Anti-oppression as pedagogy; prefiguration as praxis
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Abstract

Experiments in alternative politics saturate the radical Left in North America. The most compelling of these build on multidimensional analyses of violence that impact activist communities. An applied pedagogy called 'anti-oppression' has emerged in this work, providing a new language to facilitate the construction of radically inclusive and empowering forms of political community.

In this paper I contextualize anti-oppression via its emergence in North American anti-authoritarianism. Introducing this discourse and practice as it has been developed in key activist texts, I suggest that it represents a powerful development in the painstaking but empowering struggle to politicize racism, hetero-sexism and dis/ableism within social movement struggle. Yet the practices and concepts that bear its name must continually evolve and adapt if they are to carry forward this important project. To address this tension, I theorize anti-oppression's critical relationship towards feminism and anarchism as a pedagogical one: it presents a grounded application of feminist work on intersectional power and it further radicalizes the prefigurative impulse central to anti-authoritarianism.

Keywords: anarchism, feminism, anti-oppression, intersectionality, prefiguration, pedagogy, affinity, activism, social movements, North America

Introduction

Alternative political, economic, and cultural institutions are all around us. From free schools to radical childcare provision and financial district 'occupations', these projects are part of a long history of prefigurative political struggle to build a new world 'in the shell of the old' (Avrich and Pateman 1995; Bey 2003; Schantz 2006; Ervin 2008; LA COiL n.d.). That is, they approach movement building as an applied pedagogical project of developing capacities and infrastructures. While many such projects reproduce dominant relations of power and exclusion, a growing number of them embed prefiguration within a multidimensional analysis of oppression and anti-authoritarian organization. They attempt to problem-solve power and privilege within movement organizations while building empowering forms of political community. Many on the radical Left call this work 'anti-oppression'.

Contemporary forms of anti-oppression practice emerged in North America alongside an anti-authoritarian tendency in the mid-1990s. Gordon writes that this occurred through "convergences of radical feminist, ecologist, anti-racist

and queer struggles, which finally fused in the late 1990s through the global wave of protest against the policies and institutions of neoliberal globalization" (2008, 32; see also Dixon 2013). Similarly, both the new social movements of the 1960's and "'older' traditions of marxist and anarchist socialism" form the roots of what I will refer to as anarchistic movements (Day 2005, 4; see also Foucault 1982, 780). These movements consist of a wide range of broadly anti-authoritarian radicals who are actively renovating theories of oppression and resistance traditionally associated with the 'old' and 'new' Left. The editors of *Upping the Anti* conceptualize this process as an interweaving of three critical tendencies: "anti-capitalism, anti-oppression, and anti-imperialism" (Conway et al. 2006, 7-11).

Such an intentional interweaving of resistances is significant because it transforms the composition and trajectory of social justice struggle. Pushing beyond liberal and socialist political theory, it suggests that creation (of alternative ways of being) and destruction (of the oppressive and exploitative status quo) are implied within each other. And it explicitly connects revitalized pedagogies of communal reflexivity and empowerment with their work to radically transform society. Activists' cross-pollination of this theoretical and practical work produced a network of novel social movements that gained international recognition as they agitated against the violence of neoliberalism at the turn of the 21st century (Graeber 2009; Maeckelbergh 2011; Notes 2003). The mass convergences of the alter-globalization movement in North America were produced by innovative networks of grassroots activists drawing on repertoires of anti-authoritarian and new social movement practice. Their fusion of community organizing and large scale demonstrations were pivotal to the consolidation of an identifiable anarchistic politics. They were also the site of emerging exchanges in North America concerning activist anti-oppression (Bevington and Dixon 2005, 195; Gelderloos 2010; Martinez 2002; Starr 2004; Thompson 2010).

With this in mind, I propose that anarchistic engagements with anti-oppression – whatever their limitations – constitute a pedagogical project of movement knowledge and practice. Evolving alongside negotiations of power and privilege throughout the Left, anarchistic forms of anti-oppression draw broadly from anti-colonial, anti-racist, radical dis/ability, feminist, and queer organizing. Distinct pedagogical effects are evident in activists' collective work to identify both how oppression is reproduced at personal, communal and systemic levels and how to interrupt this process. Anti-oppression functions in these exchanges as a collective project of teaching and learning in which different practical experiments in interrupting (raced, classed, cis-gendered, able-bodied, heteronormative) domination are studied and learned from.

As a shared analytical and practical project, the radical potential of anti-oppression is lost when it is reduced to singular or static responses to power and privilege. Indeed particular routinized concepts and practices attributed to anti-oppression are increasingly facing criticism from within anti-authoritarian circles for reifying particular forms of oppression and resistance. As evident in

projects like Colours of Resistance, critical interventions of this sort have fed broader struggles around how to 'do' anti-oppression, and are vital to the continued power of this work (Smith 2006; Fellows & Razack 1997). In ideal cases, this process promises to fundamentally reorganize movement dynamics as activists challenge normalized accounts of alternative and autonomous community with feminist, anti-racist, queer, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist and radical dis/ability analysis. By conceptualizing this process as pedagogical, both anti-oppression's particular relationship to intersectionality and its broader prefigurative potential become apparent.

As shown in different contexts by O'Brien (n.d.), Srivastava (2006), and Millar (2008), anti-oppression is conditioned and constrained by the organizational and ideological environments in which it is embedded. Practices associated with anti-oppression are always partial, and without careful analysis of immediate and broader contexts of struggle they can replicate and reinforce existing power relations. Anti-oppression workshops for example, are a primary method of teaching and learning about interlocking systems of power on the Left, though their effectiveness in radicalizing individuals and movements is doubtful (Jones n.d.; O'Brien n.d.; Srivastava 2006). As such, there is a problematic relationship between what I will call anti-oppression as a logic of struggle and anti-oppression as a collection of practices. By clarifying this relationship, we – that is, those interested and implicated in anti-oppression or anarchistic politics – can begin to assess how articulations of anti-oppression become normalized and stale, and explore other methods of bringing anti-racist, feminist, dis/ability, and anti-capitalist politics into anarchistic organizing.

Activist knowledge networks, including archives like zinelibrary.info or anarchalibrary.blogspot.ca, are saturated with critiques of how anti-oppression is practiced. These interventions, presented through biographies, movement histories, action critiques, and manuals, can help us to trace how the radical work of anti-oppression has been derailed and disavowed. Some writers have attempted to distill lessons from such work and re-/present them in a manner digestible for immediate activist use (see Crass 2013, 143-8, 267-83; Khan et al. 2006, Starr 2004). This paper begins from a different sort of approach, one which attempts to clarify the problem we are facing in anti-oppression work by posing it in a more difficult and hopefully more compelling manner than it has been previously expressed (Foucault 2000).

The problem is not simply to disseminate anti-oppression practice within anarchistic movements. Instead, it involves questioning how we actually define and categorize anti-oppression work, and meditating on what sort of transformation is required of anarchistic movements if we are to invest them with a logic of anti-oppression. To begin to address these two questions, I re-frame anti-oppression as a logic of struggle, more specifically as a pedagogical project, in order to bring its collective and cumulative operation into view. This shift in perspective reveals networking as an often neglected condition for effective anti-oppression practice. It also provides some insight into how we might use the idea of prefiguration to further integrate an intersectional politics

into anarchistic movements.

Drawing from key activist texts, I show how anarchistic engagements with anti-oppression represent a powerful development in the painstaking but empowering struggle to politicize class, racism, hetero-sexism and dis/ableism within social movement organizations. I also show how the pedagogical process by which anti-oppression is applied and contested might push anarchism towards an intersectionalized praxis of 'prefiguration'. It strengthens feminist applications of intersectional privilege and oppression, and thereby accentuates the anti-authoritarian impulse central to anarchistic thought. In the first section of this paper I sketch the contours of 'anti-oppression' pedagogy in relation to its precedents and to complimentary academic applications of intersectionality. I situate the pedagogy of anti-oppression more fully in the second section of this paper through an examination of how it challenges accepted frameworks of anarchistic politics.

Anti-oppression and intersectionality

With roots in anti-nuclear, civil rights, and radical feminist movements, anti-oppression draws from multiple resistance discourses to reinvent social movement praxis. While academic work has only tangentially engaged with this grassroots project, activist writing and workshopping has facilitated the development and spread of anti-oppression principles and practices throughout the Left. Activists – anarchist, anti-racist, feminist, dis/ability, queer and indigenous – have produced a range of tools to problem-solve privilege and oppression within social movements. Examples of such tools include sexual assault survivor support networks and accountability processes, participatory meeting facilitation, workshops and skillshares, reading and action groups, open letters and call-outs, concept and language guides, blogs, archives and distros, mission statements, and direct action interventions.

Each of these can be useful for building more inclusive and effective organizing practice. But when they are relied on too heavily, practiced in isolation, or become unquestionable as methods to work through particular forms of power and violence, they actually reproduce oppression in a variety of ways. Taking the model of anti-racist workshopping again as our example, it becomes problematic when leaned on as the primary means of working through white supremacy, when it is separated from engagement in multi-racial coalition and anti-racist action, and when critiques of its methods or function are avoided or ignored (see O'Brien n.d.; Crass 2013, 257; Jones n.d.). Uncritical routinization of such practices can produce a sense of stability and either despair or accomplishment that deters the ongoing creation and critique of anti-oppression tools. The pedagogic networking of anti-oppression across movements and tactics is integral to its ongoing relevance to collective liberation struggle.

In this way, anti-oppression is a political project more often understood as developing practice than theory, yet a project embedded in rich theoretical

terrain. This will become clear as we situate it alongside complimentary social movement research and the framework of intersectionality. Academic work documenting and problem-solving oppression within social movements both compliments and contrasts with its grassroots relative. Despite their overlaps in content, anarchistic anti-oppression is best theorized separately as a grassroots pedagogy and a forum for experiments in interrupting oppressive power relationships.

Some of the most powerful and relevant academic precedents for theorizing anti-oppression come from anti-racist feminist research in social movement and community organizations. Deeply critical of conventional social science, these scholars employ theoretical frameworks informed by intersectionality to produce critiques of how domination inflected by race, class, gender and sexuality impacts movement settings. Importantly, while this work is written and published from the academy, Ward (2004) reminds us that intersectionality emerged as grassroots feminist and anti-racist critique from the margins of civil rights and feminist struggle. And that for many of these scholars, strengthening social justice struggle is the focus of their critical work. Anti-racist and feminist researchers are doing invaluable work to excavate the silences in mainstream social movement theory and fuse academic and activist resources toward anti-oppressive ends.

Yet the affinities between such scholarship and grassroots anti-oppression should not obscure the primary pedagogical work of naming and responding to oppressive dynamics within activist spaces. This has never been primarily an academic pursuit. Rather, a vast body of analysis and practice has emerged from and intervened into activist spaces often complementary to academic analyses of intersectionality. Such work can be traced back even before Collins' (2000) and Crenshaw's (1989) seminal analytical works introduced the language of intersectional and interlocking oppressions to Black feminist theory and legal critique. While their work solidified this framework in feminist and anti-racist discourse, intersectionality was already a vital component of grassroots struggles against racism and sexism. This is expressed clearly in the Combahee River Collective's Black Feminist Statement (1977). A collective articulation of personal and political struggles against racism, hetero-sexism and economic exploitation (Combahee 1977, s2), it is perhaps the most widely reproduced example of anti-oppression writing emerging from and addressed to grassroots practice.

Activists within anarchistic networks draw from similar experiences and analysis in hopes of building transformative organizing practice. The parallel academic literature does something different. What it provides most consistently are reasons why a networked and pedagogical approach to anti-oppression is vital to its continued relevance and effectiveness. It does so through incisive analysis of how oppression impacts movement-building and is systematized through broad social and political institutions.

Jennifer Correa (2010) models such an analysis, combining an intensive critique of mainstream social movement research with an intersectional study of

state sanctioned repression and systemic social and economic violence. Drawing on the history of the Brown Berets, she shows how situated processes of oppression experienced at community and interpersonal scales are often submerged in broad discussions of context or 'political opportunity' (Correa 2010, 84–5). Understanding and responding to systemic violence in the course of our activism and research is only possible if we are attuned to the situated movement knowledge produced across the radical Left. When we fail to confront the materiality of White supremacy, settler-colonialism, hetero-patriarchy, dis/ableism and capitalism, we fail to address some of the most powerful institutions structuring social movement action.

And because these institutions directly impact participation and internal dynamics in our movements, failure to address them undercuts our potential to create effective strategies of resistance. Gender regimes influence not only activists' capacities to adopt different organizational forms, but the risks they face in doing so (Zemlinskaya 2010; for a class-focused analysis, see Piven and Cloward 1979; regarding race, see Ostrander 1999; on sexuality, see Ward 2004). This is undoubtedly related to the ways in which multiple and conflicting critiques of power and privilege have emerged from resistance at different intersections of race, class and gender (Poster 1995; see also Breines 2006). Poster (1995) shows how feminist activists' incomplete experiences of and perspectives on oppression and exploitation can delimit movements' organizational goals and structures.

Similar dynamics are evident in Morgensen's (2011) interrogation of the cultural and historical grounding of queer settler counterculture, and in particular the Radical Faeries. Situating their repertoires of neo-paganism and homesteading community within the settler colonial erasure of indigenous peoples and histories, he shows how renewed anti-colonial accountability and alliance are integral to building alternative political futures (Morgensen 2011, 125). Without accountable and networked engagement across interlocking forms of domination, ignorance adhering to privilege distorts movement-building work. It reproduces oppressive and power-laden relationships within and between activist communities, and prevents opportunities for collective and transformative action.

This has been documented time and again by historians of anti-poverty activism (Piven and Cloward 1979), feminism, anti-racism and anti-colonialism (Breines 2006; Davis 1983; Smith 2005), and anarchism (Crass 2013; Ferguson 2011; Olson 2009). These authors suggest that submerged and marginalized histories of resistance (not always recognized by the largely White, middle-class Left) are an important resource to begin re-learning how to build coalition and affinity-based struggle. They also suggest the importance of troubling common-sense understandings of social movement strategy and organization. Their work shows that when our organizational practices become rigid – when we stop learning from each other – our capacity to struggle against multiple oppressions is compromised. Acknowledging the historical and continued consequences of unaddressed domination to our movements is a vital task for anti-oppression.

Equally important for the White and settler-dominated Left is engaging with emerging networks of analysis and practice that are proliferating and problem-solving tactics for responding to such domination. Such steps are crucial to transforming anarchistic politics, which claims a structure notable for both its networked activisms and its counter-cultures of self-imposed isolation, and claims active opposition to all forms of hierarchy while saturated with dis/ableism and White and cis-Male supremacy. Like much of the Left in North America, anarchistic analysis and organizing suffer from the inertia of over a century of theoretical and movement-building work insulated from resistance as articulated by colonized and oppressed peoples (Shannon and Rogue n.d.).

To get a more nuanced understanding of this inertia, we need to examine how the mechanics of our activism and organizing are intimately tied to regimes of racism, settler-colonialism, hetero-patriarchy, dis/ableism and capitalism. Ostrander (1999) takes us about as close as we can go in social movement scholarship to anti-oppression, and thus illustrates the limitations of such research for internal social movement processes. She uses intersectionality to examine how challenges faced by a Community Fund were raced and gendered: the marginalizing effects of consensus decision making, divisions of labour and responsibility, and perennial conflicts around structural reform. She also clarifies their importance: "organizational transformation toward a feminist and progressive vision is a process, a goal to be reached for, with its course perhaps best described as an ongoing and unstable project" (Ostrander 1999, 641). Ostrander provides us with a polished form of analytical work consonant with anarchistic anti-oppression, and so gestures to potential lines of intervention and collaboration for activists and academics. An important difference however, lies in where this intervention is taking place: outside of circulations of anti-oppression experience in activist networks. Just as Ostrander and others have adapted intersectional or interlocking analyses to identify, criticize and reflect on particular conflicts and developments within movement organizations, so too do many activists in their day-to-day anti-oppression work. But such work produces – to a greater or lesser extent – more direct pedagogical effects through participants' collective engagement in anti-oppression, and through its dissemination via bookfairs, workshops, and other social media.

The history of social movement struggle in North America is peppered with such interventions. At its best, this pedagogical work disturbs unspoken White, hetero, middle-class, settler/citizen and cisgendered norms within social justice organizing, and helps to clarify and present alternative and suppressed modes of political struggle. Building on historical and theoretical analysis, activists connected to anarchistic networks are attempting to expand the boundaries of the political to account for oppression in social justice struggle. Like the Combahee River Collective, recent work by Unsettling Minnesota, generationFIVE, INCITE!, Colours of Resistance and the Catalyst Project politicize and respond to the complex power dynamics faced by social movement organizations and networks. They too adapt an intersectional analysis of oppression to activist spaces to produce tools that empower and educate their communities. Activist projects such as these blur the boundaries

between anti-oppression theory and practice, engaging their communities with insights drawn from feminist, anti-racist, queer, indigenous, dis/ability and anarchist struggle. Anti-authoritarians' renovation of organizing practices and reclamation of multiple histories of struggle has lent their work new potency for addressing internal hierarchies. Radicals from a range of backgrounds are now collectively innovating and implementing practical responses to marginalization and violence within movement organizations. It is this work, rarely represented in academic journals, but referenced in workshops and working groups, zines, web portals and other activist media that might, more meaningfully, be called 'anti-oppression'.

Anti-oppression usually refers to a cluster of tactics bent on identifying and eliminating violence within movement organizations, and building empowering forms of political community (see Khan et al. 2006; Love & Rage 2011; Collectif 2011). It frames these struggles as multidimensional (personal, relational, organizational) and progressive subversions of normalized White and cis-/male supremacy, dis/ableism, hetero-sexism, imperialism and capitalism. Anti-oppression entails a broad historical understanding of how these forms of domination operate at global and regional levels, and politicizes their infiltration into movement building (Crass 2002a; 2006).

As noted by scholars above, oppression and exploitation take many forms in social movement organizing. Anti-oppression practice similarly takes diverse shapes within anarchistic communities across North America. The pedagogical work of anti-oppression in anarchism is evident in unique interventions into every aspect of anti-authoritarian politics including decision making, organizational structure, division of labour, resource management, tactics, subcultural norms and security (see Walia 2006; Miriam & Ali n.d.; Threat n.d.). On interpersonal and networked scales, such interventions are integral to a grassroots process of "becoming aware and naming the mechanisms of power that are active at the points of junction of different systems of oppression, to better combat them" (Collectif 2011, 2). Anti-oppression therefore also entails pro-active development of norms and structures responsive to internal critique – a task that dovetails nicely with anarchistic notions of prefiguration, as we will explore below. The ebbs and flows of this critical and constructive process is visible in the development and spread of how-to manuals, narrative histories and critical reflections.

The proliferation of anti-oppression in these different forms within anarchistic politics is a product of evolving ideas about where and how oppression is re/produced and where and how it might be interrupted. Anti-oppression is not a stable or homogenous body of work, though there are practices that, through their adoption by influential training centres or coalitions, seem to render them unquestionable. Nor is anti-oppression drawn from a single theoretical framework for understanding inter/personal and systemic power dynamics, though this is a highly polarizing subject. Anarchistic anti-oppression theory and practice has been spurred on by multiple understandings of how oppression works, drawn from multiple histories of resistance. One shared characteristic is

how anti-oppression organizes these multiplicities through anti-racist feminist theories of interlocking or intersectional oppressions (see Davis 1983; Crenshaw 1989; Collins 2000; hooks 2000). These approaches to identification and oppression redefine it as multiple and intersecting, and a product of interdependent systems of domination, including imperialism, capitalism, White supremacy, heteronormativity and patriarchy. As such they provide a powerful rejoinder to powerful, yet over-simplified theories of state and class power that continue to drive movements on the Left.

Intersectionality is also useful for responding to clusters of privilege, including those adhering to white, middle-class and activist masculinities often problematized by anti-oppression activists (Said the Pot n.d.; Social Detox 2007; Crass 2002b; see Brittan 1989; Connell 2005). It encourages multiple resistances, positing "a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance – as location of radical openness and possibility ... continually formed in that segregated culture of opposition that is our critical response to domination" (hooks 1990, 153). This is an important facet of intersectionality – in its expanding work to expose the complexity of the particular 'matrix of domination' (Collins 2000, 227) operative in North America, it does not rule out struggles across the differences it reveals. It rather provides theoretical tools with which to do so more effectively (Collectif 2011; INCITE! 2005; see Smith 2006; Fellows & Razack 1997).

Concentrating on the intersectional basis for anti-oppression work can help us to attend to the varied ways anti-oppression has been operationalized and contested within anarchistic movements. Creative innovations and critical interventions into anti-oppression that dovetail with poststructuralist and queer theoretical work are increasingly important to how anti-oppression is developing on the radical Left. There have been a number of important interventions by activist/academics applying and expanding intersectionality and queer theory in particular to renovate anti-authoritarian politics. These adaptations include theoretical synthetical work (Ben-Moshe et al. 2009; Sheppard 2010; LA COiL n.d.; Shannon and Rogue n.d.), critiques of actions and organizational norms (Principle 1998; Hewitt-White 2001; Highleyman 2002; Martinez 2002; Nopper 2005; Walia 2006; Russell n.d.) and alternative building (Crass 2002b; Crass and Geoff 2002; INCITE! 2005; Gaarder 2009; Jeppesen 2010b).

While there is not space here to address the nuances of these interventions, they hold a number of commitments in common with other queer and poststuctural critique (see Butler 1990; Foucault 1990). In different places, and for different tactics, these authors openly contest problematic notions of autonomy and individualism historically embedded in anarchistic politics. These values are critiqued for their role in reproducing masculinist, dis/ableist, racist, Euro-centric and class-based subjectivities antithetical to collective liberation struggle. Moreover, while they problematize static and exclusive frameworks for categorizing and adjudicating identity, they also promote the kind of sustainable

communal accountability vital to building movements across privilege and oppression. Yet they accomplish this not so much through distanced theory-building, as through collective problem-solving around practical questions of accountability, decision-making, divisions of labour and tactics.

Anti-oppression as pedagogy encompasses critical work on all of these theoretical and practical problems, many of which may not seem directly relevant to the internal power dynamics of a movement. Even so, applications of anti-oppression critique are often met with resistance – including willful and aggressive defences of privilege and power. For example, one of the most contentious issues among anarchists concerned with alternative building is strategy. The classical anarchist understanding of revolutionary anti-state and anti-capitalist struggle leaves little space for more nuanced approaches to power, and often inhibits the difficult work of building critical knowledge around colonialism, racism, cis and hetero-sexism and dis/ableism. This pre-occupation with the power of the state and capital often corresponds to activists' deferral of anti-oppression work as a distraction from the central programme of fomenting insurrection or building revolution (Dixon 2011; see Gelderloos 2010; Croatoan 2012). Likewise, certain anarchist and situationist notions of prefiguration obscure the consequences of self-imposed insularity. While the propagation of counter-culture lifestyles against White, bourgeois ways of being (punk, vegan, DIY) can be a powerful form of resistance, they are often reduced to political strategies of 'opting out' or removing oneself from relations of exploitation and hierarchy. This not only produces its own form of exclusivity, such strategies are actually counterproductive to building intersectional and effective resistance against domination (Martinez 2002; Ervin 2008; Alchemy 2009; Olson 2009).

While there is value in both revolutionary and prefigurative approaches to movement-building, and in many cases they have been transformed into conduits for anti-oppression work, each of them is also bound to Euro-centric, White and male-supremacist understandings of power and resistance. The first by subsuming all histories of oppression and resistance into a problematic framework of class, and the second by elevating the agency of a human subject beyond the reach of systemic and structural power. The most promising responses to this divide in anarchistic thought refuse the binary between inter/personal and mass organizing (Khan et al. 2006; Crimethinc 2013, 40–3). Informed by an intersectional analysis, they call for creative coalition-building attuned to the ways in which race, class, gender, ability and sexuality are interwoven with the power of the state, market, and culture.

Alongside strategy, the language of identification and oppression articulated in texts and workshops focusing on anti-oppression has also been a point of struggle in North America (O'Brien 2003; Gelderloos 2010; Shannon and Rogue n.d.). Anti-authoritarian theories of identity drawing from existentialist, postmodern, or queer theory sometimes function to obscure and dismiss the power dynamics revealed by intersectional critiques of activist practice. In the absence of a material analysis of how racialization or binary sex and gender

regimes impact people's lives, drawing attention to the precarity of such processes is at best an intellectual exercise. Subversion and collective refusal to conform to the dictates of such regimes can be powerful, but not without understanding their limitations and the conditions for their possibility.

For example, a popular anarchistic theory, the 'Temporary Autonomous Zone', promises a postmodern subversion of bourgeois norms of respectability enforced by the state. But it is devoid of analysis of the other overlapping forms of power that affect this autonomy. Participation in this "revolutionary nomadism" (Bey 2003, 122) requires that one be both unattached – with no binding commitments to family, children, rent – and primarily interested in a form of psychological and cultural liberation with no likely impact on the material conditions of one's life. In contrast, non-white, non-cis/male inflections of similar tactics to construct spaces less dominated by White, cis-/male supremacist culture are condemned. One way is by denouncing it as 'identity politics', a pejorative term applied by the Left to a range of organizing methods and ontologies used by oppressed peoples that do not immediately fold them into White settler and cis-/male dominated movements (see Jarach 2004; Anonymous 2010). This kind of response further reduces any chance of productive collaboration across oppressions.

Other activists work with contemporary theories of identity to challenge received understandings of anti/oppression and to nuance and strengthen resistance against domination in activist spaces. Part of this work is articulating innovative intersectional concepts of identity, and – like Ang's identity blues (2000), Ahmed's notion of stickiness (2004a; 2004b), or Alcoff's provocative question ('Who's afraid of Identity politics', 2000) – recognize that identities are indeed fluid and constructed, but also violently and systemically mapped onto people by institutions and relations of power. This also entails acknowledging how these identities can be a locus of resistance. An important thread of anti-oppression pedagogy, such theoretical work has been most fully developed by activists confronting male supremacy and sexual violence on the Left (The Revolution 2008; INCITE! 2005; O'Brien 2003; Principle 1998).

Even so, anti-oppression practice is not 'performative' (Ahmed 2004a, para. 11; see also Srivastava and Francis 2006, 290), and therefore requires much more than discursive and/or theoretical intervention. The language associated with anti-oppressive visions of identity can actually function to obscure and restrict our analysis of power. Concepts of privilege and allyship, or 'fishbowl' exercises and race or gender-specific caucuses can be useful in some situations and counter-productive in others. We need to be realistic about the limited utility of the tools we have adopted to teach and learn about power and oppression. Many of them are based on simplified understandings of power, reproduce White and cis-/male centrism, or simply fail to really capture the messy reality of oppressions (Jones n.d.; Smith 2013; O'Brien n.d.). It is only through a framework of pedagogy, through sustained and self-critical networks of teaching and learning that we can address these limitations and move beyond them. Such networks can allow us to develop anti-oppression as a transformative project

that has relevance for all of anarchistic politics.

Implicit struggles around the discursive construction and the material consequences of power and privilege are ongoing in movement politics. They are part of a range of contestation evident in anarchistic writing on empowerment (Alchemy 2009; Gelderloos 2010; Ruby n.d. Anger; Tov n.d.), liberation (Crass and Geoff 2002; LA COiL n.d.; Clarke n.d.; O'Brien 2003), community (Nomous 2007; Aguilar et al. 2008; Ben-Moshe et al. 2009; Knoch n.d.), and accountability (Aguilar 2007; Anonymous, Celeste & Gorrion 2012; Crass 2006; Crimethinc 2013; Thomas n.d.). Like the cases discussed above, the different content packed into these concepts functions to erase or engage a political analysis of gender, class, race, sexuality and ability. When these ideas are informed by an intersectional analysis of power, they can be transformed to account for the particular requirements of collective liberation struggles in different places and by different peoples. When a term like accountability or community is developed or applied without taking this particularity into account, it lacks the analytical content required to be realized in any substantive way, and likely perpetuates or reinforces normalized relations of power and oppression. The next section will explore this more fully through anarchistic theories of direct action, affinity, and consensus.

I have argued above that anti-oppression necessitates a collaborative grassroots project of analyzing and confronting intersectional power within radical Left. Anti-oppression as such is distinct from scholarly research mapping oppression in relation to social movement organizations. It is not singular or static, but rather a cluster of reflexive theories and practices marked by a systematic – if incomplete – application of anti-racist, feminist, dis/ability, anti-capitalist, anti-imperial and queer critiques. The pedagogical networking of anti-oppression within anarchistic networks is visible in the theoretical contention underway by activists problem-solving their politics. This collective work discursively and materially constructs anti-oppression politics as a distinctly intersectional project. It also provides important feedback on the feasibility of different experiments across broad networks of anti-oppression practice. As will be discussed further below, anti-oppression in different forms is a key component to prefigurative praxis.

Prefiguration and anarchistic renewal

The innovative project of anti-oppression is well underway within contemporary anti-authoritarianism. Alongside the difficult theoretical work discussed above, anarchistic repertoires of direct action, affinity, and consensus reflect and filter movements' engagement with anti-oppression pedagogy. These tactics emerged from the overlaps and experiences of multiple resistance struggles. Yet it is painfully evident that relations of power and privilege as structured in the dominant settler societies of North America remain a problem for anti-authoritarian activists. Direct action tactics, consensus process and affinity-based organization – the building blocks of contemporary anti-authoritarianism

– do not by themselves dissemble White and cis-/male supremacist, ableist, hetero-sexist and classed power relations. And despite decades of struggle, they remain to be substantively transformed by anti-oppression. As will be discussed below, the commonsense ways in which consensus, affinity, and direct action are often applied by the Left are neither anti-oppressive nor prefigurative. Nonetheless, these tactics cannot be reduced to their problematic operation on the White, cis-/male dominated Left. They take many forms, some of which have been reclaimed by organizing in marginalized communities. Embedded in anti-oppression pedagogy, direct action, consensus, and affinity could hold strategic potential for dismantling power relations both at a societal level and within social movement organizations.

Recent developments in activist analysis and tactics in have inspired a burst of theory concerned with the development of 'small-a' anarchism (Gordon 2008, 24), the spread of 'anarchistic' politics across the radical Left (Day 2005), and the emergence of 'new anarchists' (Graeber 2002; Williams 2007). As discussed earlier, the evolution implied here was produced by a cross-pollination of prefigurative ideas and practices on the radical Left. These authors suggest that anarchist ideas and tactics have taken on new significance in these movements (Graeber 2002, 62; Day 2005, 19-20; Gordon 2008, 12-14; Williams 2007, 298-299), while their modified descriptors (small-a anarchism; new anarchism; anarchist-ic) are imperfect attempts to acknowledge how this political tendency has been shaped by a range of struggles over the past half-century. This anarchistic current is infused with an innovative and evolving understanding of power informed by the interaction of feminist, indigenous, queer, anti-racist and radical dis/ability struggles. Drawing attention to the concrete shifts in alter-globalization struggle and the activist groups networked within it, Day (2004; 2005) provides us with a useful framing for these developments.

Writers in postmarxist and postanarchist traditions often emphasize and encourage conceptualizations of revolution and social movement as perpetual and contingent (Mouffe and Laclau 2001; Hardt and Negri 2004; Holloway 2002; May 1994; Newman 2001). Day (2005) shares this emphasis, but notes an evolution of intersectional and anarchist practice in North America not fully expressed by these frameworks. He notes a shift on the radical Left from working to build formal mass organizations to affinity-based networks of struggle, and from totalizing critiques of bureaucracy or capitalism to political analysis responsive to multiple and overlapping systems of domination. It is the resulting logic of struggle that he introduces as anarchistic, for which the manifold oppressions faced today "are ever-present as possibilities, and therefore must be continuously acknowledged and warded off to the greatest extent possible" (Day 2005, 155; see also Gordon 2008, 43).

In such language, we find the idea of social transformation embedded in a collective process of teaching/learning grounded in an intersectional understanding of power. Day suggests that this process connects reflection and resistance in a compelling way through "conscious attempts to alter, impede, destroy or construct alternatives to dominant structures, processes, practices

and identities ... [and] not just the *content* of current modes of domination and exploitation, but also the *forms* that give rise to them" (Day 2005, 4, italics original). This does not mean that anarchistic movements are not concerned with state or capitalist oppression, but that they are also invested in intersectional strategies that go deeper than restructuring political or economic institutions. Feminist, anarchist, anti-racist and other radical projects have provided the groundwork for contemporary expressions of these strategies in pedagogical networks of anti-oppression. These ideas are implicit in theories of anarchistic anti-oppression, and fostered through participatory processes and networks. This transformative process is ongoing, even as attempts to refine or realize an explicitly intersectional politics continue to be marginalized or silenced by the Left.

Alongside intersectionality, anarchistic pedagogies of anti-oppression are indebted to notions of prefiguration. This idea has long been a powerful force in anti-authoritarian movements, where it is used to create and seize opportunities for activists to build new subjectivities and relationships 'in the shell of the old'. At its most basic it is a radical strategy of social transformation that emphasizes building alternative political, economic and cultural infrastructures while working to dismantle existing oppressive contexts (Crass 2013, 27; Graeber 2009, 203; Day 2005, 37). Maeckelbergh (2011, 3) stresses its practicality as follows: "prefiguration is something that people do... the alternative 'world' is not predetermined: it is developed through practice and it is different everywhere." Prefiguration comes to anarchistic movements through a range of progressive political work, most notably from turn-of-the-century anarchism and the new social movements of the 1960's and 70's in North America. Contemporary anti-authoritarians have adapted and extended repertoires of prefigurative practice developed by these movements – including innovative forms of community organizing, consciousness-raising, and cultural production (Graeber 2002; Notes 2003; From Act Up 2002; Maeckelbergh 2011).

Some of these adaptations can be insular and uninterested in broader social change. But prefigurative praxis takes on special significance as it is intertwined with anti-oppression to problem-solve movements' latent white supremacy, dis/ableism, class-ism, sexism, homo- and transphobia. A prefigurative framework is a central means through which anarchistic work on anti-oppression sets itself apart from more mainstream and bureaucratic variants of anti-oppression (see INCITE! 2005; generationFIVE 2007; see also LA COiL n.d.; Shannon and Rogue n.d.). Unlike liberal and bureaucratic applications of anti-oppression principles, activists in this tradition position themselves to work explicitly toward radical and cumulative transformations of relationships and infrastructure (Srivastava 2006; Millar 2008). This has resulted in the innovation of anti-oppression praxis that refuses the traditional polarization between inter/personal and systems change. In the following pages, I will examine some of the implications of this in relation to the intertwined anarchistic theories of direct action, consensus and affinity.

Direct action blending cultural and political activism including radical arts

(theatre, music, poetry) and the claiming of space (social centres, freeschools, workplaces) has been central to anarchist organizing in North America since at least the late 1800's (Avrich and Pateman 1995; Ferguson 2011). In theory, direct action is a 'dual strategy' of simultaneously challenging domination and directly enacting alternatives (Gordon 2008, 18): at its best, it practices anti-oppression in concrete acts of resistance. Direct action is practiced in many different forms from collective childcare and cooperative houses to blockades and black blocs.

Yet direct action can be taken without a nuanced analysis of how interlocking systems of domination produce aggressive and confrontational tactics as more 'radical' or 'militant' and thus deserving of greater time and energy. Likewise it can be organized without a critical understanding of how racism, cis-sexism and dis/ableism alongside experiences of poverty and family affect the access and relevance of such tactics to differently oppressed peoples. That these are not only potential but regular occurrences on the Left may be attributed to "a mode of political activism" rooted in Euro-centric political theory (Ruby n.d. Anger). But direct action also has radical histories across anarchist, anti-racist and feminist struggles (Barrow 2002; Breines 2006; Moynihan 2002; Graeber 2009), which are important to how anti-oppression is developed outside of and beyond NGOs and unions. Direct action sees the reclamation of state or foundation resources for activist purposes as a subversive, but ultimately unreliable project (Jeppesen 2010a, 13; see Smith 2006; generationFIVE 2007; Crass 2013). Rather, activists and community members engage in a form of Friereian pedagogy to build critical consciousness as they identify, analyze, and respond to particular tasks collectively (Friere 2009, 54).

Feminist, queer, dis/ability and anti-racist applications of this form of action increasingly dovetail with anti-oppression. While such applications remain exceptions to general anarchistic practice, they are growing in number and influence on the radical Left. Intertwining anti-oppression and prefiguration, activists are building empowering political relationships and spaces through actively confronting systems of oppression and exploitation. There is a broad spectrum of direct action tactics at the overlaps of varied social movement struggles that are beginning to reflect this transformative impulse (Day 2005, 22-36; see also From Act Up 2002; Notes 2003; Jeppesen 2010b). Through critical interventions into strategy sessions and protest tactics, activists are breaking down the exclusivity and irrelevance of direct action politics for differently oppressed peoples (Nopper 2005; Walia 2006; Martinez 2002; Hewitt-White 2001). And not just by critiquing accepted practices or drawing on marginalized histories to reclaim tactics from the White and cis-/male dominated Left. Certainly direct action tactics are more effective when it is made accountable for who is or is not being empowered or engaged by them. But 'new' tactics (for the Left) are also being shared by indigenous, queer and other marginalized communities.

One powerful example of this can be seen in activists' work to foster methods of conflict mediation and restorative justice, adapting them to domestic violence

work in movement circles. Here we find anti-oppression has been combined with direct action in the development of support networks organized to empower survivors of intimate violence outside of – or alongside – a criminal justice process, and develop lines of accountability for those who have done harm (see generationFIVE 2007; The Revolution 2008; Crimethinc 2012). As with many of the tactics addressed above, there are limitations inherent to these projects due to the impacts of dis/ableism, racism, cis-/sexism, colonialism and capitalism on activist networks. And the adoption of such transformative justice frameworks by settler activists needs to be carefully positioned against 500 years of cultural and spiritual appropriation. It is here, in such messy but potentially transformative spaces of learning, that alternative modes of direct action are emerging. This is a key function of anti-oppression pedagogy: to infuse direct action with an intersectional analysis and intervene into and transform relations of violence long left unaddressed by the Left. As we will see below, this is inseparable from critical engagements with affinity and consensus as overlapping pillars of anarchistic organizing. All three need to be built around a kind of anti-oppression process that infuses the (strategic) fragmentation of the radical Left with an intersectional politics of resistance.

As with direct action, affinity is an important part of contemporary prefigurative praxis. Affinity is a model of organization – small groups, networked by politics or geography – intended to balance intimate relationships and tactical effectiveness. On their own or within larger projects (a social centre; a bookfair), tightly-knit and self-selecting clusters of activists are adopted as the motor for political organizing; values like honesty, trust, accountability, and collective growth are viewed as vital to their functioning. In this way, affinity "is immediately addressed towards action, basing itself not on the quantity of its adherents, but on the qualitative strength of a number of individuals working together in a projectuality that they develop together as they go along" (G.C. and O.V. n.d., 15). These affinity groups are a primary vehicle for direct action by way of working-group specialization and networked organization.

While we will return later to the networked aspect of affinity, the small group itself is relevant for the work of anti-oppression because it represents a space of intense interpersonal relationships and a launchpad for intervention into broader systems of domination. Activists on this continent are organizing in political environments produced by violent neo-/colonial power relationships. The pressures to conform to 'legitimate' modes of political expression and organization, as well as hierarchical and exploitative interpersonal relations, are backed by powerful social norms as well as threats of police or military intervention. In such a context, activists' adaptation and innovation of a distinctly anti-authoritarian model of affinity to bridge social movements and struggles makes a compelling statement. While this will be addressed more fully in our discussion of consensus, part of this contrast lies in the way affinity groups are often conceptualized as prefigurative spaces. Whatever their faults, they are constructed as a model for problem-solving hierarchical and oppressive relationships, and as spaces for personal and collective development. This provides a valuable opening for activists applying and extending anti-

oppression into the mechanics of affinity, which is more often embraced for how it concentrates activists' skills and energy.

Freeman's (2002) widely circulated critique of 'unstructured groups' provides an early example of this, though it seems to mark the affinity group something of an exception. For Freeman, "the idea [of structurelessness] becomes a smokescreen for the strong or the lucky to establish unquestioned hegemony over the others" because it allows only informal, possibly covert, and often unaccountable allocations of power (2002, 55–7). Her insightful analysis of the quiet but insidious forms of power circulating in small group settings has been corroborated many times by critics and reflexive practitioners of anarchist, feminist, and other anti-bureaucratic forms of organizing. But contemporary applications of affinity can also be highly structured to facilitate organizational flexibility and to multiply "the various contributions of each person to their fullest, nurturing and developing individual input" (Levine 2002, 63).

The amount of anti-racist and feminist critique accessible in anarchalibrary.blogspot.ca or spunk.org suggest that affinity groups, structured or unstructured, regularly fail to incorporate an intersectional analysis of privilege and power into their internal relations and organizing principles. This failure is in part a function of activists' tendency to make direct action and protest politics their primary focus. But regardless of how effective or efficient an affinity group may seem to be, the oppressive functions of White and cis-/male supremacy, hetero-sexism, dis/ableism and capitalism can remain operative and naturalized. It does not matter if this politics is built around 'interstices' (Holloway 2002), 'autonomous zones' (Bey 2003), or 'counterpublics' (Sheppard 2010); economic and social hierarchies do not magically disappear in such spaces. With Freeman and Levine, we need to return to and expand upon feminist commitments to collective empowerment to realize affinity's prefigurative potential. This means grounding affinity within a critical intersectional understanding of social and political context. Outside of the work of anti-oppression to contextualize and problem-solve its claims to inter/personal empowerment and liberation, the idea of affinity holds limited prospects for prefiguration. It is not enough to balance groups' insularity or specialized focus with inter-movement networking and solidarity, a practice I will addressed in a moment. Rather, bringing affinity groups into the realm of anti-oppression pedagogy involves extending existing power-sharing and accountability measures to account for the ways in which resources, experience and capacity are produced through regimes of privilege and oppression. And it requires re-orienting affinity to wage feminist, anti-racist, radical dis/ability, queer, and decolonization struggles within the Left.

As implied earlier, anarchistic notions of affinity have two key elements: small groups and networks. This second element is also viewed by many activists as a prefigurative project. In theory, networks of affinity are malleable, self-selecting, and horizontal, and are constituted through a wide range of social media. In this way, networks act as checks on the bureaucratization and centralization of power, yet are capable of large scale creative and cooperative

political action. Governed only by voluntary association, networks facilitate the specialization of affinity groups around concrete and complimentary direct action work: "copwatching, communications, health care, street theatre" (Notes 2003, 88). Their connectivity is "based on diverse, ad-hoc coalitions – giving rise to a pluralist orientation which deemphasizes unity of analysis and vision in favour of multiplicity and experimentation" (Gordon 2008, 42; Day 2005, 35). In North America such flexible and networked systems of mutual aid have been most visible on the Left in summit protests and other large scale demonstrations (Juris 2005, 2008; St. John 2008).

But networks of affinity also undergird much of anarchistic movement, including circulations of anti-oppression teaching and learning. It is such networks that make affinity groups a conduit and platform for allied and accountable modes of activism. The uniquely participatory nature of affinity-based organizing makes it vulnerable to anti-racist, feminist, radical dis/ability, anti-capitalist and anti-colonial interventions. Activists in North America have taken advantage of this from the beginnings of the alter-globalization movement to expand their repertoires of direct action and foci of struggle. Unfortunately, the flexibility provided by affinity-based organization also provides many ways to avoid or disengage from groups or individuals presenting difficult critiques. Because anarchistic networks are based on principles of self-selection and voluntary association, they function as much by disconnection and insulation as they are by interconnectivity – activist knowledge and energy do not flow in all directions at all times. Rather, groups make decisions regarding what parts of the network to engage with and when. These are not always explicit or completely conscious decisions, but they have important implications.

One implication is that anti-oppression has, for many activists, become one specialized and elective form of knowledge and set of skills alongside others, like fundraising or meeting facilitation. While this may be unavoidable at some level, such specialization nonetheless absolves many activists and producers of knowledge from problem-solving oppression directly. Instead, it is the job of a discrete and separate 'anti-oppression' analysis to educate and transform anarchistic politics. This occurs in a variety of ways, from seemingly the innocent partitioning of movement knowledge by specialized workshops, web portals or zine collections, to more overt and outspoken forms of voluntary (dis-)association and retractions of affinity. Here we see again the limitations of prefiguration enacted without an applied intersectional analysis of power and oppression. Premised on ties of friendship and mutual support, affinity-based networking can all too easily reproduce networks of privilege and patronage constitutive of settler societies in North America.

That said, these problematic applications of affinity are based on a relatively limited understanding of collective organizing. While the idea of affinity-based networks is sometimes reduced to the forms it took in the alter-globalization movement, there are diverse and instructive histories for such organizing (Day 2005, 182-6; see also Olson 2009; Ervin 2008; Barrow 2002; Dupuis-Déri 2010). The ideas and practices latent in anarchistic notions of affinity have

multiple referents, going back to not only Spanish, Argentinian and French anarchists, but more recently to radical feminists, Quakers, and the Black Freedom movement. Each of these holds insights for a more intersectional kind of affinity – whether through particularly compelling models of participatory economy and popular education, shelter and support networks, spiritual community, or long-term organizing. The importance of these precedents for anarchistic forms of anti-oppression cannot be overstated. These submerged histories contain analysis and practice with the potential to activate a distinctly prefigurative form of affinity-based organizing. And activists are using affinity to radicalize small groups as spaces of personal transformation and to engage in strategic and pedagogical linking of different communities oppressed and resisting (Crass 2013; Aguilar et al. 2008; Barrow 2002; Smith 2006).

Also implicated in the (re-)emergence of anarchism and anti-oppression is the theory and practice of consensus. In both senses, consensus is tightly bound to contemporary models of affinity and direct action as small group and networked organizing models. But it is discussed by activists primarily in reference to its practical form: a participatory and collaborative process of decision-making. Usually approached as a commonsensical anti-hierarchical alternative to executive or voting systems, its actual operation is highly specified. Affinity groups' small scale and task-orientedness are often cited as important pre-conditions for anarchistic consensus practice (Dupuis-Déri 2010, 49). It is in these small working groups that a majority of strategic and tactical ideas are hashed out. The practice of consensus is said to function by way of activists' mutual trust and humility, and a restricted focus "not on questions of definition but on immediate questions of action in the present" (Graeber 2009, 321).

Such broad commitments are operationalized in specialized facilitation roles and complex deliberation and conflict-mediation processes with multiple ways to register dis/agreement or concerns with the group (see Gelderloos 2006; Vannucci and Singer 2010). Movements to 'block' (veto) a decision or move to modified forms of consensus, for example, are available on the condition that such moves are not in tension with a group's founding principles. Whatever the particular nuances consensus practice takes for a group, it is supposed to allow for a thicker form of deliberation and a fuller representation of participants' politics in group actions. This intentionality is also reflected in activists' decentralized networking and coordination. A prime example of this is the use of 'spokes-councils' in which each 'spoke' (delegate) is primarily a conduit for dialogue: they relay actions, proposals and information between the network and their own affinity group (Graeber 2009, 37; see also Moynihan 2002, 168; Gordon 2008, 71). Such councils are often used by affinity groups to facilitate large-scale collaborative projects, but councils have little power of their own. Because they are premised on a principle of voluntary association, decision-making power effectively belongs to participant groups. In this way, consensus is tightly linked with ideas of affinity-based organizing, and saturates anarchistic movements.

Alongside these models of participatory decision-making, consensus' highly

specified processes produce their own forms of knowledge and expertise, and thus differing capacities to effectively engage and influence the development of collective ideas and actions. Moreover, consensus tools are not immune to manipulation. They can be abused by individuals (or affinity groups in the context of larger networks) to dominate the time and attention which has been dedicated to a task, construct problematic and fallacious oppositions between alternative courses of action, or simply bully others into agreement or tacit acceptance (see Vannucci and Singer 2010). Such behaviour not only undermines the anti-hierarchical claims of consensus, most of the authors cited above readily admit how regularly it corresponds to and reproduces social hierarchies of gender, age, race, ability and/or class. As such it is of obvious importance for anti-oppression, whether or not such domination becomes systematized in activist milieus by its repetition or through the emergence of structured or unstructured 'cores' of influence. To fully address such misuse or exploitation of others' trust, consensus practice requires an anti-oppression analysis. But we must not confuse controlling behaviours with the whole of what an intersectional perspective offers to consensus. The amount of energy spent on troubleshooting consensus practice belies the depth of its ambiguity to an intersectionally informed prefigurative politics. To go deeper, we need to think about the unexamined ways of thinking that produce consensus as a model for political organizing.

Activists' adoption of consensus practices reflects both a commitment to prefiguration and an adoption of a particular way of thinking about how to 'do' collective liberation. This way of thinking, and its political assumptions and prescriptions, is what I referred to above as the theoretical element of consensus. It is just as integral to consensus as any facilitation technique, and of just as much significance for anarchistic and anti-oppression politics. Alongside the complex and qualified set of mechanisms by which consensus is practiced, its way of thinking is part of a system of managing difference and dissent. As suggested above, the purpose of consensus is to not only facilitate creative thinking but to funnel it towards anarchistic – not necessarily anti-oppressive – frameworks of political action. That is, consensus is tightly bound up with the consolidation of affinity and the production of direct action. Its function is to reinforce and link these other projects in prefigurative praxis. As such, while consensus can produce compelling forms of anti-racist or feminist action, it is rather ambivalent towards activists applying critical analysis or problem-solving oppressive dynamics to movement settings. The relationships of respect and support necessary for sustainable anti-oppression work requires rather different forms of thinking about collective liberation than those produced in consensus.

This quickly becomes visible in situations where activists do not share an intersectional analysis of power. Positional critiques of raced, gendered and other intersectional forms of oppression must first contest sedimented notions of power as already fully theorized and deconstructed by anti-hierarchical organizing methods (see The Revolution 2008; Nopper 2005). Here, anti-oppressive interventions into group dynamics and tactics may be constructed as threatening both to the principled forms of organization central to the group

and its tactical purposefulness. Interventions may be viewed as conflicts requiring a predetermined mediation process, and thus be interpreted as threatening to the bonds of mutual trust and friendship implied in consensus. They can be discouraged and deflected in the same way as other 'disruptive' behaviours.

For example, 'blocks' to proposals adhere only when interpreted by a group as rooted in its founding principles. They are also relatively rare since such principles are usually felt to be commonsensical, and the adoption of them is a precondition to membership. Each of these discourage interventions into problematic direct action tactics. Considered alongside the organization of spokes-councils, this means that the general trajectory of affinity-based struggle, and the consideration of alternatives to it, is structured by previously articulated political analysis and strategy. Further, in the service of efficiency, consensus places groups' guiding principles beyond the reach of politics as usual, and stipulates something very close to perfect agreement in order to revisit or amend them. This means that difficult negotiations relevant to anti-oppression can be sidelined in the interest of a groups' cohesion, its tactical orientation or for the sake of its 'collective process' (as advised by Vannucci & Singer 2010, 92,3).

But groups' founding principles are embedded in widely held anarchistic notions of collective process and action. And these cannot be separated from the unacknowledged systems of oppression and power alongside which they have been theorized and practiced. They draw heavily from particular White and cis-/male centred struggles around state power and capitalism. And the investment of consensus politics in Enlightenment universalism, self-interest and rationality is manifested in "certain very white, middle-class understandings of sociality: the need to suppress unseemly emotions, particularly contentious or angry ones, the emphasis on keeping up the appearance of mutual civility, or of appearances more generally" (Graeber 2009:332). One activist describes their participation in this politics as "an exercise in the risk of compromising and being obedient to [its male and white supremacist] attitude or in confronting it," and expecting defensiveness and marginalization (Ruby n.d., Anarcha). Such felt pressures to conform to problematic consensus culture indicate our need to think deeply about the ambivalent role of consensus in building an anti-oppressive model of prefiguration.

Activists are already doing such work, showing how we can draw on the undertones of prefiguration in consensus to frame applications of intersectionality as consistent with anarchistic values. And in some cases, where anti-oppression has been explicitly named as a guiding principle, it can provide further leverage for progressive change. But even explicit anti-oppressive principles can be turned to defer or defend against interventions by feminist, dis/ability and anti-racist activists. They can be used to argue that oppressed peoples' and allies' critique of internal dynamics are over-reactions, counter-productive, even breaches of a trust in the group's intention and principles. Consensus' commonsensical conditions of civility and group solidity can prevent

anarchistic spaces from actualizing the prefiguration they seek. Its primary goals and assumptions about collectivity must be refigured through an intersectional analysis. For critical voices will not be heard, and intersectional strategies will not be recognized for their value to collective liberation as long as consensus is theorized within the 'ideological straitjacket' of Euro-centric anarchist history (Ervin 2008:s2).

Despite this, consensus is still valued by a range of activists as a method to pursue prefiguration at a micro level. And by re-framing it through the pedagogical work of anti-oppression opens up radical possibilities for anarchistic politics. As it binds with direct action and affinity, consensus produces "alternative subjectivities and ways of being" (Day 2005, 35). But this productive machinery of subjects and relationships, primed towards anti-hierarchical critique, is limited. It is rooted in settler, White, cis-/male and able-bodied experiences of oppression. If this project of new subjectivities is to progress, we must address how it is also a product of power relationships. This anti-hierarchical impulse must be linked with networks of anti-oppression, which are focused on applying and problem-solving intersectional critique. Bringing these together is integral to realizing the prefigurative potential of such spaces "[w]here psychological struggle intersects political involvement" (Levine 2002, 65; see also Ruby n.d. Anarcha).

Already this co-extension is emergent in pedagogies of collective engagement and support, and activists' incorporation of anti-oppression into anarchistic movement-building, from men's anti-sexist groups to survivor support networks and people of colour forums (generationFIVE 2007; Crimethinc 2013; Aguilar et al. 2008; Gaarder 2009). This sustained micro level work of reflection and relationship building is a core factor in taking anti-oppression and prefiguration efforts deeper than workshops and mission-statements. Sara Ahmed suggests that "race, like sex, [class, sexuality and ability] is sticky; it sticks to us, or we become 'us' as an effect of how it sticks, even when we think we are beyond it" (2004a, para. 49; see also Ahmed 2004b). The communal wrestling with the effects of this stickiness and its impact on alternative building in anarchistic spaces is the realm of anti-oppression pedagogy. As a pedagogical project, it represents a compelling and durable application of intersectional critique through networks of teaching and learning. As illustrated in this section, it provides insight into how anarchistic theories of affinity, direct action and consensus might be further radicalized as forms of prefigurative praxis. Each of these are important sites of anti-oppression struggle and through such struggle they become important sites for the intensification of the prefigurative impulse central to anarchistic politics.

Conclusions

If it is to be of continuing relevance to movements for social justice, anti-oppression must not be reduced to the principles and practices bearing its name. Anti-oppression's power lies in its growth as a multifaceted pedagogical

project by which activists are innovating social movement practice. Within anarchistic political organizing, such activism works to identify naturalized forms of oppression and eliminate institutions reproducing white and male supremacy, dis/ableism, homophobia and transphobia, racism and capitalism. Anti-oppression is ongoing, and through its collaborative and cumulative practice we can see glimpses of radically inclusive and empowering forms of political community. Its day-to-day operation prefigures alternative ways of organizing and resisting together.

This paper began by contextualizing the production and dissemination of anti-oppression in anti-authoritarian networks. I end with the suggestion that a praxis of prefiguration takes on new meaning through the pedagogical work of anti-oppression. The transformative power of prefiguration does not lie in some utopia marking the completion of anti-oppression or the realization of a 'new' anarchism. Rather, its most transformative and revolutionary promise lies in the subversive and productive work of anti-oppression. It can be found in grassroots processes of building empowering horizontal modes of resistance responsive to different experiences of oppression and exploitation. This is no small task. It requires ruthless and regular examinations of our personal and collective complicity with social structures of gender and race, sexuality, ability and class. And it requires that we shift towards alliances "not solely based on shared victimization, but where we are complicit in the victimization of others... to develop resistance strategies that do not inadvertently keep the system in place for all of us, and keep all of us accountable" (Smith 2006, 69). Anti-oppression as pedagogy can facilitate this movement, and in its transformative approach to prefiguration it provides a powerful push to anarchistic struggles against domination.

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