression. (Gay, 2016; Hackman, 2016a). Therefore, target group members “do not need allies. We need people to stand up and take on the problems borne of oppression as their own.” (Gay, 2016, para. 12). Some target group member activists decline to use the word ally at all, opting instead for something like “currently operating in solidarity with” (McKenzie, 2013b, p.139).

Positionality of the Researcher

As with all Qualitative Research, this study is not without bias. I move through the world with considerable privilege as a white, cisgender, middle class, nondisabled, heterosexual person. I also participate in anti-oppression organizing and plan to continue to for many years. Therefore, my interest in this topic is not solely academic nor is it hypothetical. Consequently, I entered into this research with prior understanding of the topics I investigated, informed both by the literature review here included and by my personal and professional experience with social justice engagement. Naming and acknowledging my biases on these topics serves to strengthen the research, according to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Therefore, I make these biases clear to allow the research to speak for itself (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

I came to this research with assumptions of some of the elements that my participants would speak to, and the questions I designed are both a reflection and an example of these

biases. For example, the question “can you tell me about a time that you made a mistake in this work? How did you respond? How did others respond?” is predicated upon the assumption that advantaged group members will make mistakes in this work. More so, this question assumes that it will be necessary to come back from these mistakes to be successful in this work for any length of time, which is consistent with the existing literature.

I made an effort to use open-ended questions and empathic listening to make room for ideas that exceeded my pre-understandings and what I learned from the literature (both research and practitioner sources). I had a prepared set of interview questions but the semi-structured interview process allowed for and encouraged the participant to guide the discussion. I also recognize that I was an avenue for interpreting the data. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis makes space for this occurrence and acknowledges the “double hermeneutic” inherent in this type of research. The primary interpretation considered is that of the participant but this research style also takes into account the secondary interpretation; that of the researcher. “The researcher is trying to make sense of the participant making sense of x” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 187).

I also made sure to listen for things I did not expect and retained variations and outliers in the research during the coding process. The better I understood my own assumptions, the more open I was to learning from my participants. I acknowledged the subjective lens with which I approach this work and strengthened the research by naming my own personal biases on the topic through the use of an interpretative framework (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Methods

This study examines the motivations and behaviors of individuals working against systems of oppression from positions of privilege. In this exploration I followed the guidelines of interpretative phenomenological analysis and conducted semi-structured interviews with a small group of participants (Chan & Farmer, 2017; Smith, Farmer, & Larkin, 2009), to gather thorough, in-depth descriptions of each participant's experience. Interpretative phenomenological analysis best suited my inquiry as I "explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 53). The smaller sample size highlights the depth of experience for each interviewee. Further, semi-structured interviews are advantageous as the format allowed respondents to "generate, challenge, clarify, elaborate, or re-contextualize" common or existing understandings of the topic. (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p. 94). This provided the opportunity to compare what I heard from these participants to current academic literature and activist discourse on these issues, as seen in the Discussion section of this thesis. Lastly, this interpretative phenomenological analysis allowed for the findings to lead to a call for action (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Mertens, 2015), making space for recommendations for better practices for all advantaged group members who participate in anti-oppression work.

For this study, I was interested in hearing from advantaged group members actively engaged in anti-oppression work. For the purposes of this exploration, I defined "advantaged group member" as a person experiencing privilege in a given identity area, or a person who is not part of the group that is most directly and deeply affected by the type of oppression they work against. When I say "actively engaged in anti-oppression work," I refer to someone who is currently immersed, in either a volunteer or professional role, in work that "seeks to recognize

the oppressions that exist in our society and attempts to mitigate its effects and eventually equalize the power imbalance in our communities” (Anti-Oppression Network, n.d., para. 2). Most commonly, this shows up as individuals working in support of traditionally marginalized groups such as people of color, women, poor and working-class individuals, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, people who are incarcerated, undocumented workers, indigenous peoples, and more. To ensure that each interview participant had a demonstrated commitment to anti-oppression work, I also required that they had been in this role for at least one year. Examples of individuals who would qualify for this study included white advocates involved in anti-racist organizing, United States citizens concerned with immigration policy, or cisgender and heterosexual coordinators for a LGBTQ+ organization. Further selection criteria included a minimum age of eighteen years.

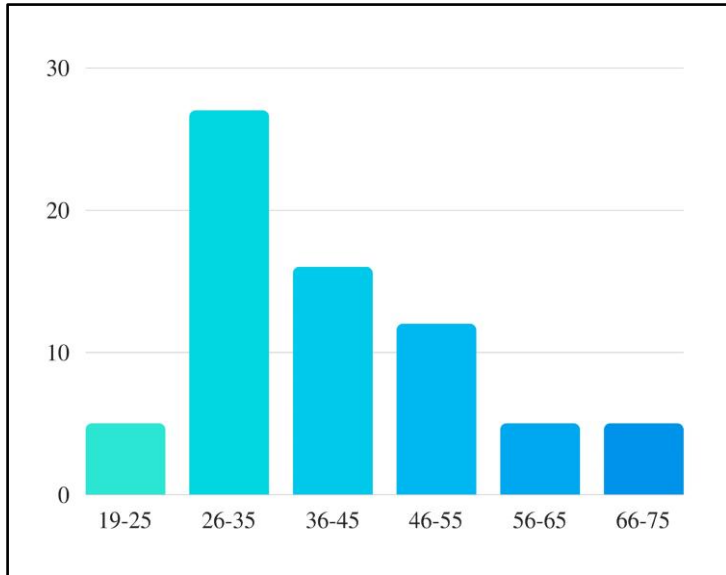
An online survey was used to recruit research participants that met these criteria. It captured the type of anti-oppression work everyone engaged in, as well as their length of time in the work and the type of role that they played (such as board member, staff person, or volunteer.) The survey also compiled demographic information such as age, gender, geographic location, and highest level of education completed. This information was included to select a participant pool with activists from different walks of life who were working to address a range of oppressions. I enlisted my personal and professional network to help identify participants and shared this survey through email and social network posts. I encouraged those who did not meet the criteria to share the request with others in their network. I further used snowball sampling by asking interview participants to indicate what other advantaged group members would be a good fit for the study.

In accordance with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Farmer, & Larkin, 2009), I aimed for a small sample size of eight to ten people and conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with nine advantaged group members. With participants' full and informed consent through a signed consent form, each of the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. A pilot interview was conducted to test both the recording equipment and interview questions, and some modifications were made to the interview protocol as a result. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis also recommends using semantic transcription where every word is collected, suggesting "false starts, significant pauses, laughs, and other features" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 65) add value to the transcription. As such, I transcribed each interview verbatim and sent transcripts for participants to review. Each participant had the opportunity to edit, clarify, or redact their comments. Approved transcripts were returned and subsequently entered into the Qualitative Data Analysis tool, MAXQDA. I then used open, thematic coding to identify commonalities across interviews (See Appendix E for complete list of codes). However, the outlying occurrences identified in this process were equally important to this exploration. This qualitative study does not seek to highlight only what is most common among interviewees, but to consider divergent approaches to this important work.

Recruitment Survey

Seventy activists and organizers completed the participant recruitment survey for this study. As I used my personal and professional networks to recruit participants and have participated in anti-oppression work myself, I knew or was acquainted with 54% of the survey respondents. The survey included five open-ended demographic questions. These questions asked survey respondents to self-identify in the categories of age, race, gender, educational background, and geographic location. All five of these optional questions had a 100% response

rate. There was a great span in the ages of survey respondents; the youngest person was 19 and the oldest 74. As seen in Figure 1, the largest age group represented were those between the ages of 26 and 35 (39% or n=27). Seven percent (n=5) of respondents were aged 19-25. Twenty three percent (n=16) were aged 36-45. Seventeen percent (n=12) were 46-55. Seven percent (n=5) were 56-65; and another 7% (n=5) were 66-75.



Note: X axis = age of survey respondents; Y axis = number of respondents

Figure 1: Survey Respondents by Age

The most homogenous category was that of race. Of the 70 survey respondents, all but two (97%) identified as white or caucasian. One person identified as Black and the other respondent identified as Pacific Islander.

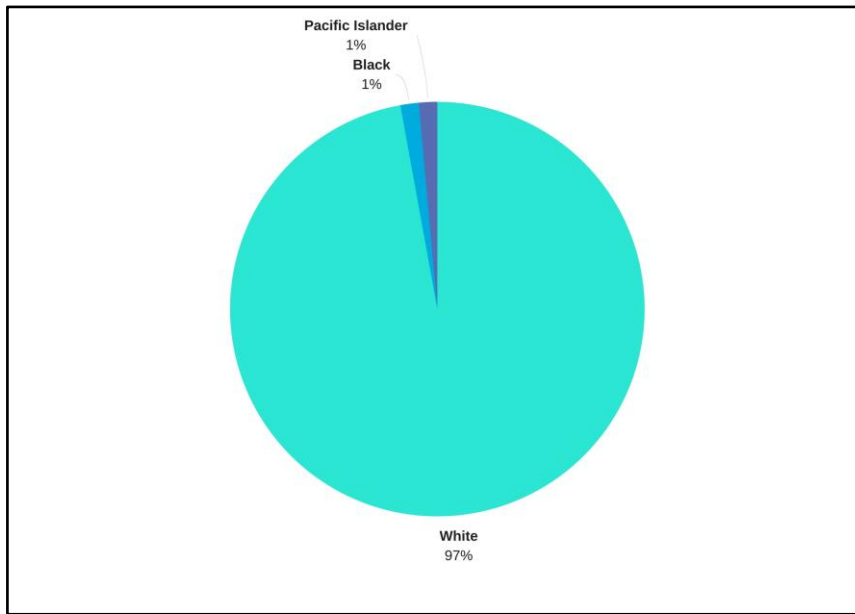


Figure 2: Survey Respondents by Race

This likely relates to the breakdown by geographic location. As seen in Table 1, most respondents reside in either Vermont or New Hampshire, two predominantly white areas of the United States. Despite my use of snowball sampling, this is also largely representative of my personal and professional networks in these two states. As previously indicated, I have participated in anti-oppression work in both Vermont and New Hampshire where many of my colleagues and comrades identify as white. It is therefore unsurprising that these groups be over represented in this survey.

Table 1: Survey Respondents by Geographic Location

Geographic Location	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
Vermont	32	46%
New Hampshire	11	16%
New York	5	7%
Minnesota	4	6%
Tennessee	3	4%
California	2	3%
Maine	2	3%
Massachusetts	2	3%
Nova Scotia	2	3%
Connecticut	1	1.4%
Illinois	1	1.4%
Louisiana	1	1.4%
Maryland	1	1.4%
Oregon	1	1.4%
South Carolina	1	1.4%
Washington, D.C.	1	1.4%

Outside of Vermont and New Hampshire, most respondents resided on the East Coast of the United States, in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Maryland, South Carolina,

and Washington, D.C. Outliers included respondents from California, Oregon, Illinois, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Minnesota (17% or n= 12). Additionally, all but two respondents (97%) were from the United States. The remaining two were both from Nova Scotia, Canada.

To collect demographic information about gender, I opted to use an open-ended question instead of having participants choose from a list of predetermined categories. This allowed each participant to choose the language that best suited their identity. As seen in Figure 3, 61% (n=43) of survey respondents identified as “female.” 20% (n=14) identified as “male.” Two individuals (or 2.8% of respondents) identified as each of the following categories: “cisgender¹ female”, “woman”, “cisgender woman.”, and “genderqueer”. The following groups each had one person(1.4% of respondents) self-identify: “cisgender male”, “female identified”, “genderqueer/trans”, “nonbinary”, “femme”, and “fluid.”

While some of these categories may seem similar or redundant, these individual terms mean different things to different people. I chose not to aggregate the responses according to my interpretation and instead opted to show the data as it was received. Further, I elected not to combine the few responses that indicated “cisgender male” or “cisgender female” in with the categories of “male” and “female” respectively, as I felt that this distinction by an advantaged group member was worth noting. Additionally, there is nothing to say that someone who identified simply as “male” or “female” could not also be transgender².

¹ Cisgender refers to someone whose sex assigned at birth matches their gender identity.

² Transgender refers to someone whose sex assigned at birth does not match their gender identity.

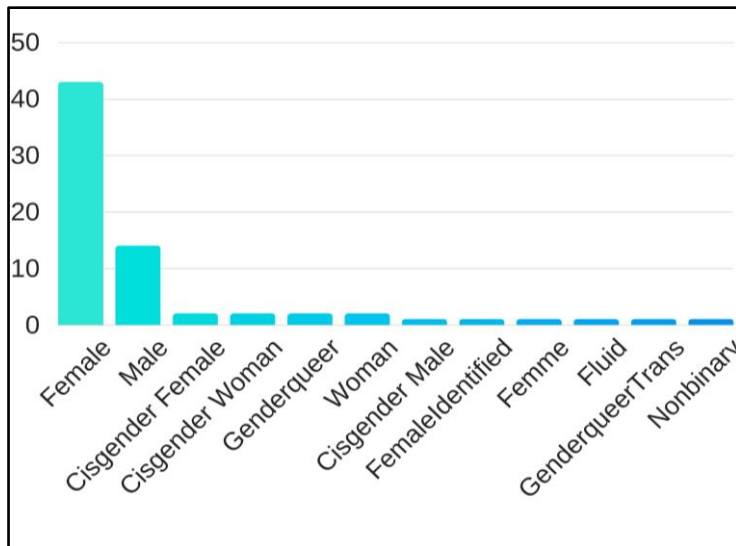


Figure 3: Survey Respondents by Gender

The group of survey respondents was well educated. At minimum, everyone had completed some college level courses. Ninety-eight percent of individuals had at least a bachelor’s degree; 64% of survey contributors held a master’s degree or higher.

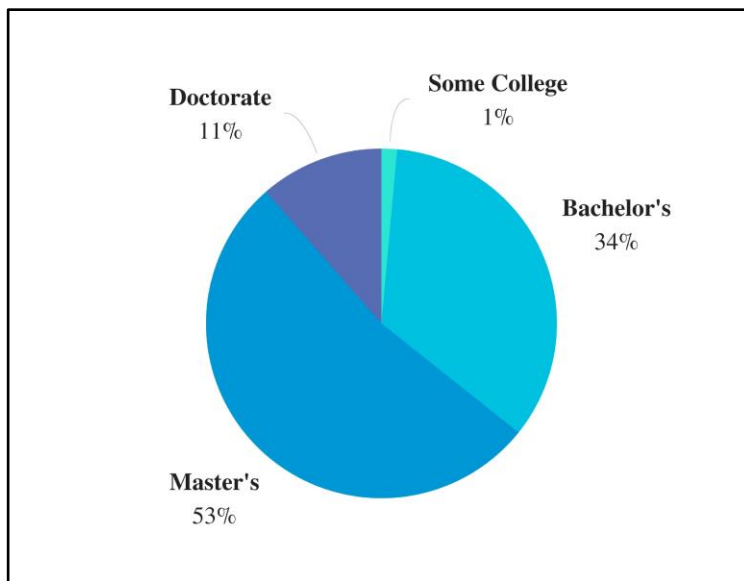


Figure 4: Survey Respondents by Educational Background

The survey also asked questions about the respondents’ anti-oppression work, including what type of work they engage in, what role they play, and how long they have been involved in this work. The survey indicated a broad spectrum of focus areas of anti-oppression work.

Individuals outlined their involvement in work that addresses immigrant rights, health equity, criminal justice reform, LGBTQ support, gender-based violence, and more. Some of the vocations listed were explicit in their commitment to anti-oppression, such as anti-hunger and food security, housing and homelessness, anti-racism, disability rights, and gender equity. Others were considered anti-oppression because of the audience with whom they work. These professionals include guidance counselors, teachers, and social workers concerned with college access, resource distribution, health equity and more for underserved populations. Other categories of work described initiatives that build skills and resources for groups, including cultural competence, multicultural organizational development, and community engagement. Additionally, while some individuals outlined a particular area of focus, 64% of survey respondents indicated that they work against more than one type of oppression in either a professional or volunteer capacity.

59% of respondents indicated that they did this work in a professional capacity: 26% identified as volunteers (see Figure 5). Only one person served solely on a Board of Directors for their involvement in anti-oppression work. The remaining 14% indicated “all of the above” or some combination of the three roles.

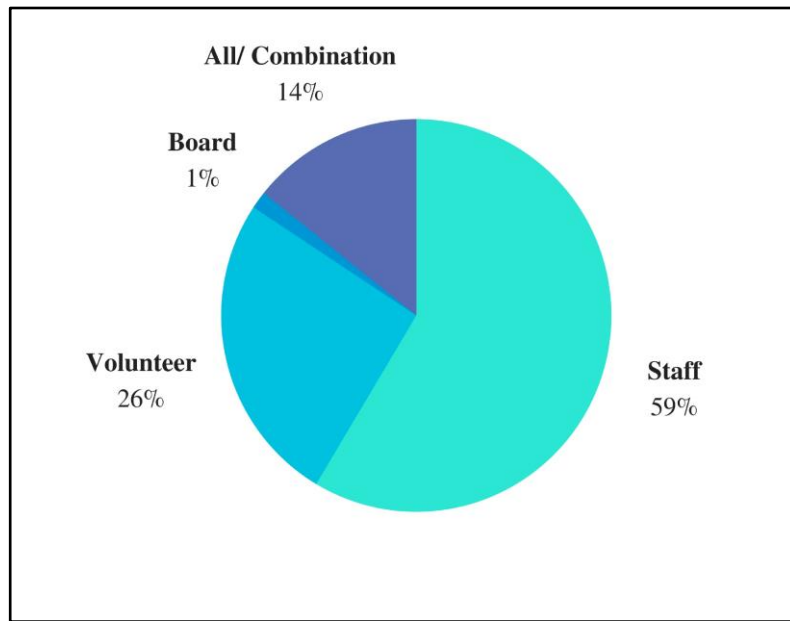
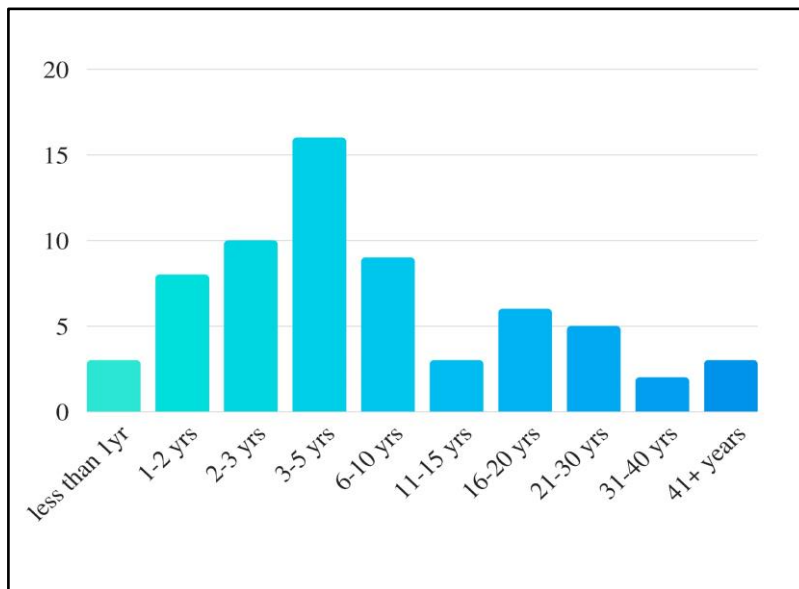


Figure 5: Survey Respondents by Role

Parallel to the large age range of survey participants, there is a notable range in the length of time involved in anti-oppression work for these activists. Most survey participants (23%) had been engaged in this work for 3 to 5 years. Three individuals had been involved in this work for 40 or more years. The person with the longest tenure in anti-oppression work has been doing this for 56 years and was one of the interview participants.



Note: X axis = number of years in the work; Y axis = number of respondents

Figure 6: Survey Respondents by Length of Time in the Work

Interview Participant Selection Process

I received many more responses to the recruitment survey than I originally anticipated. With 70 total responses, I was left with far more potential interview subjects than was necessary for my target of eight to ten interviews. The process of identifying interview participants from the pool of survey respondents was multifaceted. First, some individuals who filled out the survey indicated that they were not interested in a follow up interview or did not include contact information. Next, some survey respondents did not meet the criteria for the study. Some had been involved in this work for too short a time period (less than one year). Others were members of the historically marginalized group with whom they worked, such as women in gender equity work. As such, these activists did not qualify as an advantaged group member in that particular role. I further narrowed the group by excluding family members, close friends, and any current or former co-workers with whom I had a supervisory relationship, regardless of who did the

supervising. This left 51 survey participants who met the criteria of the study and who expressed an interest in participating in an interview.

With such an ample number of potential subjects remaining, I was able to be more selective with whom I chose to interview. However, there were times when the survey failed to draw out enough information from participants to make that determination. For example, the open-ended question “please describe the type of anti-oppression work you are involved in” could have been more specific. For some respondents, this elicited a thorough enough response to get a sense of the scope of their work to determine whether they would be a good fit for this study. For others, simple responses of “education” or “anti-racism” made it difficult to ascertain the nature or extent of their activism. This led to an adjustment of the survey methods. I submitted an amendment to the Institutional Review Board asking for approval to reach out to these individuals and solicit additional information (See the full amendment to the IRB in Appendix B).

From here, I sought to put together a participant sample with a substantial cross-section of experiences. The most common type of advantaged group member to respond to the survey (49% of total survey respondents) were white people engaged in anti-racism work in some capacity. I believe this speaks both to an increased call to action by groups such as Black Lives Matter (n.d) and Showing Up for Racial Justice (n.d.), as well as to the individuals who make up my network. As a white person involved in anti-racist organizing in predominantly white Northern New England, much of my personal network also fits that demographic. In such cases when there were multiple respondents who indicated the same type of work, I looked for the individuals who had the greatest length of time involved. I then looked for variance in geographic location, age, and gender. I looked for variety in the experience of my participants to

illuminate potential differences and commonalities between activists engaged across discrete types of anti-oppression work.

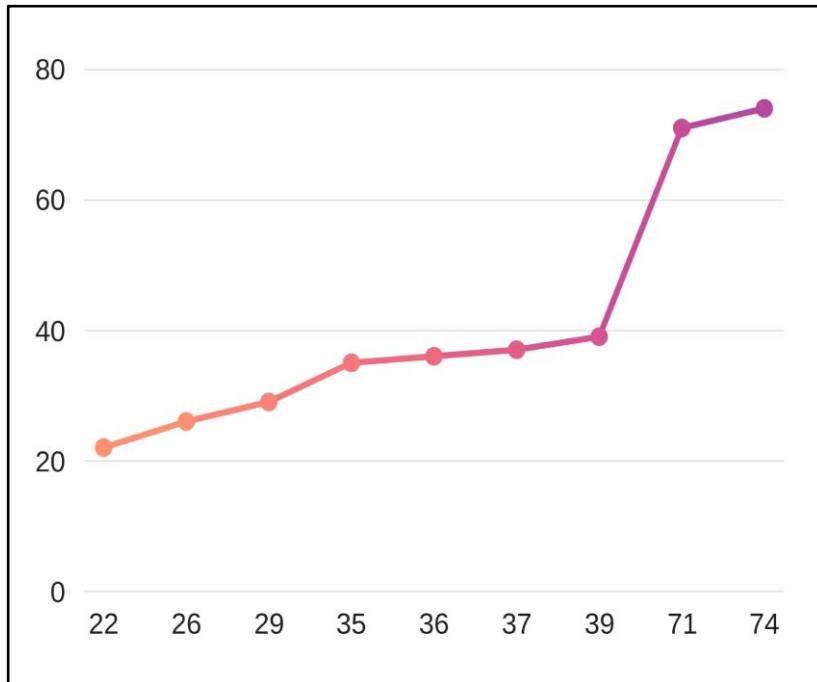
Demographic Information

The nine activists interviewed for this study had a wide range of experience and demographic identities. Each interview participant was chosen for what they could individually contribute to the study, as well as how their experience compared to and complemented that of the interview group as a whole. Of the nine interview participants, I knew or was acquainted with four of them before this study. One person was a former coworker (though neither of us presently work with that employer), I was acquainted with one person through a mutual friend, attended the same college as another more than a decade ago, and previously volunteered with one participant in a social justice group.

The age range of interview participants mirrored that of the survey respondents. The youngest person interviewed was 22 years old and the eldest was 74 years old. The other seven individuals were in their mid-twenties to late thirties.

All nine of the interview participants identified as white. The only two individuals who completed the recruitment survey and identified as People of Color were not eligible for the study due to the minimum time requirement or a supervisory relationship with the researcher.

Regarding geographic location, most interview participants resided on the East Coast of North America (See Figure 8). The person living farthest west was in Louisiana and farthest north (and the only participant outside of the United States) lived in Nova Scotia, Canada. Additionally, four participants lived and worked in Vermont, two in New York, and one in Washington, D.C.

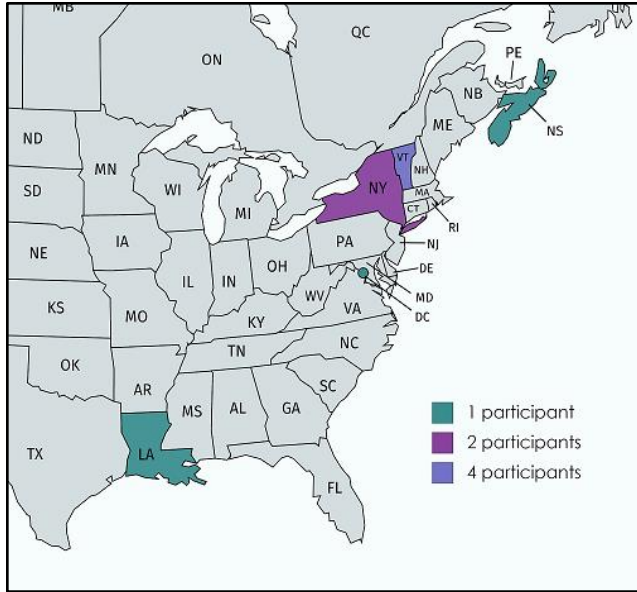


Note: X axis = individual ages, Y axis = ages by decade

Figure 7: Interview Participants by Age

Table 2: Interview Participants by Geographic Location

Geographic Location	# of Participants	% of Participants
Vermont	4	44%
New York	2	22%
Nova Scotia	1	11%
Tennessee	1	11%
Washington, D.C.	1	11%



Note: Partial Map of the United States and Canada

Figure 8: Map of Interview Participants by Geographic Location

Using their own language, the gender breakdown of interview participants was as follows: four individuals identified as “female”, three identified as “male”, one identified as a “woman”, and one identified as “genderqueer.”

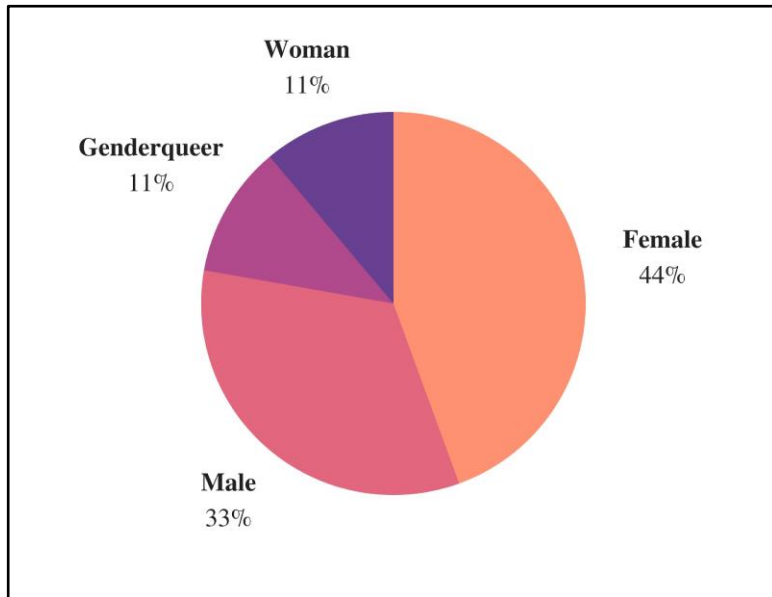


Figure 9: Interview Participants by Gender

Much like the full group of survey participants, the group of individuals interviewed were highly educated. Three participants held a Bachelor's Degree and four had a Master's Degree. Further, two participants were currently enrolled in graduate school, one in a Master's program and one as a PhD candidate.

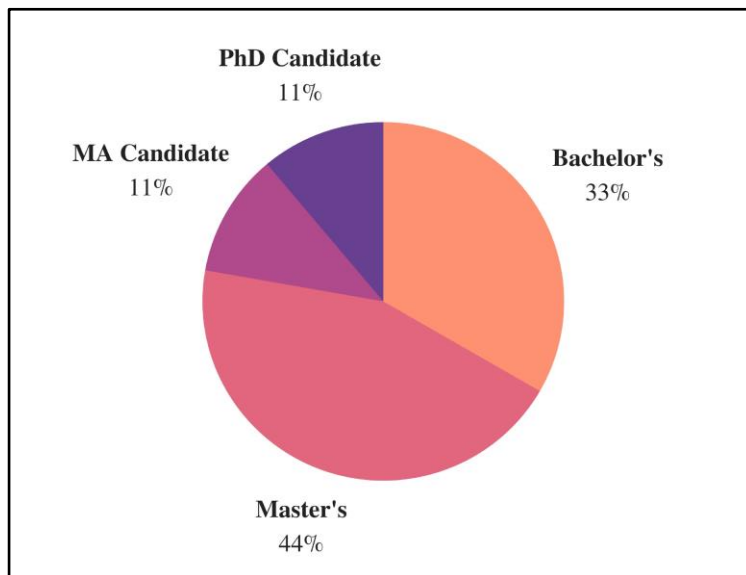


Figure 10: Interview Participants by Educational Background

In terms of the role played by interview participants in their anti-oppression work, the majority (67%) served as staff members at the time of the interview. One person was a volunteer, another was a University based researcher, and the final interview participant served in all three roles of staff, board member, and volunteer.

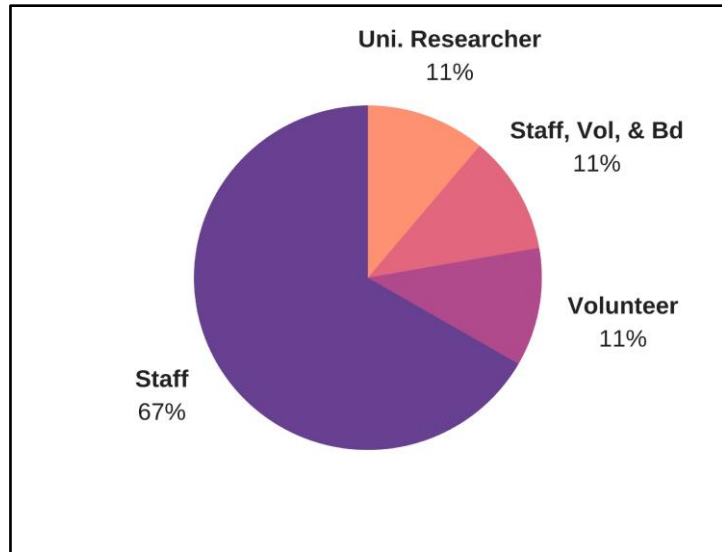


Figure 11: Interview Participants by Role

The group of participants interviewed for this project had been engaged in this work for a great length of time, with a total of 116 years of combined anti-oppression experience among them. Though the minimum requirement for participation in this study was one year in the work, all nine interview participants had been doing this work for at least two years. The person with the greatest length of time had been involved in anti-oppression work for a remarkable 56 years.

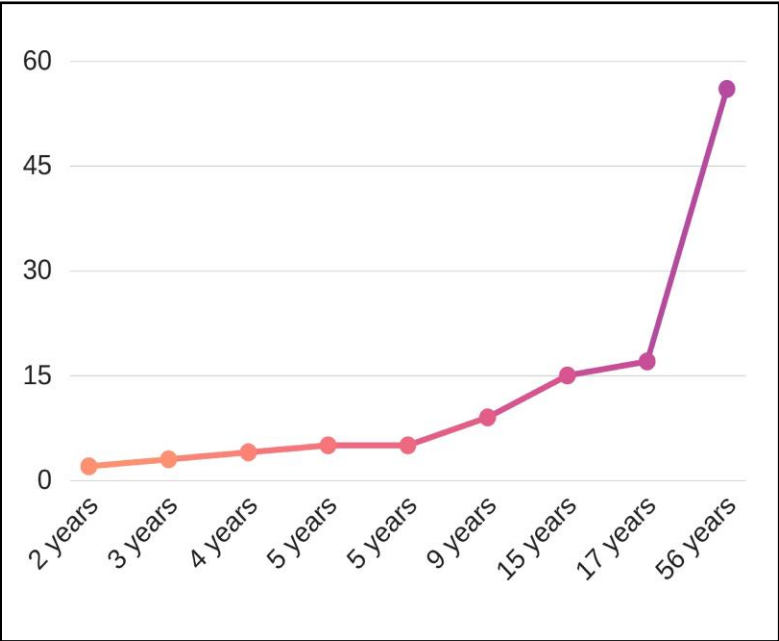


Figure 12: Interview Participants by Length of Time in the Work

Results

The nine individuals interviewed for this exploration offered a unique perspective into the experience of working to dismantle systems of oppression from positions of privilege. While each person demonstrated a deep commitment to anti-oppression, the participants engaged in the work in largely different ways. Some participated in nonviolent direct action, others advocated for change within institutions, and some focused on interpersonal connection and discussion. Some individuals worked full time for organizations that espoused anti-oppression missions and this work was expressly in their job description. Others carved out space within their job responsibilities to provide services and support for historically underserved populations. Some volunteered for social justice organizations but earned their living in other ways. Most demonstrated their commitment to social justice in other parts of their personal lives, and each elected to participate in this study, and as such, self-identified as an advantaged group member engaged in anti-oppression work.

Each of the interviewees has been given a pseudonym and other identifying information has been changed or omitted to protect their privacy.

Laura is an organizer who has been involved in anti-racism work since volunteering with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in the 1960s. Her role has changed over the years, serving as a volunteer, a board member, and college professor at various points. She now volunteers with a predominantly white anti-racist organization. **Megan** is a staff member at a nonprofit organization dedicated to criminal justice reform. She has worked for nearly two decades with people who are or who have previously been incarcerated. **Casey** is a learning and development professional in a nonprofit organization. Casey identifies as genderqueer and uses the pronouns they and them. They are able to address many areas of anti-oppression in their

work, including disability rights, anti-racism, exploring masculinity, and gender equity. They have been doing this work for two years. **Alex** is human rights advocate and a case manager at a youth service organization where his focus is addressing youth homelessness. He has been involved in this work for five years.

Chris is a community organizer focusing on anti-racism and anti-fascism at the local level in a large city. He has been involved in this work for three years. **Victoria** works for a nonprofit graduate school of education that helps educators earn their teaching certificate or Master's Degree. Her higher education institution trains teachers in the field in underserved school districts that are primarily students of color and strives to keep teachers in these communities after they graduate. Victoria has been involved for four years. **Allison** is a career services professional at a community college where she works with a number of marginalized populations, including refugees, non-native English speakers, LGBTQ+ students, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. She has been involved in this work for nine years. Allison was recommended for the study by her husband, Ryan, who was also interviewed. **Ryan** is a college student life administrator where he serves on a trans advocate team. He has been involved in anti-oppression work for more than fifteen years. Ryan and Allison also serve as house parents in a college preparatory program that places students of color in high performing public and private high schools. **Kim** is a university-based researcher in a PhD program. She conducts community-based participatory research with Indigenous communities in Canada. She has been doing this work for five years.

Themes

The following section outlines themes derived from participant interviews with regards to motivation, support, and resilience factors of advantaged group members in anti-oppression work. The ten themes that emerged from analysis of the data were: a) origin story, b) awareness of advantaged group member status, c) decentering oneself, d) making and coming back from mistakes, e) ongoing learning, f) accountability and support elements, g) using privilege for good, h) deep commitment to the work, i) importance of relationships, and j) thoughts on allyship and solidarity. See full list of themes and subthemes in Table 2 below. Differences between and among interview participants and outliers to these themes are explored and discussed as well. These elements are representative of the experiences of this group of nine participants, and I make no claims to their representing all privileged activists in social justice work.

Table 3: Results: Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme
1) Origin story	a) Event/incident
	b) Personal experience with oppression
	c) Relationship with target group members
2) Awareness of AGM status	
3) Decentering oneself	a) Centering target group member voices
	b) Not taking things personally
4) Making and coming back from mistakes	a) Fear of making mistakes
	b) Mistakes are inevitable
	c) Owning up to mistakes
	d) Showing up again after a mistake
5) Ongoing learning	a) AGMs will never fully understand
	b) Reconciling with own bias/judgement
	c) Being open to feedback
6) Accountability and support elements	a) Advantaged group member peers & colleagues
	b) Target group member peers & colleagues
7) Using privilege for good	a) AGMs engage other AGMs
	b) Interrupting problematic behavior
8) Deep commitment to the work	a) Strong overlap between life and work
	b) Cause you to stop
9) Importance of relationships	a) With target group members
	b) With other advantaged group member activists
10) Thoughts on allyship & solidarity	

Origin story. Almost all of the interview participants described clear and concrete reasonings for how they became involved in anti-oppression organizing. Three main types of origin stories emerged: a) an event or incident served as a catalyst for their involvement; b) one's personal experience with oppression translated into empathy for different types of oppression; and c) close relationships with target group members motivated individuals to become involved.

Event/incident. Having spent part of her childhood in Germany shortly after the Second World War, Laura reflected on the lack of action of trusted adults during the Holocaust that motivated her to action during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States: "I wasn't going to be a bystander. I wasn't going to do what people that I had loved and cared about and whose parents were kind to me [had done], but somehow they were responsible for this." For Laura, engagement with a civil rights organization "offered a chance to not be like all these people I knew in Germany who hadn't done anything."

Alex credited a volunteer outing at a soup kitchen in high school with the start of his career in anti-oppression work. He described how the experience helped him to better understand the existence of oppression right in his backyard:

You know, you hear 'homelessness' and if you're not really affected by it or if you're not really concentrating on it specifically, you know it exists, but you don't know to what extent and you don't know how close to home it is...The place was full. I couldn't believe how packed it was with people coming to get food. So I realized how many homeless people or how many people struggling in my community there were and I had no idea, so I really struggled with that.

The experience motivated Alex to become a human rights professional “one thing led to another but it was the homelessness in high school that really opened up my eyes.”

Victoria described a similar experience of awakening to oppression early in her career in an underfunded school district: “I realized that these kids were amazing, and they were so smart, and just no one was giving them any opportunity.” She reported how seeing this phenomenon first hand changed her understanding of the issue: “I'd heard about it, I'd read about it, I knew it was a thing but I'd never actually seen it.” Victoria described how “seeing it in action” is what inspired her to work towards social justice in educational settings.

Personal experience with oppression. Other participants described how their experiences with discrimination in other identity areas translated to motivational factors for them to get involved in situations where they do experience privilege. Chris described himself as a “white male that appears to have every trapping of privilege that you possibly can.” He explained his experience with a mental health diagnosis as an entry point to better understand the experiences of other traditionally marginalized communities: “I have found that to be a place where I gained a lot of insight, inspiration, and a small taste of what oppression and stigmatization can look like.” For Chris this was such a powerful motivator that it was hard for him to imagine other ways that advantaged group members become involved: “I think it's difficult for... people of privilege to get into this work without being personally informed by oppression of their own.”

Casey described a similar sentiment of extrapolating their own experience with oppression to better understand the oppression of others: “my entry point was my own identities and my own questioning and my own experience of oppression throughout my life.” They described the basis of their understanding: “I think for me it's an emotional level that was able to connect me to anti-oppression work in areas where I do hold privilege.” For them, a major

catalyzing factor was “recognizing the emotional reactions and experiences that I have had as a result of my own oppression or discrimination against me throughout my life.”

Personal relationship with target group members.

I never really understood how easy it is to just ignore your privilege until you love somebody like a kid or a child, that go through these things. - Ryan

Another catalyst for advantaged group members were personal relationships with friends or family members directly experiencing the oppression. These close friendships afforded advantaged group members the opportunity to perceive what life is like for others. Ryan described how he “gained comfort and knowledge and understanding” because of friends who took the time to talk with him about their reality: “we talked and talked and talked, and I better understood what their life experiences were.” He continued “one of the first areas where I started to see my privilege was because I had friends who were gay and...were kind enough to tolerate my stupid questions, and I started to see.” From there, it was an easy jump to appreciating what this meant on a grander scale. He continued: “I’m a very, very empathetic person so I just kind of needed the input. I was already that person, but I needed the input of these experiences outside of mine.”

For Kim, it was her family’s move from Nova Scotia to the Canadian Arctic Archipelago that introduced her to the communities with whom she would conduct her work: “the community I’ve known and worked with and have been a part of the longest... when I go there, I’m really treated like a community member.” This relationship building has been key for Kim’s work: “I come to research from community and not the other way around which is often the way that folks...seek out communities to work with.” This has also lent Kim credibility in other indigenous communities: “knowing how communities operate and knowing a lot about the North

and having lived and spent loads of time there...when I meet people there and they know that, you can basically automatically build a relationship just on that.” As discussed further below, in Kim’s case and others these connections with target group members not only functioned as motivating elements, but also manifested as accountability and support factors for some participants.

Regardless of the type of origin story, each of these examples highlighted an advantaged group member’s process of becoming more aware of the existence of oppression. For each of these individuals, that increased awareness then translated into action.

Awareness of advantaged group member status. Each of the nine participants described an awareness of their privileged status as they conducted their work. For some it was ever-present: Ryan reported “I’m very aware of it.” Kim shared “I’m constantly thinking about it,” and Chris reported that he thought about it “constantly. Like maybe all the time.”

Some participants saw this awareness as directly tied to how well they can do their work. Chris said “[I have] conditioned myself in the last couple years to be more aware when in spaces where I am around people that I don’t know of a marginalized identity.” He linked his awareness of his advantaged status to the likelihood he would be trusted by target group members. Allison shared that she was cognizant of this difference “because I worry about my ability to be seen by our students as an ally and as someone who can, to some degree understand their experience enough to help them in whatever role I have at the time.”

Others recognized the times that they might not be as aware of these issues as they would like to think they were: Casey admitted “I may think that I am hyper aware of it and then through that experience come to terms with the fact that I still have a lot of self-exploration to do.” Victoria explained a similar sentiment: “I think on a surface level I’d be like ‘oh I’m super

aware!' but I think subconsciously I'm not nearly as aware as I think I am." She concluded "I try to be cognizant of it, but I know that there are still times when I'm certainly not nearly as cognizant as I should be." Allison described a similar understanding: "you want to feel like you're living authentically and it's nice to have that kind of check when you realize 'oh, I didn't really understand this as much as I thought I was trying hard to understand it.'"

For others, this awareness sometimes manifested as guilt or discomfort over the difference in their situations. Megan described "I feel uncomfortable a lot. Just knowing how much privilege I have, and it breaks my heart when people are living in squalored [sic] apartments and I have a really nice home that I've lived in for 25 years." For Alex, the contrast can be striking when working with youth experiencing homelessness:

I helped this kid pitch a tent in a graveyard and then there comes a point where I have to say 'bye' and I get to go back to my nice warm house with my home cooked meal and my comfortable bed and it kills you to say 'bye.'

Kim warned how the awareness of such differences can go too far and become tokenizing. She explained "you need to be aware of it but then if you focus too much on it you're 'othering.'" She described a balance advantaged group members should aim for:

If [the awareness] is constantly at the forefront, if all you can think about is that you do come with this privilege, with this power...and [you are] trying to be constantly aware of it, you also then end up othering the folks that you're with because of it. So I guess there's a balance of being aware and being reflective and reflexive in what you're doing, but also not being too caught up in it because then you are just perpetuating it.

Decentering oneself. Historically, advantaged group members have a tendency to co-opt movements and prioritize their vision and involvement in liberation work. This can sometimes manifest as speaking over target group members or occupying leadership positions.

Alternatively, interview participants in this study spoke to a commitment to decentering themselves from the focus of the work. This took two forms: a) centering target group member voices and leadership; and, b) not taking things personally.

Centering target group member voices and leadership. Perhaps inspired by Paulo Freire, “who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society?” (Freire, 1970, p.29) there is the inclination of these advantaged group members to center the voices of target group members. This often sprouted from a desire to ensure that the work they were engaged in was in line with target group member priorities. Megan valued “letting the participants drive the bus in terms of what they need.” She described her work with previously or currently incarcerated people as helping individuals get “their lives stabilized in moving forward the way they want to be moving forward.” Kim described a similar commitment: “I want my work to be in service to community and in service to the folks that I work with...I want it to be what they want and their priorities.”

Participants also shared that this was explicitly due to the fact that they could not fully understand the lived experience of target group members. Allison explained:

I want to support [my students] in a way that they want to be supported and I want to understand them and help them in a way they want to be, and trying to own that so that they don't feel like we can't talk about that, or that they have to pretend that I understand what it's like to live their lives. Because I want them to understand that I know that's not the case.

The reality of advantaged group members not being able to fully understand the experiences of individuals from historically marginalized groups is more thoroughly explored below.

Not taking things personally. These interview participants also described a need to not take things personally. For Alex, this is true when clients might not want to follow his vision for how they can find secure housing. He described spending time and energy creating opportunities for clients that they ultimately did not take advantage of: “So you really have to not take it personally and not look at it as wasted time.” He also reported seeing this response from target group members as an opportunity to learn how to better support them: “everything that [clients] do is a sign or a flag that tells you something.”

Casey talked about the connection of taking things personally and an activist’s ego. In describing a time that they made a mistake, Casey reflected on how they were affected by the feedback they received: “I was taking it so personally that...the ego really came in there. And I made the experience about how I was inadequate or how I didn't know enough.”

As a white male, Chris had come to foresee that his active, sustained involvement in anti-racist organizing will likely elicit critical feedback from target group members with whom he works:

I think at the core of any accountability that I model or I try to practice in my life is that humility and that willingness and almost anticipation that every day that I wake up may be a day where I am confronted about something that I did that harmed someone or that impacted someone, even in a very small way. And that I need to be ready and I need to take care of myself and I need to put myself in a mental head space to be able to receive that and not respond with hostility.

He described an arduous, ongoing process, and how he has improved this over time. “Two years ago if somebody had [given me feedback] I would have been...really defensive and fragile and unhelpful.”

Making and coming back from mistakes. Connected to the aim to decenter advantaged group members, interview participants and the researcher discussed the inevitability of advantaged group members making mistakes in their anti-oppression work. Alison said

You make a mistake and it's not the end of the world...you gotta be open to the fact that you're going to make mistakes all the time, but you have to circle back, you have to have people that are gonna help you to stay honest and truthful.

As historically marginalized groups are made up of communities of individual people, there is no one way to support all individual members of that group. Therefore, it seems very likely that advantaged group members will make mistakes in this work. Interview participants were asked about their experience making mistakes and how they, and the target group members with whom they work, responded. These conversations yielded four types of responses: a) fear of making mistakes; b) the inevitability of making mistakes; c) owning up to mistakes; and d) showing up again after making mistakes have been made.

Fear of making mistakes. Even after over half a century in this work, Laura described how the fear of making mistakes affects her current activism. “I've sort of stayed a little bit back and I can justify that with being my age...I'm a support person. But some of it's also fear. And I'm just gonna be really honest and say that that's the case.” For Laura, this was directly connected to her personal experience with the “expulsion of white people” from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in the late 1960s. Laura described the experience as painful, but explained “that pain didn't stop me from trying to re-engage once it was possible to do so.”

However, this experience had a lingering effect on her work and her fear of a similar rejection: “I know I am still to a degree controlled by all of that. Both the beauty of it and the pain of it. So, I am wary of making mistakes now.”

Mistakes are inevitable. For Allison, recognizing that mistakes are inevitable in anti-oppression work is acknowledging that “there are still things that I'm really bad at and I'm working hard to get better.” She explained “there are conversations that I don't say things correctly or in a way that's best suited to continuing the conversation or developing a relationship.”

Victoria attempted to mitigate the likelihood of this phenomenon: “I try to be really proactive in stopping myself in my mistakes...I don't want to hurt anyone if I can avoid it. Whether it be with my words or my actions.” Even so, she acknowledged that she is likely to do so and considered the overall impact of her work: “I want to be able to look back at myself in 5 years and be like, you know what? I wasn't perfect but I tried.”

Owning up to mistakes. The ability to acknowledge and move past mistakes is critical for advantaged group members to form trusting relationships with the target group members with whom they work. Yet this process is a precarious one for many advantaged group members. Ryan embraced the challenge head on, and remarked that he will “call myself out in front of a room full of people if I have to.”

Allison described her commitment to doing so despite the challenges: “to me it's really important to own things in general, in this work and kind of any mindset, when I feel like it didn't go well.” She continued: “it's important to circle back to people and own up to things when they weren't as good as you wanted them to be.”

Showing up again after a mistake. Other participants discussed the importance of not giving up after making a mistake. It can be challenging to return to anti-oppression organizing after unintentionally causing harm to those one wishes to support. Casey outlined just how difficult this process can be:

I would say that I'm still in that learning process to figure out what that looks like for me. And I definitely, I experienced being rattled after that [mistake]. I felt less confident in my abilities, I doubted whether or not this is the right work for me, and it took me a while to recognize that I was allowing this experience to tie a knot in me.

Allison described her commitment to this undertaking over the long term: “I like to think that I'm learning and some days I get it right and some days I don't, but you come back the next day and try again and that's, that's I guess gotta count for something.”

Ongoing learning. Interview participants also discussed their shared commitment to ongoing learning. Regardless of length of time in the work, interview participants described a concession to the fact that their learning and growth will never be complete. Even after 56 years engaging in anti-racist organizing, Laura asserted, “it is still a work in progress, I am always learning.” She emphasized that there will “never be an end to the lessons to be learned and the way to find oneself.” Victoria echoed this sentiment encouraging other advantaged group members to “just do your best, but never stop being willing to listen.” She warned “don't ever think that you've gotten to a place where you are the wokest person and you know everything.” Casey described this concept in terms of their values as they engage in anti-oppression work:

My principal value is a recognition that I am not an expert and will never be an expert. So it's a value for continuous development and always checking in with

the people that I'm working with or with myself to really make sure that I'm communicating not from a place of knowing it all but from a place of curiosity.

This commitment to ongoing learning also manifested in the three other areas: a) recognizing that advantaged group members can never fully understand the experiences of target group members; b) that advantaged group members must reconcile with their own bias or judgements; and c) advantaged group members must be open to feedback.

Advantaged group members will never fully understand. Another common theme from participant discussions was a recognition that advantaged group members can never fully understand what target group members experience. No amount of research, reading, or relationships with target group members will equate to living that experience themselves. Casey said:

It created an environment where I could empathize but I couldn't fully understand. I could imagine what that pain or that experience might have been like. But I knew that I was looking at it through a veil. I was never going to actually be able to feel that experience for other people and that's not something I'm ever going to be able to experience.

Ryan and Allison recounted their work as house parents in a residential high school program for students of color and the increased awareness of oppression this has brought them. Allison explained “one of the great things that this experience has given to us is that ability to, for a minute, begin to really, in a small way, understand this experience so much deeper, and that has been hard and also great.” Even still, they each expressed the sentiment that they will never fully understand the experiences of their students. Ryan delineated his efforts to have the students feel heard and supported:

I try to be really thoughtful and understanding about who I am and who I'm not and how to not sound like I know everything, because I don't know anything. I don't get it at all, but I need them to feel like somebody gets it enough that they can say what they need to and feel what they need to and work through things as they happen.

Allison echoed this thought. She argued that no matter how passionate or well versed advantaged group members are on these topics they “can never really understand how it's an everyday part of, for example, a person of color's life to navigate our culture as a person of color.”

Reconciling own bias/judgement. An additional way that advantaged group members characterize their ongoing learning is connected to how they think about and reconcile their own judgements or internalized biases. This is an arduous process. Chris conceded “it was definitely a struggle for me and challenging for me to face my toxic masculinity, to face my toxic whiteness, to face the class privilege I used to have.” And yet the work is necessary. Casey examined the way they “perpetuate racism and sexism” and recounted their commitment to challenging these biases, both for the people with whom they work, but also for their own liberation:

It's something that affects the way that I interact with people. It affects the way that I perceive the world. And I, I don't want other people to experience the pain that that can cause but I also don't believe that I can be a whole human being if I am looking at the world through those lenses of hatred or discrimination that I may not even know I have.

Ryan provided a helpful framing for acknowledging and moving through these inevitable biases:

Think about the moment when you have a gut reaction that you have no control over and then think critically about it. You don't have to feel bad about it because

you had no control over it. But once you know it's there, what do you do about it?

What does it mean and how does it influence your future reactions?

Being open to feedback. Willingness to hear and incorporate feedback is another key element of ongoing learning. Many activists interviewed worked closely with their target group member peers. If mistakes are inevitable, it is very likely that advantaged group members will receive feedback from these individuals or others. Victoria reminded activists not to get defensive or try to deny the wrongdoing: “You don't get to dictate how what you do makes other people feel. If someone tells you that something you did hurt them, listen to it. Just listen to other people.” Ryan indicated how he contends with his own reflexive response in these scenarios: “If somebody calls me out, I just try- I work really, really hard to fight my own fragility.”

Chris disclosed the measure of modesty required to periodically hear that your well-intended efforts have caused more harm than good: “having that feedback and being able to process that feedback...takes a certain level of humility that I was not aware that I could even possess before I started doing this work.”

Accountability and support elements. Interview participants also described what holds them accountable in their work as well as who and what supported them in their efforts. In most cases, there was overlap between these two categories and the things that held people accountable also served to support them. For many participants, their advantaged group member peers and colleagues played that role. Victoria described one such colleague. As the only two people working out of her office, they work very closely together. “She’s super supportive...she does talk to me about when I say offensive things, and she's always there to call me out on my shit, which is something I need and I appreciate.” Casey also works on a two person team and credited their colleague with both supporting them and holding them accountable. For Casey, it

is the trust that their colleague demonstrated for them that created that dynamic. Casey explained:

She is not someone who has ever worked in the space of cultural competency or diversity and inclusion or justice trainings and so she really relies on me to carry that... so she is an incredibly important support network for me.

However, one's peers and colleagues do not always have to work at the same organization. Megan described the support and accountability she felt with those who work with partner agencies "we all work together to hold each other accountable. We call each other out on a lot of issues and make sure we're being inclusive and including all the voices that need to be heard." She further explained "we support each other to keep moving, to keep doing what we can."

Another major accountability and support source for advantaged group members are their target group member peers. In some cases, accountability to target group members is closely connected to centering those voices. Kim described "constantly seeking guidance from elders and community members and community advisors." For her, this is involved examining power dynamics and "looking at the space that you take up and what that looks like and feels like."

Sometimes this accountability takes the form of direct feedback from target group members. Ryan described a colleague who is not afraid to share when she feels he is doing something he should not: "when I mess up she calls me on my shit. Which is my favorite, because it feels terrible but it's so important." Chris described a similar scenario: "I have been held and supported by people that I'm in relationship with, and deeply accountable to in the work that I do now."

For Laura, the accountability to and support from target group member peers stems from their shared long standing, meaningful connection. She described her relationship with one such

leader during her time in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in the 1960s. The two women reconnected after twenty years and spoke on the phone every few months for the next twenty five years up until the woman's recent death. Laura explained that her accountability goes beyond the target group member activists with whom she works now. "At the root for me, my accountability is to some people who were my beloved friends whom I lost and whom I found again." She continued "I'm accountable to her. I always have been."

Victoria described a unique way in which she held herself accountable. She reflected back on her own experience with sexism and compared her behavior with that of some men she has known. She considered her tone and language and "I try to think of what I would feel like if like a man was speaking to me the way I'm speaking to a student, especially my students of color."

Another way that accountability shows up for interview participants is connected to a sense of history, and whether or not they would like their place in it based on their current behavior. Victoria reflected on her process for considering this. She regularly asks herself "am I saying something that maybe I'm going to cringe at in five years?" considering whether or not her future self would be proud of her actions. Allison discussed this same concept, but with a sense of certainty:

It is worth the additional effort and it's worth the challenges and the awkward, difficult conversations with coworkers and students and whomever, cause yeah. It's- you know you're right. You know that you're on the right side of where you want to be, the right side of history.

Using privilege for good. Most interview participants considered the privilege they experience as irrefutable; an undeniable aspect of their lives. Laura examined "how this privilege

functions” and concluded “there's absolutely...there is no way to give it up.” With the agreement that the existence of privilege is definite, many interview participants then looked to how that privilege could be used for good. For Victoria, this was almost a responsibility: “I think it would be a waste of the rights I was born into purely by luck if I didn't use the privilege I do have to try to make the world better for everyone else - or just more bearable.” For Kim, it was essential to do so with direction from the target group members with whom she works. She conducted her work “so that my privilege can be in service to community to create change or to bring voices to where they need to be heard, but dictated by community.”

Ryan used his privilege to validate the experiences of target group members, especially the young men of color with whom he works:

What I try to do most with my privilege is to both bolster people who don't have that privilege and try to provide an affirmation of ‘what you're feeling and experiencing is real’ from my perspective as well, to the degree that that's helpful and whatever I can to be supportive, I'll do that.

However, not all interview participants agreed that using privilege for good is always a good idea. Chris warned of the risks of attempting to use one's advantaged status to further an undertaking. He explained “it is possible for us to use our privilege to do good work and it is also possible to use our privilege to do good work and still have negative impacts without realizing it.” He reiterated that “one of the big parts of the work for me is just making sure that all the good that I do is not cancelled out by the impacts I don't see.”

The idea of using privilege for good was also reflected in two other concepts: a) advantaged group members engage other advantaged group members, and b) interrupting problematic behavior.

Advantaged group members engage other advantaged group members. One area where interview participants agree that it is beneficial for advantaged group members to use their privileged status for good is when engaging with other advantaged group members. Laura described this as a “very valuable role” that advantaged group member advocates can take on and suggested that this is where “the vast majority of our work lies.” Chris agreed that working with other white men “is where I feel like I can make the most impact.” He relied on “being able to relate to them and their experiences...to work through these toxic behaviors they have.”

Victoria described her efforts of engaging her advantaged group member loved ones “what I try to do is mostly just be active in conversations and holding my friends accountable and my family.” Ryan recounted his experience interacting with many different advantaged group members “a lot of my energy is really put into trying to help people in the same privileged positions or overlapping privileged positions that I hold see their hang ups.” Regardless of whether or not the individuals are close friends or family members, Laura insisted that when engaging with other advantaged group members, it is beneficial to continue to align one’s efforts with target group member priorities, “it really helps to be somewhat anchored in the [target group] community and history and culture.”

Interrupting problematic behavior. Another area where advantaged group members can use their privilege for good is by interrupting problematic behaviors, especially when those behaviors are carried out by another advantaged group member. Interview participants described their experience interrupting harmful behavior in many different scenarios, including at work, with their friends and families, in a job interview, on social media, in activist circles, and more. Victoria recapped what she and her colleagues did for one another to create good habits “we practice interrupting each other when we say something inappropriate, especially when it's a

microaggression that we might not realize is super racist or super offensive.” It is also possible to be proactive in heading off these troubling behaviors. Victoria reported that her organization tries to “foster a culture that is very aggressive towards dealing with any racism, homophobia, or sexism that we see in our office space and in our students.”

The ability to interrupt the troubling behavior of others was closely connected to interview participants’ willingness to be called out (or in) on their own behavior. Chris recounted his own willingness to receive similar feedback:

I think what it comes down to for me in this work, it's just really great to have people who are open to having their opinions changed on things, and willing to confront me and challenge me to grow and change.

Deep commitment to the work. Each of the nine interview participants demonstrated a profound commitment to their anti-oppression efforts. Allison reported:

This [work] is important and not some fad and not something that we're gonna twenty years later be like ‘ooh, that was the wrong call.’ There's no doubt that caring for and supporting and trying to become an ally for a number of marginalized populations is just the right thing.

Some participants discussed a strong carry over between their explicit work and the rest of their lives. For Casey, the “veil of separation between my job and my personal life is thin.” They further explained “I’m not motivated to show up to a space in a way that is different from what feels authentic to me.” Laura shared a similar sentiment. “It isn't some sort of distant moral thing. It's...it's my life.” Megan explained how the commitment to her work shows up in her personal life:

I'm sure it's always affected who I align myself with, who my friends are. And things that I do and causes that I support and it's kind of a way of living. And I've always been grateful that my work life and the rest of my life are pretty connected. I'm not living in two different worlds when I'm at work and when I'm not at work.

Interview participants also demonstrated a deep commitment to these values when asked if they could imagine anything that would cause them to stop doing anti-oppression work. Most advantaged group members reported that they could not imagine a scenario that would cause them to stop. Some answers were emphatic: Ryan replied “no, absolutely not,” while Alex shared that he “will fight for human rights until my very last breath,” and Chris proclaimed that “death” would be the only thing to stop him.

Like many of her peers, Allison “can't think of anything that would deter me from wanting to continue this work.” She reported that she envisions herself continuing to do anti-oppression work in some capacity “regardless of whatever work I [am] doing to get paid” because doing so “doesn't feel like it's a choice.” Alex also shared that he will “always be fighting for human rights one way or another...even if I switch positions or companies or organizations.” Megan had previously retired and found her way back to the work “so, no I don't see anything stopping me, in fact, I came back to it after stopping briefly.”

Kim was also unequivocal with her response, though hers differed from that of her peers. She reported that she would have no problem stopping if the communities with whom she worked asked her to do so: “oh, of course... coming back to being in service, if I'm not wanted or needed or asked for or if people don't want to collaborate with me or whatever that might look like, I would stop doing this.”

Importance of relationships. The importance of relationships with target group members was another prominent theme of the interviews conducted for this study. Allison reported that this work “is about a relationship first and foremost.” Chris elaborated on why supportive relationships between advantaged group members and target group members is so important: “we know that change can't come unless we actually organize and interact with each other in a way that doesn't perpetuate constant harm and retriggering.”

Kim shared that existing relationships were a key factor in selecting the communities with whom to conduct her research “we picked them based on having some stronger connection to those communities than others, because that of course helps.” However, trusting relationships are not always preexisting between target and advantaged group members. Thus, interview participants also shared concrete examples of how to build such relationships with members of marginalized communities. Alex emphasized the importance of being reliable when establishing relationships with his clients that are experiencing homelessness:

To really be there, to always be showing up, to show that you're serious, to show that, that you come any time, day or night, you get there you answer your phone every single time. So I think sometimes it takes time to build that rapport and then other times it's just listening to them and relating to them and and letting them vent, letting them be heard is a very big thing.

Megan described how she developed strong relationships despite the differences between her life and those of the incarcerated women with whom she worked.

It was clear that I was coming from a whole different world than most of those women. But I think they were open to sharing with me because I respected that they had the information and the knowledge that I didn't have.

Allison found that “trying to focus on building a relationship rather than necessarily solving problems” to be a more effective approach in working with college students. She continued “I think it's a lot of listening and it's a lot of sharing things that I think [are] relevant and just checking in with somebody.”

However, the value of supportive relationships does not stop there. Participants also reported that such relationships with other advantaged group member advocates are important, as well. Allison reflected on the value of these types of relationships: “I think it's also important to have people in my work life and my personal life that share these values and will help me to see blind spots and to help me continue to grow and learn.” This is also true of strong relationships with other organizations. Chris discussed the advantages brought by the burgeoning network of anti-oppression groups in his area.

Everytime we do an action more and more folks come from intersectional oppressions to be part of it. So we have some really great and growing and deepening relationships between all the groups...that do work across anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-misogyny, imperialism, fascism, etc.

Thoughts on allyship and solidarity. Given that allyship and solidarity are the most common ways that these concepts are considered in both activist discourse and peer reviewed literature, it was imperative to explore how the advantaged group members interviewed for this study thought about these concepts. Both terms elicited mixed feelings and in some cases, strong responses from the group of interview participants.

Allyship. Some participants embraced the label of “ally.” Allison shared that “allyship to me is the goal in the work that I'm doing.” Other interview participants vehemently rejected it,

such as Victoria: “I actually really hate the word ‘allyship’, like I am aggressively opposed to it” and Chris: “I’ll just quickly dismiss allyship as a buzzword that’s gonna go away soon.”

According to interview participants, a critical element of allyship is the fact that it is not a title that can be claimed for oneself. Ryan explained that “you don’t get to choose if you’re an ally, that’s not up to you, other people decide for you.” Casey similarly outlined “I really see allyship as a status that needs to be given by a person or a group of people that someone is trying to support.” Kim agreed “it’s not a thing that you can self-proclaim”, and then took this sentiment one step further and argued that it is not a title at all. She explained “I think it takes time, in the same way that you can’t just say ‘I’m an ally!’...It’s not as if it’s like this big declaration that someone is given.” Kim continued, “you can have thoughts and values and see yourself as someone like that, but...there has to be action or relationships.”

Other participants discussed the ongoing nature of allyship. Allison explained that “to be an ally...is a goal because it’s an active thing...it’s not static. It’s evolving, it’s growing, it’s giving room for times that I do things that are good and times that I have missteps.”

Chris reported that he and many of his peers are no longer using the term ally. “The prevalence of performative allyship in liberal institutions and activist spaces is also making ‘ally’ a bad word. Many now use the word ‘accomplice’.”

Solidarity. The concept of solidarity did not draw out the same acute responses as did allyship. Some interview participants admitted that they had not previously thought of solidarity in regards to their anti-oppression work. Ryan shared that “solidarity” is “not a word that I actively seek or use to describe anything that I’m trying to do.” However, unlike the effort of some interview participants to move away from the term allyship, he would “be happy for somebody else to use [solidarity] if they wanted to.” Kim reported being surprised at the use of

solidarity in this way “just because I haven't heard it as much.” Other participants thought of solidarity in terms of the labor movement (Allison shared that “when I hear the term ‘solidarity’ I always think of unions.”), but not necessarily across different types of anti-oppression work.

Though some interview participants preferred the term solidarity over that of allyship. Laura stated that “the concept of solidarity resonates more strongly with me than the concept of allyship.” For her, solidarity carried with it a sense of shared experience and consequence. She described her time working with her peers of color in the Jim Crow South, “there was no question...because of the mutual danger there was solidarity, we were all in this together.”

Victoria agreed with the idea of a shared experience:

I prefer the term ‘solidarity’ because ‘solidarity’ just emphasizes, like ‘no no, we're equals, but you're being mistreated so I'm gonna be here solid with you and make sure that however I get treated, you get treated. And however you get treated, I get treated, because we deserve the same.’

Similarly for Alex, solidarity connoted a sense of being on the same team.

When I think of solidarity I think of me to my clients. And that's the thing where I try to tell them ‘I'm on your team. It's me and you. I even argue with my own boss and own coworkers on your behalf.’

Much like allyship, interview participants argued that working in solidarity means more than lip service. Chris emphasized “I think solidarity is a great word to say but it definitely requires action to demonstrate and define it— for it to actually carry any meaning.” Casey reiterated the idea that both allyship and solidarity require sustained, ongoing effort.

It is something that is a practice and it is conditional. So it's based on every action that I make. I may be a successful ally from someone's perspective in one moment

but in another moment I may do something that is not supportive of that person or a group of people. And that puts my allyship or my solidarity in question.

Interview participants also warned of the ways in which the two terms can be misused, especially if advantaged group members embrace the concepts of allyship and solidarity without the action to back it up. Chris explained:

I think many [target group members] have been burned so many times by people who claim to be allies and claim to be in solidarity but when the shit hits the fan, they are nowhere to be found because this work is uncomfortable and stressful and requires someone to come at it with enough decentering work to realize what actually makes a difference—not what is just performative or self-serving.

Discussion

During her interview, Laura, the participant with the greatest length of time in anti-oppression organizing, asked the question at the crux of this exploration: “I’m curious what anchors other people who don’t have to be in these struggles. What is their personal stuff - whether it’s relationships or experiences that they had as children or what?” Here, she epitomized the foundation of this study and the question all advantaged group members must ask themselves. She continued: “What drives us to break out of whatever class and racial background that we started out with?”

The imagery of the anchor exemplified the experience of privileged activists in anti-oppression work. They must consider what tethers them to the work as the nature of privilege gives them the prerogative to opt out. As Cazerres-Kelly argued “this isn’t a race...we’re building relationships that will transcend the current political climate and will help push progressive intersectional and truly equitable ideas and legislation forward.” (Cazerres-Kelly, 2018, para. 20). As such, advantaged group members committed to collective liberation must surmise the ways in which they are anchored to the work and continually choose to show up.

The themes generated by the interview participants echo that of the existing literature, especially the practitioner discourse. This is unsurprising as these resources are generally created by activists and advocates who are similar to the interview participants. This body of resources (and themes generated by interview participants) outline the knowledge and mastery of the individuals on the ground. Thus, the practitioner discourse represents a more fluid, responsive depiction of the ever changing work of dismantling systems of oppression than does the peer reviewed academic literature. In fact, it appears that the academic literature is a few steps behind

the practitioner discourse. Below, I explore some of the ways the study findings overlap with the existing literature, and speak to implications for practice, research, and theory.

Both the literature and study themes discuss the importance of accountability and support elements. Abrash Walton (2010) asks “how do we draw strength from, and how are we accountable to, those on whose behalf we advocate? (p. 20). I expected to learn about these elements when I began this exploration. However, I did not expect the frequency with which it was described that advantaged group members both derived support and were held accountable by the same factor; most commonly relationships with target group member and advantaged group member peers and colleagues.

Additionally, the need for advantaged group members to decenter themselves outlined in the study relates closely to the concept of centering the voices and experiences of target group members as delineated in the literature review. Additionally, the concept of decentering oneself, or counteracting the tendency to prioritize privileged experiences, originated in anti-racist initiatives with an effort to decenter whiteness (Hitchcock & Flint, 2015; Grimalkin, 2014). However, as outlined by interview participants, it is clear that this idea can be applied across all identity areas. Wherever advantaged group members experience those advantages, when they notice their experience, participation, or feelings being prioritized over those of target group members, they can work to refocus energy and efforts. This includes those instances when advantaged group members make things about themselves. As Johnson noted, “it is difficult to hear anger and not take it personally, to think it’s all about you, but that is what allies must be ready to do” (2018, p.129).

Another poignant concept highlighted by both the literature and the interviews is the inevitability of one’s biases and the need to reconcile them. As oppression is ubiquitous in our

society, it is no wonder that many well meaning individuals have internalized prejudices. Both Gerstandt (2015) and interview participant Ryan discuss the inevitability of these biases and describe a need to accept them. This acceptance is not meant to absolve individuals of responsibility for their internalized harmful beliefs. Instead both Gerstandt (2015) and Ryan suggest that one must truly face their biases in order to unlearn them. In other words, one can not expect to change a bias that they are unwilling to admit that they harbor. Further, if one accepts such biases as inevitable, they need not get overwhelmed, or become immobilized, by a sense of guilt or shame for harboring them, another concept addressed in both the literature and interviews. Instead, well meaning advantaged group members can get to the necessary work of unlearning said biases.

Many of the advantaged group members interviewed for this study described a sense of appreciation for the opportunity to reflect on these concepts. For many, it was the first time that they had expressly thought about their involvement in anti-oppression work from this lens. Why are activists and advocates not encouraged to explore and reflect upon what supports, sustains, and bolsters them in this work? Especially considering the onerous, circuitous work of dismantling systems of oppression, it would serve advantaged group members well to regularly reflect on what supports them in doing so. However, advantaged group members should be mindful not to center their own experiences when discussing these topics with target group members. While we all stand to benefit from the dismantling of systems of oppression, the engagement of privileged activists is not as important as the lived experience of target group members.

Implications for Practice

This next section outlines how the findings of this study can be applied to practitioners engaging in anti-oppression work from positions of privilege. What is clear - from the academic literature, practitioner discourse, and interviews conducted for this exploration - is this: there are no easy answers. There is not one way to engage in anti-oppression work. There is not one way to establish a deep commitment to the cause, or to find oneself invested in its outcomes. There are no set, actionable steps for advantaged group activists to take that will work for all members of an historically marginalized group. But there are ways of doing it better.

The following concepts were all generated by advantaged group members in the field and on the streets. However, an academic exploration of these concepts may not be of particular use to the practitioners on the ground, especially written in thesis format. It is far more valuable to depict these concepts in ways that can be immediately applied. Therefore, I created the following tool for practitioners (See Table 4.) It outlines ten takeaways for advantaged group members engaged in anti-oppression work, generated from the interviews and existing body of literature. The tool also indicates where more information can be found on each topic in both the academic research and practitioner discourse. Lastly, the creation of this tool highlights the expertise (of on the ground activists, advocates, and practitioners) that generated this understanding in the first place.

Table 4: Actions for Enhancing Practitioner Engagement

Actions for Enhancing Practitioner Engagement	Resource List
1) Move through mistakes. → <i>Mistakes are inevitable. Learn how to correct yourself, recover, and show up again.</i>	DiAngelo, 2017; Leondar-Wright, 2005; Loubriel, 2016; Michael & Conger, 2009; Utt, 2016.
2) Listen... → <i>To target group members, then listen some more.</i>	Cazeres-Kelly, 2018; Droogendyk, et al, 2016; Metta, 2017.
3) Increase awareness of privilege. → <i>Continually seek out opportunities to learn about your connection to systems of privilege, oppression, and their ongoing impacts</i>	DiAngelo, 2017; Johnson, 2018; McIntosh, 2012; Metta, 2017; Trombetta, 2018.
4) Be cautious when using privilege for good. → <i>Using privilege reinforces it. Be mindful that your good work could have unintended consequences.</i>	DeGraaf, 2014; Jenkins, 2016; McIntosh, 2012.
5) Critically examine concepts of allyship and solidarity. → <i>Find terms that work for target group members, not just ones that make sense to you.</i>	Gay, 2016; Hackman, 2016a, 2016b; McKenzie, 2013a, 2013b, 2015.
6) Allow language to evolve. → <i>Terminology that works for some target group members may not work for others, and those terms are likely to change over time. Be flexible.</i>	Deustch, 2006; Grant, 2017.
7) Find your place in the work. → <i>There are endless ways of working against systems of oppression. Find the way that works for you, your skills, interests, and lifestyle.</i>	Kaufman, 2016; Shaw, 2013.
8) Avoid savior mentality. → <i>Engage for the collective liberation of all people and not to “save” target group members.</i>	Abdi, et al, 2015; Crass, 2013; Edwards, 2006; Johnson, 2018.
9) It’s not about you. → <i>Your feelings, participation, and engagement are never as important as the lived experience of target group members.</i>	Gay, 2016; Grimalkin, 2014; Hitchcock, 2015; McKenzie, 2013a, 2013b, 2015; Thurber, et al, 2015.
10) Take care of yourself. → <i>Care for yourself so you can be open to feedback and continue to engage for the long haul.</i>	Loubriel, 2016; Smith & Reddington, 2010.

Move through mistakes. Advantaged group members must choose to engage despite the likelihood -- or inevitability -- of mistakes and mishaps. They must be willing to make those mistakes, hear feedback, engage in corrective behavior, and show up again. As Maya Angelou said “do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” (2015). The possibility of making mistakes must not be seen as an excuse for those experiencing privilege to opt out of the fight.

Listen. Morrison (2013) argues “our work as allies must always and everywhere be grounded in humility, collaboration, and accountability” (para. 16). As such, advantaged group members should constantly be listening to target group members. There is no shortage of information on the experience of marginalized communities; whether that be from target group members with whom advantaged group members are in accountable relationships, or through public forums such as books, blogs, websites, and youtube videos like those highlighted in the practitioner discourse section of this thesis. Privileged activists should follow their lead, center their voices, uphold their expertise, and at no point should advantaged group members believe that their learning is done.

Increase awareness of privilege. As DiAngelo delineated, “I didn’t choose [privilege], it is not my fault, I’m not wracked with guilt about it, but it is my responsibility to change it.” (2017, 16:10). Each individual interviewed for this study described what brought them to the work. Whatever the catalyzing factor -- an event or incident, personal experience with oppression, or relationship with a target group member -- each origin story led to an increased awareness of privilege and oppression, and a heightened commitment to dismantle these systems. The study findings suggest that advantaged group members should continue to raise awareness of the existence of privilege and educate themselves and their privileged peers on these critical

topics. A solid understanding of these systems and their ongoing impacts on marginalized communities -- and societies as a whole -- will serve as the foundation from which to engage in this work.

Be cautious when using privilege for good. Using privilege for good is a controversial topic. Whenever one uses their privileged status, they emphasize its existence and reinforce the power dynamic. They continue to position themselves as leaders and corroborate the perception of their expertise. However, there are valuable contributions that advantaged group members can make with the access afforded by their privilege. Perhaps most notably, this can be done to engage other advantaged group members and alleviate the burden of emotional labor on target group members.

Continue to explore allyship & solidarity. The study findings suggest that advantaged group members should also continue to interrogate the concepts of allyship and solidarity. They are the most common way these ideas are discussed and they frame our understanding of the relationships between advantaged group members and their target group member peers, friends, and colleagues. If these labels do not work for target group members, then embracing them or presenting the ideas in this way continues to frame the work from the understanding of advantaged group members. Insisting on the use of terms as outlined by advantaged group members continues to center the focus of this work on the people experiencing privilege, and continues to view advantaged group members as those who have the knowledge and expertise to pass along.

Allow language to evolve. Practitioners must also be prepared for terminology to shift and change. What works for one individual or group might not work for another, and what works now might not hold up in the long run. A sense of flexibility and resilience will serve advantaged

group members well as they navigate changing language and respond to the feedback of target group members with whom they are in accountable relationships.

Find your place in the work. There is no shortage of ways to engage in anti-oppression work (Kaufman, 2016; Shaw, 2013). Oftentimes, people assume that nonviolent direct action is the only kind of anti-oppression organizing, yet this work takes many forms and many different types of activists are needed. Advantaged group members should find the type of engagement that works for them; what utilizes their skills and compliments their preferences

Avoid the savior mentality. If Advantaged Group Members engage in anti-oppression work to “save” target group members they will not be effective. Practitioners should not try to conduct this work on behalf of marginalized communities, but in partnership with individuals and leaders from within those groups. Further, the motivation for involvement should not be because they want to do something for these communities, but because of an understanding that these systems harm us all.

It’s not about you. At the same time that Advantaged Group Members engage in this work for the collective liberation of all people, they must also remember that ultimately, this work is not about them. Advantaged group member edification, participation, and comfort are not what is paramount in this engagement. Target group members especially do not owe advantaged group members anything. One’s involvement in this work cannot be contingent upon receiving something in return.

Take care of yourself. This work is incremental and arduous. Being open to feedback and susceptible to criticism requires a high level of humility on the part of advantaged group members. Practitioners should do what they must to care for themselves so that they can do this work for the long haul and so that target group members are not put in a position of prioritizing

the comfort of those experiencing privilege. Loubriel (2016) emphasized that the feelings of advantaged group members are valid and important, but addressing them can not come at the expense of target group members. She encouraged advantage group members to remove themselves from a mixed group if they find themselves becoming visibly emotional and to find advantaged group member activists groups to process and address their feelings.

Implications for Theory

This study presents an opportunity to clarify or validate the tenets of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as viewed through the themes that emerged through this analysis. As IPA intended, this study focuses primarily on the experiences and understandings of the participants, then made space for the interpretation of the researcher (Chan & Farmer, 2017). Additionally, the open ended questions and semi-structured interviews common to IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2008) served this exploration well.

The study could be extended to further investigate Laura's provocative question of what anchors an individual to a struggle that is not their own? She asked "what drives us to break out of whatever class and racial background that we started out with?" This is touched upon briefly in the origin story section of the study findings, but continued exploration of what drives advantaged group members to engage in anti-oppression work would be valuable. Perhaps there is space for an additional theoretical model; one that is framed around the assumption that all individuals who experience privilege and choose to engage in liberation work have a formative origin story. Further research could validate or refine this study's findings that include three different - and seemingly mutually exclusive - types of origin stories: a) event or incident, b) personal experience with oppression, and c) relationships with target group members.

Limitations of Study & Implications for Further Research

According to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, a homogenous sample can be advantageous for a study so that convergence and divergence can be examined in some detail (Smith et al., 2009, p. 3). However, I still consider the nearly uniform racial identity of survey respondents and interview participants to be a limitation of this study.

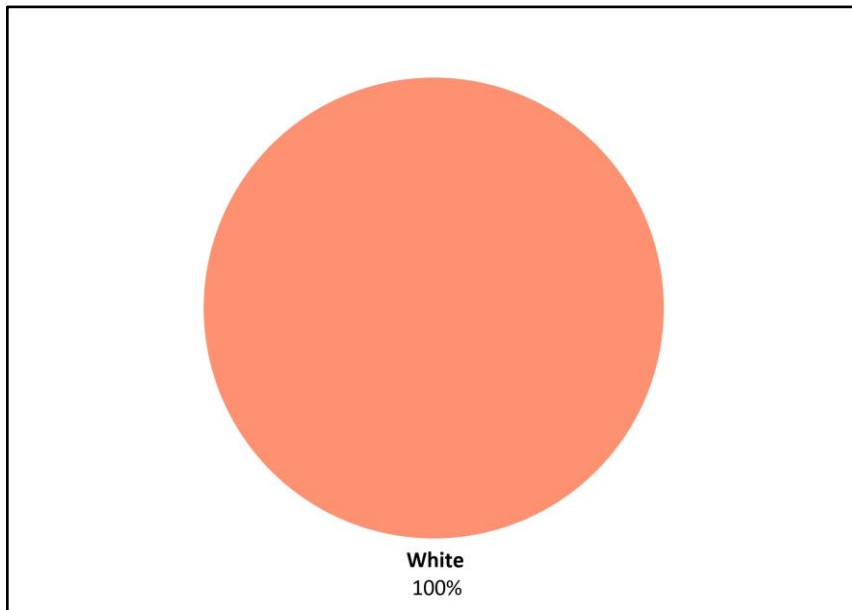


Figure 13: Interview Participants by Race

With race as a major oppressive factor in the United States and beyond, white people make up a large number of advantaged group members in the United States. That being said, many People of Color experience privilege in other areas of their identity and are doing valuable anti-oppressive work in those arenas. Further studies of advantaged group members can benefit from their knowledge and experience.

Similarly, interview participants for this study were largely located on the east coast of the United States and were highly educated. Further research could seek out a broader participant

pool and explore whether and how geographic region and educational background influence anti-oppression engagement and motivation.

There is also an apparent distinction between the advantaged group members who hold professional service provider positions and those who do not, especially in regards to their relationships with clients. For interview participants such as Alex (youth service provider) and Megan (criminal justice reform advocate), the target group members with whom they work are explicitly their clients. They each hold a position that expressly delineates with whom, and on whose behalf, they work. Their job is to provide a service for certain individuals or groups. Other advocates such as Laura or Chris serve in volunteer positions where the target group members with whom they work are also their peers and fellow activists. Future research could explore the apparent difference in the relationship dynamic between each of these types of advantaged group members (service provider and peer) and the target group members with whom they work.

Additionally, the initial recruitment survey for this study yielded a larger response rate than anticipated. It was a valuable tool to recruit participants and facilitate the process of data collection. Survey questions were used to ensure that program participants met the requirements of the study. Optional demographic information compared to the type of anti-oppression work performed by each activist helped to narrow down the participant pool and identify the best candidates to include in the interview process. However, the survey could also have served as an additional source of relevant data. By anticipating the high response rate I could have included one or more questions that probed at motivation or resilience factors of respondents. Sample questions could have included “why do you participate in anti-oppression work?”, “how did you begin to engage in this work?”, or “what supports you in your work?” This would have pulled from a larger sample size to further illuminate the experience of Advantaged Group Members in

anti-oppression work. Paired with the in-depth data sets from the semi-structured interviews, these brief responses could have created a more robust mixed method research study. Future studies on anti-oppression can utilize this mixed method approach and garner additional information from such an inquiry, in addition to the more in depth explorations captured in interviews.

Lastly, the overall sense from the findings of this study was that of deep thoughtfulness and self-reflection on the part of interview participants. While they existed, this study did not deeply explore participant's feelings of joy or satisfaction as a result of their involvement in anti-oppression work. Further research could explore the idea of advantaged group member activism as a contributor to well-being, as outlined by Klar and Kasser (2009).

Conclusion

Working with people privileged by systems of oppression to end those systems, opens the door to profound possibilities of creating new identities, cultures, communities, and institutions, rooted in liberation rather than domination, for all of us (Crass, 2013, p.14).

Systems of oppression harm all people, regardless of privileged or oppressed status. Undoubtedly these systems harm target group members to a different and more severe degree than their advantaged group member counterparts. However, individuals with privilege are still undermined by their existence. It is not necessary to equate the experiences of those enduring oppression and those enjoying privilege to suggest that we all have something to gain from the eradication of these systems. Replacing such deeply embedded structures will require the sustained, dedicated efforts of many groups, including those who stand to benefit most from their existence.

Advantaged group member involvement in anti-oppression work can be value added. It can be done without undermining the expertise of those most directly affected by it, but it will not be easy. Advantaged group members must walk the fine line of following target group member leadership and goals without overburdening these communities with the responsibility of their education. They must work within accountable relationships with marginalized communities and stand within their own integrity. To help with this process, I created a tool for practitioners that synthesizes the data collected in this study and the findings of the existing academic and practitioner research (See Table 4) that outlines better practices of engagement. This work is complicated, ambiguous, and ever-changing. Navigating it may not be easy, but it will be worthwhile. After all, it is the responsibility of all people, especially those in positions of privilege, to create a more just and equitable world for all.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT SURVEY

Advantaged Group Members in Anti-Oppression Work

This study will examine the motivations and behaviors of individuals working against systems of oppression from positions of privilege. In order to participate in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age, AND:

- Participate in anti-oppression work, (meaning that you work in support of traditionally marginalized groups, such as people of color, women, poor and working class individuals, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, people who are incarcerated, undocumented workers, etc.),
- Be an Advantaged Group Member, (meaning that you are not a member of the group that is most deeply affected by the type of oppression you work against, i.e. a white person in anti-racist organizing),
- Do this work in either a volunteer or professional capacity, (does not need to be in your job description),
- Have been doing this work for at least one year.

The purpose of this study is to examine the practices of Advantaged Group Members who are actively engaged in anti-oppression work. If you agree to be a part of this research study, you will be asked to take a computer survey about your identity and your experience working against oppression. I expect this survey to take about 5 minutes to complete. Based on the results from this survey, I may call you for a follow-up interview. Study participants may benefit from the opportunity to reflect on their participation in this work and may learn from other Advantaged Group Members about what motivates and supports them in this work. There is little to no risk of harm by completing this survey or participating in the interview process. I hope this study will increase awareness of systems of oppression and encourage additional Advantaged Group Members to work against such systems.

If you are okay with me contacting you at a later date for a follow-up interview, please make sure you enter your email address and/or phone number on the last page of the survey. I plan to publish the results of this study as part of my master's thesis research. I will not include any information that could identify you. I would like to hear from as many people as possible. If you know someone that might be willing to complete the survey, please send them this email.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to answer an individual question in the survey or during the interview.

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Kelly Walsh by telephone at (802) 498-5551 or by email at kwash1@antioch.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Dr. Kevin Lyness, Chair of the Antioch University New England (AUNE) Institutional Review Board, at 1-800-553-8920 or by email at klyness@antioch.edu, or Dr. Barbara Andrews, Interim Provost and CEO, at 1-800-553-8920 or by email at bandrews@antioch.edu.

* Required

1. **Click on the drop down box below and consent to participate or not participate in this research survey: ***

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, I wish to participate in this survey.
- No, I do not wish to participate in this survey.

2. **Name**

3/20/2018

Advantaged Group Members in Anti-Oppression Work

3. Age (Optional - for demographic purposes only)

4. Race (Optional - for demographic purposes only)

5. Gender (Optional - for demographic purposes only)

6. Highest level of education completed (Optional - for demographic purposes only)

7. Which state/province do you live in? (Optional - for demographic purposes only)

8. Please describe the type of anti-oppression work you are involved in. *

9. What type of position is it?

Mark only one oval.

Staff

Volunteer

Board of Directors

Other: _____

10. How long have you been involved in this work?

3/20/2018

Advantaged Group Members in Anti-Oppression Work

11. **Are you interested in participating in an interview about your experience as an Advantaged Group Member doing anti-oppression work?**

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Other: _____

12. **If so, what is the best way to reach you to follow up?**

Mark only one oval.

- Phone
- E-mail
- Other: _____

13. **E-mail Address**

14. **Phone Number**

THANK YOU!

Powered by
 Google Forms

APPENDIX B: AMENDMENT TO INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPLICATION

Antioch University IRB

Amendment Form

Investigator's Name: Kelly Walsh

Project Title: Endeavors in Solidarity: Lessons from Advantaged Group Members in Anti-Oppression Work

The general purpose of the study is to: examine what can be learned from Advantaged Group Members who are involved in anti-oppression work

Originally Approved: In selecting participants, I would use a short online survey to solicit participants and determine whether they meet the criteria. Follow-up phone interview participants would then be chosen from the pool of participants who meet the criteria and who express interest in participating in the phone interview.

Proposed Change: I received more participants through said survey who both meet the criteria of the study and who are interested in participating in a phone interview than anticipated. I would like to send the following question via email to this group to help narrow down the participant pool:

"Thank you for participating in my research study looking at power, privilege, and oppression. Your contributions are very much appreciated!

*Thank you also for your potential interest in continuing to participate via follow-up phone interview. **Before moving to the next step, please reply to this email to tell us a little more about your work.***

1. *Please elaborate on the type of anti-oppression work you are involved in. (i.e. what are some of your responsibilities/activities? How many hours per week or month (on average) do you spend on this work? How would you define or describe your work?)*

2. *Are you still interested in participating in an interview about your experience as an Advantaged Group Member doing anti-oppression work? Yes/No/Maybe*

The risk:benefits ratio will change in the following ways: It is not anticipated that the risk:benefit ratio will be affected by these changes.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- Let's start with you telling me about your work.
 - What do you do? How do you do it? Who do you work with?
 - How would you describe your organization
- When people ask you about it, how do you define or describe your work?
- What brought you to this work?
 - How did you get started?
 - Did you always know this is what you wanted to do?
- Why do you do this work?
- What principles do you work by?
- What are your relationships like with the people you work with?
 - Peers/Colleagues (Advantaged Group Members or Target Group Members)
 - Clients/Program participants/Target Group Members
- How do you hold yourself accountable in this work?
 - To whom are you accountable?
 - How do you hold others accountable in this work?
- What does solidarity mean to you?
 - What does allyship mean to you?
 - Do you/have you ever thought about your work in these terms?
- Who are your mentors in this work?
- What supports you in this work?
- How does the fact that you're an advantaged group member affect the way you think about your work?

- How aware of that difference are you in your everyday work?
- Can you tell me about a time that you made a mistake in this work?
 - How did you respond?
 - How did others respond?
- What is difficult or challenging about being an Advantaged Group Member in this work?
 - Do you ever feel uncomfortable as an Advantaged Group Member in this work?
 - What is easy about it?
- How do other advantaged group members react to your involvement in the work?
 - (those also in the work and those not in the work)
- How does this work show up in the rest of your life?
 - outside of your current work/volunteer role?
- Can you imagine something that would cause you to stop doing this work?
 - What would that be?
- What other Advantaged Group Members should I be talking to?

APPENDIX D: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Alex³, interview conducted February 9, 2018

Casey, interview conducted February 9, 2018

Laura, interview conducted February 12, 2018

Megan, interview conducted February 12, 2018

Kim, interview conducted February 21, 2018

Chris, interview conducted February 21, 2018

Victoria, interview conducted February 23, 2018

Ryan, interview conducted March 7, 2018

Allison, interview conducted March 9, 2018

³ Names have been changed.

APPENDIX E: QUALITATIVE THEMES

Code	Subcode
AGMs work=engaging other AGMs	
Mistakes made by AGMs	
	owning up when you make a mistake
	showing up again after a mistake
	fear of making mistakes
	conflict avoidance
TGMs are not a monolith	
toll this work takes on AGMs	
Easy as an AGM	
Hopes for the future	
people power!	
Accountability factors	
	will I be proud of this later?
	accountable to TGMs
	peers hold each other accountable
multiple orgs working together	
Sustainability	
Importance of TGM voices	
	where TGM voices are disregarded
	TGMs in charge
Can't take it personally	
work part of me	
	predisposed for this work
Cause you to stop	
	if I was asked by TGMs, yes
	No way
Support Elements	
	feeling effective
	built in self care elements
	connections w/ TGMs
	passion for the work
	Sense of community
	Peers/Colleagues

ENDEAVORS IN SOLIDARITY

	loved ones
Outside Life	
	Inspired to do more work
	raised awareness of issues
	very little distinction- outside life/work
importance of relationships	
	how to build relationships
Awareness of AGM status	
	focusing too much on it is othering
	guilt over AGM status
AGMs will never fully understand	
	struggling to get other AGMs to understand
reconciling own bias/judgement	
the importance of language	
Values & Principles	
	sitting with discomfort
	entitlement to comfort
	interrupting problematic behavior
	curiosity
	ongoing learning
thoughts on "solidarity"	
	solidarity requires action
	solidarity = all in this together
	solidarity = working together
thoughts on "allyship"	
	allyship is problematic
	relationships are key for allyship
	allyship is conditional
	allyship can't be claimed
Origin Story	
	helping others to get started
	relationship w/ TGM
	event/incident
	personal experience w/ oppression
content & process	
Type of Anti-Oppression Work	
	creating anti-oppression focus

ENDEAVORS IN SOLIDARITY

	job title
AGMs bring up tough convos	
we need everyone	
did not act	
sees value in relationships with diverse people	
position/type of role changes dynamic	
self awareness	
outside perspective	
activism can take many forms	
importance of autonomy	
shying away from the hard work	
using privilege for good	
hard to describe how to do this well	

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