

“The Well-Meaning White People:” A Comparative Case Study of the White Anti-Racist
Organizing Models of the Southern Student Organizing Committee and Alliance of White Anti-
Racists Everywhere, Los Angeles

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to synthesize a framework by which to evaluate white anti-racist organizing and determine the extent to which the organizing strategies of SSOC and AWARE-LA can be both compared and evaluated within the context of each other. Thus, this study will highlight the organizations' ideologies as well as their tactics for education, mobilization, and engagement in broader movements for racial justice. This research ultimately considers the following questions: How do the organizing strategies of SSOC and AWARE-LA—as they relate both to social movement organization and grassroots community organizing—typologically compare to one another in terms of their ideologies, their strategies for education and mobilization, and their engagement with multiracial coalitions. How can patterns of both organizational success and failure elucidate the ways in which white anti-racist organizations can more effectively mobilize members and engage in multiracial anti-racist coalition building?

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>ABSTRACT:</u>	2
<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:</u>	3
<u>INTRODUCTION:</u>	5
<u>HISTORY AND BACKGROUND</u>	6
<u>SOUTHERN STUDENT ORGANIZING COMMITTEE (SSOC)</u>	6
<u>ALLIANCE OF WHITE ANTI-RACISTS EVERYWHERE, LOS ANGELES (AWARE-LA)</u>	8
<u>REVIEW OF LITERATURE:</u>	9
<u>FRAMING AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATION</u>	10
<i>DIAGNOSTIC FRAMING:</i>	11
<i>PROGNOSTIC FRAMING:</i>	12
<i>VARIABLE FEATURES OF COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAMES:</i>	12
<u>OUTCOMES OF GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY ORGANIZING</u>	14
<u>WHITENESS THEORY</u>	20
<u>WHITE ANTI-RACIST ORGANIZING</u>	23
<u>METHODOLOGY:</u>	25
<u>ORGANIZATIONAL INTERVIEWS</u>	25
<u>DOCUMENT ANALYSIS</u>	26
<u>FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS</u>	28
<u>IDEOLOGY</u>	30
<u>ISSUES</u>	33
<u>EDUCATION</u>	34
<u>MOVEMENT CONTRIBUTION</u>	36
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	43
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	44
<u>REFERENCES</u>	45
<u>APPENDICES</u>	49

Introduction:

I was first introduced to white anti-racist organizing through a Community Based Learning course at Occidental College in the fall of 2016 in which students were required to attend monthly meetings with Los Angeles-area white anti-racist organizations. Generally defined as the act of “opposing or inhibiting racism,” an anti-racist is principally characterized as “an opponent of racism” (“Anti-Racist, n. and Adj.” n.d.). Distinguishing *white* anti-racism from anti-racism more broadly, Beverly Daniel Tatum notes that while “not all [w]hites are actively racist, many are passively racist. Some, though not enough, are actively anti-racist. The relevant question is not whether all [w]hites are racist, but how we can move more white people from a position of active or passive racism to one of active anti-racism” (Tatum 2003, 11). Tatum, therefore, centers *action* as a condition of white anti-racism—a qualification which contemporary white anti-racist organizations such as the Alliance of White Anti-Racists Everywhere – Los Angeles (AWARE-LA) have assumed as a mandate for activism.

Since completing this Community Based Learning course nearly two years ago, I have continued attending AWARE-LA meetings and, in doing so, have developed close relationships with leaders and members within the organization. These meetings and conversations have illuminated a common concern within AWARE-LA membership: a general lack of members’ knowledge about the histories of white anti-racist organizing and organizations. While most members look to John Brown or Anne Braden as examples of *individual* white anti-racists, most cannot recall any white anti-racist *organizations* to whom they look in engaging with anti-racist activism. Therefore, this project was developed in response to AWARE-LA’s desire to better understand a history of white anti-racist organizing in the United States.

Comparing the Civil Rights-era Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC) and AWARE-LA—the two most thoroughly documented white anti-racist organizations in the United States—this study evaluates the ways in which white anti-racist groups organize for racial justice, and examines the strategies of white anti-racist social movement organization and grassroots community organizing. Analyzing the social movement organizational tactics of SSOC and AWARE-LA, this research attempts to synthesize a framework by which to evaluate white anti-racist organizing and determine the extent to which the organizing strategies of SSOC and AWARE-LA can be both compared and evaluated within the context of each other. Thus, this study will highlight the organizations’ ideologies as well as their tactics for education, mobilization, and engagement in broader movements for racial justice. This research ultimately considers the following questions: How do the organizing strategies of SSOC and AWARE-LA—as they relate both to social movement organization and grassroots community organizing—typologically compare to one another in terms of their ideologies, their strategies for education and mobilization, and their engagement with multiracial coalitions. How can patterns of both organizational success and failure elucidate the ways in which white anti-racist organizations can more effectively mobilize members and engage in multiracial anti-racist coalition building?

History and Background:

Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC)

Founded in Nashville, Tennessee at the height of the Civil Rights Movement in 1964, “SSOC emerged in response to the need for a Southwide interracial, intercollegiate group...to fight for a new South that is free of racial prejudice” (SSOC 1964). Although it was initially

organized to directly engage southern whites in anti-racist action and other progressive causes as the university-based arm of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), SSOC quickly focused its efforts exclusively on the organization of white southerners as SNCC's organizational ideology shifted to center Black separatist thought (Michel 2004). Distancing itself from SNCC to work as an independent organization, SSOC relied heavily on southern culture and identity as the primary means of attracting white southerners from the basis of their southern experience (Michel 2004). In the attempt to create an alternative conception of white southern identity, SSOC advertised the promise of a "new South" in the hopes of mobilizing other progressive whites and dispelling the assumption that the South was "monolithically opposed to progressive causes" (Michel 2004, 49.) As one SSOC organizer noted, it would be impossible to create a new South "as long as the Klan is almost the only group now attempting to organize this large, sometimes hated, and often forgotten minority group:" white southerners (Southern Student Organizing Committee 1966). For this reason, SSOC leaders argued that "experience has taught us that we work best with those we know best, the group of which we are part" (Southern Student Organizing Committee 1967, 5).

But while some SSOC organizers interpreted this claim as a charge to mobilize white students specifically—the group to which these organizers most directly belonged—others argued that SSOC should work to mobilize *all* southern whites to engage a diverse and representative body of southern white people (Michel 2004). This ideological tension, in many ways, contributed to the demise and dissolution of the organization in 1969 (Michel 2004). Nevertheless, SSOC's existence as the only documented, formalized, and strategically white anti-racist organization in the Civil Rights-era positions SSOC as an important case study in

which to ground a continued and contemporary analysis of white anti-racist organizing and organizations.

Alliance of White Anti-Racists Everywhere, Los Angeles (AWARE-LA)

Founded in 2003, AWARE-LA is “an all-volunteer alliance of white anti-racist people organizing to challenge racism and work for racial justice in transformative alliance with people of color...[and] build white anti-racist and multiracial alliances to contribute to a broad-based, social justice movement” (“What We Do”). An affiliate of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ)—a national network of white anti-racist organizations working to mobilize 3% of white people in the United States in order to build a critical mass of *anti-racist* white people—AWARE-LA demonstrates the contemporary model upon which white anti-racist organizations ground their activism and organizing. Functioning as a dialogue and consciousness-raising group—specifically in regard to white anti-racist identity formation, white anti-racist community building, and broad-based political education about both the personal and systemic impacts of whiteness and white supremacy—these monthly community meetings, also known as Saturday Dialogues, serve as gatherings for “white anti-racists who want to discuss issues of identity, community, privilege and racism in our lives with the intention to strengthen our practice as anti-racists in alliances, relationships, and interactions with people of color” (“What We Do”).

In addition to AWARE-LA’s Saturday Dialogues, the organization is also affiliated with a direct-action white anti-racist organization: White People 4 Black Lives (WP4BL). Officially organizationally allied with Black Lives Matter: Los Angeles and the broader Movement 4 Black Lives, WP4BL promotes a culture of *actively* noticing, calling out, and challenging institutional and cultural racism. In so doing, they approach this activism “with an intersectional lens and a commitment to act accountably in our relationships and alliances with people of color and

people-of-color-led organizations” (“White People 4 Black Lives”). For this reason, WP4BL’s direct action is varied and includes “fundraising, internal and external education, mobilization, recruitment and networking, action planning, and cultural transformation” (“White People 4 Black Lives”). Ultimately, the organization believes “strongly that white folks can play a progressive and supportive role in amplifying the voices and demands of Black people, moving the white community to take a more active and participatory stance for racial justice, and apply strategic pressure on institutions to change racist policies” (“White People 4 Black Lives”). In this sense, White People 4 Black Lives functions as a necessary aspect of the AWARE-LA organizational model, as it attempts to directly and actively combat the manifestations of white supremacy as they exist in white communities, while AWARE-LA dialogues invite white people into this work from the position of education and community-building.

Review of Literature:

In an effort to better understand the theoretical underpinnings of white anti-racist organizations, and to evaluate the strategies by which SSOC and AWARE-LA organize/d white anti-racist people, this literature review will synthesize social movement organizational theory (particularly as it relates to sociologically-rooted framing processes), grassroots community organizing models of power-building, the race-based and racialized components of social movement organization, and whiteness theory. The synthesis of these four areas of theory will undergird this extended study of white anti-racist organizational structures and strategies that aims to provide a model by which to evaluate white anti-racist organizations and understand the extent to which these theories are directly applicable to white anti-racist organizations in and of themselves.

Framing and Social Movement Organization

In their landmark literature review, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” Robert Benford and David Snow outline the utility of using framing theories to assess social movement organization and function (2000). Their review indicates that framing literatures do, indeed, provide invaluable analyses for the study of social movements, and that conceptualizing social movement organization within a frame-based context illuminates previously overlooked components of social movement organizational processes (2000). To understand the extent to which social movement framing has become a foundational aspect of social movement analysis in and of itself (Benford & Snow 2000), it is useful to ground this study of white anti-racist organizing in the self-framing by these movements. The first portion of this literature review will outline the foundational aspects of social movement organization as they relate to frame-based social movement analysis, to contextualize racial justice-oriented social movements within this broader sociological context.

In describing the defining features of collective action frames, Benford and Snow draw primarily from sociologist Erving Goffman’s *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* which states that individuals make sense of social experiences through frames of reference or understanding (1974, 21). Benford and Snow note that “frames help to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action” (2000, 612). Framing, by this definition, simplifies world events and experiences in the process of mobilizing and/or gaining the support of potential movement members (Snow & Benford 1988, 198)—a process of collective action framing that Benford and Snow trilaterally delineate as 1) Diagnostic Framing, 2) Prognostic Framing, and 3) Motivational Framing (2000, 615; see also Snow & Benford 1988).

Diagnostic Framing:

According to their definition, Diagnostic Framing aims to locate and focus blame and/or responsibility as a means of contextualizing the SMO within a broader understanding of world events (2000, 615). The first diagnostic framework is characterized as Injustice Framing: the articulation of injustice as is defined by those who experienced harm (Gamson et al 1992). Diagnostic Framing, therefore, provides a common framework for most movements that advocate for political and/or economic justice (Benford & Snow 2000, 616). Secondly, Adversarial Framing (Hunt et al 1994, 194; Gamson 1995) deconstructs an injustice in terms of a binary “good” and “evil,” or “protagonist” and “antagonist” (Benford & Snow 2000, 616). In a broad sense, Diagnostic Framing seeks to understand and attribute blame as the primary means of first conceptualizing a problem and ultimately building a movement (Benford & Snow 2000, 616).

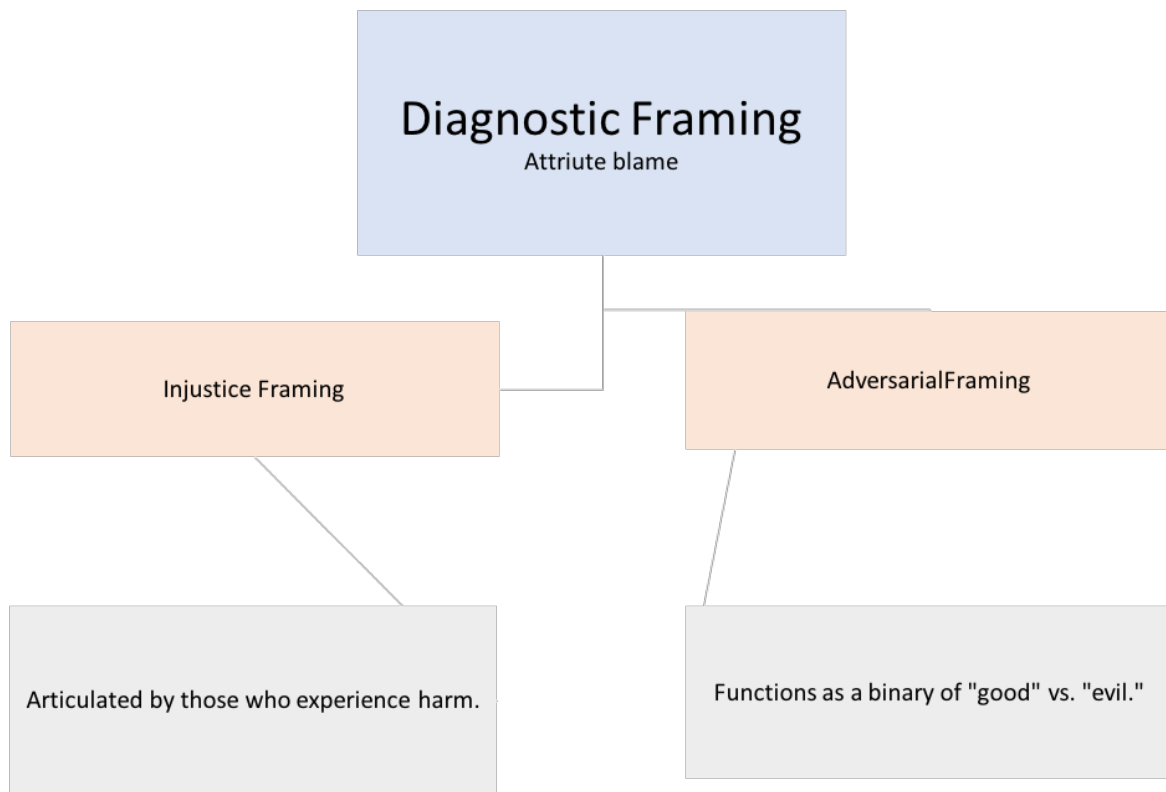


Figure 1: Benford & Snow's Diagnostic Framework

Prognostic Framing:

Benford and Snow define Prognostic Framing as the articulation and proposal of solutions in response to a given problem: a prognosis that generally occurs through the collective—and generally coalitional—articulation of targets, opponents, and ideologies in the effort of attaining a shared goal (2000, 616-617). Prognostic framing, therefore, functions on the basis of a mutual recognition of each faction’s “indispensability” within the broader movement (2000, 617). This theory of prognostic framing is, therefore, important in examining white/multiracial coalition in racial justice movement building.

If Diagnostic Framing seeks to assign blame and prognostic framing attempts to solve an issue, then Motivational Framing provides the call to action—especially in regard to rhetorical constructions of how and why a movement functions. As Benford and Snow (2000) note, “these socially constructed vocabularies provided adherents with compelling accounts for engaging in collective action and for sustaining their participation” (Benford & Snow 2000, 617). Thus, Motivational Framing literally defines a movement, and also engages specific rhetoric to both engage and mobilize members, including “vocabularies of severity, urgency, efficacy, and propriety” (Benford & Snow 2000, 617). Therefore, Motivational Framing defines the basis upon which movements are articulated.

Variable Features of Collective Action Frames:

The extent to which these three frames define a movement, however, is dependent on “variable features of collective action frames” (Benford and Snow 2000, 618)—the first of which is defined as “strategic processes” and aims to bridge “two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem” (Benford & Snow 2000, 624); and/or crystalize preexisting ideals and beliefs, especially in the context of cultural values

(Skillington 1997, Weed 1997, Williams 1995). As these strategic processes occur within the context of member recruitment and mobilization, Paulsen and Glumm (2005) also note that this strategy is generally most effective when movement members are significantly different from the movement beneficiaries; and/or when movements are branded as being discordant with the ideologies of a dominant culture. Therefore, Benford and Snow's theory of strategic processes is highly relevant in the context of white anti-racist organizing due to the fact that white people are not the direct beneficiaries of these racial justice-oriented movements and are also directly contradicting the white supremacist state in which we live.

James Jasper's claim that collective identity is a foundational aspect of both the significance and development of social movements, for example, further illustrates the importance of strategic processes in relation to white anti-racist organizations (1997). As Gamson notes, "participation in social movements frequently involves enlargement of personal identity for participation and offers fulfillment and realization of the self" (1992, 96). Thus, the development of collective identity is central to social movement organization in and of itself—a fact that is clearly reflected in white anti-racist organizations that seek to develop a *culture* of white anti-racism, and a *community* in which anti-racist white people can support each other in this process.

The final variable feature is defined as "flexibility and rigidity, inclusivity and exclusivity," and describes the nature of the frame within which a social movement is defined (Benford & Snow 2000, 618). This variable, in other words, determines the likelihood that a collective action frame will be used as a master frame, or a "generic frame" (Snow & Benford 2000). These "generic frames," can thus be defined as "collective action frames [that] are quite broad in terms of scope, functioning as a kind of master algorithm that colors and constrains the

orientations and activities of other movements (Benford & Snow 2000, 618). Master frames, therefore, serve as general blueprints for all social movement organizational processes, and conceptualize a similar ideology between social movements that share a master frame. Benford and Snow note, however, that

only a handful of collective action frames have been identified as being sufficiently broad in interpretive scope, inclusivity, flexibility, and cultural resonance to function as master frames, including rights frames (Valocci 1996, Williams & Williams 1995), choice frames (Davies 1999), injustice frames (Carroll & Ratner 1996a,b, Gamson et al 1982), environmental justice frames (Cable & Shriver 1995, Capek 1993), culturally pluralist frames (Berbier 1998, Davies 1999), sexual terrorism frames (Jenness & Broad 1994), oppositional frames (Blum-Kulka & Liebes 1993, Coy & Woehrl 1996), hegemonic frames (Blum-Kulka & Liebes), and a “return to Democracy” frame (Noonan 1995). (Benford & Snow 2000, 619)

Nevertheless, all frames have the potential to shift and adapt to become master frames (Noonan 1995). Thus, while it is useful to understand the existence and prevalence of master frames within global social movement building, these frames cannot be considered to be wholly static (Benford & Snow 2000, 619). It is noteworthy, moreover, especially within the context of this study, that there is no anti-racist frame—and no white anti-racist frame, more specifically.

It is in this continued examination and synthesis of literature, therefore, that it becomes necessary to center notions of social movement framing as to understand the dimensions of white anti-racist organizing as it relates to the 1960’s SSOC and the contemporary AWARE-LA.

Outcomes of Grassroots Community Organizing

According to Speer et al.’s 1995 article “Organizing for power: A comparative case study,” “community organizing for power is...focused explicitly on system change” (Speer et al. 1995). It is, therefore, useful to supplement theories of social movement organization and framing with theories of grassroots community organizing, as both types of activism attempt to enact systemic change—albeit on different scales and by different processes. As Speer et al.

describe,

Community organizing for power (1) is a process that capitalizes on individual, organizational, and community strengths with minimal control by professionals... (2) represents a form of citizen participation that promotes indigenous leadership... and (3) embodies our values of community, diversity, and change for improvement of individual and collective well-being. (Speer et al. 1995)

In other words, community-based efforts to develop power and enact structural change can be understood by way of this specific body of “social action organizational theory” which accounts for the dynamics of grassroots community-based leadership, political engagement, and action.

Rooted in the community organizing traditions of Paulo Freire and Saul Alinsky, social action organizational theory posits that grassroots community organizations—what Speer et al. define as “power-based community organizations”—aim “to build social power capable of leveraging resources and negotiating improvements for its members and their communities” (Speer et al. 1995). These theories of grassroots community action are predicated on a societal binary that Freire characterizes as “the oppressor” and “the oppressed” (Freire, 1970). As Alinsky argues, “the Haves want to maintain the status quo and the Have-Nots want to change it” (Alinsky, 1971). But because white people overwhelmingly act as oppressors or “Haves” in terms of both individual actions, and the privileges and benefits that accompany whiteness within the United States, Freire and Alinsky’s delineation does not sufficiently address the positionality of white anti-racist organizations who, as oppressors, advocate for structural change in the broader struggle for racial justice—an effort that would ultimately minimize the powers and privileges of white people. Nevertheless, Alinsky and Freire’s characterizations of power-based community organizing serve as foundational models of grassroots community organization, and, therefore, provide a useful lens through which to understand anti-racist organizing in and of itself, as these efforts ultimately seek to shift the systems of power that are predicated on racial

oppression and subjugation.

Speer et al.'s characterization of grassroots community organizations as “power-based community organizations,” privileges the importance of power in enacting social change. Because “several theorists assert that power is fundamentally a relational phenomenon and is therefore developed by building relationships among individuals, organizations, and institutions (Speer et al. 1995; see also Brock, 1988; Burns, 1978; Foucault, 1980; Janeway, 1980), this rhetorical shift to define grassroots community organizations as power-based community organizations clearly highlights the significance of power-based relationship building. Both Freire and Alinsky advocate for the development of community-based power as a primary tool of organizing and empowerment, and assert the importance of it is important to understanding the ways in which power, in and of itself, is manifested. According to political sociologist John Gaventa, power is exerted across three dimensions:

In the first dimension power is represented through superior bargaining resources that can be used to reward and punish various targets (Polsby, 1959). This dimension represents the popular and traditional understanding of power—those with the greatest resources (e.g., money or organized people) have the greatest power. A second dimension of power is the ability to construct barriers to participation or eliminate barriers to participation through setting agendas and defining issues (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962)...In the third dimension, power is conceived as a force that influences or shapes shared consciousness through myths, ideology, and control of information (Lukes, 1974). (Gaventa 1982)

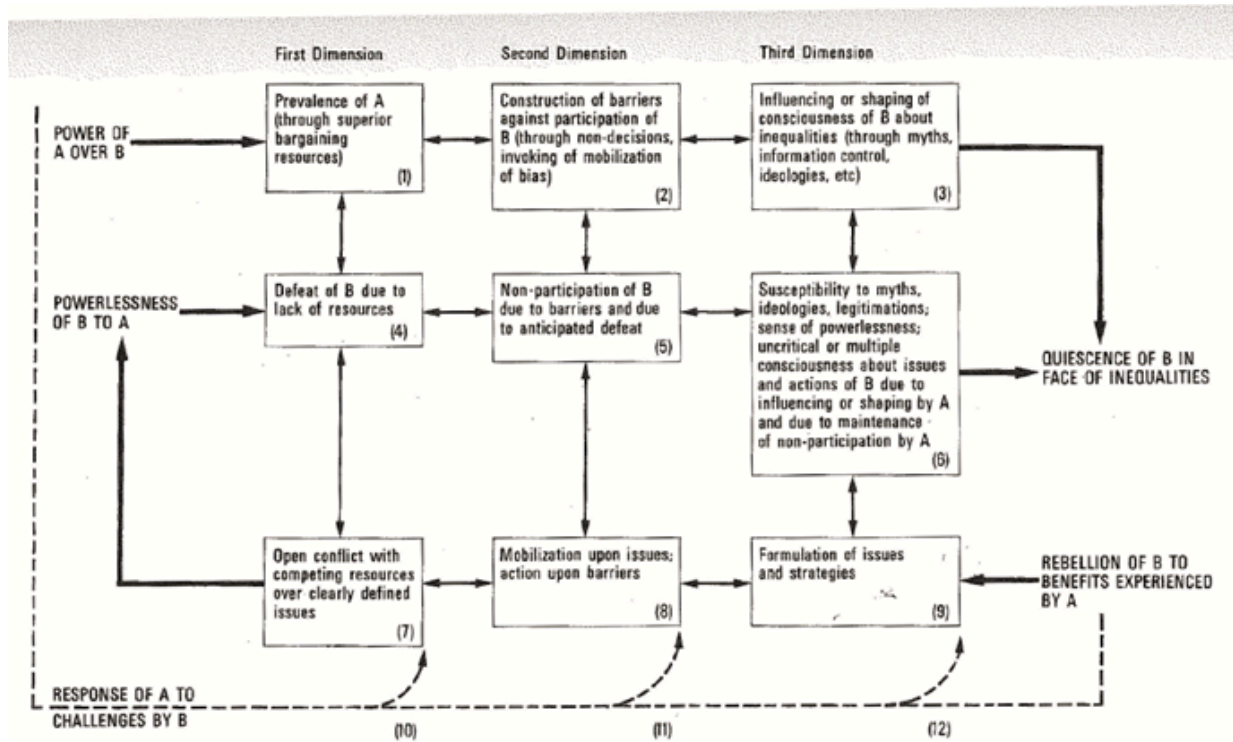


Figure 2: Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion – A Tentative Scheme

Paralleling Gaventa’s model of power dimensions, Alinsky argues that in power-based community organization, “you do what you can with what you've got...power in the main has always gravitated towards those who have money and those whom people follow. The resources of the Have-Nots are (1) no money and (2) lots of people...Use the power of the law by making the establishment obey its own rules. Go outside the experience of the enemy, stay inside the experience of your people...Once all these rules and principles are festering in your imagination they grow into a synthesis” (Alinsky, 1970). Gaventa’s model of power dynamics, therefore, serves as a useful blueprint for understanding power-based community organizing at large as this model addresses the inherent fluidity of power—a characteristic of whiteness itself. As Alinsky notes, the power/powerlessness dichotomy of the “Haves” and “Have-Nots” is constantly in flux: “Power is not static; it cannot be frozen and preserved like food; it must grow or die” (Alinsky, 1971). Therefore, according to Alinsky and Freire, it is up to the oppressed to build power in a

way that both incorporates and re-appropriates the tactics of power development that are enacted by the oppressor. In the context of white anti-racist organizing, this concept is strained because these organizations are attempting to use the tactics of whiteness and white supremacy to undo these very systems.

Thus, both Freire and Alinsky propose slightly different means to the same revolutionary end, it is important to note that both approaches to grassroots community organization fundamentally work in concert with one another. As Alinsky describes,

An organizer working in and for an open society... does not have a fixed truth—truth to him is relative and changing; everything to him is relative and changing. He is a political relativist... Seeing everything in its duality, we begin to get some dim clues to direction and what it's all about. It is in these contradictions and their incessant interacting tensions that creativity begins. As we begin to accept the concept of contradictions we see every problem or issue in its whole, interrelated sense. We then recognize that for every positive there is a negative, and that there is nothing positive without its concomitant negative, nor any political paradise without its negative side... This grasp of the duality of all phenomena is vital in our understanding of politics. It frees one from the myth that one approach is positive and another negative. There is no such thing in life. (Alinsky, 1971)

Acknowledging Alinsky's case for the necessity of duality in enacting political change, it is apparent that there is, therefore, no singular means by which to enact structural community-based change—a fact that is represented by Freire and Alinsky's differing means of power-building and community empowerment. This fact, furthermore, proves to be relevant within the particular context of SSOC and AWARE-LA, as both organizations approach racial justice-based activism from multiple perspectives.

Race-based Community Organizing

Laura Pulido's book *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left* provides a framework for analysis grounded in the organizing histories of activists of color in 1960's Los Angeles (2006). Pulido examines "how differential racialization may contribute to distinct forms of revolutionary

activism and...examine[s] this relationship in detail” (Pulido, 2006). She, moreover, argues that “differential racialization influences a racial/ethnic group’s class position and that both of these factors then shape the local racial hierarchy. Thus differential racialization and class positioning have contributed to the distinct radical politics articulated by various leftists of color” (Pulido, 2006). According to Pulido, therefore, race and class are strong determinants of the method(s) by which organizations operate. For this reason, an understanding of ways in which race and class influence organizing strategies is useful in examining white anti-racist organizing, specifically.

This broader tradition of radical organizing of color, therefore, largely stems from Black radical theory. Especially with regard to these 1960’s social movements, Laura Pulido argues that “non-Black people of color were greatly inspired by, and in some cases emulated, Black Power. As people of color we must come to terms with the role that African Americans played in the development of a Third World consciousness” (2006). This collaboration and adaptation of ideology is, furthermore, reflected in the ideological emphasis on “self-determination” within most all radical social movements of color throughout this era—a charge which is often attributed to Stokely Carmichael (1966). This charge for self-determination relates to notions of power-based community organizing, as these activists of color largely advocated for community empowerment and community-based control.

In an examination of the 1960s student movements within the United States, Andrew Barlow draws upon Doug McAdam’s “political process” model of social movements which notes that social movements occur as a result of a broader political injustice. While McAdam’s (1982) research proposes that these movements generally occur within singular “sectors” of society—a term that he operationalizes to designate race—Barlow’s research centers the organizing that happened both across and between such sectors—i.e., multiracial coalition (1991,

2). Nevertheless, in contextualizing this concept of “sectors,” Barlow emphasizes that 1960s social movements did, indeed, hold distinct racial and ethnic identities. He argues that “for non-White people, the fact of racial subordination defines their sectors, but it also provides the basis for the formation of powerful communities of resistance to racism, with a panoply of institutions, informal social ties, autonomous culture, political power and a long history of political struggle. As people of color experience racism in other sectors, racial communities provide important resources on which they can draw (1991, 3.) Barlow notes, for example, that “White students and students of color behaved quite differently within the same context. In particular, it suggested that students of color had the need and the ability to forge ties with more enduring and powerful protest movements located in the more stable, racially defined sectors” (1991, 1). Therefore, cultural significance functions as a foundational aspect of race-based community organizing by activists of color. In other words, Pulido’s theories of race-based community organizing do not entirely apply to white anti-racist organizers, due to the fact that white people are, unlike people of color in the United States, not racialized or minoritized. It is, therefore, necessary to employ whiteness theory as to glean a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which white people, specifically, organize for racial justice.

Whiteness Theory

When asked about his thoughts on the American “Negro problem,” Richard Wright pointedly proclaimed, “there isn’t any Negro problem; there is only a white problem” (1976, 1); thus, in order to conceptualize a robust understanding of white anti-racist organizing, it is necessary to ground this research in theories of white identity formation, and in whiteness theory more broadly. For the purpose of this study, it is useful to categorize these whiteness theories into three schools of thought: the race traitor school, the class solidarity school, and the

particular/invisible school of whiteness theory. These overarching theories of whiteness and white identity formation are a means of understanding the extent to which white anti-racist organizing can occur.

Largely recognized as the founder of the race traitor school of whiteness studies, Noel Ignatiev advocates for the abolition of whiteness in and of itself—calling on white people to disavow their affiliation with whiteness and to, instead, act as “race traitors” (1998). Building upon the tradition of the Civil Rights Movement, Ignatiev argues that “the task today is to challenge, disrupt, and stop the functioning of the mechanisms that reproduce whiteness” (1998). He fractionally determines the likely number of white anti-racists in every major US city and calls on these individuals to join “with others [white people] in disrupting schoolboard meetings where tracking policies are determined, breaking up SAT tests, monitoring police and courts and publicizing the results, picketing banks that redline, forcing their way into publicizing headquarters, blocking bulldozers at construction projects where the labor force was exclusively white” (Ignatiev, 1998). Although Ignatiev does call on white people to actively combat systemic racism, he does not discuss the need for any formalized, collective organizing or movement building in engaging in anti-racist activism (1998). Essentially, Ignatiev advocates for a sort of individualized anti-white(ness) activism as a means of both undermining the system of white supremacy, and destroying the identity of whiteness in and of itself.

Foundational to the canon of whiteness theory is David Roediger’s *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (Verso, 1991) which serves as the foundation of one of the primary schools of thought within this broader field of whiteness studies: the class solidarity school. In this text, Roediger traces the extent to which, specifically in the United States, race and class have intersected from the 1700s to the early 1900s—

concluding that working class whites often resisted alliance with laborers of color as a means of preserving the semblance of power associated with white identity. Roediger emphasizes, however, that this racialized (racist) labor organizing ultimately served to harm the class interests of white union workers—a claim which Allen and Allen corroborate in *Reluctant Reformers: Racism and Social Movement Reform in the United States* (Howard University Press 1974) noting that it was white racism in and of itself that prevented meaningful multiracial labor alliances. Ultimately, Roediger and the class solidarity school illustrate the extent to which white workers have continually privileged their race over their class—a fact that has solidified the identity of whiteness in and of itself.

The particular/invisible school of whiteness theory, as was largely established by Richard Dyer (1988) suggests, for example, that “white power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular” (1988). Howard Winant complicates Dyer’s definition, noting that the particularizing characteristic of whiteness has also enabled the bifurcation of whiteness as being either white supremacy or white benevolence—a concept that Winant coins as “white racial dualism” (2004, 3). Citing Winant’s theory of white particularity, Weigman concludes that this concept of dualism “allows us to understand the ways in which disaffiliation from white supremacy founds contemporary white identity formation for the majority of Americans and, further, how that disaffiliation can be—and has been—put to multiple and contradictory political purposes” (1999, 121). This self-definitive nature of whiteness, according to the particular/invisible school, ultimately concludes that whiteness, by its (non)definition problematically allows white people to individualize their identities, while non-white identities are, conversely, both universal and static (Weigman 1999). Therefore, it is especially important to understand this particular/invisible school of whiteness theory in the study of white anti-racist

organizations which claim to facilitate the development of an alternative whiteness—one that is outside the realm of dominant white identity and is, therefore, particularized within these spaces.

White Anti-Racist Organizing

Turning to the specific case of AWARE-LA, Jeb Aram Middlebrook's article, "The Ballot Box and Beyond: The (Im) Possibilities of White Antiracist Organizing," applies whiteness theory to an ethnographic study of AWARE-LA and examines an enduring body of "scholarly and activist claims that white people should not or could not organize other white people effectively against racism because, in sum, 'there is no such thing as a white anti-racist'" (Middlebrook 2010, 234). An examination of the United States abolition, women's rights, and communist movements from the nineteenth to the late twentieth century, Middlebrook argues, indicates that "the possibilities of multiracial alliances in these efforts often broke down as a result of white radicals internalizing white superiority and white privilege, patronizing people of color, and subordinating issues of race to class" (2010, 235). A synthesis of Roediger's theory of class solidarity and Dyer's theory of white invisibility usefully addresses the difficulties of white/multiracial alliance: Middlebrook notes that although white people in the United States have historically been encouraged to privilege their whiteness over multiracial class solidarity, the perceived invisibility of whiteness has eclipsed discussions of white privilege and white supremacy as class differences become the only identifiable distinctions of societal injustice (2010, 237). In other words, Middlebrook argues that these previous iterations of white organizing are imbued with characteristics of white supremacy—ultimately minimizing the possibility of white/multiracial coalitions because of the ways in which whiteness functions in and of itself.

While he acknowledges the complexities and challenges of white anti-racism and multiracial coalitions, Middlebrook does argue that AWARE-LA's strategies for multiracial organizing and event planning "demonstrated that the practice of whites organizing whites toward antiracist action, in alliance with people of color, can produce viable models of racialization, coalition, and social change" (2010, 234). Additionally, "some grassroots organizations from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s took seriously 'the white question' and worked to organize whites to both challenge white supremacy and to ally with people of color in building antiracist and anti-capitalist power in the United States" (Middlebrook 2010, 236). But despite his acknowledgement of Civil Rights-era white anti-racist organizing, Middlebrook does not name a single organization that engaged in this work. Middlebrook does argue, however, that these unnamed organizations "enacted the theory and practice of 'affiliate...autonomous' organizing, or the development of racially separate but allied organizations dedicated to supporting self-determination in communities of color, and to fostering white responsibility for ending white supremacy in the United States" (236). Thus, Middlebrook acknowledges the potential power and significance of white anti-racist organizations within broader movements for liberation and justice, especially within a historical context. Middlebrook's ethnography of AWARE-LA, therefore, encourages the development of an alternative conception of whiteness that is rooted in both social movement organizational theory and is actively engaged with activists and organizations of color. It is for this reason that this project attempts to develop a framework by which to understand white anti-racist organizational strategies and practices in the hopes of delineating the processes by which such organizations can actively interrogate the ways in which they are enacting whiteness and, consequently, hindering multiracial racial-justice engagement.

Methodology:

Drawing upon Gregg L. Michel's interviews with SSOC members, and the organization's published literature; as well as in-depth interviews with AWARE-LA members, participant observation, and document analysis, this study seeks to understand both the social movement organizational tactics and the strategies of power-based community organizing that SSOC and AWARE-LA implement/ed within the Civil Rights Movement and the Movement 4 Black Lives, respectively. Moreover, this research attempts to determine the extent to which these organizational strategies compare to one another in terms of the following three criteria: 1) their engagement in broader multiracial anti-racist coalitions; 2) their strategies for member recruitment, mobilization, and education; and 3) their overarching ideological frameworks. In so doing, this study implemented qualitative research methods to understand AWARE-LA's contemporary organizing strategies within the context of SSOC's Civil Rights-era tactics, as to conceptualize an understanding of white anti-racist theory and practice within the context of social movement organization and grassroots community organizing.

Organizational Interviews

I coded and analyzed Gregg Michel's interviews with former SSOC members that he conducted from 1992-2004, and are published in *Struggle for a Better South: The Southern Student Organizing Committee, 1964-1969*. I analyzed these interviews and developed a coding system to evaluate the frequency of the number of both inductive and deductive themes that arose in the interviews. See *Figure 4*. Although these interview transcriptions were not publicly accessible in their entirety, direct quotations from these interviews were included as epigraphs and anecdotes through Michel's 2004 publication. Therefore, I was able to incorporate Michel's SSOC interviews into my broader comparative analysis of SSOC and AWARE-LA.

I also conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with AWARE-LA members to examine the extent to which the organizing tactics of SSOC and AWARE-LA can be compared. See *Appendix 1.1*. I advertised my study at the AWARE-LA meetings that I attended from October 2017 through January 2018, and conducted six semi-structured interviews between February and March 2018 with general members and leaders from AWARE-LA and their affiliated organizations: WP4BL and SURJ. Because I have been attending AWARE-LA dialogues since August 2016 and WP4L events since November 2017, I have developed relationships with the organizations’ leaders and members. I also contacted these relationships to supplement my interviews. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, I recorded, transcribed, and analyzed these semi-structured interviews in the attempt to understand members’ personal experiences and perceptions of AWARE-LA. Using the same inductive and deductive themes as with the SSOC interviews, I examined the frequency of the themes that arose in the interviews. Accordingly, these themes followed the interview questionnaire and referred to various aspects of white anti-racist organizational development and action.

<i>Inductive</i>	<i>Deductive</i>
Ideology	Issue
Education	Personal Stake
Mobilization	
Movement Contribution	

Figure 3: *Interview Themes*

Document Analysis

I also conducted a document analysis of the official organizational literature published by both SSOC and AWARE-LA. The SSOC documents consisted of three integral organizational documents: 1) the organization’s 1964-1965 brochure, 2) the “Prospectus for the White Student

Project,” and 3) the organization’s “About” document. The AWARE-LA documents included three of the organization’s foundational documents: 1) “Why A White Space,” 2) “Core Principles,” and 3) “Theory of Social Change.” These close-readings allowed me to compare the formally published rhetoric, ideologies, and methods of white anti-racist activism that both SSOC and AWARE-LA promote/d. Similar to my analysis of member interviews, I also coded these documents using the same inductive and deductive codes as in the interview analysis to determine the frequency with which each organization’s published literature contained a number of these themes. See Figure 5. A full list of the codes used in this document analysis can be found in appendices.

Limitations

Because of the relationships that I have developed with AWARE-LA members since my initial involvement with the organization in September 2016 I had to navigate a fine line between interacting as an organizational member of AWARE-LA, and interviewer. Before conducting interviews, I established myself as a researcher in this specific context as to ensure that interviews were transparent and, adhering to principles of participant observational research, that I was engaging these members with recognized subjectivity.

It should also be noted that the lack of recorded, formalized white anti-racist organizations in the United States necessitated this comparison between SSOC and AWARE-LA. This comparison should not imply false organizational confluence; instead, this comparative case study attempts to acknowledge and catalogue the organizing tactics and strategies of these two formally organized white anti-racist organizations. In beginning this research, I found that SSOC was the only explicitly white anti-racist organization with a recorded history in the United States. While formalized multiracial organizations have been organizing around issues of racial

justice since the 18th century, and white anti-racist individuals have been attempting to resist white supremacy anti-Black racism in the United States since the early 19th century, there was no record of formally organized white anti-racist affinity *organizations* until the emergence of SSOC in the mid-1960s. While this lack of recorded white anti-racist organizational histories could function as another research project entirely, this research attempts to begin the work of cataloguing and comparing two white anti-racist organizations in the effort of tracing a trajectory of white anti-racist organizational ideology and strategy.

While SSOC was formed as an amalgamation of liberal and leftist student organizations on predominantly white college campuses during the Civil Rights Movement, AWARE-LA does not organize on college campuses in any official capacity.¹ Therefore, SSOC's organizing strategies must be understood within the specific context of student organizing on a college campus, while AWARE-LA attempts to organize white community members more generally throughout Los Angeles. Despite the fact that SSOC and AWARE-LA are not entirely analogous organizations, the sheer nature of their function as white anti-racist affinity organizations offers a fertile basis for a comparative analysis of these two groups in the effort to develop a history of formalized white anti-racist organizing strategy in the United States.

Findings and Analysis:

Data was collected from Gregg L. Michel's interviews with SSOC members, personal interviews with AWARE-LA members, and the officially published organizational literature of

¹ There are unofficially affiliated AWARE-LA chapters at the University of California, Los Angeles and at Occidental College. Both of these student-led, campus-situated chapters use the public resources that AWARE-LA has published in the "White Anti-Racist Culture Building Toolkit" on the organization's website. Regardless of the presence of these AWARE-LA chapters on college campuses, the organizing platform of AWARE-LA was not specifically designed to target college students—contrary to SSOC's primarily campus-centered organizing platform.

both SSOC and AWARE-LA. The purpose of dually examining these interviews and documents was to develop a comparative analysis of the two organizations in order to understand how these two white anti-racist organizations compare to one another, and how patterns of both organizational success and failure elucidate the ways in which white anti-racist organizations can more effectively educate and mobilize members, and engage in multiracial anti-racist coalition building. These organizations were chosen because of their existence as formalized white anti-racist organizations with a published body of organizational literature about their goals, tactics, and organizational ideologies.

It is useful to situate this analysis in the mission statements of SSOC and AWARE-LA. SSOC's mission, for example, reads: "We as young Southerners, hereby pledge to take our stand now to work for a new order, a New South, a place which embodies our ideals for all the world to emulate, not ridicule. We find our destiny as individuals in the South in our hopes and our work together as brothers" (1964), while AWARE-LA works to:

Create a just, sustainable, and multicultural world by participating in a broad-based nation-wide multiracial movement for transformative social justice... The purpose of WP4BL/AWARE is threefold: to organize White people in Los Angeles, thereby bringing them into the movement for racial justice in large numbers; to transform white identity and culture through education and community building in Los Angeles and beyond; and to act in solidarity with People of Color led movements in Los Angeles and around the world. These three purposes serve the aims of bringing white people into action for justice, moving White people out of complicity and apathy, combatting anti-black racism, and leveraging privilege to support PoC-led movements. We take responsibility for creatively and assertively challenging white supremacy. (2017)

Leveraging these statements in the effort to develop a comprehensive comparative analysis of the organizing strategies of SSOC and AWARE-LA, the data from this content analysis are organized into six themes: ideology, issue, education, mobilization, movement contribution, and personal stake.

Theme	Description
Ideology	Moral, theoretical justification for organization’s inception
Issue	Primary problem(s) around which organization rallies
Education	Tools that organization employs to engage and introduce members to organizational ideology and issue.
Mobilization	Organizational tactics to actively engage members
Movement Contribution	Organization’s engagement with a broader movement
Personal Stake	Centering members’ identities and/or experiences to illustrate a personal connection between members and the issue(s)

Figure 4: Organizational Themes and Theme Descriptions

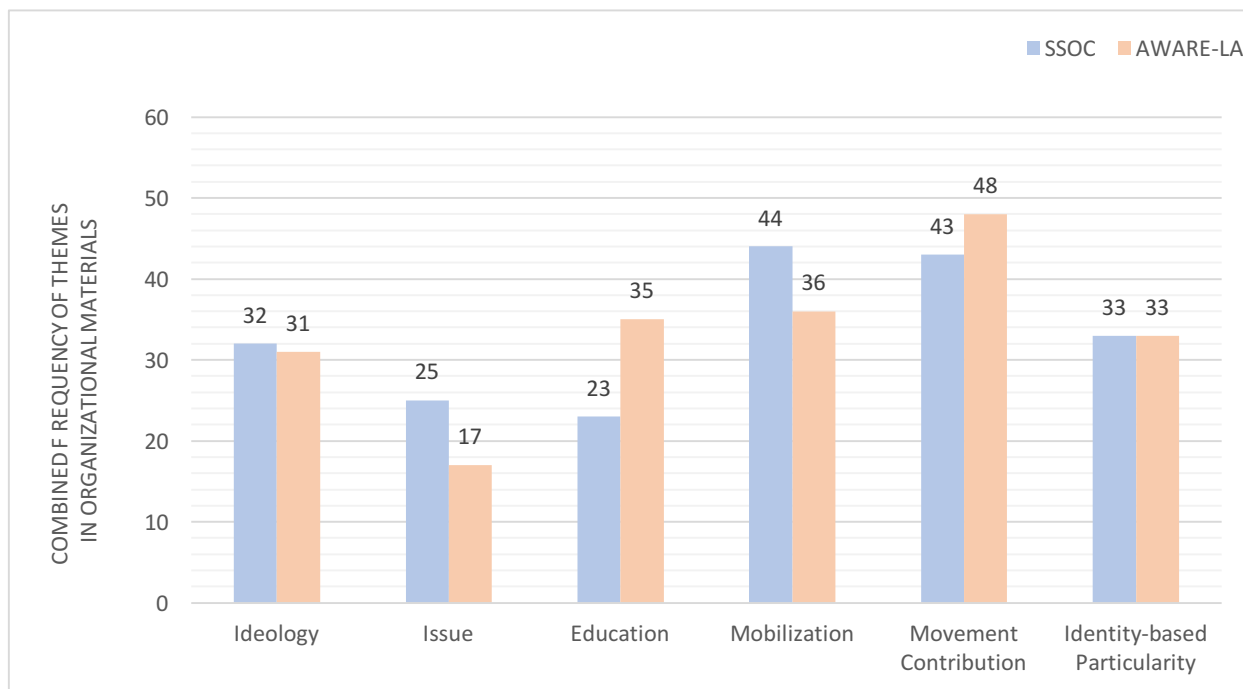


Figure 5: Comparative Content Analysis: SSOC and AWARE-LA

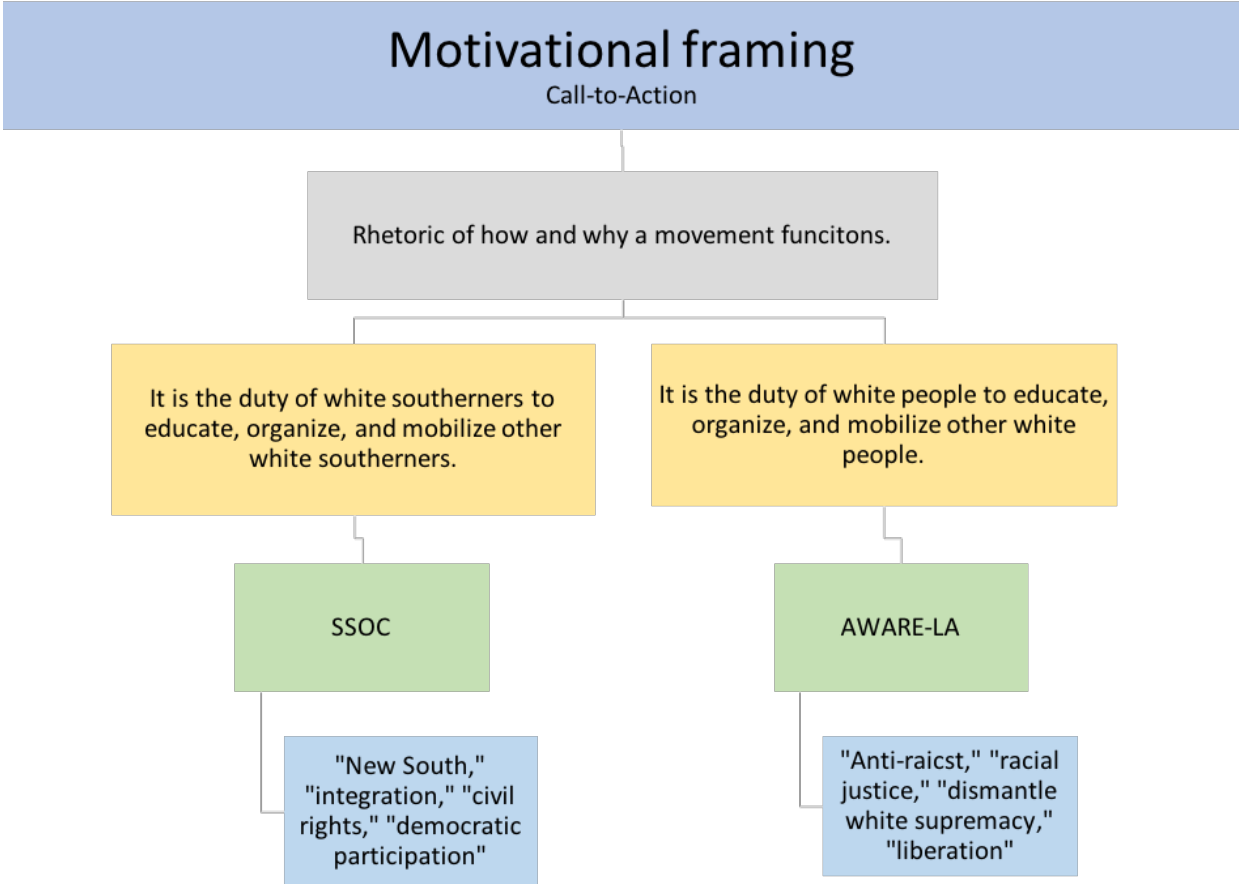
Ideology

In his seminal autobiography, Malcolm X challenges “the well-meaning white people...to combat, actively and directly the racism in other white people. Let sincere white individuals find all other white people they can who feel as they do—and let them form their own all-white groups, to work trying to convert other white people who are thinking and acting

so racist” (X and Haley 1965, 432-433). Issuing this charge in response to the influx of white people attempting to join Black Nationalist organizations in the mid-1960s, Malcolm X’s rhetoric largely inspired the formation of the Civil Rights-era Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC) and the contemporary Alliance of White Anti-Racists Everywhere, Los Angeles (AWARE-LA). Although the concept of a white anti-racist organization may seem to be oxymoronic, an examination of white anti-racist activism in the United States—in regard to the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and the present-day Movement 4 Black Lives—indicates that white anti-racist organizing exists and persists as a means of attempting to combat racism. Taking Malcolm X’s charge as a sort of mandate for white anti-racist organization, SSOC and AWARE-LA were formed in the attempt to educate, organize, and mobilize white people in the broader struggle for racial justice as to combat white supremacy from the site of whiteness itself. In this sense, white anti-racist organizations’ belief that they are organizing in response to an ask from people of color serves as the primary ideological underpinning of these groups.

An examination of the frequency with which both SSOC and AWARE-LA employ words that refer to their organizational ideologies indicates that the two organizations are nearly identical in terms of the degree to which the organizations discuss their ideologies and, by extension, the degree to which members discussed these perceived and/or purported ideologies. The frequency of these themes is also indicative of organizational ideologies more broadly, as this illustrates the degree to which each organization centers each theme as a part of their broader organizational structure. In this sense, it seems that the organizations are comparatively similar and consistent in terms of the discussion of the ideological justification for white anti-racist organizing. In this sense, it is also useful to employ Benford & Snow’s Motivational Framework, as to glean a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which SSOC and AWARE-LA

describe the ideological justifications—and motivations—for engaging in these organizations. An examination of the ideologies of SSOC and AWARE-LA within the context of Benford & Snow’s motivational framework, therefore, indicates the strength with which these organizations articulate/d the ideological justifications for this work. As a general member of AWARE-LA noted in an interview, for example, the organization “provides opportunities for a culture shift and for justice and for equity” (Anonymous, February 2018).



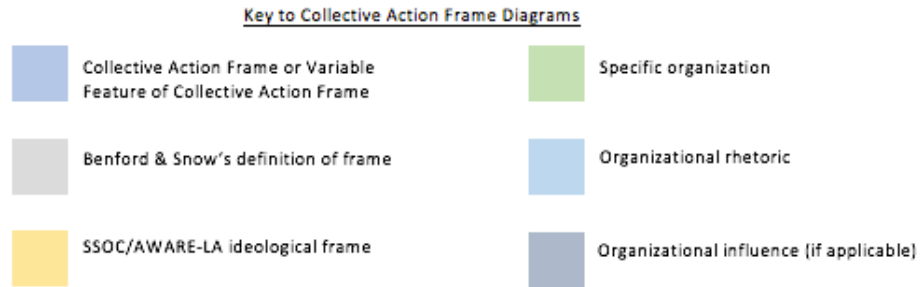


Figure 6: *Situating SSOC and AWARE-LA in the Context of Benford & Snow's Motivational Framework*

Issues

Despite the similarities between the ways in which SSOC and AWARE-LA present/ed the ideological underpinnings of their organizing, a comparative content analysis of both the documents and interviews associated with these organizations indicates that SSOC was more explicit in articulating the issues against which they were organizing. While SSOC directly acknowledges poverty and racism as the primary issues against which they were organizing, AWARE-LA discusses these issues in a more abstract manner—frequently referring to white supremacy as the primary concern of the organization, without directly articulating what how this is manifested and how it can be targeted.

As Sam Shirah of SSOC noted, one of the primary goals of SSOC was to “Agitate and try to destroy the apathy” (Shirah and Michel 2004, 24). Two separate members of AWARE-LA, however, noted that the main goal of the organization is to “undo white supremacy,” or, put differently, that AWARE’s primary focus is “focusing on white people as a way to end white supremacy” (Anonymous, February 2018; Anonymous, March 2018). While both SSOC and AWARE-LA similarly articulate racism and white supremacy as issues that the organizations are aiming to address, SSOC ultimately grounds this more abstract notion of white supremacy in concrete manifestations of this concept throughout the bulk of their organizational materials. This is not to say that AWARE-LA overlooks the ways in which white supremacy plays out;

rather, an analysis of both their organizational materials and interviews with members indicates that AWARE-LA participants are more focused on the abstract manifestations of white supremacy, due to the ways in which AWARE frames their organizational outlook as one of ultimately combatting white supremacy while SSOC emphasizes poverty and segregation as concrete manifestations of white supremacy in and of itself (“What We Do” n.d.; Southern Student Organizing Committee 1967).

Education

It is, therefore, important to examine the ways in which SSOC and AWARE-LA educate/d their members within these movements. Although SSOC placed a stronger emphasis on specifically articulating the issues around which the organization worked, an examination of the ways in which these organizations educated their bases indicates that AWARE-LA prioritizes education within this movement. In this sense, Benford & Snow’s theory of diagnostic framing is particularly useful in understanding the ways in which both SSOC and AWARE articulate the issues around which they organize. Although diagnostic framing is typically used to attribute blame in the context of a specific issue, the nature of white anti-racist organizing situates this framework as an important interjection into the understanding of these issues. Because white people are “not directly affected by racism,” the specific diagnostic framework of injustice framing functions as a useful way to understand both how white people uphold and perpetuate racism, and how they can actively combat them (Anonymous, March 2018).

In centering the voices of people of color as the primary source of organizational education, AWARE-LA acknowledges that, because white people do not experience racism, members must necessarily listen to those who do experience these harms:

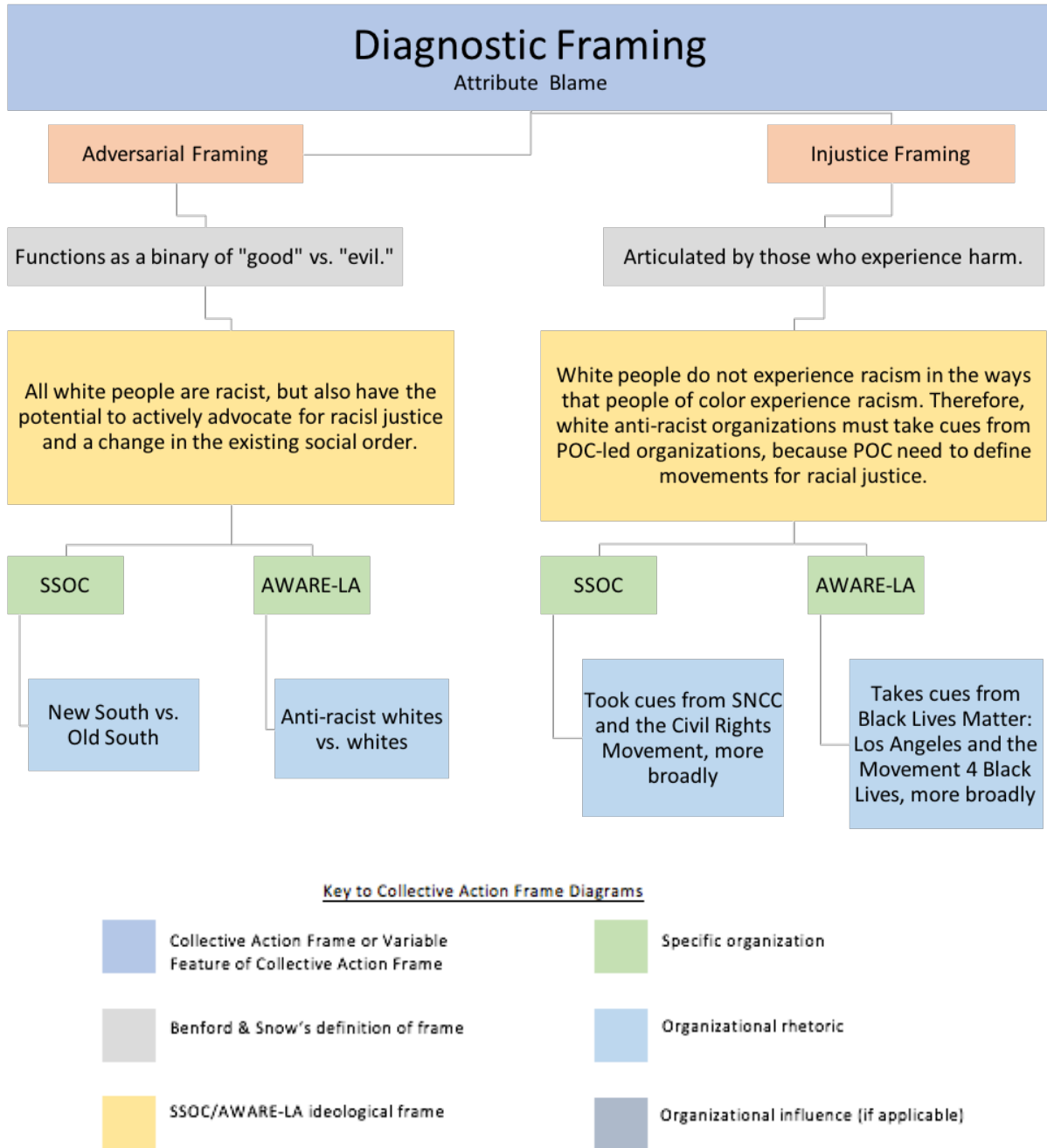


Figure 7: Situating SSOC and AWARE-LA in the Context of Benford & Snow's Diagnostic Framework

Although SSOC did take cues from SNCC and leaders of color within the broader Civil Rights Movement, the organization, in many ways, emphasized the class-based oppression that many white Southerners faced (SSOC 1966). Although SSOC implemented this framework in the hopes that emphasizing class and the struggles of impoverished whites would increase

membership, this tactic ultimately sidelined the experiences of people of color—therefore, minimizing the educational opportunities of SSOC members who, by nature of their whiteness, would never be able to truly understand the impacts of racism and white supremacy (Ignatiev 1998). Nevertheless, SSOC’s organizational materials and interviews refer to mobilization of their members more frequently than does AWARE-LA.

Movement Contribution

The frequency with which these organizations discuss multiracial movement contribution, however, is very similar (see Figure 4). The fact that both organizations prioritize multiracial coalitional engagement indicates that, despite shortcomings in the organizational treatment of issues, education, and mobilization, both SSOC and AWARE-LA are ultimately engaging in this work as white anti-racist organizations with the goal of collective liberation. As the founder of WP4BL noted in an interview:

We’re not doing things for outward praise. And that’s especially early on, we were showing up in the way—we were making calls, we were dropping off just supplies that they asked for...we were giving rides. You know, we weren’t doing things that was like “Hey everybody, look at me. I’m the good white person!” Because a lot of people do do that—they just want their cookie. And I think that because we were willing to show-up in ways that weren’t sexy—the ways that did not garner public praise—and we continued to do that, folks were like “Oh alright, you’re actually *in* this with us. You’re not doing it because you just want the cookies for it. You’re in it.” And I think that, for me, is the *biggest* and most important piece for ways that white people can show-up (Anonymous, March 2018).

In this sense, Benford & Snow’s prognostic framework functions as useful standpoint from which to understand white anti-racist organizational engagement in multiracial coalition. As Benford & Snow note, for example, “all coalitional parties are indispensable” (Benford and Snow 2000). As Sam Shirah argues, for example, the role of SSOC members was to “go into the white communities and organize the people there to form an alliance with the civil rights movement...to end that these two groups of disinherited people the Negroes and the

downtrodden white, may work together to achieve a society that will be of benefit to all” (Shirah and Michel 2004, 24). In this sense, it is apparent that white anti-racist organizations can, indeed, play an important role in broader movements for racial justice.

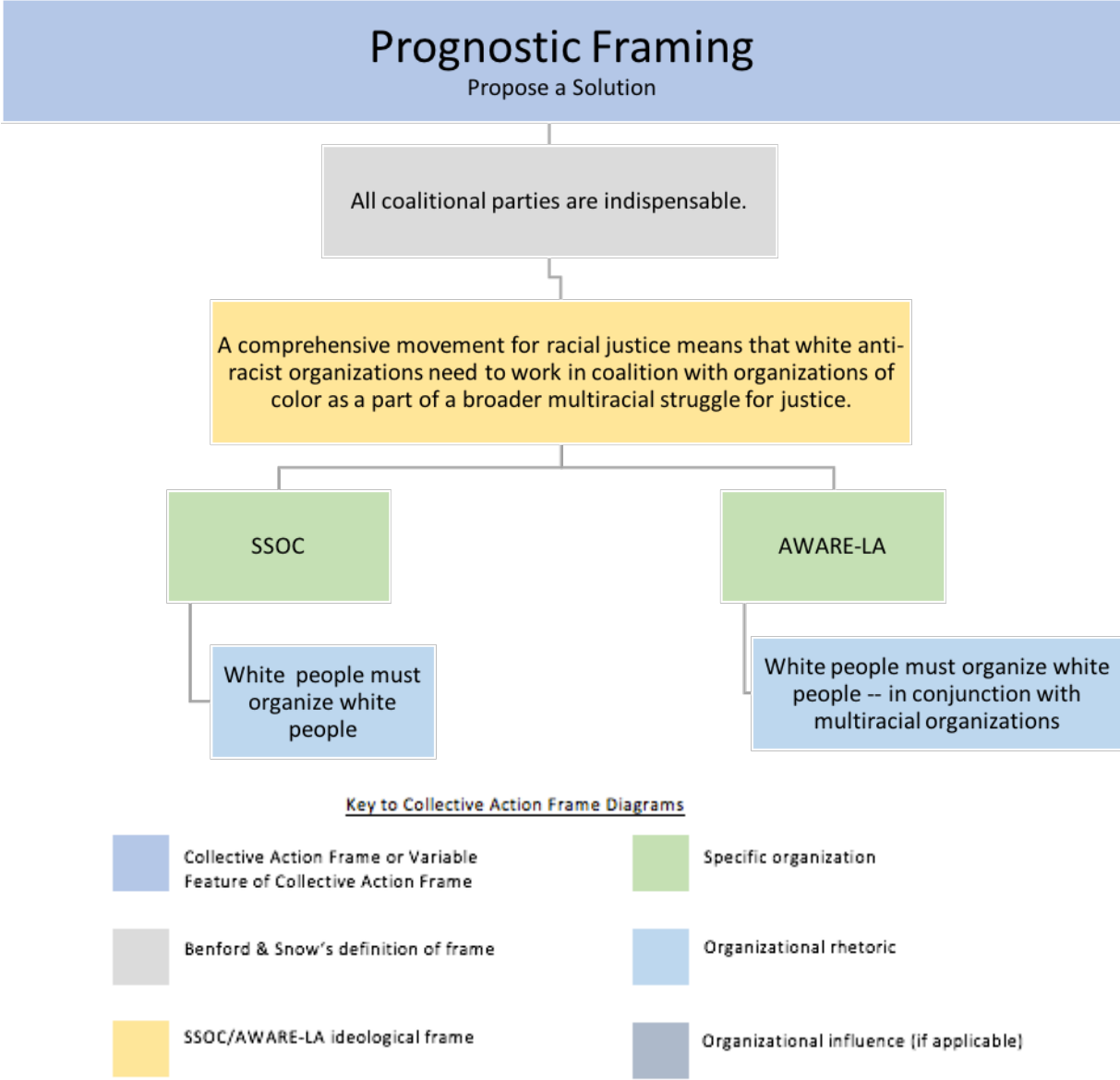


Figure 8: Situating SSOC and AWARE-LA in the Context of Benford & Snow’s Prognostic Framework

This adaptation and coalition between radical organizations of color, furthermore, continues to this day in the context of #BlackLivesMatter and the broader Movement 4 Black Lives: movements which are now synonymous with contemporary racial justice organizing in the

United States. As Grace Kyungwon Hong concludes in her essay “Comparison and Coalition in the Age of Black Lives Matter,” “our present moment, in which imperialist state violence persists in distinctly racialized and gendered modes, demands unexpected, imaginative, and vital new ways of understanding and articulating coalition and solidarity. The work of these emergent scholars, alongside that of countless thinkers, activists, and organizers, shows that this demand is more than being met” (277, 2017). In this sense, it is important to recognize the extent to which multiracial coalitions continue to strengthen racial justice movements in and of themselves—a fact that was apparent in the 1960s and continues to hold to this day.

As SNCC chairman, John Lewis, noted “It was important for them, as individuals and as a group, not to run from their history, from the past—not to try to be something else—because they had to say to the larger society, to the larger white community, that ‘we are you’” (Michel 43). “Drawing upon the southern past, Lewis believes, invested SSOC students with a tremendous ‘sense of moral authority’ because, on the one hand, ‘they could openly identify themselves as...someone [sic] who was very proud of southern history, culture, and the past,’ and, on the other hand, they could claim, owing to their particular interpretation of that past, ‘that “we care about social justice and we and to be part of this growing movement of social justice for social change.”’ In short, they sought to make southern history serve their current needs” (Michel 43). “We felt they could have a major impact on organizing and mobilizing white students and creating a cadre of supporters in the larger white community... What we’re saying is that someone has got to organize those white guys hanging around the gas station. We can’t do it, but you can” (Michel, 2004). Therefore, both SSOC and AWARE-LA play/ed important roles in broader movements for racial justice, as these organizations had access to the white communities that multiracial organizations were far less likely to organize.

It is important to note, however, the extent to which whiteness manifested in these organizations. As Robyn Weigman theorizes, whiteness as both an identity and an ideology allows the individual to determine what that identity looks like (Wiegman 1999). Engaging in these white anti-racist organizations, therefore, allowed participants to both behave as white “anti-racists” without wholly questioning the implications of their behavior.

The SSOC emblem, for example, was a Confederate flag with a Black man and a white man shaking hands in front of the flag. While this logo was developed in the hopes of attracting more



Figure 9: *Southern Student Organizing Committee (1967).*

white southern members by appealing to their southern culture, this desire to maintain this romanticized notion of southern regionalism is rooted in a legacy of chattel slavery (Michel, 2004). While one SSOC member

argued that “identifying with historic white radicals allowed members to feel okay about being southerners and being active anti-racists; that we didn’t have to throw out being southern with

the whole thing,” this very notion of maintaining white cultural ties serves to maintain status-quo white supremacy (Michel, 2004; 45).

As Benford & Snow explain regarding their variable strategic processes, moreover, white people benefited from engaging in these anti-racist organizations. The fact that SSOC relied on southern values and a sense of regional exceptionalism, furthermore, complicates the presence of this group in and of itself, as by this framework, white people benefit just as much—if not more than people of color—by engaging in this type of anti-racist work.

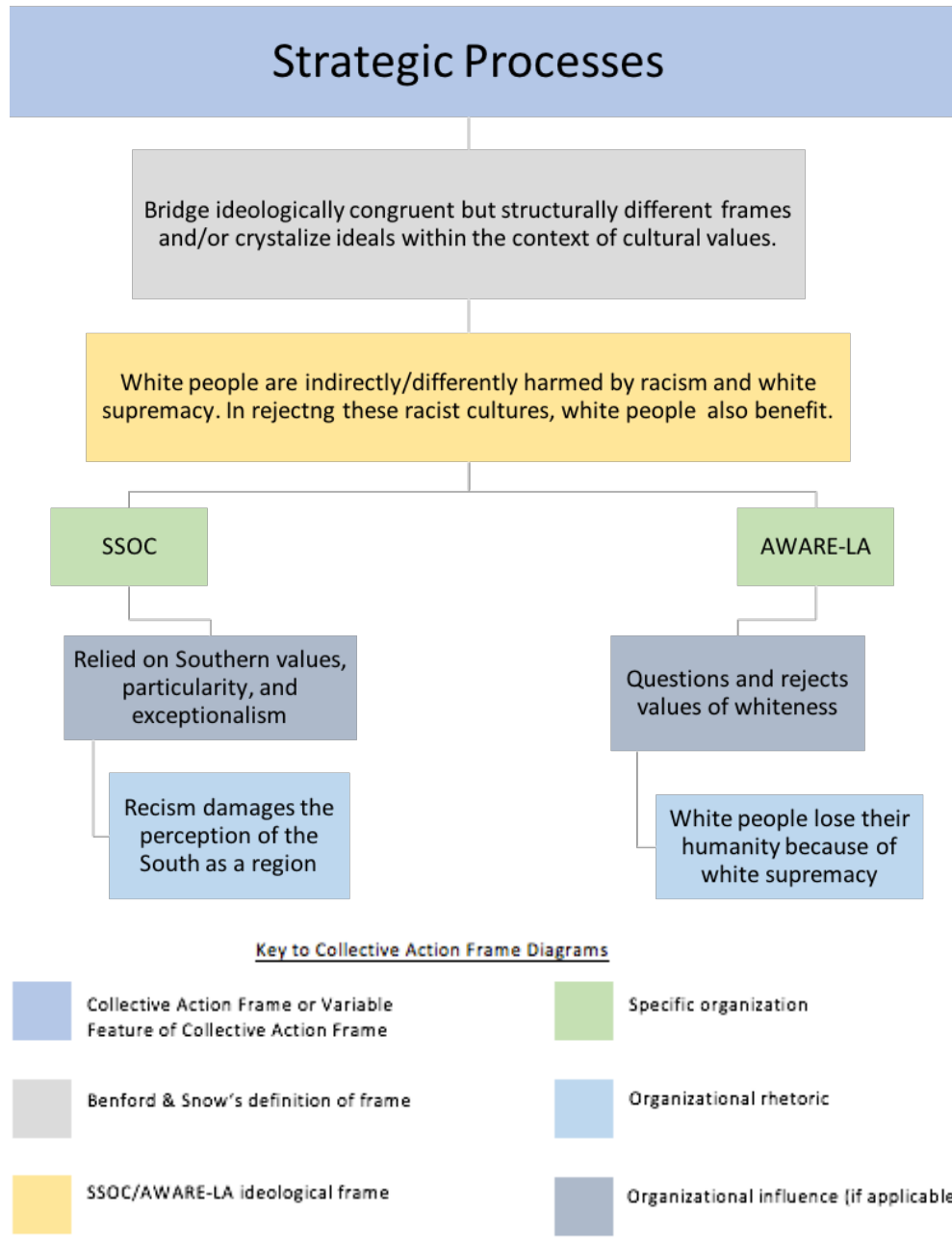


Figure 10: Situating SSOC and AWARE-LA in the Context of Benford & Snow's Framework of Strategic Processes

Furthermore, many contemporary white anti-racists in AWARE-LA have argued that “this [type of white anti-racist] work has never been done before” (Anonymous, February 2018). This conceptualization of this work as being exceptional and new not only feeds into Weigman’s theory of particularized whiteness, but also indicates the extent to which a white anti-racist organizing history is absent from common conceptions of United States history. Applying this

lack of historical understanding to Benford & Snow’s theory of frame diffusion usefully illustrates this dual sense of white exceptionalism and lack of recorded white anti-racist history.

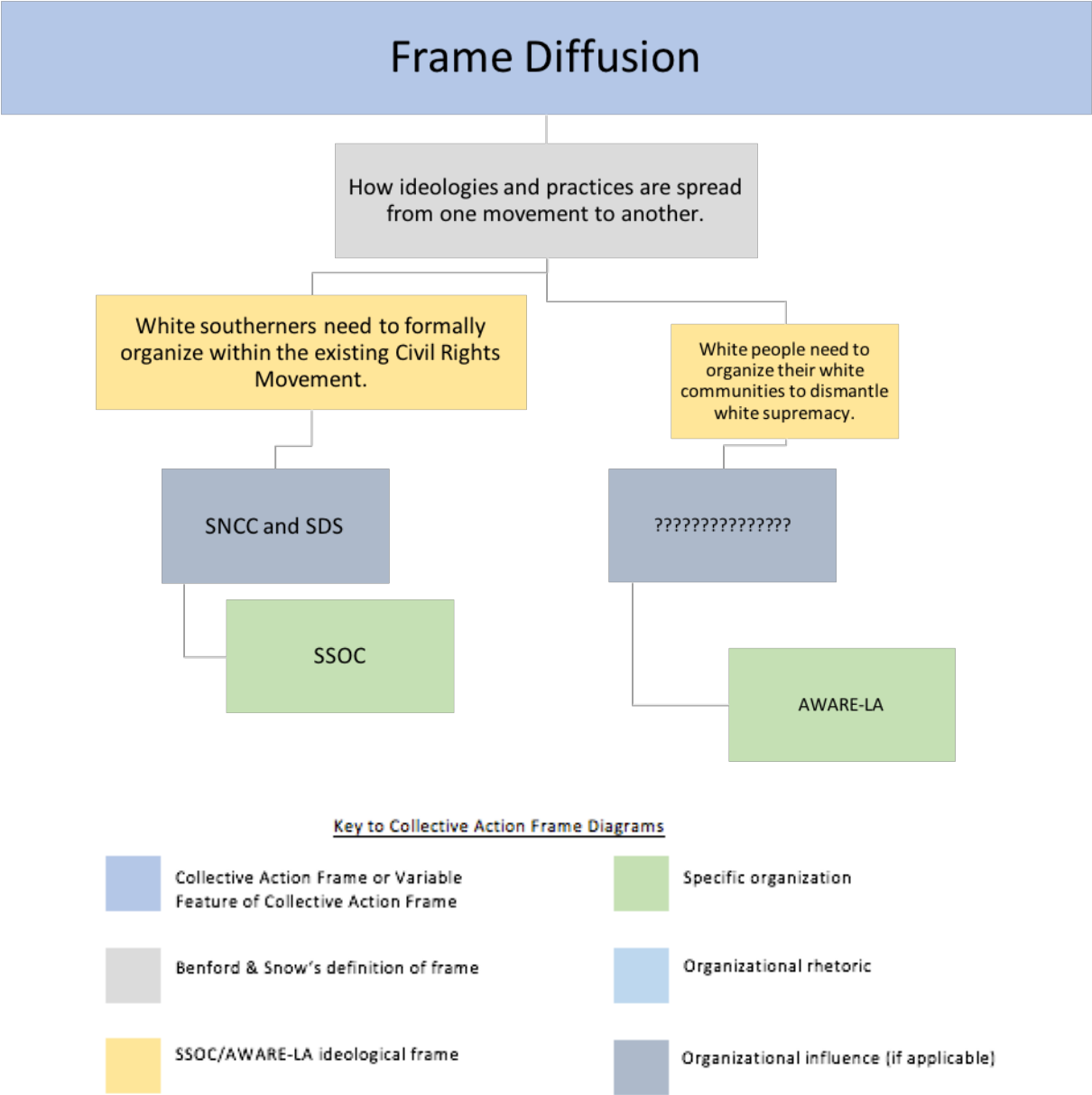


Figure 11: Situating SSOC and AWARE-LA in the Context of Benford & Snow’s Framework of Frame Diffusion

In this sense, it is important to critically interrogate the existence of white anti-racist organizations as to both acknowledge the grassroots community organizing in which these

groups are engaging, and to problematize the ways in which whiteness is manifesting in these spaces.

Recommendations:

In examining the ways in which both SSOC and AWARE-LA function/ed as white anti-racist organizations, specifically in conjunction with Benford & Snow's theories of social movement organizational framing, it is apparent that future white anti-racist organizations would benefit from an understanding of historical iterations of these types of groups. This research, therefore, indicates that the development of a white anti-racist historical trajectory of both social movement organization and grassroots community organizing strategies would be very beneficial in the effort to strengthening future white anti-racist organizing. For this reason, this research will be shared with the AWARE-LA, WP4BL, and SURJ as to both follow the trajectory of meaningful community-based research and continue the Marxist and Black radical tradition of bringing theory to practice.

To study white anti-racist organizing without a dual understanding of social movement and grassroots community organizational theory would result in an incomplete understanding of the ways in which white anti-racist activism occurs. It is important to recognize the ways in which white anti-racist organizations—and white anti-racist individuals, more specifically—do not wholly adhere to Alinsky and Freire's theories that the oppressor simply wants to maintain the status quo (Alinsky 1970). As Saul Alinsky posits in his seminal text, *Rules for Radicals*, “Activists and radicals, on and off our college campuses —people who are committed to change—must make a complete turnabout” (Alinsky 1970). Therefore, in the process of making this shift towards a more holistic understanding of white anti-racist organizing, it is important to

begin the work of tracing a trajectory of the specific strategies of community organizing and social movement organization that historical white anti-racist organizations have employed.

Conclusion:

In analyzing SSOC and AWARE's tactics for social movement organization and grassroots community organizing, it is clear that a comparative analysis of these two organizations helps to elucidate the ways in which these two white anti-racist organizations engage in anti-racist activism in terms of organizational ideology as well as their tactics for education, mobilization, and engagement in broader movements for racial justice—from the multiracial Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s to the contemporary Movement 4 Black Lives. An understanding of the various tactics and strategies that these organizations employ, therefore, necessitates a further examination of white anti-racist organizational strategies as to continue mapping a trajectory of the work in which these organizations engage, and the tactics that such groups employ in the effort of helping to create a more just world.

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Appendices:

1.1 Interview Questions

1. Please describe your organizational affiliation and involvement.
2. Please describe your organizational affiliation and involvement.
3. How do you see this organization fitting into the broader movement for racial justice?
4. Are there any organizations after whom your organization models its own organizing tactics?
5. Is there an event that politicized you and/or led you to become involved in anti-racist work?
6. Are there any organizers/scholars/activists after whom you try to model your own activism?
7. Are there any white anti-racist organizers/scholars/activists, specifically, who inspire your own activism?
8. How (if at all) do you see your own identity as a white person impacting your involvement with racial justice activism?
9. What do you understand to be the role of white people within movements for racial justice?
10. How (if at all) are you and your organization held accountable to people and organizations of color?
11. Do you see room for improvement and/or growth within your organization?
12. Do you think it is possible to be a white anti-racist person?

1.2 Interviewee's Organizational Affiliation(s)

General Member, Alliance of White Anti-Racists Everywhere (AWARE-LA); 2 interviewees

General Member, AWARE-LA and White People 4 Black Lives (WP4BL); 1 interviewee

Steering and Coordinating Committee Member, AWARE-LA and WP4BL; 1 interviewee

Founder, WP4BL; 1 interviewee

Bay Area Chapter Founder and Northern California Regional Resource Person, Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ); 1 interviewee

1.3 Organizational Documents

1.3.1 "About SSSOC"

THE SOUTHERN STUDENT ORGANIZING COMMITTEE (SSOC) was organized in response to an urgent and growing need for communication and education in the South. The following prospectus includes the role of the Southern Student Organizing Committee, its goals, and its proposed organizational structure.

INTRODUCTION

Since a few local student groups, based on predominantly white southern campuses, have become increasingly interested in the areas of civil rights, civil liberties, peace, academic freedom, capital punishment, and poverty, the following needs have been painfully recognized: (1) the need for communication among these local groups, (2) the need for mutual support, and (3) the need for the exchange of ideas and experiences. Groups organized on several southern campuses have met with a relative degree of success on a local level (e.g., Nashville's Joint University Council on Human Relations, University of Tennessee's Students for Equal Treatment, Georgia's Students for Human Rights, Duke Universities' Core Chapter, Kentucky's Students for Social Action, New Orleans' Liberal's Club, Florida's Student Group for Equal Rights, etc.). However, the isolation of these groups has been a major handicap, resulting in a reduction of their effectiveness.

On another level, the "moderate" in the South has not become a part of the positive movement toward a new, just, democratic order. On many campuses, the "moderate" has been paralyzed by such various pressures as public opinion and discouragement of participation by university administration policies. As the Negro and civil rights movements have become more "militant" in their demands and tactics, the "moderate" has felt defensively alienated. Various efforts have been made to reach these moderate southern whites and to raise the issues of the hour. Communications and improved human relations have been the goals of conferences, workshops, etc., but they have somehow failed to accomplish their purposes and have not communicated a sense of "what can be done".

The crucial role of SSOC, therefore, is to establish a dynamic, working form of communication among Southerners who have a constructive contribution to make. Thus a sense of unity and strength would be created among students of the South--ranging from the moderate to the militant--in their efforts to promote equality and justice.

FIRST SSOC CONFERENCE

On the weekend of April 3-5, 1964, forty-five student leaders and representatives from approximately fifteen predominantly white southern campuses in ten states gathered in Nashville at the invitation of students from Vanderbilt University and Peabody and Scarritt Colleges. The goals of the conference were several: to assess the extent of involvement in civil rights by students at Southern campuses; to ascertain the amount of interest in action along other political, social, and economic lines; and to assess their student needs and set up a structure through which felt needs in these areas could be met.

Briefly these goals were achieved. It was determined that there is a great deal of activity on these campuses, ranging from moderate to radical. Furthermore, it was confirmed that students are interested in not only civil rights but in other areas beyond civil rights, e.g., peace, academic freedom, civil liberties, capital punishment, and unemployment. It was pointed out that the specific activities the local groups might engage in would be up to them. Finally, a structure was set up. The group has called itself the SOUTHERN STUDENT ORGANIZING COMMITTEE (SSOC). A Continuations Committee was directed to formulate specific proposals and programs.

1.3.2 SSOC Brochure

SSOC

The Southern Student Organizing Committee is a group of Southern students who have united to work for a democratic South.

SSOC believes that there are many white students on campuses across the South who have begun to realize that there are things wrong with the South in which we live. However, all too often these students feel isolated on their campuses and do not see what they can do to work for a New South.

SSOC was begun by students who realized this and felt that something must be done to encourage students to act on their convictions. When these students work together instead of in isolation, effective change can be brought about in the South.

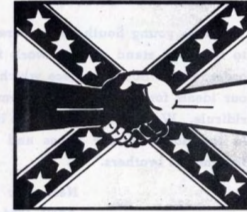
SSOC believes in the New South. We believe that the South has a unique opportunity to prove that men can live together free from hate, want, and fear.

OFFICERS

Chairman Gene Guerrero, Jr.
 Emory University
 Executive Secretary Sue Thrasher
 University of Tennessee
 Treasurer Ron Parker
 Vanderbilt University
 Field Secretary Archie Allen
 University of Virginia

The Southern Student Organizing Committee needs your help and participation in working for a New South. Please write us for further information.

**SOUTHERN STUDENT ORGANIZING
 COMMITTEE**
 P. O. Box 6403
 Nashville, Tennessee 37212



SOUTHERN STUDENT ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

"We as young Southerners, hereby pledge to take our stand now to work for a new order, a new South, a place which embodies our ideals for all the world to emulate, not ridicule. We find our destiny as individuals in the South in our hopes and our work together as brothers."

Nashville, Tennessee
 April, 1964

SOUTHERN
 STUDENT
 ORGANIZING
 COMMITTEE

SSOC'S PROGRAM

Education and self-education aimed at the Southern campus to expose the most vital issues of the nation and the world to Southern students. Education which encompasses the facts about the South today, the opportunities available to work for the building of a New South, and a vision of a democratic and integrated South.

Dialogue and democratic participation for Southern students in working for the building of the New South. Dialogue through conferences in accord with the vision and purpose of SSOC to strengthen interest and participation. Participation through community and campus projects enabling students to work for the New South.

SSOC'S GOALS

- § Not only an end to segregation and racism but the rise of full and equal opportunity for all;
- § An end to personal poverty and deprivation;
- § An end to public poverty which leaves us without decent schools, housing, parks, medical care, and communities;
- § A democratic society where politics poses meaningful dialogue and choices which affect men's lives;
- § An end to man's inhumanity to man;
- § A world working towards the easing of tensions of the Cold War with positive emphasis on peace, disarmament, and world-wide understanding.

1.3.3 SSOC Prospectus

[N.D.]

PROSPECTUS FOR THE WHITE SOUTHERN STUDENT PROJECT

Key Woller, field secretary for the White Southern Student Project

The need for movement in the white communities.

Bayard Rustin referred specifically to this need in relation to the current crisis in the civil rights movement. He suggested that the concerned white students, instead of donning overalls and going into the Negro communities, should organize their own communities around action projects. There is an increasing awareness of the existence of "the invisible poor" due to the publicity gained by President Johnson's war on poverty. Slum conditions have been brought to the foreground by Washington and New York rent strikes. Civil rights groups have been creating movement in the Negro communities, but where is the movement for the forgotten whites--the jobless, the poverty-stricken, the sharecroppers? There are not only large numbers of unemployed and underemployed, but also large numbers who are unemployable. There are areas in which job retraining programs following the coming of automation cannot answer the problem because there are no jobs available. The fact is that there simply are no jobs to be found.

The system that oppresses the Negro oppresses the poor white also--and not only the poor white. The college student, the professor, the minister suffer from a denial of the freedom of thought, of speech, of press, of association. When these people speak out, they lose their jobs: they are expelled from school; they are called Communists: crosses are burned in their yards: they suffer other harrassment by the community.

There is a need for movement in the white community that would be complementary to the movement in the Negro community. Potentially radical students on the verge of rebellion need some type of stimulus. None of the present civil rights organizations have moved into this area to bring about a people's movement.

Action has begun in certain areas.

1. Hazard, Ky.--Berman Gibson, The Committee for Miners, etc.
2. Clairfield, Tenn.--Poverty-stricken parents organized boycott of a school.
3. Atlanta--Georgia Students for Human Rights organized. They have participated in direct action and have taken steps to speak out.
4. Florida--students have begun to move.
5. Texas--the Democratic Coalition
6. Chapel Hill--college students involved in the integration movement.
7. University of Southern Mississippi--student starting off-campus newspaper to bring out the issues that have been censored by the University.

8. Millsaps--several students contacted are action-oriented. One plans to publish an off-campus literary magazine with orientation towards social criticism.
9. Berea College--students interested in action in the Appalachian area and are presently working on the coming March on Frankfort for public accommodations.
10. Nashville--students have organized direct action and are planning a Southern Students Organizing Fund.

Programs to be considered.

1. Community centers--work with juvenile delinquency, health problems, school dropouts, birth control, pre- and post-natal care, literacy and political education projects combined with voter registration.
2. Cultural projects (similar to the proposed Jackson, Mississippi Theatre) to be introduced into culturally deprived areas such as the Appalachians.
3. Rent strikes and sit-ins at graineries.
4. Slumclearance and area improvement.
5. Newsletter--setting up communication of ideas and programs for active students on campuses separated by distance.
6. Organization of migrant workers.
7. Working with children--relationship on level of person to person. Could give valuable insight into the problems and attitudes of the adult community.
8. Organization of the unemployed--mass marches--coordinate with the unemployed Negroes.
9. Possibility of organizing industrial workers through grants from unions.
10. Summer project in Mississippi in white community--complementary to SNCC summer project.
11. Organization of poor whites in large industrial cities such as Birmingham.
12. Programs in areas where large numbers of students congregate--Daytona Beach during spring vacation, etc.
13. Help by Highlander Center with organizational training.
14. Women's strike for freedom--Contact people experienced in this area--Lillian Smith, Mrs. Matt Herron, Virginia Durr. Efforts to dispel the whole "we must maintain segregation to protect our women", the "would you want your daughter to marry a Negro argument." Also organized around a variety of issues--peace, bad schools, poverty, women's rights.

Possibilities for work at the student level.

1. off-campus newspapers, leaflets, mass meetings
2. Find potential activists at religious foundations, on newspaper staff, in the drama, literature and art crowd, etc.
3. Interest could be stimulated by bringing in such people as Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, the Freedom Singers.

4. Civil liberties and academic freedom issues--freedom of thought speech press, and association. "In loco parentis" and "conduct unbecoming to a student" clauses.
5. There could be test cases on censorship of speakers--Gus Hall Rockwell, John Lewis, etc. could be invited to campus.
6. Intimidation or expulsion of students can be issues around which to rally the rest of the campus.

Things to avoid.

1. Surface changes that do not get to the heart of the problem.
2. Doing things for people--then pulling out without establishing local leaders and local movement.
3. Rigid, bureaucratic dehumanizing organization.

Efforts should be made to understand the relationship between issues--segregation, poverty, unemployment, the permanent war economy.

There is a need for constant reevaluation--the program should be continuously checked to see if it is moving towards the goals.

Why a White Space

For many, it sounds contradictory: “It’s racist if just white people get together. Isn’t that segregation?” The following are our reasons for gathering as a white anti-racist community:

1. People of color shouldn’t always have to be the ones to educate white people about racism and oppression. We are taking responsibility for learning about racism, our own white privilege, and how to challenge it as white people.
2. In order to challenge racism and dismantle white supremacy, white people need to unlearn racism and discover the ways we enact white privilege. This is a long, difficult, and sometimes painful process. It’s helpful to have a space where other white people engaged in this process can support and challenge us, without having to always subject people of color to further undue trauma or pain as we stumble and make mistakes. Having a community of white anti-racist people gives us hope, helps us grow our practice, and gives us strength to stay in it for the long haul.
3. A commitment to anti-racist identity and practice as a white person can sometimes mean increased alienation and conflict in our lives, especially with other white friends and family who disagree with us. AWARE is a space where we can get support from people who are experiencing similar struggles as anti-racist white people.
4. AWARE is a space for white people to figure out what it means to be an anti-racist white person and challenge racism in all areas of our lives. We cannot expect people of color to have all of the answers for us on how to transform ourselves and other white people. As white people we are well equipped to understand what it means to be white, as well as a white anti-racist.
5. AWARE is a place where white people can begin to build a new culture of white anti-racism, and learn the skills needed to transform the larger white community.
6. AWARE is a supplement to, not a replacement for, multi-racial dialogues between white people and people of color. It’s important that white people give space in their lives to learning from and bearing witness to people of color’s experiences of racism.
7. A white space serves as a resource to people of color who want to work with white people but don’t want to have to spend all their energy dealing with the racism of white people.

1.3.5 “AWARE-LA Core Principles”



Core Principles

Like most long-standing, grass-roots community groups, AWARE-LA has had its share of leadership transitions, conflicts, and challenges. We believe it is our core principles that have allowed us to survive and thrive. They have helped guide us especially when new volunteers with different orientations arrived, full of energy, and with attitudes that pushed us to stand firm. We cannot overstate the level of commitment we have to the principles named below.

1. We avoid shaming one another.

We accept that people give what they can. When members need to step back from attendance or volunteer activities, we respect their need to do so, and we welcome them back with open arms when they return. When we create structures, we ensure that they avoid forced commitments like a required number of volunteer hours or monetary donations. We also take care not to shame people for their opinions and feelings, understanding that we are all in process and at different points in our journey. Within this orientation, we also uplift the need to challenge each other with care to facilitate growth.

2. We do not compete with one another.

Competing to be the “most down” white person is seen as counterproductive and discouraged. We avoid an attitude of challenge and/or a “show and prove” expectation. Instead, we offer the invitation that, “All are welcome, especially those just starting to get awoken to these issues. We value you and are glad you are here. Every voice counts, and we’re here to support and strengthen each other’s voices.”

3. We seek to create healthy and whole identities as anti-racist white people.

We do not get stuck in the debate around whether or not white people can be “good” or not. We hold the view that racism has been used as a tool to separate us from others and that it has been destructive for everyone, including white people. Our own humanity has been reduced as we have been largely socialized to care less about people of color. We need to heal from our positions as bystanders and perpetrators to injustice. Being healthy and whole means we create an identity that supports us in being anti-racist.

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1.3.6 AWARE-LA “Theory of Social Change”



1.4 Codes

1.4.1 Ideology Codes

SSOC		AWARE-LA	
Social Change	62	anti-racism	62
Economic Justice	29	Structural change	34
Equality	26	social change	32
Freedom	25	racial justice	39
Goals	24	justice	26
Democracy	22	dismantle white supremacy	26
New Culture	15	accessibility	21
Racial Justice	13	economic justice	18
Liberty	7	moral responsibility	13
Integration	7	goals	12
Peace	6	progressive values	11
Structural Change	6	liberation	10
Radical	4	freedom	8

Populist	4	revolution	5
Conscience	4	environmental justice	5
Disarmament	3	gender equality	6
Justice	3	goal	5
Ideology	3	radical	4
Hope	3	LGBT Rights	5
Revolution	2	abolition	4
Community-Oriented	2	grassroots	3
Progressive	1	inclusive	3
Anti-Vietnam War	1	values	3
Race-Traitors	1	Civil Rights	2
		humanity	2
		self-determination	2
		peace	2
		equity	1
		intersectional	1
		Socialist	1
		tolerance	1

1.4.2 Issue Codes

SSOC		AWARE-LA	
political system	48	racism	85
issues	46	white supremacy	25
poverty	34	stereotypes	15
racism	18	structural issues	14
segregation	15	oppression	11
moderate	12	Trump	9
injustice	11	prison	6
unemployment	10	apathy	5
War	7	injustice	5
industrialism	6	anti-black racism	5
oppression	4	hate	4
elites	3	segregation	4
discrimination	3	evil	4
Ku Klux Klan	2	gentrification	4
apathy	2	healthcare	4
censorship	1	inequality	3
anti-Negro	1	police	2
war	1	poverty	2

		non-racists	2
		colorblindness	1
		Liberals	1
		Nationalism	1
		prejudice	1

1.4.3 Education Codes

SSOC		AWARE-LA	
consciousness-raising	49	continual process of unlearning	61
political education	43	dialogue	52
continual process of unlearning	38	political education	48
dialogue	32	recognize white privilege	46
organizational resources	32	consciousness-raising	46
History of Slavery	12	understand white supremacy	45
		calling in/calling out	35
		Skills-building	18
		organizational resources	13

1.4.4 Mobilization Codes

SSOC		AWARE-LA	
provide opportunities	94	direct-action	90
encourage participation	53	multiple entry points	59
community	51	community	59
Multiple entry points	48	build capacity	50
organizing	42	effective engagement	38
direct-action	41	provide opportunities	38
build power	28	leverage privilege	27
political	22	working groups	26
activism	19	leadership development	22
leadership development	10	activism	19
Agitate	2	leadership development	16
fund-raising	2	monetary donations	3
		agitate	1
		mobilized	1

1.4.5 Movement Contribution Codes

SSOC		AWARE-LA	
movement building	74	solidarity	79
Civil Rights organizations	51	movement building	60
Multiracial organizations	45	Black Lives Matter	57
coalition	38	Black folks	54
Black folks	36	organization	54
SNCC	32	multiracial movements	49
support	19	Accountability	45
mutual struggle	15	power-building	37
meaningful relationships	13	meaningful relationships	32
SDS	8	power-building	30
local	7	mutual struggle	27
non-violent	7	coalition	21
global	6	local	21
national movement	5	radical love	20
non-Southerners	3	people of color	18
militant	2	national movement	16
		SURJ	15
		organize	12
		National	8
		international	3
		broad-based	1
		Non-Violent	1

1.4.6 Personal Stake Codes

SSOC		AWARE-LA	
white people	115	white people	225
South	73	alternative culture of whiteness	99
Southern	58	personal stake	13
New South	28	healthy white identity	8
Southerners	12	identity	6
Southland	6		
regionalism	2		
Rebel	1		