TOWARDS INCLUSION: EXPANDING AND CHALLENGING CITIZENSHIP THROUGH INTERSECTIONAL ANTIPOVERTY ACTIVISM

DISSEETATION

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Abstract

Within low-income populations, there is a history of community work aimed at highlighting the plight of those living in poverty and establishing economic justice. In the contexts of the United States, an increasing number of these antipoverty activists are mobilizing within their communities to make demands on the state in an effort to contest state exclusions, challenge notions of inequitable citizenship, and reclaim power as impoverished citizens. This project investigates the relationship between the state, economic status, and citizenship by focusing on the role antipoverty activism plays in generating critiques of the state and defining citizenship for low-income individuals. While feminist political theorists posit that citizenship can exclude certain populations based on gender, race, and class, this study investigates how those individuals living at the margins understand citizenship in their own right.

By comparing and contrasting the work of two women-led antipoverty groups located in the Midwest, this study uncovers that despite the lower-class standing of their members, these organizations collectively express important critiques regarding the relationships between citizenship and neoliberal individualism within the United States. Specifically, as this study reveals, through an articulation of an oppositional community, in which individuals challenge class, gender, and race oppression through activism, these antipoverty organizations are renegotiating citizenship rights from the economic margins.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH

“Man was/is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Introduction

Over the past decade, America has witnessed a decline in the financial sector and a growth in the number of individuals experiencing economic difficulties. Beginning in 2007, the United States began a slow move towards what individuals now label a recessionary period during which Americans experienced record unemployment rates, the collapse of the housing industry, and the loss of jobs overseas (Elsby et al., 2010; Gwartney & Connors, 2009; Waddan, 2010). The effects of the recession are demonstrated in the rise of poverty figures; in 2009, U.S. Census data estimated that roughly 43.6 million Americans were living in poverty – a number that increased nearly 4 million from 2008 (U.S. Census, 2009). Of those 43.6 million living in poverty, 10.4 million were classified as “working poor,” an increase in 2 percent from 2008 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).1 While the rise in poverty figures is alarming and demonstrates the severity of the current economic recession within American society, it should be noted that many Americans have lived under the poverty line long before the start of the recessionary period. For these individuals, housing costs and job shortages are not connected to the recession, but a part of the daily struggle to survive.

1 According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, a person is classified as “working poor” if they spend no less than 27 weeks in the workforce and earn a total income below the poverty line, which for a family of four in 2009 was $21,954. In contrast, individuals who are labeled “poor” are not assumed to have employment or have spent less than 27 weeks in the labor market.
Within low-income populations, there is a history of community work aimed at highlighting the plight of those living in poverty and the connections between poverty and politics. This community work, which can be labeled “antipoverty activism,” is focused on eradicating poverty and establishing economic justice for individuals both within the United States and abroad. Some examples of this antipoverty work are the unemployed workers movement of the 1930s, welfare rights organizing of the 1960s, and recent uprisings for the establishment of economic human rights in the 2000s. Central to these activist campaigns is the notion that despite their economic status, lower-class citizens possess the potential to create social change. Currently within an American context, an increasing number of individuals, from long-standing activists to those new to poverty, are joining the antipoverty effort and mobilizing within their communities in an attempt to challenge inequities based on economic status and to develop a political consciousness aimed at connecting the realities of economic marginalization to political and social structures.

The following study aims to analyze current examples of antipoverty activism within the United States by exploring the relationship between activist goals, the political status of low/no income individuals, and the American economic climate. Specifically, this project focuses on the status of citizenship for low/no income individuals within the United States, and examines the ways in which antipoverty activists understand and negotiate their own citizenship standing through their activist framework.²

² This study uses the phrase “low/no income individuals” to broadly refer to those individuals living at the economic margins. For the purposes of the project, “low/no income individuals” include those people who classify themselves as “working poor,” “poor,” or impoverished. I avoid labeling this group of individuals as either the “working poor” or “the poor” because of the
Research Query

This project investigates the connections between the state, economic status, and citizenship by concentrating on the role antipoverty organizations play in generating critiques of the state, defining citizenship for low/no income individuals, and engaging in community activism centered on economic justice. Whether political or social in nature, citizenship as an identity, a status, and a political construct influences the lives of all Americans. For the purposes of this study, citizenship is defined as the status of possessing rights, privileges, and duties based on membership into a specific community. This definition combines many themes discussed by citizenship theorists (which will be outlined in further detail in later chapters), but centralizes three key elements: rights, responsibilities, and community.

In her text on semi-citizenship, Elizabeth Cohen (2009) argues that citizenship rights are unique to other forms of rights as they are fundamentally related to the political realm and the notion of political membership. As I elaborate in Chapter Two, the scope of citizenship rights span political, civic, and social institutions and directly connect to the inclusion and exclusion of specific populations. The element of responsibilities exists in contrast to rights, meaning individuals engage in specific behaviors and actions in the difference in social construction between the two categories. The emphasis on employment for the “working poor” “make them more sympathetic within American culture, while those individuals labeled “poor” have a history of negative connotations due to their lack of employment and assumed personal issues (Hancock, 2004; Neubeck, 2006; O’Brien, 2008; Schneider & Ingram, 2005). Yet, both impoverished and “working poor” individuals face many of the same consequences of living at the economic margins, such as low-wages, inadequate health care, unaffordable housing. The category of “low/no income individuals” works to encompass the variety of economics realities of those living at the economic margins while avoiding influences of negative social construction.

As I problametize in later chapters, the influence of neoliberalism on U.S. society over the past few decades posits that citizenship rights may also be inherently connected to economic issues.
exchange for rights. Again, as explained in Chapter Two, the idea of responsibilities connects the status of citizens to each other as well as to the state as both entities have real and perceived responsibilities to each other. Lastly, the element of community can vary in terms of boundaries, populations, and nature as real or perceived. For this project, community is defined as a specific location or space based on various factors such as geography, shared identities, or shared ideals. The element of the “community” directly connects with the rights and responsibilities of citizens to each other and to the state, and also connects to the inclusion and exclusion of specific populations.

Citizenship as an identity, status, and construction is valuable as it offers individuals both material and perceived privilege. Within the United States, a citizen is a legally recognized individual who has the power to vote in elections, to participate in the political process, and to influence policies. A citizen is also someone who possesses specific freedom of choice protected by the state, such as the right to freedom of speech or the right to freedom of religion. With regard to governmental structures, citizens are those recognized by the state as genuine actors and exist in a specific relationship to the state. For instance, the state, which itself is constructed of elected citizens acting on their legal right to run for political office, operates in connect with the citizenry. The demands and interests of citizens propel issues to government platforms. The state also

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Throughout the project, I use the term community in place of the idea of civil society. Walzer (1998) defines civil society as “the space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks . . . that fill this space (p. 292). As Young (2000) and others explain, civil society is thought of as the third section of societal life, with the state and economy comprising the other two-thirds. This project understands citizenship as based in the community and not civil society since citizen communities can exist in relationship to state and economy, not necessarily as separate.
provides resources to citizens, which works to support citizens’ political and social viability.

In addition to the material benefits of legal status, citizenship presents individuals with a sense of belonging within a specific community, as well as a sense of equal status alongside other citizens (Cohen 2009). For many, possessing the status and title of “citizen” grants political and social recognition. Citizens are those whose issues are acknowledged and whose voices are not stifled with respect to the state. In contrast, those who are without citizenship status are often left unacknowledged as viable social and political actors, and their perspectives may remain silenced. As outlined in the definition of citizenship, the status of “citizen” also allows individuals to feel a sense of belonging within a specific community. Citizenship can work to create a culture in which individuals of various backgrounds and identities can co-exist through equally participation. The common identifier is that of “citizen,” and individuals who possess legal citizenship status are understood as equal actors within the state regardless of difference.

Yet, some individuals may not experience full access to the material and perceived benefits of citizenship status. Feminist and critical race political theorists (Jaggar, 2006; Kymlicka & Norman, 1994; Lister, 1997, 2003; Mills, 1997; Pateman, 1988; Pateman & Mills, 2007; Young, 2000) have long argued that the construction of citizenship excludes certain individuals on the basis of gender, racial, sexual, economic, and national identities. According to them, certain populations of individuals do not experience the full extent of freedoms, privileges, and rights because of gender, racial, or sexual differences. For these individuals, access to political participation, recognition as
social actors, and state resources are limited or denied based on specific identity differences. Recently, some theorists (Cruikshank, 1999; Grewal, 2005; Ong, 2006;) argue that neoliberalism as both an economic and political construction has influenced the inclusivity of citizenship, incorporating not only issues of gender and racial difference, but also the importance of economic productivity and class status. The material and perceived benefits of citizenship risk negation if access to full citizenship status is compromised for specific populations.

From these studies and my own understanding of neoliberalism’s connection to American citizenship, I find it necessary to explore the relationship between citizenship and economic identities, specifically looking at how those living in poverty define and understand citizenship and mobilize in relationship to citizenship. Do those who are thought to be excluded from citizenship by political theorists understand themselves as excluded? If so, how do they challenge these exclusions and if not, what can their definitions of citizenship reveal about the relevancy of economic status on citizenship rights? What do they perceive as the benefits of citizenship status and more specifically, what new insights, if any, can antipoverty activists offer regarding the theorization and creation of non-exclusionary citizenship rights? Further, for the specific population of antipoverty activists, what role does their community activism play in their understandings of citizenship?

Non-exclusionary (or inclusive) citizenship rights stems from Iris Young’s (2000) theory of inclusive democracy. Stemming from Young’s work, inclusive citizenship centers on the interplay between constructions of gender, class, and race and poses a challenge to power hierarchies within the state. This approach to citizenship takes into account the multi-variant categories of citizen and the potential for resistance within state exclusions.
The study centers on three main issues: critiques, visions, and strategies. First, I examine the critiques antipoverty activists offer regarding the relationship between the state, economic status, and citizenship. This study explores both the ways in which citizenship has been constructed within the United States and the means through which citizenship is adopted and contested in antipoverty activist frameworks. Specifically, I aim to uncover what influence, if any, class and economic circumstance play within the activists’ understandings of citizenship and what connection, if any, exists between neoliberalism and their critiques. Second, the study investigates the ways in which activists build on their critiques to envision new ideal versions of citizenship in diverse ways. Specifically, I seek to understand the roles that issues of gender, race, and class play in this re-envisioning process and explore the centralization of “community” within their definitions. Given the location of the “community” within the definition of citizenship, the importance of civil society in relation to the state and economic spheres, and the position as of antipoverty groups as grassroots activists, this study explores the role the community plays within both their critiques and their visions for ideal citizenship. Finally, the study surveys the means through which the organizations work to support their visions within their local and national contexts. Expressly, in what ways do the activists engage with their critiques and visions within their grassroots activist programs?

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6 I defer to Temma Kaplan’s (1997) definition of “grassroots”, which she describes as: “being free from any constraining political affiliations and being responsible to no authority except their own group” (p. 2). In her project on women’s grassroots activism, she describes her subjects as women who “generally recognize their seeming powerlessness against corporate and governmental opponents, [but] also assert their moral superiority, their right to be responsible citizens, not according to official laws, but on their own terms” (p. 2). This project views grassroots antipoverty activists in a similar light as those who are seemingly marginalized but who understand their own political agency through community activism.
I address these three main issues by comparing and contrasting the work of two women-led antipoverty groups: Women Uprising (WU) located in Pickerington, Kentucky and Families Helping Families (FHF) located in Corners, Ohio. The two groups act as case studies to explore the potential of antipoverty activists to collectively organize in an effort to critique state structures and advocate for citizenship equality across economic lines. The main focal points of analysis for this project are the two organizations: WU and FHF. I recognize the groups as comprised of their antipoverty mission, their community programs, and their individual members. This project examines these three elements—mission, programs, and members—collectively in an effort to understand the critiques, visions, and strategies of WU and FHF.

I engaged in a comparative case study investigation of the two organizations and examined the activities conducted by both in local and national environments. From participant observation, interviews with organizational members, and a review of organizational materials, I studied the ways in which the groups engaged with both political and social citizenship rights for low-income citizens and analyzed the claims they made regarding power dynamics and economic-based exclusions. I also examined what role the community played in their understanding of citizenship, and what role the community holds in the activists’ views of economic marginalization for low/no income individuals. Furthermore, given the theorized influence of neoliberalism within American political and economic spheres, I wanted to examine what function, if any, the neoliberal context plays within the activists’ understandings of citizenship.

7 I use pseudonyms for each agency’s names and locations. Because of the contentious nature of some of the organizational programming and missions, I deemed it necessary to ensure the anonymity of each organization and its participants.
I also surveyed the groups’ interactions with the state via advocacy and public policy lobbying efforts, as well as the groups’ interactions with the broader civil sector via community collaborations, networking, and educational programming. Data collected during fieldwork were used to help comprehend the correlation between the groups’ everyday activities, their visions for future change, and their grassroots struggle for inclusivity. By using the two antipoverty groups as case studies, this study hopes to reveal the potential of antipoverty activists to voice concerns and work towards establishing equitable relationships with the state.

Study Background and Broader Impact

This study is an outgrowth of a larger interest in the construction of antipoverty activism within the United States. While living in Kentucky, I became aware of a small, but growing movement of activists trying to adopt an understanding of economic human rights for impoverished individuals. While traditionally those who advocated on behalf of low/no income individuals were not themselves impoverished (Neubeck, 2006), this new class of antipoverty activists embraced the identity of “poor.” My fascination with their self-identification, and the ways in which this identification influences the types of community work with which they engaged, sparked some questions regarding the activists’ relationships to the state, the correlation between poverty rights and citizenship rights, and the ways in which the identity of “poor” can be used as both as a tool for resistance. Though the activists do not necessarily centralize issues of “citizenship” in their work, I understood their messages of economic injustice and state-based oppressions as inherently connected to the ways in which citizenship is constructed and maintained within political, social, and economic spheres. Given the new strand of feminist literature
arguing against the influence of neoliberalism on citizenship rights (Cruikshank, 1999; Grewal, 2005; Ong, 2006), it seemed important to understand how those individuals self-identifying as low/no income connected to citizenship rights in a neoliberal era.

The information revealed within this study is important for several reasons. First, it is necessary to give attention to those individuals for whom citizenship may be exclusionary. Previous work has explored the theoretical ways in which gender, race, and economic class may influence citizenship rights for those at the margins; this study seeks to understand how those individuals *themselves* directly understand citizenship. This study builds upon citizenship studies and feminist political theory by connecting understandings of citizenship to the everyday experiences of low/no income individuals. Furthermore, social activism exists as a tool for creating social and political change and this study seeks to understand how social activism can be a useful tool for challenging citizenship exclusivity specifically. Given the location of the “community” within the definition of citizenship, it is necessary to explore how those whose work centers within a community activist framework perceive citizenship.

In addition, it is necessary to understand how certain individuals may be denied equal access to the material and perceived benefits of citizenship status within the United States. Possessing the identity of “citizen” grants individuals freedom of speech, access to political participation, state recognition, and cultural community formation. What happens to individuals who are unable to identify themselves as citizens, or who are denied citizenship based on identity categories and experiences? How might their exclusion impact the construction of citizenship benefits in general?
In addition, given the current American economic crisis, this study allows opportunities for those struggling for economic justice within local and national communities to voice concerns regarding the current relationship between the state, neoliberalism, and citizenship rights. My project, which began in 2009, developed just as the American financial crisis was emerging and discussions of economic stratification became more salient in mainstream culture. This study aims to open opportunities for the perspectives of those who have been struggling with poverty for decades to be heard. In doing so, this study presents their perspectives to broader audiences, spreading the activists’ messages of economic justice, and challenging individuals to broaden understandings of citizenship and poverty.

**Literary Context for Study**

My study focuses on three main areas of discussion: citizenship studies, social activism, and poverty. Throughout the text, I seek to fuse the three areas together in an effort to explore the various critiques grassroots activists offer of citizenship and the state. The study seeks to analyze how citizenship is defined, applied, and experienced by low-income individuals. Within these critiques and analyses, I explore how social activism exists as a tool for examining the relationship between impoverished individuals and citizenships. Exploring antipoverty activism may reveal the ways in which such marginalized individuals are working to create political clout for themselves within their own local communities. As Lister and Beresford (2000) explain, most research on poverty neglects to realize the ability of people living in poverty to “apply their experience to develop their own knowledge and analysis of their situation” (288). My
The project seeks to provide space for understanding how low/no income activists understand citizenship from the margins.

The study centers on challenging what I label “exclusionary citizenship” and piecing together a revised version of citizenship that incorporates participation and input of individuals across economic lines. As previously stated, for the purposes of this study, I rely on the definition that citizenship is the status of possessing rights, privileges, and duties based on membership into a specific community. My project builds from feminist political theories of citizenship and exclusivity in an effort to contextualize and problematize this definition for marginalized populations. Within the United States, citizenship is situated in a liberal framework, where citizenship is both political as well as social (Lister, 1997). Feminist theorists have worked to expand the definition beyond the binaries of political and social. Yuval-Davis (1997) argues that citizenship is multi-layered and defines it as “an overall concept which [sic] sums up the relationship between the individual and the state” (p. 69). Similarly, Freidman (2005) explains that citizenship outlines one’s “full membership into a community” and therefore incorporates issues such as culture in addition to law and politics (p. 4). Feminist political theorists also explore how citizenship is constructed with specific limitations; for instance, many feminists have argued that citizenship is a gendered construct, perpetuating the notion that the ideal citizen is not only male, but also a male worker who participates in the public sector and produces goods under capitalism (Brown, 1995; Orloff, 1993; Yuval-Davis, 1997). As Allison Jaggar explains, proper citizens are believed to be economically “independent, productive, and social contributors” (Jaggar, 2005, p. 93).
Thus, the economic dependence of citizens remains of importance as the state moves from liberal influence to that of the neoliberal framework.

As I discuss in Chapter Two, neoliberalism as an economic and political frame holds significant influence over the way in which citizenship is constructed, maintained, and experienced within the United States. Recent literature points to connection between a neoliberal agenda and citizenship marginalization; as Ong explains, “citizens who are deemed too complacent or lacking in neoliberal potential may be treated as less-worthy subjects” (Ong, 2006). Thus, within a neoliberal context, those with less economic clout often are subject to exclusion from “full” citizenship rights and privileges. Feminist critiques of citizenship’s exclusionary nature are central to the development of amended versions of citizenship that understand and incorporate the historical and contemporary marginalization of low/no income individuals. These more “inclusionary” forms of citizenship, and the means through which they can be created, are explored within this study.

In addition to examining the various ways in which citizenship is constructed and critiqued within citizenship studies, I also explore the relevance of social contract theory as a mechanism for understanding the ways in which the citizenship is constructed as exclusionary. Critical contract theorists work to assess how the state perpetuates an exclusionary contract according to issues of gender, race, nationality, and class (Keating, 2009; Mills, 1997; Pateman, 1988; Pateman & Mills, 2007). As these authors explain, forms of identity categories are seen as political constructs that are used by the state to hold certain populations isolated and grant other populations more citizenship rights and political maneuverability. Critical social contract theorists emphasize questions related to
political solidarity and political obligation by investigating how these concepts are deeply influenced by race, gender, nationality, etc. For many critical contract theorists, the idea of a contract may not necessarily exist as egalitarian but rather restricted, becoming a “contract of domination hierarchical and exclusionary in character” (Mills, 2007, p. 115). Viewing social contracts as hierarchical and limited helps to illuminate ways in which individuals are locked into specific groups according to their identity and the limiting effects of such classification. These arguments are significant for those individuals who themselves embrace identity categories for the benefit of their social activism, such as antipoverty activists.

A second main element to the study is social activism, which for this study is the outward process of deliberate action aimed at achieving a social justice goal(s). I approach social activism as providing a space for marginalized populations to voice their opinions and garner attention in public spaces. This study explores various components of social activism including collaborative organizing, identity formation, and oppositional consciousness development. In addition, the study recognizes the importance of social activism as connected to citizenship, given the location of citizenship status within the “community.” A key question that drives this project relates the connection between social activism as a form of contentious politics and the status of citizenship as a political construction through the common link of community spaces.

Throughout the study, I also contemplate the ways in which social activism can provide space for critical discussions of intersectionality and inclusion to emerge.

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8 See Chapter Three for a more elaborate explanation of this definition and the components of social activism.
According to Hill-Collins (2000), an intersectional ideology follows the logic that “oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type and oppressions work together in producing injustice” (p. 18). Activists utilizing an intersectional approach in their work, such as WU and FHF members, are better able to highlight, as Crenshaw (1991) argues, “the need to account for multiple grounds of identity” when looking at social issues, problems, and solutions (p. 1245). Issues of class status, racial categories, and gendered identities cannot be viewed as singular, as all individuals experience oppression based on multiple categories. Similarly, there are differing experiences of class, race, and gender within marginalized groups creating what Strolovitch (2007) dubs “a constituency of intersectionally disadvantaged” citizens (p. 8). My study seeks to investigate the ways in which intersectional approaches to antipoverty activism influence group dynamic and impact the activists’ critiques and revisions of state exclusions and citizenship constructions.

The study focuses on a specific type of activism: antipoverty activism. As the term implies, antipoverty activism seeks to eradicate poverty for all individuals. Antipoverty activism includes grassroots and national efforts to strengthen the political, social, and economic clout of those currently living in poverty as well as raise awareness about the realities of impoverished individuals for those of higher class status. Antipoverty activism is comprised of both direct service programs such as food and clothing donations, as well as more policy-based activism that works to foster direct change for low/no income individuals. Antipoverty organizing has existed in various forms throughout the 20th century, but this study focuses specifically on antipoverty organizing that began in the mid-1990s in correlation with welfare reform of 1996 and
the development of a larger movement for economic human rights. My study seeks to understand how activists involved in this recent edition of antipoverty work mobilize around issues of class and make claims against the state.

While discussing their critiques, visions, and strategies, I attempt to heed the various ways in which issues of intersectionality influence their antipoverty activism. Class issues and economic disparities exist at the center of WU and FHF’s organizational missions and strategies; yet each organization acknowledges the important role issues of gender, race, and other identity differences play on the construction and maintenance of economic inequalities. Both WU and FHF have men and women participants and my study includes the perspectives of organizational members regardless of gender category. However, my study gives attention to the historical, social, and political influence of gender within the state, citizenship, and neoliberal contexts. While there are a significant number of American men living in poverty, there are slightly more women currently living below the poverty line (4.0 million versus 3.8 million). In addition, women have historically contended with a larger array of issues in conjunction with poverty, such as child care costs and wage discrimination (NCP, 2009). A study conducted by the Institute for Women and Public Policy noted that income earnings for single mothers were significantly lower on a monthly scale than single fathers (IWPR, 2003). The number of women receiving government assistance is significantly higher than men, and even after obtaining a GED or a high school diploma, “women were still 40 percent more likely to live in poverty than their male counterparts” (IWPR, 2003). It appears, then, that low/no-income women experience poverty and the effects of economic marginalization in significant ways. Therefore, as this study posits, it is important to give attention to the
ways in which gender influences both the realities of antipoverty activism and citizenship rights for low/no income individuals.

This study also recognizes the inherent connection between racial differences and economic stratification within the United States. Similar to issues of gender, some feminist and critical race theorists (Naples, 1998a; Nebeck, 2006; Nebeck & Cazaneve, 2001) posit that men and women of color experience poverty differently than their white counterparts. Nebeck and Cazaneve (2001) explain that there is a historical legacy of what they dub “welfare racism” that inherently influences the treatment of low/no income individuals of diverse racial backgrounds. Welfare racism is apparent in the exclusion of people of color from welfare rolls and the depiction of low/no income black women as “irresponsible, immoral, and promiscuous” (in Nebeck, 2006, p. 39). Hancock (2004) explains that the media’s disproportionate portrayal of women of color as “welfare queens” limits the scope of programs aimed at helping these women escape poverty. As she and others (Mink, 1998) explain, such negative imagery influences the construction of policies aimed at helping low/no income individual. Though this study engages with low/no income individuals of various racial backgrounds, it lends attention to the influence of racial differences over the perception, treatment, and approach to those living in poverty.

**Statement of Methods and Chapter Organization**

The study centers on the experiences and perspectives of antipoverty activists engaging in community work around issues of economic justice. The study relies on data from the field, specifically pulling from interviews and other observational fieldwork information to access what arguments and opinions the activists hold. As Lister and
Beresford (2000) explain, antipoverty activist efforts will be stronger if it involves research that “illuminates the views of” those living in poverty (p. 290); my project hopes to contribute to such research by reflecting on the perspectives experiences of low/no income activists.

I selected Women Uprising (WU) and Families Helping Families (FHF) as case studies for four specific reasons: size, leadership, activities, and national connections. First, I was looking for an antipoverty organization within the Midwest that was relatively small in size. I wanted a small organization since I was interested in examining how activism can formulate in small, local spaces and grow to help create sustainable change on a larger scale. The small size of both WU and FHF was a primary factor for their selection; both WU and FHF have one staff member and approximately 10 board members with their volunteer and broader membership numbers fluctuating from 30-50.

Given my interest in feminist theory and women’s experiences of poverty, I also desired researching organizations with strong female leadership. Both FHF and WU were influenced by the welfare reform legislation of 1996, and both organizations have strong female leadership of women who were significantly affected by the legislation. As explained Chapter Three, the timing of their formation is significant given the introduction of new welfare legislation.

Thirdly, I chose WU and FHF for the variety of activities with which they engage. Both agencies operate with a “by and for poor people” mentality and address a variety of key poverty issues such as fair housing, adequate nutrition and food selection, and unjust public policies. I was interested in focusing on agencies that took a broad approach to poverty issues within their local communities as it seemed that they might offer a diverse
understanding of citizenship and the state. Lastly, I chose the two agencies for their similar involvement with the larger economic human rights movement, spearheaded by an umbrella agency entitled The Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign (PPEHRC). Although I was mostly interested in the work the two agencies conducted on the local and state levels, I viewed their alignment with a larger national movement as important to the construction of their agency missions and outreach programs.

Because my project hinges on WU and FHF’s missions, programs, and members, I needed to spend time with each organization in order to speak to activists and interact with their programs. I conducted case study fieldwork at both WU and FHF spanning across six months during 2009. During fieldwork, I engaged in participant observation of meetings and programs, collected organizational brochures and materials, and interviewed staff, board members, and volunteers. The interview data are central to the study, and as Reinharz (1992) argues, interview research “explores peoples’ views of reality” and allows individual researchers to use these views to create theory (p. 18). This project fuses the interview voices of WU and FHF activists with theories of citizenship and poverty within America in order to ascertain what critiques and new visions of citizenship emerge at the economic margins.

Women Uprising and Families Helping Families are used as case studies in order to examine the means through which antipoverty activism critiques issues of citizenship rights for low/no income individuals, addresses exclusions within the state and their communities, and envisions inclusion through their community activism. By using these two agencies as case studies, I do not intend to suggest that the ideas and opinions of WU

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9 See Appendix A for a more complete overview of data collection and analysis.
and FHF members represent those of all antipoverty activists in the United States, nor do I intend to present my work as all-inclusive or representative of a larger antipoverty activist movement. Rather, the critiques, visions, and strategies of WU and FHF should be viewed as sample representations of possible concerns regarding the construction and maintenance of citizenship for those living at the economic margins. As Gottfried (1996) warns, conducting research that produces an essentialist view of the opinions and experiences of a specific population only leads to a “politics of identity” which is exclusionary as “no personal experience is inclusive enough to encompass all human experiences” (p. 5). The purpose of using the two groups as case studies is to examine the types of attitudes existing among activists and to explore the means through which antipoverty activists work to overcome exclusions within their local and national communities.

This project hinges on three central topics: citizenship, social activism, and poverty. Given that the main purpose of the project is to examine the critiques and visions antipoverty activists offer regarding the theorization and creation of inclusionary forms of citizenship, it is necessary to begin with exploring how citizenship is defined. Chapter Two begins this exploration by providing a detailed look at feminist political theoretical approaches to citizenship and state exclusions. Specifically, the chapter outlines how citizenship exists as "exclusionary" for specific populations and explores various ways in which some theorists are challenging such exclusions by expanding the construction of citizenship to include new identities and new spaces. By incorporating citizenship studies and critical contract studies, Chapter Two seeks to set the foundation of the exclusive/inclusive citizenship dichotomy referred to throughout the project. Within this
chapter, I also investigate the connection between citizenship, the liberal state, and the current neoliberal influence. In exploring how citizenship can be re-envisioned as more inclusionary, I discuss the effects of neoliberalism on the construction of citizenship as exclusive and the various ways in which feminists and other scholars attempt to work past neoliberal control to incorporate difference into the definition.

Chapter Three explores using social activism as a tool for critiquing the state. Specifically, this chapter outlines the various aspects of social activism that influence the ability of marginalized populations to voice concerns within the public sphere. The chapter also introduces poverty as a key issue of concern for ensuring the development of inclusionary citizenship. While issues of class and poverty are briefly discussed in Chapter Two as they relate to citizenship and the social contract, Chapter Three expands upon the discussion to explore the historical plight of low/no income citizens within the United States. In addition, the chapter contextualizes this project within an antipoverty activist framework by outlining the historical significance of antipoverty activism within the United States and its relationships to issues of exclusion. Within this chapter, I reintroduce WU and FHF and give a more detailed account of their mission, their formation, and their overall goals.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six all use empirical data from conversations with WU and FHF members to explore critiques, visions, and strategies of antipoverty activists. Chapter Four focuses on the critiques and visions of the activists. Specifically, the chapter explores the multiple ways the activists understand citizenship, the critiques they offer regarding the state, and the manners with which their definitions do or do not connect to issues of economic marginalization. This chapter aims to understand how the
critiques offered by WU and FHF members connect back to definitions, inclusive and exclusive, discussed in Chapter Two. Furthermore, this chapter presents the WU and FHF members’ visions for how they believe citizenship and the state ought to be defined. I compare and contrast their critiques and visions with those as outlined in Chapter Two and put the activists in dialogue with feminist political theorists. I also seek to understand what role both class and the community play in the WU and FHF members’ construction of citizenship. As outlined in the chapter, WU and FHF members understand citizenship as directly connected to neoliberalism, which influences the scope of the community and community politics. In response, they present their version of community – the oppositional community – that works to challenge citizenship exclusions and neoliberal oppression. Chapter Four examines this version of community in further detail.

Chapter Five focuses on the strategies WU and FHF use to engage their critiques of citizenship and the state within their activist activities. This chapter takes the individual attitudes expressed in Chapter Four and contextualizes them within the larger scope of the organization’s programs and community work. This chapter outlines how the activists’ engage in educational programming, consciousness raising, collaborative organizing, and contentious politics in order to further the mission of economic human rights. Also, I seek to understand what correlation, if any, their actions have with their understandings of citizenship, the state, and neoliberalism, as well as what role the recession and increasing poverty figures has played WU and FHF activities. Further, I connect their activist programming back to their proposed vision of the oppositional community; what position does their theory of an oppositional community hold within
their antipoverty activism and do they succeed at working towards a more inclusionary view of citizenship through their programs?

The final chapter, Chapter Six, connects the critiques of WU and FHF members back to a theory of inclusionary citizenship rights and critical contract theory as discussed in Chapter Two. Building off of discussions within the previous chapters, Chapter Six seeks to develop and present a new understanding of the social contract as connected to the critiques and visions of citizenship expressed by WU and FHF members. This approach, which I dub the activist contract, links the views and opinions of WU and FHF members about citizenship with ideas related to critical contract theory in an effort to explore how returning focus to the community (in particular the oppositional community), may help create space in which inclusionary citizenship can develop. As I ultimately argue, using the activist contract to ground new relationships for low/no income individuals within their communities offers WU and FHF activists, as well as others, the opportunity to engage their ideal views of citizenship within their local spaces.

The ever-increasing rate of poverty demonstrates a need for exploring the realities of those living at the economic margin. If what feminist theorists posit is true – that citizenship is denied to specific populations based on gender, race, sexual, and class differences – then it becomes necessary to examine the ways in which those specific populations understand citizenship for themselves. Citizenship is constructed as awarding individuals various freedoms, responsibilities, and rights, yet, specific individuals may not be granted full access to such benefits. This project, by highlighting the work of antipoverty organizations, seeks to move towards a more inclusionary
understanding of citizenship that allows individuals across class, race, and gender lines opportunities to experience full citizenship status.
CHAPTER 2: CITIZENSHIP CONSTRUCTED AND CONTESTED

“So now I understand about people who have to fight to become a citizen. Now I understand about that. I thought you were automatically a citizen because ... I mean you’re human. You’re a person. You breath in and out air, so wouldn’t that make you a citizen?” Juanita, WU member

Introduction

For Juanita, a 40-something Women Uprising activist, citizenship represents a basic human right. In her view, citizenship is unquestionable; it symbolizes a status granted to individuals based not on their gender, race, or class, but on their everyday existence. While Juanita views citizenship as a basic status independent of social, political, and economic standing, as she suggests, certain populations may be denied access to full citizenship rights. Key questions for Juanita and other antipoverty activists focus on whether specific marginalized individuals, such as those living in poverty, are recognized as citizens under the law, as well as whether they are able to act as citizens within society. If marginalized individuals are not considered full citizens within political and social contexts, then their capacity to participate as political and social agents may be jeopardized. Further, they may not experience the various material and perceived benefits citizenship offers individuals.

While citizenship as a status can provide access to liberties and protection of personal rights, citizenship may also exclude individuals based on specific identity categories such as gender, class, race, and nationality that work to influence an individual’s position within society. This chapter draws upon feminist political theories
of citizenship to explore the construction of this latter form of citizenship, what I call “exclusionary citizenship.” This chapter also seeks to investigate the possibilities of challenging exclusionary citizenship and developing nuanced forms of citizenship that take into consideration issues of difference and social location. Specifically, the chapter aims to explore two main issues: first, the construction and maintenance of “exclusive” citizenship within the particular framework of a liberal state for marginalized individuals; second, the ways in which theorists challenge exclusive citizenship to become more inclusionary.

In the first section, I provide a brief background on citizenship studies in an effort to answer the question: what is a citizen? I explore the multiple dimensions of constructing citizenship in a liberal framework, specifically surveying the two dichotomous relationships of citizenship rights versus responsibilities, and the image of the citizen as an individual versus a community. I contextualize this section within the liberal state and explore the ways in which liberal citizenship may exclude specific populations based on issues of gender, class and race. Within this section, I also introduce critical social contract theory as a theoretical approach useful for unpacking citizenship within a liberal state. Relying on critical social contract theory helps reveal the means through which marginalized groups such as women and people of color were historically denied full participation within the state. Throughout this section, I explore the various ways in which citizenship can act and has acted to exclude specific populations.

The second section of the chapter analyzes the possibility of challenging exclusionary citizenship through the creation of innovative approaches to citizenship that
are more inclusionary. Within this section, I explore the means through which marginalized groups can be integrated within the state and assess two methods of creating such inclusion. The first method centers on creating new opportunities for inclusion within the economic sphere. Working from the argument that liberal citizenship is dependent on citizen’s economic productivity, this method posits that increasing the opportunities for economic growth may help create inclusivity for marginalized groups. Within this first method, I explore how the shift from a liberal state to a neoliberal state has led to a change in the construction of citizenship and an increase in the inclusion of certain marginalized populations within the market. I then problematize this new inclusion, specifically referencing recent feminist scholarship (Cruishank, 1991; Eisenstein, 2005; Fraser, 2009) that critiques the types of inclusionary relationships created by neoliberalism. By using women’s economic advancement as an example, I explore how inclusions that result from neoliberalism may potentially act to further marginalize rather than help specific populations.

The second method, which I argue is a better method of creating inclusion, centers on the development of a differentiated definition of citizenship that allows space for challenges to issues of gender, class, and race inequality. Here I draw on specific feminist theorists – Ruth Lister, Chantal Mouffe, and Iris Marion Young – to explore how reconstructing citizenship to recognize difference and situating citizenship in new locations may lead to creating inclusionary models for marginalized citizens. Though I argue the second method is an improvement over the first method, it is not without problems; thus I compare the benefits and disadvantages of incorporating difference into
citizenship and I also examine the role the community plays when posing challenges to exclusionary citizenship for those at the margins.

I conclude the chapter by introducing social activism as a tool for developing an inclusive approach to citizenship that avoids further marginalizing individuals. Social activism, as a form of social resistance and opposition, can work to help expand the scope of “political” activity to include, for instance, the unpaid community work of marginalized individuals. In moving towards the next chapter, I explore how social activism can help solve some of the issues emerging from Method One, while simultaneously upholding the central themes of Method Two. A discussion of social activism continues in Chapter Three, where I will contextualize my study in poverty-based grassroots activism.

**Citizenship Constructed**

For the purposes of the project, citizenship is defined as the status of possessing individual rights, privileges, and duties based on membership into a specific community. This definition develops from citizenship studies literature that posits citizenship as a “political principle of democracy; juridical status of legal personhood; and form of membership” (Cohen, 1999, p. 248). The definition works across binaries such as public / private, local / global, and social / civil (Acklesberg, 2005; Hemerijck, 2001; Lister, 1997; Young, 2000). The definition incorporates the idea of citizenship as both an individual status and as a membership within a specific community. Further, it combines two central components of citizenship: individual rights (the tangible things one is benefited from possessing the status of “citizen”) and individual responsibilities (the duties to which one is required to adhere as a result of possessing the status of “citizen”).
While this study’s definition works to unite various entities of citizenship constructions, questions remain regarding the impact of specific entities of the definition. For example, what constitutes rights, privileges, and duties? What are the implications for constructing citizenship as an individual versus community entity? And do the two dichotomies between rights/responsibilities and individual/community develop exclusions for specific populations?

Two central theoretical camps in citizenship theories have led to the development of the rights/responsibilities and individual/community dichotomies. The first – liberal individualism – emphasizes the notion of citizenship as status, resulting in a greater degree of importance on the notion of rights. Within the liberal individualism approach, individuals have specific needs and “entitlements” based on their status as citizens. They are seen as autonomous, independent actors responsible for protecting their own rights and respecting the rights of others (Crowley, 1998, p. 178). For liberal-individualists, the state protects the rights and freedoms of individuals and mediates relationships between individual citizens (Cohen, 2009, p. 45). While the focus of citizenship within a liberal approach is the rights and autonomy of the individual, as Shafir (1998) explains, there is also an understanding that citizens have a duty to cooperate with other individuals and support the development of social unity across individual citizens (p. 8-9). In contrast, the second camp – civic republicanism – underlines the notion of citizenship as “practice”. Civic-republicans recognize that citizens have inherent duties as a result of their “citizenship” status (Oldfield as cited in Shafir, 1998). For civic-republicans, citizenship is based on a shared sense of the self where individuals are citizens and also members of a larger community of other citizens. Because of the emphasis on
community, within civic-republicanism, individuals center their civic efforts on maintaining the wellbeing of the community through engagement in specific acts such as volunteering work, and voting. Citizenship for civic-republicans, thus, develops through action and individuals collectively assist with the maintenance of citizenship by fulfilling civic, political, and social duties. Individuals not only have responsibility to the state, but as Lister (2003) explains, they have responsibility to each other (p. 15).

Individual rights and responsibilities exist in multiple ways. For instance, rights are political, civic, and social in nature. Lister describes political rights as denoting the legal and political status of a citizen “as symbolized by possession of a passport” (p. 44). Within the United States the concept of political and civil rights relies heavily on legal documentation such as the Bill of Rights and the Constitution and the notion that citizenship incorporates entitlements as founded through the U.S. Constitution. Political and civil rights include the right to speech, to vote, to run for political office, and to a trial by jury (Oldfield, 1990, p. 179). According to T.H. Marshall, civil rights ensure individuals the right to freedom (i.e.: right to properly, right to justice) while political rights ensure the right to exercise that freedom (as cited in Shafir, 1998). Civil and political rights rely upon the image of the abstract citizen who requires no identification to a specific group in order to act upon civil and political rights as citizens. In other words, political rights are granted to individuals regardless of race, gender, and class boundaries.

Social rights, on the other hand, are often fixed within societal institutions and pertain to relationships in areas of the economy, education, and the family. Examples of social rights are, for instance, the right to an education, to health care for individuals and
their families, and the right to work and engage in the labor market. Within the United States, social rights are not necessarily prescribed by legal documents, but are entitlements that citizens often accept as necessary in order to lead a productive and just life. The state bears some responsibility for assuring the protection of social rights; Cohen (2009), in explaining T.H. Marshall’s view of social rights, explains that it is the state that is charged with the task of ensuring the equality of all citizens (p. 42). Therefore, if social rights are a necessity for citizenship equality, then it is part of the state’s responsibility to ensure equal access to social rights. Unlike political rights, which are perceived as universally applicable, the notion of social rights allow space for the incorporation of identity issues, with some marginalized populations advocating for social rights based on issues of gender or race. Many identity-based social movements advocate for the increase in political documentation of social rights based on identities as a means of equalizing citizenship for marginalized populations. Historically, examples of such efforts include maternity leave, affirmative action, and American Disability Act (ADA) policies.

Despite their differences, political and social rights co-exist and the status of citizenship often incorporates both types of rights. T.H. Marshall argues that social rights are “as a necessary condition for the exercise of civil and political rights” creating an ideal citizenship that incorporated both (Couch et. al., 2001, p. 5). In this framing, social rights cannot exist separate from political rights and vice versa. Because of their differing nature, upholding political and social rights for citizens requires the work of federal, state, and local governments, as well as individuals themselves acting to protect both their own liberties and those of their neighbors. Individuals differ on their opinions
of social rights, but individuals may collectively agree to uphold social rights if the denial of such entitlements infringes upon political or civil rights.

In contrast to rights, the notion of responsibilities stems from the idea that citizens have a “duty” to the state.\textsuperscript{10} Citizenship requires both a political duty to vote or participate in formal politics as well as a social duty to be economically productive in exchange for civil and political liberties. According to Mead (1986), it is the obligation of a citizen to engage in paid work that represents “as much a badge of citizenship as rights” (p. 229). The “duty” discourse implies that citizens are not passive recipients of rights from the state, but rather individuals who engage in civic, political, and social action in exchange for rights. Individuals complete various political and social obligations in exchange for their right to vote or to have educational services. The state grants rights and privileges in exchange for civic duties and citizenship responsibilities.

A second dichotomy within citizenship studies compares citizenship as an individual versus community construct. At its core, citizenship exists as an individual status, yet, for some citizenship theorists, the status also relates to one’s membership within a community, thereby marking citizenship as a collective entity, not merely an individual status. Marshall’s work on social rights grounds citizenship as not only a status necessary for political agency, but more importantly \textit{membership} into a community. His definition states that “’citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the

\textsuperscript{10} Some theorists (Lister 2003) argue that the “duty” discourse stems from post-World War II rhetoric claiming that because governments provide for citizens, citizens should respond by engaging in various forms of civic duty activities such as voting, serving political committees, and “giving-back” to society.
rights and duties with which the status is endowed” (Crowley, 1998, p. 169). For Marshall, existing as a citizen grants access to a larger community of individuals who share similar rights and responsibilities to the state. Rights are designated to individuals because of their status as citizens, and in return, citizens must defend those rights within political, social, and civil contexts. The community, for Marshall, acts as a protective net for individual rights and responsibilities, and for him, is viewed as a primary location for citizenship activities.

Both dichotomies of “rights versus responsibilities” and “the individual versus the community” reflect ways in which citizenship can be constructed and defined as exclusionary for certain populations. For instance, examples of political citizenship rights are the right to vote, to participate in government, and to have a voice in public interest. Yet, as feminist theorists argue, women were historically excluded from the public sphere, and this exclusion hindered their ability to participate as political citizens. In addition, the rights/responsibilities framework relies on the image of the autonomous, abstract, individual citizen void of identification with specific groups – an image which itself excludes women. As Coole (1994) argues, the historical impact of their separation from the public realm means women still are not seen as “autonomous, independent, [or] public” and therefore, women are not understood as rational actors (p. 203). Citizenship as a status gives preference to the autonomous male figure that is not connected to any gender, race, ethnic, or class difference and perpetuates a “realm which blanks out the identities of individuals by neglecting their differences” (James, 1992, p. 51). When women have entered into the public sphere, their experiences of citizenship continue to be compared to that of men (Acklesberg, 2010). In other words, upon entering the public
sphere, women continue to be labeled “emotional” and “not rationale,” limiting the extent to which they can exist as full citizens.

Further, as some critical race and feminist scholars argue (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Mills, 1997; Neubeck & Cazenave, 2001; Omi & Winant, 1999), the historical legacy of racial hierarchies influences the citizenship rights of people of color. For example, the struggle for the right to vote, own property, and hold political office all influenced the creation of an atmosphere of political inequality for African-American citizens. Some feminist scholars argue (i.e.: Grewal, 2005; Narayan, 1997), the history of racism within political, social, and economic structures clouds the plight immigrants attempting to obtain citizenship equality. In this light, women and people of color experience exclusion from citizenship benefits as they are significantly marked by their inability to act independently of their gendered and raced identities.

In addition to exclusions based on gender and race categories, theorists also outline the exclusion of economically marginalized groups. Allison Jaggar (2005) explains that proper citizens are believed to be economically “independent, productive, and social contributors” (p. 93). Similarly, Judith Shklar (1991) argues that modern citizenship under the liberal state is based upon the notion of work and labor, which hinders women’s ability to become full citizens since gainful employment is not always available to women (p. 64). If citizenship is constructed such that in order to receive rights one should engage in civil, political, and economic work, then women, for instance, can be considered marginalized as citizens based on their historic exclusion from the civil, political, and economic spheres. Further, according to T.H. Marshall (as cited in Shafir 1998), social class hierarchies influence the ability of economically
marginalized individuals from achieving full citizenship status. As he explains, “the rights with which the general status of citizenship was invested were extracted from the hierarchical status system of social class” (p. 103). Thus, those individuals whose economic status exists outside the periphery may be unable to uphold specific responsibilities and thereby also excluded from specific rights.

With regard to the individual versus community dichotomy, emphasizing the needs of individual citizens may work to hinder the ability of marginalized groups to be recognized. The image of the abstract citizen who exists independently of community ignores the influence gender, race, class, nationality, and religion. As a result, individuals whose daily practices rests on experiences of group identification may be excluded within this framework. As indicated by Young (1989), dominant articulations of citizenship are not created according to the “heteronomous realm of particular needs, interests, and desires” but rather exist as an expression of universal individualism, (p. 253). Constructing the citizen as independent, abstract and individualistic excludes the means through which non-abstract concepts and personal needs play a role in daily life. Thus, the image of the abstract individual who disassociates from gender, race, and class-based categories perpetuates an image of citizenship as universal.

In contrast, centering citizenship within the community may also lead to the exclusion of specific populations. Crowley (1998) argues that focusing on citizenship as full membership into society requires that individuals be critical of the extent to which this membership may perpetuate inequality for certain populations. As he explains, citizenship “is a label for full membership based on equality of status” (p. 169). If individuals are not equally able to access to rights as a result of gender, race, and class
differences, then membership into society as citizens may also be compromised. He warns, though, that individuals must heed attention to the means through which “rights become endowed with meaning” and the influence of social constructions and social structures on both the “construction of identity,” the concept of “membership,” and the construction of “citizenship” itself (p. 171). If citizenship relates to membership into a community, then attention must be given to the identity of that specific community. In addition, it is unclear what attributes Marshall’s argument requires of individuals in order for them to be considered a “full member of a community” and as a result, there remains room for exclusion within his definition. If, for instance, full membership into a community is based on economic productivity, then women and people of color may be excluded from full membership again based on their historic marginalization in the public sphere.\footnote{One theoretical argument that displays the various ways in which citizenship is constructed as exclusionary for specific populations is Elizabeth Cohen’s (2009) work on semi-citizenship. In her text, Cohen argues that certain populations such as the LGBT community, children, ex-felons, and immigrant workers are labeled as “semi-citizens.” For Cohen, these groups are considered semi-citizens for they possess some but not all political rights and the rights they do possess are fluid and subject to political, social, and economic oppression. As Cohen argues, and I agree, citizenship is fluid with some populations receiving access to specific rights and responsibilities while simultaneously being denied other rights. She uses the juxtaposed example of GLBT citizens and immigrants to demonstrate her argument: while gay and lesbian individuals are considered full citizens under the scope of national citizenship rights and responsibilities, they are denied access to other rights such as the right to marry. On the other hand, while immigrants are denied access to full citizenship rights due to their nationality, the right to marry a U.S. citizen is not denied (p. 35). For Cohen, juxtaposing these two groups demonstrates the fluidity of citizenship rights and the ways in which citizenship simultaneously exists as exclusive and inclusive for specific populations.}

\textit{Critical Social Contract Theory}

While examining the two dichotomies helps reveal the ways in which citizenship definitions can work to exclude specific populations, it is also necessary to examine how
the relationship between the state and citizens is exclusionary in other ways. A method
used to unpack the relationship between of the state and a citizen is that of critical social
contract theory. The notion of a social contract among citizens sets up political authority
as grounded in a consensual agreement between a citizen and the state. At its core is the
assumption that individuals “give up their right of self-government” to the state in
exchange for protection and freedoms (Pateman & Mills, 2007, p. 15). Thinking of the
relationship between citizens as grounded in a social contract helps highlight the
relationship of specific legal rules regarding the role of citizens and the construction of
citizenship rights. Vis-à-vis the social contract, individuals agree to follow order and rule
of law in exchange for the protection of specific liberties and freedoms. As Carole
Pateman (1988) critically states, “the social contract enables individuals voluntarily to
subject themselves to the state and civil law; freedom becomes obedience and in
exchange, protection is provided” (p. 7).

A social contract approach to citizenship often envisions citizens are abstract
actors capable of logically contracting with the state and other institutions in exchange
for beneficial protections or services. Ideally, there are no marginalized or privileged
parties within the social contract; all participating parties are consenting individuals.
Contracts are based on the notion that society is comprised of “morally equal contractors,
whose interests should be given equal weight in the sociopolitical institutions” (Pateman
& Mills, 2007, p. 8). Further, in Mills’s (as cited in Pateman & Mills, 2007) view,
contract is “famous for its nominal egalitarianism, its emphasis that in the state of nature,
all men are equal” (p. 97). However, according to Wendy Brown (1995), social contract
theories support the notion that individuals consent to a contract outside of pre-existing
power relations and as a result, little consideration is given to those individuals whose existence is based upon uneven power dynamics (p. 162). As feminist and critical race theorists posit, though social contract theory assumes an equalized state of nature, in fact society is not constructed as an equality-bearing space. Therefore, contracts are not necessarily based on equality but rather may be based on relationships and circumstances that are fundamentally unequal. The social contract supports an image of the race and gender-blind autonomous man, which in actuality is nothing more than an “idealizing abstraction . . . that abstracts away from the concrete specifics of social oppression” (Pateman & Mills, 2007, p. 176). Recognition needs to be given to those who are not necessarily members of the majority to see how they fare under the social contract.

Critical social contract theorists (Joseph, 2005; Keating, 2009; Mills, 1997; Pateman, 1988; Pateman & Mills, 2007) take up the challenge for recognition and argue that citizenship is only available to those individuals who fit the liberal image of a citizen: white males. For these theorists, rather than granting political freedoms and rights to women and people of color, the social contract further limits them as citizens under the liberal state. Forms of identity categories are understood as political constructs that are used by the state to hold certain populations isolated and grant other populations more citizenship rights and political maneuverability. As Mills (as cited in Pateman & Mills, 2007) argues, the contract is not an egalitarian contract but a “contract of domination hierarchical and exclusionary in character” (p. 115). By viewing the contract as hierarchical and exclusionary, distinct types of contracts emerge, such as the racial, class, and sexual contacts, that work to oppress individuals based on specific identity categories. What these authors support is a non-normative reading of the social contract –
one that allows groups typically excluded from the contract recognition as full citizens.\textsuperscript{12}

For Mills and others, a genuine contract needs to take into account the legacy of marginalization according to class, race, and gender and “prescribe appropriate corrective and transformational measures in light of” these marginalizations (p. 88).

In \textit{The Sexual Contract}, Pateman (1988) analyzes the impact of the social contract on women. Her main argument establishes the notion that a social contract originates from a different contract – the sexual contract. For Pateman, the laws of the state and civil society are regulated by sexual differences and perpetuate patriarchal power. Pateman argues that the sexual contract exists in the form of a marriage contract, primarily perpetuating the subordination of women within civil society by relegating them to the private household and rendering their citizenship rights limited to that space. Citizenship rights, both political and social, become accessible to men only; women cannot escape their sexed and gendered bodies which forces women to be seen as less than fully citizen. As Pateman explains, the social contract creates the image of equal membership and representation in society, yet men are the lone actors in the original contract and women “must acknowledge the political fiction and speak the language even

\textsuperscript{12} Mills (1997) explains that the social contract has been “a central concept of Western political theory for understanding and evaluating the social world” (p. 6). As he posits, because society is premised on contracts, it is necessary to review the various ways in which contracts can help and hinder populations. For him, the creation of non-normative readings of the contract help reveal how various groups of citizens have in fact been marginalized by contracts, rather than protected. He explains that social contracts are comprised of two main forms: political contracts (the construction of government and society) and moral contracts (“foundation of moral code of society”) (p. 9-10). Yet, as Mills explains, the political contract in fact merely solidifies the moral contract, regulating the behavior of citizens and creating dichotomies between those citizens who follow moral code and those who do not. In addition, according to Mills, the moral code is based on identity differences according to race, gender, and class, in addition to issues of behavior and passivity. Rousseau (1792) similarly states that social contracts dictate social order, which “does not come from nature [but] is based on conventions” (in Masters, 1978, p. 47).
as the terms of the original pact exclude them” (p. 221). While women are able to obtain some sense of citizenship rights in that they can vote and participate in the political arena, they are never able to fully escape their sexed bodies. The state depends on their sexual difference in order to maintain the agreements of the social contract. According to Pateman, the “meaning of the ‘individual’ remains intact only so long as the dichotomies between… private/public, women/individual, and sex/gender remain intact” (p. 225).

Mills (1997) argues for the acknowledgment of a racial contract – a contract that is inherently racialized, favoring white citizens and stigmatizing non-whites. Race, like sex for Pateman, becomes central in the creation of social order and the maintenance of state ruling. White is not a color but a “set of power relations” that becomes naturalized in the racial contract (p. 127). Citizenship is based not on political access and discipline but on racial categories and membership. Freedom is color-coded and is given only to whites (p. 37). Mills claims that people of color are made to believe they have freedom when in reality they are further stereotyped and marginalized. Conversely, whereas Pateman argues that men are aware of their gendering of women’s bodies, Mills argues that whites are not aware of the racialization of the social contract. He argues that the racial contract “requires a certain schedule of structured blindness and opacities in order to establish and maintain the white polity” (p. 19). White citizens may benefit from the racial contract, but they are blind to their preferential treatment. Historically, whites have experienced superiority in social and political contexts; therefore, the workings of the racial contract are deemed naturally, not politically, constructed. Like Pateman’s sexual contract, the racial contract is dependent upon a normative binary – the white/nonwhite
binary. All citizenship rights and social existences are constructed upon the notion of white versus non-white personhood (p. 56).

For the purposes of this project, another form of contract – the class contract – should be unpacked in order to understand the relationship between contract, citizenship, and class. Mills posits that the idea that contracts are themselves not inclusionary originated with Jean-Jacque Rousseau’s critique of class and the social contract. As Mills explains, Rousseau’s critique, which could be labeled as the “class contract,” creates a foundation for thinking of the domination contract; for Rousseau, the contract is an illusionary contract that marginalizes individuals based on a false promise of justice (as cited in Pateman & Mills, 2007, p. 82). According to Rousseau’s theory, social contract’s premise that all individuals are equal is false given society’s hierarchical structure according to class relations. As Mills summarizes, for Rousseau, “the human equality of the state of nature becomes the unnatural “political” inequality of a class society ruled by the rich” (as cited in Pateman & Mills, 2007, p. 87). For Rousseau, the origin of class inequality was based on the promise of consensual relations between rich and poor. In Rousseau’s view, the rich wished to protect their property and defend their class status by promising the poor “new social institutions that pretended to offer justice, peace, and impartial social rules for the mutual benefit of all” (as cited in Pateman & Mills, 2007, p. 81). Such premise does not work to aid the poor, but rather further marginalizes them according to their economic positions. While contracts are based on the idea of equality, for Rousseau, a contract void of bias may be unattainable so long as economic divides exist.
Drawing on their work, other scholars apply the racial and sexual contracts to various other bodies and populations. For instance, Christine Keating (2009) analyzes postcolonial India through the lens of both the sexual and racial contracts, arguing that the racial contract cannot be viewed only as influencing whites versus non-whites, for in India, issues such as caste, religion, and region must be taken into consideration as well (p. 59). Contracts exist across these categories and thus the ways in which individuals may be either privileged or oppressed by the contract must be examined across multiple cultural and historical contexts. Suad Joseph (2005) also elaborates on critical social contract theory with her notion of the kin contract, explaining the relationship between individuals, the family, and the state in Middle Eastern nations. For Joseph, what is of importance is analyzing the recognition by the state of the kin contract’s patriarchal and paternalistic subjection of women – a subjection which has significant influence on women’s citizenship outside the family.

For these theorists, the social contract subordinates women and people of color under the auspice of a consensual contract so that women and people of color believe they are full citizens when, in actuality, they are victims and objects of the social contract itself (Pateman & Mills, 2007, p. 87). In this guide, the social contract, as Mills states, becomes a “domination contract” as all contracts by their very structure exclude certain populations and sub-groups. The social contract becomes a “strategy for theorizing domination within a contract framework” (as cited in Pateman & Mills, 2007, p. 83). Thus, the social (domination) contract perpetuates stereotypes and specified images of racialized and gendered bodies so that individuals whose identities are built upon difference experience some level of marginalization. The contract regulates norms and
reinforces power relations and enforces proper identity categories on behalf of the state.

As Mills claims:

>The class, sexual, and racial contracts each capture particular aspects of social domination so that, whether singly or (ideally) in combination, they register the obvious fact that society is shaped by the powerful acting together, not individuals acting singly. (p. 96)

Some critiques of the domination contract argue that it is not necessarily the “mechanism” of the contract . . . but rather the ‘content’” of the contract that creates marginalization (Dickenson, 1997). Yet, as Pateman and others have demonstrated, the very nature of contracts is, by construction, based on social oppression and the exclusion of specific populations. By incorporating issues of class, gender, and race differences and historical inequality, the contract represents the construction of social institutions based on historical inequality rather than the state of nature.

*Contract and Citizenship*

Critical social contract theory is a useful tool for understanding both the relationships between citizens and the state as well as the construction of citizenship as exclusionary. First, using critical social contract theory helps explain the origin of the separation of specific citizens from the public realm, which has significant influence over the current positions of marginalized populations within a liberal framework. For instance, in Pateman’s work, she explains that social contract theory justifies women’s historical exclusion from the public sphere by explaining the reliance on women as sexed beings ruled by a sexual contract. In other words, according to the sexual contract, women cannot escape their gendered identities, resulting in exclusionary existences within the liberal state. In addition, using social contract theory helps uncover the ways
in which specific identities have been targeted by the state, resulting in unequal access to citizenship rights for marginalized individuals. The work of Pateman and Mills contribute to the understanding of how women and people of color have been situated as inferior citizens based on their identity categories within the scope of the social contract. Further, referencing Rousseau’s work on class hierarchies and contract helps reveal the unique position of low/no income individuals to the state. If citizenship is based on economic production, and class marginalizes an individual’s ability to participate in the public sphere, then it becomes clear how the citizenship status of low/no income individuals can be compromised. Engaging with critical contract theory, thus, helps shed light on how the image of the “abstract” citizen remains a mechanism for perpetuating inequality for marginalized groups.

Critical social contract theory also presents a possible explanation of how individuals often marked by identity categories (such as women) experience state-supported marginalization across political, social, and economic realms. While citizenship is constructed as an abstract image, contracts exist across identity categories, and the ways in which individuals may be privileged or oppressed by the contract must be investigated across multiple cultural and historical contexts. Using critical social contract theory helps this examination process as it provides theoretical details for understanding the multiple connections of oppression across identity categories. For instance, in her work on the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill hearings, Jane Flax highlights the ways in which contracts work across and within identity categories (Flax, 1998). As she uncovers, within the Hill/Thomas hearing, the sexual contract trumps the racial contract for Anita Hill represents the symbolic oppressor as Clarence Thomas represents
the symbolic hero/victim. Despite Thomas’s position as a black man, his status as an upper-class male figure gives him certain contractual benefits that are denied to Hill. In this case, white men are able to see in Thomas the image of the liberal abstract citizen despite his racial background – they are not able to see such an image in Hill, and as a result, she is further marginalized as a citizen existing in both the racial and sexual contracts. Flax’s work is a reminder of the fluidity of contracts and the various ways in which contracts can simultaneously privilege and oppress.

In addition, combining critical social contract theory with citizenship studies can work to challenge the image of citizenship as an individual construct. According to Mills, understanding social contracts as marginalizing individuals based on class, race, and gender issues makes “groups the key players”, not necessarily individuals (as cited in Pateman & Mills, 2007, p. 96). Situating contract within a group identity helps explain the various ways in which contract theory connects individuals to social institutions and the state, and also gives resonance to group agency and identity. Critical social contract theory posits that the historical hierarchization of society based on class, gender, and race significantly influences the ways in which individuals form relationships to the state and other citizens. If citizenship excludes individuals based on various group identities, then perhaps envisioning citizenship as based within a group identity would also help explain how citizenship has been constructed in relation to social institutions and hierarchies. It is difficult to view the status of citizenship as inclusionary if, according to critical social contract theory, state/individual relationships are based on group identities and historical marginalization according to class, gender, and race associations. As Mills explains, a radical reading of contract theory “recognizes that the crucial juridical-political
institutions are not egalitarian in their functioning, but biased in various ways by class, gender, and racial privilege” (p. 98). I argue that referencing critical social contract theory helps reveal the potential for citizenship to exist as an example of these crucial juridical-political institutions’ preference for an abstract individual based on gender, class, and race superiority.

Summary

The goal of this first section has been to explore the construction of citizenship as exclusionary. As outlined, citizenship is potentially limiting for marginalized individuals with regard to both the rights/responsibilities discourse as well as the individual/community dichotomy. Historically, specific groups of individuals have not enjoyed equal access to participation in the economic realm, hindering their ability to contribute to the public sphere and fulfill their civic “duties” as defined under the liberal state. In addition, the reliance on the abstract individual model of citizenship continues to marginalize individuals who may experience different accessibility to the public sphere based on gender, race, and class. Believing that all citizens are equally capable of participating in the market does not account for the number of citizens who have difficulty entering the market, as well as those citizens who enter the market but continue to experience marginalization based on difference.

If exclusionary citizenship is supported through the targeting and marginalization of specific groups by the state, and if individuals such as women experience continued exclusion based on social contracts, how, then, can marginalized groups work to overcome such exclusions? Is it possible to create a definition of citizenship that takes into account the various identity differences of citizens? Is there also a means of defining
citizenship that recognizes the historical marginalization of specific groups by way of social contracts with the state? If citizenship relies on economic productivity, can increased inclusion of marginalized citizens into the market help alleviate other exclusions based on difference? Can issues of rights and responsibilities be adopted within a non-exclusionary definition or must they, too, be reconstructed?

The second portion of this chapter is dedicated to exploring how exclusionary citizenship constructs can be challenged and remedied through the creation of altered approaches to citizenship that offer space for gender, class, and race differences. I will explore two main ways a non-exclusive citizenship approach can form, dubbed “method one” and “method two”. The first method focuses on whether increasing opportunities for marginalized citizens in the public realm helps satisfy exclusions based on historical marginalization. If the liberal state emphasizes economic production and status for citizens, and if marginalized groups are excluded based on their historical place outside the economic sphere, then presumably increasing group presence in the market would alleviate tensions. In problematizing this question, I focus specifically on the creation of new opportunities for marginalized citizens within a neoliberal framework. I analyze the ways in which the adoption of neoliberal agendas has impacted citizenship as a construct and also explore the ramifications of increasing marginalized citizens’ presence within the market. I question the possibility that while neoliberalism has increased the presence of marginalized populations within the political, social and economic spheres, some exclusion may still exist. I use women as a specific case study and unpack recent feminist works (Cruikshank, 1999; Eisenstein, 2005; Fraser, 2009) that argue that while women
have gained advancement within neoliberalism, they may still not enjoy full citizenship equality.

The second method, which I understand to be a better method, focuses on creating a differentiated citizenship based on altering how marginalized groups are defined within citizenship rather than merely increasing their presence within the public sphere. I draw on specific feminist political theorists (Lister, 2003; Mouffe, 1992a, 1992b; Young, 2000) to propose a more inclusionary model of citizenship that centers on the interplay between constructions of gender, class, and race and works to avoid perpetuating the exclusion of marginalized groups. I conclude the chapter by introducing the community and social activism as a space in which inclusionary citizenship may develop. As method two reveals, re-centering citizenship within the community may allow space for marginalized citizens to challenge issues of identity difference and economic productivity.

**Citizenship Contested**

**Method One**

Understanding citizenship as exclusionary relies on the image of the citizen as an “abstract, disembodied individual” (Lister, 1997, p. 71). As explained in the previous section, citizenship exists within the public sphere and centers economic productivity as a basis for measuring citizenship status. Such image creates exclusions for specific groups who have historically been removed from participation in the economy. Working from this definition, a logical method of creating inclusion for marginalized citizens is to increase the capacity of individuals’ economic power in a market-based society. If citizenship weighs on economic production, than full citizenship may be accessible for
those who can economically produce. Increasing the opportunities for marginalized
groups to participate may help end their exclusive position with respect to citizenship.

The incorporation of a neoliberal framework within American society impacted
the opportunities for marginalized groups to make claims in the market in very specific
ways. Catherine Kingfisher (2002a) explains that neoliberalism is not only an economic
and political framework but also a “cultural system … for understanding and organizing
the world and for informing our practices in it” (p. 13). As a cultural framework,
neoliberalism works to influence the boundaries of public and private, the construction of
individual subjectivities, and the classification of specific institutions (p. 13). At its core,
neoliberalism centralizes three main concepts: expansion of the market, privatization, and
reformulation of the welfare state. As Tabb (2001) explains, while the welfare state
encouraged individuals to resist domination and work collectively, neoliberalism favors
corporate interest and subordinating individuals through various state policies and
restrictions (p. 61). Feminist theorist Inderpal Grewal (2005) posits that neoliberalism
encourages states to merge welfare and the market, applying “market logics to welfare
concerns” (p. 15). Neoliberalism emphasizes the economic market and private liberties
and as a result, much of neoliberalism’s influence over the state relates to the push of
power to the markets and away from democracy (Crouch et al., 2001, p. 10).

On a global scale, an example of neoliberalism’s influence over states resides in
the implementation of structural adjustment programs and the favoring of microcredit
over “macro-structural efforts to fight poverty” (Fraser, 2009, p. 112). Further, according
to de Sousa Santos and Auritzer (2005), global neoliberalism works to encourage society
to follow market trends and values “under the presupposition that all social activity is
better organized when organized under the aegis of the market” (p. vii).13 Within the United States, an example of the move to micro over macro approaches was the end of the “nanny state” with welfare reform of the late 1990s during which President Clinton ended the notion of federally entitled programs for low-income parents and restructured the welfare system to incorporate more market-driven, individualistic ideas of economic success and poverty alleviation.14

While neoliberalism does not claim the identity of “conservative,” various theorists connect neoliberalism to the new right and argue that the two ideological camps have similar goals. Chantal Mouffe (1988) claims:

Starting from different viewpoints, both neoliberal theoreticians of the market economy and those who are called, in the United States, “neoconservatives” are variously seeking to transform dominant ideological parameters so as to reduce the central role played in those by the idea of democracy, or else to redefine democracy in a restrictive way to reduce its subversive power. (p. 97)

In this sense, neoliberalism influences the political realm as a result of its encouragement of the market and privatization. What is most interesting of Mouffe’s argument is not the connection between the new right and neoliberalism, but rather her assertion that both are

13 De Sousa Santos’ series of books on the influence of neoliberal globalization on state democracies and social movements provides an in-depth look at the ways in which neoliberalism has overtaken democratic order on a global scale. As de Sousa Santos’ (2005) explains, neoliberal globalization has created an “abstract political inclusion made of concrete social exclusion” and as a result, marginalized populations who believe they are part of the political, social, and economic system actually are further marginalized by market influences (p. x).
14 Hester Eisenstein’s (2005) piece on the correlation between the feminist movement and the rise in corporate globalization provides an excellent history of the development of neoliberalism as an economic model both within the US and globally. As she states, the model was first tested in Chili and then expanded to first world nations, particularly Great Britain with Margaret Thatcher and the U.S. with Ronald Regan (p. 489-494). Her work clearly articulates that the rise in neoliberal influences within the U.S. was gradual, spanning several decades. Though welfare reform policies of 1996 are seen as concrete examples of neoliberal influences within public policies, neoliberal influence was visible in welfare policies starting in the 1970s and 80s with work-first programs.
seeking to alter democracy as a political structure and ideology. For her, democracy is a system that upholds individual and collective liberties and allows individuals to have public access to the political sphere. However, if the new right and neoliberal models seek a return to the private, then it is feasible that they conflict with democratic ideas that give more power to the hands of the public.

In addition to influencing how governments operate, neoliberalism also impacts the social realm. While neoliberalism supports the decrease in state power in place of increasing private interests, the state does play a specific role in the marketizing of the social sphere. The state operates to maintain institutional access to the market and to not interfere with the operation of market interests. In other words, neoliberalism “corporatizes” the state, increasing state protections of corporations and the market rather than protections of civil liberties and individuals. Social institutions also become private entities with many corporations gaining strongholds over institutions, such as the health care industry. Neoliberalism’s influence over social institutions also exists in the multiple forms of state/federal approved policy measures passed in the last two decades that provide protection for private businesses and allow for specific public goods such as utilities to become private business ventures with protections similar to those of corporations.

In her text on welfare policies, Judith Goode (2002) presents an overview of neoliberalism’s increasing influence over social systems, which she argues began during the 1970s when “global pressures on profits and productivity mounted” (p. 75). She focuses on the plight of low/no income individuals within the United States to demonstrate the myriad ways neoliberalism historically influenced both policies and
social attitudes. While the welfare system was targeted during the War on Poverty, it was not until the 1970s when state-sponsored welfare programs were labeled as promoting dependency and “bureaucratic inefficiency” (p. 75). The push for market triumphalism and state separation continued into the 1980s when both the Regan and Bush administrations pushed for a specific family ethic and market-based independence for low-income individuals. As Goode explains, the emphasis on family values and market-triumphalism was in direct response to the increasing number of individuals on welfare services and the rise in racist stereotyping of welfare recipients. For Goode, a key piece of legislation that demonstrates the pervasiveness of neoliberalism was the Family Support Act of 1988, which encouraged “moving women on welfare to work… while still recognizing their roles as mothers” (p. 79). For Goode and others (Naples, 1997), the Family Support Act epitomized the three tenants of neoliberalism and worked to further disadvantage marginalized individuals, rather than support them.

While it seems clear that the gradual adoption of neoliberalism frameworks influenced both the political and social realms of society, the question remains how neoliberalism as a political-economic ideology has and continues to influence the conceptualization of citizenship. As Clarke (2004) explains, neoliberalism worked to alter the idea of the collective public in favor of individuals with “economised [sic] identities as taxpayers and consumers” (p. 31). In addition, from its early inception in the 1970s, the neoliberal agenda encouraged the construction of citizenship as based on the individual rather than based on the community. According to Fraser (2009), “in place of public provision and social citizenship,” neoliberal supporters favored “‘trickle-down’ and ‘personal responsibility’” models (p. 107). Citizenship rights fixated more on
protection of personal liberties rather than on the collective good, and individuals encouraged to adopt the idea that only individual people are responsible for upholding citizenship rights, not a community of citizens. Further, as Ong (2006) summarizes, quintessential elements associated with citizenship became “disarticulated and rearticulated with forces set into motion by market forces” (p. 6). Just as neoliberalism was gradually adopted within political and social frameworks across the span of several decades, so too was its emphasis on citizenship.

In conceptualizing citizenship today, it is apparent that the push for individualization and privatization restricts the emphasis of equality of rights within neoliberalism. Mouffe (1988) argues that neoliberalism’s emphasis on individual liberty subordinates democracy because “the defense of economic liberty and private property replaces a defense of equality as the privileged value in a liberal society” (p. 97). Equality is no longer sacred as individuals only wish to protect their individual freedoms, rather than help protect the collective good. Individuals make personal gains based on access and contribution to the market, and as a result, economic status takes precedence. For Grewal (2005), within neoliberalism, rights and citizenship are through to be “achievable through the workings of market capitalism” (p. 124). While neoliberalism alters how citizenship is constructed as a communal entity, it expands opportunities for individuals to have a place within the market.

The increasing privatization and marketization of citizenship seems to impact on all citizens, but also leads to the development of new economic initiatives for marginalized populations. Because the market is a central element within neoliberalism, access to the market is pivotal, and current political and social trends encourage
marginalized populations to enter the market in specific ways. While the importance of community decreases within a neoliberal framework, the importance of personal liberty increases. An element of this shift from community to individual is the increase in economic opportunities within the market. Ong (2006) explains that the neoliberal state “gives value to the calculative practices and to self-governing subjects” who act independently of the state (p. 16). In other words, those who self-govern are the preferred citizens while those populations who rely upon state aid and community support are “rendered excludable as citizens and subjects” (p. 16). Yet, if those individuals are able to become self-governing and economically productive, then their citizenship will too become preferred.

Focusing on the specific situation of women as citizens within neoliberalism facilitates the exploration of neoliberalism’s influence on expanding inclusivity for marginalized citizens. When focusing specifically on women, credit must be given to feminism for its work to expand opportunities for women within the public realm. During the second wave, a main goal of feminist activism was the incorporation of women into the labor force and encouragement of women to seek employment outside the private sphere. The feminist push for women’s economic presence in the labor market allowed women to take advantage of increasing opportunities for labor outside the home. Abramovitz (2002) states that because societal attitudes towards working women were shifting, the primarily white feminist movement encouraged women to enter the labor force and create economic independence from their private lives (p. 220). Paid labor and economic independence represented a means of freeing oneself from the “shackles of
patriarchy” and the first step in achieving autonomy from the historical role of woman as mother/wife.

While neoliberalism and feminism both allowed for greater presence of women within the labor markets, recent feminist scholarship cautions against supporting the idea that women enjoy more equality as a result of the increase in labor-force inclusivity, thereby strengthening the ability of women to obtain full citizenship status. These arguments posit that while women gain specific advantages by joining the labor market, thereby enjoying more inclusion into the neoliberal market, such expansion may not benefit all women. Uma Narayan (1997) states that while feminists continue to advocate for equalized work-related opportunities within both social and political arenas, feminists should simultaneously be cautious not to “reinforce the assumption that engaging in waged work is a necessary condition for individuals” to achieve equal right and social standing with regards to citizenship (p. 50, original emphasis). Historically women’s work within the labor market was underpaid, labeling women as “cheap labor.” Pushing women to join the workforce does not necessarily alleviate women’s economic situations, but rather situates them to support the mentality that through work, independence is gained. In addition, as some feminists argue (Abramovitz, 1996; Amott, 1990; Mink, 1990, 1998; Ong, 2006; Piven, 2001), women of color, who historically were integrated into the workforce, never experienced liberation through their work, but rather a perpetuation of oppression as low-wage laborers. As Mink (1998) explains:

For women of color, wage work has been a mark of inequality: expected by the white society for whom they work; necessary because their male kin cannot find jobs or cannot earn family-supporting wages; and exploitative because their earnings keep them poor. (p. 25)
Thus, the very nature of the argument that economic work leads to independence and empowerment from patriarchal structures is a racialized argument, supporting the perils of white women over their Black and Latina counterparts.

Wendy Brown (1995) argues that while feminists adopted an ideology of equality largely based on economics – waged work creates independence for women, which increases equal status – feminists simultaneously failed to understand the depths of capitalism within the economics-based equality model. According to Brown, feminists need to be critical of capitalism as a manifestation of “a political economy of domination, exploitation, [and] alienation” (p. 13), perpetuating the availability of cheap labor for the betterment not of women, but of the labor market. The argument that women’s equality exists within economic independence hides the reality that capitalism and gender oppression are mutually dependent in that gender oppression hides the “structural realities of the capitalist system” (Woods, 2002, p. 279). By working together, gender oppression and capitalism create class divides that further perpetuate the idea that through economic independence, women can gain equality, which only works to continue the need for women’s cheap labor. In a way, thus, gender oppression, capitalism, and economic ‘equality’ are circular.

Other feminists (Cruikshank, 1999; Eisenstein, 2005; Fraser, 2009; Hawkesworth, 2002) argue that the inclusion of citizens (specifically women) within the neoliberal market works to create a sense of false equality for marginalized citizens. For instance, if there exists a market need for cheap labor, than citizens should provide such labor, and through what better means to gain workers than to advertise the necessity of paid labor as part of full citizenship status? As Kingfisher (2002a) explains, through neoliberalism,
women can enjoy the equalities of citizen as their male counterparts: “now women, too, can be counted as separate, autonomous individuals whose very individuality provides them with the means to achieve self-sufficiency” (p. 27). Yet, this argument also fails to address the historical presence of low/no income women and women of color in the market. Though their cheap labor supported the expansion of the market, they have never been viewed as autonomous, separate individuals. Thus, the argument that market participation can lead to citizenship equality is again a classed and racialized argument. Looking at the experiences of how women across racial and class lines are included yet simultaneously excluded within neoliberalism reveals important information regarding the perpetuation of exclusionary definitions of citizenship outside the liberal state.

The belief that market participation leads to citizenship equality also connects to the subjection of women’s sense of agency within the market. Barbara Cruikshank (1999) argues that while citizens believe they are being included in the market, such inclusion is an example of a technology of citizenship that further limits their position within political and social spheres. For her, engagement in such technologies is presumably voluntary, and yet engagement acts coercively by limiting the realm within which citizens are capable of acting. Individuals believe they have a stake in society, but their presence is not valued. As she states, the freedom of citizens is an example of an “operationalization of power” in which citizens believe they are free when in fact they are subject to specific discourses and ideologies that keep them locked in a specific way of acting and behaving (p. 22).

Cruikshank defines technologies of citizenship as “discourses, programs, and other tactics aimed at making individuals politically active and capable of self-government” (p. 1).
Using Cruikshank’s technologies of citizenship approach helps shed light on the argument that increasing the inclusion of women within the market perpetuates their cheap labor and subsequent economic marginalization. Women believe they are included when in fact their inclusion is a mode of coercive circumstances working to keep women locked in marginalized status. Ong (2006) makes similar claims regarding the relationship between technologies of citizenship and neoliberalism. As she argues, neoliberalism, as a technology of government, “is a profoundly active way of rationalizing governing and self-governing in order to “optimize” (p. 3). In other words, the benefit of the market, rather than the citizen, is of primary concern. Such argument is of significance when examining the situation for non-citizen women laborers. Immigrant and migrant women’s labor is often seen as the most marginalized and cheapest of all labor, and yet there remains little neoliberal reward for their economic productivity. They represent the epitome of the neoliberal worker and yet they remain excluded from citizenship inclusivity.

Hester Eisenstein’s (2005) work on the “dangerous liaison” between feminism, capitalism, and globalization expands on the idea of coercive inclusion. She argues that the growth of capitalism stems from the reliance on women’s labor on a global scale. Such reliance on women’s labor in part is a direct result of the work of the women’s movement during the 1960s and 1970s. The push for women’s economic independence outside the private sphere was a result of the feminist movement’s ideological influence on women to believe that economic productivity outside of the house was a required
element of the new, liberated woman. Because of the ideological push, the number of women entering the labor sphere increased, creating a new pocket of cheap, lower-paid laborers on which capitalism could rely. On a positive note, as Eisenstein notes, the influence on the labor force is a lasting impressions of the feminist movement and not only were women new forms of ‘labor’ within the market, but also there occurred changes to sexual harassment policies, equal pay policies, family leave, and work training programs for women which seemingly worked to help women’s independence in the public sphere.

A key element of Eisenstein’s argument rests in the normalization of women acting as independent agents, which further promotes neoliberal’s push for individualization. As Eisenstein argues, feminism represented “individualism and the right to participate in the market economy as a worker or entrepreneur in one’s own name” separate from patriarchal restrictions and historical social roles such as wife and mother (p. 498). Yet, in her argument, the more accepted the image of the working woman became, the more detriments it created for women in the long-run. As she explains, because women’s labor was so normalized, welfare reforms of the 1990s “made this its centerpiece” (p. 501). It is the centralization of women’s labor within welfare reform that inherently connects it to neoliberalism. As stated earlier, neoliberalism decreased the importance of the welfare state; state policies no longer “doled” out benefits at random, but had specific policies and regulations for who could receive

\[16\] Again, this was a limited argument, as women of color and low/no income women across racial-lines were working in the economic sphere for decades before the feminist movement’s push for economic independence. Yet, these women experienced little empowerment and liberation as a result of their employment.
benefits. Yet, feminists have long criticized welfare reform for its blatant denial of provisions offered to women who have difficulty finding work or who find work but still reside in poverty since available work is so low-paid. Eisenstein’s argument, then, is that the increase in women’s labor resulted in it becoming a central idea within welfare reform, which has become a factor in the preparation of poverty for dependent women. As she concludes: “the legitimization of feminism masks the radical restructuring of the world economy, and the glitter of economic liberation disguises the intensification of poverty for the vast majority of women” (p. 511).

The relationship between feminism and neoliberal individualism hurt low/no income women and women of color significantly. Katzenstein (2003) writes that the push for women’s economic equality subsequently divided women into two main classes: those who became “insiders” of the state (middle-class women) and those who remained citizenship outsiders (low/no income women). For Katzenstein, middle-class feminist activists became insiders through their push for policy change geared towards economic independence and advancement for middle-class women. Low/no income feminist activists were not able to make similar inroads into politics and thus suffered during the rise of neoliberal policy changes of the 1980s and early 1990s. In addition, as previously highlighted, women of color had long participated in the labor markets in low-wage jobs since before the rise in both neoliberalism and feminist activism. The second wave feminist push for economic independence did not take into consideration the historic plight of women of color and low/no income women whose historic participation in the market served not to empower them, but to reinforce market profits and market control over their public selves.
If anything, as Kingfisher (2002a) and Goode (2002) explain, the situation for women of color and low/no income women under neoliberalism was the *opposite* of their middle/upper class counterparts. While white women were pushed to join the labor markets for empowerment, low/no income women were pushed to join to detach themselves from dependency on welfare systems. As Goode (2002) explains:

In the new environment of neoliberalism, the scene was set for focusing on the belief that only paid work would liberate poor women from the shackles of state dependency. This required demeaning poor women’s unpaid contributions as mothers and making them autonomous self-governing agents. (p. 76)

Like their middle/upper class counterparts, low/no income women were pushed to join the labor force, yet, unlike other women, women of lower-class status were targeted for their private lives as mothers. To support her claim, Goode describes the adoption of the Family Support Act of 1988, which grew out of the “resentment felt by the increasing number of working women towards welfare mothers paid to stay at home and take care of their children” (p. 79). For Goode, middle/upper class women based this resentment on issues of class, but also racial stereotypes; she refers to Mink’s (1998) argument that “without racial images, there would be more willingness to imagine oneself in the same situation” (p. 79). In addition, Mink (1998) argues that welfare reform of 1996 concretely demonstrated the divide between white middle/upper class women’s interests and those of low/no women and women of color. As she explains, working-outside the home became an issue of choice with women choosing to either stay at home or work. Yet, welfare form legislation demonstrated that low/no income women are not afforded choice, but rather have an *obligation* to work (p. 26). Thus, as the stories of women of color and low/no income women demonstrate, while arguments regarding the detrimental
relationship between feminism and neoliberalism hold merit in outlining the various ways in which market triumphalism can hinder women’s advancement, the very basis of the comparison – the relationship between feminism and neoliberalism – remains problematic.

I want to push the arguments of these feminists (Cruikshank, 1999; Eisenstein, 2005; Fraser, 2009; & Goode, 2002) in order to understand the direct implications of neoliberalism on women’s citizenship. Specifically, is it possible that women’s citizenship perhaps has become a manifestation of the neoliberal agenda? By suggesting this question, I do not mean to discredit feminist activism, nor do I wish for my argument to blame the feminist agenda for the current economic situation of women in the US. However, the perpetuation by the white, middle/upper class feminist movement of the autonomous, individualistic citizen image is extremely significant. I agree with Eisenstein when she argues that the feminist encouragement of women’s presence in the labor market supported the ideal of the individual who contributes to society and exists quietly in the private realm. And in the eyes of neoliberalism, women have morphed into the ideal citizen in the sense that they ascribe to the image of the “economic man” who contributes to and supports a free market. Yet, women also continue to exist as the primary caretakers in society, maintaining the domestic sphere and strengthening the private. Further, not all women are allowed access to the opportunities for economic productivity; immigrant women, for instance, remain “outside” the opportunity for economic capital. The racialized and classed nature of neoliberalism’s empowerment continues to limit a large majority of women who historically have participated in the market without much benefit.
In addition, while the private sphere has gained new significance within neoliberalism, women’s role within the private sphere has not changed and as a result, their position as marginalized citizens remains, despite the push for them to enter the public sphere and the new emphasis on the private. Women still engage in a relationship with the sexual contract, despite gaining advances outside the private realm. Women of color and low/no income women continue to be limited within the private realm as dominant images of their roles as mothers are negatively stereotyped. Further, through policies such as the Family Support Act of 1988 and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, low/no class women are “provided” access to market empowerment in exchange for increased surveillance over their private behaviors (Goode, 2002, p. 82). Thus, their private selves as mothers and women are just as scrutinized as their public image as wage-laborers. Further, as Ong (2006) explains, citizens who are deemed incompetent in the market “become devalued and vulnerable to exclusionary practices” within a neoliberal system (p. 7). Women’s competency in the market, regardless of race and class positions, remains dependent on the gendered image of the abstract homo-economicus.

Using the category of women as a case study reveals ways in which increasing the economic clout of marginalized individuals may not necessary lead to more inclusionary citizenship practices. True, neoliberalism’s influence over the market and state benefited women’s citizenship status in ways otherwise not possible within the liberal state. Yet, as I outlined, arguments supporting the “dangerous liaison” between feminism and neoliberalism raise key questions regarding the advantageousness of increasing women’s economic capabilities on citizenship rights. Though the individual white, middle/upper
woman achieves success within the market, women of color and low/no class women do not, and therefore the collective concept of citizenship for women remains problematic. Further, incorporating some of Pateman’s critical social contract theory reveals the potential continued denial of citizenship access and benefits to women due to the sexual contract. In addition, not all women benefited from the rise of neoliberalism and the history of race and class differences within feminist activism must be accounted for in discussions of neoliberal citizenship and market-based empowerment.

If expanding the inclusion of marginalized populations within the market fails to address limitations based on difference, then what other methods can be used to challenge exclusionary citizenship? The next section of the chapter explores a second method of creating more inclusionary models of citizenship for marginalized groups. Here, I survey the development of a differentiated definition of citizenship as a means of creating inclusion for marginalized populations. Specifically, this section explores how reconceptualizing citizenship as inclusive across differences may help reveal ways that marginalized citizens can begin to emerge from exclusionary relationships to secure space within political and social contexts. I investigate arguments proposing the reconfiguration of citizenship to include issues of difference as a solution to challenge assumptions perpetuated within the neoliberal framework. In addition, I explore how reconstructing citizenship as based on difference may help open up possibilities to return to the community as a site of contestation and promote citizen action.

**Method 2**

In contrast to the image of the abstract liberal citizen exists the notion of citizenship as a collective construct based on “social relationships between individuals”
Within this framework, citizenship consists not merely of the granting of rights and status to an autonomous individual, but also of a social identity and way of situating oneself within a community. Crowley (1998) states that if citizenship is defined as membership into a community, then citizenship relates to an equality of rights, requiring a “common belonging and stimulates the feeling of such belonging” (p. 170). Feminist and critical race scholars have long grappled with the idea of citizenship as a collective identity and have worked to develop new means of analyzing citizenship as a communal membership. Yet, does defining citizenship in this fashion allow space for non-exclusionary definitions to form?

Feminist and critical race scholars have begun to shed light on the need for focusing on issues of difference when theorizing citizenship. For them, incorporating issues of difference into the definition fosters the communal aspect of citizenship. Iris Marion Young (2002) argues that to think of citizenship as abstract ignores difference amongst individuals and the historical marginalization of populations. Utilizing the universal definition of an abstract citizen is problematic since universalizing rights and responsibilities of individuals excludes the specific nature of rights per group identity (as cited in Kymlicka & Norman 1994, p. 370). For Young, in order to create a unifying definition of citizenship, the concept of difference needs to be emphasized; for her, the ideal citizen is based on a “differentiated” definition (as cited in Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, p. 370). Incorporating difference may help excluded populations challenge their status at the margins. As Anne Phillips (2000) states, if “difference is attached only to the marginal, their citizenship is still second class” (p. 41). By creating a form of citizenship that centralizes all difference, then difference is no longer thought of negatively and those
who “differ” from the historically abstracted citizen are no longer thought of in inferior
terms.

In her text on citizenship rights for women, Ruth Lister (2003) explains that if
citizenship is based on group identity, then it should be “premised on recognition of
difference rather than on sameness” (p. 81). A comprehensive approach to citizenship
rights would allow for individuals to take “into account their different social positions
and group affiliations” while simultaneously allowing them [individuals] to “see
themselves as equal individual members of the polity” (Lister, 2003, p. 59). In addition,
other theorists support a multicultural approach to citizenship that requires the promotion
of minority rights to the majority (as cited in Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). In response to
diverging interests within specific minority groups, the regulation of individual rights
within such groups would allow for the maintenance of diversity but control of identity-
based hierarchies that may arise when dealing with multiple sets of “differences”. Within
such a multicultural form of citizenship, individuals are “incorporated into the political
community” not merely as individuals, but also as part of specific identity groups (in

In contemplating the usefulness of incorporating issues of identity and difference
into citizenship construction, I wish to focus on three main arguments: Lister’s
difference-based model; Mouffé’s theory of radical democratic citizenship; and Young’s
type of differentiated democracy. Each of these arguments regards the development of
a non-exclusive approach to citizenship in different ways (Figure 2.1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theorist</th>
<th>Major Theoretical Claim</th>
<th>Role of Citizen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruth Lister</td>
<td><em>Inclusive citizenship:</em></td>
<td>To expand scope of “political” work within community spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenge gendered nature of citizenship</td>
<td>To reject universal image of citizenship</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenge universal construction of “citizen”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chantal Mouffe</td>
<td><em>Radical Democratic Citizenship:</em></td>
<td>To honor the community, but center focus on individual liberties and freedoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognize difference without centralizing difference</td>
<td>To challenge institutions that perpetuate negative difference</td>
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<td>Need to transcend difference</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Challenge institutions, public/private divide</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iris Marion Young</td>
<td><em>Differentiated Democracy:</em></td>
<td>To allow space for marginalized individuals within politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognize difference without making difference secondary</td>
<td>To reject difference as deviant.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work to incorporate various issues into citizenship</td>
<td>To collaborate across differences</td>
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Figure 2.1: Description of Inclusionary Citizenship Models

The first centers on the work of Ruth Lister (2003) who argues that a non-exclusionary approach to citizenship must take into account the gendered nature of citizenship. Lister contends that often incorporating difference into the definition results in a universalization of difference for marginalized populations. As she states: “the very idea of a “woman-friendly citizenship” [is] contradictory both because citizenship is inherently woman-unfriendly and because the category “woman” itself represents a false universalism” (p. 6). Both the gender-neutral form of citizenship in the liberal state and new differentiated forms of citizenship are problematic for women as they continue to be
measured against the standard male-dominated version of the autonomous citizen. Lister states that difference continues to be “conceptualized in binary rather than pluralistic terms” (p. 17). Instead of relying on the singular identity of woman when creating a difference-based citizen model, she advocates for an inclusion of a gendered analysis of all forms of difference, which would help alleviate the dependency on a universalistic notion of the category “woman” (p. 12).

For Lister, citizenship is both an individual entity as well as a communal priority. She advocates for increased awareness of gender differences within the community as a means of helping the individual citizen. Educating the community means expanding the political and social realms in which citizenship exists to incorporate more women’s experiences as a means of differentiated the community space. For instance, she argues that political citizenship should expand to include participation in informal politics as well, such as neighborhood politics. In addition, Lister advocates for political citizenship to include the negotiation of welfare services that women often experience, since welfare policy itself is an extension of the political sphere (8). As she states, experiences of political citizenship need to be reflective of the wide range of experiences individuals’ face, which also helps incorporate a difference-based ideology into citizenship. It is her support of the expansion of what constitutes “political work”, as well as her understanding of the influence identity politics holds over citizenship as a status, that connect her argument to the development of inclusionary citizenship.

At the heart of Lister’s approach is challenging the gendered nature of citizenship in order to create new forms of citizenship models. Yet, it remains unclear how Lister’s approach avoids universalizing the identity of woman. By expanding the scope of
political and social contexts to include women’s experiences, Lister succeeds at creating more space in which women can be seen as valid citizens. Yet, she continues to centralize the key difference – gender – as the site for expanding citizenship rights. While including neighborhood politics as a space of political rights does allow for multiple experiences to be recognized, it still centralizes the idea that women experience different politics and as a result require different, expanded definitions in order to become citizens.

A second argument regarding the development of a non-exclusive approach to citizenship centers on Chantal Mouffe’s (1992b) concept of a radical democratic citizenship. Connecting her argument to inclusionary citizenship development reveals that a variety of differences, not just sexual difference, are required to develop a new radical model of a “collective political identity” (p. 379). Mouffe agrees with theorists such as Pateman who argue for the need to critique sexual difference, but unlike Pateman, Mouffe’s remedy should not include “making sexual difference politically relevant to its definition” (p. 376). Instead, for Mouffe, new constructions of citizenship as an identity should allow for sexual and cultural differences to “become effectively non-pertinent” (p. 376). For her, citizenship should recognize the historical and contemporary implications of difference for varying groups of citizens, but not centralize difference. Instead of perpetuating the dichotomy between liberal and civic republican, she aims to create a new form of citizenship that honors the community but also allows for individual liberties to be protected.

Mouffe’s radical democratic model does not so much dissect identity differences for individuals, but dissects the institutions through which equality and liberty are stifled (p. 378). She argues that citizenship should not be limited to a political construction, but
should exist as an “articulating principle that affects the different subject positions of the social agents” while allowing for difference (1992b, p. 235). Individuals benefit as a community, merging the liberal-individualist and civic-republican models together. Mouffe’s theory is idealistic in that it requires citizens to completely re-imagine the construction of citizenship, group identity, and democratic existence. However, her theory provides a way to avoid essentializing experiences of specific groups when forming a more inclusive model of citizenship. She asks individuals not to construct diverse approaches to citizenship based on difference, but rather to collectively organizes in opposition to the exclusion of difference under the guise of “radical democratic citizens” (p. 236). Radical democratic citizenship also emphasizes challenging institutional oppression asking the state to become more inclusive, rather than simply changing the definition of citizenship itself. She directly challenges the separation of public and private, instead arguing that true democracy exists across the two spectrums (p. 238). In this sense, it speaks directly to critical social contract theory which seeks to challenge the perpetuation of exclusions of citizens through various institutions. For Mouffe, all institutions should be concerned with equality and liberty, not just citizenship: “no sphere is immune from those concerns and relations of domination can be challenged everywhere” (p. 238).

A third argument regarding the development a non-exclusive approach to citizenship relates to Iris Marion Young’s (2000) concept of deliberative democracy. Young argues that exclusions exist within an aggregative model of democracy in which interest groups are recognized, but only the majority benefits. For her, even a universal definition of citizenship “cannot but retain its character as privilege” (in Shafir, 1998, p.
A deliberative democracy allows for the creation space for interest groups to be heard and also for compromise to exist. Young is not advocating for a universal approach to citizenship, but rather an understanding of the perpetuation of power dynamics caused by ignoring difference. As she states, citizenship is constructed in the notion of the universal that negates the importance of gender, race, and class experiences and opens the possibilities for exclusion. In order to avoid exclusion, notions of difference must be centralized; in doing so, citizenship also allows for issues of oppression to be recognized. Her differentiated citizenship allows for the creation of justice across social divides rather than depending on a universal, abstract notion of equality. As such, a theory of differentiated citizenship answers what she dubs the “paradox of democracy” which posits that “social power makes some citizens more equal than others, and equality of citizenship makes some people more powerful citizens” (1998, p. 272).

Inclusion, for Young, emerges through increasing the ability of marginalized groups to not only have a space within the political realm but also a voice. As she argues, “voting equality is only a minimal condition of political equality,” and therefore all forms of political and social action need to be challenged in order for marginalized groups to gain some level of equality (p. 6). While Young’s work centers on creating political inclusions for marginalized populations, it offers a clear understanding of the benefits incorporating difference into citizenship constructions and relationships between individuals and the state. Young’s approach argues that inclusive citizenship would allow for “a transformation of private, self-regarding desire into public appeals to justice” (p. 51). Like Lister, Young encourages focusing on the expansion of political participation to local spaces and community politics. Young does not, though, argue that
inclusionary citizenship and democratic practice should only be located in civil society; rather, for her both the state and civil society need to be strengthened and revised in order to “deepen democracy and undermine injustice” (p. 156). While the community can allow space for marginalized populations to develop their own political voice, the role of the state, and the ability of the state to intervene and aid marginalized groups, should not be forgotten.

For the purposes of this project, I do not wish to follow one specific approach but rather attempt to integrate all three approaches (Lister, Mouffe, and Young) that I reason offer beneficial tools to creating inclusivity for marginalized citizens. Clearly there is a need for recognizing the exclusionary nature of citizenship as a construct, but it is unclear exactly how to incorporate difference into a new construction. While Lister echoes the need to incorporate difference into new conceptualizations, critical questions remain regarding the universalizing of difference within her approach. Her argument offers critical insight into investigating the gendered aspect of exclusionary citizenship, but how can her model work when discussing the class or race-based marginalization of specific populations? In contrast, Mouffe’s approach avoids pluralistic tendencies by arguing for dissolution of difference through recognition, but may not necessarily allow space for experiences of oppression to be understood as influential when constructing citizenship. Young’s model seemingly presents a compromise between Lister and Mouffe; however, her approach negates the ability to create a universal notion of equality for citizens. For Young, incorporating difference into citizenship poses a problem for marginalized populations: on the one hand, they desire full status as citizenship, but wish to reject universal images of citizenship; on the other hand, incorporating issues of difference
allows their interests to be heard, but perpetuates an “otherness” of their difference (1998, 282). While Young’s theory articulates the necessity of making difference less secondary and more approachable, she does not construct a clear outline for how individuals can perceive difference as anything other than deviant.

While none of the three approach are without fault, they each provide questions and analytical tools necessary when addressing how differences is constructed within citizenship, how difference is excluded within the liberal citizen subject, and how exclusions can be avoided by reconstructing citizenship. I refer to these three approaches throughout the project as I work to explore new approaches to creating inclusionary citizenship that are mindful of both difference and universalization while locating ways in which an inclusive model of citizenship might be plausible.

An important common feature of all three arguments is the support for returning focus to, and reorienting citizenship within, the community. As outlined in Chapter One, this project understands the community as a specific location or space based on various factors such as geography, shared identities, or shared ideals. I substitute the term “community” instead of civil society as I understand community spaces as relating to both the theoretical approaches to citizenship as inclusive and exclusive and the material forms of social activism occurring in small, local spaces. The term “community” encompasses spaces as small as local families and neighborhoods, to as large as national organizations and global activist networks. All these spaces exist within the broader realm of civil society, but labeling them as “communities” gives attention to the ways in which marginalized populations understand their situation vis-à-vis the state and the economy.
The individualistic model of citizenship perpetuates exclusions based on difference. Yet, refocusing citizenship as based in the community rather than the state may open possibilities for incorporating difference and including marginalized groups. Specifically, attention must be given to the role of citizens within the community, and it is necessary to explore how citizens deemed marginalized through liberal and neoliberal frameworks actively engage the community. As Young explains, a deliberative democracy in which all individuals have access to equal voice must allow space for political engagement outside of formal institutions. Examining local communities, and the activism that exists within, may help reveal ways in which marginalized citizens, who otherwise struggle to possess political voice in formal institutions, are able to develop and share their political voice. While citizens are acted upon within a liberal and neoliberal state, an inclusive approach to citizenship focused on action within the community may help secure agency for marginalized citizens.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the various ways in which citizenship has been constructed as exclusive for marginalized populations. The exclusionary nature of citizenship exists across both liberal and neoliberal state structures; therefore there is a significant need to revision citizenship to allow for the broad experiences of marginalized populations to be recognized. Feminist discussions related to citizenship have taken into account multifaceted definitions and various locations in which citizenship can form. Utilizing a broad approach to citizenship helps create space to discuss the possibilities of resistance and subversion. In order to challenge the exclusions within the state,
differences across identity categories must be acknowledge to advance passed the individualistic approach to citizenship.

Discussions of neoliberalism’s influence over citizenship remain central to hypothesizing a more inclusionary form of citizenship rights for marginalized citizens. As this chapter considered, the push for economic productivity and the importance of the market influences the ways in which citizens have access to and understand citizenship rights and responsibilities. Only those who are viewed as autonomous actors of the state are deemed “full” citizens within the neoliberal agenda, thereby excluding those who rely upon the state or civil society for assistance. Through critical social contract theory is often based in the liberal state, the argument that contracts exclude marginalized populations holds within the neoliberal agenda, especially considering the ways in which women and people of color remain marginalized in the market, despite their efforts for economic equality.

In the next chapter, I wish to begin the exploration of how more inclusionary models of citizenship can develop within a specific context – community activism. As stated by Lister, Mouffe, and Young, returning focus to the community may provide insight into the various ways in which liberal citizenship excludes specific populations. Further, as explored in Chapter Three, emphasizing the community may help localize discussions of citizenship at the grassroots level. Social activism at the local level provides a useful means through which models of inclusionary citizenship can begin to develop. The next chapter unpacks the various ways social activism exists as a tool for challenging exclusionary citizenship. Specifically, I will look at how the emergence of antipoverty activism challenges exclusions based on gender, race, and class.
I argue that issues of poverty centrally relate to the situation for marginalized populations under the exclusionary neoliberal models of citizenship. As Lister (2003) posits, “poverty is corrosive of citizenship both as a status and a practice, undermining rights and the ability to fulfill the potential of citizenship” (p. 141). The economic nature of citizenship status holds significant influence over the ways low-income citizens maintain a voice within the public sphere. For instance, in attempting to create inclusionary citizenship through market participation, low/no income women remained stigmatized by neoliberal frameworks and policies. The next chapter explores how antipoverty activism may work to alleviate some of the tensions inherent in low/no income individuals’ experiences within neoliberalism. Further, as Lister, Mouffe, and Young explain, the issues of difference must be taken into account when constructing a theory of inclusive citizenship. Groups that “assert a positive meaning to group difference . . . engage the meaning of difference itself as a terrain of political struggle” (Young, 1998, p. 286-7). As the following chapter will explore, the push for antipoverty activists to reclaim an identity as “poor” may work to materially construct Young’s theory of differentiated citizenship.
CHAPTER 3: IMPOVERISHED INDIVIDUALS AND THE POWER OF SOCIAL ACTIVISM

“It is clear that millions of people are protesting the imposition of an economic system that puts the bottom line ahead of basic human needs.” Laura Pulido, 2006.

Introduction

In 2009, roughly 44 million Americans lived at or below the official American poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). More than half of America’s low/no income citizens are women and African-Americans and Latino/as are more likely to live in poverty than their non-Hispanic white counterparts (NPC, 2008). The most recent Department of Labor statistics stated that in 2009, approximately 10.1 million American citizens were classified as “working poor” meaning that they spent more than half the year within the labor force and still had an average income level at or below the poverty line (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). The same report claimed that women, African-Americans, and Latino/a individuals are twice as likely as their white male counterparts to be members of the working poor.

Factors that lead to the economic marginalization of women and people of color range from material to theoretical; for some, the lack of employment and educational opportunities within their specific communities works to limit the scope of their economic stability, while for others, the foundational structures on which political, social,

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17 In 2009, the estimated poverty threshold for a single individual under 65 years was $11,161. The figure increases based on how many children and adults live within a household. For instance, the poverty threshold for a two parent household with one child under 18 was $14,787 whereas the poverty threshold for a household with five children was $28,230.
and economic climates are built (i.e.: the domination contract) set individuals up for limited advancements on the basis of gender and race categories (Goode & Maskovsky, 2001; Padavic & Reskin, 2002; Pateman & Mills, 2007). Regardless the reason, statistics related to poverty within the United States demonstrate a steady increase in the number of impoverished citizens and a need for studies focused on the realities of those living at the economic margin.

Exploring the various ways in which marginalized citizens engage in social activism helps shed light on how individuals combat both the material and theoretical factors of poverty. As discussed in Chapter Two, a central component of redefining citizenship as more inclusive involves reorienting attention to community spaces. Because social activism often begins in local spaces, focusing on grassroots activism within smaller communities may provide key information regarding the exclusivity of citizenship for marginalized groups. Furthermore, examining social activism reveals ways in which those living at the margins work to challenges their own marginalization in localized spaces. I argue that social activism, which for this study is defined as the outward process of deliberate action aimed at achieving a social justice goal(s), is an important tool marginalized citizens can use to challenge citizenship exclusions based on difference, return focus to the community, and restore personal and group agency. Understanding the various ways in which marginalized groups engage in social activism may help uncover how they have historically challenged state exclusions in their own communities and highlight how they can continue to do so today.

This chapter focuses on specifically on social activism around issues of poverty. Studying poverty reveals key insights in how specific populations are disadvantaged with
regard to their citizenship rights due to economic status. If, as Chapter Two posited, citizenship is based on economic productivity and market participation, then those who live at the economic margins may find difficulty in achieving access to full citizenship status. In addition, given the influence of neoliberalism on citizenship today, examining poverty yields pertinent information regarding the connection between citizenship rights and economic standing. By focusing on antipoverty activism, I hope to localize a discussion of citizenship exclusivity for low/no income individuals at the grassroots level.

The chapter first begins with an overview of the main components of social activism and its relevancy as a tool for creating social change. The chapter then moves to focusing specifically on the social activism of low/no income citizens. Here, I provide a brief historical overview of the main components of poverty activism in the United States across the past 20th century, and also explore the emergence of a renewed economic movement. Within this section, I also explore how poverty is constructed within American society and also highlight the past activism of low-income women to demonstrate the ability of marginalized individuals to collectively organize on issues of poverty.

The chapter ends by reintroducing two activist agencies used as case studies: Women Uprising and Families Helping Families. These two groups center their missions on issues of poverty and engage in social activism at the local, state, and national levels. I argue that using the groups as case studies will help reveal the potential of focusing on social activism to help develop more inclusionary forms of citizenship rights for marginalized populations.
Why Social Activism

How do the problems facing low/no income individuals garnish attention and solutions within public spaces? Is it possible for everyday citizens to act in their own best interests outside formal politics or is sustainable change inevitably connected to the political sphere? One method through which citizens can begin to answer the aforementioned questions is social activism. Social activism provides a space through which individuals can collectively organize, develop agendas, voice issues of concern, and seek to create solutions and changes that can be implemented at the local, state, and/or national levels. At its core, social activism allows opportunities for individuals to act collectively to make social change. As Howe (1998) explains, marginalized individuals often turn to collective action to help achieve social change since such action “builds networks and creates a web of solidarity” (p. 239). By acting collectively, marginalized individuals “reject [neoliberal] competitive individualism” and place “emphasis instead on maintaining viable networks of relationships” (p. 239). These networks work to help sustain activists’ efforts and often fuels marginalized individuals’ desire for social change.

In addition, social activism allows individuals opportunities to challenge state politics and work with state officials in both formal and informal ways, such as lobbying or street protesting. The state and political economy are often influential in shaping the discourse of social activism and the material foundations on which individuals become activists. As Fisher and Shragge (2007) explain, “the relationship between the national political economy and community organizing is not a one-way street.” (p. 199).
Individuals who engage in social activism must view the construction of social change as a process connected to state and economic entities.

Social activism, the outward process of deliberate action aimed at achieving a social justice goal(s), centers on the development of social change. My understanding of social activism parallels the definition of community organizing, which social movement scholar Marion Orr (2007) describes as the “process that engages people, organizations, and communities towards the goals of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of life, and social justice” (p. 2). In addition, my approach to social activism combines the elements of what Fisher and Shragge (2007) describe as both social action and community development. Social activism connects individuals and seeks to push a social change agenda. A key component to social activism is opposition to some ideal, structure, or group. In addition, social activism often seeks to centralize the idea of “building community” across issues or populations. As Todd Shaw (2009) argues, activism often provides the means through which citizens can “confront maldistributions of power” by organizing across communities of identity groups (p. 15). A central component, thus, of social activism is the challenging of

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18 There are examples of social activism that do not centralize issues of social justice and change. Many groups may seek to organize individuals, organizations, and communities in pursuit of a common goal, but the crux of that goal may not reside on challenging power imbalances or questioning institutional structures. As this project hinges on examining how marginalized groups can challenge citizenship exclusions through their community work, it is important to maintain some sense of social justice within a definition of social activism.

19 For Fisher and Shragge (2007), social action and community development differ in approach and intent. They describe social action as constructing demands on the public and private sectors towards social change and mobilizing individuals to “pressure government or private bodies.” For them, social action focuses on the use of conflict as a means to an end. On the other hand, community development focuses more on “a shared interest in society,” and involves bringing individuals together “to a common process that contributes to the well-being of the community as a whole” (p. 195). I view social activism as consisting of both social action and community development and thus focus on incorporating both elements into this project.
specific power imbalances, whether the challenge relates to power over a specific group, power over a specific issue, or power over a specific community. Issues such as identity politics and political accountability also intersect when defining social activism.

Drawing on these accounts, social activism appears to encompass three main actions: challenging power imbalances, forming a collective identity, and developing a political consciousness. In what follows, I unpack each of these components and look at both the critiques for and against each action.

*Power Imbalances*

A central component of social activism is the challenging of power imbalances related to domination over a specific group, issue, or community. Traditionally, examples of grassroots activism emerges as a result of a power imbalance; for instance, an individual or group of individuals will notice a real or perceived power discrepancy and begin to tell other individuals about the issue. Individuals begin to act, then, through various ways in order to correct the power imbalance. A central idea to challenging power imbalances is the need to create or maintain an equal and just democratic structure. A true democratic society, as Cruikshank (1999) for instance explains, is one in which individuals have an equal representation and ability to voice their concerns and opinions. There are few relationships in which one person is marginalized or stifled and oftentimes individuals work to maintain equal power dynamics across groups. A central goal of social activism is to create equal relationships between groups often marginalized and groups often in power. The feminist movement, civil rights movement, and disability rights movement are just a few examples of activist organizing that centered the goal of a
true democratic society for all groups of individuals regardless of gender, race and ability.\textsuperscript{20}

Working towards equal power relationships and a true democratic society requires more than merely challenging power imbalances. In his book on black activist organizing around housing justice issues, Todd Shaw (2009) explains that a true democracy holds government officials accountable, but also holds grassroots activist \textit{themselves} accountable to issues such as gender, race, class, and other identity categories. Shaw uses the example of housing activism to demonstrate government and activist accountability. In his book, activists worked during the 60s and 70s to establish fair housing for low/no income individuals across racial lines. The individuals working towards equitable housing laws held government officials accountable for the lack of funding to housing development, shortage of attention given to low-income residents, and overall lack of recognition of unjust housing policies. Yet, more importantly, housing activists held

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{20} Though each movement – the feminist, civil rights, and disability rights – aimed to provide space for marginalized groups to challenge power dynamics, oftentimes each movement experienced its own power struggle. For instance, feminist authors (Gluck 1998, Hill Collins 2000; Hull et al 1982, Sandoval 1992) discuss the various ways in which the mainstream feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s often ignored issues related to racial, class, and sexual difference. As Gluck (1998) explains, many women of color and low/no income women, “who live the intersection of race, gender, and class… resented what they perceived as ‘the’ women’s movement’s single-minded focus on gender” (p. 51). Groups such as the Combahee River Collective were pivotal to challenging some race-based power differences within early feminist activism and in solidifying discussions of power imbalances for black women (in Hull et al., 1982). Only after the voices and experiences of women of color and low/no income women were recognized did the feminist movement alter its focus on the universal woman to an idea of multiple feminisms. The recognition of multiple feminisms was key to challenging power differences among women within feminist activism; it was also necessary to the longevity of the movement and the awareness of women of color’s specific experiences of key feminist issues, such as reproductive justice (Silliman et al., 2004). Similarly, the civil rights movement reportedly ignored issues of gender, and those with mental health issues find it difficult to voice their needs in a disability movement often focused on physical ability. While each movement succeeds at challenging power dynamics in the name of specific groups, they also each struggle with their own internal power dynamics.
\end{quote}
each other accountable by reminding organizers and supporters that housing affects individuals across race, gender, and class barriers. By doing so, organizers attempted to level power across individuals rather than placing significance in one group or one identity category.

A popular means through which individuals disrupt power relationships is through the use of protest. Protests indicate a “mode of political action oriented toward objection to one or more policies or conditions, characterized by showmanship or display of an unconventional nature” (Lipsky, 1968, p. 1145). For many, protests mark an accessible means of counteracting power imbalances and demonstrating dissatisfaction with power relationships within a specific institution or arena. Typically, the group engaging in the protest is considered powerless and the subject group of the protest is considered as having the desired power. Protests emerge when power imbalances are realized and when “momentous changes in the institutional order” occur (Piven & Cloward, 1977, p. 36). Social movement authors are cautious to argue that protests work for all marginalized groups in every activist movement. As Piven (2006) explains:

. . . the capacity to disrupt ongoing economic, social, or political processes on which power rests is widely distributed and increasingly so as societies become more complexly specialized . . . but the ability to mobilize and deploy contributions to social cooperation in actual power contests varies widely and depends on specific and concrete historical circumstance. (p. 26)

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21 I describe protests as accessible in that protests take on many forms and allow for multiple individuals to engage in oppositional activities. For instance, a protest can be as simple as refusal to purchase goods from a specific store or as large as marching down streets of urban centers. In addition, protests can focus on multiple issues simultaneously, which allows for greater participation (Acklesberg, 2010)
While the contexts in which protests and protests movements may develop vary according to history and social contexts, the ability to use protest as a tool for critiquing power imbalances remains strong.

*Collective Identity*

A second component of social activism centers on the development of a collective identity across individuals and groups. Organizations and groups involved in social activism often seek to construct a common identity that works to fuse the interests and issues most pertinent to the individual members of the group. Verta Taylor (2000) states that a collective identity is understood as the “shared definition of a group that derives from its members’ common interest and solidarity” (p. 222). Operating with a collective identity helps groups work within a community or state to push for the interests of the group as a whole. For some organizers, collective identity-making is central to the sustainability of an organization or movement; without it, a group can appear too divided to make concrete change.

Developing a collective identity is not equivalent to constructing homogeneity amongst group members; rather, a collective identity relates more to the process of bonding that brings together a variety of individuals. For instance, in Shaw’s (2009) book on black activism, he notes that often times, the struggle for housing justice was multiracial and multi-classed. The movement included various groups whose organizational goal was housing justice for all individuals regardless of gender, race, or class. The collective identity of the housing organizers was that of “housing advocate” – the main issue was not one of race or class but rather one of affordable housing for all individuals.
Despite its advantages, certain scholars find fault with the concept of collective identity formation. Some argue that a collective identity essentializes identities or unintentionally diminishes one identity and exaggerates another (Taylor, 2000). Examples of negative collective identity-making are visible within the history of the women’s movement during the 1960s and 70s. While the category of “woman” was emphasized, other categories such as race, sexuality, and class were not. As a result, women of color, lesbians, and lower-class women often felt excluded from the larger movement. While many went on to form their own collective groups that emphasized other identity categories, some women attempted to work with the larger movement and create a more unified approach to feminism that was cognizant of the differences among women. Yet, despite flaws relating to essentialism and identity ranking, collectively identity formation also presents the opportunity for solidarity. As Mario Diani (1992) explains, activists who possess a collective identity share “ideas and beliefs which allow them to frame … issues into a broader and more meaningful perspective, [and a] solidarity and sense of belongingness” (p. 111). Many feminist organizations have attempted to incorporate a sense of difference within their collectives, resulting in organizations that mobilize in the name of “women” but that do so with the recognition that experiences of gender vary across other identity categories.

Collective identity formation also presents opportunities for classifying identities or ranking oppressions. In other words, by forming a collective identity, individuals are inclined to place identities into a hierarchical system where one identity takes precedence over another. For example, in her text on New Left activism in Los Angeles, Laura Pulido (2006) discusses the idea of race and class hierarchies, defining racial hierarchy as
the “specific configuration of power relations in a given place and time based on racial ideology” (p. 25). According to Pulido, what is significant in discussing class and race hierarchies is the idea that while they both intersect, they are often still separated. In her study, while workers of color often experience lower wages than their white counterparts, for example, specific racial groups remain segregated. For Pulido and other social movement scholars, the hierarchies prove a double bind. While weighing one identity over the other provided a stronger sense of collectivity within specific groups, it also isolated those very groups from forming connections to other groups.

One way to avoid the essentialism is to adopt a theory of intersectionality into the movement’s collective identity formation. Many involved in collective organizing realize the necessity of discussing how various identity issues, such as gender, class, and race, intersect with each other in specific ways. For instance, one cannot talk about poverty without also talking about the inherent ways in which women have been denied access to the public sphere and relegated to the private, thereby limiting the historical scope of their economic productivity. Within social activism, incorporating a theory of intersectionality into the collective identity process may help alleviate some of the dividing aspects of developing a group identity. As Hill-Collins (2000) argues, “if power exists across intersections, then resistance must also” (p. 203). Movements aiming to create sustainable social change can adopt an intersectional identity that helps frame social needs as diverse.

Take for example some of the organizations women of color activists have developed related to reproductive justice. Women of color have long emphasized the need for awareness of race and class issues in the fight for gender-based issues such as
reproductive rights and workers’ rights. Jael Silliman, Marlene Fried, Loretta Ross, and Elena Gutierrez (2004) explain that groups dedicated to issues of race, class, and reproductive rights are “redefining reproductive rights in their communities” and “organizing along lines of racial and ethnic identity” in order to promote an understanding of the connections between reproduction and race (p. 4). Organizations such as the National Black Women’s Health Project (NBWHP) and the National Latina Health Organization (NLHO) broadened the scope of reproductive rights for women and encouraged white women to acknowledge their role in perpetuating negative social constructions of women of color’s bodies. As the authors discuss, while white women prioritized issues such as birth control and legal abortions, black women centered on issues such as sterilization abuse (p. 55). Similarly, Dorothy Roberts (1997) claims that black women’s voices challenged policies and programs that promoted forced sterilization, calling attention to the racist and classist ideologies motivating the efforts of groups headed by upper/middle class white women such as Children Requiring a Caring Kommunity (CRACK) (p. 168). Women of color activists, thus, approached reproductive rights with an intersectional ideology and challenged the norms surrounding reproductive rights for women on both an organizational and public policy level. In doing so, they created a collective identity of women concerned for reproductive justice, but were able to maintain emphasis on a variety of ways in which other identity categories influenced their activism.

Even when movements attempt to incorporate a theory of intersectionality into their collective identity formation, they run the risk of essentialism. As Gluck (1998) explains, attempting to create a racially aware version of the feminist movement
“promotes the same kind of oversimplified, unitary view of feminist that the conventional three- or four-fold typology of the white women’s movement does (p. 53). She continues by stating that regardless of the level of intersectionality of identities within a movement, the ‘actions and programs’ of a movement still respond to the immediate need of the main collective identity (i.e.: the feminist movement continues to prioritize women’s needs) (p. 53). Thus, while adopting an intersectional framework presents one of the best ways to avoid essentialism when creating collective identities, activists should remain cognizant of the various ways in which power dynamics exist across intersectional frameworks as well.

The formation of collective identities works to help join individuals around a specific issue and develop a sense of solidarity. Yet, in relation to social activism, one has to question how the formation of a collective identity connects to challenging group oppression and marginalization. Individuals may form collective identities based on their perceived or real similarities and shared ideas, and may use that collective identity to push a specific issues, such as the NBWHP or NLHO as explained by Silliman and colleagues. Yet, how do some groups deem their collective identity as political or oppositional? Judith Mansbridge (2001) posits that specific groups form collective identities around their perceived subordinate identities in an attempt to “identify injustices done to their group” and to reclaim their identity in a positive light (p. 1). These groups, which Mansbridge dubs “liberation groups” seek to end their own subordination by rallying around their collective identity as oppressed. Thus, individuals form a collective identity for the specific purpose of challenging power imbalance and
oppression. The formation of this oppositional identity directly connects with the final key element of social activism – the development of a political consciousness.

**Politization**

A third central component of social activism is the development of a political consciousness. Individuals who are participants in social activism often experience what theorists call “politicization” – or the process of becoming politically aware (Pulido, 2006, p. 61). Becoming politically aware means more than just having a cognizance of political and social issues. Developing a political consciousness also includes the process of understanding the ways the political spectrum inherently impacts one’s daily existence. For instance, many feminists decree the phrase “the personal is political,” to mean that issues once thought private – such as reproductive rights, family planning, domestic violence – actually have political implications and can be resolved or controlled, for good or bad, through the political sphere. In many ways, experiencing politicization means recognizing the fact that very few issues within society exist outside the scope of political influence or attention. Thus, for someone who is involved in social activism to become politically aware means that the issues pushed by activism are themselves political issues.

The process of becoming politically aware also correlates with the notion of “empowerment.” While feminists have challenged the concept of empowerment (see Cruikshank 1999²²), examining the concept is still necessary when looking critically at

²² Cruikshank (1999) writes extensively about the ways in which a logic of empowerment is detrimental to those for which empowerment is reserved. In other words, for Cruikshank, political structures such as public policies support a sense of empowerment for marginalized populations while further oppressing those at the margins. She equates empowerment to her theory on technologies of citizenship and as she states, “understood as a means of combating exclusion and powerlessness, relations of empowerment are, in fact, akin to relations of government that both constitute and fundamentally transform the subject’s capacity to act” (p.
social activism as a process. I defer to Morgan and Bookman’s (1988) definition of empowerment as “a spectrum of political activity ranging from acts of individual resistance to mass political mobilizations that challenge the basic power relations in our society” (p. 4). The process of becoming empowered starts with the recognition of powerlessness and the recognition of oppressive “systemic forces” (4). In other words, empowerment begins with politicization. In addition to recognizing power relationships, empowerment also involves regaining and maintaining control over the self (Ristock & Pennell 1996, p. 1). For individuals who exist at the margins of society, empowerment can act as a powerful tool for mobilizing within local communities and raising awareness and support around a specific issue. Politicization and empowerment are individually-based concepts, but the community can collectively help individuals become empowered through social activism.

Possessing a political consciousness is critical to understanding the means through which citizenship exists as an exclusionary entity. As Martha Acklesberg (1988) explains, people’s perception of their position within society is directly connected to their status within social and political structures and their ability to be politically involved and effective (p. 298). In addition, many activists who become politicized are more apt to understand the necessity of expanding citizenship rights outside the scope of the civil and political realm. As Nancy Naples (1998b) states, the community organizers she interviewed were aware that “social policy” and social activism “can serve as a vehicle for expanding citizenship in concrete ways that go beyond individual practices like voting

71). For her, a discourse of empowerment actually shapes and governs the ways in which individuals’ act, all in the name of challenging exclusions.
or paying taxes” (p. 3). For Naples’s subjects, citizenship is achievable within the community and should be beneficial for the whole of the community, not merely the individual. In a sense, Naples’s subjects are echoing the components of inclusionary citizenship as outlined in the previous chapter.

In addition to forming a political consciousness, social activists often develop an oppositional consciousness. Similar to development of a political consciousness, an oppositional consciousness focuses on discovering connections across public and private realms and empowering individuals to challenge their own sense of powerlessness and oppression. However, a key difference hinges on the intent of oppositional consciousness: “to undermine, reform, or overthrow a system of human domination” (Mansbridge, 2001, p. 5). Also, the development of an oppositional consciousness requires the construction of collective identity making so as to help individuals “identify injustices… oppose those injustices, and see [the group] as having a shared interest in ending or diminishing those injustice” (5). Thus, the process of politicization and collective identity formation are central to the development of an oppositional lens aimed at empowering individuals to directly confront injustices. An oppositional consciousness, then, expands on the notion of politicized identities by specifically focusing on the destruction of systems of oppression that keep certain groups subordinate.

This first section explored how social activism works to provide space and opportunities for individuals to collectively organize, obtain a politicized identity, and become empowered. The following section will investigate the means through which social activism connects to the plight of a specific group of disadvantaged citizens: “the
poor”. The section explores the importance of poverty-based social activism for economically marginalized citizens, the central arguments within such activism, and the reasons why giving attention to antipoverty activism is critical to the development of non-exclusive models of citizenship.

The section begins by giving a brief background on the problematization of poverty issues. I then move to exploring the development of poverty activism: what are the main arguments in poverty activism and who are the main actors involved? In this section, I highlight both historical and current examples of poverty activism in an effort to understand what main messages underline social activism around poverty. I end this section by re-introducing the two case study organizations and describing their mission and framework with respect to antipoverty activism.

**Economic Injustice and Social Change**

Examples of antipoverty activism have varied from housing protests of the 1960s to union strikes of the 1940s to recent uprisings against welfare reform in the 1990s. While antipoverty activism does not necessarily exclude the involvement of middle-upper class individuals, historical and contemporary examples of poverty activism demonstrate the centrality of impoverished citizens’ voices and the importance of a “by the people, for the people” mentality. A critical theme of antipoverty activism centers on encouraging the voices and agency of those economically marginalized. It is important first to discuss the various ways in which poverty has been shaped and defined within the United States, as this history helps develop the foundation for antipoverty activism.
The War on the Poor

The policies created during the War on Poverty in the 1960s and 1970s helped develop a less-than-sympathetic public opinion of poverty within the U.S that continues to have relevance in the lives of low/no income individuals and the creation of new public policy today. Political and social attention began focusing on issues of poverty during the Depression Era with policies such as Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) that offered social services and monetary support for low/no income individuals. It was not until the Kennedy administration, however, that wide-scale attention arose to alleviating poverty. It is during the 1960s that poverty becomes not only a “measurable” issue, but also a lifestyle for those living in economically challenging situations.23

What the War on Poverty attempted to achieve was a solution to poverty, not merely the creation of federally funded programs to aid the impoverished (Isserman & Kazin, 2008, p. 112). The War on Poverty centered on two main approaches to alleviating poverty for Americans: implementing work initiatives and encouraging employment, and equal access to welfare rights and government assistance. The goal of the two approaches was to put low/no income people in stable jobs – a goal solidified in

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23 Prior to the 60s, the U.S. lacked a formal measurement tool for gauging poverty rates. In 1963, government worker Mollie Orshansky developed an income-based measurement tool based on the Department of Agriculture’s report that one-third of a family’s after-tax income goes towards food costs. According to Orshansky, a family was considered “poor” if their after-tax income “was less than three times what it costs for such a family to eat at a minimally adequate nutritional level” (Neubeck, 2008, p. 117). Today, while the poverty level is calculated based on before-taxes income, it remains based on Orshansky’s formula. In addition, the publishing of Michael Harrington’s book *The Other America* (1962) triggers the birth of political and social attention to low/no income communities. As Neubeck explains, many believe that Harrington’s book sparked the beginning of the War on Poverty (p. 116) and credit the development of the “culture of poverty” ideology to Harrington. It is during this period that individuals living in poverty began to develop a public persona.
policy by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which allowed for government funding to be relegated to poor communities to help fund work-related programs.

The main focus of the War on Poverty, thus, became one of helping low/no income individuals find employment so as to pull themselves out of lower-economic locations. The initiative was described as a “hand up, not a hand out” (Isserman & Kazin, 2008, p. 114). In this way, the war was not seen as merely an expansion of welfare programs, but more of an opportunity for the government to help those in poverty help themselves rather than help them increase/perpetuate their dependence. Low/no income individuals would be able to attend job-training programs which in turn would help them achieve employment. For President Johnson, only those in dire circumstances, such as widows and disabled individuals, should take advantage of welfare programs such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) (Isserman & Kazin, 2008, p.114). The creation of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) allowed for the program to become a staple feature of the Johnson administration. OEO oversaw the creation of job training programs, Job Corps, and education programs within impoverished communities across the United States. What is significant about President Johnson’s initiative is that it supported the work of community action agencies by funding their offices and initiatives (Isserman & Kazin, 2008, p. 115). Through such

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24 Previous known as ADC, AFDC is the result of welfare reform of the 1960s that refocused energies and emphasis on pulling families out of poverty. The changes from ADC to AFDC reflect the rising backlash against welfare recipients, the growing racialization of the welfare pool, and the increasing political interest in controlling the interest of low/no income individuals. The reform also is a precursor to welfare reform of 1996, which significantly altered the welfare system to reflect the growing influence of American neoliberalism.
funding, it appeared as though the government wanted low/no income individuals to help themselves to alleviating poverty.

The War on Poverty started to end just as the Reagan presidential era began. The lack of advancement of low/no individuals since the start of President Johnson’s efforts lead to the rebirth of the “culture of poverty” image, where impoverished individuals were “enmeshed in an inter-generationally [reproductive] quagmire of dysfunctional values and behaviors” which kept them impoverished (Goode, 2002, p. 76). Under the Reagan administration, low/no income individuals became the scapegoats for the ills of society; poverty was equivalent to “personal irresponsibility” and laziness. Low/no income individuals were viewed as impoverished because of their perpetual dependency on welfare and their lack of motivation to contribute to the labor force.

The approach to poverty from the 1970s to the early 1990s was also influenced by racialized ideologies about people of color in low/no income communities. Scholars (Amott, 1990; Bensonsmith, 2005; Hancock, 2004; Mink, 1990; Nadasen, 2005; Nuebeck & Cazenave, 2001) describe the growth of media attention to low/no income minority communities and the influence such media portrayals had on public and political opinions of minority communities. Nadasen (2005) explains that rising interest in “inner-city black poverty” promoted an image of poverty as “pathological” (p. 14). Women of color were blamed for their own economic plights and viewed as unsympathetic, versus their white low/no income counterparts whose poverty was viewed as based on structural changes rather than personal behaviors (Nadasen, 2005). In addition, papers such as the Moynihan Report of 1965 influenced state responses to poverty within minority neighborhoods, basing policies and programs around images of the dysfunctional “black
matriarch” (Bensonsmith, 2005, p. 247). As Neubeck and Cazenave (2001) claim, the effects of the Moynihan Report and other similar media projects was the “racially re-gendering” of the culture of poverty mentality, which significantly influenced how low/no income people of color were viewed by state entities. As a result of these racially-charged arguments, two groups of low/no income individuals developed: those deserving (the white, working class) and those undeserving (the racialized underclass) (Bensonsmith, 2005, p. 258).

As explained in Chapter Two, the dawn of neoliberalism spanned several decades from the end of the Cold War era to the start of the Clinton administration. Neoliberalism’s influence over the state is evident in the changes made to welfare policies, particularly changes passed during the Clinton era with the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). PRWORA introduced many changes to welfare policies, but one of the primary goals of welfare reform was the push of paid labor as the solution for poverty. As with the War on Poverty, new policies under PRWORA influenced social attitudes towards individuals living in poverty. The image of the “welfare queen” continued into the late 20th century, resulting in a continued attitudinal marginalization of poor individuals. In addition, as Neubeck (2006) explains, changes to welfare policies under PRWORA demonstrate a “new paternalism” by treating impoverished individuals, specifically women, with disdain while simultaneously trying to control their behaviors and actions (p. 31).

25 Some of the additional changes made under PRWORA are: the implementation of a 5 year maximum time limit; a child-cap regulation that limits the amount of funding families can obtain for children born while receiving welfare benefits; required community service hours; and limitations on benefit options for immigrant families.
Just as citizenship under neoliberalism became privatized, so have poverty and economic rights. As Catherine Kingfisher (2002a) explains, the right to economic stability and economic citizenship more generally are “no longer the property of the individual but one of firms and markets” (p. 31). Like citizenship rights, poverty is seen as a personal issue and individuals living within poverty are expected to rise out of their economic circumstances through work and personal determination, rather than reliance on social services or government programs. As Neubeck (2006) explains, neoliberalism fosters the idea that “poverty is best addressed by allowing the free-markets to work at job and income creation and by getting government assistance programs out of the picture” (p. 34). Under neoliberalism, individuals should rely on businesses and corporate opportunities rather than government aid. Further, individuals who depend on welfare assistance programs, rather than on economic productivity within the market, are seen as deviant.

Many scholars find fault with viewing poverty as an individual issue. For instance, as Goode and Maskovsky (2001) explain, one of the more problematic aspects of the continued view of poverty as problematic is the idea that the “free market is the most efficient means for achieving economic growth and guaranteeing social welfare” (p. 7). Markets, not government, are the primary providers of assistance to low/no income individuals. Thinking of poverty as an individual issue helps create the dichotomy of “deserving” and “undeserving” poor individuals. Because poverty is so easily soluble through market participation, those who choose to become active in the market are seen as “deserving poor.” In contrast, those who do not seek aid through the work force are seen as undeserving. In other words, “the deserving poor are now those who embrace the
spirit of entrepreneurship, volunteerism, consumerism, and self-help,” while the undeserving are those who remain “dependent” on the state (Goode & Maskovsky, 2001, p. 8). Polarizing low/no income individuals only seeks to further marginalize them within the guise of the state and society, for now there is a class of the impoverished (the undeserving) who are stigmatized twice due to their economic situations.

Kingfisher (2001) aptly explains that the war on poverty has been replaced by a “war against the poor” (p. 279, emphasis added). If full citizenship is based on economic productivity, then one can argue that poor individuals may be seen as less than full citizens. Low/no income individuals, thus, are stuck between the requirements of citizenship (economic productivity) and the reality of the poverty which makes it difficult to meet citizenship’s requirements. What often emerges from feelings of injustice is a need to create social change. Impoverished citizens have long mobilized to call attention to the unfair state policies that influence their lives and the means through which they lack social and economic citizenship rights. Yet, what are the main arguments being created and how have those living in poverty use social activism to help push their cause for economic rights? The following is a brief glimpse into the underlying issues central to poverty activism and the various examples of how low/no income individuals have mobilized for change.

*Antipoverty Activism*

Through participation in social movements, massive protest demonstrations, and public policy advocacy, low/no income citizens actively work to challenge political and

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26 Susan Hyatt (2001) claims that the “undeserving” ideology has been replaced by a “newer representation of the poor as potentially good workers who have simply been deprived of the opportunity to participate in society” (p. 226).
social authorities and push for the establishment of economic justice. While poverty activism specifically does not hold as significant a place in social movement literature as the civil rights or women’s movements, the antipoverty struggle has a deep history.

**Unemployed Workers Movements**

Early examples of poverty activism in the 20th century begin with the unemployed protests during the late 1920s and early 1930s. During the early stages of the Great Depression, unemployed American laborers began to protest the lack of jobs and high costs of food, housing, etc. (Piven & Cloward, 1977, p. 43). Slogans such as “Bread or Blood” represented the struggle of the unemployed who took to the streets in masses (p. 44). Unemployed individuals started sharing their stories of struggle with others and collectively organized against employers, housing authorities, and government officials. A central component of these early protests was the development of various small collective organizations, each pushing for unemployment insurance and financial relief for unemployed workers (p. 74). The establishment of Unemployment Councils, for instance, aided in the formation of a collective identity for the unemployed, as well as the development of a political face for low/no income individuals. While communist and socialist parties formed labor groups prior to the construction of the unemployed workers movement, it was the “onset of the Great Depression” that encouraged low/no income individuals to “vent grievances, understand local and national politics, and … meet immediate needs of food, shelter and clothing (Valocchi, 1990, p. 194). According to Valocchi, the sheer amount of organizations available to the poor motivated individuals to collectively organize and rally for unemployed workers’ rights (p. 194).
Lower-class women played meaningful roles during the unemployment strikes of the 1930s, as demonstrated by the development of the International ladies Garment Workers Union and the recruitment of women to the Congress of Industrial Organization (Abramovitz, 2001, p. 120). For the women activists, central issues were not just unemployment but also respectful treatment in employment and equal wages for equal work. Their work was also pivotal to the larger unemployed workers movement, as, according to Abramovitz, black homemakers organized a “‘Don’t Buy Where you Can’t Work’ boycotts using their role as consumers to demand jobs for unemployed black men and women” (p. 122). While the unemployed workers movement fizzled with the dawn of World War II, it left a mark on the ability of low/no income individuals to mobilize and force their voices to be heard.

Scholars offer several explanations as to the decline in the unemployed workers movement. For some (Valocchi, 1990), the introduction of New Deal policies lulled the need for protests and uprisings. As Schlesinger (1958) explains, the “idolatry of Roosevelt had taken the spirit out of the unemployed movement” (as cited in Valocchi, 1990, p. 197). Thus, the willingness of the government to make changes for the unemployed decreased the motivating factors behind unemployed workers’ protests. For other scholars, internal struggles between organizing leaders caused a breach in the movement. Organizations needed to formally organize in order to generate concrete victories and maintain movement motivation (Piven & Cloward, 1997, p. 77). However, internal organizational struggle and disagreements between leaders caused bureaucratization struggles. In short, the introduction of a more sympathetic government
body, combined with the overall difficulties of organizing a mass social movement, led to the demise in the first large-scale poor people’s movement within the United States.

**National Welfare Rights Movement**

A wider-known example of poverty organizing is the National Welfare Rights Movement of the 1960s and 70s. Premilla Nadasen (2005) explains that the welfare rights movement was “one of the most significant movements of the 1960s” because it proved that even the most subordinate individuals can find a place within the political arena and have their cause be recognized and addressed” (p. xiv). As she explains, welfare policy of the 1960s reflected liberal social policies and that “rising expectations for poor people and trying circumstances for welfare recipients” gave activists a motivation to organize (p. 15). The amount of low/no income Americans who received benefits increased dramatically during the 1960s, and as a result, the need for low/no income individuals to feel present within the political and social arenas also increased. Welfare recipients wanted to break away from being “objects of scrutiny” and become legitimate political actors (p. 46). What the welfare rights movement accomplished, as Nadasen argues, was to challenge that social view and argue that welfare recipients deserve fair social policies that help stabilize them rather than perpetuate their poverty (p. 234-240).

The welfare rights movement was driven primarily by the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), which enlisted approximately 20,000 members during the movement’s height (Abramovitz, 2001, p. 124). The development of the NWRO comes during a time when economic issues emerged in the civil rights movement (Piven & Cloward, 1977, p. 276). At the heart of the movement was the push to politicize and
motivate low/no income individuals to make demands on the state and claim welfare rights to which they were entitled. As Piven and Cloward explain, when organizing the movement:

The main tactic should include large-scale “welfare rights” information campaigns; the enlisting of influential people in the slums and ghettos, especially clergymen, to exhort potential welfare recipients to seek the aid that was rightfully theirs; and the mobilization of marches and demonstrations to build indignation and militancy among the poor. (p. 284)

Thus, a main strategy was for the organization to be run “by and for poor people” with low/no income individuals taking center stage at the planning and execution of organizational strategies and demonstrations.

The movement constructed a variety of activities with which poor individuals could align themselves and make political demands. One campaign was to form and present individual grievances of mistreatment in welfare offices. This campaign gave families often ignored in the welfare process an opportunity to voice their concerns and demonstrate their ability to problem solve. A second campaign was to mass mobilize group grievances against the welfare program, social service agencies, and the overall attitudes towards the poor. In addition, another component of this campaign offered special grants to fund the purchase of resources to low/no income individuals, such as food, clothing, and shelter (Piven & Cloward, 1977, p. 301). As part of this campaign, individuals collectively organized to stage massive demonstrations and protests; such demonstrations mainly consisted of AFDC recipients and other movement supporters (p. 303).

The movement was innovative in attempting to put impoverished people’s voices at the center of the struggle. Yet, the Welfare Rights Movement was plagued with
problems stemming from organizational structure to power imbalances amongst leaders, to a lack of media attention for welfare issues. For example, according to Piven and Cloward, who themselves were active in the development of the NWRO, the campaigns for individual grievances proved problematic in that individuals rarely maintained activity in the organization to fulfill the grievance process and it was difficult to make individual grievances a collaborative project. In addition, the documentation and presentation of grievances used much of the organization’s staff and resources (p. 300). Another fraction in the movement was amongst leaders; by the end of the 1960s, the movement morphed into an advocacy initiative, lobbying “on behalf of a constituency that was organized in name only” (Piven & Cloward, 1977, p. 317). The change from a mobilizing to a lobbying organization ultimately hindered the organization, for low/no income individuals were no longer the central agents at work.

Despite its faults, the National Welfare Rights Movement provided a lasting reminder of the potential for low/no income individuals to collectively organize and become political active within their local and national communities. Although the movement’s goal of “by the poor / for the poor” ultimately contributed to its demise, the idea of centering the voices of the poor is important to forming a cohesive poor people’s movement. As Nadasen (2005) explains, by publicly acknowledging their identity as “poor,” activists “challenged the welfare status quo and helped re-characterize the public perception of welfare” (p. 76). While welfare policies historically were created without much input from the populations they affect, the welfare rights movement demonstrated the necessity of including low/no income citizens’ voices in the creation and implementation of poverty policies.
Economic Human Rights Movement

Starting in the 1990s, a new version of an antipoverty movement emerged focused on the establishment of economic human rights for all individuals through the American adoption of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights. Specifically, the movement seeks to highlight the plight of low/no income individuals and argue that those living in poverty are not only limited financially, but also limited with regards to social and political rights. Activists within this movement frame poverty within a human rights framework. Like liberal citizenship, poverty within the United States has often been described as an individual problem, rather than a societal problem. Yet, centering poverty within a human rights framework diverts attention away from blaming the individual and more on blaming the society and culture in which that individual exists.

Arguing that poverty is a human rights issue connects poverty directly to equal citizenship. Human rights, like social citizenship rights, are seen as the basic tenants deserved of all individuals, such as affordable housing, the availability of clean water and nutritious food, and access to education. Conceptually, human rights are available for every person; therefore, if these rights are denied, than those individuals denied such rights are seen as less than fully citizen. Denied individuals cannot participate equally in the political and civil realms because of their lack of human rights. As Margot Young (2007) explains, social citizenship “recognizes that one of the bases of community is the recognition and fulfillment of basic human needs” (p. 6). In an era of neoliberal influences, access to and maintenance of human rights, like citizenship rights, has become marketized. Many public goods and services became privatized, creating difficulties for economically instable individuals to access services. In addition, as
discussed in Chapter Two, citizenship as a construct has become more consumer-market driven. The primary role of the citizen is as consumer, and by supporting the markets, one is fulfilling one’s civic duties. However, little attention is given to the position of individuals who are not financially able to exist as consumer citizens.

Although social activism on economic human rights is relatively recent, conceptualizing economic rights as basic human rights is not as new. During the creation of the New Deal, economic human rights was considered one of Roosevelt’s “four freedoms” and during his presidency, he pushed for the adoption of the Economic Bill of Rights (Neubeck, 2006, p. 5). While the U.S did not pass this second bill of rights, its basic tenants (i.e.: a right to food, housing, water, a descent home) were incorporated into the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Yet, the United States has yet to ratify the UN’s Declaration of Human Rights, and very little effort has been made to help ensure that economic human rights are established and maintained for American citizens. As Neubeck (2006) states, the failure of the American government to ratify the declaration “illustrates the second-class status the United States has generally accorded economic human rights in comparisons to its support (albeit uneven and selective) for civil and political rights” (p. 9).

A central focus for this new example of antipoverty activism is the adoption of economic human rights within the United States. Specifically, organizations active in the movement collectively mobilize and advocate for the national ratification of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights and primarily push for the adoption of Article 25, which states that:
Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care, and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (Center for the Study of Human Rights, 1994, p. 6)

A core principle of Article 25 is the recognition that all individuals, regardless of class, race, and gender, are entitled basic resources that contribute to a healthy and productive life. Yet, as Neubeck outlines, given the fact that the United States has yet to ratify the Declaration of Human Rights, in which Article 25 is written, overall attitudes towards human rights may not be sympathetic.

In addition to the lack of formal recognition of economic human rights, there remain other difficulties to adopting such a human rights framework. In her piece on neoliberalism and economic justice, Taunya Banks (2009) argues that despite the movement’s efforts, without drastically changing the ways in which America viewed human rights, poverty advocates will gain little ground. For Banks, the neoliberal notion of individualism and the “dislike of government-sponsored social legislation” must be challenged before any form of human rights are recognized within the United States (p. 166). Yet, individuals working within their own communities are the best able to start challenging such dominant ideologies. By starting locally, groups are able to highlight the power dynamics and “structural conditions” that create and maintain experiences of poverty (Naples, 1998a, p. 187).

**Antipoverty Activism Themes**

Across these various examples of poverty activism, several core components remain constant. The first is the notion that through creating and maintaining a collective
voice, sustainable economic and social changes can develop. The empowerment of low/no income individuals is of central importance to antipoverty activists. Educating such populations about power relationships within the state, and encouraging the development of a politicized consciousness, are central themes throughout antipoverty work. Yet, the idea of empowering low/no income individuals has come under scrutiny throughout the decades. For instance, with the privatization of poverty and citizenship, the message becomes one of individual rather than collective empowerment. As Maskovsky (2001) explains, neoliberalism shifted the plight of the low/no income individuals from a social issue to a personal problem, resulting in empowerment efforts being directed towards individuals rather than communities. Antipoverty activists are quick to counter this push by arguing that poverty is not necessarily an individual problem, given the various social issues that sustain poverty, such as lack of education, lack of proper housing, and lack of health insurance. In addition, the goal of antipoverty activism is not necessarily limited to empowering the impoverished, but also includes the goal of ending poverty (p. 480). While efforts should be available to help individuals with their personal situations, the broader goals of activist efforts should be the empowerment of the collective as a whole.

Another key component of antipoverty activism is the centrality placed on experiences of impoverished people themselves. As outlined, many organizations within the three movements promoted a “by and for poor people” ideology. Antipoverty activism is radical in the sense that those involved argue that the poor, not government officials or experts, are the individuals who understand poverty best. Promoting the development of agency for the low/no income individuals goes directly against the
neoliberal agenda that seeks to further marginalize such groups (Kingfisher, 2002c, p. 168). Further, antipoverty activists understand that as a construct, poverty does not act alone, but relies on historical social and political differences across institutions. Judith Goode (2002) explains that a majority of laws and policies related to poverty ignores “preexisting structural inequalities which negate the premise of individuals as equals” (p. 77). As discussed in Chapter Two, the image of the liberal citizen is based on an autonomous ideal where everyone is born on equal footing. However, as antipoverty activists and supporters express, individuals begin on different footing. For many, poverty is not a result of personal laziness, but rather a result of systemic inequality.

Thus, their impoverished circumstances reflect unjust social and political policies that foster the marginalization of specific individuals based on class.

The development of agency is key for low/no income individuals to obtain social and political equality. Lister (2003) explains that individuals who possess agency are capable of choice and self-development (p. 38). Yet, as policies around poverty demonstrate, low/no income individuals are rare offered choice in their public and private lives. The invasiveness of stereotypes against the impoverished and the increasing surveillance by neoliberal policies such as PRWORA remove the option of choice from low/no income individuals. What antipoverty activism seeks to highlight are the myriad ways in which political and social structures prevent the development of agency for those living at the economic margin.

A third and final core component is that women play a significant role when it comes to antipoverty activism and organizing poor citizens. As demonstrated in the protests of the early unemployed workers to the work of the National Welfare Rights
Movement, to the budding of a new economic human rights campaign, women have long been central agents in the struggle against poverty within the United States. Women are key as both central agents of change within antipoverty activism as well as central victims of economic oppression. Many who write on women’s activism discuss the various ways in which issues of class and economics often directly correlates with many of the “gendered” issues on which women focus, such as reproductive rights, maternity leave, workplace discrimination acts, etc. The argument that poverty is a gendered phenomenon connects with the notion of “feminization of poverty”, whereby poverty affects more women than men because of sexual divisions in the public and private realms.27 As Kingfisher (2002a) explains, those suffering in poverty are categorized as emotional, irrational, and needy – all deemed as feminine characteristics (p. 25). In the sense that women are not full citizens, those in poverty are also seen as powerless and less than fully citizen based on their economic status.

Yet, despite their significant gendered marginalization, as poverty activists, women have been able to alter state policies and create sustainable social change. As Nancy Naples (1991) explains, women’s community activism influenced the types of policies and programs emerging from the state; specifically, for her, women’s community work was “essential for the formation of the social welfare state” (p. 318). A central component of women’s activism has been to create programs that would help address the

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27 Diane Pearce (1990) describes the feminization of poverty as the explanation of the differences of women’s experiences of poverty from their male counterparts. She uses the term to summarize not only the higher numbers of women living in poverty individually, but also the disproportionate number of female-headed households living in poverty (p. 266). For Pearce, poverty targets women differently because of their responsibility for children and their experiences of discrimination in the labor force.
needs of the community, and as Mimi Abramovitz (2001) explains, during early 20th century, women “pressed the government to build” permanent programs that would help solve some of the economic situations facing women and communities at the time (p. 123).

My project seeks to fuse the three core messages of poverty activism together in order to examine connection between poverty activism and inclusionary citizenship development. My project focuses on the work of two antipoverty organizations that center the voices of low/no income individuals, seek to establish economic human rights, and possess strong women’s leadership throughout the organization. I conclude the chapter by exploring the work of these two organizations further. I first reintroduce the two organizations and then explain the significance of the two agencies as antipoverty organizations. I also describe how each group connects to the three core messages of antipoverty activism. The chapter concludes by outlining the remaining chapters of the project and a brief explanation of why heeding attention to the voices of antipoverty activists remains of critical importance in today’s neoliberal era.

**Case Studies – WU and FHF**

Given the activist emphasis on the ability of low/no income individuals to act and speak as social change agents against poverty, it is imperative the new research focus on highlighting the voices of low/no income individuals themselves. As Maskovsky (2001) states: “by studying and communicating poor people’s efforts to organize themselves into coherent, politically effective collectivities, we can work to ensure that poor people are integrally involved” in the reorientation of poverty research (p. 480). Thus, it is
necessary to center the opinions and input of those living in poverty when theorizing about the marginalization of low/no income individuals within the neoliberal state.

For the purposes of this project, I selected two women-led organizations focusing on economic rights for impoverished individuals. The first organization of the study is Women Uprising, (WU), located in Pickaway, Kentucky. Formed in 1996 by a group of low/no income women, WU developed out of the women’s concern and frustration over new welfare reform policies related to time limitations, lack of educational support, and overall treatment of welfare recipients. Over the past decade, however, WU moved from focusing on welfare reform to taking a broader approach to antipoverty activism, incorporating programs that advocate for a livable wage campaign and universalizing healthcare. According to its members, WU now labels itself as a “grassroots organization run by and for poor people” (WU website, 2007).

Poverty remains a key issue within the state of Kentucky, which is one of 16 states to have a poverty rate of 16% or higher (U.S. Census 2009). Specifically, Pickaway experiences high rates of poverty, with roughly 16% of the total population in Pickaway’s county living below the poverty line (U.S Census 2009). Further, Kentucky is one of five states to have estimated poverty rates of 17% or higher in 2009 (U.S. Census, 2009). While the state did experienced a significant drop in the number of households claiming welfare benefits after the passage of PWROWA, poverty figures within the state did not

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28 As explained in Chapter One, I gave both WU and FHF and their locations pseudonyms so as to help protect the anonymity of each organization and its participating members. Though their actions are legal, some of the attitudes expressed by interviewees remain highly contentious.

29 The other four states are Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, and West Virginia.
similarly decline.\textsuperscript{30} The state’s rising poverty figures, as well as Pickaway’s own dire economic outlook, create prime space for antipoverty activists to mobilize.

WU’s programs revolve around informing the community about poverty issues, specifically regarding how institutions such as the educational system and labor market perpetuate a cycle of poverty for the ‘poor’. Among some of their programs are: the Leadership School in which members learn public speaking and recruitment skills; the Dismantling Classism Workshops which are held at various organizations and corporations across Kentucky so as to educate community residents about issues of class; and the Revolutionary Reading Group, which helps group members strengthen their reading skills by discussing biographical texts about various revolutionary political leaders in a collective space. Other programs include public speak-outs at the capital in Frankfort, collaborating with other groups on a Livable Wage Campaign and working with the Affordable Housing Trust Fund in Pickaway to secure affordable housing for WU members.

The second organization, Families Helping Families (FHF), is located in Corners, Ohio. The organization was founded in 1996 under a different name and originally had a broader antipoverty focus on issues related to ending poverty within its home city. However, there were internal differences amongst members regarding the scope of the group’s mission and in 2003, the organization reformatted to become FHF. The FHF’s

\textsuperscript{30} According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (2011), there were approximately 80,000 families receiving welfare benefits in 1995, but only 30,000 in 2009. In contrast, poverty figures experienced a less decline, dropping from 132,500 families in poverty in 1995 to 119,000 in 2009 (www.cbpp.org, 2011). The discrepancy in numbers between the decline in poverty rates and the drop in welfare caseloads speaks to the influence of new welfare forms and neoliberal work-first programs for low/no income individuals.
formal mission statement is to help “educate, empower, and assist low income families and individuals in reaching self-sufficiency” (FHF flyer, 2010). FHF used to engage in direct service to poor clients in Corners, such as case management services. Yet, budget cuts have forced them out of an office space, thereby changing their mission from direct service to advocacy and education. One of the FHF’s main program, a weekly bread give-away, continues their direct service interest and allows them continued contact with the individuals for whom they advocate. In addition to the bread program, the FHF is heavily active in advocating for economic justice with other groups in the Corners area and frequently travels to the capital to rally and protest at the state house for issues such as kinship care for foster children, equitable wages, and affordable housing.

While Ohio has not experienced as severe poverty rates as Kentucky (approximately 15% of the population live at or below the poverty line), Corners has experienced some of the worst effects of the current recession (U.S. Census, 2009). A variety of factors have led to Corners economic decline, including the flight of key industries away from the city center and a growing city budget deficit that strains social services extended to low/no income individuals. Further, at the state level, 8 of Ohio’s major cities, including Corners, have 20% or more of the total population living below the poverty line (US Census, 2010). In contrast to Kentucky, Ohio has experienced an even more drastic shift in poverty and service figures since welfare reform, with a decline in welfare applicants in conjunction with an increase in families living in poverty.31

31 According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (2011), Ohio went from approximately 234,000 families on government assistance programs in 1995 to only 87,000 in 2009. In contrast, the number of families living in poverty rose slightly from 264,000 in 1995 to
need for activism related to poverty issues is great within Corners as well as the remainder of the state.

The passage of PRWORA in 1996 was critical to the mission and development of both agencies. While the national movement for welfare rights formally ended in the 1970s, low/no income individuals were still interested in the rights of welfare recipients to humane treatment by social services. As Abramovitz (2001) explains, welfare recipients formed “Up and Out of Poverty Now” campaigns that worked to mobilize low/no income individuals to demand fair treatment in local and state communities. In addition to a newfound interest in poverty activism, this new movement also centered gender at the heart of the issue, with poor women emerging as central leaders in the new fight for welfare rights. As antipoverty organizations, WU and FHF echo the work of long-standing welfare organizations such as Justice, Economic, Dignity, and Independence (JEDI) in Utah and the Women’s Economic Agenda Project (WEAP) in California.

WU and FHF align themselves with the larger national movement for the recognition of economic human rights, and both are members of a larger umbrella organization entitled Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign (PPEHRC). PPEHRC is a Minnesota-based initiative that collectively organizes smaller organizations across the country to help continue pushing for the adoption of economic human rights within the United States. As member organizations, WU and FHF include themselves in the larger national discussion of creating economic human rights for American citizens.

273,000 in 2009. Thus, the rise of impoverished families is not reflected in the number of TANF applicants.
WU and FHF work to project the national agenda back to their local communities thereby spreading the mission of the larger economic human rights movement to new populations. In addition, WU and FHF see themselves as continuing the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King’s “Poor People’s Movement” that was launched in the 1960s. Both agencies promote the ideology of forming a large-based poor people’s movement, as quoted by Dr. King.

WU and FHF demonstrate the need to centralize the voices of “the poor” in activist efforts. As two WU’s activists explain:

WU’s function is to take the people who are what I call on the front lines to poverty. The people who are the first hand experiences of what the poverty and the human rights violation are. And build community around them in order to organize to abolish poverty. Because they’re the ones who have that first-hand knowledge. (Alice. 2009)

WU represents people who have traditionally had no voice… groups like WIT create pressure. It’s… very easy to cut programs for the poor because the poor have no power. Unless the poor are beating at your door and bringing the press with them and making you look like a heartless son-of-a-bitch. (Sherry, 2009)

A striking feature of these new groups is the centralization of self-identification as “poor” individuals and the importance of the community over the individual. Such focus counters the increasing neoliberal focus on the individual and the belief that through individual hard work and economic contributions, one can escape poverty. WU and FHF members used the collective identity of “poor” to develop their oppositional consciousness by which they challenge the demonization of the impoverished individual and focus more on the ways in which communal organizing can help support individuals in economic turmoil.
WU and FHF incorporate a variety of different elements into their local, state, and national efforts. As a result, they exist as multifaceted organizations with advocacy, lobbying, and direct services as their foci. WU and FHF combine several of Smock’s (2004) organizational approaches in their work: the power-based model, the community-based model, the women’s centered model, and the transformative model. First, WU and FHF demonstrate the power-based philosophy to organizing, focusing on the belief that individuals within a community lack power to make substantial change. According to this approach, in order to obtain power for marginalized residents, organizers must engage in pressure tactics to influence political officials to “accede to community demands” (p. 18). WU and FHF also demonstrate the community-based model, which focuses on strengthening the community at large rather than implement changes from above. Collaborative partnerships and cross-organizational work are pivotal to the community-based model.

In addition, by centralizing women’s leadership and engaging in gender-central campaigns around the feminization of poverty, WU and FHF engage in the gender-centered model of organizing. Their work reflects the historical and contemporary centrality of women in poverty activism and is a reminder of the ability of low/no income women to rally for poor people’s agency. Lastly, WU and FHF demonstrate the transformative model of organizing, which assesses “the system itself as the core of the problem” (p. 29). By centering the lack of economic human rights in the United States, WU and FHF demonstrate the need to transform how individuals approach poverty rights.

32 Smock (2004) writes that there are five basic approaches to community organizing: the power-based philosophy, the community-based model, the civic model, the transformative model, and the women’s centered model.
in order to further their cause. By existing across these four organizational models, WU and FHF demonstrate the multiplicity of activism at hand in the newly developed “poor people’s” movement of the 21st century.

Both WU and FHF use an intersectional approach to their activism, especially in their formation of their collective group identity. WU and FHF centralize issues of class difference and economic-based marginalized, but their missions, programs, and members promote an understanding of the intersecting influence of gender, race, sexual, and national differences with respect to economic status. As gathered from observational data and interview responses, economic disparities are central to the mission of WU and FHF because they unite individuals from across multiple areas of difference; for WU and FHF, men and women of various race and ethnic backgrounds all can experience poverty and economic injustice based on class status. But, members articulate an understanding of the historical and contemporary ways in which multiple identity categories and difference support or challenge economic inequality; therefore their activism should be considered intersectional.

The groups differ in terms of their racial composition; while WU’s board has participation from African-Americans, Caucasians, and one Latino man, FHF’s board all identify as African-American. Yet, both organizations have a mixture of men and women’s participation, and both aim to tackle intersectional racial and gender issues within their larger class-centric focus. For instance, their community activities encourage discussions of intersectionality and allow members to explore the various ways in which their race or gendered identities may have influenced their class positions. In doing so, each group allows for a richer collective-identity formation process to occur: while they
seek to support and manage a collective identity as “poor” individuals, they invite to the table rich discussions of the various ways in which class oppression intersects with other marginalizing factors.³³ It is clear that while class remains the central organizing focus of both organizations, and their programs develop within a framework of economic inequalities, both WU and FHF possess an underlying commitment to discussing racial inequalities and patriarchy as influencing class experiences for their members and other community individuals.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the importance of social activism as a means of making sustainable change for everyday citizens. In particular, activism focused on issues of poverty is significant given the economic-focus of citizenship within contemporary neoliberal society. The War on Poverty and the passage of PRWORA have led to a less-than-favorable view of impoverished individuals, and antipoverty activism exists as a tool for helping low-income individuals challenge such stigmatization. In addition, social activism around issues of poverty helps low-income individuals challenge power imbalances, collectively organize, and represent themselves as “poor” individuals, and develop political consciousnesses that work to solidify the notion that the low/no income individuals can act as social change agents. While some historic example of antipoverty activism reflect the ability of internal power imbalances to hinder a movement, it is clear that low/no income individuals are capable of organizing collectively to renew senses of agency and command respect as impoverished citizens.

³³ Another way in which WU and FHF engage in intersectional activism is through their various organizational collaborations with other groups. I discuss their collaborative organizing in more detail in Chapter Five where I explore the outreach work of both organizations.
The previous chapter concluded by suggesting that returning focus the community may help in the creation of inclusionary citizenship rights for marginalized citizens. Given the influence of neoliberalism over the construction of citizenship and the public image of “the poor,” it is necessary to examine how antipoverty activism is useful in challenging limitations according to neoliberal ideologies. As Naples (1998a) explains, “with the narrowing of citizenship rights through welfare … policies of the 1990s, antipoverty and civil rights activists must reintroduce broadened notions of community action” to communities of low/no income individuals (p. 186). For Naples, engaging in community activism encourages low/no income populations the opportunity to participate in creating new discourses around citizenship and economics; poverty and human rights; and citizenship and agency. As outlined in Chapter Two, by reorienting focus to the local community, more inclusionary models of citizenship may emerge. The remainder of the project explores what types of critiques, visions and strategies related to citizenship and the state are emerging from WU and FHF’s antipoverty activism.

Neubeck (2006) states that although it is important to emphasize the lack of social and economic citizenship rights for poor people, poverty advocates need to remember that possession of those rights is not “in and of itself a ticket out of poverty” (p. 11). According to Neubeck, what needs to occur is a reformatting of how such rights are conceived, created, distributed, maintained, and protected. The following three chapters explore how WU and FHF connect to Neubeck’s suggestion: specifically, what are the organizations’ critiques and views of citizenship and the state, and do members view themselves as excluded from citizenship based on their economic status as impoverished individuals? Further, how are WU and FHF envisioning citizenship that allows for full
participation from low/no income individuals and in what ways do their programs connect to these visions?

Joan Acker, Kate Barry, and Joke Esseveld (1996) discuss the importance of looking at activity not as a singular experience but as a variety of experiences. As they explain, experiences are situated within social relations and “what is at issue is not just everyday experience, but the relations that underlie it and the connections between the two” (p. 62-63). It is important to approach the experiences of these organizations not as singular acts of resistance or expressions of opinion, but as existing as part of a larger movement. What WU and FHF have to share is but one set of perspectives on the reality for low/no income citizens living within the United States. While the experiences of their members are unique to their geographical locales and personal backgrounds, their stories are integral to the exploration of the relationship between citizenship, economics, and social inequality. The next three chapters, thus, aim to give recognition to the organizations’ missions, programs, and members in an effort to explore the relationship between their antipoverty activism, citizenship rights, and the process of developing inclusionary citizenship re-centered within in the community.
CHAPTER FOUR: INTERPRETATIONS OF CITIZENSHIP, THE STATE, AND THE COMMUNITY

Civic republicanism holds that . . . the life of the citizen is not only the most inclusive, but also the highest, form of human living-together that most individuals can aspire to . . . “ Adriano Oldfield

“Thinking about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness . . . if you have no health care, no housing, if you’re working multiple jobs and still can’t make ends meet, what life is that?” Tina, WU member

Introduction

As outlined in the previous chapter, antipoverty activism focuses on being “by and for poor people” centering on empowering low/no income citizens and using activism as a vehicle to create social and political change for marginalized citizens.

While Women Uprising (WU) and Families Helping Families (FHF) are able to collectively organize against injustices within their communities, organizational members may have difficulty accessing full citizenship rights as low/no income individuals. The influence of neoliberal individualism and the push for economic productivity oftentimes leaves populations of lower-class standing struggling to validate themselves as justifiable citizens. Given the importance of gender, race, and economic status on the construction of productive citizenship today, those who exist at the margins of dominant citizen imagery may feel excluded within the broader social and political spheres. Whether political or social in nature, citizenship influences the lives of all Americans, regardless of identity issues. This chapter works to reveal the ways in which those living at the
economic margin understand citizenship, as well as the ways in which citizenship influences their own lives as low/no income individuals.

This chapter specifically explores how members of WU and FHF are interjecting themselves into the discussion regarding exclusionary citizenship, the state, economic divides, and community. Within the chapter, I attempt to uncover the critiques antipoverty activists offer regarding the reality of citizenship and governments today, and their thoughts on the relationship between economic status and citizenship equality. Because the larger purpose of this project is to examine the means through which antipoverty organizations can collectively challenge exclusionary citizenship, this chapter starts with the perspectives of individual organizational members in order to understand how their individual voices unite in their collective programming. In addition, this chapter begins to connect the critiques generated by WU and FHF members to the discussion of inclusionary citizenship discussed in Chapter Two. By examining how the activists define citizenship and the state, this chapter reveals the potential ways in which the concepts can be challenged at a grassroots level. In addition, this chapter exposes key insight into the diverse ways in which WU and FHF members demonstrate their political critical consciousness through discussion of citizenship and the community.

This chapter is divided into three main parts. First, it is first important to outline a basic overview of how WU and FHF members define citizenship and the state. Throughout my interviews, I asked participants to give their definition of citizenship, as broad or specific as necessary. In doing so, I aimed to understand whether the two dichotomies of “rights vs. responsibilities” and “the individual vs. the community” were present in their definitions. In addition, asking the participants to define citizenship in
their own words helps expose the multiple ways in which citizenship can be interpreted and understood. Further, given their stance as low/no income citizens, examining the participants’ definitions may help reveal what influence, if any, class may have on their definitions of citizenship.

In addition to defining citizenship, I asked participants to explain how they viewed the state – specifically, what role does the government play in the political and social realm, what is the relationship between citizens and the state, and is there a connection between citizenship, class, and the state? As outlined in Chapter Two, via social contracts, the state has tremendous weight over the ways in which individuals are situated within society, as well as how individuals perceive their own positions as citizens. Exploring the participants’ understandings of the state allows for an examination of how participants view the social contract in general. I survey their thoughts on whether the state is an ally or adversary, and ask whether believe issues of identity such as gender, race, and class influence their positions as political actors within the state.

The second section of the chapter is dedicated to exploring the relationship between the participants’ definition of citizenship, their view of the state, and issues of class. Here, I specifically investigate how the activists interact with key neoliberal issues such as production and meritocracy in their responses. I also analyze ways in which the participants connect issues of class, gender, and race to citizenship and state rule. Throughout my interviews, I asked participants to explain what connections, if any, they perceive between poverty and the state. Do they understand citizenship and the state as connected to economic inequality and class stratification? Do they view low/no income
citizens as excluded from citizenship and if so, what role does the state play in perpetuating that exclusion? What correlations do they draw regarding the state’s relationship to low/no income citizens and finally do their critiques connect to neoliberal individualism as explained in previous chapters?

These first two sections aim to highlight the voices and experiences of WU and FHF members. Each member comes to participate in WU and FHH in various ways (see Appendix B). What this chapter aims to understand is how their individual perspectives can unite as a collective critique of citizenship and the state. Though Chapter 5 explores the relationship between these perspectives and the specific activities and programs of WU and FHF, I hope to uncover how the combined perspectives of individual members’ presents key ideas regarding how the two groups understand both exclusionary and inclusionary citizenship for marginalized populations. In addition, while the chapter specifically focuses on how WU and FHF members understand the relationship between class and citizenship, I also heed the influences issues of gender and race in their critiques. For some of the participants, their racial identities may influence their perceptions of citizenship equality and the accessibility of citizenship privileges for certain populations.

The third and final section investigates and analyzes WU and FHF responses. Here, I outline the underlying issues that emerged from interviews, specifically the connectivities among the participants’ definitions of citizenship, the state, economic stratification, and feminist political theorists as discussed in Chapter Two. In addition, the third section attempts to critique some of the alternative approaches to citizens/state relations that emerge from WU and FHF members, such as the connection between their
views of citizenship and neoliberalism. In general, two critical concepts emerge from WU and FHF interviews: productivity and community. This third section dissects these two concepts and puts participants’ understanding of productivity and community in conversation with theories of citizenship and neoliberalism. In this analysis, I incorporate discussions regarding the impact of their oppositional consciousness as marginalized activists on their views of citizenship and the state. I also question whether their comments connect to a need for more inclusionary citizenship or if their understandings of citizenship and the state perpetuate an exclusionary view of citizenship rights. The latter question will be dissected further in the next chapter, which expands upon the critiques of productivity and community discussed here through WU and FHF’s community programs.

**Defining Citizenship; Examining the State**

This first section begins by dissecting the opinions of WU and FHF participants in response to questions of citizenship and state governance. Particularly, this section is divided into two sub-themes: citizenship defined and the state uncovered. This portion seeks to provide an exploration of their thoughts on citizenship and the state, while the latter portion of this chapter offers a deeper analysis and critique of their responses. Though not always explicit, issues of intersectionality were thematic throughout the interviews; as I outline their thoughts on citizenship and the state, I attempt to interweave an understanding of the ways in which gendered, racialized, and classed perspectives interact with their definitions. Further, given their activist membership in WU and FHF, it is important to outline the ways in which their individual constructions of citizenship
interact with their larger membership as organizational members, and their development of an oppositional consciousness.

Citizenship Defined

The participants’ definitions of citizenship varied, but overall two main themes emerged from interviews: citizenship as *community* and citizenship as *responsibility* (see Figure 4.1).

First, the participants explained that citizenship is inherently connected to the idea of a community, which for this study, as stated in Chapter One, is defined as a specific location or space based on various factors such as geography, shared identities, or shared ideals. Some of the participants explained that citizenship is not an individual status, but
rather a communal entity that requires all individuals within a specific population to support each other. The specific boundaries and components of “community” varied across and within individual interviews. Some referred to the community as their neighborhoods or their larger city, while others alluded to the informal community of their organizations and families. In addition, many of the participants also referred to their network of other social justice organizations as part of their “community”. Through activism, they are connected to a larger community of organizations through which they can share stories and develop citizenship (Barbara, 2009; Edgar, 2009; Kayla, 2009; Tina, 2009). In addition, some of the participants (Edgar, 2009; Kayla, 2009; Sherry, 2009; Tina, 2009) also referred to the construct of the “global community” referring both to the network of activists they have encountered through their participation at World Social Forums, and to the larger population of low/no income individuals across the globe.\(^{34}\) Their sense of communities are both real and imaged as WU and FHF members articulate both a necessity of face-to-face interaction among some communities but a sense of shared common good and ideals in others. Regardless of boundary or nature of the space, a critical component of all their approaches to community remained the centralization of the collectively engagement of citizens in specific ways.

Candice, a longstanding FHF board member and social service agency employee, stated that a citizen is “someone who belongs to a particular area inside of a community… being part of the community.” Similarly, Robin, a new WU member and

\(^{34}\) One community absent from conversation was that of the religious community. Though a sense of religious morality is thematic throughout some of their responses, none of the interviewees mentioned religious spaces as a possible location for community politics or activism.
undergraduate student, explained that citizenship “is a location thing and also a membership thing” where individual citizenship is based on geographic location as well as membership into a specific community. Sherry, who has been involved with WU since its development in 1996, expanded on the idea of citizenship as membership by explaining that for her, WU members represent the quintessential version of citizens:

WU is filled with citizens. I mean they are individuals who participate in society in meaningful and positive ways by interacting with and connecting with those around them. The mission of the individual within WU, to me, kinda sums up what it means to be a citizen. Because they are attempting to connect with other people, the people around them, in a positive way.

For Sherry, the heart of citizenship lies in the ability of individuals to act for others and exist as a small part of a larger community.

Many of the participants explained that citizenship is not only about being a member of a community but also about playing an active part in that community. For some, citizens cannot exist on a singular level but must be conscious of other individuals and their needs. Jade, a longstanding FHF board member and retiree, claimed that citizenship is “about making a responsible commitment to act or view your giving as a whole.” Alice, another undergraduate student and WU member, echoed the idea of existing as part of a whole by claiming that citizens need to be aware of not only their individual needs but also the needs of the community. According to WU and FHF participants, citizens cannot exist individually but must exist as an active member of a larger community, incorporating their individual needs with the needs of others in their local areas. As Clinton, one of WU’s few male members and longstanding community advocate for the poor, summarized, “citizens take care of others as they take care of themselves.”
A second theme that emerged from the participants’ responses is the concept that as citizens, individuals have specific responsibilities. Similar to the notion that individuals are part of a larger entity, the theme of “citizenship as responsibility” connects to the idea that in order to be considered a citizen, individuals have responsibilities to act for both themselves and others. In particular, WU and FHF members expressed three types of responsibilities in which citizens should engage: 1) a responsibility to help those who have difficulty helping themselves; 2) a responsibility to educate fellow marginalized individuals about power structures that contribute to their marginalization; and 3) a responsibility to educate those who are in positions of privilege about power structures that support their privilege. A key component of all three forms of responsibility is a sense of “obligatory action” and service towards others. For WU and FHF members, citizenship is not merely an identity but rather a process that requires action and reflection; the ideal embodiment of citizenship is active participation in the public setting. As Francine, a working mom and WU volunteer, explained, all citizens “need to participate like everybody else, to the best of your ability. We have myriad ways for people to contribute and to participate.” For Francine and others, active participation within the community is an essential element of being a ‘citizen.’

The idea of citizenship responsibility and civic service was thematic throughout all 15 interviews. For Edgar, a member of FHF’s board and longtime welfare activists, a citizen is very simply “someone who gives back” and shares resources to others in their local communities. For Jade from FHF, citizenship is about “making responsible commitments to act” and benefit your larger community. Providing provisions and goods to other individuals is also a component of serving others, as outlined by Robin, an
undergraduate student and WU member who explained that all citizens, regardless of means, should “provide for each other what you can.” Having a responsibility to others was repeatedly mentioned as part of being a good citizen: “fulfilling one’s obligation to the people” of one’s community was central to many of the respondent’s definitions (Sherry, 2009). Clinton said that “a citizen is one who cares about what he does, who serves from the heart, not from the pockets. A citizen does it and he doesn’t look twice about it.” Others echoed the necessity of the responsibility to serve as an element of citizenship. Sherry from WU stated that citizens have a responsibility to actively participate in the community, whether that is “walking around your neighborhood to check on elderly people, volunteering, engaging in neighborhood beautification” programs. For her, any form of service towards other individuals fulfills the responsibility requirement of citizenship.

In addition to actively serving other individuals, WU and FHF members expressed a responsibility to educate both marginalized and privileged individuals. The participants explained that as citizens, individuals have a responsibility to uphold those rights for themselves and others. As Clinton explained, “citizens have the responsibility of doing what is supposed to be done . . . [to maintain] what is rightfully deserving to us.” For him, citizens are responsible for upholding the rights given to them by the government and to not become complacent. Further, as he said, if one individual has resources or rights, it is his/her responsibility to pass those resources on to someone else. He stated that “once it [rights and resources] has been provided to you, it is your duty and your job to give, to provide it to someone else.” In addition, Edgar from FHF explained
that it is the responsibility of citizens to make sure that the rights of others are upheld and recognized by government officials. For him:

A citizen is not just someone who, you know, receives benefits of the private sector or of the public sector. A citizen is … the vision of our country. You talk about the universal declaration of human rights? It is the role of all of us as citizens to make sure that those rights come about.

In Edgar’s mind, citizens have the responsibility to uphold not only their own individual rights, but also a responsibility to work towards upholding the rights of others. In this way, WU and FHF participants directly support the notion that citizenship as full membership in the community, with individual citizens working to help uphold and maintain the status of “full membership” of others in their communities.

Viewing citizenship as both community and responsibility connects to the participants’ collective identities as members of a larger activist organization. It is significant that they define citizenship as a community-based concept given their specific location as marginalized individuals. For many, the various communities to which they belong, whether geographic (neighborhoods) or organizational (WU and FHF), signifies something familiar and safe. Their communities exist as spaces in which individuals can identify with others and share experiences related to their marginalized positions. In particular for WU and FHF members, they express the importance local spaces and communities play in people’s abilities to cope with economic disparities. Edgar from FHF states that low/no income individuals “gotta go and deal with reality” and in order to deal with these hardships, people turn to communities of others who are also dealing with hunger or a lack of health care. Though Edgar’s experiences in higher education may influence his perception and experiences of the “harsh realities” of low/no income
communities, his racial background as an African-American male and his past identity as a low/no income individual grant him access to stories of the hardships community members endure and provide perspective of inequality that may influence citizenship.

For Alice from WU, who at the time of fieldwork was a part-time student looking for employment, WU is her community, for “everybody there is me… we’re all working, we’re all wondering if we’re going to be able to pay our electric bill… we all share the same struggles but together we work on overcoming different obstacles together.” To her, the WU community represents her refuge in which she can find comfort and support when dealing with her own economic struggles looking for work. While Alice’s racial identity as a white woman may render her privileged in some regards, her class experience as a struggling student motivate her activism and her understanding of citizenship for low/no income individuals. In addition, her current struggle for employment influences her perception of the value of community spaces as places of refuge; she views the community as a location in which she can discuss her problems and hear recommendations or stories of success from other community members.

Understanding citizenship as both community and responsibility also connects to their larger membership in WU and FHF. As previous discussed in Chapter Three, when individuals engage in social activism, they typically involve themselves in discussions related to power hierarchies and identity issues, experiencing politicization and developing levels of oppositional consciousness. A part of this development process is the realization that one should help others understand power differences and develop new forms of consciousnesses as well. For WU and FHF activists, their role as members of social justice organizations means they have a responsibility to maintain their own
oppositional consciousness and also help others develop their own understanding of power inequalities. For FHF, reaching out to engage in what member Edgar calls “capacity building” helps individual members encourage others to “feel like they have more power.” Fulfilling their citizen duty to help others realize power injustices also allows FHF members to strengthen the ties of their organizational community. For instance, if FHF is viewed as a space in which people deal with economic struggles, then transforming that space into one of consciousness raising helps strengthen the attitudes and oppositional ideologies of community members, thereby strengthening their citizenship.

Citizenship as Exclusive

Overall, the activists’ definitions of citizenship appeared inclusionary, with all individuals, regardless of gender, race, class, nationality, or sexuality, able to participate as full citizens. The WU and FHF notion that citizenship involves membership and responsible involvement in a community is an idealistic view of citizenship for as the WU and FHF participants explained, such image does not exist. Many of the respondents acknowledged that oftentimes citizenship remains exclusive and is denied to various groups based on economic status, racial backgrounds, and gender identities. In their interviews, interviewees recognized two main problems that hinder the creation of their ideal citizenship: territorial exclusion and exclusion based on identity “isms”.

Some participants mentioned exclusion based on “territory” which prevents certain populations from obtaining access to citizenship. The activists acknowledged that formal citizenship, as in the understanding of citizenship formally recognized by law within the United States, remains contingent on issues of space and territory. The
participants used the idea of territory in two distinct ways. For some, territory connected with issues of immigration and national identity. Lyra, a young mother with a longstanding history as a WU member, explained that:

> We tend to look at [citizenship] as a privilege as opposed to a right. You look at undocumented people as like they are citizens because they are active citizens here. And they’re part of our economy . . . but we don’t call them citizens. Why? Cause of nationality, or the idea of territory. . . . My real concept of citizenship is privilege. Privilege is what it boils down to because of the culture we live in.

She acknowledged that though her understanding of citizenship differs, theoretically citizenship is often seen as an issue of privilege based on national identity. Lyra, who at the time of fieldwork was pursuing a bachelor degree, comes to her understanding of privilege and territory both through her access to critical thinking in classroom spaces, but also through her experiences as a former member of the armed services, which granted her access to stories of exclusion based on nationality.

The second distinct way in which participants discussed territory was as connected not to national identity, but to the prison industry, with individuals seen as existing in separate territories while serving sentences. For many of the participants, felons attempting to reenter the public system can be equated to immigrants attempting to adapt to American democracy. Former felons are often denied access to full membership in society, thereby influencing their ability to act as full citizens. Because the participants equate citizenship to active membership in to a community, they recognize the difficulty felons experience in obtaining full citizenship rights given their exclusion from civil society. Juanita, a single mother and longtime WU member, explained her frustration at the limitations felons experience with regards to citizenship: “people that are felons and get out, they have to fight for their citizenship? To me, if you’re a human and you’re
alive, wouldn’t that make you a citizen?” To Juanita, the ideal of citizenship should be accessible to everyone, but in reality, it is denied to specific individuals. Her comments demonstrate the parallel between the ideal view of citizenship as described by WU and FHF members, and the reality of exclusion that many of them experience.

In addition to understanding citizenship as territorially exclusive, many of the participants explained that citizenship still remains contingent upon various “isms” such as classism, racism, and sexism. For Alice from WU, citizenship remains based on “what color your skin is, what sex you are, what your sexuality is, what job you have, what car you’re driving… it all plays into that.” Another one of WU’s few male members, Dustin, explained that in order for citizenship to ever be truly equal, individuals need to let go of their personal prejudice towards issues of “difference”. Such prejudice does nothing more than “hinder” society and in order to move forward towards a more inclusionary form of citizenship, individuals need to be more receptive to issues of difference. Dustin’s own racial identity as a Latino man may have led to experiences of prejudice based on racial stereotypes; in addition, Dustin’s time within the prison complex may have provided him first-hand experiences of the various ways in which identity-differences ultimately cloud one’s access to equal treatment.

For the participants, individuals are consistently denied access to full membership in a community because of these “isms”. With regard to issues of class, responses from the participants support the idea that without proper economic status, one cannot be considered a full member of the public community. Further, as Tina, one of the founding members of WU and former executive director, explained, in order to have access to full citizenship, individuals need to be on “stable footing”; for her, those who experience
marginalization based on “isms” struggle to even participate in the system, let alone enjoy full citizenship benefits. Tina’s own past experiences as a low/no income single mother connect with her understanding of the various roles sexism and racism may play on the realities of citizenship for low/no income individuals. As she describes in her interview, she had first-hand experience with the prejudice of state offices against low/no income people, and as she claims, such prejudice fueled her motivation for activism. For Tina, it was her class-status, not her race or gender identities, that led to feeling judged and stereotyped when seeking social services. As she explains, what mattered was not her racial identity as a white woman or the reasons for which she sought services; what mattered were her class status and the mere fact she was in need of government help in general.

It is clear that while the participants theorized citizenship as inclusionary, they still remain doubtful that all individuals are able to engage in citizenship equally. At the core, the participants are invested in defining citizenship as a communal entity; for them, like civic republicans, individuals cannot engage in citizenship without having some sense of responsibility to others and their larger community. Because they view service as a necessary component of citizenship, the participants support the need for civic engagement as part of ideal citizenship. The benefits of citizenship for WU and FHF members are material, but more so perceived; members understand citizenship as based within a community of other individuals with whom problems are shared and responsibilities are upheld. According to their description of desired citizenship, the status of “citizen” allows individuals access to political and social decision-making, it also offers WU and FHF members’ recognition as viable actors.
While the participants envision a definition of citizenship that is inclusive of
difference, many understand citizenship as remaining an exclusionary entity. Politically
and socially, citizenship remains focused on “isms” which hinder the ability of
individuals fulfill their citizen duties and participate in meaningful ways. For members
like Tina and Dustin, until issues of difference are addressed, individuals who exist at the
margins remain excluded from citizenship. These “isms” and identity prejudices can
impact the extent to which citizenship benefits are experienced by specific populations.
For WU and FHF members, even if they are understood as citizens, their abilities to
engage in the material benefits of citizenship – for instance, equal political participation,
a place at the decision-making table – are limited. Yet, according to the participants,
actively engaging in the community and perpetuating the image of the “good” responsible
citizen may work to eventually help alleviate exclusions based on “isms” and bring
citizenship back to a community focus. It is in this way that participation in groups such
as WU and FHF helps the individual members act out their own definitions of
citizenship.

The State Uncovered

In addition to exploring their thoughts on citizenship, I also was interested in
understanding how members viewed the role of the state, especially their opinions
regarding the relationship between the state, citizenship, and their own positions as
low/no income individuals. If the participants envision citizenship as service and
participation in communities, how do they envision the role of the state? What role does
the government play in creating or maintaining citizenship and do they think the state
includes or excludes individuals based on difference?
Interviews with WU and FHF members revealed that similar to citizenship, views of the government and state officials are complicated. In general, the participants agreed that the role of the government is to support its citizens, uphold their rights, and work to enforce equality for all individuals. Some participants believed that the government has a responsibility to equalize “the playing field” for all citizens. Part of this process is providing a standard of living that treats individuals equally regardless of class, race, or gender identities. As Candice from FHF explained, the role of government is to “set a standard of living… make sure everyone is being fair and being treated equally.”

Similarly, Kayla, a mother and student who has been involved with WU from the beginning and currently acts as WU’s executive director, explained that it is the government’s responsibility to make sure that access is available to all citizens, regardless of class, gender, or race. She said:

> Justice is more about access than outcomes. Do people have access to affordable housing? The answer is no. Um, and so it’s the state’s responsibility to level that playing field. To make that access more available. I guess that’s what I’m thinking about – the government’s responsibility is to create access.

For her and other participants, just as citizens have a responsibility to serve the community, so does the government have a responsibility to provide access for an equal chance to all individuals. In addition, some participants expressed that the state should distribute resources evenly as well. Sherry from WU explained that the state’s responsibility is to “be equal in their distribution of resources . . . to provide a certain amount of resources to the people.” Allocating resources evenly helps contribute to a more equal treatment of all citizens, regardless of social status. It also helps contribute to a most just standard of living for individuals. As Jade from FHF explained, the state acts
hypocritically when it vows to offer social services, but neglects to provide necessary aid to its neediest populations.

In addition to equalizing the “playing field” for citizens, many of the participants stated that the state had a responsibility to offer support and resources for those citizens in need. Edgar from FHF explains that the government should “step in” during situations in which other citizens are not able to offer support. In other words, the government should always be available and willing to offer support for its marginalized populations. Kayla from WU similarly explained that for her, it is “the government’s responsibility to take care of its people.” In this sense, the government has a similar role as individuals within a civic republican model of citizenship: to care for others and provide support for those in need. 35 Though none of the participants expressed a desire for a “nanny state,” what they did communicate was their understanding that the state is responsible for providing for its citizens and allocating funding to programs that give support to all populations. 36

Overall, two major themes emerged from discussions focused on the role of the state. First, the participants explained that at its core, the government should be by and for everyday people; in other words, the people should run the government, rather than

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35 Though the interviews took place nearly 5 years post-Hurricane Katrina, several of the participants used the government’s treatment of Katrina victims as an example of the state’s perceived role (Barbara, 2009; Edgar, 2009; Kyla, 2009; Tina, 2009). For them, the government had a responsibility to serve those individuals in need and the disaster of Katrina’s aftermath was a testament to the government’s failure to allocate resources to those citizens in need.

36 Several participants (Barbara, 2009; Sherry, 2009; Kayla, 2009; Tina, 2009) alluded to their desires for a socialist state, though none of the four elaborated on how such state could emerge within the U.S. Kayla and Tina from WU mentioned some Scandinavian countries as models for state-citizen relationships they viewed as more desirable while Barbara and Sherry merely described their interest in creating a more socialist-leaning state geared towards providing for all individuals regardless of positionality.
the government ruling the people. Nearly every interview included the exact statement: “the government is run by and for the people.” As expected, there was an undercurrent of community politics in their responses, and many of the participants explained that because people run the government, the relationship between citizens and the government should to be mutually supportive. If the role of the government is to enforce the equal opportunity of all citizens, then it seems logical that individual citizens have an active role in upholding the role of the government. Thus, a central component of the role of the state, according to participants, is the centrality of people’s voices and experiences. As WU and FHF members explained, the government should act to voice and represent the people equally, regardless of the social “isms” or identity differences. Yet, many interviewees claimed that, like their understanding of citizenship, this view of the state as is idealistic. For them, the government has become an entity in its own right, rather than a representation of individual needs and experiences.

For Barbara, a retired educator and current FHF executive director, the ideal state should have “the people who control the government” and yet in reality, the people are being silenced by this increasingly growing entity known as “the state.” Similarly, Candice from FHF explained that the government was intended to work for the people: “When the government is operating correctly . . . we run the government, not the government runs [sic] us.” Barbara and Candice’s identities as low/no income African-American women may play a role in constructing their understanding of the lack of equality across government officials; as black women, they made connections to the lack of representational voice of minority issues in politics and the gendered and racialized aspect of American politics, a system in which most of the key players are white males.
Though her racial identity differs, Alice from WU echoed Barbara and Candice’s sentiment by explaining that sometimes she “forgets that the government is supposed to be working or us and it’s our government.” Thus for WU and FHF members, though ideally the state should be run by and for the people, such image does not yet exist.

A second theme to emerge from the interviews outlines a perceived lack of faith in the state. Participants expressed having a lack of faith in both the ability of the government to work for the people, as well as a lack of faith in the ability of the state to represent the needs of those living at the margins. First, though WU and FHF members describe their ideal view of the state as inclusive, many of the participants described having little faith that such ideal would ever exist. For the participants, the current relationship between citizens and the state is not one of mutual support. Further, the participants were skeptical that marginalized citizens could ever a true voice within the state. Nearly all 15 interviewees stated they believe the larger American public distrusts the government. For the participants, people lack faith in both the governments’ ability to fulfill its role and also support its citizens. Further, the participants understood the government as standing in direct opposition to its citizenry and articulated the various ways in which everyday citizens are distanced from the state.

Edgar from FHF explained that he does not believe many people “have much confidence in their government. I don’t get the feeling that they really feel like they have this trust in government, that government is going to do what it is supposed to do.” Similarly, Edgar’s fellow FHF member Barbara stated that people are “tired of government” and feel like their voice is not being represented. As she claimed: “you’ve got an angry group of people [who are going homeless and hungry] and they don’t feel
like their government cares for them.” Again, Barbara and Edgar’s African-American racial identity may influence their perception of the limitations specific populations, such as racial minorities, feel with regard to government representation and faith in the state. For them, the lack of reflection of racial, gender, or class diversity impacts the confidence individual citizens have in their government system.

Having a lack of faith in one’s government connects back to the idea that at its core, the government should be run by and for the people it serves. For some of the participants, the absence of faith has to do with a lack of association to their government and elected officials. The participants expressed their expectation that their government be representational of their own experiences (Candice, 2009; Juanita, 2009; Tina, 2009). If one feels detached from the government, one may be more likely to lack faith in the government’s abilities to fulfill its responsibilities to citizens. As Tina from WU claimed, she does not feel connected to the state as it is “this huge government and it is way out there.” The government has become too large for many of the broader public to understand, and for Tina and many other WU and FHF members, the size and scope of the state makes many marginalized populations feel detached from politics.

Connecting the participant’s definition of citizenship with their statements about the government yields an interesting trend. While the participants envision more idealistically inclusive definitions of citizenship and the state, they acknowledge that such is not the case. Similar to their definitions of citizenship, the participants defined the state as supportive, centered on everyday people, but ultimately exclusionary. Though the participants understand the role of the state to be the enforcer of equality for all citizens, ultimately they have a lack of faith that such enforcement exists, citing the
ignoring of voices and lack of trust as two primary ways the government excludes citizens. Their comments regarding the role of the state have significant impact on the ability to redefine citizenship as more inclusionary. For instance, if, as the participants outline, citizenship is based on the mutual support of individuals and a sense of responsibility to serve and actively engage, then the state should hold a similarly supportive role.

This section has outlined the participants’ definition of citizenship and investigated their understanding of the role the government plays in everyday life. Their responses interweave ideals and realities, and present a small portion of how low/no income individuals understand these issues. Although not as significant in their responses, a third theme emerged in their discussion of the state: the relationship between citizenship and class inequalities. Some of the participants explained that oftentimes, the state becomes an arbitrary “enforcer” of financial marginalization for specific populations. In other words, the state regulates class difference and economic divides among its citizens and fosters a climate of economic stratification. They claimed that the relationship between citizens and the government has become one of “haves and have-nots” with those who hold financial influence pulling the strings of government officials.

As Tina from WU expressed, “how do poor people even engage with the system? Almost 100% of our government is wealthy people. Our elected government is wealthy people, who had the funds to run for election.” Similarly, WU member Robin explained that the government should do a better job of redistributing the wealth so it is not just the wealthy influencing programs. For many of the participants, the dichotomy between the wealthy and the poor distracts the state from existing as a grassroots entity run “by the people for
the people,” and also prevents those of lower-class status from participating as full citizens.

The next section of this chapter will focus on the correlation between class, economic stratification, and citizenship. For WU and FHF members, what role does class play in the formation of their ideal government as operating “by and for the people”? How do they view “poverty” as related to citizenship and the state and what are their thoughts regarding the neoliberalism and what are their thoughts regarding the privatization of the state and the construction of citizenship within the United States? What role does intersectionality play in their critiques of the state, citizenship, and economic stratification? Further, in what ways does the participants’ understanding of class and citizenship relate to constructions of community?

**Citizenship and Economic Stratification**

As discussed in Chapter Two, the construction of American citizenship remains heavily embedded within issues of class divides and economic privilege. Some feminist political theorists (Jaggar, 2006; Lister, 1997; Ong, 2006) posit that citizenship is predicated on financial production and active involvement in the markets, rather than in the community. Given the current neoliberal influence in American culture, it is necessary to engage in a critical discussion of class in order to uncover the various ways in which specific populations continue to be marginalized based on their economic status. Though WU and FHF engage in intersectional antipoverty activism, the central organizing goal for each organization is the eradication of economic marginalization and poverty. As explained in Chapter Three, both organizations understand the role gender and race inequalities hold over class experiences, and though class is central to their
mission, they acknowledge the intersectional foundation on which economic stratification exists. During the interviews, I asked them to share their thoughts regarding the influence of class and neoliberalism on the construction and reality of citizenship. Through their responses, it is apparent that WU and FHF members understand class as critical to the construction and maintenance of exclusionary citizenship and state structures.

Their responses can be categorized into three separate sub-themes with each sub-theme revealing key insights into how the participants understand the weight of neoliberalism on citizenship. The first sub-theme focuses on the idea of a class privilege, meaning the inherent privileging of economic clout within American democracy. Some of the participants believe that the government is driven by money, and those who lack economic clout also lack political voice. For Edgar from FHF, the root cause of exclusion is money: “I say that inclusion is not when you’ve been exposed or been removed from being exclusive. It all has to do with money.” Jade, another FHF participant, understands the construction of the American society as being built entirely on class divides; as she stated:

If you don’t have any money, you don’t have any power . . . everyone gets some type of monetary reward. You know? [Laughs] You can be a Girls Scout and do all the chores and duties and club things and you still get a reward. The whole system is set up on rewarding.

In addition, as another WU member Clinton claimed, “in order to be rich, someone else has to be poor.” The entire social system, for these participants, is predicated upon
economic success and monetary status. In their eyes, it is those individuals who do not have high economic status that experience difficulty establishing their social and political existence. Further, for the WU and FHF participants, it seems as if society cannot function without some type of economic stratification.

In addition, the participants also explained ways in which they viewed economic privilege influencing their lives in other forms. For some, growing privatization and neoliberal influences has caused a decrease in community life. In their minds, Americans today are encouraged to draw inward, to become more private and disengaged from community life. Alice from WU explained that “it’s disenchanted that community no longer exists. We’re taught to stay in our houses, watch our TVs, don’t get involved.” For her, increasing public privatization has led to an increase in personal privatization as well, diminishing community life. Robin, another WU member, echoed the sentiment that neoliberalism’s influence has led to a distancing amongst individuals and a disintegration of community. As she stated:

I think one of the biggest problems with American society is the individualism that’s so imbedded in the past 50 years . . . and when you’ve got a society that every little person in there thinks only of “me”, that’s not a society. It’s not going to function. It’s just going to get sicker and sicker and fall apart.

For her, the gradual increased emphasis on the individual, due to the increasing influence of neoliberalism, has led to a destruction of a “community ethic” in which people helped others and supported a larger good.

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The participants refer to the ‘system’ as including the state, government structures, as well as political/social/economic institutions. They use the term interchangeably to summarize the state-based structures (i.e.: Congress or City Councils) that govern individuals, and also use it to represent the various intersections between political, social, and economic issues.
The respondents articulated an understanding of citizenship as based on productivity – a citizen is one who is actively engaged in some aspect of communal life. Yet, as WU and FHF members explained, the reality of productivity still remains couched in economic terms and standards. The participants were keenly aware of the problems of neoliberal mentality on low/no income citizens. Nearly all of the interviewees expressed resentment at the meritocratic idea of “picking oneself up by the bootstraps.” In response to the push for economic productivity, Barbara, FHF’s director, stated, “Well, when did they [the poor] get boots? You know, how can you pull yourself up with your bootstraps if you don’t have boots.” Francine from WU echoed Barbara’s sentiments, claiming “the whole idea of pulling oneself up by the bootstraps is a fallacy . . . if everyone could do that, we wouldn’t have poor people.” Their critique of meritocracy parallels their dismissal of neoliberalism that depends on self-determination and productivity as a method of social welfare control.

For the participants, the centrality of money in American society supports the state’s emphasis on meritocracy, thereby further limiting those individuals of low/no class standing. The “system” supports the notion that hard work creates financial independence, but WU and FHF members disagree. For them, those who struggle the most gain the least (Jade 2009). In their eyes, those who cannot financially support themselves are criminalized because of the meritocratic emphasis on economic productivity. In describing her feelings on meritocracy, Alice from WU explained:

It’s hard to survive just off of a paycheck. It’s hard to make all your ends meet and do anything without any sort of help. Even though I don’t make very much money, it was decided this year that I made too much money. So there are all these lines drawn over who deserves something and who doesn’t.
Alice’s own experience as a student struggling for employment directly connects to her articulation of economic stratification and the depth to which economic difference influences one’s access to citizenship participation. For her and others, the “system” is set up for those at the lower end of the economic latter to fail, regardless of the rhetoric of meritocracy. To them, the state supports economic stratification by perpetuating the “bootstraps” myth.

Though they did not explicitly claim that gender or racial differences influence the continued marginalization of specific groups, WU and FHF activists clearly articulate some discussion of intersectionality in their examples of meritocracy. For instance, some FHF members explain how the role of women as primary care takers of young children keeps them locked in a system of dependency. Candice from FHF explained that because “a lot of the issues that deal with family life comes through women,” women are overburdened with childcare and other family-related activities. This burden spills over in to their financial lives with women experiencing a “double standard” that forces them to choose between paternal child support or government assistance. As a social worker, Candice comes into contact with low/no income single mothers, many of whom are African-American or Latina, who recount their struggles to find adequate child care or employment opportunities while taking care of their children. She continued to explain that welfare policies are not sympathetic to the plight of low/no income women struggling for childcare, and this lack of sympathy represents the state’s lack of tolerance for poverty issues as well as the state’s inherent ties to neoliberal meritocracy. Though Candice never stated that women’s gendered experiences limit their position within the state, nor did she ever bring in her own experiences as a low/no income woman, her
examples of childcare and welfare policies demonstrates the relevancy of intersectionality within their critiques of the “bootstrap” myth. Candice’s own identity as an African-American, low/no income mother may impact her understanding of the gendered and classed nature of citizenship and the state. It is through her racial and gender identity that she connects to many of the clients she serves and her “insider” position as a woman of color may help her piece together stories of struggle that outline a larger picture of injustice.

A second sub-theme in their discussions of class was the dichotomy of corporate greed versus citizen need. All 15 of the participants agreed that corporations negatively impact today’s citizens. The participants referenced the ideas of “corporate welfare” and “corporate greed” in their interviews and were quick to criticize the increasing privatization and corporatization of the state. To summarize, the participants understood corporate welfare as meaning that corporations are in control of the larger American public; the state no longer has full authority, but rather has been taken over by corporations and public enterprises. Corporate greed means that because of the unique relationship between corporations and the state, corporations are able to emphasize their needs over the plight of individuals, thereby putting the greed of the company over the need of citizens. In other words, corporations run America and as a result, America operates on corporate greed.

At the time of the interviews, health care reform was a main topic of political debate and Barbara from FHF used the health care debate to summarize the influence of corporate greed on American political institutions:
The corporations don’t uh, don’t want to hear from the people because they know that their bread is buttered by the states. Once a change like health care … what is going to happen to insurance companies? Single payer? That means that the insurance is out. And what happens to all those billions of dollars to insurance companies? It’s the economics of government. Corporate welfare for all.

In her opinion, the relationship between insurance companies and the state represents corporate greed by prioritizing profits over the health care needs of citizens. Other participants similarly echoed her sentiments by claiming, “WU realizes that it is the big business who [sic] runs the government” (Francine 2009), and “business has far too much impact on politics” (Tina 2009). By claiming that corporations control the state, the participants allude to neoliberalism’s push for corporatization and privatization.

In addition to discussing examples of corporate welfare, many of the participants also talked about the decrease in social services and the privatization of “welfare care” for disadvantaged citizens. As previously explained, a tenant of neoliberalism is the decrease in state welfare projects and the increase in dependency upon civil society to support and operate social service programs for those in need. In their interviews, WU and FHF participants were quick to criticize the lack of state-sponsored support for low/no income citizens. For them, the decrease in state funding for social support agencies was a sign not of the recession, but rather of the decrease in concern for low/no income individuals. In addition, the lack of support represented the privatization of the state and the neoliberal agenda to push social service programs on to the community. As Candice from FHF explained, “we don’t have to be in a recession in order for people to need social services. Jobs come and go, economies come and go, but social services . . . we need to have those in place.” Again, Candice’s experiences both as a social worker but also as a struggling black mother shape her understanding of the impact job-loss and
policy changes have on a community. Her own gendered and racilaized experiences, coupled with those of her clients, lend to the realizaition of the inherent problems in state assistance programs and growing neoliberal privatization. For her, the growth in corporate welfare has pulled energy away from social services, thereby decreasing the support given to those citizens in need. A decline in services supports the “lack of faith” argument put forth by WU and FHF as it demonstrates the state’s failure to fulfill its role as provider of resources and protector of equality for all citizens.

A final sub-theme to emerge from the interviews was the notion the devaluation of poverty issues within the state. In addition to understanding how class and neoliberalism interact with the state, WU and FHF participants articulated a clear awareness of the relationship between poverty and citizenship. As explained in the previous chapter, in order to be an acting member in WU or FHF, one has to identify as “poor”. Whether they currently lived in poverty or identified as working-class, all 15 interviewees raised concern over the devaluation of impoverished individuals. For Barbara, FHF’s director, the demonization of poverty is evident through her fundraising work for the organization. As she explained, politicians are only interested in those issues affecting middle-class families or “light” poverty issues, such as “working with youth or re-entry programs.” In her view, foundations and state programs will not fund programs geared towards the realities of low/no income individuals:

Poverty issues – it’s like a dirty word. When you go talk to funders, they don’t want to be a part. They want to hear about middle class programs and teaching kids to dance. But how I can do all of that when the kid’s not even coming to school because he don’t [sic] have a place to stay. He’s sleeping under a bridge! Right now, if you got poverty issues, and that’s what you’re working on, you almost can’t get funding.
To Barbara, the lack of interest in poverty issues represents the overall ignorance about the experiences and realities of those in poverty. In addition, many of the individuals FHF serves, and who Barbara encounters weekly through FHF programs, identify as African-American or Latino/a; thus, the devaluation of poverty issues to which Barbara alludes may also be connected to a devaluation of racial difference and an overall perpetuation of individual and corporate prejudice against specific populations based on difference. Further, as Barbara explained, the disinterest in poverty issues on a state level reflects a lack of concern about the economic realities that face citizens. Such disinterest directly impacts the types of programs and services Barbara and her board are able to offer the Corners community.

Also thematic through all 15 interviews was the argument that the government purposively ignores the plight of low/no income citizens and/or tries to keep people in poverty. Alice from WU explained that the cutbacks to student loan programs “are going to affect the poorest minorities and that deepens the trench between them breaking the cycle of poverty that they are in.” For her, cutting student loan programs indirectly keeps specific populations impoverished and demonstrates the lack of care by state officials for low/no income individuals. Again, Alice’s own position as a struggle student influences her understanding of the problems at work with student loan and other “assistance” programs. Other FHF and WU members were critical of the various ways in which state-run social welfare programs seemingly keep people in poverty. As Jade from FHF stated, the 3-year time-limit in her state does not make sense “with jobs being depleted, it is impossible for someone to say, even if they do planning, that some circumstance is not going to come back at them and then they need help.” In her eyes,
the state-imposed time limit keeps specific individuals in poverty. Just like the cuts to student loan programs, the time limit demonstrates the lack of empathy or support for low/no income populations.

Also critical of the state welfare program was Barbara from FHF, who exclaimed that welfare reform in her city dropped case logs from “184,000 to under 100,000. Think all those women got jobs? No. We’ve been bleeding jobs since 2000. What happened to all those women?” In her view, the decline in case logs is not indicative of fewer people living in poverty, but rather supports the image of the state as ignoring their neediest citizens.38 Not only does Barbara articulate an understanding of the inherent discrepancies between state programs and economic realities for Corners residents, but she also understands the significant plight of low/no income women as a result of welfare policies. Similar to another FHF member (Candice), Barbara’s own experience as an African-American mother may impact her understanding of the difficulties low/no income women face as they transition out of welfare programs and into the employment sector. She lives in a predominantly African-American neighborhood and witnesses women of color struggling to make ends meet and find jobs in her daily life, outside of her activist work. Though she confronts these difficulties directly in her FHF programs, Barbara bears witness to the impact policies such as PRWORA may have on her neighbors and their children.

Their critique of the state as keeping individuals in poverty also connects to their criticism of citizenship and territory as discussed earlier in this chapter. As WU and FHF members explained, former felons and prisoners have difficulties accessing full citizenship rights based on their separation from the public sphere and the stigmatization of prison. And yet, the state provides few provisions for these individuals as they transition from prison to community. In this sense, the state keeps these individuals marginalized based on their past experiences (Dustin, 2009; Juanita, 2009; Lyra, 2009).
Other participants believe the government favors the voices and input of affluent citizens, thereby keeping the voices and input of impoverished individuals silenced. The state supports the capitalist system that rewards those who ‘work hard’ and make a profit. For those who are unable to make a profit, the system is not so rewarding. Yet, as many of the WU and FHF interviewees claimed, in order for someone to profit, someone else has to lose. For instance, Francine from WU explained that:

You’ve got people all over the country, all over the world, who are in sweatshops working for cents a day . . . and that’s part of the downfall of the idea of self-determination and the idea of capitalist market system. There has to be a winner. You know and … you can’t have winners and not a loser.

For Francine, the low-income earners and those individuals living in poverty are the “losers” in the capitalist economic model. Similarly, Clinton from WU claimed that “in order to be rich, someone else has to be poor.” WU member Sherry explained that it is not democracy that the United States government encourages, but rather capitalism. For her, the state is able to prosper because it has “people who are disadvantaged who will do the nasty grunt work. It can’t exist without that.” A key message that comes from all the interviewees, then, is that the relationship between poverty and the state is co-dependent. For them, because the state and affluent individuals benefit from the detriment of low/no income people’s labor, there is a desire to support and uphold economic stratification. Low/no income individuals often are dependent on the state for social service and welfare programs; on the other hand, the state is dependent upon the “poor” for their ability to do, as Sherry states, “the grunt work.” Without the labor of the low/no income individuals, the state and its economic interest would not thrive. Thus, it is within the interests of the state to maintain a population of low/no income individuals.
An alarming theme across the interviews was the feeling of despair regarding low/no income individuals’ abilities to have a political voice within the current system. Nearly all of the 15 interviewees explained that low/no income individuals believe their economic status makes them powerless within the state, and as low/no income individuals, they possess little influence over their own political and social climate. As Alice from WU claimed, the people in power treat low/no income individuals as if they do not have any power, which results in the mentality that “well I’m poor, maybe I don’t deserve this. And maybe I don’t have rights, and maybe I don’t really matter.” Similarly, Edgar from FHF stated that “people feel hopeless to a great extent… people feel powerless.” WU member Sherry believes that because low/no income individuals feel powerless, they are integrated into a system that keeps them “encapsulated in their class.” In other words, because the “poor” feel like they lack the power to have a political voice, they continue to exist at the margins and engage in “grunt work” in exchange for state provisions. Understanding the intersectional positionality of WU and FHF supports their theory of powerlessness for marginalized individuals; if specific groups are marginalized based on “isms,” and exist within a system that perpetuates those “isms” for its own benefit, then members of that marginalized group may feel hopeless and powerless.

Across all three sub-themes, it is apparent that the participants are aware of a detrimental relationship between class structures, citizenship, and the state. For many of the WU and FHF interviewees, class dictates power dynamics within the state and as a result, those individuals who exist at the lower-ends of the class structure, those low/no
income individuals, suffer the most. Not only is their labor exploited for the gains of a few wealthy citizens, but also their interests and needs are ignored by state officials. As a result, their abilities to fulfill their roles as citizens within a liberal-individualism definition of citizenship are threatened. The dependency of the state on economic stratification ultimately hinders the citizenship of those living at the economic margins. The idealistic views presented earlier cannot exist since, as the participants explained, class directly influences the type of state in which citizenship develops, and gender, race, and class, for instance, influence the type citizenship that is available. Looking at the relationship between class, citizenship, and the state helps piece together the larger picture of the participant’s definitions of citizenship as community and responsibility, as well as their lack of faith in the government. Further, the interviewees understand their class, gender, and racialized identities and experiences as contributing to their exclusion from full citizenship status and from all material and perceived benefits offered to citizens. In addition, they view the benefits awarded to citizens by the state as limited due to the state’s attitude towards poverty issues and its increasing privatization. For WU and FHF members, the material and perceived benefits awarded to citizens are limited to those whose economic status is considered marginal.

The two previous sections were dedicated to organizing the WU and FHF interview responses and understanding what types of critiques members are making of American citizenship and the state. The final section aims to analyze their comments and

39 Through their discussions of welfare policies and other government programs, WU and FHF members understand issues of gender, race, and sexuality as connected to class-related power dynamics that keep low/no income individuals locked in marginalized positions. Yet, as anti-poverty organizers, they collectively argue that class as a structure and system of oppression is central to excluding specific populations.
connect them to citizenship studies and feminist theories on neoliberalism and the state.

As the first two sections demonstrated, the interviews revealed key differences between the idealistic views of citizenship that WU and FHF members’ desire and the realities they experience. The participants articulated specific opinions regarding responsibilities of citizens and the responsibilities of the state. Two central themes arose from these articulations: definitions of productivity and of the community. This next section focuses on dissecting these two constructs further and puts WU and FHF in conversation with feminist theorists as discussed in Chapter Two. However, while it is telling that the images they envision connect to new forms of inclusionary citizenship as discussed in Chapter One, WU and FHF responses are not without their issues. As I will argue, connecting the interview responses back to the literature unveils both benefits and problems regarding the potential of developing inclusionary citizenship for those living at the margins. Using feminist political theorists to critique and support some of their arguments helps uncover the multiple ways in which WU and FHF attempt to build constructions of citizenship for marginalized groups and are expanding the definitions of productivity and community in specific ways.

Discussion

Overall, two interlocking themes emerge from the participants’ responses and exploring each theme reveals ways in which the participants’ critiques connect to the development of a model of inclusionary citizenship. First, participants situate their understandings of citizenship as based on productive action whereby individuals are considered either good or bad citizens based on their productive activities. I focus on the dichotomy of “good versus bad” citizenship as it directly connects to the image of the
liberal subject as discussed in Chapter Two and explore how new understandings of productivity and citizenship responsibility emerge from this binary. I also problematize this relationship and explore how the dichotomy of good versus bad citizen speaks to the difficulties in constructing an inclusionary model of citizenship, and may actually work to limit further the marginalization of specific groups.

The second theme exists in response to the first and centers on the development of nuanced views of the “community”. As I will explain, WU and FHF members articulate unique understandings of the community that both correlate to, but simultaneously challenge, ideas of neoliberalism. Their views of communities extend the boundaries of what constitutes communal spaces as well as the types of activities and citizen action desired within those boundaries. As I will demonstrate, their ideas surrounding the community exist in direct correlation to their notions of productivity, and works to alleviate some of the tensions within the good versus bad citizen dichotomy. This second portion ends by theorizing how WU and FHF’s understanding of the community may reveal key information about reformulating citizenship as inclusive for marginalized groups.

*Good and Bad Productivity*

A central theme in WU and FHF members’ responses was the notion that citizens have responsibilities to serve their community and engage in positive productivity. For them, citizenship is available for those who responsibly engage other individuals and maintain an active presence in the public sphere. The centralization of “service” connects to some aspects of the civic republican approach to citizenship that argues that citizens should act in the best interest of the collective good, therefore making them virtuous.
citizens. As Oldfield explains, “pursuing the common good is the core of the communal citizens’ civic virtue” (as cited in Shafir, 1998, p. 11). Most of the WU and FHF members align with the civic republicanism model of citizenship, as they center civic action, and citizenship duties within the scope of the community whereby individual citizen action benefits the larger citizenry community.

The focus on service also connects to the dichotomy of good citizen versus bad citizen. While many of the participants believe that citizenship requires civic action, they stated that what type of action a person conducts influences one’s citizenship. As Oldfield claims, citizenship as community is not merely a fact that “people act, but how they act” (as cited in Shafir, 1998, p. 82). Thus, for WU and FHF members, it is not simply that citizens have a responsibility to help other individuals, but that they serve in mutually beneficial ways. As Sherry from WU described, citizenship includes anything that “results in direct positive contact with the people around you.” She elaborated by stating that citizens should participate in meaningful and positive ways and encourage others to similarly participate. Other WU and FHF participants echoed Sherry’s sentiments, arguing that those who participate in negative ways, such as committing crimes and harming others, are negatively affecting their communities, and therefore are labeled “bad citizens.”

In his text on citizenship within the 21st century, Russell Dalton (2009) explains that to be a “good citizen” today often requires individuals to adhere to what he calls “engaged citizenship” (p. 5). Engaged citizenship includes concern for the welfare of others and also social rights and responsibility of citizens. WU and FHF participants align themselves with Dalton’s notion of engaged citizenship by outlining a definition of
citizenship that is predicated on service to others in their communities. By supporting Dalton’s notion of engaged citizenship, the participants are also sustaining the notion that “good citizenship,” or inclusive citizenship one could argue, requires some type of engagement within civil society.

Conceptualizing good citizenship as service to one’s community reinforces the civic republicanism approach to citizenship and connects to Lister (1999) and Young’s (2000) support of expanding citizenship outside political lines. As explained earlier, a necessary step when working to create inclusionary citizenship is to expand the scope of what constitutes productive work to include civic engagement and other forms of community services. By connecting citizenship to community interaction and emphasizing civic engagement as productive citizenship, WU and FHF members create spaces for multiple individuals to participate and claim the identity of “good citizens.”

The liberal subject approach to citizenship limits the scope of those who qualify as “productive” citizens as those who are capable of economic productivity and merit. By centering the scope of productivity in the community, and extending the context of what counts as “productive actions” to include volunteering and community service, WU and FHF members begin to conceptualize citizenship as more inclusive.

Further, by expanding what constitutes productive activities, the participants’ idea of citizenship embraces volunteer and care work as what Fuller, Kershaw, and Pulkingham (2008) describe as “an important aspect of citizenship responsibility” (p. 158). Specifically, their expansion of citizenship to the community helps support the historic work of women as primary caretakers and community volunteers. Women, especially women of color, have historically been central to unpaid volunteer and care-
work and feminist scholarship has highlighted the necessity of women’s unpaid labor in the public sphere. Through their emphasis on active citizenship and service to the community, WU and FHF members give attention to the importance of women’s unpaid labor that often goes unnoticed within communities and, as feminist scholars argue (Acklesberg, 2010; Lister, 2003; Naples, 1998a), unnoticed as valid political activities. In their interviews, they recognize the historical legacy of women, primarily low-income women and women of color, who worked to strengthen communities by engaging in small acts of care such as providing child-care for neighbors, meals for the hungry, and clothing for those in need (see Robin, 2009; Sherry, 2009). Thus, by centering care work and civic engagement in their understandings of citizenship, WU and FHF members work to expand the scope of citizenship outside traditional political barriers and help allow for the inclusion for women and other marginalized groups.

In addition, centralizing citizenship on service to one’s community opens up space for marginalized groups to develop a political voice within local spaces. In this way, the WU and FHF thoughts on community service connect back to Young’s (2000) notion of inclusionary citizenship as centered in the community. In her text, Young supports expanding citizenship to the public sphere, which for her includes the physical public space, the relationships among citizens within that space, and the forms of speech conducted within the public sphere (p. 168). For Young, civil society allows freedom in which marginalized groups can “find each other and form associations [such as WU and FHF] to improve their lives through mutual aid and articulation of group consciousness” (p. 165). The activities in which WU and FHF dub “good citizenship” relate to Young’s argument in that those activities provide opportunities for WU and FHF members to
connect to other low/no income individuals and give support not offered by the state or economy. As expressed by WU and FHF members, their responsibility as “good” citizens is to help those who cannot help themselves by providing services and aid not available or not provided by the state. Providing such services allows those left outside of exclusionary citizenship an opportunity for support and also gives opportunity for WU and FHF members to act on their citizenship responsibilities. Thus, by centering citizenship on community service, WU and FHF members embody some of the tenants of Young’s suggestions for developing inclusionary citizenship.

Yet, while the image of citizenship as outlined by WU and FHF members does expand the definition of productive action to allow marginalized groups equal opportunities, WU and FHF articulations of productivity and the “good vs. bad citizen” dichotomy also can be problematic. True, their image of citizenship pushes past the liberal subject, expands citizenship into community spaces, and includes acts of volunteerism and care work as forms of responsible work. Yet, centering “good citizenship” on productive action and service may work to reinforce the very exclusions WU and FHF members are against. In other words, their image of “good citizenship” may also work to perpetuate the liberal individualism model of citizenship and the neoliberal emphasis on productivity. Unlike the neoliberal vision of citizenship, the WU and FHF participants do not center productivity in the economic sphere. But supporting the concept of ‘productivity’ as a measurable indicator of citizenship is problematic as it reinforces the *necessity* of productivity for good citizenship. Only those individuals who positively “give back” to their communities through can claim the identity of “good” citizen; productive action remains a necessary component of the citizenship equation.
While the WU and FHF members’ vision of good citizenship does open up the space for the inclusion of individuals who would otherwise be excluded, it also reinforces the idea that productivity guarantees rewards. In other words, civic engagement and volunteerism equals good citizenship status. In a way, their comments directly connect to the limiting argument put forth in method one of Chapter One, that liberation and empowerment are available through productive action.

In addition, some of the interviewees’ responses seem to contradict their descriptions of what constitutes “good” citizenship behavior. First, their ideas of good citizenship contradict their critiques of limited citizenship for prisoners. Returning to their discussion of territory and the prison complex, WU and FHF members are quick to challenge the assumption that those who have engaged in the prison complex are “bad” citizens. For the participants, a criminal past should not exclude one from access to citizenship. Yet, members understand “good” citizenship as mutually beneficial productive action and one could argue that actions leading to prison sentences are often not mutually beneficial. If citizenship is based on an idea of productivity based on responsible action and service to others, how can those who do not engage in such productive behavior obtain access? Further, is the state not warranted at limiting the citizenship of those who go against WU and FHF’s understandings of “good” citizen behavior?

A second point of contradiction comes in questioning who has access to “good” citizen behavior. In other words, is the very idea of serving others and giving back to one’s community a privileged concept? Many low/no income individuals, including some WU and FHF members such as Clinton, Juanita, and Candice, struggle to manage
multiple jobs in addition to taking care of children and aging family members. Their time to participate in the larger community remains limited, which also limits their ability to serve community members. Further, if one of the responsibilities of citizenship is to help those who cannot help themselves, how do those individuals in the latter group participate? In what ways can those citizens who are confined to their homes or who are physically unable to actively participate in the community engage in ‘good’ citizenship production? While these questions remain left unanswered by WU and FHF interviewees, they raise critical issues regarding how expanding productive activity for marginalized groups may continue to exclude certain individuals.

It is not evident through interview conversations whether WU and FHF members realize how their attitudes and actions maintain connection to neoliberal ideas of good citizenship, nor how their understanding of citizenship productivity is privileged. Yet, given their position as low/no income individuals, a possible connection between their attitudes and neoliberalism could relate to the relevancy of neoliberal policies and welfare programs within their lives. A central point to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) is the promotion of active citizenship and civic volunteerism as a moral substitute to paid labor. PRWORA emphasizes the meritocratic notion that hard work creates financial gain; yet the policy does not limit hard work as paid employment, but rather requires recipients to volunteer in lieu of paid labor as much as 30 hours a week.\(^\text{40}\) Because some WU and FHF participants currently

\(^{40}\) For a good summary of PRWORA work and community service requirements, see Mink’s (1998) text on welfare reform and the criminalization of welfare mothers. In her text, Mink analyzes the difference between the treatment of welfare mothers engaging in community service and middle/upper class women who similarly volunteer. As Mink claims, policies such as
collect benefits through the state, they encounter messages encouraging economic productivity and community services as necessary parts of “good” citizenship. Perhaps their construction of a “good vs. bad” citizenship dichotomy is a result of their experience under new welfare reform?\(^4\) As MacDonald and Ruckert (2009) argue in their piece on post-neoliberalism, the neoliberal state has often been “actively involved in the construction of the molding of bodies and minds” (p. 9). While WU and FHF members do re-center citizenship within the community, their support of productivity as a necessary clause of “good citizenship” may not be as liberating.

Another explanation of their subconscious support of the neoliberal citizen model connects to Barbara Cruikshank’s (1999) theories of technologies of citizenship, as introduced in Chapter Two. As Cruikshank explains, technologies of citizenship work to empower individuals to become active citizens while simultaneously maintaining a power structure in which citizens are regulated. Using her argument, then, WU and FHF members believe they are engaging in good citizenship because they serve others within their communities, yet the correlation of good citizenship to community service is influenced by the state’s desire to regulate bodies of marginalized citizens. Even WU and FHF participants hint that that the state has an alternative motive when constructing PRWORA criminalize single mothers by requiring community service as a substitute for paid work for a limited time; while middle/upper class women are able to engage in community service leisurely, low/no income women, as Mink claims, are required.

Mary Hawkesworth (2002) claims that the neoliberal push for economic advancement of minorities and the incorporation of women into civil society “may be another instance where structures that count as progressive for men have markedly different consequences for women” (p. 307). PRWORA supports the idea that good citizenship necessitates economic productivity, yet as many feminist theorists argue (Hancock, 2004; Mink, 1998; Naples, 1998), such image is gendered, raced, and classed. Connecting back to Hawkesworth’s point, then, demonstrates that images of citizenship supported under PRWORA may not necessarily be as beneficial for marginalized citizens as it is for those constructing the policies themselves – upper/middle class politicians.
policies and programs that “help” marginalized groups. As members explain, while the state appears concerned about economic and social injustice on paper, the root of policies and programs aimed at needy populations actually work to further marginalize individuals rather than help. This is evident in FHF director Barbara’s referral to the decline in welfare rolls and the disappearance of low/no income women from welfare programs. Individuals believe they are being helped when in actuality they are locked into a system of inequality. Thus, encouraging individuals to believe good citizenship warrants productive action may not be an independent thought of WU and FHF members, but rather a way in which the state manipulates individuals to act in certain ways, thereby further marginalizing them.

It is difficult to determine whether the need for WU and FHF members to serve others is merely an example of Cruikshank’s’ technologies of citizenship, or whether it is actually an attempt to develop more inclusionary forms of citizenship for low/no income individuals. For the purposes of this study, I am hesitant to completely dismiss their definitions as mere perpetuations of the neoliberal agenda. On the one hand, their support of the “good vs. bad” citizenship dichotomy maintains a neoliberal-emphasis on citizenship and may work to exclude certain marginalized individuals. Yet, their critiques do reveal important information about the centrality of the community in their definitions. Unlike the liberal-individual model that places little emphasis on the community in which a citizen belongs, the WU and FHF members’ definition of citizenship centers individual productivity within the good of the community. While a

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42 Barbara’s comments directly connect to the feminist critiques (Kingfisher, 2002; Mink, 1998; Newbeck, 2009) of PRWORA as providing little support for low/no income women as they go through the transition from AFDC to TANF.
large component of their definition is the idea of “productivity,” an even larger component is the greater community’s needs.

New policies enacted by PRWORA encourage community service as an essential part of neoliberal productivity; but WU and FHF members’ understanding of service is not predicated on the receipt of benefits nor is it monitored by the state. Their emphasis on service to others and the community exists outside of policy and state regulation; for them, it is merely a form of surviving and supporting other low/no income individuals. Thus, despite the potential influence of the neoliberal agenda on their definitions, the views presented by WU and FHF members do hold potential for developing inclusionary forms of citizenship. In addition, though their ideas of good productive behavior may limit specific groups who have difficult engaging in service, WU and FHF members acknowledge the difficulties some may experience in their critiques (see Candice’s discussion of women and care-work). Perhaps they are more forgiving of those individuals for whom fulfilling their citizen responsibilities may be difficult because they realize the intersectional relationships between oppression and gender, race, and class identities.

In order to alleviate some of the tensions that arise from issues of productivity, I now turn attention to the second theme to emerge from the interviews: the definitions of what constitutes “community.” Though I have outlined some of the inherent problems within WU and FHF’s ideas regarding productivity and good citizenship qualities, what remains evident is their push against the boundaries of what constructs the community and their emphasis on responsible community service within citizenship. As I will explore, their understandings of the community offer some challenges to Cruikshank’s
theory of technologies of citizenship by engaging with neoliberal constructions of community in nuanced ways.

The Oppositional Community

A second theme to emerge from WU and FHF members is the overview of what they consider and articulate as “community”. For them, the centralization of economic marginalization greatly influences their emphasis on the community-aspect of citizenship, their lack-of-faith in the government, and their understanding that money controls all social and political institutions. Because they have experience living as low/no income individuals, they have firsthand knowledge of the realities of economic stratification on political structures. Further, their own experiences in poverty fuels their resentment and anger towards the governments’ dismissal of poverty as a necessary social problem. As evident in many of the interviews, not only do WU and FHF members feel hopeless about the ability of the “poor” to have a voice in politics, but they also feel anger towards the state discounting their potential.

As previously discussed, the WU and FHF members view citizenship as centered in the community and focus on the responsibility to service to others. For them, the role of the community is to support individuals and provide space in which the three levels of citizenship responsibility can occur: to help those who cannot help themselves; to educate fellow marginalized individuals about power structures; to educate those in positions of dominance. As citizens, individuals have a responsibility to educate other marginalized people about power inequities as well as educate those in positions of power about their own privilege. The community acts as the location in which these citizenship responsibilities are developed and sustained. A key component of these three areas of
responsibility is developing an oppositional consciousness, which for the purposes of this study is defined as “the empowering mental state that prepares members of an oppressed group to act to undermine, reform, or overthrow a system of human domination” (Mansbridge, 2001). Though WU and FHF members differed on their definitions of the community, a common theme throughout their responses was the relationship between the community, social activism, and the development of a critical lens directed at power structures that keep them marginalized. Thus, they desire an oppositional community in which their ideal citizenship can exist.

If the role of citizenship for WU and FHF members is to responsibility help others understand power hierarchies and injustices, the role of the state is to create an environment in which individuals are able to act out their citizens’ responsibilities. By outlining an image of the government as the proctor of rights and enforcer of equality, the participants advocate for an extensive view of government that seeks to provide programs and social services to its citizens in order to protect their equality and create a just society. As Dalton (2009) explains, an expansive government prioritizes “social rights” and works to “redress” marginalizing conditions (p. 103-4). Such expansive view of government connects to the idea of engaged-citizenship, which the participants also support. As Dalton again explains, an expansive government “provides for the needy, develops social service programs, and is a guarantor of basic civil rights” (p. 104). Because the participants support a view of citizenship that prioritizes the wellbeing of the community as a whole, it is logical that they would also support a government that similarly prioritizes communal wellbeing and social rights. WU and FHF members’ support for the expansion of state services is a testament to their understanding that the
state, in conjunction with civil society, is a *necessary* player when working to create inclusionary citizenship. In this sense, they align with feminist political theorists who argue that community participation and civil society alone will not be able to singularly create more inclusive understandings of citizenship (Lister, 1997; Young, 2000); rather, the state needs to be critiqued and challenged as well as a space in which marginalized citizens can create political voice and break-down exclusions.

Throughout their conversations, WU and FHF members articulate a critique of the relationship between the state, community, and neoliberalism as discussed in Chapter Two. They dissect the myth of meritocracy, which stems from members’ own experiences trying to “move” out of poverty. Many of the WU and FHF members expressed frustration at the meritocratic ideology that through hard work, one can achieve financial stability, and their frustration stems from their economic experiences as low/no income individuals. As they have first-hand experience trying to achieve the “American dream,” they also have first-hand knowledge regarding the deceptiveness of meritocracy. As articulated in their interviews, despite hard work in low-wage jobs, FHF and WU members continue to struggle with economic disparities. In their eyes, no amount of hard work can remedy some of the structural economic biases supported by the state. WU and FHF members are critical of the state, for if the state supports the meritocratic ideal, and they understand meritocracy as a fallacy, then the state should also be mistrusted.

Because they cannot trust the state, WU and FHF members put faith in individual members of the larger community. For instance, if, as Barbara from FHF explained, the state does not express an interest in poverty issues, or issues related to race or gender differences as well, it becomes necessary to involve the local community in these issues so
as to force the state’s interest. Their opinions echo that of Young (2000) who states that the community can “enable citizens to expose injustices in state and economic power and make the exercise of power more accountable” (p. 72). Since the state does not focus on issues of poverty and power, it becomes necessary for the community to take up this action and for individual members of that community to engage in a critical response.

Though their ideas of productivity may align with those of neoliberalism, WU and FHF members’ ideas of community are not as similar. A new dichotomy emerges between the neoliberal view of community and the WU and FHF’s understanding of community: the neoliberal versus oppositional community. The community within a neoliberal framework acts as the place in which individuals work to help other individuals by absorbing responsibilities from the state. In other words, the neoliberal community represents the transfer of responsibility for social services and resources from the state to its citizens. As Goode and Maskovsky (2001) explain, a central component of the neoliberal agenda is the privatization of state services and the push for individuals to empower themselves through the markets, not state programs. Here, the role of the community becomes one of maintaining a level of order among citizens, creating some level of support for marginalized groups, and providing resources ignored by the state.

However, as the participants articulated, the neoliberal community does not necessarily favor those living at the margin. For them, the state supports neoliberal agenda of free markets and depends on low/no income individuals to do the “grunt work” necessary for capitalist enterprise. While neoliberalism decrees such “grunt work” as empowering low/no income individuals within the market, WU and FHF participants understand such labor as merely keeping them limited to a cycle of low-wages and
poverty. In addition, as they explained, the neoliberal community framework significantly influences their citizenship rights as marginalized individuals. For WU and FHF members, citizenship does not exist within the community but in-fact exists within the scope of capitalist needs by basing “good citizenship” on those who are economically productive. There is little room for inclusion other types of productive activities within the neoliberal community as true empowerment remains within the confines of the market.

In addition, as Hyatt (2001) explains, though neoliberalism encourages community volunteerism as replacement for state services, it does not favor the type of volunteer work done by low/no income individuals; as she states,

Neoliberal governance masks the withdrawal of public resources from all communities by making volunteerism an obligation of citizenship for the working and middle classes, while simultaneously diminishing the significance of volunteerism in poor communities toward the end of creating an extremely low-paid workforce. (p. 228)

Her claim that neoliberalism diminishes the significance of low/no income individuals’ volunteerism is echoed by WU and FHF participants, who understand their work as fulfilling the “grunt labor” for the market, or filling the holes left behind in social services for the “needy” by the state.

On the other hand, the participants’ notion of community centers on the existence of an oppositional consciousness. For them, the community is where individuals make decisions, discuss grievances, support individuals, and share their voices. For WU and FHF, the ideal community represents the space in which oppositional consciousness and critical discussions of power can develop and flourish, and their ideal views of citizenship can develop. Unlike the neoliberal community, in which grunt work is expected and
supported, the oppositional community allows space in which economic stratification and the “grunt work” can be challenged. In addition, the participants believe that government should be run by and for the people; thus, the oppositional community represents the ideal space in which conversations about politics and governance can take place.

It is necessary to relate this new dichotomy back to discussions of citizenship, for as WU and FHF members articulate, their experiences as marginalized citizens remains connected to their experiences both within the markets and their individual communities. As outlined in Chapter Two, inclusionary citizenship encourages the incorporation of gender, race, and class inequalities into the discussion, and by re-centering citizenship in the community rather than the economy, WU and FHF members take the first step to re-define citizenship as inclusionary. WU and FHF members are aware of the ways in which political and social institutions, supported by economic forces, are gendered, raced, and classed. In their interviews, they demonstrate an understanding that citizenship and the state support various “isms” that work to keep groups separated and marginalized. For them, the community provides space in which those “isms” can be challenged. By separating their ideas of community from neoliberalism, WU and FHF members are able to understand the pervasiveness of “isms” within state and economic structures and are better able to tackle issues of gender, race, and class differences within their own communities. In addition, as Lister (2003) explains, establishing a sense of agency for individual citizens is a necessary component of the development of inclusionary citizenship rights for those to whom agency is often limited (p. 34-7). WU and FHF members centralize the issue of agency and empowerment within the
oppositional community; to them, it is imperative that individuals feel they have a voice and presence in government and helping to develop that voice starts within local community spaces.

Further, as Lister posits, citizenship based on the neoliberal notion of economic liberation and freedom through the markets only works to further limit citizenship for specific groups. In other words, for those individuals for whom the market is not liberating (i.e.: low-wage workers), citizenship as economic freedom only further excludes them as viable citizens since their low-wages require dependency on support services and resources. Rather than liberating individuals, participation in the market further marginalizes them as low-wage employees. WU and FHF members echo Lister’s sentiments in their understanding of the state’s need for their low-wage “grunt work.” Their understanding of community attempts to help liberate those individuals for whom the market is exclusionary through development of an oppositional consciousness.

In addition to supporting the creation of inclusionary citizenship, WU and FHF’s sense of oppositional community also seeks to address some of the earlier addressed issues related to productivity. I proposed using Cruikshank’s (1999) theory of technologies of citizenship as an explanation for why WU and FHF members may perpetuate a neoliberal emphasis on productivity within their views of citizenship. Cruikshank’s argues that citizens’ actions are regulated “only after the capacity to act as a certain kind of citizens with certain aims is instilled” (p. 4). The neoliberal community desires individuals to act as responsible members of civil society whose service to others, while dubbed voluntary and empowering, acts only to replace the state’s services. WU and FHF members, in contrast, desire individuals to act as responsible members of
society who act with an oppositional lens to power structures that keep them marginalized. While they may not fully recognize the influence of technologies of citizenship over their actions, the existence of their oppositional lens differentiates them from the neoliberal citizen model. Thus, even though their ideas of productivity may connect to Cruikshank’s theories of citizen-subject disempowerment, WU and FHF manage to challenge the scope of citizen-subject operationalization by locating productivity and citizenship within the oppositional community.

I argue that WU and FHF members are beginning to construct ideas of community that differ from neoliberalism. They recognize a sense of dissatisfaction with the neoliberal community and desire the creation of this oppositional community. However, there still remain connections between the neoliberal and oppositional communities that must be addressed in order for marginalized populations to embrace some sense of inclusionary citizenship. For instance, work conducted within the community (i.e.: service to others) does not necessarily have to exist outside the scope of the neoliberal agenda, but rather can work to reaffirm neoliberal endeavors within new spaces. Providing education or food for low-income families is an act of community service, but also alleviates economic burden from the state, thereby placing emphasis on service provision to a new population. A key trait of neoliberalism is the privatization of social services and the push for welfare programs away from the state and on to civil society. By providing services and help to marginalized populations, WU and FHF allow the state to focus energies towards what WU and FHF members describe as “corporate need.”
However, as previously emphasized, the key point of separation remains the presence of an oppositional lens within their service work. The ideal neoliberal community prefers citizens to serve others without questioning, yet as WU and FHF members displayed, the very essence of their approach to service is to empower other low/no income individuals to recognize their own economic marginalization. While in neoliberal communities individuals act in their own best interests, for WU and FHF, their distrust in the state and market interests fuels their service to others. Thus, their work is not only providing food to low/no income families, but also discussing issues of power inequalities that keep groups in need of food programs. While activists have not yet presented a complete alternative to the neoliberal community, their emphasis on developing critical consciousness throughout their service work separates them from the neoliberal model.

**Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the participants’ views regarding the distinct relationship between citizenship, the state, and economic stratification. What the chapter demonstrated was the multiple approaches to citizenship and the state, as well as the perceived influence of neoliberalism on class structures. Giving attention to the perspectives of WU and FHF members helped reveal the ways in which everyday citizens understand political concepts, as well as how exclusionary citizenship and limiting state relationships influence one’s perceived existence in the political and social realm. This chapter also opened discussions of how individualized experiences of race and gender differences shape one’s perception of the classed-nature of citizenship and state relations. Though the participants expressed an idealistic view of citizenship as inclusive and based
in the community, they were quick to acknowledge that citizenship still remains exclusive with individuals marginalized based on their social identities and lack of membership in communities. Furthermore, the participants expressed a lack of faith in the ability of the state to protect the interests of all citizens and to exist as a “by the people, for the people” entity. The influence of neoliberal agenda clearly plays a role in the construction and maintenance of exclusive citizenship for WU and FHF members, and as they express, American society remains swayed by class structures that acts to stigmatize and limit the voices of low/no income citizens. In addition, as I problematize, the influence of the neoliberal agenda may also influence the very understanding of ideal citizenship as presented by WU and FHF members.

This chapter outlined the basic attitudes of WU and FHF members with regard to citizenship, the state, and the influence of class. What remains to be seen is how exactly WU and FHF members are attempting to work towards their idealistic notions of citizenship and the state through their activist work. Moreover, how does their activist work connect to the dichotomy of oppositional community versus neoliberal community? WU and FHF activists recognize the need to motivate individuals to resist privatization and return to the community, and as Lister (2003) explains, “local activism is important for citizenship from the perspective of both its impact on the wider community and on the individuals involved” (p. 32). The following chapter explores the ways in which WU and FHF’s activist engagements work to reconstruct definitions of exclusionary citizenship. I also explore the relevancy of productivity and community within their activist programs, and explore how their activities might work to answer some of the questions I raised regarding the presence of neoliberal influences in their critiques.
In addition, the following chapter will also introduce the influence of the current economic recession on both the work of WU and FHF members as well as on the process of redefining citizenship as inclusive. The participants understand citizenship and the state as predicated on a class structures with those in poverty being silenced at the bottom and those with wealth controlling the government. However, many of WU and FHF participants hinted that a change to the class contract may be developing due to the recession and changes in attitudes. As Tina from WU explained, the recession may be beneficial for social activism as “maybe we can start making partnerships with middle class people who are starting to see that they are affected by these things, too.” Thus, the following chapter will incorporate a discussion of how the recession impacts the development of inclusive citizenship through collaborative community activism.

I end this chapter with a quote from a longstanding WU member, Sherry. In describing the relationship between WU and the state, she outlines the need for collective action and democratic disruption in order to create inclusive citizenship. Sherry stated:

It is a mistake to cast the state as this blind, unthinking, unseeing entity. It is, but that blind, unseeing, unthinking entity is made up of individuals who do see and who can think and that’s where groups like WU come in. Because if they can reach the individual that makes up the state, then they can change the agenda of the blind . . . . The state is going to serve the interest of the loudest constituents and the constituents that most serve their interest. The easy way to that is money. If I’m a politician and I want to get re-elected, and you’re going to give me $1,000 to my campaign, I’m going to do what you want. But the only way to offset that for people who are poor is with volume of people. ‘I want your $1,000, but I want these 50 people who are outside my door that the media are filming to go away more’.

Clearly social activism plays a key role in creating inclusive citizenship for WU and FHF members. What follows is a detailed look at their activist efforts to redefine citizenship,
break through economic marginalization, and re-center focus to the oppositional community.
CHAPTER 5: EDUCATION, COLLABORATION, AND COMMUNITY-BASED CITIZENSHIP

“Alone I am just a single voice, but as a collective, we can be a giant voice and they can’t ignore lots of us.” Alice from WU

“How do you build hope when the world is such gloom, you know? How do you build hope? But we have a responsibility.” Edgar from FHF

Introduction

Interviews with Women Uprising (WU) and Families Helping Families (FHF) members demonstrate their understanding of the inherent influences class plays with regards to citizenship and state relations. As explained in the previous chapter, participants believe that citizenship within the United States relies on the neoliberal premise of economic productivity, with the state and government officials supporting the maintenance of an economically divided populace. For the participants, their status as low/no income individuals results in their exclusion from the state. In contrast, their ideal visions of citizenship are not exclusionary, but work to allows citizenship status to all individuals who serve other citizens and engage with the community. As I argued in the previous chapter, their expanded views of citizenship help them develop spaces in which marginalized citizens can engage in their own agency and develop an oppositional consciousness around issues of class, gender, and racial differences. What this chapter aims to investigate is the connection between their critiques and visions with their grassroots activism. Do WU and FHF participants use their activist work as strategies to move towards their ideal views of inclusionary citizenship, or does their activist work
remain tied to the neoliberal agenda? Does their activist work connect to their ideas of an oppositional community and if so, how does it emerge through their programs?

This chapter attempts to understand the impact of the members’ critiques and visions of citizenship and the state on WU and FHF’s activist programs. As Collins (1991) explains, “in order to achieve change, the expression of individual agency needs to be translated into collective action” (as cited in Lister, 1997, p. 41). This chapter highlights the ways in which the activists’ discussion of citizenship exists within their community work. In addition, I attempt to connect their activist strategies to the dichotomy of the neoliberal versus oppositional community so as to demonstrate the connection between their activist programs and the development of inclusionary citizenship.

Similar to the previous chapter’s organization, this chapter begins with a description of WU and FHF programs and then moves to connect their activities to citizenship theories. I begin by breaking down WU and FHF community activities into sub-categories in an effort to understand the broader implications of their work. The sub-categories overlap with each other, but by separating the activities, I hope to understand the intricate ways in which WU and FHF work to engage in the main components of social activism as discussed in Chapter Three: to develop political (oppositional) consciousness, empower low/no income individuals, and challenge power structures. I then move to analyzing specifically how these sub-categories connect to the development of inclusionary citizenship as outlined by WU and FHF participants and the desire for an oppositional community. In what way does WU and FHF’s activism engage with their ideal views of citizenship and the state and does their activist programming challenge
exclusionary citizenship? What presence does the neoliberal agenda play in their community work and how might their grassroots activities connect to an understanding of citizenship as situated within civic engagement?

As I explore their activist work, I aim to integrate a discussion of the current recession into my analysis. Many of the WU and FHF members discuss how the recession has influenced their work and by exploring these perspectives, I aim to understand how an economic shift in American society may be beneficial to the overall goals of the antipoverty activism. Specifically, what impact has this recession played on WU and FHF efforts to establish more equitable citizenship rights for low/no income citizens? Also, what influence, if any, has the recession had on neoliberal goals and in what ways are WU and FHF adjusting their activities to better serve new populations?

**Grassroots Organizing**

The overall goals of both organizations are to empower low/no income individuals, raise awareness about poverty issues to the broader public, and ultimately eradicate poverty. The following section analyzes their activist engagements and looks specifically at the types of programs they offer as well as the attitudes shared regarding their grassroots organizing. I separate the activities of WU and FHF into four sub-categories: *educational outreach, intersectional collaborations, disruptive politics*, and *political interaction*. By breaking the activities into sub-categories, I hope to uncover the reasons behind their engagement in specific activities as well as how each different sub-category connects to their larger organizational goals.
Educational Outreach

A central component of both WU and FHF is educating low/no income individuals as well as those of other class-status about issues related to poverty. As outlined in Chapter Four, key components of the members’ idea of citizenship focus on three areas of responsibility: to help those who cannot help themselves; to educate fellow marginalized individuals about power structures; to educate those in positions of dominance. Both WU and FHF create educational programming that works to integrate the three areas of citizenship responsibility in several ways. Members strive to help inform impoverished individuals about their political and social rights and also encourage them to understand their own political consciousness. They also work to help low/no income individuals understand the inherent intersectional nature of economic disparities within American society. In addition, they also work to educate middle/upper class individuals about the realities of those living in poverty as well as the systemic perpetuation of economic stratification across institutions. WU and FHF participants educate individuals through both formal and informal programs.

Educating low/no income citizens

Key targets for WU and FHF’s educational programming are those individuals living in poverty within the larger Corners and Pickerington communities. Topics on which WU and FHF members discuss vary from political structures and rules, to policies and legal mandates, to the multiple ways in which class exists within American society. WU and FHF members also help low/no income individuals obtain more structured educational skills by providing help with GED classes, typing classes, tax educational classes, etc. Throughout the interviews, I asked participants to explain their justification
for educational outreach programs for low/no income individuals, as well as to explain their own personal views on the relevance of such programs to the larger organizational purpose.

Overall, the efforts to educate and empowering low/no income individuals connect back to notion of challenging power dynamics as discussed in Chapter Three. Edgar from FHF explained that “if you’re educated, you become a threat.” In his interview, he connected the necessity of education to the historical legacy of keeping slaves and immigrant workers uneducated; as he explained, “knowledge is power and people in power can be threatened,” but can also generate threats. Other WU and FHF members echo his sentiments that educating marginalized populations is a necessary requirement for empowerment. For WU member Alice, WU helps give impoverished people “the education that no one else will give them.” By providing them education, WU and FHF are helping to shift the power dynamics often oppressive for low/no income individuals. For WU member Clinton, educating impoverished individuals is the first step in helping them move out of poverty. As he stated, “education is key… we don’t have because we don’t know.” Thus, educational programming is seen not only as providing immediate benefits to low/no income individuals, but also as providing long-term benefits to the larger antipoverty struggle.

Some of the programs formally engage low/no income community individuals in specific ways. For instance, WU offers a program dubbed the Revolutionary Reading Group (RRG), which provides a space for community participants and WU members to discuss works of revolutionary thinkers and leaders. As Francine explained, the RRG “gets together once a week and reads together materials about organizing and other
people’s struggles.” She stated that a recent book focused on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and demonstrated to RRG participants that there are people outside of Pickerington struggling with poverty, racism, and sexism. According to Alice, the RRG “is not only a consciousness raising group, but helps build connections in the community.” In other words, the RRG provides space for individuals to discuss their own personal experiences with oppression, become educated about examples of organizing and struggles world-wide, and provide opportunities for other non-WU members to come and participate in the education process.

Other programs engage with the community in less formal settings. For FHF, their weekly Bread Program acts as both an educational space as well as a service program. The Bread Program offers opportunities for individuals to receive free bread and other baked goods donated from local Corners’s bakeries. The program acts as an outreach initiative to help Corners’s most needy, but by opening their office on “bread days” (Barbara, 2009), FHF members also present opportunities for individuals who receive the bread to share their stories and problems, thereby creating an informal educational setting. FHF members Candice and Barbara are present each week for the Bread Program and use it as an opportunity to connect to those within the community as well as to understand some of the issues facing low/no income individuals in Corners. Further, by exchanging in dialogues with recipients, Candice and Barbara are able to talk to individuals they might otherwise not have exposure to about current political issues and current antipoverty activist initiatives. According to Barbara and Candice, many of the bread recipients become active in FHF’s other programming after hearing of the organizations’ work through the bread program. They are also able to discover concerns
they have regarding politics or social services and extend that to other FHF members, thereby helping maintain an awareness of how FHF can help the community.

An obvious goal of these formal and informal educational programs is to empower low/no income individuals to become social change-agents. As Edgar explained: “we have a responsibility to work with vulnerable populations, to educate them.” In doing so, Edgar stated, FHF members help encourage vulnerable individuals to see their own self-worth and establish their own sense of confidence. In addition, the WU and FHF educational programs foster a sense of consciousness-raising for low/no income individuals. As stated in the interviews, a goal of the educational outreach is to empower low/no income individuals to understand their own financial situation and develop their own sense of a political voice (Alice, 2009; Barbara, 2009; Candice, 2009; Edgar, 2009; Francine, 2009; Kayla, 2009). Such goals directly relate to the idea of consciousness-raising as discussed in Chapter Three; by focusing efforts on empowering individuals, the development of a political consciousness is possible.

Through programs such as the RRG and the Bread Program, WU and FHF open up space for dialogues in which individuals can share stories and develop their own understanding of power inequalities. Alice from WU stated that WU’s educational outreach gives space for people to “be heard, to express what they have lived in and . . . what nobody is willing to do for them.” In a similar vein, Sherry from WU used an old proverb of “give a man to fish, he’ll eat for a day but teach a man to fish and he’ll eat for a lifetime” to summarize the mission of WU. By teaching low/no income individuals to “fish”, WU works to develop political consciousness and foster space for those living in poverty to feel empowered as political actors. Developing a political consciousness, thus,
helps empower individuals to understand their own political voice and share it in the community.

FHF and WU both work to foster spaces in which individuals can impart their experiences in unique ways. WU developed a collaborative book project called *A Mile in Our Shoes*, which worked to help low/no income individuals communicate their personal struggles of gender, race, and class inequalities to new audiences. The book, which showcased stories from various community members and antipoverty organizers, was an opportunity for WU to connect to other community members and engage in a discussion of poverty and resistance with people across Pickerington. As Robin from WU explained:

I think the book offered the people who wrote their stories down an experience, like a freeing experience. You know, just to be able to tell your story and get it out there and then to be able to read the stories of others makes you realize that you’re not alone.

A sense of oppositional consciousness was developed through the act of writing the stories as well as reading the stories of other contributors. The book also incorporated issues of race, gender, education, and legal justice into stories, providing individuals opportunities to understand the various ways in which various social institutions support experiences of poverty. One of the stories is that of interviewee Dustin, who describes the sense of responsibility he felt upon his release from prison to educate other individuals about the perils of poverty, drugs, and alcohol. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Dustin’s experiences as a Latino man and former convict may influence his perception of the realities of citizenship for low/no income individuals and the importance of highlighting difference and prejudices when discussing citizenship status.
The prison complex, which itself is raced and classed with many of its inhabitants either racial minorities, low/no income or both, may have provided Dustin an environment in which his awareness of the intersectionality of class and race developed. Seeing a pattern in the identity of others within prison may have impacted his view of the inequalities individuals face in low/no income areas. While class may not be his primary identifier as an activist, he views race in addition to class as critical to the perpetuation of inequality those who have criminal backgrounds experience.

Lyra, another interviewee, outlines her experiences in poverty in *A Mile in Our Shoes*, which she attributes to the gendered and classed nature of being raised by a teenage mother who carried the family in and out of welfare services. Though Lyra’s racial identity as white may render her privileged in some spaces, her experiences as a low/no income child, and her current position as a struggling student and mother, shaped her perception of the connections between class disparities and other identity issues.

WU took steps to share the book with other audiences by hosting public readings and selling the book at local events. In addition, the actual publication of the book was an act of political resistance as the book was manufactured in-house with WU members piecing the book together by hand. As Alice explained, “the only help we received outside of ourselves as that we didn’t print it ourselves. We went to a printing company. Everything else was done by us. And I think that was really powerful and it shows just what we can do.” Thus, for Alice and other WU members, the book represented the power of educating the larger public and the power in allowing low/no income individuals opportunities to voice their experiences and raise awareness about poverty in Kentucky.
As part of the ongoing effort to promote the book, WU members host “Truth Commissions,” or events designated as spaces in which people can share their experiences of human rights violations and other stories of struggle. Because A Mile in Our Shoes was a compilation of various stories of poverty injustice, many of the writers use the Truth Commissions as a forum to continue their stories and educate other community members on both the value of dialogue and the importance of antipoverty activism.

Ultimately, whether through empowering others or helping to foster a political consciousness, the educational programming agenda of WU and FHF connects to their idea of citizenship as service to one’s community. Many of the participants explained that they have a responsibility to help educate fellow impoverished citizens about their rights. As Clinton from WU exclaimed, once “we’ve been exposed, once we know something, then it makes you a fool if you don’t [pass the knowledge along].” For him, those who possess knowledge are responsible for acting on that knowledge and working to change power dynamics and structures, and if educated individuals choose not to act, then they become part of the problem, not the solution. Clinton’s own position as a low/no income African-American male may have influenced his understanding of the responsibility of individuals to spread discussions of inequalities and identity difference to other community members. As he explained in the interview, coming to WU helped shape her own perception of how his racial identity connects to his experiences of poverty. For him, he feels responsible to educate other low/no income members and other African-American men about the inherent system of oppression that keeps certain populations marginalized.
Educating Middle-Upper Class Citizens

In addition to targeting low/no income individuals, WU and FHF also reach out to those living at the other end of the economic spectrum. Educating middle/upper class individuals helps WU and FHF members fulfill part of their responsibility as citizens to educate those who are in positions of power about oppressive domination and injustice. Their educational efforts with the affluent center more on highlighting the realities of impoverished people as well as the discussing the various ways in which poverty is constructed and maintained as oppressive. A key goal for these educational programs is to address stereotypes of poverty and develop cross-economic alliances useful when challenging formal economic structures and generating support dollars.

One reason WU and FHF work to educate middle/upper class individuals is to dispel myths around poverty and those living in poverty. According to the interviewees, those living outside economic marginalization have stereotypical views of impoverished individuals and as a result, are unable to support antipoverty activism. As Robin from WU articulated: “our main goal is to educate the public . . . you know, downplay the impression that people are poor because people are lazy or they don’t try hard enough.” A key tool through which WU works to dispel these myths is through their Dismantling Classism Workshop. On their program brochure, WU explained that the Dismantling Classism workshops “work to fight negative stereotypes such as ‘poor people are lazy, dumb high school dropouts. They don’t want to work; they have babies to get more welfare’” (WU Brochure, 2007). WU has conducted this workshop, which centers on demystifying poverty and creating awareness about poverty issues, to corporations, local businesses, schools, and community gatherings. For WU, such workshops help educate
those of upper-class standing about the economic realities of living on minimum wage, seeking government assistance, or receiving food bank donations. Though FHF does not have a similar structured educational program in place, they do incorporate similar strategies to dispel poverty myths when working in the larger Corners public. For instance, when they give presentations at local town forums, they use similar statistical facts as the Dismantling Classism workshop, and rely on anecdotal stories to challenge images of impoverished individuals (FHF Brochure, 2005).

WU and FHF members also work to educate the middle/upper class communities about the multiple ways in economic subordination can fluctuate across geographies and time. As Sherry from WU explained, class can oppress the rich just as much as it can oppress low/no income individuals as they rich are similarly put into silos according to their economic group: “either way, you’re still trapped in and boxed in, to a certain way of being and a certain existence.” Thus, educating the wealthy not only means teaching them the ways in which low/no income individuals are oppressed, but also teaching them the various ways in which they themselves are oppressed based on class systems and structures. FHF member Edgar claimed that “a lot of us are in the same boat and we just don’t recognize it.” By educating middle/upper class individuals about their own class privilege and subsequent class oppression, WU and FHF members work to garnish support for their mission and generate nuanced ways on approaching antipoverty activism.

WU and FHF members recognize the impact the current economic crisis has played on their outreach services to middle/upper class individuals. For many of the participants, the economic recession actually benefited their community outreach in
several ways. First, the increase in middle/working class individuals becoming “working-poor” altered some of the ways in which society viewed poverty. According to some interviewees, before the financial crisis impoverished individuals were blamed for their economic misfortunes, but the financial crisis ay be challenging such stereotyping. According to some WU and FHF members (Barbara, 2009; Lyra, 2009; Tina, 2009), now that middle-class individuals are experiencing effects of poverty, they understand the interconnectedness of systems that often keep low/no income individuals impoverished. Middle-class individuals who started to experience poverty do not believe their own actions to be the source of their economic problems, but rather blame downsizing, the collapse of the housing market, etc. As WU member Tina explained, newly working-class individuals believe “they’ve been working; they’ve been doing what is right. So maybe it’s system failure now, rather than personal failure.” This shift in mentality represents an opportunity for antipoverty activists to educate their middle/upper class counterparts on the multiple ways in which systemic structures influence economic class.

A second reason why the economic crisis benefits antipoverty activism is that it increased the amount of individuals interested in antipoverty organizing. Not only are there more people experiencing poverty, but also more people recognize issues related to poverty across various areas of society. As Lyra from WU explained, “economics are getting more visibility, its directly affecting more people. And it’s more in your living room.” She continued to explain that more visibility means that poverty is relatable and the struggles of impoverished individuals are more understandable. She compared the increase in visibility of poverty with the televised coverage of civil rights organizing, explaining that the televised coverage of the riots and police brutality influenced the
success of the civil rights movement. For Lyra, the televised imagery of the financial collapse allows individuals to understand poverty and its effects in different ways; “when you have your stuff affected or they see their neighbors losing their houses, it brings a different perspective I think.”

In addition to changing the way in which they approach middle-class individuals, the financial crisis also influenced the types of educational programming WU and FHF offer. For instance, as a result of the financial crisis, FHF created new educational initiatives that partner with their middle/upper class counterparts, a program I dub the “Suburban Women’s Collective”. FHF director Barbara explained that she was contacted by a group of Corners suburban women to conduct a workshop on navigating the government assistance system. She and her FHF colleagues realized that there was a growing need for educational programs in new areas of Corners and began to collaborate with new groups of varying economic status. The groups’ relative ‘new’ status as working-class means they lack the knowledge low/no income individuals often take for granted, such as awareness about the public welfare system and food-bank locations (Barbara, 2009). While the Suburban Women’s Collective is different than the Bread Program, for instance, it works empower participants in similar ways by encouraging them to share stories and challenge power structures.

The Bread Program also allows Barbara and FHF opportunities to discuss the intersectional relationships of gender and race with respect to economic disparities. Though FHF is comprised of all African-American members, the Suburban Women’s Collective is multi-racial; thus, the program provides opportunities for Barbara to help educate the suburban women about the impact identity differences play on economic
stratification. In addition, the program gives Candice opportunities to discuss the gendered “double standard” low/no income women face when struggling to provide for their children and find employment, as articulated in the previous chapter. The program may also provide Barbara inroads to other white or racially diverse organizations in the Corners area with which she and FHF can collaborate.

Intersectional Collaborations

Another central component of WU and FHF work is their collaborations with other organizations on both local and national levels. WU and FHF collaborate with groups of varying missions, but all support the idea of intersectional collaboration.43 Groups with which WU collaborates range from small feminist health cooperatives to large state-wide coalitions and cover issues stemming from gender oppression to sexual equality to political parties (WU Brochure, 2008). FHF similar covers many issues through their collaborative organizing, though many of the groups with which they align centralize issues of economic oppression (FHF Brochure, 2007). The ways in which FHF and WU collaborate are just as diverse, from sharing financial support to co-coordinating events and to volunteering at marches.

During the interviews, several justifications for intersectional collaborations surfaced. First, WU and FHF members agreed that collaborative organizing helps generate attention and understanding of their organizational missions to a larger audience.

As FHF member Candice explained, collaborating with other groups is “definitely a benefit… definitely a benefit to have a coalition behind you and working with you. It

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43 By intersectional collaboration, I mean collaboratively organizing in ways that critically engages issues of gender, racial, sexual, and national differences as well as class divides.
gives you more exposure . . . it gives you more effectiveness, more assertiveness and more numbers.” She continued by claiming that collaborations allow FHF members to know more about the issues, subsequently increasing the educational capacity of FHF work. Collaborating also helps increase the amount of support available for WU and FHF when they host events or need volunteers. More people are willing to offer help and volunteer support for WU and FHF when needed. The benefit of collaborative organizing is mutual in this regard. Sherry from WU explained such mutual benefit when she described a specific scenario during which WU members offered help to another organization protesting discriminatory complaints against McDonalds:

The Fairness Campaign and the ACLU staged a protest in front of the McDonalds and um, a bunch of people from WU came to that protest. It was covered on the news and the end result was that McDonalds paid a $2,000 award to each of the men and initiated mandatory diversity training for their managers. So that did not help WU, but their participation did help the LGBT community. And on the flipside, when [WU] held their conference and they staged a march to protest economic policies of the U.S. government, a huge handful of people from Fairness came . . . a huge number of gay students from the University came and supported them. And they got all kinds of coverage on the news.

According to Sherry, the support WU members offered to the LGBT organizations was beneficial as it helped generate attention for both organizations and helped add numbers and involvement at both groups’ events.

In addition, collaborative work helps strengthen the main mission of WU and FHF. As the director of WU Kayla stated: “we believe in solidarity in allies. I mean, because the focus [is] building a movement, you need to work in solidarity and collaborations with other organizations.” Similarly, FHF’s director Barbara acknowledged that FHF relies on various collaborations to help support their educational outreach programs and other events, explaining that without such collaborations, the
membership and interest in FHF could potentially decrease. For instance, FHF’s annual “Still Fighting for the Dream: MLK Poor People’s March” relies on STOP’s co-sponsorship and allows other local and statewide groups to act as “endorsers” of the events, rather than co-sponsors (FHF Flyer, 2009). WU also relies on other organizations for financial support and co-sponsorship for their larger events. WU hosted a major collaborative event entitled the “Building the Unsettling Force Conference,” that took place in July 2009. The conference, which was hosted by WU and co-sponsored by two national organizations, allowed WU to collaborate with groups from local, national, and global settings. Similar to FHF, WU allowed other organizations to act as “supporters” of the event, but maintained WU’s presence as the primary organizing entity, which gave WU more media publicity and community recognition.

Though WU and FHF collaborative organize with groups of various focus, some members were hesitant to accept collaborative work as without problems. Alice from WU explained that WU has experienced power struggles with other organizations in which other organizations attempt to control the actions of WU members and compromise their mission. In addition, some members did not share’s FHF member Barbara’s sentiments that collaborating strengthens the mission. Clinton from WU stated that the bureaucracy and inner-politics of other organizations can “bog down progress, so while we’re always open to working with other groups, at the same time WU is independent.” For him, regardless of how beneficial collaborations can be for WU members, the main mission of

44 The march is approaching its 7th year and annually draws 50-100 participants from across the city. The march aims to commemorate the Poor People’s March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom that took place in 1963 and was led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. During the FHF event, participants march through the streets of Corners with signs calling for policy reform and economic justice.
WU remains helping low/no income individuals and collaborating opens up the potential for that mission to disappear. As he elaborated, because “we see ourselves as taking up the voice of the people we represent, if we become aligned with someone else, we can’t allow that voice to be diminished or overshadowed.”

Participants also expressed the problem with identity-based fissures developing within the organization as a result collaborative work. As Lyra from WU explained, at times collaborative work challenges rather than strengthens the issue of class and poverty politics central to WU members. She warned that social organizing is often about weighing difference with some groups; to her, some groups centralize gender as the primary oppressor while others understand class or race as central. For her, it becomes difficult to focus on issues of class oppression when collaborating with other groups for whom issues of gender and race oppression are primary. Lyra provided an example from the Building the Unsettling Force Conference to support her argument that intersectional collaborations can often lead to the hierarchization of identity issues. As she explained, in one workshop, a woman challenged Lyra and other WU members during their discussion of racial disparities and class issues. The woman did not believe that Lyra, as a white woman, could possibly understand the hardships endured by black and latina women and claimed that Lyra was not in a position to discuss issues of racial disparities. During the interview, Lyra relayed that race was the primary issue for the woman whose racial identity as an African-American woman trumped her class or gender experiences. For Lyra, this experience represented the difficulties she and other WU members face when attempting to engage in intersectional work. Though she does not find benefits outweigh the challenges, Lyra does acknowledge the importance of discussing identity
issues in conjunction with class; but she warns against believing that they all exist equally.

Just as the War on the Poor divided low/no income individuals, so too can antipoverty activism often divide people based on identity categories.\textsuperscript{45} The difficulty of organizing with competing identities relates to what Waite (2001) calls the problem of “monolithic subordinate groups” (p. 202). In her study on African-American activism in Chicago, Waite (2001) discusses the difficulties black community members experienced in organizing across class lines. As she explains:

The hierarchical positioning of black Chicagoans raises the important question of how to mobilize social movements when members of the subordinate group engaged in conflict share certain aspects of oppression, but are situated in different structural positions regarding the object of that conflict. (p. 202)

Many of the groups with which WU and FHF collaborate claim identities as marginalized individuals, but do so under varying headers, such as gender or racial oppression, for example. For Waite and the participants, conflict arises when individuals wish to collaborate across organizations but understand their own position as dominant or subordinate across groups. WU and FHF members did not suggest solutions to these difficulties in their cross-organizational collaborations. Yet, their acknowledgement of such problems demonstrates their understanding that collaborations cannot exist without first challenging the situations in which individuals come to organize and identify as subordinate or dominate.

\textsuperscript{45} As Katz (1986) explains, the War on the Poor divided those living in poverty into two groups: the working-class (or working-poor) and the very poor (p. 277). Such division led to a fracture in the ability of low/no income individuals to politically mobilize and also kept those labeled “working class” in low paying jobs for fear they would eventually falter and become members of the “very poor” (p. 277).
Another way in which WU and FHF engage the community is through disruptive politics, which for the purposes of this study are defined as protests, sit-ins, demonstrations, letters to the editor, or controversial policy statements. Both groups use disruptive politics to promote their mission, educate the public, and highlight injustices to a larger public. In this sense, disruptive politics are used as educational tools, and similar to the more formal educational programming, WU and FHF target two audiences in their disruptive politics: those living in poverty and the politicians who influence poverty-related policies. For Candice from FHF, marching in the streets allows politicians to “see how the people feel, and hear resolutions proposed by the people.” As she summarized, marching “is a way to educate and inform and bridge the gap between the community and our elected officials.” Marching also is a useful tool for generating support for the organization and developing confidence in its members. For example, Juanita from WU explained her experience marching at the 2008 Republican National Convention:

It’s really empowering . . . I got to march and marching just gives you so much power. You might not think you have power but when you march and you get to marching and you’re so . . . your adrenalin is so high and you’re ready to conquer the world! You know what I’m saying? That was really important for me. And I cried.

For Juanita, marching not only demonstrated her ability to voice concern and protest the state, but also empowered her as a low/no income individual and made her feel powerful when she otherwise would not. Similarly, Kayla proclaimed her feeling of empowerment when she marched in St. Paul:

At that point in my life, I knew this was where I was supposed to be and my children could not afford for me to be anywhere else. Their lives depend on change in this country . . . “1, 2, 3, 4 – Stop the War on the Poor!” was the song
and thousands of poor people and people who believe in economic justice were
the signers. Oh, what an experience! (as cited in WU newsletter, 2008).

For both Juanita and Kayla, the experience of marching not only solidified their own
sense of empowerment, but also solidified their personal commitment to antipoverty
activism.

Similar to empowering members, disruptive politics also help present the voices
of low/no income individuals. Many of the interviewees understand marching and
protests as tactics available to low/no income individuals to voice concerns and solidify
their own status as social change agents. In their words, marching allows those
marginalized citizens to momentarily live outside of the margins. For WU member
Clinton, protesting lets marginalized groups in productively confrontational ways: "We
don’t try to step on no toes, but at the same time, we won’t roll over. We want our voices
to be heard . . . our goal is not to bust heads, but to have our voices be heard.” In
addition, as a FHF brochure proclaims, marching provides opportunities for low/no
income individuals to speak for themselves in a public arena: “Don’t let anyone else
speak for you!” (FHF Brochure, 2008).

Using protest and disruption also helps educate WU and FHF members to the
inherent power structures at play for low/no income individuals. In addition, using protest
as an activist tool connects to the construction of an oppositional consciousness. As
Grouch (2001) explains, participating in protest “seems to be particularly useful for
people with no previous oppositional consciousness” (p. 93). As an educational tool,
protest may help individuals realize their own marginalization and start to develop an
oppositional lens. Protest usually centralizes issues of power injustice; therefore
involving oneself in protest should lead to an understanding of one’s own relationship via
the power injustice. Many WU and FHF members expressed feelings of shock and awe
regarding the reactions by the state and local governments to their demonstrations and
protests. For instance, when recounting her experience at the 2009 G-20 Summit, FHF
director Barbara elaborated how the treatment she experienced was indicative of the
state’s attitude towards social justice activists. As she stated:

The message that the country sent to their citizens was awesome. There was [sic] police dogs with muzzles and men hauling them. And then there were police officers all up and down the line with groups of like 30 or 40 with batons like ‘if you move, I’ll bust your face off.’ And this is the reception. And we’re gleefully marching and smiling and telling them to come join us! And it is just unbelievable. . . . it was just like you were in a police state. This is what they do with their citizens because they have something to say. Because the citizens are saying this is what we disagree with, or this is what we want changed. Or this is what we want to say about what is happening in our government. That you’re met with such fierce animosity and that you’re threatened with your life. It was just grotesque and unbelievable.

For Barbara, the reaction was not necessarily one against low/no income individuals, but
one against grassroots activists and those seeking social change. For her, the reception
received at the G-20 Summit protest represents the state’s lack of care towards
marginalized citizens in general. The police-reaction represents the state’s view of the
people as the problem; as she explained, “you wonder why they’re not talking about the
issues that the people are talking about, that the people are fighting for. And that’s
because they’re looking at us as if we’re the problem. As the people are something to
fight against.”

Some WU and FHF members embraced the idea of marginalized citizens acting
as disruptive bodies feared by the state. As WU member Alice stated: “what is it – the
French government that is totally afraid of their people because they just like protest and
revolt all the time? They should be a little bit more afraid of us.” For Alice, the very act of protesting demonstrates the political potential for marginalized citizens. Other interviewees described marching and protesting as creating “pressure,” against state officials and community members, serving as reminders of the power of community organizing. As FHF leader Barbara explained, marching allows people’’ to see what is happening and to take control” allowing them to use that pressure to their advantage within the community. Thus, disruptive politics serves three general purposes for WU and FHF members: to educate others about power structures, to empower marginalized citizens, and to put pressure on the state to make political, social, and economic changes.

Political Interaction

FHF and WU involve themselves in various political interactions focused on challenging political structures. These interactions include lobbying politicians, campaigning for policy change, drafting stance papers, and educating low/no income individuals about voting processes. At the core of these activities is the creation and support of sustainable political, social, and economic change for low/no income individuals in Corners and Pickerington. Though, as expressed in the previous chapter, WU and FHF members are wary of the state’s ability to champion for low/no income individuals, members still desire to work with politicians to raise awareness about economic injustices and policy problems.

A central form of political interaction is WU and FHF’s work challenging inequitable public policies on a local, state, and national level. As Edgar from FHF stated, a major goal of FHF is to “look at policies – whether it’s county, national, or whatever – and see how those policies are either enhancing or helping, or if those policies
are interfering.” Barbara, the director of FHF elaborated that “we are very interested in seeing that policies are more humane. So we do advocacy rather than lobby to get those policies changed.” For WU and FHF members alike, challenging public policies allows low/no income individuals to feel as though they have a political voice. In addition, as revealed through their interview responses in the previous chapter, many WU and FHF members view politicians as unconnected to the concerns and realities of their constituents. Challenging public policies is a definitive way for members of the constituency to demonstrate frustration and push for policy changes directly related to their own marginalization.

A central policy against which FHF and WU fight is the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). FHF focuses on several elements of Ohio’s welfare policies, such as the 3-year time limit and the laws limiting kinship care for low/no income mothers. As part of their most recent efforts to push for policy amendments, FHF drafted a position piece that presents their argument for TANF changes, entitled “Public Assistance: A Safety Net for Women and Children at Risk.” The piece focuses on two main issues: the elimination of the 3 year time-limit in Ohio and the 5 year federal time-limit, and the creation of “job programs to expand employment opportunities” at both the federal and state levels (FHF Working Draft Paper, 2009). Also central to their local, state, and federal suggestions is a reorganization of child-care clauses, including the adoption of “kin” as recognizable parents, the exemption of “single parents with children under the age of one from OWF work requirements,” and the passage and amendment of the Responsible Fatherhood and
Healthy Families Act of 2009.\textsuperscript{46} In addition to drafting the position piece, FHF also tried to seek signatures for a petition to support the document, which included a paragraph to President Obama asking for support to the nations “most vulnerable,” that reads:

On behalf of poor mothers and their children, we plead for a moratorium on TANF time-limits during our country’s economic crisis . . . in 2008, a shocking 56\% of single Ohio mothers with children under 5 years were in poverty. You have bailed out corporations, banks, and rightly safeguarded unemployment insurance benefits for laid-off workers, so too there needs to be an adequate safety net for our most vulnerable families.\textsuperscript{47}

With respect for PRWORA, drafting the position piece and pushing for petition support is one way in which FHF creates opportunities for low/no income individuals to engage with the political system. For FHF, which is primarily comprised of African-American women members, the position piece also allowed opportunities to discuss and directly challenge the gendered and racialized aspects of poverty policies that effect low/no income women in Corners. As observed during fieldwork the race and gender identities of FHF members propelled the piece to directly talk about the impacts of the time limit and of kinship laws on the wellbeing of low/no income individuals, especially women. Members such as Barbara and Jade live in predominantly African-American, low-income neighborhoods; their access to stories of hardship from their neighbors may have

\textsuperscript{46} The Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act (RFHF) of 2009 was proposed in 2009 as an amendment to The Temporary Assistance To Need Families (TANF) section of the Social Security Act. RFHF encompasses several main tenants, including: proposed funding for job training programs for low/no income parents, protection of 100\% of child support payments for parents, expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, and promoting responsible fatherhood programs through grants and other community initiatives (\url{www.govtrack.us}, 2010). The bill was not able to pass committee approval and was never proposed to Senate for vote.

\textsuperscript{47} At the time of writing this chapter, the status of the position piece is unknown. The original draft was presented for discussion at a FHF board meeting in early January, 2010, but fieldwork ended shortly thereafter.
propelled their support of the position piece and their passion for challenging unjust public policies.

Like FHF, WU works to challenge elements of PRWORA on both a state and federal level. For WU, the main issues against which they fight relate to childcare and child support clauses. A central WU program is the Claiming Our Rights, Reclaiming Our Children campaign (CORROC), which works to educate individuals about child-removal policies and judicial practices. CORROC acts as both an educational tool as well as a way to generate policy change and political support for low/no income parents struggling to maintain satisfactory living arrangements for their children. As an educational tool, WU offers monthly workshops aimed at educating low/no income parents on their parental rights, Child Protective Services (CPS) policies, and ways in which they can challenge unjust child-removal policies. As a political tool, WU members use take the mission of CORROC to politicians and CPS employees, claiming “Take our Poverty, Not Our Children!” (WU Newsletter, 2005). Another central slogan – “Call it what it is: poverty, not neglect” aims to challenge CPS employees to reevaluate why low/no income individuals are targeted for child endangerment charges.

WU members have picketed CPS practices in Frankfort, KY as well as presented their testimonies of unjust child removal in Washington, DC (WU newsletter, 2005). In addition, WU members have worked with politicians in Frankfort to lobby for bills amending unjust child removal, such as SB 141, which “would provide an attorney at the temporary removal hearing as well as for an appeal to the Court of Appeals if a parent can’t afford an attorney” (WU Newsletter, 2007). Through CORROC’s multiple concentrations, WU members attempt to engage low/no income individuals in the
political process as well as continue the educational programming for individuals of all class statuses.

Coupled with their work on unjust child removal, WU had also worked extensively on pushing for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) in Pickerington. A Trust Fund was developed in Kentucky in 1992, but the state left the decision to adopt the policy up to individual cities. The Pickerington campaign focused on providing funding for low/no income individuals to have adequate housing opportunities. The Pickerington AHTF was passed in 2008, but politicians have stalled on distributing the funding and deciding the allocation of monies to low/no income areas. WU had been a critical part of the struggle for the trust fund since the early 21st century and engaged in various acts of disruptive politics to push for support. For instance, many WU members rallied at the Pickerington City Hall in support of the AHTF and collaborated with other groups such as Jobs with Justice and Kentuckians for the Commonwealth to push for political support of the fund. Though a campaign for the AHTF was no longer on their main list of issues in 2010, WU members still advocated politicians and political parties for support of affordable housing initiatives and championed for low/no income individuals struggling to find housing.

In addition to policy statements, FHF and WU also engage in the political process by offering informational programs on voter rights and procedures. FHF and WU members understand that many low/no income individuals are unaware of proper voting practices and rules and many are unregistered to vote. By offering educational courses and programs to community members, FHF and WU work to allow those living in poverty a chance to express their political opinions. FHF offers “Get Out & Vote” rallies
during each election cycle to help Corners citizens learn about some of the local and state ballot issues. They also have sample ‘voting’ machines on hand for individuals to learn about voting practices (FHF Flyer, 2007).

Though their work spans the local/state/national divides, many of the interviewees expressed understanding that focusing energies on local politics yields the greatest results. As Kayla from WU explained, “We’re an instant gratification kind of society … the most satisfying change would be local.” She continues by explaining that change can occur faster at a local level and part of the educational programming for WU is to educate individuals about the necessity of starting locally. As she stated, “President Obama could sign a bill today and we wouldn’t see it for six more years . . . but if you change things on the local level, you see it a little bit faster.” She goes as far as to list the levels of importance for political organizing, starting with “local officials, then state officials, then Congress. To me, our president is the last one to worry about.” FHF members echoed Kayla’s sentiment, and as Edgar explained, it is the policies that effect local life that are of ‘up-most importance.’” Thus, though some of their outreach programs engage the state and national politics, much of what FHF and WU focus on rests within the local city politics of Corners and Pickerington.

It is clear that FHF and WU engage in diverse programming and incorporate multiple issues into their antipoverty activist agenda. From educational programming across economic divides, to their various protests and marches, to their engagement with other organizations and politicians, FHF and WU’s programming speaks to the intersectional nature of poverty and the need for diverse approaches to its eradication. Though some of the participants disagree on certain claims such as the inherent benefits
of intersectional collaborations and the necessity of national politics to the struggle for economic justice, there remains a core set of values amongst FHF and WU members connecting their grassroots programs to their organizational goals.

The next section aims to relate their grassroots work to their critiques of citizenship and the state. More specifically, what correlation, if any, do the four sub-categories have to the development of inclusionary citizenship? The section works to connect their work back to their visions of citizenship, both real and ideal, by asking: how do their activist programs connect to the neoliberal/oppositional community divide and what connections are visible between their community work and inclusionary citizenship?

**Revisiting Inclusionary Citizenship**

For FHF and WU members, a significant component for creating a more inclusive understanding of citizenship centered on refocusing citizenship within the scope of community initiatives and responsibilities. Many of them were critical of the current state of affairs for impoverished individuals, and the crux of their argument remained focused on the community, with particular emphasis on developing a critical lens towards economic injustices. Like the political theorists (Lister, 1999; Mouffe, 1992a, 1992b; Young 2000) in Chapter Two suggested, refocusing citizenship within the community may help reveal ways in which those once marginalized can find a solid political voice and social acceptance, ultimately creating more inclusionary forms of citizenship. What this section aims to demonstrate are the ways in which WU and FHF activists’ efforts – educational programming, intersectional collaborations, disruptive politics, and political interaction – connect to the concept citizenship as community.
I argue that three main factors help connect WU and FHF grassroots activities to their critiques and ideal understandings of inclusive citizenship as community: their engagement in intersectional identity politics; their diverse educational programming; and their engagement in disruptive politics. Combining all three factors reveals the complicated ways in which WU and FHF’s grassroots activities connect to their critiques of citizenship and the state, their visions for an oppositional community, and their desire for inclusionary citizenship.

**Factor 1: Intersectional Identity Politics**

The first component of connecting their grassroots activism to their visions of inclusive citizenship relates to their intersectional identity politics. From the interviews, it is clear that WU and FHF centralize class politics in their organizational work while simultaneously recognizing the need for intersectional organizing. As explained in the previous chapter, WU and FHF members understand class as intricately connected both to the construction of exclusionary citizenship and to a state system anchored on using low/no income individuals for ‘cheap labor’ for the benefit of wealthier citizens. Their focus on class identities positions them as community actors for low/no income individuals. Yet, their ability to engage in intersectional identity politics connects to their ideal views of inclusionary citizenship that rest on the intersectional of difference and equal status within political, social, and economic realms. Issues of class are not necessarily “primary,” but rather become the central issue on which other inequalities related to gender, race, or nationality can be challenged.

As some explained, the very nature of their class-based activism allows them to interweave topics related to gender and race oppressions. Alice from WU stated that “it
is from that economic perspective that WU can work to address all those other forms of oppression… racism, sexism . . . .” Kayla, the director of WU explained that the organization understands class as existing across all other issues and so if “we build a movement against classism, then you can address the other [issues] as they come.” She continued: “if you’re not eating and if you’re not safe, then you can’t deal with gender biases or racial biases.” For their part, WU and FHF participants seem aware of the intersectionality of oppression, and many problematized the tendency to rank oppressions within community organizing. Alice from WU, for instance, explained that WU has helped her realize that ranking oppression “only serves to reinforce oppression. You’re only repeating what the dominant group is doing.” For WU members, a movement cannot develop on discrimination but rather must start on the essential understanding that “in reality we are all created equal.” Through their collective organizing, by bringing together various groups to discuss the multiple ways in which class inequality seeps into other forms of identity-based oppression, WU and FHF members foster the understanding of commonality amongst low/no income individuals.

By utilizing an intersectional approach, FHF and WU members fulfill a gap in services from the state to marginalized citizens. Individuals in the community view WU and FHF as focused on poverty, and WU and FHF offer various programs for both those living in poverty as well as those interested in learning more about economic injustice. Yet, by allowing for discussions of other identity issues to intersect with their missions, FHF and WU also generate additional opportunities for support in the community. Programs such as the Suburban Women’s Collective serve as a way for FHF to connect to individuals through gendered identities. The suburban women reached out to FHF
based on their common identity of working-poor women and through the program are educated about racial differences as related to, too. As previously outlined, while FHF is comprised of African-American women, the Suburban Women’s Collective is multi-racial; therefore, the program itself provides opportunities for individuals on both ends of the spectrum changes to discuss the realities of gender, race, and class disparities. Individuals’ economic status brings them to WU and FHF, but it is their stories of gender and racial oppression, in addition to their class stratification, that help generate a sense of oppositional consciousness of economic justice (as demonstrated in *A Mile in Our Shoes*). WU and FHF provide individuals access to a space lacking within the state to discuss their experiences of citizenship inequality and identity-based problems.

In addition, their intersectional work directly connects to an emphasis on creating new forms of citizenship inclusive of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality differences. Through their disruption of a classed-view of citizenship, WU and FHF are also disrupting the image of the white, male heterosexual worker citizen. In this sense, the work of WU and FHF connects to, and subsequently confronts, the racial and sexual contracts proposed by Pateman (1988) and Mills (1997). Their grassroots activities speak to theories of inclusionary citizenship as outlined by Lister (1998) and Young (2000), which work to address issues of difference within the single unifying identity of citizen. Though WU and FHF centralize issues of class, by allowing for the expression of gender and race oppressions, they commit themselves to the diversity of citizenship. To them, citizenship cannot be reduced to a homogenized identity, but rather must focus on the multiplicity of difference that all individuals, marginalized and privileged, bring to the table. As Barbara from FHF summarized, inclusion does not mean “sameness” of people,
but rather means “sameness of access.” For her, and other WU and FHF members, inclusion allows space for difference to be appreciated and allows equality to exist for those who so desire it. Further, WU and FHF members acknowledge that merely recognizing a need for difference is insufficient for the creation of inclusionary citizenship; critical discussions regarding the ranking of identities are also necessary.

Factor 2: Educational programming for citizens

In addition to their intersectional collaborations, their multi-faceted educational programs connect to the development of inclusionary citizenship. A central component to their educational programming is the idea that low/no income individuals lack an understanding of their rights and privilege as citizens. As Candice from FHF explained, often low/no income individuals don’t know the “rules and regulations… they just know about how you’re being considered for the process.” This lack of understanding related to political structures or “rules” of citizenship tends to keep low/no income individuals confined to a space of ineffectuality. Tina from WU summarizes the need for educational programming when she stated that:

When we get people to the table, there’s always some kind of education that needs to be done because we don’t get democratic education, like um, civics and things like that. They never had that in school . . . how you change laws, what are the different, you know, this is the House of Representatives, this is the Senate, how does a bill become a law. You know, simple things like that. We’re not taught that stuff anymore. So people feel disempowered that there’s just – that they’re out there making these rules and laws that govern our lives and there’s no way to change it. So we demystify that. We say ‘this is how you go about it, this is how it works.’ These people are real people so we can call them on the phone and say ‘please support this bill’ or ‘please don’t support this bill.’ So that’s really the education piece.

For Tina, the lack of formal education about political structures works to keep individuals locked into positions of ignorance and silence. In her eyes, it is the role of groups like
WU to share basic knowledge with marginalized groups so as to educate them about their own political voice and empower them to work for change in their own right. Tina’s own experience as a struggle low/no income single mother during welfare reform of 1996 shaped her understanding of the importance of education and consciousness-raising for low/no income people struggling to navigate an unjust governmental system.

For WU and FHF participants, educating other low/no income citizens is the first step to creating an awareness of the multiple ways in which citizenship is exclusionary. WU and FHF act as representatives for others in the community to help them navigate the rules and regulations regarding class structures and citizenship in general. As WU and FHF members ask themselves: if they did not reach out to educate other low/no income individuals, who would? What other types of programs would be available to them to help learn techniques of navigating the ‘political process’? The interviewees acknowledge their own role as representatives and understand their position as low/no income leaders; as Juanita from WU exclaimed, “Where the government drops off and leaves you, then we’re doing it!” Yet, participants were also quick to point out that what they represent comes directly from the community and its members. WU member Alice explained that assuming WU knows what is best for low/no income individuals maintains a power-imbalance and WU “takes people who are what I call on the front lines of poverty and builds a community around them in order to organize to abolish poverty.”

Acting as advocates for low/no income individuals through their educational programs is significant for two reasons. First, it is important for low/no income individuals to feel they have supporters and representatives in public spaces. So often, as explained by WU and FHF participants, low/no income individuals are silenced in the
political process and understand their own position as unimportant or insignificant. As WU and FHF participants’ highlighted in Chapter Four, this feeling of insignificance also leads to distrust in state government and a lack of faith in political representatives. Yet, by acting as advocates for these marginalized individuals, WU and FHF place themselves in political conversations. As activists, they are able to situate themselves at the table in ways others cannot. Through their advocacy work, they attempt to ensure that the needs and concerns of those excluded from the table are represented.

Second, acting as advocates helps to increase the number of individuals involved in antipoverty activism. Many of the WU and FHF members explained that their activism prompted others to become involved in the struggle. For instance, in referring to the “Building the Unsettling Force” conference, Alice from WU explains the importance of her presence in the streets as an advocate for Pickerington’s impoverished. As she stated, “I do need to get out into the streets because maybe it’ll make some people say ‘Hey, there is someone doing this!’ and not be afraid to take back their own power in a different way.” For her, acting as an advocate motivates others to become involved, thereby increasing support for WU and the antipoverty activist struggle. Increasing the number of activists also increases the number of individuals able to act as representatives for those not yet actively involved, thereby increasing the political presence of low/no income individuals within the community.

The educational programs also have personal significance for WU and FHF members as they work to solidify their own presence as citizens. For WU member Juanita, acting as an educational representative is one of the only ways in which she, as a low/no income individual, can create valid change in her own right. As she explained,
“financially, I’m not able to help people as far as money wise. But I know I have education. You know what I’m saying? I can get out there, say what I gotta say and maybe help somebody along the way.” For her, the educational program is one of the only ways in which she sees herself as making a difference in her community. Though she cannot afford to run for office and cannot afford to support political candidates, she can feel political productive through educational programming and representing the needs of low/no income individuals within the larger public. Juanita demonstrates the necessity of expanding the scope of productive action to include service to others and community initiatives. In addition, Juanita’s acknowledgement of her work represents the difference between the neoliberal and oppositional communities. Because of her critical consciousness, Juanita is able to turn her service into a tool for opposition.

Through their educational programs, and their positioning as advocates for the impoverished, WU and FHF members directly challenge the image of exclusionary citizenship. As discussed in the previous chapter, WU and FHF members view citizenship as existing beyond the scope of economic productivity. For them, productivity, both paid and non-paid, in other arenas, is just as important to the value of citizenship as holding a job. From FHF’s Bread Program to WU’s Revolutionary Reading Group, members are solidifying their place as productive citizens in their own right. As Juanita and others explain, what they lack economically they make up for by giving back to others. Thus, by acting as advocate through the educational programs, WU and FHF members personally challenge the exclusionary image of citizenship, and engage the community with an oppositional consciousness framework.
In addition, like their intersectional identity politics, WU and FHF’s educational programs work to fill a void from the state. Connecting back to the idea of empowerment, WU and FHF members view their work as not only serving those who cannot help themselves, but also as breaking away from state-sponsored service programs, which as Francine from WU explains, work to only further oppress people and “keep them in the system.” For interviewees, empowering individuals to develop oppositional consciousnesses and encouraging them to become educated about political, social, and economic discrepancies is more beneficial than many services offered by the state. As discussed in the previous chapter, WU and FHF members understand that an ideal state should act as a supporter for those most vulnerable, but as for them, such image to exist. Instead, as they explain, state-sponsored programs only operate to further marginalize the very populations they set out to help. Because state programs work to hinder rather than help low/no income individuals, WU and FHF members view it as their responsibility to step in and provide necessary support to marginalized communities.

Their educational outreach programs demonstrate how their notion of community differs from that of neoliberalism; by centering an oppositional lens and power injustices in their work, WU and FHF fill a void from the state in a very political fashion. Their programs are not merely providing resources to individuals, but fostering spaces and opportunities for critical discussions to exist and develop. For instance, while the FHF Bread Program is providing a food service to needy individuals, it also provides FHF members opportunities to talk to community residents about problems or issues relevant to their activism. FHF fulfills the necessary role of the neoliberal community by alleviating burden from state programs, but also engages in oppositional consciousness
raising, thereby not complying within the scope of the neoliberal community. In addition, their work helps create spaces in which inclusionary citizenship can take place, primarily because an oppositional consciousness is present. For WU and FHF participants, inclusionary citizenship cannot form until power inequalities and structures are challenged. Thus, their educational programming acts as the first step in the development process.

**Factor 3: Disruptive Politics**

The third and final component that connects their activism to inclusionary citizenship relates to their disruptive politics. WU and FHF members’ disruptive politics ultimately seeks to empower the most vulnerable. Because they feel excluded from full citizenship, those living at the margins often do not feel as though they have a voice or presence within the political sphere; yet through disruptive politics, as WU and FHF members demonstrate, low/no income individuals can use their voice in other ways.

In addition to empowering individuals, the disruptive politics of WU and FHF members also works to challenge citizenship’s neoliberal influence. On a basic level, the very act of disruptive politics compromises the productivity of various industries, thereby complicating the economic production for a timeframe. For instance, during the march for the Building the Unsettling Force Conference, individuals stood in the street and blocked traffic; in doing so, they stalled city busses and caused traffic in downtown Pickerington. The same is said for FHF’s annual MLK march, during which Corners’s antipoverty activists march through the downtown streets during standard lunch hours. For both examples, WU and FHF members disrupt the schedule and productivity of people commuting to meetings, buses en-route to pick up passengers, and police units
forced to stop traffic. On a deeper level, WU and FHF’s disruptive politics work to
directly challenge the idea that impoverished individuals are lazy and inactive by putting
the faces of those living in poverty in the public arena. In doing so, they contest the idea
that the impoverished are unproductive by recruiting low/no income individuals to
productive demonstrate in the public sphere. As both Clinton and Sherry from WU
explained, demonstrating in the streets and protesting political offices puts the faces of
“the poor” at politicians’ doorsteps, thereby making it difficult to ignore their voices and
needs (Clinton 2009, Sherry 2009).

In addition to their protests and marches, some of WU and FHF’s inner
organizational decisions disrupt the neoliberal agenda. For instance, WU’s
organizational finances are a key example of their refusal to engage in the state’s
economic regulations. WU continues to operate without a 501(c)3 status, claiming that
they want to avoid regulating how they spend their organizational funds to appease the
state. For them, many of the grant programs funded by the state require that funds be
spent in specific ways, and WU members agree that to limit their funding habits
potentially compromises the mission of their organization. In their eyes, as Kayla
explains, remaining separate from 501(c)3 status complicates their financials, but
ultimately helps the organization challenge unjust state funding practices. WU’s decision
to separate from state-sponsored funding sources connects to Alison Jaggar’s (2005)
critique of the co-optation of NGOs by fudging sources. According to Jaggar, “the
demand for accountability to [NGO] donors limits” their goals as well as their internal
democracy (p. 100). Though they have to manage added issues of limited budgets and
restricted funding sources, WU’s decision to operate outside of 501(c)3 status allows them to work autonomously outside the state’s neoliberal agenda.

As interviewees explained in the previous chapter, the state relies on the labor and subordination of those living at the economic margins. Such reliance maintains a system of economic stratification that keeps the wealthy in power and the impoverished at the margins. By engaging in disruptive politics, WU and FHF members directly confront the state’s desire to keep them subordinated, and highlight the subversive potential of impoverished individuals. In addition, WU and FHF’s use of disruptive politics helps them challenge the corporate greed problem as introduced in Chapter Four. Fisher and Shragge (2007) argue that community organizing from groups such as WU and FHF can help “put the state back in to regulating corporate practices and ensuring the welfare of its citizens” (p. 210). By engaging with the political field through diverse means, WU and FHF challenge the neoliberal push for corporate greed over citizenship need.

Their engagement in disruptive politics represents their departure away from the neoliberal model of community and citizenship as their protests, appeals to politicians, and collaborative work encapsulates the essence of oppositional consciousness. WU and FHF take to the streets to claim injustices and also express desire for others to understand how power hierarchies and oppression influence their own lives. Their disruptive politics not only helps foster lenses of opposition for their members, but works to spark in other community members a similar sense of opposition. Further, WU and FHF engage in disruptive politics not merely to create a larger oppositional movement, but also to proclaim injustice to the state and dissatisfaction with current societal structures. While they seek to empower individuals to find their own critical lens, WU and FHF moreover
seek to challenge the power structures that keep individuals marginalized. Here, the activists are not merely engaging in what Cruikshank (1999) calls “self-help” activities in which they proclaim liberation from oppression through empowerment and reclaiming identities as low/no income individuals. Rather, they are helping themselves while simultaneously engaging the state and the neoliberal community in very political ways.

In addition, the disruptive politics of WU and FHF contradict the claimed “regime of disappearance” of low/no income individuals by the neoliberal agenda (Goode & Maskovsky, 2001). According to Goode and Maskovsky, low/no income individuals disappear under neoliberalism due to their vilification as “poor” and their erasure from institutions operating under neoliberal dominance. Impoverished individuals have no political voice because they are offered no public presence. Yet, WU and FHF force their presence into the public sphere through their disruptive politics, thereby challenging the “regime of disappearance.” Because they protest and march in the street, they demand recognition in ways not expected through neoliberalism.

Nearly all of the interviewees claimed that disruptive politics ultimately are not sufficient to make radical changes across the economic and political system. In their eyes, citizenship has become so exclusionary that acts of civil disobedience may be required in order for those living at the margins to have a voice and presence in the political system. As Jade from FHF explained, “we’ve seen globally in times of any nation, when you have people that are hungry, they will turn over that society [until] there’s no more, no more order or form of order.” Her fellow FHF members echoed her sentiments by claiming that politicians will never take notice until those living in poverty “take to the streets” in more aggressive ways (Barbara, 2009). Sherry from WU similarly
states that the impoverished need to start “busting down the door” in order to be recognized.” Though WU and FHF currently do not engage in civil disobedience, they recognize the potential power such actions hold for those who continue to be excluded from political decisions and citizenship spaces.

Summary

Overall, across their intersectional identity politics, educational programming, and disruptive politics, the WU and FHF activist programs connect to citizenship in four main ways. First, their activities work to challenge the very definition of “citizen.” Their intersectional politics reconstructs citizenship to incorporate multiple identity differences and experiences. As WU and FHF members explain, inclusionary citizenship brings individuals together under the broad status of “citizen”, but does not mean that individuals must leave their identity differences behind in order to achieve that status. Many of the WU and FHF interviewees’ own racial and gender identities shape their perceptions of economic injustice and the limitations specific populations experience with respect to citizenship rights. By recognizing the hierarchy of identity-politics within grassroots activism, and their own gendered or racialized positionalities, WU and FHF participants highlight the ways in which exclusionary citizenship supports identity-based oppressions.

Second, their activities work to challenge the neoliberal influence over citizenship and the state, as they described in detail in Chapter Four. As made clear in the previous chapter, WU and FHF members understand the influences neoliberalism holds over their experiences as marginalized citizens; therefore, an underlying theme throughout their grassroots activities is to dismantle that influence by challenging state programs and
engaging in alternative forms of productive activities. In addition, through their political interactions, WU and FHF are connecting their grassroots activities to the decree that government should be “by-and-for the people”, which challenges the notion that the state operates for the good of corporations rather than the good of constituents.

Third, their work seeks to empower those otherwise excluded from neoliberal citizenship to develop their own oppositional consciousness. WU and FHF members’ engagement with disruptive politics works to challenge unequal power structures and the very foundation of exclusionary citizenship. By encouraging individuals to voice their opinions and demand political reform, WU and FHF members undermine the idea that those living at the margins are unable to participate. Further, they help individuals push past political, social, and economic barriers that often prevent them from speaking in public arenas by providing space in which protests and marches can occur. Their intersectional activism allows a diverse array of oppositional consciousnesses to develop which helps raise awareness that marginalization is not natural, but rather is state sponsored.

Lastly, their work directly connects to the theories of inclusionary citizenship outlined in Chapter Two. A central component of their outreach programs is the development of a political voice for low/no income individuals, and as Young (2000) explains, citizenship inclusion is created through increasing the ability of marginalized groups to not only have a space within the political realm but also a voice. Thus, by fostering spaces for those voices to develop and be heard, WU and FHF members are beginning the process of making citizenship more inclusive. Further, as discussed in Chapter Four, many of the WU and FHF participants believe that real change can only
come through grassroots organizing, located within the scope of the community. Activists can work with politicians, but for WU and FHF participants, true change must begin locally through grassroots organizing and community building. As Edgar from FHF explained:

I’m a strong believer in bottom-up planning and that pressure has to come from the bottom. Because that’s where, you know, people suffer, people feel the effects of an unjust society, and the lack of social justice. And the reason that it’s so important for people to organize and come together is because they are the ones that are responsible for making those decision-makers feel the need, you know, to respond. And to make institutions respond.

Edgar’s sentiments were echoed throughout the interviews, with many other interviewees stating that true democratic order results from the needs of the people. Such sentiment reflects not only the desire to centralize the needs of those living at the margins, but also a desire for citizenship recognition for those individuals as well. As WU and FHF members explain, it must start locally. As Lyra from WU explained, “real change only comes from the demands of the people affected.” By centering their activist efforts within local politics, WU and FHF members begin the process of reorienting the development of inclusionary citizenship within local communities.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the diverse array of activist strategies in which WU and FHF members engage, and also complicated the ways those grassroots activities connect to theories of exclusionary and inclusionary citizenship. It is clear that WU and FHF members understand the necessity for multiple approaches to antipoverty activism within local, state, and national communities. As they reason, these multiple approaches not only allow them to reach a larger audience of both impoverished and affluent individuals,
but also provide them a diverse set of approaches to challenge state inequities and dismantle economic myths. A diverse approach to their organization also allows members to confront the impact of their own racial and gender identities on their experiences of poverty. It is easy to forget that the individual activists are themselves currently living or have lived in poverty and face many of the issues in which the organizations fight on a daily basis. As members articulated, their programming works to help others become involved in the struggle as well as keep them involved in activism despite their own personal economic issues.

The last two chapters have outlined the critiques generated by WU and FHF members of citizenship and the state, as well as the strategies in which they engage to develop more inclusionary ideas of citizenship. These last two chapters also introduced what I labeled the oppositional community, a space in which WU and FHF aim to situate their organizational politics and work towards developing their visions for more inclusionary practices of citizenship. In moving forward, I wish to explore more in-depth the development and significance of the oppositional community and its connection to citizenship. From the interviews, it is clear that WU and FHF members believe themselves as excluded from citizenship, but remain hopeful for the development of a new understanding of citizenship that allow them a presence. What I wish to explore is how combining critical social contract theories described in Chapter Two to the construction of the oppositional community may help reveal important information about how WU and FHF members can create their ideal visions of citizenship.

Specifically, from my fieldwork observations, I aim to suggest the construction of a new approach to the social contract – the activist contract – as outlining a possible
framework for activists to use within their local spaces so as to develop their ideal visions of citizenship and community. As I outline in the previous chapter, while WU and FHF members desire the construction of an oppositional community, there remain some issues regarding the role of neoliberalism in their organizational work. A goal, then, of the last chapter, is to explore how marginalized activists can create new contracts so as to construct the oppositional community as separate from neoliberalism. I understand the oppositional community and activist contract as holding potential for marginalized individuals to interject themselves into, and subsequently disrupt, the neoliberal agenda. As Grewal (2005) posits, “neoliberalism can be interrupted by fracturing its assumed coherence” by focusing on the struggle between social movements and the new right (p. 19). In what ways can WU and FHF’s articulations of an oppositional community “interrupt” the perpetual exclusion of low/no income individuals from citizenship, and how can their articulations take material shape in the form of an activist contract? This final chapter concludes this project by exploring these possibilities.
CHAPTER SIX: MOVING FORWARD: BUILDING THE OPPOSITIONAL COMMUNITY

“Extremes of inequality breed patterns of domination and subservience in the multiple social relations of everyday life, and these cultural patterns undermine democratic capabilities” (Frances Fox Piven, 2006, p. 12).

Introduction

Interviews with WU and FHF members reveal the multiple and complex ways in which citizenship is understood and challenged by low/no income individuals through community activism. Chapters Four and Five highlighted the various types of activities in which they engage and the arguments they make regarding the importance of social activism and disruptive politics. Through their responses it becomes clear that as activists, they emphasize the development of critical consciousness throughout discussions of citizenship and the state; for WU and FHF, the ideal citizen is one who upholds their responsibilities and serves other, but also one who challenges social inequities that keep certain populations excluded. If the role of the citizen is to serve and educate others, then the role of the state, for WU and FHF members, is to protect and support citizens in upholding their responsibilities. Yet, WU and FHF participants acknowledge that their ideal images of citizenship and the state do not exist, primarily because of neoliberalism’s prioritization of privatization of the state and centralization of the market.

During my fieldwork, I witnessed many examples of organizational work that demonstrated the groups’ commitment to developing and maintaining an oppositional
consciousness. From board meeting discussions about the Suburban Women’s Collective at FHF to the open dialogues about identity hierarchies and organizing conflict at WU, the members of each group seem committed not only to their own development of a critical consciousness, but also to the maintenance of an organizational commitment to opposition. However, there was one scenario in particular which I understood as posing a direct challenge to this commitment to opposition, and to which I wish to interject ideas about solidarity formation and citizenship.

During fieldwork, I attended a WU board meeting that took place upon the completion of the Building the Unsettling Force Conference. During this meeting, individuals were asked by staff member Kayla to describe their favorite aspect of the conference as well as any challenges or problems they encountered. Many members shared similar concerns with the treatment they experienced with an antipoverty organizer from another agency. This woman, which member Juanita described as harsh and egotistical, seemed to treat other WU individuals with disdain. During this meeting, one gentleman, who was not interviewed for this project but who is one of WU’s lone male members, referred to the woman as a “cunt.” During the meeting, no one said anything to this word and there was little reaction to this man’s comment. However, the scenario came up in my interview with Tina, who said that as a woman, she was offended by the term and was worried by the lack of reaction during the meeting. For Tina, the incident represented the challenges WU are starting to face as they begin to integrate more men into their organization and navigate individuals’ personal feelings within an organizational context. In Tina’s view, the incident, while uncomfortable, presented an
opportunity for her and other WU members to openly talk about issues of identity, privilege, and opposition as they continue their community activism.

While I was also shocked by the usage of the term during the meeting, I viewed the incident as indicative of the ongoing struggle in which activists must engage as they navigate individual commitment to the cause and organizational goals. The male WU member presented himself during fieldwork as committed to WU’s mission and yet using the word “cunt” creates a conflict with the women-centric nature of WU as a group. Whether the man did not know his choice of word would upset other members is unclear; however, the incident demonstrates the potential difficulties organizational members face as they engage in collective oppositional politics.

As I interweave this incident into fieldwork data and my own observations of WU and FHF’s work, I realize that FHF and WU members are working to constitute their sense of solidarity and commitment to oppositional politics within their organization and within their larger communities. If the location of the “community” plays a central role in the construction of inclusionary citizenship for WU and FHF members, then their commitment to opposition must also be grounded in community politics. However, before the oppositional community can develop, the basis of a commitment to other organizational and community members needs to be established.

What this final chapter aims to explore is the foundations of WU and FHF’s development of solidarity towards inclusionary citizenship and the oppositional community. Specifically, this chapter focuses on exploring an alternative approach to social contracts – the activist contract – and outlining whether it can operate to help construct equal relationships necessary to the development of solidarity and the
oppositional community for WU and FHF. In its definition, the activist contract consists of the agreement between community individuals to support each other in opposition to power and in their daily living. By participating in the activist contract, individuals work towards developing the oppositional community.

In order for inclusionary citizenship to develop, the oppositional community should develop and I argue that the activist contract is an agreement to which organizational members commit to help begin the development process. The activist contract is not rigid, but should be viewed as fluid, allowing room for discussions of conflict as individuals begin their personal commitment to solidarity and oppositional politics. The activist contract, as an agreement to support each other in opposition to power and in daily life, works to keep individuals motivated towards the end-goal of the inclusionary citizenship and should remind individuals of the necessity of discussing conflict and personal experiences of marginalization while striving for the oppositional community. I view WU and FHF as already engaging in aspects of the activist contract, and this chapter seeks to explore how WU and FHF’s relationships to each other and their communities ultimately connect to the construction of an oppositional community and inclusionary citizenship.

Though a social contract is traditionally designed between a citizen and the state, the idea of an activist contract builds on the relationships of marginalized individuals between themselves and other citizens. In constructing an activist contract, I seek to understand whether such alternative understanding of the social contract can provide assistance to antipoverty activists as they work to renegotiate citizenship within the community and challenge state inequalities. In returning to the idea of a contract, and by
problematizing the relationship between “contractor” and “contractee,” I wish to hypothesize how a new understanding of the social contract may help resolve some issues raised in the previous two chapters, especially regarding the influence of neoliberalism in the participants’ responses as well as the dichotomy between neoliberal and oppositional communities. While Chapter Five explained the multiple ways through which WU and FHF members succeed at developing an image of inclusionary citizenship through their community programs, some issues remain concerning the foundation on which their image of inclusionary citizenship is built. My hope is for the activist contract to help provide opportunities in which those problems can be resolved, or at least addressed further.

My understanding of the activist contract is hybrid, integrating arguments from social contract theories, central feminist theoretical understandings of citizenship, and intersectional identity politics, as well as key components related to community activism. The activist contract is built upon the diversity of organizational programs, and the insight offered by the interviewees regarding understood connection between economic stratification, citizenship, and state relations. Within the chapter, I explore how WU and FHF interject themselves into contract discussions through their critiques of the state, citizenship, and neoliberalism, which speak to what Mills’s (as cited in Pateman & Mills, 2007) dubs the domination contract, and also through their argument of the development of inclusionary citizenship centered on issues of difference and opposition to power structures.

The final chapter is divided into three main sections. The chapter first begins with a discussion of the relationships between the activist contract and the need for the
oppositional community. Here, I first outline the components of the activist contract as constructing a commitment to solidarity that can be used by WU and FHF activists as they continue to develop an oppositional community and oppositional consciousness within their organizations. As I describe the activist contract, I aim to ground it as a response to the domination contract as described by Mills and other critical contract theorists. I then move to explore the implications for theory and practice and connect the activist contract to ideas of inclusionary citizenship presented by Lister, Mouffe, and Young, as well as to the notions of citizenship as presented by WU and FHF activists. I also return to my fieldwork observation with WU to ground ideas about the activist contract.

The second portion of this chapter aims to understand the implications for using the activist contract to support both the oppositional community and inclusionary citizenship. Specifically, I explore the reality of the activist contract within the scope of neoliberalism, and theorize the implications for empowerment the contract provides against neoliberal influences. Also, if WU and FHF activists target exclusionary policies and programs throughout their activist work, what might a policy response look like that is centered on both the oppositional community and inclusionary citizenship? Further, as WU and FHF activists work to create inclusionary citizenship rights for low/no income individuals, what space might the global community play in that struggle?

The final part of the chapter seeks to summarize the project by recapping the major arguments of WU and FHF participants and implications for their community work. What new issues have been identified through the study and what questions remain left unanswered? In moving forward, what key messages do WU and FHF leave
with regard to the development of inclusionary citizenship for those existing at the economic margin?

**Theorizing the Activist Contract**

As explained in Chapter Two, a social contract typically outlines the agreement made between citizens and the state whereby citizens exchange certain personal freedoms for protections and provisions from the state. I understand the members of WU and FHF as engaging in their own approach to contract relationships, primarily in how they as organizational members make commitments to each other and how they make commitments to other community members. In thinking of the commitments they make to each other, how might contract agreements be grounded in solidarity and opposition? Further, do those commitments ultimately connect to the development of inclusionary citizenship?

Through fieldwork data and interviews, it is apparent that WU and FHF are beginning the process of recognizing and challenging the historical and contemporary limitations of the inegalitarian social contracts discussed in Chapter Two. Through their educational programming and disruptive politics, WU and FHF members articulate an understanding of the historical implications of gender, race, and class inequality for marginalized groups. Programs such as WU’s Revolutionary Reading Group and FHF’s annual “Still Fighting for the Dream” march encourage individuals to learn about and challenge the historical significance of exclusion across gender, race, class, and nationality. In addition, WU and FHF members articulate an understanding of the interlocking systems of oppression that keep low/no income individuals marginalized. In their responses, interviewees expressed concern about the influence of “isms” over the
construction of citizenship; for them, sexism, racism, and classism all contribute to the exclusion of specific populations from full citizenship rights. Further, through their intersectional collaborations, they understand the need to fight multiple oppressions.

WU and FHF’s desire for an expanded view of community based on commitments to solidarity of opposition for organizational members. As described in Chapter Four, the key difference between the neoliberal idea of community and that as supported by WU and FHF is the presence of or desire for an oppositional lens, a critical way of examining and challenging the various power structures that exist across institutions to keep specific groups marginalized and silenced in the public sphere. WU and FHF seek citizenship that allows for discussions of difference and experiences and it is through their oppositional consciousness that they begin to develop difference-based activism. Charles Mills argues that mainstream contracts encourage assimilation of marginalized individuals to the dominant group (white, heterosexual men), “thereby burying the distinctive problems the former groups face” (p. 98). Yet, by proclaiming their identities as low/no income individuals and centering their organizational politics on issues of difference and inequality, WU and FHF refuse to acquiesce to mainstream contracts. The oppositional community exists in response to the desire for inclusionary citizenship that encourages difference and experience rather than homogeneity.

In moving forward with the struggle for inclusionary citizenship rights, I question how the work of WU and FHF that dispels myths about economic justice and citizenship equality within their communities ultimately relates to the liberating aspects of contracts. I see the organizations challenging power structures in their activist programming and also coming to terms with their own internal organizational power structures through
conflicts described earlier. Their individual and organizational conversations promote what I see as a new understanding of the social contract – an activist contract. At its core, the activist contract helps outline relationships for individuals living within the oppositional community. Thus, the very tenants of the activist contract must be based on the logic of the oppositional community: a location of individuals committed to an oppositional consciousness that seeks to “undermine, reform, or overthrow a system of human domination” (Mansbridge, 2001, p. 3). As a contractual relationship, the activist contract consists of: the agreement between community individuals to support each other in opposition to power and in their daily living. Individuals consent to the activist contract in exchange for support of their oppositional politics and daily living from other community members.

The activist contract agreement outlines two basic agreements. First, individuals consent to support each other in opposition to power. A key aspect of creating the oppositional community is developing an oppositional lens. In order for individuals to truly exist in mutually benefiting ways, they must recognize the historical and contemporary structures of oppression that keep specific individuals marginalized. In her text on developing the oppositional consciousness, Mansbridge (2001) explains that “individuals in the subordinate groups must be brought together by existing or developing institution in order to help one another dig into” layers of oppression (p. 7). By grounding the activist contract in an oppositional lens, it supports the encouragement of individuals to recognize issues of domination and oppression that keep citizenship exclusionary. Individuals may enter the activist contract without an oppositional lens, but it is through conversations about power structures that their consciousness develops
within new relationships. The activist contract is constructed as a fluid relationship in which individuals interested and committed to social justice can connect.

The second agreement within the activist contract hinges on the idea of service: individuals agree to support each other in their daily living. A key aspect of what WU and FHF consider responsibilities of citizenship is to serve other individuals, help those who cannot help themselves, and educate others about power structures. Thus, by agreeing to help each other in daily living, individuals agree to assist those who may experience difficulties as well a serve the greater “good” of the larger community. The two agreements help construct and support an image of citizenship that is mutually supportive and beneficial, existing in oppositional response to the domination contract.

Both tenants of the activist contract would help outline for WU and FHF members opportunities to discuss problems that may arise in their community activism. For instance, returning to the problematic incident from WU as described earlier in the chapter, committing to live in opposition to power structures means that WU activists, for example, should engage in discussions around the problems of using words like “cunt” in organizational meetings. Agreeing to abide by the activist contract means that organizational members need to recognize their own position of power in the organizational spaces. Engaging in challenging conversations and making the agreement to live in opposition to power may help groups like WU as they continue to make expand their organizing to include diverse members and incorporate intersectional issues into their mission.

The activist contract exists for those individuals within specific communities and does not outline a contract between the state and community members. As many of the
WU and FHF members articulated, the ideal state should be one that operates by and for the people. They also desire a state that supports the will of the community and the need for service to others. However, they decree that such state does not exist because of the influence of “isms” and power structures that keep specific groups out of political power. In addition, the current state, according to WU and FHF members, is one based in neoliberal oppression of marginalized groups. If the purpose of the activist contract is to support the maintenance of the oppositional community, then the primary audience should be community individuals, not the state. As Tina from WU explained, the government is too large at this point to subvert (Tina 2009). Only once an oppositional community is established can individuals begin to theorize how to use their opposition to change political structures. WU and FHF members currently engage with the political sphere by appealing to policy reform and voting rights. Yet, they remain dissatisfied with the response of the state to issues related to poverty (Barbara, 2009; Kayla, 2009; Tina, 2009). Thus, as the interests of community residents and activists remain of primary concern, the state lacks a place within the activist contract.48 Further, the heart of the activist contract remains the organizational members and their external community members; therefore, focus needs to remain on challenging and discussing power structures as they directly affect those core individuals first before discussions can expand to the state level.

48 The potential range for the activist contract grows as groups such as WU and FHF expand their activism to new communities. Thus, there is potential for the state to become an actor in the activist contract in the future. Such entry into the activist contract would require an overhaul of the state’s priorities and a detachment of the state from neoliberal interests. So long as the state favors the concerns of the market over the concerns of marginalized individuals, it can never become an oppositional actor within the activist contract.
In theory, the activist contract works to combine the necessary tenants of inclusionary citizenship development with the underlying themes relevant in critical social contract theory. It acknowledges power dynamics that often support exclusionary citizenship, but unlike the domination contract, the activist contract seeks to create new spaces for challenging power and inequality.\textsuperscript{49} In relation to social contract theory, the activist contract creates freedom and opportunities through which individuals can recognize Mills’s understanding of the domination contract as well as their own positionality with respect to oppressive relationships. In describing the subordination of individuals based on classism, patriarchy, and white supremacy, Mills explains that:

\begin{quote}
The social contract in its guise as the domination contract captures these crucial ‘descriptive’ realities while simultaneously, by emphasizing their ‘artificial’ genesis, bringing them across the conceptual border from the realm of the natural into the realm of the political. (Pateman & Mills, 2007, p. 87)
\end{quote}

The activist contract addresses the relationships built upon the domination contract in two ways. First, given the necessity of an oppositional lens, individuals within the activist contract are encouraged to recognize the various aspects of the domination contact. Ideally, individuals develop their oppositional lens prior to engaging in the activist contract. But since the activist contract outlines the agreement for support in opposition of power, individuals who agree to the activist contract can engage in ongoing dialogues about power structures and the influence of the domination contract.

Second, by agreeing to support community members in their daily living, individuals within the activist contract aim to support those who are oppressed by the

\textsuperscript{49} As discussed in Chapter Two, Mills describes the domination contract as a series of contract relationships that “generates norms, and stipulations about how to apply these norms, that will themselves reinforce domination” (Pateman & Mills 2001, p. 90).
domination contract. The activist contract is concerned with establishing and maintaining justice. Because it is based on individual relationships, individuals consenting to the activist contract recognize that classism, sexism, and racism are not natural hierarchies, but mechanism of political forces that keep specific populations docile and other in power. Returning to the WU example, through the activist contract, individuals engage in conversations about the history and meaning behind the word “cunt” and the various ways in which that word is viewed as problematic for women, especially low/no income women. WU member Tina expressed her own understanding of the problems behind the word and the need to discuss its usage at future WU meetings; therefore, I see WU as already beginning to engage in activist contracts through members’ acknowledgement of the necessity for challenging such harmful language.

The activist contract supports the larger goal of creating the oppositional community in which individuals can develop understandings of citizenship that exist outside neoliberal exclusions. Building the activist contract within an oppositional framework helps outline the multiple ways in which those considered marginalized – women, minorities, low/no income individuals, immigrants, GLBT individuals – can construct new relationships and agreements around their social justice issues. In addition, it allows those often excluded from citizenship opportunities to claim agency and voice. In doing so, it expands their participation as citizens and potential as social change agents. As Young (2001) posits, inclusive democracy must focus on enabling the “participation and voice of all those affected by problems” (p. 10). By basing itself within social justice frameworks, the activist contract outlines relationships in which marginalized individuals can begin addressing those problems.
Referencing fieldwork data and the three themes of social activism as discussed in Chapter Three – challenging power structures, creating an oppositional consciousness, and forming a collective identity – helps explain how the activist contract aids in challenging marginalization dependent on sex, race, or class-based contracts. Situating contracts within an activist framework supports the importance of cross-issue collaborations and collective identity formation. Individuals consenting to the activist contract understand the multiple ways in which intersectionality connects with marginalization. In other words, their oppositional lens requires of them an understanding of the various ways in which gender and race, for instance, intersect with class oppression. Therefore, the activist contract must allow for intersectionality to exist.

WU and FHF members are already engaging in intersectional dialogues and are self-reflective in their own observation of power inequalities. For instance, during a FHF board meeting, members demonstrated their own understanding of intersectionality while discussing how to deal with the new Suburban Women’s Collective. While the board supported the program, they all expressed surprise that such middle-class women were approaching their agency for assistance. I observed their reactions as connected to their commitment to opposition and solidarity with individuals in and outside FHF. Though the Suburban Women’s Collective differed from FHF in racial and class composition, FHF members understood the importance of helping these women as they struggled to navigate social services in Corners. This meeting reflected the key elements of the activist contract, whereby FHF members were working to establish and maintain solidarity to each other while simultaneously discussing power structures connected to their organizing.
The centrality of the oppositional lens and social activism are crucial to understanding how the activist contract relates to inclusionary citizenship. Lister (2003) states that collective action and social activism can increase resistance to oppression in both public and private spheres (p. 30). An oppositional consciousness is significant when working within the context of a neoliberal framework where the public sphere relies heavily on the push for privatization. The activist contract allows individuals opportunities to engage in resistance within public spaces. Also, in terms of creating a non-essentializing differentiated citizen, citizens must be capable of acting as citizens in the name of a collective good. Mouffe (1992a) similarly explains that a radical citizen “must be an active citizen… who acts as a citizen, who conceives of herself as a participant in a collective undertaking” (p. 4, original emphasis). The idea of the common good is foundational to the activist contract; therefore, the activist contract reveals information about how marginalized individuals can act collectively as citizens in ways that are often excluded from citizenship, but included within the scope of an oppositional community.

Second, and most importantly, the activist contract returns the development and maintenance of citizenship to the community, distancing itself from a singularly individualistic construction of citizenship. The activist contract requires individuals to consent to support each other in two distinct ways. While the agreement is mutually beneficial, it also is geared towards the betterment of the community in which the contract resides. Reorienting citizenship within the community helps illuminate the means through which rights and responsibilities are constructed and upheld. Individuals within the activist contract can critically challenge and examine the ways in which
individual citizenship rights and responsibilities have historically been based on power structures and domination. In addition, moving citizenship to the community reinforces the ability of citizens to create their own relationship with other citizens. The community incorporates local spaces and neighborhoods; the small-scale of the community allows for more potential opportunities for the necessary conversations about power dynamics to take place.

One way in which I observed WU already beginning the process of the activist contract with community members was during their Building the Unsettling Force Conference. On the last day of the conference, WU hosted a community park party in which they celebrated the conference but also allowed community members who did not attend the conference to meet and speak with conference leaders and panelists. The party was a casually opportunity for WU to spread the word of their mission to new individuals and also encourage others to join in conversations about poverty issues. At the block party, several musicians performed songs about economic injustice and rapped about the importance of community solidarity. Though neighborhood residents may not have attended the conference, they received its core message of oppositional consciousness-raising and activist solidarity through these songs. The community party was, as I understood, an extension of the commitment WU members made to each other to live in opposition and support each other through their daily struggles.

In constructing the activist contract, I explained that it does not allow room for state participation. Given the necessity of the oppositional lens, it becomes difficult for individuals to consent to the state that operates outside the scope of opposition. Yet, by situating the activist contract within the community, I do not mean to suggest that those
who consent to the activist contract are separate from state control. As legal citizens, they still must operate under state sanctions and laws. However, for the purposes of creating more inclusionary citizenship and oppositional community aimed at breaking down power structures, the activist contract must remain focused on individual community members and their oppositional lens. Lister, Mouffe, and Young agree that relationships with the state and politicians remain of critical importance when developing inclusionary citizenship. Yet, it is first necessary for individual members of the community to agree to support each other in opposition before they can collectively begin to challenge the state.

The activist contract is meant to support the creation of the oppositional community in which inclusionary citizenship can develop. Yet, a possible concern with the activist contract is the position of individuals who do not consent to the contract. What happens in communities where individuals do not wish to support each other in opposition or service? This is a valid question and one that remains a challenge to the activist contract. It is assumed that all those who desire the oppositional community desire the activist contract, since it is centered upon service to others and resistance to power structures. The real solution may remain not with the activist contract, but with the issue of intersectional identity politics in general. One reason for resisting the activist contract may be the hierarchical nature of identity-based organizing, as discussed in Chapters Four and Five. The story from Lyra of the woman who challenged her racial identity during the Building the Unsettling Force Conference directly connects to the activist contract. While the woman was in opposition to class inequities, she believed racial inequality to hold highest significance in her personal activism. The insistence that
her issue is of greater important challenges her ability to critically engage in conversations about the intersectionality of power structures. Yet, Lyra’s ability to converse with the woman about why she believed race trumped class speaks to the power of the activist contract as an act of collective behavior and solidarity building. Though the woman agreed with Lyra, it is their conversation that remains of critical importance to building and sustaining activist contracts and the oppositional community. Thus, a solution comes not in the formation of the contract, but in the understanding of intersecting oppressions that support exclusionary citizenship.

Activist Contract and Citizenship

The activist contract sets out to provide an ideological framework through which marginalized individuals can understand their role in developing inclusionary citizenship. In her text on differentiated citizenship for women, Lister (1997) highlights the importance of collective action in helping expand the parameters of citizenship. As she explains:

Involvement in collective action can strengthen the ability to resist oppressive practices such as domestic violence in the private sphere: conversely such resistance can lead to and inform more public collective citizenship action. (p. 30)

The importance of collective action for Lister relates to the expansion of what constitutes both citizenship action as well as meaningful issues related to proper citizenship. This support for collective action resonates within the activist contract, in which individuals agree to support their personal understandings of power injustices as well as agree to pose challenges to those groups or individuals supporting power structures. For instance, the educational programming aimed at middle/upper class individuals allows WU and FHF members to challenge those in positions of power to understand the influences of class,
gender, and racial oppression on both their own economic situation as well as that of low/no income individuals.

In addition, engaging in the activist contract can help individuals realize and navigate the multiple networks that co-exist within the larger community. The multiplicity of social networks within a particular framework can be both daunting and beneficial. Frances Fox Piven (2006) explains that social life is organized through various “networks of specialized and interdependent activities,” all of which have the potential for conflict and collaboration. In her explanation, these interconnected networks are circular in that, for instance, “the agricultural workers depend on the landowners, but the landowners also depend on agricultural workers” (20). A potential problem of the interconnectedness and reliance upon networks is the potential for power differentials and new hierarchies to arise. Yet, as I argue, engagement in the activist contract helps resolve some power issues by requiring individuals to come into the contract with an oppositional lens. Again, the example of their cross-class educational programs demonstrates the advantages of the activist contract for WU and FHF. As Sherry from WU explained, middle/upper class individuals are oppressed by economic stratification in unique ways. Their organizational programs help individuals across class structures construct their own oppositional lens, thereby allowing them access to engage in the activist contract. Once they agree to support individuals in opposition to power, middle/upper class individuals can realize their own positions of privilege and work to support WU and FHF’s antipoverty activism. FHF’s Suburban Women’s Collective represents the possibility for engaging those considered privileged in intersectional collaborations.
In her work on women’s community activism, Nancy Naples (1998a) explains that a necessary element for the success of activist endeavors is the engagement in open discussions about diverse experiences of oppressions and power structures. For her, “interaction with others encountering similar issues or problems” is important when attempting to form collaborations and make sustainable change (p. 146). The activist contract, by requiring individuals support each other in opposition to power, supports Naples request for activist dialogues. The contract also supports the push for the development of political consciousnesses across groups, which in accordance with Naples argument, works to help individuals realize underlying power issues that influence their gendered, raced, classed experiences.

Clearly the activist contract’s core goals are influenced by relationship building, consciousness raising, and challenging power structures. In addition, the activist contract also holds several purposes in supporting the development of inclusionary citizenship. Yet, while the activist contract situates individuals within the oppositional community, it remains an idealistic approach to creating inclusionary citizenship for marginalized individuals. What this next section explores is how the activist contract works to materially support the development of the oppositional community for low/no income individuals. Building off of the WU and FHF case studies, I aim to explore how the activist contract may work to answer some questions raised in Chapters Four and Five about the relationships between citizenship, community, and neoliberalism. Here, I also examine what influence the oppositional community may have over policy responses. In other words, if as WU and FHF members articulate, recent welfare legislation exists in response to neoliberal influences, how might policy be imagined within the construction
of inclusionary citizenship based in the community? In addition, I briefly explore whether the oppositional community can transcend American boundaries. What issues arise in developing activist contract relationships across borders and how might the oppositional community develop into a global community?

**Implications for Community Building**

Chapters Four and Five outlined the complex and dynamic ways in which antipoverty activists understand citizenship, view their own positionality vis-à-vis the state, and work towards eradicating poverty and establishing economic justice through grassroots programming. Outcomes from the case studies reveal two interesting trends: first, WU and FHF members manage to elicit progress towards the theoretical development of inclusionary citizenship for low/no income individuals. Second, despite their progress, the actual creation of inclusionary citizenship remains difficult, primarily because of the neoliberal influences over community and the state. Thus, the issue remains whether antipoverty activist, who in their position as low/no income individuals view themselves as excluded from citizenship, can truly develop material responses to exclusionary citizenship, or if citizenship will remain tied to neoliberalism.

**Challenges to Neoliberalism**

As outlined in Chapter Three, there are three purported traits of poverty within the neoliberalism (a.k.a.: “new” poverty): economic polarization, political demobilization, and market triumphalism (Goode & Maskovsky, 2001). Engagement in the activist contract works to challenge at least two of these three elements, and offers potential for challenging the third. First, the activist contract challenges the economic polarization of low/no income individuals by centralizing the oppositional consciousness and the
creation of the oppositional community. Within new poverty, low/no income citizens are separated from mainstream society by the limitations of low-wage jobs, lack of educational opportunities, and increased surveillance by the state. As a result, low/no income individuals become polarized and understand themselves as unable to advance within political and social structures. WU member Alice explicitly talked about polarization when she explained the increasing privatization of households and the decreasing interest in community politics. Yet, the activist contract exists in response to the domination contract and centers the possession and maintenance of an oppositional lens. The act of agreeing to the activist contract requires individuals to participate across class lines, thereby directly challenging the economic polarization of low/no income individuals.

Second, the activist contract responds to the issue of political demobilization by engaging marginalized individuals in oppositional resistance. Goode and Maskovsky (2001) explain that low/no income individuals were depoliticized as a collective because of common media imagery of impoverished individuals as lazy, hypersexual, and prone to criminal behavior (p. 7). The message about low/no income individuals removed support of their plight from middle/upper class counterparts, subsequently removing their “political voice and political defenders” (p. 7). Yet, the activist contract forces individuals who once were without voice to engage in critical discussions of oppression and marginalization. Through relationships with other marginalized individuals, low/no income individuals can challenge unjust media assumptions about their class positionality as well as pose political threats to the state. In addition, they can challenge ideas related to gender and race in relation to poverty. Programs such as the Dismantling Classism and
Suburban Women’s Collective demonstrate the value of politically mobilizing across class, gender, and race lines. The development of the activist contract would strengthen those programs by outlining the oppositional nature of the cross-class discussions. In addition, because the activist contract seeks to establish equally consenting, mutually beneficial agreements amongst individuals, such negative imagery must not exist or influence the attitudes of those engaging within new contracts.

The activist contract does not directly remedy the issue of market triumphalism. However, through its work to engage individuals otherwise polarized from political action, the activist contract does open space for challenges to the markets. For instance, within the activist contract, individuals can problematize the relationship between corporate greed versus citizen needs. As evident in their interviews, WU and FHF members recognize the state’s favoritism of market interests, arguing that corporate interests trump the need of low/no income individuals for social services and welfare programs. On a basic level, though the activist contract as a contract does little to resolve the issue of market favoritism, it does allow those who consent to the contract opportunities to critically resist market-favoritism and create new ways in which citizens’ needs can be supported outside of the market, such as care-work or community initiatives. In addition, basing the activist contract within the oppositional community requires that individuals locate empowerment in other avenues outside of the market. Goode and Maskovsky explain that a key component of market triumphalism is the empowerment of marginalized individuals through participation in the market. They claim that “everyone, including the poor, is assumed to be possessed of empowerment thanks to the liberating structure of the market itself” (p. 9). Yet, the oppositional
community centers empowerment through other forms of participation such as community organizing, volunteerism, and care work. Thus, by supporting the oppositional community, the activist contract also supports challenging empowerment through market participation.

Challenging the three tenants of “new poverty” demonstrates the potential for the activist contract to support the development of an oppositional community outside the scope of neoliberal influences. More importantly, the activist contract assists in the development of inclusionary citizenship models based on service, acceptance of difference, and oppositional commitment rather than economic productivity and market value. The activist contract, with its focus on individual goodwill and community initiatives, seek to expand the parameters of citizenship to include activities outside the scope of traditional politics. In her argument about women’s (dis)empowerment within civil society, Alison Jaggar (2006) emphasizes the question that it is not where individuals choose to be active – the formal political sphere or civil society – but rather it is what type of work individuals are conducting within those spaces (p. 104). Her argument is important when theorizing the development of inclusionary citizenship. Of value is not just economic productivity within the market, but also other types of productive citizenship work such as care-work, volunteerism, and oppositional politics. Expanding the scope of “political” activities to include productive jobs within the oppositional community allows those individuals once excluded from traditional citizenship opportunities to participate.

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Policy Development

WU and FHF members argue that developing inclusionary citizenship requires not just expanding the scope of political activities, but also challenging specific policies that encourage the marginalization and oppression of low/no income individuals. As Ingram and Schneider (2005) posit, “policies impact citizenship when they directly or indirectly create inequalities in political participation and then they contribute to the social construction of some persons as deserving and others as undeserving” (p. 27). Of primary concern for WU and FHF activists are policies related to financial resources and benefits, such as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). As feminist theorists claimed, PRWORA incorporates moral ideologies about low/no income individuals within policy frameworks (Hancock, 2004; Mink, 1998; Neubeck, 2006). If citizenship is to exist as inclusionary, then policies such as PRWROA must change as they work to support neoliberal agendas of market triumphalism and economic polarization (Goode & Maskovsky, 2001; Mink, 1998; Neubeck, 2006).

Yet, how might a theory of inclusionary citizenship and oppositional community influence the construction of policies? First and foremost, since an oppositional lens is critical to the development of inclusionary citizenship, then policy responses, too, must enact a critical lens about power structures and inequities. Low/no income individuals are considered undeserving within larger social sphere and therefore policies related to economic support and welfare benefits reflect this undeserving attitude. Yet, policies that operate towards inclusionary citizenship would not be influenced by social constructions of undeservedness. Rather, policies would be based upon the results of critical discussions
about the influence of such social constructions that render certain groups marginalized. The FHF position piece to President Obama seeks to begin conversations about the limitations of specific public policies and the ways in which those policies target minority populations. If public policies developed in response to such position pieces, or at least took the perspectives of FHF and WU into consideration while drafting legislation, then policies would develop that directly build off of critical conversations about power structures and exclusion.

In addition, inclusionary citizenship centralizes the recognition of difference and understands that individual citizens have unique experiences that shape their position within society. Inclusionary citizenship also recognizes the multiple ways in which identity issues intersect with each other to keep some individuals limited. Policies often approach identity problems singularly by focusing only on the plight of low/no income individuals, immigrants, or GLBT individuals, for instance. Yet, policies under inclusionary citizenship would recognize the ways class, race, and gender may intersect with GLBT populations’ experiences, or how sexuality and class intersect with immigrants. Policy responses as related to inclusionary citizenship cannot focus on one issue, such as abortion funding, without attention to the intersectionality of difference within that specific issue.

It becomes difficult to outline the elements of policy under the oppositional community since policy is an extension of state rule, which WU and FHF members argue remains tied to power structures. Yet, one advantage of the development of policy under inclusionary citizenship is the expansion for how marginalized individuals become constructed and influenced by policies. Schneider and Ingram (1997) explain social
constructions create four main types of target population groups to which policy can respond: the advantaged target population (powerful and deserving), contenders (powerful but not deserving), dependents (deserving but not powerful), and deviants (neither deserving nor powerful). Typically low/no income individuals hover across several categories from dependent to deviants. However, if their citizenship were no longer considered secondary and if citizenship were based on issues of difference rather than economic merit, then their position could improve. In addition, given the centralization of oppositional lens within inclusionary citizenship, those considered privileged (i.e.: the advantaged target populations or the contenders) would have to recognize their own positions of privilege within new policies, just as dependents and deviants have to recognize their own marginalization. WU and FHF attempt to begin the process of reformulating who is considered desirable and who is considered deviant through their intersectional educational programs and their engagement with political structures.

Lastly, because inclusionary citizenship is located within the community, policies should develop within formal politics as well as community organizations. In other words, policy should operate both from the “ground-up” in addition to “top-down.” In her piece on neighborhood organizing, Camou (2005) explains that policy-making is often located in “legislatures and bureaucracies,” but “the civic sector and its diversity of organizations” are also important sites of policy construction (p. 197). For her, the neighborhood organizations “assume much responsibility for identify and tackling urban problems” (p. 197). In her study, she critiques this new policy-making by suggesting that those within neighborhood organizations only focus on target groups who are
marginalized under mainstream policy, rather than “the more positively constructed
groups” (p. 197). Yet, the oppositional community aims to educate all individuals about
power structures; therefore, not only would policy develop from community needs, but
all individuals, marginalized and dominant, would be included in the discussion.

Global Contexts

The construction of an oppositional community provides liberating potential for
those individuals otherwise excluded from mainstream citizenship. Yet, does that
potential diminish when expanding the scope of citizenship and belonging outside
American borders? While the construction of the liberal citizen subject may not have
much significance outside a national context, neoliberalism does hold influence over the
state/citizen-subject relationship on a global scale. Not only does the idea of market
triumphalism and political demobilization expand beyond borders, but so does the desire
for social justice activism in response to state limitations.

Some of the WU and FHF participants acknowledge the relevancy of the global
community within their own understandings of citizenship and belonging. Several WU
members traveled to various World Social Forums and Global Economic Summits,
bringing back stories about global poverty as well as views of American society. As
Kayla from WU explained, engaging in global dialogues is important for the construction
of inclusionary citizenship since “[we] learn how they feel about us as Americans…
[that] was a big eye opener.” For her, how she is viewed as an American citizen globally
impacts her ability to make change locally, for as she claimed, how others view poverty
in American helps her understand the types of issues she needs to present to community
officials and politicians. Her fellow WU member Tina echoed the importance of the global community on local activism. As she stated:

We’re all very interconnected at this point. With corporations and things like that. So in order for us to have a significant change globally . . . the United States has got to change. . . We believe in order for there to be some kinda large change globally, it’s going to have to start in the belly. It’s going to have to be facilitated by organizations like ours on the inside, that can change this country.

For Tina, expanding the scope of her community activism to the global sphere helps strengthen her initiatives locally as well as strengthen the global movement to challenge economic disparities. As activists, she and her other WU peers found strengthen in their cross-border collaborations and she acknowledged that theorizing an identity of “the global citizen” impacts how she approaches local politics for Pickerington residents (Tina, 2009).

However, despite their interest in collaborating across national borders, WU and FHF activists still recognize the value and importance of their local community spaces. As Clinton from WU explained:

Poverty exists all over the world. It’s definitely a global issue that has to be faced. But before we can go out and attack the big old bass, you got to get that guppy first. So you have to start within your community. You have to start within yourself. If you can’t change poverty within yourself, then you can’t change poverty outside.

The “guppy” becomes WU and FHF activists as well as other community members and the fishing line on which that guppy can be caught is the oppositional lens. For Clinton, only once individuals themselves recognize their own positions of marginalization and privilege as citizens can they work to extend that opposition lens to global structures. Thus, while the activist contract and oppositional community may hold relevance on the
global scale, for WU and FHF members, focus must continue to remain within local spaces.

Outside the scope of WU and FHF, it remains difficult to theorize a construction of both the activist contract and oppositional community. The activist contract is based on the agreement to live in opposition to power structures and support other individuals. An element of opposing power structures is developing a basic knowledge of the historical legacy of oppression for specific populations. While this is already difficult in local spaces, it becomes even more difficult to manage across borders. Also, the scope of which individuals can work to help support other individuals in their daily lives becomes difficult when expanding the contract globally. What types of support can one engage over borders that are not in some way hierarchical or exclusionary? What would conversations within the activist contract look like across borders? These are difficult questions to approach and thus, the question of relevancy for the global space remains of issue when theorizing the future of the activist contract and the expansion of the oppositional community.

**Conclusion: Moving Forward**

Pateman and Mills (2007) describe the domination contract as outlining not the equal society in which individuals strive to exist, but rather the unequal society in which individuals already exist and desire to terminate (p. 7). From observational analysis and fieldwork data, it is apparent that WU and FHF members are challenging the types of contracts in which they engage within their organizations. The activist contract works opposite the domination contract as it helps outline some of the tenants of the just society desired by marginalized populations. Inclusionary citizenship works to promote issues of
difference, relocate focus to the community, and expand notions of citizen productivity for those often excluded. The oppositional community operates as a material tool in which inclusionary citizenship can develop and the activist contract, as it describes relationships amongst individuals within the oppositional community, supports its construction. The central focus on social activism keeps citizenship committed to the community and grounds it in an oppositional lens focused on challenging power inequalities. Marion Orr (2007) describes community activism as “replenishing democracy in communities not generally associated with civic engagement” (p. 252). The activist contract, by focusing on local community spaces and the abilities of marginalized groups to have a voice in creating new power structures, supports Orr’s argument.

Alison Jaggar (2006) posits that activism in civil society is not an exclusive alternative to traditional state-centered politics (p. 108). For her, civil society and formal politics both hold equal roles in protecting and marginalization specific individuals. Yet, for WU and FHF citizens for whom the state and local politics remains exclusionary, the community exists as the key sight for resistance and expansion of citizenship. By focusing on the role individuals play in challenging unjust power structures and creating alternative relationships built upon an oppositional consciousness, the activist contract presents a model for understanding how local community groups can advance with their missions of social justice and work to establish more equitable approaches to citizenship within their communities.

Clearly the construction of the activist contract remains difficult while individual citizens and communities remain tied to neoliberal influences. Despite their
determination to challenge state power structures and unequal citizenship through their social activism, WU and FHF members fail to concretely determine how inclusionary citizenship can develop within the United States. They put forth critical suggestions for the creation of the oppositional community as a space in which their desired understandings of inclusionary citizenship can form. And their organizational work is starting the process of opening up dialogues about citizenship exclusion and class, race, and gender differences. Yet, the material construction of inclusionary citizenship, and the contracts required to support that construction, remain at this point theoretical projects.

However, it is WU and FHF’s interjection into the conversation about citizenship, neoliberalism, and community activism that remains crucial. This project aimed to investigate three main questions: 1) do those who are thought to be excluded from citizenship understand themselves as excluded; 2) how do they challenge these exclusions and what can their definitions of citizenship reveal about the relevancy of economic status on citizenship rights; and 3) what new insights, if any, can antipoverty activism offer regarding the theorization and creation of non-exclusionary citizenship rights? Through examining their critiques, visions, and strategies for resistance, it becomes clear that WU and FHF activists, as a marginalized population, 1) do see themselves as excluded from citizenship; 2) challenge such exclusions through expansion of the community and challenges to neoliberal ideas of market empowerment and productivity; and 3) centralize the necessity of service and oppositional politics through organizational activism as necessary for the development of inclusionary rights.
As the two organizations articulate, citizenship offers more than material benefits, such as access to political participation or fair representation in legal trials. The status and identity of “citizen” offers a community of belonging for individuals. As members outline through their interviews, to exist as a ‘citizen’ means that one exists as a member of a community of responsible actors focused on the equality and worth of all individuals regardless of identity issue. WU and FHF members understand themselves as excluded from full citizenship rights based on their gender, class, and racialized positions, but what they desire is not necessarily redistribution of wealth or services (though they do articulate some desire for equalization with those of more affluent economic and social positioning). For them, two things are more important to equitable citizenship: equal recognition as viable actors by the state, and equal access to political and social participation. For WU and FHF, what is of critical importance is the inclusion of low/no income individuals at the political table; for impoverished community members to have opportunities to voice concerns and engage in decision-making processes. As members explain, real equality cannot develop without full participation of all individuals.

The end result of this project is twofold. First, through fieldwork and conversations with WU and FHF members, the study revealed the potential for antipoverty activism to challenging citizenship exclusions. More importantly, however, this study revealed that these activists can interject themselves into the theoretical conversation in productive ways. Not only did WU and FHF’s organizational programming and members’ responses challenge exclusionary notions of citizenship, but they also expanded on notions of empowerment through the community, developing key ideas about productivity in today’s neoliberal area. In addition, given the importance of
oppositional consciousness within the activists’ citizenship models, this study posits the development of an oppositional community as the locale in which inclusionary citizenship can form. Repositioning the organizations’ current activism and organizational politics in the framework of the activist contract helps demonstrate the potential for this imagined oppositional community to become a reality for marginalized individuals. Questions remain regarding the role policy and the global sphere play on the oppositional community. Yet, despite these issues, the crux of the project’s outcomes lies in the construction of the oppositional community as the location for inclusionary citizenship development.

In addition to revealing the potential agency of low/no income individuals and the possibilities for challenging citizenship exclusions, this study also recognizes several main points. First, when discussing issues of citizenship and equality for marginalized groups, environmental conditions are of critical importance. The state’s emphasis on neoliberalism and its subsequent centralization of privatization, market triumphalism, and economic stratification was pertinent to the activists’ understandings of citizenship and their organizational programs. In addition, WU and FHF’s understandings of gender, race, class, and national differences influenced their connection to experiences of citizenship and the state, and helped them establish their own oppositional lens. As Lister (1997) explains, when theorizing citizenship for those living at the margins, it is necessary to outline the multiple ways in which citizenship connect to individual agency and the environmental conditions on which that agency relies. In other words, “the citizenship rights, which enable people to act as agents and to express that agency in the arena of citizenship, are not fixed. They remain objects of the political struggle to defend,
reinterpret, and extend them” (p. 198). For her, the real questions become not one of access to citizenship rights, but on what basis are citizenship rights constructed and challenged. The WU and FHF activists echoed these concerns and their activism demonstrates the necessity of questions regarding conditions on which citizenship is constructed and maintained.

Second, this study supports the feminist theoretical claims of the relevancy of community work in response to exclusionary citizenship, as well as the multiple ways in which intersectional identity issues can impact citizens’ rights. Though I concluded that neither Lister, Mouffe, nor Young possess the perfect approach to inclusionary citizenship rights, all three theorists contributed key ideas about the role of the community and intersectionality, which were taken up and challenged by WU and FHF members. All three theorists argue against the notion of a universal citizen for whom all difference impacts equally. As Lister (1997) explains, a true feminist approach to citizenship, one that exists as inclusionary, must “be rooted in a politics of solidarity in difference…” that “exposes the false universalism of citizenship as traditionally conceived and the implications that flow from that” (p. 199). The oppositional community, standing in contrast to the neoliberal community works to incorporate Lister, Mouffe, and Young’s understandings of difference and inclusivity while simultaneously providing attending to the needs of those living at the margins themselves.

Though their desire for inclusionary citizenship situated within communal spaces is evident, some questions still remain about the future for the oppositional community and inclusive citizenship for low/no income individuals. For instance, in what ways will the move from a recessionary to a post-recessionary period within the United States
challenge or support the desire for the oppositional community? As the WU and FHF members explained, their outreach programs to middle/upper class individuals increased in part because of the recession’s impact on affluent neighborhoods. Their ability to engage in intersectional programming was influenced by the rise in poverty figures in diverse neighborhoods. Yet, once individuals begin to find stable financial footing after the financial meltdown, will it become more difficult to develop the oppositional consciousness across class, gender, and race categories? From their interviews, it seems that the financial disaster led to an increase in oppositional discussions about power structures and economic stratification. Fieldwork occurred during the heart of the Wall Street collapse and the bank bailouts, which helped fuel WU and FHF’s disruptive politics and expanded the scope of poverty activism to new communities, as demonstrated through one of their marching slogans: “Bail Out the People, Not the Banks!” Yet, the future of their push for inclusionary citizenship and oppositional consciousness may undergo challenges as America advanced into a new financial age.

In addition, how might the increasing neoliberal agenda influence antipoverty activism in the long-term? Theorists such as Hyatt (2001) explain that citizenship in today’s neoliberal era is constructed upon images of social capital and volunteerism. Yet, social capital and “volunteerism” is rapidly changing (Putnam, 2000). Whereas neighborhood and civic organizations once dominated the social capital landscape, individuals are finding new ways to exist as civically engaged citizens. As WU and FHF members explain, the depths to which individuals ‘serve’ others is also changing due of the ever-increasing privatization of individuals and households. As this study moves forward, what impact will this new tide of volunteerism have on WU and FHF’s activist
work? More importantly, how might this shift in social capital and volunteerism impact the development of the oppositional community?

While the future of WU and FHF’s work is unknown, their foundational understandings of citizenship for low/no income individuals remain constant. Though they understand economic stratification as central to the limitation of specific individuals from full citizenship, they view the radical potential of those marginalized citizens across gender, race, and class lines as housed within the oppositional community and activist contract. In describing civic republicanism, Adrian Oldfield summarizes the relationships of citizenship and community in comparison to the dichotomy of justice and freedom:

We aspire to be just and free, even though we know we shall never be perfectly just or free. But that knowledge neither prompts us to abandon the ideals nor disposes us to discard the concepts as inappropriate or irrelevant to the world in which we live. We judge that world in terms of how just and free it is the suggestion advanced here is that we should also judge our world in terms of how far it realizes the ideas of citizenship and community. (as cited in Shafir, 1995, p. 80)

WU and FHF aspire to be equal citizens, even if the notion of equality is built upon multiple layers of domination and seems unobtainable. They aspire for full access to the material and perceived benefits of citizenship, yet recognize the historically limiting foundation on which those benefits exist. Yet, despite the difficulties of living at the economic margins, and the multiple institutions working against them, WU and FHF members persist in their desire for economic justice and a more inclusive idea of citizenship. Their activism speaks to the potential of marginalized individuals to understand the intersectionality of inequality, and to directly confront power structures through open conversations and commitments to each other and their larger communities.
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Appendix A: Research Design and Methodology

This project aims to examine the various ways in which antipoverty organizations challenge state exclusions and construct new ideas about citizenship for their members and their communities. Specifically, this project focuses on how low/no income grassroots organizations are engaging in dialogues about citizenship, both as inclusion and exclusion, within their community work. Chapters One and Three provide brief overviews of the study’s research design and case study selection. This Appendix gives a more detailed outlook of methods used for data collection and analysis.

Background Information

I had previous knowledge of and contact with several WU members before constructing this project. From my previous experience with WU, I had a basic understanding of the key issues against which WU fought in the larger Pickerington community. I knew the group developed out of low/no income women’s activism during the late 1990s, maintained a small size, and recently had expanded to include men’s participation in their work. I also knew the group had key national partnerships with other antipoverty organizations, such as the Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Organization (PPEHRC). In developing this project, many of my initial questions stemmed from my initial interest in WU’s community work and the types of attitudes the organization presented around issues of poverty across Kentucky. I was fascinated by
WU members’ self-identification of “poor” and the diverse array of programming in which they engaged. Given the social construction of low/no income individuals within American culture, I was interested in understanding the reasoning and consequences behind their self-identification. More connected to this project, because these individuals self-identified as low/no income, I was interested in how they viewed their positionality within the larger scope of American citizenship, which as some feminist scholars posit, theoretically works to limit individuals based on gender, race, class, and/or sexuality.

I opted to engage in case study method for this project as it allowed for a cross-organizational study focused on issues of citizenship and economic marginalization. In her work on identity politics and the working poor, Erin O’Brien explains “comparative case studies are appropriate when scholars want to extend theory, explore important but uncommon phenomena, or increase understandings of the correlations normally witness” but not examined (OBrien 2008). By comparing and contrasting the experiences and programs of several antipoverty groups, I hoped to examine the various ways in which those citizens living at the economic margins understood and challenged citizenship through activism for themselves, an intersection into the citizenship studies and feminist political theory literature.

As outlined in Chapter One, WU and FHF were selected for case study based on four criteria: size, leadership, activities, and national connections. I knew PPERHC collaborated with many antipoverty organizations across the country, so I turned to their website as a means of establishing a connection with a second case study. I visited their website and scanned a list of their member groups. I then visited each organization’s website or phoned their office if no website was available to acquire a basic
understanding of their size, leadership, activities, and group makeup. After speaking on the phone to FHF’s director, Barbara, I chose them as a second case study organization, as they had similar size (small) to WU, leadership (women), historical background (influenced by welfare reform of 1996), and diverse community programs geared on economic justice. They also shared the common national organizational collaboration of PPERHC with WU.

**Project Data Collection**

In order to understand the various ways in which WU and FHF were engaging in discussions of citizenship and economic justice within their community work, I needed to spend time interacting with their members and office space. Data from this study was collected from three major sources: print/web-based materials, personal interviews with organizational members, and observational research of board meetings, community events, and other organizational meetings, both formal and informal. I collected data across several months – from July 2009 to December 2009 – though time at each organization as spaced across the span of those six months. Before any interviews were conducted, I gathered preliminary samples of their organizational materials (brochures, handouts, website information) to help me construct my questions and give context to the project. I also spoke on the phone with the organization’s directors, Barbara from FHF and Kayla from WU, in order to establish connections with the groups and ask other background questions unanswered through print and web-based materials. Research of organizational materials and historical data helped yield information regarding how each group engaged in antipoverty activism and discussed citizenship and state exclusions. Collected copies of materials (brochures, newsletters, meeting minutes, media reports)
dating from the year of establishment (1996) to end of fieldwork (January 2010) helped document the development of group identity and mission across times. It also helped solidify some of the themes emerging from interview conversations, such as the intersectional nature of poverty activism and the various collaborations in which WU and FHF engage.

Next, during the months of July 2009 – December 2009, I spent time at each agency’s offices. During this time, I engaged in informal conversations with organizational members, discussing various topics from group history to local community politics to national political issues like health care reform. I also engaged in participant observation of four board meetings, one informal staff meeting, open office hours, informal and formal organizational programs, one regional march for antipoverty organizers, and one national conference of antipoverty and social justice groups.

In addition, I conducted a total of 16 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with staff, board members, and volunteers, averaging 60 to 90 minutes in length. Interviewees ranged in age from 22-65 and included individuals from a broad range of racial and educational backgrounds. Interviewees were approached via a snowball sampling; given the small nature of each organization, there were limited individuals of which I could contact. Both Barbara and Kayla offered the names and contact information for their board members, and I connected with other interviewees (volunteers) through attendance

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50 I spent two consecutive weeks on location in KY and visited the Ohio office sporadically across the span of several months. Though my onsite time in Kentucky was short, I spent nearly every day of the two weeks on location at their office or meeting with individuals. I also stayed in touch with the organization and its programs through their online media site, email newsletter, and email communication with Kayla, the director. I spent an equal amount of time onsite in Ohio as Kentucky, but the actual length of time onsite was spread over the course of four months instead of two weeks.
at programs and informal meetings. Several of the volunteers were practicum students who had either previous volunteer experience with the organization prior to the practicum, or had finished their practicum and were currently staying onboard as volunteers.

A set of questions was used as a foundation to conversations; however, because the interviews were semi-structured, dialogues often deviated from those questions. I constructed interview questions based on my preliminary understanding of their organizational work from print/online media collection and my conversations with Kayla and Barbara. I also constructed the questions around my theoretical interests (see Appendix C for the list of semi-structured interview questions). Interview questions related to several themes: issues of antipoverty politics, definitions of citizenship and the state, community activism as a strategy of resistance, and issues of intersectionality. The interview questions were not necessarily asked in order, though I attempted to cover all questions in conversations. Consent was obtained before any individual was interviewed, and anyone contacted for an interview had the right to decline participation in the study, though no participant did. Due to the contentious political nature of some of WU and FHF’s organizational actions, I offered anonymity to interviewees as part of their consent form. Thus, each of the 15 participants was given a pseudonym (see Appendix B). I asked if each participant was comfortably with the interview being audio-recorded, and interviews took place at the desired location for each participant, ranging from their personal homes to WU and FHF office space to local restaurants.

Formal fieldwork ended in December 2009. However, I followed up with the groups as they continued their work into 2010 via the social media site Facebook, their
organizational websites, and their email list-serves. Because FHF does not have a Facebook page or website, I emailed Barbara periodically from January 2010 – April 2010 to follow-up on some of their ongoing projects, like their “Public Assistance: A Safety Net for Women and Children at Risk.” piece. None of this follow-up work was used as part of my data, but merely a way for me as a researcher to maintain an awareness of the group’s programs and activities.

**Project Data Analysis**

Interview questions were built on specific issues from my theoretical interests in citizenship studies and a background literature review on poverty activism. During my participant observation and interviews, I wrote notes in a journal to help me organize thoughts during the transcription process. After interviews, I also wrote notes about what I perceived to be emerging themes from the conversation. These notes were used later to help the coding process. Interviews were transcribed verbatim with a total of 174 pages of single-spaced interview data. In the end, I coded and analyzed the interview transcripts, collected organizational materials, and personal field notes.

Coding occurred in two rounds. First, I coded generally for major themes as related to my literature background, theoretical framework, and overall organizational messages. These themes directly related to the interview questions and the framework through which I entered the field as a researcher. To help code materials into these general themes, I read all data materials and highlighted key words or phrases that connected to the general theme based on the literature review.

After establishing the initial major themes, I then re-read the collected data to ascertain smaller themes related to each of the major headers. Here, I organized materials
into sub-categories based on what I perceived as key words or phrases connected to the major topic (see Figure Appendix A.1). For instance, under the major topic of citizenship, I noticed a pattern of the words: responsibility, rights, and community. These became sub-themes under the “citizenship” header. Some of the materials overlapped across sub-categories. For instance, individuals spoke of the responsibility individuals have as citizens, but also the responsibilities the state has towards citizens themselves, with the state and citizenship existing as separate major themes. Yet, the participants’ conversations about their citizenship responsibilities directly connect to their understandings of the state’s responsibilities. Thus, some of the data were categories across several different themes. Once all collected data were highlighted according to the major and sub-categories, I then organized all major themes and sub-categories into separate documents so I could easily compare and contrast interview responses and organizational materials. I color-coded commonalities across sub-themes to help my analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Themes</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government and State</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Identity Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Neoliberalism</td>
<td>Recession</td>
<td>Welfare Reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Organizing</td>
<td>Collaborations</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Disruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Information</td>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>Welfare Reform</td>
<td>Intersectionality</td>
<td>Women’s Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc.</td>
<td>Global Community</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure Appendix A.1: Coding Categories
Researcher’s Observations

As I entered the field, I paid attention to the issue of trust with my subjects. At the time of entering the field, I anticipated some feelings of distrust or suspicion of my role as a researcher within their group settings. Given the self-identification as “poor,” I worried that participants would distrust me on account of my privilege as a university student and lack of “poor” identification. However, upon arriving in Kentucky and Ohio, I found many of the participants eager and willing to talk to me about their activism, their personal consciousness around issues of poverty, and the relationships between low/no income citizens and the state. Of those individuals interviewed for the project, none of them appeared hesitant to answer interview questions and all of them agreed to meet for follow-up interviews if necessary. Only one individual (a gentleman from FHF) outwardly expressed his displeasure with my presence during an informal program meeting. Though the director, Barbara assured this man that my presence was merely to observe the inner-workings of the program, he expressed suspicion of my intent and refused to participate in an interview. I did not perceive that his distrust influenced the other FHF participants and did not experience any additional hostility at other program meetings or board meetings.

Upon analyzing my data, I suspected the lack of distrust and the willingness to talk to me possibly connected to the participants’ attitudes related to the treatment of poverty issues within the public realm. As discussed in Chapter Four, WU and FHF members do not believe issues of poverty take precedence within the public realm and expressed frustration at the lack of attention given to poverty issues by the state. It seems
that my presentation as someone interested in hearing their perspectives and understanding their program may have motivated them to speak openly without distrust. Further, many of the participants expressed excitement of their stories and perspectives being read by a new audience and asked for copies of the project upon completion.
## Appendix B: Participant Backgrounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Approx. Age</th>
<th>Relationship To Group</th>
<th>Path to Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>FHF</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>One of founders of FHF: “We started due to the welfare reform laws. We wanted to service families once the time limits became in effect - those mothers with their children.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candice</td>
<td>FHF</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
<td>Active based on work experience as social worker: “I didn’t start out as a board member. I just started out volunteering here and there. And um, volunteering, doing different projects with them, you know, giving them donations. And eventually I was asked to join the board.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edgar</td>
<td>FHF</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
<td>Long-time volunteer in antipoverty activism: “I’m always seeking community, uh, organization type activities that I can become involved in. Because um, that relates very much to my whole value makeup. Personal value orientation. But as well as my professional value.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>FHF</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
<td>Personal friendship with Barbara: “I couldn’t understand how come, what I call housing complex, technically that’s what they</td>
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</table>
are, housing complex – people call them projects – you know, and to me that’s a stigma of that, it’s just a word that they’ve held on as a stigma.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Personal relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peggy</td>
<td>FHF</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Personal friendship with Barbara: “She [Barbara] was explaining some of the things she was doing in the community and um, I just liked, you know doing that. Helping other people. Helping them you know get different information.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>WU</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Active in response to neoliberal privatization: “It’s disenchanting that community kinda no longer exists. I wanted to get involved to help others also get involved.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>WU</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Board President</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personal friendship with Tina: “Recently WU took on a human rights framework and . . . there were some human right violations of mine that had been exposed and she [Tina] figured that uh, that with my voice and a little bit of my wisdom, I would be a good fit for WU. Also, I’d bring a different type of look as far as a male’s perspective.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dustin</td>
<td>WU</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Active as practicum student in social work program: “I just feel like they are doing something that’s really needed in the community.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francine</td>
<td>WU</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|          |              |        |           |              | Active as practicum student in social work program: “Tina knew I had done some empowerment work with the Somali/Bantu women refugees . . . she heard of my work there and
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>How They Joined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juanita</td>
<td>WU</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
<td>Heard of group through school program: “I had a writing teacher and she involved me to the . . . dismantling classism workshop. And that’s how I found out about WU. But then when I found out that part of their program was, like CORROC, fighting for children and their removal from the home. I had that same type of situation.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla</td>
<td>WU</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Active from the beginning: “I just started going to meetings. I mean, I wasn’t doing anything else. So I just started going to meetings and just the community that was there. And then of course there was food. [laughs]. It just happened.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyra</td>
<td>WU</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
<td>Active as part of Women’s Studies course project: “We were required to do an internship in our undergrad work and [my professor] recommended Women Uprising just knowing some of my experiences and things. She felt like that would be a good fit for me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin</td>
<td>WU</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Active as part of school project: “I took a class here that was called “Faces of Global Poverty” and one of the requirements for that class was that you get involved with a community organization. And a couple of students who were in that class with me had actually already been members of WU and so they recruited a few”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Activist Status</td>
<td>Initial Contact/Information Source</td>
<td>Role/Reason for Involvement</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherry</td>
<td>WU</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C 40-50</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
<td>Active from beginning: “My son who has Aspergers syndrome was being seen at [social services] and they had a bulletin board that had a flyer for this Women Uprising group. And it sounded interesting. It was a grassroots organization for women living in poverty with children. And I thought oh that’s interesting.”</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>WU</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C 30-40</td>
<td>Board Member, former director</td>
<td>Founder of WU: “I attended a meeting about a scholarship for low-income women and there were probably 20-30 welfare recipients for this meeting for this one scholarship. And from that meeting, we decided to form an organization . . . through our conversations at that meeting about how this was going to effect us.”</td>
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Appendix C: Interview Questions

Instructions for interview
Interviews will be semi-structured, meaning that the co-investigator will use this sheet as a basis for the interview, but questions/conversation may deviate from those listed below. Questions also may be asked and answered out of the order listed here.

Personal/Organizational Background Information

1) How long have you been with ________________ organization?
   a. In what year did you become involved in ________________?
   b. Why did you become involved in antipoverty activism?
      i. What would you say was a motivating factor for you? (ie: job, family, school?)

2) Describe the mission of ________________ organization.

3) What are some of the key activities ________________ conducts in the community?

4) How many staff members/volunteers does ________________ current house?

Organization and Gender

5) Approximately how many women do you have in your staff/volunteer/board?

6) Does your work in the community serve mostly women?
   a. If yes: please explain the types of activities specifically targeted at women.
   b. If not: please explain the populations you serve.

7) Would you say that “gender” and “womanhood” is important part of ________________’s mission?
   a. If yes: please explain how you incorporate “gender” and “womanhood” into your activities.
   b. If no: please explain your understanding of where “gender” fits into your agency.

8) How does your agency reach out to women?

Organization and Intersectionality

9) In your eyes, what are the three biggest issues facing US antipoverty activism right now?
   a. Are these issues local, or do they have national/global influence?

10) In what ways, if any, do you think ‘race’ plays a part in antipoverty activism?

11) Does ________________ participate in collaborations with other groups?
a. If yes: please describe some collaborations.
   i. Please describe the benefits you think come from collaborations.
   ii. Please describe any difficulties that come from collaborations.
b. If no: please explain why ______________ does not collaborate.

12) What are the top three means through which ______________ works to mobilize people around your mission?
   a. Please explain some stories of successes or failures in mobilizing individuals?

13) What do you think are the two largest driving factors for people when they decide to become involved in antipoverty activism?

**Organization and Citizenship**

14) Do you see poverty influencing citizenship rights for people in ________ (state)?
   a. Please explain why or why not?
   b. Is class related to citizenship? If so, explain, if not explain why not.
   c. Are race or gender related to citizenship? If so, explain, if not explain why not.

15) Would you say that the state (the government) is fair or unjust with regard to poor individuals?
   a. Please explain.

16) What obligations do you think you have as a citizen to the state?

17) Does the state have any obligations to you as a citizen? If yes, what are they?
   a. Do you think any of these obligations are unfair? Fair? Subjective to class status?

18) Does ______________ work with public policy?
   a. If yes: in what capacity?
   b. If no: why do you choose to distance yourself from public policy?

19) What public policy initiatives are most pressing for antipoverty activism?

20) Do you think the current administration shows promise for reforming policy?

21) In what ways do you or your organization work with politicians?

**Misc.**

22) What issues are most pressing for the economic human rights movement?

23) In your opinion, are activist voices surrounding poverty issues being heard on the local, state, or national level?
   a. If yes, explain where you see instances of voices being recognized.
   b. If no, explain what problems you see.

24) Does ______________ participate with groups on a global scale?
   a. Does ______________ send representatives to the World Social Forum?
      i. If yes: please discuss benefits of travel to WSF
      ii. If no: please explain why.

25) Do you believe it is important for US activists to interact with activists across the globe?

26) Is there an influence of globalization on ______________’s work?
a. Do you believe the US is unique to how the country treats its poor?
b. Do you believe US antipoverty activism has relevance with antipoverty activism in other countries?

27) Please define feminism.
   a. Would you describe yourself as “feminist?”
   b. Would you describe your agency as “feminist?”
      i. If yes: explain how this title fits in with your mission.
      ii. If no: please explain why your organization does not describe itself as ‘feminist’. Do you have any other description for the organization.

28) Do you have any questions for me or any points on which you wish to further elaborate?