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El Movimiento: A Brief Analysis Of The Role Of Core Activists In The Development Of A Unified Social Movement In Ciudad Juarez, Mexico

Luis Diaz

University of Texas at El Paso, lrldiaz2@miners.utep.edu

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EL MOVIMIENTO: A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF CORE
ACTIVISTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A UNIFIED SOCIAL MOVEMENT
IN CIUDAD JUAREZ, MEXICO

DIAZ LUIS R.

Department of Sociology

APPROVED:

Ernesto Castaneda, Ph.D., Chair

Howard Campbell, Ph.D.

Jules Simon, Ph.D.

Benjamin C. Flores, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

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Luis R. Diaz

2012

Dedication

To all the brave people that fight for the other

EL MOVIMIENTO: A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF CORE
ACTIVISTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A UNIFIED SOCIAL MOVEMENT
IN CIUDAD JUAREZ, MEXICO

by

LUIS R. DIAZ, MA, BA

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to solve the question of why, despite the efforts of many social activists, there is not a unified social movement in Ciudad Juárez, México. My hypothesis is that social activists who are able to distinguish between a collective project and a personal project are more likely to create a successful social movement than those who tie their public identity with their personal identity. The reason seems to be that individuals who do not make this distinction are not able or willing to create networks beyond their ideologies, as well as beyond their personal direct influence and control, hence limiting the possibility of influence of their social organization in a larger political scene. This limitation seems to have prevented social organizations from creating a unified social movement.

My data was collected through in-depth interviews as well as participant observations. The interviewees were chosen through snowball and purposive sampling. Interviews were done with key, representative social activists from August 2011 to July 2012. Participant observation was made during organizational meetings and events. To some degree, I have participated in and analyzed social movements on the border of Ciudad Juárez, México –El Paso, TX for over seven years. Through my analysis, I find that there are different types of participants in the social organizations. I propose a typology of social activists. The first one is faddish activist, then occasional activists, followed by part-time activist, and finally core activist. I focus this study on core activists and their role in creating strong social movements.

Keywords: Social Movements, Ciudad Juárez, México, Solidarity, Social Activists

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El Movimiento: a Brief Analysis of the Role of Core Activist in the Development of a Unified Social Movement in Ciudad Juárez, México

Chapter I

1.1.-Introduction. - This paper attempts to solve the question of why, despite the efforts of many social activists, there is not a unified social movement in Ciudad Juárez, México. Among other factors, the strength of a social movement comes from its numbers (Tilly, 1991). The larger a social movement is the more political muscle it has. It is easy to infer from this paradigm that a unified social movement has more political power than diverse social organizations working on their own. Social activists in the northern city of Juárez, México are well aware of this principle, as they are part of a long tradition of resistance. To name a few instances, it was here where a group of cultural activists chained themselves together to the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes¹ (INBA) buildings' doors to stop the closure of the museum (1992), and the international bridges were closed to ask for a more fair federal contribution to the city. It is also one of the first places where attention was called to the femicides taking place in the city, and in some other areas of the country (1991) and where social activists opposed the so called "war on drugs", started by Felipe Calderón, by claiming that it is an ineffective and unethical strategy as it was causing more damage than good and was criminalizing young, poor people, as well as activists (2008).

Most social activists agree that a unified social movement, where, in Ernesto's² words: "medical doctors, lawyers, students, and women's groups need to work together"³

¹ Fine Arts National Institute

² In order to protect the identity of the interviewees, all the names have been changed. In the occasions where the author is using the real name of the person, in addition to the real first name, he uses the last name of the person quoted

³ Doctores, yonqueros, estudiantes, abogados, grupos de mujeres; necesitamos un enlace.

(Diaz, personal communication, February 23, 2012) is needed. However, Juárez, in Javier Sicilia's perspective "is a difficult zone, [where] there are plenty of organizations, there are a lot of ways to see the problem" ⁴(Diaz, personal communication, April 28, 2012). Even though most social organizations have social concerns they have not all created a unified social movement with a larger capability of enforcing more social changes. In my thesis, I shed light on the question of why this anticipated, unified social movement in Juárez has not happened. I focus my research on core social activists and the process that brings them to become and stay active in the pursuit of social change, as well as on the factors that have prevented the creation of a unified social movement. It is important to notice that the absence of a unified social movement is not exclusive to Juárez, but rather is a constant in social movements. However, the absence of unified social movements does not mean that this unity of movements should not be pursued. On the contrary, how to connect different social movements is one of the most persistent questions in today's actual social activism. As a consequence, it is also a relevant theoretical question. I consider that core activists play a vital role in the organization of a social movement. Core activist invest a large portion of their personhood when they commit to the building of a social organization, even to the point where they may become an obstacle to the development of a large social movement. I am especially interested in learning how core activists develop and handle their personhood in relation with their involvement in social activism, so people that are interested can reproduce those factors and bring more people to activism as well as facilitate activists to remain active for a longer period of time. I research what factors make core activists get involved in social activism to begin with, and more importantly, what

⁴ Juárez es una zona difícil, hay muchas organizaciones, muchas formas de ver el problema.

makes them stay involved, and create a larger social movement. This knowledge could accelerate new activists' learning process as they will have a clearer idea of what to expect once they get more involved in social activism. I am also looking to systematize the knowledge that is already possessed by core activists and offer it back to them and to the community, so they can better see the good decisions they have made, as well as the shortcomings they have.

Despite their strong ethical commitment, social activists are part of the general population, which implies that they may, consciously or unconsciously, have some of the behaviors that they critique on other people. The need for recognition and the search for personal prestige is one of the most detrimental behaviors that some core activists follow, because it may translate into a personal agenda instead of one that looks for the wellbeing of the community they are trying to help. Preliminary research shows that most of the time, this behavior is not noticed by them. They internalize their roles as social activists to the point where both roles, as an individual and as an activist, become one. This increases the possibility for them to confuse personal decisions that work in favor of their personal needs of self-actualization instead of working towards the needs of the movement, which may damage the movement.

The purpose of this work is then to test the following hypotheses:

H₁: Social activists that are willing and able to make a distinction between their personal identity and their public identity as social activists are more likely to create successful social movements than those social activists who participate in social activism in pursuit of their personal agenda.

H₂.-People will stay involved in activism as long as they think that ‘another world’ is possible and that they can contribute to that change.

In order to test these hypotheses, first, I study the process that allows a person to become a core activist, second I describe a core activist, third I analyze the internal and external factors that have prevented the organization of a unified social movement, and finally I compare a closed and open social organization group. In doing so I study the different forms of struggle that social organizations use to promote social change, as well as the internal dynamics of some of the most relevant social organizations in this border city as they are perceived and described by my interviewees. I also study the social aspects of the personhood of a core activist. I conduct this research to learn the factors that bring a person to become a core social activist. I focus this study on five areas: demographic information, everyday life, involvement in social activism, and the criteria used to collaborate or not with other organizations.

For the purpose of this research, I make a distinction between people that get started in social activism as a response to a specific situation that is affecting them (i.e. tuition increase, work conflicts, the disappearance of a family member, etc.) but leave as soon as their problem is solved, from people whose involvement in social activism is not limited to the solution of a specific problem that may or may not affect them; rather they are committed to a larger social change. I consider only the former to be social activists. Based on participant observation, my six years’ experience in social movements, as well as conversations with different participants in social activism, I consider that there are different levels of commitment among social activists. In order to make this distinction

clear, I divide them in different categories according to their level of commitment with progressive social change. These categories go from people that occasionally participate in a social movement, to people to whom social activism is one of their highest priorities. These categories are: faddish activists, occasional activists, part time activists, and core activists. Allow me to define them.

Faddish activists: This is the largest group in numbers; as such it serves as the main source of new activists. They are people that get involved in activism when there is a lot of media attention. Most of them cannot make a life time investment. Only a small fraction of them will move to a larger commitment. The main reason for them to leave activism is the lack of a strong interest on the social issues, but also because they do not find a friendly environment in the social activism scene.

Occasional activists: They stay longer in social activism and have a large interest in social change. They attend protests and marches on a regular basis, but they do not participate in the organization of these protests and marches. They are not affiliated with any social organization. Their participation in activism is subordinated to other interests such as school, work, and personal life. Most of them are young and will leave social activism soon after they acquire major commitments such as marriage and professional jobs.

Part Timers: They already developed a strong commitment to social change. They actively participate in protests, as well as other forms of social change events. They are part of social organizations, but social activism is not their priority. Their life is not strongly tied to social activism, as they work on something else, and activism is an activity done in their

free time. Mostly they stay tied to friends with whom they share their social change interest. The largest cause for their abandonment of social activism is due to personal disagreements with the other members/friends of their social organization. Others, who stay working, do not get active beyond their organization. A few of them will be in active contact and later work to develop larger social movements.

Core Activists: They are strongly committed to social change. Their life is vastly organized around social activism. They have large local, national and international networks. They become politically involved because they want to help people living in oppressive conditions. They are not involved because they are looking to pressure the government to solve only a specific situation that is affecting them, but rather to change the social conditions that have people living under those conditions. They are fully committed to a long term agenda of progressive social change. They work with or create different social organizations as they fight different battles through their social activism life.

I am defining a core activist in terms of their level of commitment with the movement. I am using four criteria: average weekly hours spent working on the movement, years spent on the movement, the priority given to their participation on activism, and the expectation of future involvement. To qualify as a core activist a person needs to spend over ten hours per week working on the movement, have been involved for at least four years, prioritize her involvement in social activism, and be willing to continue doing so.

This data was collected and measured through self-reported behavior by interviewees and verified thorough references of other people as well as with secondary

sources, i.e., newspaper articles, documented activities, and intensity of documented participation in events.

1.2.-Methodology.-

1.2.1. - Sample and Recruitment.- Informants were identified through social networks as well as mass media articles to see what names appear on a regular basis and in relation with different social movements. Using the snowball sampling method, once the first contacts were made, I asked the initial informants to lead me to other people that may be relevant for my study.

The age of my sample went from late 20's to late 50's. My total population is estimated to be around sixty people included people participating in meetings I observed and documented in detailed field notes; I consider that a sample of twenty-three people , accurately represents the behavior of the total population. I chose the gender, age, and social class of my informants in such a way that none of these groups were over or under represented. Informants were included based on their level of involvement in social activism; with a minimum of an average of ten hours a week and have been involved for at least two years in this activity.

As specified before, social activism is a public activity where people who do it are clear and open to the public about their activities. They were not subject to any type of coercion to give an interview and they did and do not face any potential risk for doing so since the interventions are kept anonymous. Informants were recruited through the snowball technique where a first contact was made, and then that person led me to another informant. The initial set of informants, when possible, was contacted in person. When

personal contact was not possible, I approached the possible informant through phone or e-mail. In the case of subsequent sets of informants, I asked the informant that suggested them to be relevant for the study to put me in contact with them.

I used two methods.

1.-Participant Observation.-I conducted participant observation during several protests, and more importantly for the purposes of this project, I conducted participant observation during the organizational meetings of two different groups. The first one was a closed group. I define a closed group as one where meetings are conducted in closed spaces, most attendants are social activists and leaders with proven social capital, and participation happens mostly by invitation. For the most part the invitation is made to people who have a greater capability to create social change, i.e., social leaders, members of the academia, in general; in Susan's words, "people from organizations"⁵ (Diaz, personal communication, Feb, 08, 2012). The second group whose meetings I attended was an open group. I define open group as ones that hold meetings in an assembly form in open spaces where everybody, with or without experience, known or not known by other members, can join the meetings. Authorization to record and study the meetings was obtained through a direct petition to the assembly.

2. In-depth Interview-I interviewed relevant social activists that meet the criteria described above. My unit of analysis is the individual. Interviews took an average of two hours. When conditions allowed it, (i.e. the possibility for the interviewee to cross the

⁵ Gente de organizaciones.

border to be interviewed) the twenty-three interviews were conducted in El Paso, TX. and Ciudad Juárez, México.

1.3.- Literature Review.-My research shows that among active actors in Ciudad Juárez, political life there is [...] the shared belief that a causal connection exists between the destruction of the social fabric and extreme levels and forms of violence that have occurred in Juárez during the last decade. However, they differ on what should be the role of the government to fix this problem. There are three different positions on this issue. The first one believes that the efforts to rebuild the social fabric are not coming from the government. Therefore, they focus their efforts towards performing, to some degree, the government's social duties or, in some extreme situations; some people even introduce the idea of overthrowing it. They are reluctant to work with the government. The second one believes in the government as a necessary institution and thinks that the government is the primary responsible entity for the wellbeing of people, but distrusts the people in government. They use a combination of collective action and community work to work on the social issues. They use collective action to pressure the government to fix the problem at the same time as they establish social organizations to directly contribute to solve the problem. They function as pressure groups. The last one is the position that social protests should not happen and all social changes must be done within the institutions. For obvious reasons, I focus only on the first two positions as they organize social movements to create social change. For the purpose of this thesis, I am using Tilly's (2004) definition of a social movement as "sustained, collective, popular based public making of claims short of armed rebellion, or the people and organizations that amount such claims" (p. 474).

Charles Tilly's (1976) essay "Major Forms of Collective Action in Western Europe 1500-1975" is a rough classification of discontinuous forms of collective action. The classification "depends on the claims that collective actors are asserting in their action: competitive claims, reactive claims or proactive claims. Competitive claims refer to the use of social resources of the same community. They are usually local and have a short life and do not link to big movements. However, some elements are also part of reactive collective action defined as: "group efforts to reassert established claims when someone challenges or violates them" (Tilly, 1976, p. 367). They are usually formed by local solidarities: the youth groups, guilds, and so on. They substitute the role of governments' institutions that have failed to meet their duty. The final form is proactive collective actions which "assert group claims which have not previously exercised" (p. 368) as for example, strikes on demand of better working conditions. Strikes started during late 1800's.

In 1500-1700 Europe, most movements were local and were about the market, not the state. These movements had three variants: the retributive action, the blockage, and the price riot, blockage being the most popular one. Western Europe blockages' cycles shows that as soon as the state met its functions of protecting a fair distribution at a fair price of food, collective actions diminished. The food riots are also conditioned by three factors: proletarianization, commercialization, and dismantling of local controls. The increasing power and presence of the modern nation state has dictated the evolution of forms of collective action, as the nation state has become more powerful, collective actions have become scarce.

“Major Forms of Collective Action in Western Europe 1500-1975”s thesis is that forms of local solidarity are the main forces behind a collective action. Tilly takes the history of Western Europe to make this point. His chain of reasoning is that as the nation state substituted local forms of control, collective action diminished, this was due to two elements: 1) if the state and/or its local representatives were doing a good job, there was no need for people to rebel and 2) the nation state gained control over forms of repression and coercion which made it harder for people to get organized. The fight for power went to national and more organized forms. This explains the decrease in food riots, but not present-time collective actions. His intentions seemed to be more to explain and analyze the genealogy of present day movements as well as their evolution in terms of the history of political power. Tilly shows, for example, how social movement performances, e.g., food riots, and the object of claims changes, and how the system reacts, food riots became less common in Europe, a different forms and objects of contention appeared.

In “Domination, Resistance, Compliance ... Discourse” Tilly (1991) says that in the 1960’s American sociologists took a populist turn. The claim made by populists was that the powerless must be given a voice. The populist analysis rests on strong conceptions of power, as well as in the distinction between power to and power over. According to Tilly, populist analyses rely on the existence of durable and extensive interests. The problem is that there are several and contradictory accounts of the existence of these interests. They do not explain the reason that if there is a permanent conflict between the powerful and the powerless, why there is not a permanent state of rebellion. Several possible explanations have been given, but they can be summarized by [...]: false consciousness, coercion, scant resources or some combination of the three.

Tilly (1991) argues that the populist position has been charged with looking for a chimera, the search for a text that would speak the voice of the oppressed. Timothy Mitchell argues that the idea of presenting a theoretical frame isolated from day to day practice is already exercising some form of power. He makes his point as he criticizes James Scott's work. In his work, Scott delves into the idea of moral economy. Scott focuses his work on everyday forms of resistance rather than on "rare moments of concerted action" (as quoted in Tilly, 1991, p. 596). The assumptions on "Moral Economy and Weapons of the Weak" are that the weak share a mentality. However, none of them go further on the explanation of the mechanisms behind the genesis and development of this shared mentality. It is on "Domination and the Arts of Resistance" that Scott develops the idea of "hidden transcripts that actors... fashion and deploy in the course of public encounters" (Tilly, 1991, p. 596). These hidden transcripts exist in the human mind, but at the same time they cannot be judged true or false by any social or analytical position.

In fact, according to Scott, there are four transcripts: two hidden, two public. The oppressed can use the oppressor's transcripts in their favor. A counter ideology is necessary to create resistance to ideological domination. Tilly criticizes Scott's argument by saying that it needs to work more on the explanation of how this shared mentality is created. According to Scott, rebellion is always the consequence of long nurtured hidden transcripts, but this does not explain *a priori* which groups will rebel against their oppressors. It seems that the perceived vulnerability of the dominant group is a plausible explanation of why some people rebel and others do not. This, however, seems to create an internal conflict between Scott's crude individualized rationality and non-rebellion. When personal agendas match other people's agendas the conditions for collective action are set.

Tilly claims that even though Scott makes important contributions to collective action theories, he falls short when it comes to explaining open confrontations

Scott's hypothesis that an already existing transcript, the match of agendas, and the presence of "it is possible to force a social change" attitude, based on the perception that there is weakness on the dominant group may explain why it is that some people rebel. However, I consider that it still needs to work more in explaining how it is that some groups rebel even when there is little chance of success. Another point that does not fit Scott's theory is to explain why it is that people who have no personal interest and/or are not being affected by "x" problem still join social movements to the expense of their time and personal life. When doing this claim I am thinking on social activists or college students that support protest and events that do not affect them directly.

In "Social Movements and (all sorts of) Other Political Interactions-Local, National, and International, Including Identities" (Tilly, 1988) the author runs analogies between social movements' dynamics and politics at other scales. From 1780-1829, members of the Catholic Association in England fought for being fully recognized as full citizens. They did it in a very novel way, through strategies that we now recognize as having invented social movements. The study of social movements has gone through different phases. One of them considered social movements to be driven by mass psychology, another one, the natural-history approach, was modeled in the shape of organized labor and other emancipatory movements. None of these approaches seemed to explain modern social movements.

The new authors of social movements contested the perception that social movements were instrumental and that they all sought power within the already existing

structures, they also underline the search for an identity, and the significance of shared beliefs within the participants of a social movement. Some authors praised social movements as the future of democracy. Some students argued, influenced by post-modernism, that social movements were only social constructions. In response to these accusations, realists worked hard to find out how social movements evolve in environments with different political structures. One of their conclusions is that social movements depend a lot on informal, personal networks of people with common beliefs. This has moved social theorists to study social movements from three perspectives: methodological individualism, phenomenological individualism, and system realism. They work on the concepts of actor, category, transaction, tie, role, network, group, organization, and identity. Only a few people have compared religious movements with social movements. However, according to Tilly, they share some important features. He uses the history of Catholic exclusion in England to make his point.

Tilly also compares a social movement with an electoral campaign. Its members must be worthy, united, numerous and committed (WUNC). They gain their power from “an implicit threat to act in adjacent arenas” (Tilly, 1988, pg. 467) by following collective persuasive actions such as blockades, and marches, among others. The success of a social movement would depend on how well they play with the different factors, for they may have to compromise some commitment to gain numbers, etc. They also need to create some mystification in order to create a sense of unity and common beliefs, so they can present them to the outside as a solidarity group. The level and kind of mystification would depend on the audience. It is important to notice that mystification does not mean falsehood. Some mystification elements are “the presence of solidarity, the constriction of

shared identities, the sense of grievance, the creation of sustaining organizations, and more” (Tilly, 1988, p. 469). In fact, according to analyses of collective actions, these are the elements that define a social movement. However, to these elements Tilly adds “collective claims on authorities.” A social movement consists of a sustained challenge to power holders in the name of the population living under the jurisdiction of those power holders by means of repeated public displays of that population’s numbers. As social movements were being invented, they also brought counter movements that are promoted by those of whom the success of a social movement may affect. Tilly also runs an analogy between nationalistic movements and social movements. He says that just as a nationalistic movement is propelled by a sense of identity and common problem, so is a social movement.

Tilly’s (2004) article “Contentious Choices” summarizes several approaches to the analysis of contentious politics. The study of political conflict is done under several names each one of them already suggests an emphasis on some actors of the conflict. Students of this phenomenon debate how it is possible for resource-poor exploited people to effectively participate in the decision making process to their benefit. A way of studying this is to define social movements as “sustained, collective, popular based public making of claims short of armed rebellion, or the people and organizations that mount such claims” (Tilly, 2004, p. 474). Even though Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly accept social movements as distinct, they are looking for patterns that repeat in different forms of political struggle, keeping always in mind public character and the relation with government bodies.

Mario Diani and Ivano Bison define their topic as “collective action dynamics” (Tilly, 2004, p. 474). They emphasize identity assertion through the informal networks of the participants. They based their work in an analysis of connection and interactions among civic organizations of the cities of Glasgow and Bristol. Ludger Mees argues that “the classic social movement agenda with its emphasis on social change, structures of political opportunity, and threat , organizational bases, framing process serves well the discipline inquiry into the history of the Basque nationalism” (Tilly, 2004,p. 475). Jack Goldstone studies the effect of democratic institutions and a better explanation of the set of causes that generate a social movement. Social movements are complementary to more structured ways of doing politics. He proposes that instead of explanations based on movement actors, students of social movements should focus “on external relational fields” (Tilly, 2004, p. 476).

Koopmans focuses on the influence of mass media in social movements. He “stresses how mass media themselves channel perception and interpretation of opportunities for political endeavor” (Tilly, 2004, p. 476). Even though Maria Kousis agrees that political opportunity urges social movements she also argues in favor of including economic analysis on the equation. Javier Ayuero focuses on grassroots participation in social movements, especially on the repertoire and its adaptation to local arenas. Sidney Tarrow works on an idea already used by Tilly, the intersection between state structures and contentious politics. He argues, in opposition to the rest of the panel, that collective claims come from the “stress of social change from interest generated by locations within social divisions by class, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or region” (Tilly, 2004 p. 478). In short, Diani, Bison, Koopmans and Kousis focus on actors’ movements. Mess Goldstone and

Tarrow do it on long-term transformations of political context and consequences. Ayuero roots his analysis on local circumstances. None of these explanations is necessarily better than the others. The differences between them occur at a theoretical and meta- theoretical level. Tilly distinguishes four possibilities. 1) We can seek to establish general laws, 2) identify particular mechanisms and processes that operate in several cases; 3) historical continuity; 4) placing specific important episodes within the analysts' immediate social context.

The role of social movements has changed, as society has moved from homogenous societies to more diverse ones. As mentioned before, Tilly dates the origin of social movements by the XVI century with the apparition of the modern nation-state. However, as the nation-state evolved, the old paradigm of having the state as the regulator of common private interests was not the predominant reason to organize a social movement. Today, societies are diverse and civil society comprises a large variety of interests. This implies that the state and its institutions do not represent the *spirit of people* anymore, and the dialogue is no longer only between the state and a homogenous opposite group. As Melucci (1993-1994) says "Democracy in complex societies requires conditions which enable individuals and social groups to affirm themselves and to be recognized for what they are or wish to be" (p. 183). It is important then, to see that according to Melucci's argument, the people, in their diversity, are the ones that should dictate their destiny, for the state cannot or does not want to respond to this large variety of interests.

The disparity between the state and the people's vision causes people to look for an alternative way of accomplishing their goals. Sometimes, this comes in the form of social

movements. Social activists can elect different strategies to achieve their goals. Among the most important ones is the rescue or creation of public spaces where “[they] should include some guarantees that individual and collective identities are able to exist” (Melucci, 1993-1994, p 188). In other words, social movements, in addition to be pressure groups, they also become social spaces where diverse people to actualize their identity. Social movements serving as places where people actualize their identities through the organization of the movement itself and the opening of public spaces where people can exercise their individuality outside of the of the state-controlled scenarios reveal the multiple functions of social movements. These functions go beyond being mere pressure groups, to be spaces of freedom and social innovation. In Melucci’s (1993-1994) words, “Social movements [then] can prevent the system from closing in upon itself by obliging the ruling groups to innovate, to permit changes among elites, to admit what was previously excluded from the decision-making arena, and to expose the shadowy zones of invisible power and silence which a system and its dominant interests inevitably tend to create” (p 190).

Melucci and Massolo (1991) urge academics to study collective action not as a unit, but as a process where academics need to focuses on the elements that make up a more or less cohesive collective action. He says that while collective actions have taken to be a unit in reality, they are composed by a large variety of social process, actors, and forms of organizations. On Melucci’ and Massolo’s approach (1991) collective actions are “the result of intentions, resources and limits with an orientation built through social relations within

a system of opportunities and restrictions”⁶ (p. 358). In Melucci’s system, individuals create a more or less stable collective ‘we’ through three classes of orientation: the purpose of the action, the ways that are used to achieve their goal, and the environment. In order for joint action to be considered a social movement it is also necessary that they work in three dimensions: solidarity, the presence of a conflict, and the breaking of the limits of compatibility of the system the actors are referring to. In Melucci and Massolo’s (1991) words, then, “the empirical field of collective action looks more like a series of systems than like the expression of a ‘subject’. Actors play different roles at the same time and the work of [academics] is to unveil their plurality” ⁷ (p. 363). This plurality brings some problems on how it is that diverse communities can create collective actions.

Now, that it is clear that participants on social movements come from diverse backgrounds, I need to understand how coalitions come to be by understanding the internal structures of a social movement. As Pojanamt (2012) points out, the process of creating coalitions is similar to that of creating social groups, where people may go from having loose ties created by common interests to strengthening those ties to the level of community binding relationships. Pojanamt presents Peck’s community development process that involves inclusivity, commitment, and consensus and follows four stages of development. As individuals and groups begin to form, they enter into the “pseudo community” stage wherein individuals pretend to overlook differences so as to avoid conflict and gain acceptance. When this eventually fails, groups enter into the stage of

⁶ “el resultado de intenciones, recursos y límites, con una orientación construida por medio de relaciones sociales dentro de un sistema de oportunidades y restricciones”.

⁷ “el campo empírico de la acción colectiva se parece más a una serie de sistemas de acción que a la expresión de un ‘sujeto’. Los actores juegan muy diferentes juegos al mismo tiempo, y la tarea del análisis es develar su pluralidad”.

“chaos” and begin to reveal their true selves and hash out their differences. Then, if individuals are able to move past the chaos phase it is followed by the “emptiness” stage in which individuals attempt to purge themselves of old worldviews etc. and adopt a new and more inclusive collective frame or identity. The last stage is “true community,” which involves real empathy, broadened definitions of “we” and genuine trust. (p. 102)

As they form a true community, they adopt common moral norms. Crandall, Eshleman, O'Brien, (2002) argue that even though morality, in terms of social norms, comes from an internal search for justice, external factors also shape moral behavior. The desire to belong to a group is among these external factors. Evidence of this is that people are likely to adopt the prejudices of their desired group. On their words ““We hypothesize that expressed prejudice is a direct function of its social acceptability, and when collapsing across individuals, the fit between how much people report and how much people feel is appropriate to have is nearly perfect” (Crandall, Eshleman, O'Brien, 2002, p. 363). They run their study based on Group Norm Theory where: “Social norms are formed in group situations and subsequently serve as standards for the individual’s perception and judgment when he is not in the group situation; the individual’s major social attitudes are formed in relation to group norms” (Sherif & Sherif, 1953, pp. 202–203).

Crandall, Eshleman, and O'Brien run several studies to test their hypothesis, mainly in the University of Kansas with both graduate and undergraduate students that received credit for their participation in the studies. They studied the relationship between explicit and regular prejudiced behavior, such as jokes, and group norms as they were perceived and acted on. They had three main hypotheses: discrimination would be accepted if the

prejudice is supported, offensiveness has normative effects, and if the group is appropriate, a joke is accepted. The three hypotheses were proved right by the data they collected.

This study helps to make the point that given the case that a person accepts the rules of the group she belongs to, if the social organization works with prejudice against a group with a different vision of reality, a newcomer will adopt that prejudice and will not work with the group that is suffering prejudice. On the other side, if the social norm in the group she is working with not having prejudice, most likely she will be open to work with diverse groups. The more desirable the group, the more people will wish to follow its lead. And when people identify with attractive groups that condemn a prejudice, they are likely to win the struggle for internalization” (Crandall, Eshleman, O’Brien, 2002, p. 376). This tendency explains the reasons for a person to remain loyal to a group, and not necessarily to an idea or a larger goal, such as a unified social movement.

In order to fully understand the desire to create a coalition to advance the social project, it is vital to understand the reasons for people to take part in a social movement in the first place. One of the reasons is identity search. Passy and Giugni (2001) explain the reasons behind participation in social movements. They draw their hypothesis from the social networks and the rationalist perspectives. By doing this research they expect to add on the little research that has been done on the factors and mechanisms that lead people to become involved. Passy and Giugni (2001) “propose to see structural-level and individual level explanations as part of a broader process in which each of them intervene at different moments in time” (p. 131). They try to do so by exploring the nature of social networks and their impact on participation. They argue that social networks play a role in the person’s

construction of cognitive parameters that incline a person to participate or not in social movements. Social networks play three basic functions: structurally connecting prospective participants to an opportunity to participate, socializing them to a protest issue, and shaping their decision to become involved.

Passy and Giugni enumerate four cognitive parameters that denote that the way an individual perceives reality influences her intention to take part in collective action. These parameters are: effectiveness of the action, the more a person thinks her actions actually make a difference in the state of affairs, the more she will be willing to participate in social movements. The second one is the assessment of risks of collective action where the higher the risk, the lower the level of participation. The third one is the behavior of the authorities; this parameter measures the level of legitimacy of authorities: the less legitimacy the authorities have, and consequently the most legitimacy a collective action has, the higher level of participation. The last one is personal availability which is measured in both perceived and objective availability. It is the case that participation in social movements is constrained by other activities such as work, school, family obligations, etc... The more objective availability, the more chances a person has to become involved in social movements; at the same time the more involved she gets the more perceived availability she will have.

Passy and Giugni (2001) tested their hypothesis on members of the Bern Declaration (BD) an organization of the Swiss Solidarity movement carried by a small number of leftist and religious intellectuals who look to sensitize the population towards inequalities and imbalances in North/South relations. They found that social and cultural

factors play a role in who participates in social movements, but not in the intensity of participation. In contrast, social networks and, more importantly, recruiters are indicators of the level of intensity of participation in social movements. According to Passy and Giugni (2001) it is more likely that a person stays involved in social movements when a person gets involved through informal networks, such as friends, rather than through family ties. They venture the explanation that when a person gets involved through family ties this is perceived more as a moral obligation rather than a choice. In addition to that, trust, which is vital for a person to stay involved in social movements, is better built through informal networks. Recruiters play a big role in the continuance of a social activist “to be recruited by an activist is by large the stronger predictor of differential participation; in contrast, the simple fact of being recruited by some kind of network does not seem to affect the intensity of engagement” (Passy and Giugni, 2001, p. 138).

To continue on the same argumentative line, now that it is clear that one of the reasons for a person to become involved in a social movement is the search for identity, I will briefly explore the process through which a person’s identity and a social movement match. Snow and McAdam (2000) point out that most contemporary literature on identity-social movements (identity politics (Taylor and Raeburn (1995), contested identities (Taylor 1996), Collective identities (Melucci 1989), insurgent identities (Gould 1995), and identities movements (Gamson 1995)) tend to study the relation identity –movement at a cultural or group level and by doing so they skip the process by which a person becomes part of a group with a shared identity. Snow and Adam consider this to be a large theoretical void in social movements’ literature. In consequence, Snow and McAdam (2000) have their goal “to bring a measure of conceptual and empirical clarity to the identity/

movement nexus by elaborating ways by which personal identities and movement/collective identities are linked processually and by suggesting the implications of those linkages for various movement dynamics and process” (p. 42).

In order to elaborate on the various processes through which personal and collective identities are aligned, they build in the existing dispositional, structuring, and constructionist approaches. The first step is to borrow on the constructionist analysis where attention is directed towards the construction and maintenance of identity through joint actions, negotiation and interpretive network. They define identity work as “anything people do, individually or collectively, to give meaning to themselves or others” (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock, 1996, 115, as quoted by Snow and McAdam, 2000, p. 47); from here they analyze how the groups create a common identity. This, again, presents the problem that it already assumed the existence of groups. Identity convergence works on the idea of the match between a movement and people that already fit it. The analytical problem here is to explain the connection between the two of them, the person and the movement. Existing literature explains it by two different processes: identity seeking and the appropriation of extant networks. Snow and McAdam (2000) reconcile both positions by arguing that “given the existence of a shared identity among a network of individuals, appropriation of a [solidarity] network is likely to facilitate identity convergence between those prospects in the movement. But in the absence of an extant shared identity, network is unlikely to generate such identity” (p. 49).

Snow and McAdam analyze several approaches to the identity work process. They are:

a) Identity amplification. It presumes the existence of an existing identity that is harmonious with a collective identity, but that is not sufficiently salient to ensure participation. If the movement is attractive enough, the person will adopt her new identity, in a closer match to the collective identity to make it her salient personality.

b) Identity consolidation refers to “the adoption of an identity that combines two prior identities that appear to be incompatible because they typically associated with strikingly different subcultures or traditions be they political or religious” (Snow and McAdam, 2000, p. 50). On this approach two different identities blend together to create a new one. I.e. when a college professor joins a social movement, she becomes a social activist using the tools he had previously acquired.

c) Identity extension exists when the already existing personality of a person is enhanced by the collective identity. “In such instances movement adherents are expected to utilize or invoke their movement role identities in virtually all encounters with other relevant to the movement, such that the movement identity comes into function in a fashion akin to a master status” (Snow and McAdam, 2000, p. 51). As we will see later, this is the case for some core activists and if not managed wisely it may become an obstacle in social movements.

d) Identity transformation, opposite to the three previous identity work process where there is a resemblance of the past, represents “a dramatic change in identity, such that one now sees her-or himself as striking different that before” (Snow and McAdam, 2000, p. 52). In order to make this change a person needs to ‘rewrite’ her biography according to her new identity; i.e. when a person that may have enjoyed the benefits of the

power, when she discovers that those privileges come at the price of the suffering of other people , by adopting a new identity as social activist, now she rejects those privileges.

It is important to underline that not all people involved in social movements, do it with the same level of intensity. Differential participation can be explained through Sheldon Stryker's (2000) article; where the "framework underlying the theory suggests that identities reciprocally affect commitment and can become functionally autonomous; they can affect person's choice behavior independently of the commitment underwriting their salience" (Stryker, 2000, p. 21). Stryker (2000) defines "Identities [as] self-recognitions tied to roles and thus to propositions in organized social relations" (p. 28). This is to say that, as symbolic interaction theory proposes, the identity of a person is inspired but not completely determined by the social interactions where a person intermingles. A person has agency and will pursue the role she feels closer to by looking for groups that reinforce the role she wants to take at the same time that these groups influence, but again, do not fully determine her identity search. In a few words, groups and identity have a mutually dependent relation. A person's relation to a group and the subsequent identity building have a close connection to interpersonal relations; "Identities based on relationships in groups are generally more central and desirable to persons than identities not based on relationships (Deaux 1996, as quoted by Striker" p. 30); more graphically people live in groups not in categories"(Stryker, 2000, p. 30).

At this point, it is important to underline the difference between social identity theory that privileges categories as the main factor in identity building and the identity theory that moves more on a person level and uses groups as the main identity building

factor. Stryker (2000) argues that “groups [are] perhaps typically formed of subsets of persons having common categorical characteristics; categories reflect social boundaries, making it more likely that persons with common characteristics will form the role-based relationships underlying commitments” (p. 30). In other words, groups are made up by people that willingly look to be together, as they feel identified with that set of people. On the other hand, categories are socially constructed and to some degree imposed on people. In consequence, people do not feel that attracted or obligated to other people in the same category.

Commitment to a group, not to a category, explains why it is that even where there is no chance for success a leader will remain a leader. Kornhauser (1962) argues that this happens when the social relations of the leader are circumscribed to the party, not to what the future may bring. Commitment erodes when the needs of the leader are no longer fulfilled by her social relations to the party. However, as it is easy to infer, most people’s social relations are not circumscribed to their participation in social movements, they also meet other roles in groups other than the social organization they participate in. As Stryker (2000) points out “if movement and nonmovements relationships overlap greatly, it is likely that person’s multiple commitments will reinforce one other; if these are independent they may still reinforce each other but are more likely to compete for the loyalty of movement members” (p. 32). When there is conflict of commitment the group the person has more loyalty to is the one than is more likely to win a person’s attention. It is important to notice that commitments are dynamic; they may change according to personal circumstances such as moving to a different city, losing or getting a job, etc. When a challenging circumstance appears, a person’s preferred identity will raise and reveal itself

as the dominant identity “A transsituational concept of identity salience implies the at least partial independence of behavior including role-related choices, from demands of immediate situations of actions” (Stryker, 2000, p. 34).

Without any doubt, the Mexican political system is different than the American system which most authors have studied. So in order to better understand the process that activists in Juárez follow, it is imperative to review, at least briefly, the literature on this issue. My research will greatly benefit from a study of social movements in México. I will use Dolores Trevizo’s book “Rural Protests and the Making of Democracy in Mexico 1968-2000” as my starting point. Even though she recognizes the importance of external pressures on the Mexican democratization process, she also argues that internal factors such as right and left hand social movements create the conditions for civil society to be ready for a more democratic life.

She makes her point by arguing that the student movement of 1968, which according to her, is the landmark of the end of the soft totalitarian PRI, was the source of a number of highly committed leaders that later created several organizations. In the long term, these organizations achieved more than the original goals of the movement. Trevizo argues then that the success of a movement should not be evaluated in terms of the recognition of the political system of the legality and validity of such movements, but in terms of its outcomes.

Trevizo also elaborates on the elements that make a social movement successful in repressive environments. One element is leadership. The second element is politically autonomous organizations. This element is vital because it allows social movements not to depend on the resources of the PRI-government, and with this they were able to present an

opposition to it. The final element is framing. A good leader must know how to frame a social movement so it is adopted by more people. Trevizo claims that one of the reasons why the 68's movement was unable to attract more people was because it was framed as a socialist one. People were uncomfortable with that labeling and not ready to fight under that flag.

Caudillismo and *Mesianismo*, *Personalismo*, having all the power in one person has been characteristics of the Mexican political system; now days the character that embodies this system is López Obrador. Grayson (2007) qualifies López Obrador as a political “messiah”, for “unlike a Chavez, for example, he is not just one more option for the masses. Rather, he is a ‘savior’ prepared to rescue the humble from deceitful politicians and their neoliberal schemes that benefit the affluent” (p.2). López Obrador is convinced that he represents the have-nots and that his moral principles put him beyond scrutiny and attacks; this defense of the have-nots as well as his honesty and austerity has continued during his political career. He expects and demands the same frugal life style he has to his inner circle and family members, some of which actually are also part of his political project.

Either by accident, conviction, or strategy, López Obrador follows on the path of Jesus, understood as a Messiah. He does so by: claiming to be a political redeemer, living frugally, speaking in parables, is influenced by Mexican founding fathers as Jesus was inspired by prophets, and challenges the status quo. He sets himself beyond the ‘law of men’ by virtue of his honesty. He is the only truth holder by representing the will of the people as he takes it to mean, he is in close contact with the poor, he performs miracles in the sense of feeding the poor through social programs, he fully trusts his own judgment and

rarely looks for advising. Like Jesus, he welcomes females into his inner circle and, finally, he also “conquered” Jerusalem by becoming México City’s mayor.

It is also important to notice that when in term, he called México City *la ciudad de la esperanza*⁸, he called himself a *rayito de esperanza*⁹. He also named his, at that time social organization and now political party, MORENA, an acronym for *MOvimiento de REgeneracion NAcional*¹⁰. When this acronym is read as the word MORENA (brown skinned) it can be related to skin color of most mestizos, to the raza, as opposite to white people, a skin color that in the collective imaginary is the skin color of the Spanish conquerors of the past and the Americans of the present, both of them are blamed by the have-nots for the poor conditions they live. More important to Grayson’s argument, MORENA can also be related to virgin Guadalupe, *la virgen morena*¹¹, one, if not the most, venerated religious figures in México. By making these connections López Obrador has been able to tie his image to religious icons, which in a devoted country like México, creates a persona that people follow with almost blind faith. His followers have accompanied him in the largest marches in México City as the one on April 24, 2005 when more than a million people protested in a March of Silence to protest the *desafuero*” (Grayson, 2007, p. 7). A number that did not diminish, as in 2012, when López Obrador lost the presidential election to Enrique Peña Nieto, an equal number of people protested what they considered had been unfair presidential election and asked for it to be cancelled.

There are several factors involved in the development of a messiah. They are: weak institutions, lack of confidence in traditional politicians, hope, media attention, leadership

⁸ City of Hope.

⁹ A little ray of hope.

¹⁰ National Regeneration Movement.

¹¹ Brown skinned virgin.

of an individual, and ambiguous proposals that appear to meet popular demands. It is possible to see some of the factors are present in most social movements, i.e., weak institutions, lack of confidence in the traditional politicians, and media attention. However, hope, inspired through ambiguous proposals is unique to a messiah. People need the combination of a charismatic leader and people that want/need to believe that a person, the messiah, will save them from an oppressive and invasive power as the Romans were for the Jews and the PRI and PAN, both political parties represented as the enemy, for they are pushing a neoliberal agenda that, if accomplished, will bring more pain and suffering to the people.

López Obrador had a long way to go to become the messiah he is now. His discontent with neoliberalism started in the late 70's when oil was found in Tabasco, the state where he was born and where he started his political career. With the oil boom, fishermen and small farmers left the rural side and went to look for the well-paid jobs in PEMEX, the state owned company that runs the oil industry in México. Things went good for some time, but several factors ended up that state of well-being. The first one was Salvador Neme Castillo's corrupt and inefficient administration, the federal government cut in oil revenues to the state, PEMEX moving to Campeche, and the increasing free trade with the United States. Tabasco was in no position to face all these challenges and economic inequalities increased. López Obrador was then the leader, by using the strategies discussed above, that people wanted. As their conditions of economic inequality, violence, unemployment, etc., also spread in the rest of the country, especially in the south, López Obrador became a national messiah.

López Obrador went back to Tabasco from UNAM, the national university, only to find a state with more economic inequalities than there was when he first left for México City. In mid-70's Tabasco "pockets of poverty coexisted with areas of development in the Región de la Chontala. Nacajua, one the poorest areas in the region, is home to the Chontal Indians with whom López Obrador worked as state coordinator of the National Indigenous Institute (INI)" (Grayson, 2007, p. 34). This position allowed López Obrador to see first-hand the poor condition people lived in and became even more politically involved. Even when he was aware of the corruption in PRI, he decided to join it, so he could make a chance from the inside.

Being part of the PRI, his attitude of service, and imagination gained him the position of the state head of the INI, and in consequence he also assumed the state directorship of the General Coordination of the National Plan for Marginal Groups and Depressed Zones (Coplamar). In this position López Obrador showed an unusual attitude of service and solidarity with the poor by living in a *choza* in Nacajua, arranging resources and credits for the indigenous and by refusing to attend the glamorous parties organized by other members of the government, as Gustavo Rosario Torres, the Conasupo administrator.

López Obrador's messianic commitment to the poor and his ideology was manifested during his marriage to Rocío Beltrán Medina living in poor conditions and using the little resources they had to help other people. The most extreme indication of his faith and dedication to his project came when he was so absorbed in his work that he did not notice how sick his wife was and never took her to a specialist.

Enrique González Pedrero invited him to play a key role in the 1982 gubernatorial campaign and named him the head of the PRI in Tabasco due to his ability to communicate

with people. When in charge, he followed the Miguel de la Madrid slogan of moral renovation. This action reflected his idea that the PRI was a union of the revolutionary forces and was to help the poor. In consequence, he wanted to remove the cacique structure and place the elites at the bottom, file and rank members of the party at the top, and at the same time he pushed for a socialist agenda in the state. This socialist agenda took him to renounce, after only a day in the office, to the State Government Chief Administrative Office. Many of his close friends followed him in this decision and also renounced their position in solidarity with him; an action that left the state PRI with only one staff member.

After the political break up with González Pedrero, López Obrador went back to México City where he continued his mission of convincing old members of PRI of getting closer to the people. He worked for the National Institute for the Customer (INCO) where he learned more administration skills and made contact with other people from PRI and other political parties that shared his vision of the future for México. It was also at this time that he developed his discontent from neoliberalism as technocrats, in the face of Salinas de Gortari raised to power.

Cuahtémoc Cárdenas fully disappointed of the direction the PRI took , and with all hopes of reforming it from the inside, founded the National Democratic Front (FDN) on January 12, 1998. López Obrador was the candidate in the 1998 Tabasco governor elections. Despite his enthusiasm he lost the election to Neme, the PRI's candidate, who used dirty tricks to win the elections. López Obrador responded by strengthening the PRD structures and creating a people's parallel government, a "parallel government that mirrored practices of the corporatists PRI" (p. 70). He also used a tactic of sit ins and

blockages to drive money to the poor. When it was suggested to him that a team of experts was to evaluate the damage that PEMEX had done to Chiapas he refused, for “if we resolve all their problems, ‘how will we recruit people for marches and blockades’?” (p. 73). This last phase reveals what seems to be López Obrador’s strategy: help the poor, but not to the point where they do not need you anymore. After all, what is a messiah without followers?

Chapter II Process to Become a Social Activist

Adverse social and economic conditions in Ciudad Juárez reached their peak in the years from 2008-2011. The violent situation came to an extreme where people even left the city looking for a safer place to live. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center and the Norwegian Refugee Council, “Within 2007-2011, 135,000 people left the city” (2011). The question is then: Why is it that even when these conditions affected a vast majority of, if not all, people, only a few chose social activism as a useful response? One answer is that some of them trusted the institutions to fix the problems and remained politically inactive. Some others, as I mentioned before, left the city looking for a place where they could find better conditions. Others did not trust the government institutions and did not expect the solution to come from it, yet they remained passive with an attitude of resignation and a negation to participate in any community efforts to improve the conditions of the city. They thought that it was not possible to cause a social change. There is a last group of people, the one I focus my attention on: core social activists. They believe that another world, through social change, is possible and they actively pursue this goal. This poses another question: Why is it that a person in Juárez decides to get involved in social activism? In the following section, I answer this question through the analysis of the process that brings a person to become a core activist.

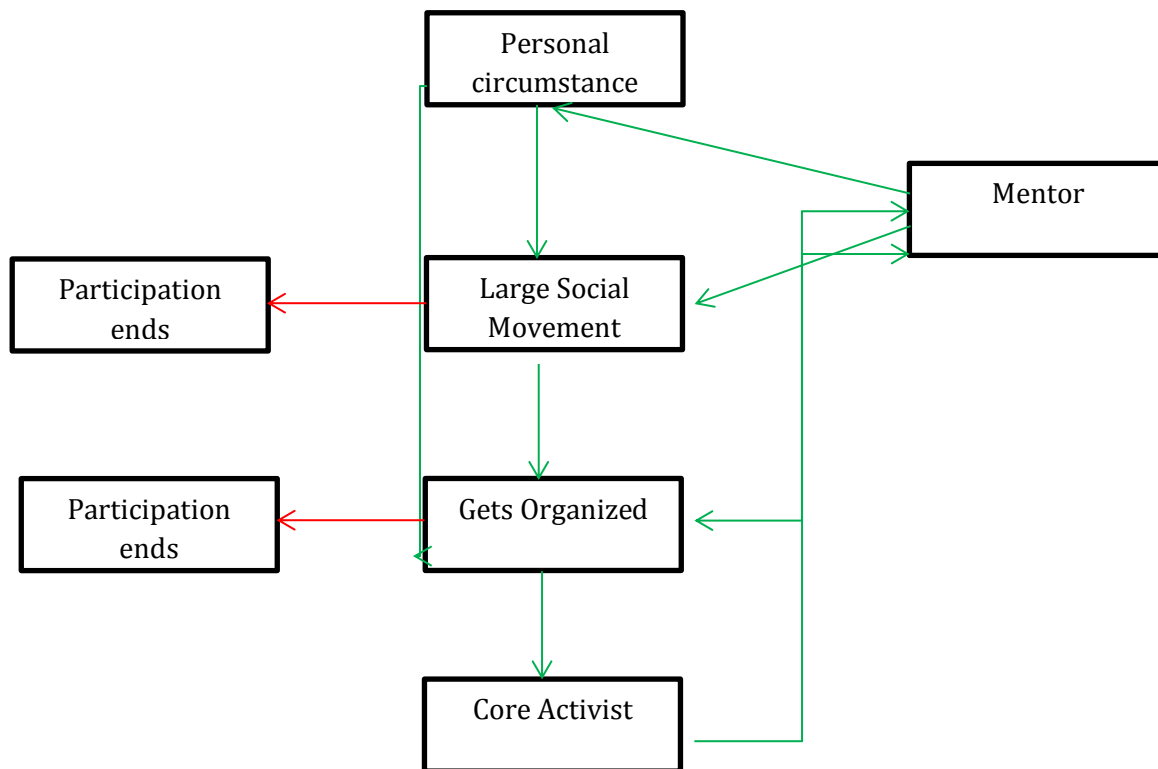


Figure 1 Process to Become a Core Activist

2.1. – Mentor.–The first factor appears at an early age when a person may not even have any sort of political will. This factor consists of having a person who at a young age shows a potential core activist that there are alternatives to the status quo. This person can come in the form of a mentor, parents, family members, and quite often in the form of a teacher. This early influence usually comes in an early age but becomes relevant at adolescence. It is important to note that this factor is present in all the activists interviewed regardless of their family antecedents. This is to say, even people that had no social capital in the sense of coming from a family with access to cultural events, books, trips, or elite schools, still gained access to alternative information; as Doctor¹² said: “My family was poor, there were no books at my house, but my elementary teacher let me borrow his

¹² Doctor is being used as a pseudonym, not as an academic title.

books and talked to me about a more just world”¹³ (Diaz, personal communication, February 07, 2012). This notion that another world is possible is communicated to them through books, conversations, pieces of advice, and in the case of social activists whose parents are already social activists, through direct participation in political protests, organization meetings, assemblies, training camps, etc.

To elaborate on the importance of the mentor and how they have life-long influence in future social activists, I present the example of habit creation; specifically ‘reading’ and how it provides core activists with a vital skill. In México, “the average number of books read per year per person is 0.5 books a year” (Publishing Perspectives, 2009), however, as my research shows, social activists were raised in an environment where they read on a regular basis. As a consequence, their average book read is higher than the national average. I consider that this is an important factor in the building of an alternative vision of society as average people obtain most of their information through mainstream media. As a consequence, they have a tendency to believe what the government wants them to believe. They are less likely, then, to rebel against the status quo. On the contrary, social activists read at least two different newspapers, magazine articles, and several books; i.e. Bernie, a member of *Grupo de Articulación Justicia en Juárez*¹⁴ reads eight newspapers before he leaves his home for work.

This reading habit will later become crucial for their involvement and permanence in social activism. Most social activists are well educated in an academic sense, measured by the degrees they hold, but also in the social, political, cultural, and economic events that

¹³ Mi familia era pobre, no teníamos libros, pero mi maestro de primaria me prestaba los suyos y me platicaba de un mundo más justo.

¹⁴ Justice in Juárez Articulation Group

affect the world and the city. This education helps them to make a deeper analysis of the political environment and conceive that a political change is possible. Also, the extended vocabulary and knowledge they gain by reading opens the possibility for them to lead a social movement. Even though the notion that it is possible to improve adverse social conditions is in their minds, it needs to be fed by the following factors.

2.2. - Personal Circumstance. - It is often the case that an event in the private life of a person prompts their participation in social activism. This personal circumstance can be what they consider to be an unfair arrest or intimidation as in the case of Ernesto where he got involved:

[When they came to arrest me under false accusations] seeing the police closing the streets, to see the power that these people have, right? They are inside the government, to how many people haven't they done this? I mean, I felt it, how many people have they killed, [and then have used as] scapegoats, these bastards are bad people. [Later] Marcos came with the Other Campaign and walked here and I got filled with emotion, right? The struggle of the north with the south, then Calderón came with its militarization; I think it started in 2007 and several citizens we took to the streets.¹⁵(Díaz, personal communication, March 23, 2012)

¹⁵ al ver la patrulla que estaba cerrando las calles, al ver el poder que tienen estas personas, ¿no? Están adentro del gobierno, a cuántas personas no le han hecho esto, o sea me caló, cuántas personas no han matado, chivos expiatorios, son malas gentes estos cabrones. Vino Marcos con *La Otra Campaña* y también anduve ahí y sí me llenó de emoción, ¿no? La lucha del Norte con la del Sur, luego vino Calderón con su militarización, creo en el 2007 y pues varios ciudadanos empezamos a salir a las calles.

This process can also start because the killing or disappearances of somebody close to the core activists. The person affected is not necessarily a family member; it can also be a close friend, a student, or even a neighbor. In Marisela Ortiz's words:

In 2001, an event changed my life and my family's life, it was the disappearance and later murder of one of my students; she had been my student for three years while she was attending high school, her name was Lili Alejandra Garcia Andrade¹⁶ (Diaz, personal communication, March 21, 2012).

The direct suffering or the witnessing of these cases awakens the sense of solidarity that a core activist already has in mind. As Marisela Ortiz said, "In memory of those who have been killed, I have to keep fighting, they are not collateral damage, they have a name and surname"¹⁷ (Diaz, personal communication, March 21, 2012)

To add more evidence to this point, it can be pointed out that the number of participants rose after some significant events that impacted the society in Juárez. To mention one, after José Darío Álvarez Orrantia was shot by the federal police in front of the University of Juárez while he participated in a protest against the militarization of the city, a group of students took to the streets of the University of Juárez and demanded the end of militarization in Juárez. Also, despite the fear of being attacked again, they called for the "If they shoot one, they shoot all" march¹⁸ in November 2, 2010. Approximately 3,000 people

¹⁶ En 2001 un hecho cambió radicalmente mi vida y la de mi familia , que fue la desaparición y posterior asesinato de una estudiante que había sido mi alumna durante tres años en la secundaria, su nombre fue Lili Alejandra García Andrade

¹⁷ En memoria de los que han sido asesinados, hay que seguir luchando, no son daños colaterales, tenían nombre, apellido.

¹⁸ Si nos dan a uno nos dan a todos. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67Lkbc61SWY>

participated in this march. They shouted slogans like “Juárez is not barracks, take the military out” “We want schools, we want work, we want hospitals, we do not want the military” and “People listen, this is also your fight” as well as “Darío lives, the fight is on” and “You said no, but we are back on the streets.”¹⁹ These changings reflected the shared idea that the military was causing more problems than they solved, as well as their call to other people to join the *movimiento* despite the risks it implied. This type of incident, where repression and suffering are so clear that even non-activists can see it, brings people together. People feel related to the suffering, for they have also experienced it in the hands of criminals or law enforcement agents, as most people in Juárez suffered or witnessed an act of violence during those years.

The increase of violence in Juárez that started in 2007 and climaxed in 2010 affected most Juárez inhabitants. During this time there was virtually no person that had not directly suffered an act of violence. Some people blamed the violence on a war between drug cartels for the control of Juárez and they expected that once there was a winner, violence would stop. Other people wanted the government to take control of the situation, so the violence would stop; social activists were not exception to the rule. As William said These different diagnoses caused different reactions “the medical doctors marched demanding peace, victims demanded justice, other movements [marched] against

¹⁹ Juárez no es cuartel, fuera ejército de él. // Queremos escuelas, queremos trabajos, queremos hospitales, no queremos militares. // Pueblo escucha, también esta es tu lucha. // Darío vive, la lucha sigue. // No, que no, sí que sí, ya volvimos a salir.

militarization, ...the middle class did not trust [the movements] against the militarization”²⁰ (Diaz, personal communication, July 23, 2012).

A large segment of my interviewees agreed that the vast military presence in Juárez had come to aggravate the already violent situation, which caused the killing and disappearance of more people, to an average of eight murders a day during 2010 (Manning, 2011). In consequence, they demanded the withdrawal of the use of military force in Juárez. This position and being outspoken caused the government to brutally repress them, which triggered a strong feeling of solidarity among them, for every time they were repressed more people would join the movement. It is important to note that at the beginning of the militarization process, most people, including other social organizations, did not agree with the social activists that argued that the military was at least partially responsible for the increase in the levels of violence in the city. Nevertheless, as more people were directly affected by the violence and noticed that the military presence had increased the violence, some of them started to share the belief that in order to at least diminish the violence it was necessary for the militarization process to stop and gradually or immediately, depending on how strongly they felt about it. As a consequence, a larger number of people joined the different social organizations that were demanding the federal government to withdraw the military and federal police presence in the city.

2.3. - Large Social Movement. -In addition to the personal circumstances and the disappointment of the authorities’ performance, a vital element that facilitates her introduction into activism is: a large, already existing social movement. As literature shows,

²⁰ Los médicos marchaban por la paz, las víctimas por la justicia, otro movimiento contra la militarización... la paz, [la] clase media que desconfiaba [de movimientos] en contra de movimiento contra la militarización.

and I have established through this text, a person is more likely to become a social activist if that person believes that another world is possible, this is to say if she believes that her efforts will actually have an impact on the social and economic conditions in the city.

An advantage of a large social movement is that it provides an activist with protection, a safe place to talk to people with similar interests, and reinforcement to her idea that the fight is worth it and possible to win. This is to say, a large social movement that has achieved some tangible results shows a social activist that a change is possible. Case in point; Zapatism is one the most important movements, and directly influenced core activists who now are in their 30's and 40's. Some of them participated in Zapatista support networks to bring national and international resources given in solidarity with the movement in the Selva Lacandona. Sometimes, as in the case of Kiko, where his parents were deeply involved with the Zapatista Army, they are sent to summer training camps in the Zapatista communities where they help to build schools, farms, interact with the indigenous community, and learn about the Zapatista ideology. As it is known, Zapatism can be traced back to participants of the student protests in México in 1968 and the Guerra Sucia in 1971. As a consequence, it is possible to see how this movement, as other large movements, has a large influence on today's activism.

Younger activists are also influenced by Zapatism, but during their shorter life they have been part of other movements. In the case of Juárez, the femicides, the violence, and the strong military presence created several social movements to fight back against those elements. Some of these movements are *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa (2001)*, *El Frente*

*Plural Ciudadano*²¹ (FPC)(2010), *Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura*²² (2001), *Lomas del Poleo* (2006), and more recently the student's movement *#Yo Soy 132* (2012) among a large number of social organizations founded in Juárez. It is important to note that all of these movements were created after an extreme event which brought people to the streets. In the case of the *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa*, it was the murder of Lilia Alejandra García Andrade; The FPC was created after the killing of sixteen students in a high school student's party in the Villas de Salvárcar neighborhood. *Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura* was born out of a concern for how the city was being ruled. *Lomas del Poleo* was organized to defend the inhabitants of the settlement from being displaced, and *#Yo Soy 132J*, was created as a response to what was perceived to be unfair presidential elections.

When a social movement is able to deliver and/or match its message to the general audience, its numbers will increase. When that is the case, a larger number of people feel that the relation between effort and results is more adequate than when they have to start a movement from scratch. Since the meetings are open and actually rely on the number of attendants, it is easier for newcomers to find people that share the same interests. Large social movements are then a place where people can socialize without any major risks. A good number of people leave the social movement once it is no longer popular and loses momentum, while others will stay involved in social activism. The ones that stay join or create a social organization; they get organized.

It can be the case that a social organization disappoints a person and in consequence decides to not get involved. As Charles said:

²¹ Citizens Plural Front.

²² Pro-Culture Pact Movement.

I did not like the first experience, [in social activism] to be very honest, to me; people were very chaotic, disorganized; now many of them are my comrades. I got the bad impression that they could not even agree on when would be the next meeting, I had a bad taste and it lasted several years before got involved in activism again²³(Diaz, personal communication, July 27, 2012).

2.4. –Get organized.- As people get together and socialize under the umbrella of a large social movement they get to know each other. Most of the time they come in groups of friends where they are already part of an informal network and meet with other people with similar interests reinforcing in this way their belief on the validity and usefulness of the movement. In a few occasions there is the case that a person who had no previous interest in social change and therefore does not have connection with anybody related or interested in social movements attends a meeting by herself, but this is a rare case. If people whom attend a meeting, an assembly, a protest, or some other sort of social activism feel comfortable, welcomed, and with the possibility of contributing to cause a social change it is more likely they will stay and get organized.

For the most part, at first, these organizations function around the friend nucleus and act in consequence. Usually this stage of social activism occurs in an early age of the activists, when they are teenagers or early twenties. It is not rare to see that some of them join the activism scene for a pure sense of belonging, just like a person joins a sports team, or a juvenile group. Some others do it out of a sense of ethical duty. However, at this

²³ La primera experiencia no me gustó, para serte muy honesto se me hacía gente muy caótica, desorganizada, ahora muchos de ellos son mis compas, de esa mala impresión de que ni siquiera se podían poner de acuerdo de cuando iba a ser la siguiente reunión, tuve un mal sabor de boca y duré varios años antes de volverme a incorporar.

moment there is not a reliable way to tell who will stay involved in activism, for they all work together with the same enthusiasm.

It is important to notice that activists get to know each other not only during organized meetings, but also in other places such as schools and social events not necessarily related to social activism. It is also during these occasions where they start talking in an informal and relaxed environment of ways of getting organized to promote social change. The reader must keep in mind that the purpose of this work is to study social movements and core activists that are not necessarily responding to a specific problem, but rather core activists that are looking for a deep social change; therefore, they may not have a sense of urgency to get quickly organized as somebody who has a family member detained would do.

There are different ways people get to organizations. The first one is while attending a large social movement event, they get invited to participate in an organization that already exists or as in the case of Redes Universitarias, a national organization that groups students of universities all around the country and is part of MORENA a social organization founded by Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the leftist presidential candidate in the elections of 2006 and 2012, students are invited to create Redes Universitarias chapters in Juárez. These invitations by a larger group reinforce the sense of belonging and achievement in the new activist and make her develop a stronger sense of commitment.

Other times they create an organization from scratch. These kinds of organizations are usually made up by a group of friends who already spend time together and have a common interest such as high tuition fees, the desire for a sports facility, etc. They are

unstable in this first stage, for their permanence is based more on personal loyalties to the other members of the group than to the social cause. As a consequence of these personal loyalties they are susceptible to leave social activism due to internal conflicts that are not related to the social cause. In fact, it is often the case that these groups break because they do not get along in a personal way or because their personal circumstance has been solved; as Simone said: “I just want to find my daughter and forget about this nightmare, as soon as I find her, I am gone, and I cannot take it anymore”²⁴ (Diaz, personal communication, March 8, 2012). Again, in these cases they participate in social activism and valuable participants in the movement, but due to the heavy pressure that comes with activism, they leave as soon as their problem is solved or they lose all hope of the problem being solved.

Contrary to the people that leave when the issue, for good or for bad, is finished, a core activist remains involved long after the immediate feelings of courage, indignity, and/or sorrow has gone. People, who are heavily interested in social change, stay and make contact with other organizations, creating larger networks. It is possible to see this process in Julio’s words:

I started in the leftist university committee, it was a committee of students who had a number of concerns about the high fees in UACJ [University of Juárez], and so we did activism, mmm, I first met the group, it was a group of young people that were organized and I was with another group which had the same concerns, and we joined them, we started to participate in that committee. Once there we [I] began to understand the mechanisms of discussion, the

²⁴ Sólo quiero encontrar a mi hija y olvidarme de esta pesadilla. En cuanto la encuentre me voy, me voy, ya no puedo más.

assembly method, we discussed other types of problems. For example we started discussing what was going on with the state enterprises, why they were being privatized, why education in the country was being privatized too, [we also talked about] the looting that there was in PEMEX, and all those discussions took us to the conclusion that they were just different aspects of the same problem, to include them in a roll, that it was a wider systematic problem.... All problems have a common axis, which I later realized; it was capitalism.²⁵ (Diaz, personal communication, March 13, 2012)

As I said before, core activists stay involved in social activism even after the personal circumstance that led them to become active has reached its limits. They continue to do so because their commitment to social change is larger than their own state of affairs and they believe that their actions can bring a new social order. As a consequence, once one specific problem has been solved or is in the process of being solved they continue working on another issue, if they consider that it is also affecting the city. This can be seen in how core social activists that have been asking for the demilitarization of the city, now participate in movements that ask for the overturning of the presidential election and/or for more cultural activity in the city among other causes. It is important to notice that some other activists, such as the ones working on femicides, have stayed working on the same

²⁵ Yo inicié en un comité universitario de izquierda, que era un comité de estudiantes que teníamos una serie de inquietudes por las altas cuotas en la UACJ, entonces hicimos activismo por eso, eh primeramente conocí el grupo que era un grupo de chavos que se organizaban y yo estaba con otros chavos que tenían esas mismas inquietudes, y nos unimos, nos sumamos a participar en ese comité, ahí se empezó a conocer los mecanismos de discusión, los métodos asamblearios, discutíamos otros tipos de problemas, por ejemplo empezamos a discutir qué rollo con las empresas estatales, por qué se estaba privatizando la cuestión de la educación en el país, el saqueo que había en PEMEX, y todas esas discusiones nos fueron planteando que ... englobarlas en un rollo más amplio que era una problemática epistémica.... Todos los problemas tienen un eje común, lo que posteriormente comprendería que es el capitalismo.

issue for more than a decade now, because, unfortunately, that problem has not been solved.

This extreme commitment to social activism helps them to support the adverse conditions they are subjected to; these conditions rank from indifference from the people to repression and in some unfortunate cases even to their murder. However, due to their commitment to the movement and their conviction that a change is possible and is coming, they persist in their efforts. This is not to say that core activists are only committed to an abstract ideal. In fact, one of the reasons they remain active despite the adverse circumstances is their sense of personal responsibility towards different victims of oppression they meet during their participation in social activism. Levinas's concept of the Other, as an abstract idea, and the other, as a specific person-face, is useful to understand this notion. In Levinas's philosophy, the Other represents the abstract notion of an impersonal other, while the other is the face of a person calling the I to meet his duty towards him. This is to say that even when a core activist is motivated by the idea of helping other people, this desire takes the form of a concrete effort when it is directed towards, and inspired by, a specific person or persons.

Chapter III Core Activists Description

The political and economic circumstances in Juárez have created the conditions that call for the development of several social movements that respond in different ways to the situation. There are different kinds of people that join social movements as they obey different motivations and follow different forms of struggle. As mentioned before, I focus on core-activists whose main goal is to force a larger positive social change beyond what may directly affect them. Core-activists accommodate their life to the demands of social activism. Their commitment to the movement goes beyond their mere direct participation on organizing or attending events, it goes to being aware of the country, state, and city's political life, so they can have a sound participation that allows them to work on promoting social change.

My research shows this group is approximately a group of sixty people composed by fairly equal proportions of men and women with ages that go from late twenties to late fifties. It is important to note that the age rank of my interviewees is not consistent with usual social movement's population where most participants are young people. The reason is that I focus this study on people that have made of social activism a life time commitment; this is to say people that have already gone through their 'rebellious years' and are now committed to a larger project. As a consequence, they are older than new participants in social activism. It is also important to notice that social organizations that work on femicides are an exception to the fairly equal gender distribution. In this case, for obvious reasons, most of them are women. Now, I proceed to a more concrete analysis of core activist.

3.1.- Profile.-

I now will analyze the profile of a core activist

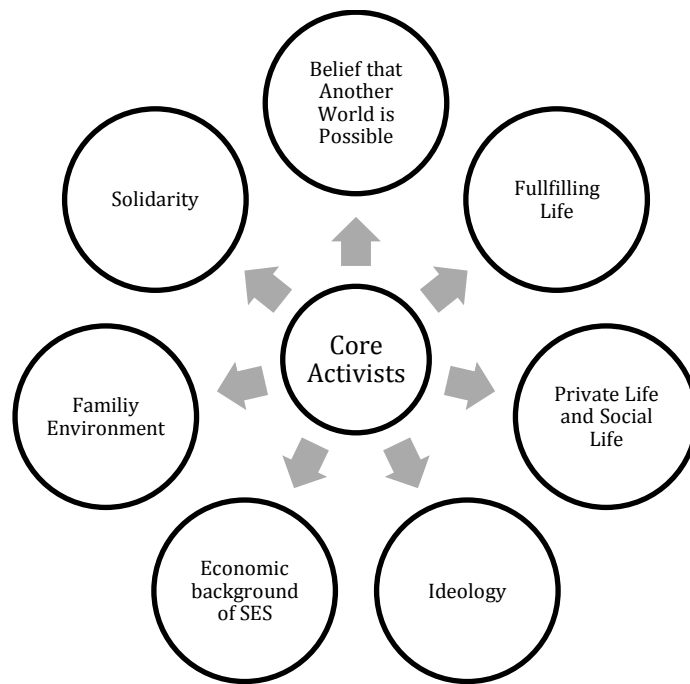


Figure 2 Core Activists' Profile

3.1.1. – Ideology. - Event though there are some rightists social organizations, a good number of social activists have a leftist political ideology. However, there are important differences within this leftist ideology. Some of them claim and/or are perceived to be Zapatistas, Marxists, Trotskyists, Neo- Zapatistas, and anarchists. There are also Sicilianos, a group that is identified with Javier Sicilia the moral leader of the Movement for Peace and Justice with Dignity²⁶ (MPJD). Most of them declare to be politically involved, but not to be affiliated to any political party. These different ideologies inform the way social activists act on the movement and are both a source of union and division among them, for their reading of the circumstances in Juárez makes them act in different ways. Activists with a strong ideology are more reluctant to negotiate and work with other sectors of the

²⁶ Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad.

movement; i.e. social organizations with a strong commitment to an open decision making method, such as assemblies, are reluctant to work with activists used to working in closed groups and vice versa. This is so because in the specific situation of Juarez, activists that prefer to work in open groups are committed to direct democracy, while activist that prefer to work in closed groups are more inclined to get things done in the most efficient way.

Another important consequence of ideology is how far people think it is necessary to go and /or are willing to go. Some activists think that the change needs to be fought in small battles, step by step working to some degree with the system. Others want to overthrow the state and argue for the need of a revolution. This difference on which way to go, makes them choose different paths.

3.1.2. - Economic Background of SES. –Social activists come from different soci-economic backgrounds. Some of them, especially the youngest ones, struggle to stay out of poverty. However, living in a precarious economic situation does not prevent them from being involved in social movements. On the contrary, this first-hand experience of the consequences of an unfair social and economic system encourages them to challenge it. Most of them take less time-consuming jobs, so they are able to spend a larger amount of time in social activism. They take free-lance jobs, live with their families, teach, travel to different cities where they are supported by the solidarity of the social activists community, and a few have made social activism a paying career in government positions or in *Asociaciones civiles*. Undoubtedly, the kind of job they get depends on their age, education level, and particular skills they have.

There is also an important segment of activists that even though they cannot be called upper class, live in a more comfortable situation where they have access to more resources. They work in jobs such as college professors, medical doctors, small business owners, or managers. In fact, college professors are a good portion of the social activist total number. While teaching their classes they show the love and solidarity towards other people, as Doctor, who is a college professor, held “as Freire said ‘teaching is an act of love’ I try my best to respect my students’ ideas and not to attack their ideas” (Diaz, personal communication, February 7, 2012). In fact, members of the academia have become the main liaison between people with a higher economic status and people with less economic resources. As my research shows, this difference in the access to resources plays an important role when it comes to making decisions about what is the best strategy to follow to force a positive social change; i.e. willingness to work with the authorities, make alliances with businessmen, the use of protests, and the form of organizing meetings, among others.

This difference in professional lives makes them face the challenges in different ways. On one side, there are activists, especially the young ones that have fewer resources, with a tendency to organize protests and marches and are not as willing to negotiate with the government institutions. On the other side, there are activists that, due to their positions, have a larger access to resources but have major time limitations and who prefer to work towards a specific goal. They are also more willing to work with the government and with the business class.

It is important to notice that even though, according to Bernie, “the attack against the militarization radicalized the positions, because there were people that supported the idea of militarization”²⁷ (Diaz, personal communication, August 13, 2012] some members of groups - as medical doctors, lawyers, managers, business owners- that usually would not agree on using strong reactive collective actions became more involved as violence got to them and they perceived that the government was not doing enough to help them. Before this perception, they trusted the institutions and relied on them to solve, or at least alleviate the problem. When they saw this was not the case they also took to the streets and used other strategies such as pressuring the government to stop the violence.

3.1.3. - Belief that another world is Possible. - As I explained before, the group of activists that I am studying is not people that become politically active to solve a specific problem, but I am looking at people who are committed to changing the social system for one they consider to be more just. This, of course, is a long term project that can only be sustained if it is fed with the idea that a better social order is possible. As mentioned before, social activists spend a considerable amount of time in the company of other activists with whom they share the belief that another world is possible. This shared time, as well as the success of the activities they organize together, reinforces this belief and keeps them working in favor of social change. This belief is supported by the existence of a major social movement and reinforced through social interactions with other activists and through the support of some segments of the population. As far as this belief in combination with the belief that

²⁷ El ataque contra la militarización radicaliza las posiciones, pues había gente que apoyaba la idea de la militarización.

the activist's efforts contribute to make this change possible exists, it is more likely that a social activist will remain involved in the *movimiento*.

3.1.4.-Fulfilling Life.-An important factor for core activists to take all the risks and economic limitations that comes with honest social activism is their ability not only to survive but to have a fulfilling life. As Ana Laura said in a humorous way “thanks to this art bullshit, I have a richer life, I have been able to do things that otherwise I would not have been able to do, I had dinner with [Elena] Poniatowska, [Elba Esther] Gordillo, among others; I have travelled, but more importantly, I see how the children are looking forward to come to the library on Sundays”²⁸ (Diaz, personal communication, June 31, 2012). In other words, in contrast to the economical advance that most people pursue in life, social activists find self-actualization in helping other people and the joy that comes with social interaction with other members of the social activism, cultural, social, and political scenes. Continuing with Ana Laura, she has plenty of job offers, yet she decided to reject all of them, but one position in the Chihuahua Cultural Institute (ICHICULT)²⁹, so she could spend her time developing their collective art's project: *Biblioteca Ma'Jauna* with the other two core members of *Palabras de Arena*, their feminist collective. This library opens every Sunday at 11:00 A.M. for the children of *colonia Virreyes*, a dangerous and poor neighborhood in Juárez. The library is part of the house where she lives, which is in poor condition. However, instead of dedicating her efforts to better her living conditions; she uses her talents and skills to improve the library; i.e., Ana Laura has a project for a better library to

²⁸ Gracias a mi trabajo en estas mamadas del arte, tengo una vida más plena. He hecho cosas que de otra manera no pudiera haber hecho, he cenado con Poniatowska, Gordillo entre otros, he viajado, pero más importante, veo cómo los niños esperan cada domingo para venir a la biblioteca.

²⁹ Instituto Chihuahuense de la Cultura.

the cost of \$40, 000 USD. She has already collected \$20,000 from different sources. She was able to do that, thanks to her well recognized trajectory that has gained her an excellent reputation.

3.1.5.-Private Life and Social Activism.-There is a small but very important difference between a social activist's private life and their social activism. As Charles said:

[To me]The person and the profession are the same, and that makes me get involved in these issues, because even if I wanted to be content with my academic work and consultant and just give numbers... since I share the idea that knowledge must be spread and not be kept with the elites, I open this extension of my profession to issues that could be considered activism, but they are part of the same. ³⁰ (Diaz, personal communication, July 27, 2012)

Charles continues:

It is hard to live as an activist all the time, it is quite exhausting, and then if you do not have the resources to cover your expenses, you starve to death... I also have to work .Besides I am not sure to what point it is healthy not to keep a private life, right? To completely give up your life, as kids did it in the 70's. They enrolled in the guerrilla that is praiseworthy. They give up their lives, but then you think: was that the only way? Maybe [now] they could be alive

³⁰ La persona y el profesionista son la misma cosa, y eso hace que me involucre en estas cosas por que aunque pudiera conformarme con mi trabajo académico y especialista y decir simplemente cifras... como comparto la idea de que el conocimiento se debe divulgar y no quedarse en las grandes capas, abro ésta, otra extensión de mi profesión hacia cuestiones que se consideran activismo, pero para mí es parte de lo mismo.

and contributing. Yes [activism] is a way of life, but also according to your possibilities.³¹ (Diaz, personal communication, 2012)

It is important to notice that the capability to gaining an identity from places other than social activism allows them to focus on the causes they are fighting for, instead of bringing their personal conflicts to the movement. This increases their possibility of creating a successful social movement, for people that do not rely completely on activism to gain respect, friends, a position, an identity, are more likely to make decisions thinking on what is best for the *movimiento* not for them.

However, interviews show that in order for core activists to support the pressures that come with social activism, they need to keep a private space outside of social activism. This place allows them to take some distance and get some well needed breaks from activism in order to keep some mental stability. As Chabela told me “Sometimes I get depressed; you need to be in constant therapy. This is not going to change, I got too involved in my work, and there must be negotiation otherwise, there is nothing”³² (Diaz, personal communication, June 31, 2012). If social activists do not take these breaks, their possibilities to get tired of activism increase exponentially, and they will abandon or considerably diminish their involvement in social activism.

³¹ Es muy difícil vivir como activista todo el tiempo, eso es muy desgastante, y luego si no tienes los medios económicos para subsanar tu vida cotidiana, te mueres de hambre, me refiero a eso, también tengo que trabajar y porque también no sé hasta qué punto sea sano no tener también tu vida particular ¿no? Entregarte tu vida totalmente al movimiento como hicieron muchos chavos en los ‘70’s que se metieron a la guerrilla, que es muy loable, pero que dieron su vida, pero y luego te pones a pensar: ¿no había otra manera? A lo mejor todavía podrían estar vivos y contribuir. Sí es una forma de vida, pero también de acuerdo a tus posibilidades.

³² En algunas ocasiones me deprimó. Esto no va a cambiar, me involucro demasiado en mi trabajo, debe de haber una negociación, de otra manera no hay nada.

3.1.6.-Family Environment.-Family pressure to leave social activism exists, but it is not a detrimental factor. On the contrary, their families are aware of the risks they are taking and even when they worry and take some cautions, for the most part, family members support their activism. There are different reasons for this support. In some cases they come from a family tradition of social activism. Their parents were social activists, so they grew up used to this danger. In some other cases, while in early stages of their involvement in social movements they met their spouses as they were part of the social activism scene. Their spouses, then, know the risks that come with social activism. This does not mean that families are not afraid, they are, but they overcome this fear. In this respect William said:

“My family worries, especially when I publicly say things they consider very strong words; in general they support me, but sometimes they get mad at me. It depends on what is happening in the city. There were hard times in the city [for social activists] when they killed Marisela Escobedo, members of the Reyes family, Susana Chávez, etc...³³, in those times, they were more worried, but I cannot say that they do not support me.”³⁴ (Díaz, personal communication, July 23, 2012)

³³ In 2010, four members of the Reyes Salazar family, a life-long social activist family, were killed, arguably because they were denouncing human rights abuses by the military. They were declared missing. After there was local, national and international political pressure, state police found the bodies a few yards away from a military post.

Marisela Escobedo was shot to death in downtown Chihuahua, México in front of the city hall around 7:00 P.M. The place where she was killed is surrounded by surveillance cameras and a strong police presence, yet nobody stopped the murderer. She had several disruptive tactics to pressure the legal system to make justice for her daughter Ruby who had been murdered and the murderer had been set free by a court of law.

Susana Chávez was a poet and activist that were murdered with extreme cruelty. Social activists say she was murdered because of her social activism while the police declared it a crime of passion.

³⁴ Mi familia se preocupa, especialmente cuando públicamente digo cosas que ellos consideran fuertes, en general me apoyan, pero a veces me regañan. Depende de qué está pasando en la ciudad. Hubo momentos



Figure 3 Repression to Los Indignados. Photograph: La Unika. Nov 01, 2012



Figure 4 Social Activists Setting a Camp to Pressure the Government to Release *Los Indignados*. Photograph: La Unika. Nov 01, 2012

muy fuertes en la ciudad, cuando mataron a Marisela Escobedo, miembros de la familia Reyes, Susana Chávez, etc. En tiempos como éstos se preocupan más, pero no puedo decir que no me apoyan.



Figure 5 Member of *Los Indignados* Released. Photograph: La Unika. Nov 02, 2012

In other cases, young activists gain support from their families when they see the repression and abusive treatment social activists suffer. Let's take for example one of the last massive protests: a march by *Los Indignados* of Juárez on November 01, 2011. During this march sixteen people were arrested for protesting against violence in Juárez during the march and twelve people were arrested later while protesting outside the police office. They protested by sticking plastic adhesive crosses on the walls and windows of banks, McDonalds, and ATMs. These crosses represented the over 7,000 people that have been killed in Juárez as a result of the war on drugs. As I said before, two groups were brutally arrested, the first one during the march and the second one when they were protesting

outside of the police station because the police did not let them visit the detained people and there were rumors they were being physically and psychologically abused.

At one moment, a police officer said that they would allow a group of parents to see the detained, but later the acting judge denied the visit. This caused the anger and worry of the supporters and family members. They started to stick crosses on the police station as a form protest. The police then arrested a second group of people. Rose, one of the interviewees, was arrested in this second group of 12 people. She was detained when she was trying to prevent a partner from being arrested. A total of 28 people were detained for over 36 hours, the legal limit to present charges to free them. The police presented charges against them, and argued that the protesters had damaged their uniforms.³⁵

Some family members got involved in social movements when they witnessed this unfair and abusive treatment towards social activists. Arguably, the repression that young activists suffered caused this group to deactivate. When I asked Rose if she was going to protest on a later visit that President Calderón made to Juárez, she told me that she was not, she said: “it is fucked up, I do not want to end up in jail again, to be honest I am a little afraid, besides I have tests coming up at the university” ³⁶(Diaz, personal communication, April 20, 2012).

It is important to note that while *Los Indignados* were detained there were around 150-200 people protesting outside the courthouse day and night during the 36 hours that it took to set them free. They were members of all organizations that despite their ideological

³⁵ In May 2012, Los Indignados had a meeting with their lawyer where they were informed that the cost of repairing the damage had been covered with the bail and the charges had been dropped.

³⁶ Está cabrón, no quiero terminar en la cárcel otra vez, la neta sí me da un poco de miedo, además tengo exámenes en la universidad.

differences and lack of cooperation in regular circumstances, stayed there during that time. This of course is not a reaction unique to Juárez as most social movements gain support after repressive tactics are used against them, but it proves that given a strong common goal it is possible for them to work together, i.e. At this specific occasion, the *Comité Médico Ciudadano*, an organization that was in disagreement with the tactics used by *Los Indignados*, publically expressed their solidarity with the group of *Los Indignados* that was arrested.³⁷

3.1.7.-Solidarity.-These actions show the deep sense of solidarity that social activists have towards other social activists even when they may have different opinions. They know that being the visible faces of the segment of population that openly protest the current social and economic conditions makes them the target of the oppressive system. Several social activists have been assassinated or forced to leave the city in circumstances that suggest the direct involvement of the federal government or at the very least its inability to protect its citizens. It seems to me that when most people perceive their lives and possessions to be in danger, they will run away from those circumstances. Yet to the contrary, social activists grow stronger when facing threatening conditions. This has not been a one-time situation, but rather a pattern. When there is danger for one or more social activists they will unite and rise stronger.

It is possible to see this pattern by analyzing the peak years of violence in Juárez and the militarization of the city. It was during this time that several prominent social activists such as Marisela Escobedo, members of the Reyes Salazar family, “a family that

³⁷ <http://juarezdialoga.org/noticias/pronunciamiento-del-comite-medico-ciudadano-en-contra-de-la-represion-a-ls-indignads-de-ciudad-juarez/>

was hunted beyond death, when they wanted to bury the Elías and Malena brothers, they did not allow the family to bury them in the town's cemetery"³⁸ (Diaz, personal communication, 2012), and Susana Chávez were assassinated. The repression continued in 2011 when Marisela Ortiz and Norma Andrade³⁹, Cipriana Jurado⁴⁰, and surviving members of the Reyes family, among others had to leave the city fearing for their lives. Some of the social activists that left the city are asking for political asylum in the United States, others went to unknown places in México where they can be safer. Yet most of them continue with their involvement in social movements in Juárez. They just do it from another place through different strategies. It was during these sad occasions that activists got together the most and defeating fear, they took to the streets again and organized some of the most attended marches; as Julio said "to kill an activist is like throwing water to a gremlin, by trying to silence one, you get more"⁴¹ (Diaz, personal communication, March 13, 2012).

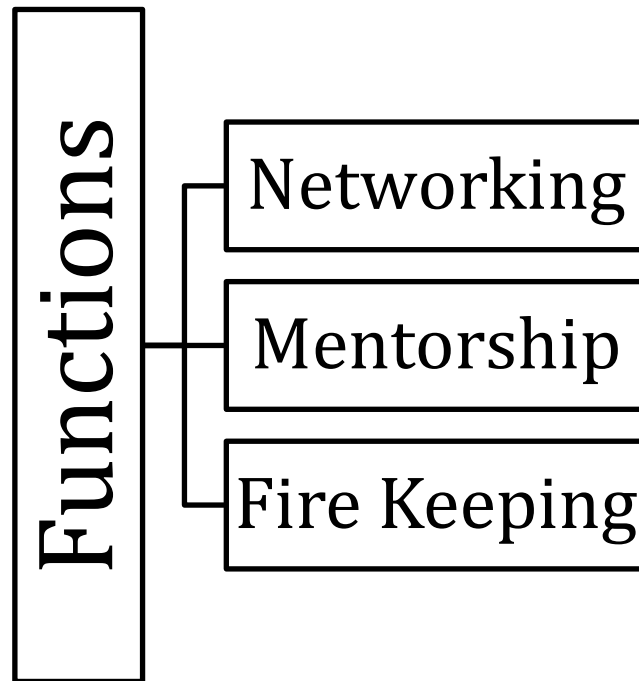
³⁸ Los Reyes Salazar, una familia que fue perseguida más allá de la muerte, cuando iban a sepultar a los hermanos, a Elías y a Malena, no permitían que se sepultaran en el cementerio del pueblo.

³⁹ They were the founders of "Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa" a social organization created to pressure government to bring femicides to an end. After receiving several death threats and an actual attempt to kill her, Norma Andrade left the city. While in another city, on February 14, there was a new attempt to kill her. Also, due to death treats Marisela left the country and is looking for political asylum.

⁴⁰ She is a social activist that denounced femicides, military abuses, and defended the family of people that had disappeared. She worked in close collaboration with Josefina Reyes. She was the first person who got political asylum under the argument that her life was in danger for death threats coming from the Mexican army.

⁴¹ Matar a un activista es como echarle agua al gremlin, queriendo acallar una voz la multiplicas

3.2.-Functions of a Core Activist



3.2.1.-Networking.-A core activist serves several important functions within a social movement. Being fully committed to a social organization and to the movement in general allows them to build powerful networks. These networks give them the possibility of learning and, also very important, to pressure México's government from the outside; i.e. as Marisela Ortiz, one of the founders of *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa* perceived that México's government reacted faster when there was external pressure, she found invaluable assistance in Amnesty International; in her words "since 2001, when we started, I looked to make contact with Amnesty International, because we needed to learn from the people that know" ⁴² (Diaz, personal communication, March 23, 2012).

⁴² Desde el 2001, que empezamos, yo busqué el contacto con Amnistía Internacional, para aprender de la gente que sabía.

Most of them use this position with the purpose of getting a movement to grow faster by having their networks and experience to the service of the movement. However, others are cautious with whom they open their networks. There are at least three main reasons for doing so. The first one is to keep their networks safe from the risk of their names being known by infiltrators. The most radical the movement, the most secrecy there is. Another reason to keep control of these networks is to keep the prestige and reputation that the core activist may have. This is to say, a core activist who has built a reputation of being trustworthy and responsible will hesitate before she recommends a new person to an organization. As a consequence, in some occasions a new member may need to prove her commitment before she is put in contact with other members of the organization and/or with other organizations. This is especially done in closed groups where they prefer to work with the same people in order to have faster results. A third reason is more personal. It is the case that sometimes core activist do not share their networks because they want to keep control of them and will stay as the leading figures of the movement with the social privileges that come with this position. Sometimes, this attitude comes in the form of a confrontation where they have an attitude of, in Sapphire's words: "Thinking that only they know the truth, and you are going to impose it, I think there is an activism that instead of adding, they call the people that attend marches [in an irregular basis]: why have you not come?" ⁴³ (Ramírez, personal communication, August 25, 2012).

On the contrary, when an activist performs her networking function well, she serves as a hinge between groups with different ideologies. Since they communicate with both

⁴³ Pensar que tú tienes la verdad y que la vas a imponer, yo creo que hay un activismo que reclama en lugar de sumar, reclama al que va: ¿por qué no habías venido?

positions, they carry messages between two groups of people who are not able or willing to directly communicate with each other. This requires a humble attitude where they are open to learn from other perspectives. As Charlie said:

Plan Estratégico is conducting studies [where] you realize that they may be in conflict with your opinions, but that is a good place for you to say: damn it, I do not have the whole truth, neither do they. Also, there you have to tie together all this knowledge, because it may change your life or you change somebody's life.⁴⁴
(Diaz, personal communication, July 27, 2012)

This function allows them to build the so needed agreements and enlarge the numbers of a social movement.

Networking also serves to protect social activists, as Marisol explained:

These actions [being in contact with international organizations] somehow protected us, because we had a commitment to human rights organizations, then it was not so simple that they could harm us without things staying quiet, we had become known in the world.⁴⁵ (Diaz, personal communication, March 21, 2012)

This is a vital survival tool for activists as the more visible they are, the higher the political cost of repressing social activist is, the higher the cost the less willing the state is to attack the social activists.

⁴⁴ Plan Estratégico está sacando estudios, te das cuenta que va a chocar con tus opiniones, pero eso es un punto más para que digas, "bueno güey, ni yo tengo toda la verdad, ni ellos la tienen". Y también hay que entablar todos esos conocimientos porque tú sabes, igual te cambian la vida a ti, igual y tú se la cambias a alguien.

⁴⁵ Estas acciones nos protegían de alguna manera porque ya había un compromiso con organizaciones de derechos humanos, entonces ya no era tan simple que nos pudieran hacer daño sin que la cosa quedara tranquila, ya nos habíamos dado a conocer en el mundo.

3.2.2.-Mentorship.-Another function of fully committed activists is that they serve as mentors to the new generations. Amid the internal factors, core activists play a vital role in the possibilities of success of a social organization because they have a heavy influence on the people that join a social organization. An example of this is when I asked Rose, a relatively new member in the social movement scene, how she gets her information, and she explained that it stems from a pair of prominent and well-known social activists. She said:

I read the newspaper, but there are issues that I understand better when one of them explains it to me. It is not that I do not get it, but since they have more experience... I mean they are older and have read more than I have, they can see the context better than I can. ⁴⁶ (Diaz, personal communication, January 26, 2012)

Due to this level of influence on faddish activists, core activists can lead an organization to become an inclusive organization where different approaches about how to fight social injustice can work together or help make it an exclusive organization where only people that think the exact same way are welcomed. As Sapphire said:

Ideologies should not be sent first, first we talk about the things that we have in common, the medical doctors, etc... because we all have suffered, sometimes the discussion starts with how to organize an event and later

⁴⁶ Yo leo el periódico, pero hay cuestiones que entiendo mejor cuando uno de ellos me lo explica. No es que yo no lo entienda, pero es que ya que tienen más experiencia... Me refiero a que son mayores y que han leído más que yo, pueden ver el contexto mejor que yo.

the discourse becomes: let's make the Bolshevik revolution by Wednesday.⁴⁷ (Ramírez, personal communication, August 25, 2012)

Depending on what activists do, they will have growing numbers in their organizations and hence a stronger position to force a positive social change. In other words, core activists play a very important role in mentoring the new coming activists and regular people who want to participate in pushing for a social change as well as making their movement appealing to more people.

3.2.3.-Fire-Keeping.-The last function is that of the fire keepers. Core activists keep a movement alive while it grows in numbers of participants and hence in political influence. This is to say that for them it is not a matter of how much support their cause may have or how popular a struggle is or the extreme conditions of repression they work under. This is the life they have chosen and they stick with it, sometimes to the ultimate consequence of being killed. This attitude keeps them working in an organization despite the low numbers of members during harsh times. This permanence of social activism makes them the natural point of reference to which people turn when there is a breaking point that gains the attention and participation of more people in the movement. They will then lead the emerging social movements. It is important to notice that I am not making the claim that they necessarily become a *caudillo*, but that due to their knowledge, experience, and contacts gained through their longer permanence in social movements they are the natural leaders to follow.

⁴⁷ No hay que enviar a las ideologías por dentro, hay que hablar de las cosas que nos unen, a los médicos, etc... porque a todos nos ha tocado sufrirla y luego el discurso empieza con organizar alguna protesta y se vuelve en que vamos a hacer la revolución bolchevique para el miércoles.

Chapter IV Factors against a Unified Social Movement

What has prevented social organizations from creating a unified social movement with better possibilities to force a positive social change? A closer examination of one of the latest attempts to create a unified social movement in Ciudad Juárez offers some answers. It is important to note that Juárez has a long tradition of resistance and mobilization. The movements organized in recent history can be divided in four areas: cultural-political organizations, organizations that collaborate with the government, organizations strongly committed to a leftist's agenda and not willing to negotiate with the government and the latest group of voluntary organizations that focus more on the social than on the political. These have a low participation of collective action. Before we move on, it is also important to note that there is not a clear-cut distinction among the different groups as some organizations resemble a combination of two or more of the characteristics of each group.

Allow me now to focus on some of the splitting moments in activism. For this purpose I will direct my attention to FPC, which, at the beginning, was one of the largest unified reactions to the violence in Juárez. The FPC was organized after the shooting of sixteen students in Villas del Salvárcar in January 30, 2010. This tragedy was a milestone event that united people and social activists in a common front against violence. After the murder of these young students, President Calderón stated the murderers were members of a gang, which they were not, even though he seemingly offered a justification for the shooting. President Calderón's statements caused even more outrage among people. The shooting and

the feeling that the Federal government was not protecting the citizens prompted people that usually would not get politically involved in addition to social activists, religious groups, and art collectives, to form a coalition to demand justice for the slain students as well as a change in the Federal government's strategy against the drug cartels.

FPC was created under the premise that the so-called war on drugs was in fact a process of social cleansing: young poor people should be made to disappear by whatever means necessary. Some activists from several organizations theorize that this process of social cleansing was started by President Calderón's administration because, in Julio's words, "[the government calculated that] it was cheaper to kill poor people than fighting poverty" ⁴⁸ (Diaz, personal communication, March 13, 2012). This idea is also shared by William who made the argument that the middle class and higher got fed up with delinquency and pressured the government to eliminate it. In William's evaluation: "some members the middle and upper classless did not care what methods the state used to 'clean' the streets, even if that included criminalizing poor people, or forcing them to hide or kill them (Diaz, personal communication, July 23, 2012). Among other demands, the most important one was to release the army from police duties and end the militarization of the city. People of different organizations worked well and united for about a year when these different forms of organizations created divisions among the members. This splitting process continued to the point where,

⁴⁸Les salía más barato matar a los pobres, que combatir la pobreza.

according to the few members who still are part of the organization, it is inactive and only get together in emergency cases.



Figure 6 View of the Reyes-Salazar Family's Fasting Camp. Photograph: La Unika

The first division of the FPC was the different way that groups wanted to manage the Reyes family conflict. On one side, there were people from FPC who wanted to maintain and continue the sit-in in front of the State Law Agency Offices that had been organized by the FPC in solidarity with the Reyes family where “they demanded the safe return of the missing María Magdalena Reyes Salazar, Elías Reyes Salazar and his wife Luisa Ornelas Soto”⁴⁹ (Animal Político, 2011). This sit-in, in accordance to FPC’s practice, was open to all the public, so people could bring different demands. In other words, it was organized in an assembly method.

⁴⁹ Three members of the Reyes family had been kidnaped; in consequence some members of the Reyes family, in collaboration with several social organizations organized a sit in and a hunger strike in front of the DPP offices demanding they were brought alive. Unfortunately, they were later found death.

In order to increase the pressure on the government to meet the Reyes family's demands, in a divided choice it was decided to move the sit-in to México City where according to Gerald "the MORENA bureaucracy wanted to appropriate the sitting in México City"⁵⁰ (Diaz, personal communication, July 27, 2012), to move it more onto the direction of collaboration and assistance from political parties. At the same time, other organizations wanted the sit-in to finish and take the Reyes family to a safer place.

These different strategies caused the first important break inside the FPC. According to William, the confrontation between two groups, MORENA and FPC, escalated beyond the political realm to personal threats and insults. The different approaches to the problem, unilateral decisions, as well as this environment of open and personal animosity caused people that were not directly involved in the conflict to also separate from *FPC*.

According to Susan, the unilateral decision making process by a small number of people was another source of breaking:

[at first the FPC] brought together a good number of groups that later left it because they feel... the assembly got divided and became what now is *Frente*. They did not consult with us before they go into a march; they go to the streets without informing, without any safety strategy.⁵¹ (Diaz, personal communication, February, 08, 2012)

⁵⁰ La burocracia de MORENA se quiso apropiarse del plantón en México DF.

⁵¹ Aglutina muchos grupos que luego dejan el Frente porque también sienten... la asamblea se divide y se convierte en el frente. No nos consulta sale a marchar sale a gritar sin informar, sin estrategias de seguridad.



Figure 7 Caravan for Peace with Justice and Dignity. Photograph: La Unika. June 10, 2011

A second division, among social organizations in Juárez came when Javier Sicilia and the caravan from Movimiento por la Paz y Justicia con Dignidad (MPJD) visited Juárez. At that time, different social organizations from the entire spectrum created the *Asamblea Juareense por La Paz con Justicia y Dignidad*. This organization was created *ad hoc* to organize a forum to set a national pact based on the one proposed by the MPJD, but where also, according to Gerard, “it was agreed that the agreement reached in Juárez will be the national pact”⁵² (Diaz, personal communication, July 27, 2012).

Organizing this event was especially challenging, for organizations were coming from an already debilitating process as described before. However, after some hard negotiations, all organizations, working together under the name of

⁵² Se acuerda que lo que se haga en Juárez será el acuerdo nacional.

*Asamblea Juarense por La Paz*⁵³, agreed on supporting Sicilia's visit under the condition of not negotiating with the government as the Sicilia group wanted. In Gerald's words, "we (*Asamblea Juarense por la Paz*) told Sicilia that we were not willing to talk to the government, that if he wanted to do it, we will not organize his event"⁵⁴ (Diaz, personal communication, July 27, 2012). This is a claim that was corroborated by all interviewees that were involved in the process as well as by the press conference that *Asamblea Juarense por la Paz* organized to clear up their position prior to the arrival of the Caravan for Peace with Justice and Dignity to Juárez.

Here, it is important to note that most of the direct conversations with Sicilia's group were made by people from *Pacto por la Cultura*, and that they were also in charge of getting the University of Juárez's facilities. *FPC* was in charge of writing the document that would be signed by attendants to the meeting in UACJ. This was the first point of disagreement. It was not clear if this document was a final document or if all the conclusions from all the working tables were to be added. On one side, there was a group made up of both national and local activists arguing that the conclusions of the tables were to be the pact. On the other side, according to Julio, there was a small leadership from the Sicilia group that wanted to control the final writing of the text and keep it virtually equal to the pact announced in México City on May 12, 2011 (Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad, 2011). At the end of the meeting, the document written by the Asamblea

⁵³ Pro-peace Juarense Assembly

⁵⁴ Nosotros (*Asamblea Juarense por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad*) le mandamos decir a Sicilia que nosotros no estábamos dispuestos a hablar con el gobierno, que si él lo quería hacer nosotros no le íbamos a organizar su evento.

Juarese por la Paz plus the additions of the conclusions from the roundtables were presented by Sicilia as the National Pact in Juárez on June 10, 2011.

The next day Sicilia, pestered by the press, declared that what was presented in Juárez was not the National Pact; that the pact was what they had already previously presented in México City. This declaration brought two reactions, both of them of disapproval but on different scales. A sector, identified with a more radical left called him a traitor; in Julio's words:

We claimed [as valid] the pact signed in June 10[2011] [Sicilia] did not honor his word, and here, when you made a pact and later denied it, that is called betrayal. He is a victim and whatever you want, but here we all are victims⁵⁵ (Diaz, personal communication, March 13, 2012).

On the other side, another group said that they would not call Sicilia a traitor and were not to break with him, because, in William's words:

There are more important issues to discuss and we may even agree on those, but if they are to bring the idea that he is a traitor it is fuck up, because we do not think that he [Sicilia] is a traitor"⁵⁶ (Diaz, personal communication, July 23, 2012).

Having this discussion as the main priority caused the dissolving of the *Asamblea Juarese por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad* and also a personal break between some of the activists. Since this last break after the Sicilia event, FPC and

⁵⁵ Nosotros reivindicamos el pacto del 10 de junio, no se honró la palabra, y aquí cuando tú haces un pacto y luego lo niegas, eso se llama traición, y será víctima y lo que tú quieras, pero pues aquí todos somos víctimas.

⁵⁶ Hay cosas más de fondo que hay que criticar y a la mejor hasta estamos de acuerdo en esas, pero si van a poner enfrente lo de que es un traidor, está cabrón, porque nosotros no pensamos que es un traidor.

other organizations have been working separately and some personal animosities remain.

This break-up even reached organizations in El Paso where there were complaints from some social organizations and social activists who had been a part of organizing and supporting the event, but who later felt that they had been left out of the decisions. These organizations accused the other parts of having a small group controlling the decisions instead of having everybody involved as it had been done before the event. On the other side, a member of the accused group told me that if that had happened, it had been unintentional. Currently, this break still persists.

When I interviewed Sicilia about his perspective on what had happened in Juárez he told me:

The problem in Juárez was that the radicals wanted to throw their agendas on me, but I put them down and said: there is no problem, you guys want it? It is yours, but I am out, I leave, you guys would be doing a favor to me. Now, if I am driving the bus everybody can get in or get out, the bus stop at every corner, I am not putting any conditions on you, do not put any conditions on me.⁵⁷ (Diaz, personal communication, September, 28, 2012)

He continues:

...they accuse me of having signed that pact, filled with a thousand of demands
...I had no choice, but as soon as the event finished [the public

⁵⁷ el problema en Juárez, fue que las partes duras me quisieron subir agendas y yo los baje y yo dije, no hay bronca, ¿la quieren? ahí está, nada más que yo ya no estoy eh, me voy, me harán un favor, yo llevo el camión, todos se pueden subir o se pueden bajar, el camión para en cada esquina, yo no los estoy condicionando, no me condicionen a mí.

presentation of the pact in the Benito Juárez square in Juárez] I set my boundaries and said no, there was six points and those six points turned into a thousand. The substance was betrayed, we move within these six points. That is when the disagreement started ⁵⁸ (Díaz, personal communication, September, 28, 2012).

It is important to notice that these differences on the agenda and forms of organizations also occur inside organizations. As Bernie said:

In 2010 there was a very strong incision in our group *Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura*. Discussions were very strong. There was basically the position of those who did not agree to participate in the alleged or actual support offered by the government ... and those who said 'ok, this happened [Villas del Salvárcar student's assassination] but here comes the government to help us and we must apply for those resources because there are many victims' ... we said no, the government is the one which sent the military, and the military is one of the ones killing people. We cannot be part of that. The discussion came out as much inward. ⁵⁹ (Díaz, personal communication, August 13, 2012)

After a long period of discussion, *Pacto por la Cultura* decided to become an *asociación civil* so they could access resources coming from the Federal

⁵⁸ ...me acusan de que yo acepté el pacto ese lleno de mil demandas... no tenía más remedio, pero acabando el evento me deslinde, dije así no, había seis puntos y esos seis puntos se convirtieron en esos mil y se traicionó la sustancia, nosotros nos movemos en esos seis puntos y fue cuando se armó el disenso.

⁵⁹ En el 2010 hay una incisión muy fuerte en nuestro grupo Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura. Fueron discusiones muy fuertes donde básicamente era la posición de quienes no estábamos de acuerdo en participar de la supuesta o real ayuda que ofrecía el gobierno... y quienes decían: bueno pasó esto, pero ya viene el gobierno a ayudarnos y hay que entrarle porque hay muchas víctimas... Habíamos grupos que dijimos no, el gobierno es el que mandó al ejército no podemos participar de eso. La discusión se dio tanto hacia afuera como hacia adentro.

government program *Todos Somos Juárez*.⁶⁰ However, the disagreement of whether or not to get access to the government money continued and caused an impasse, after which they decided to have a friendly separation. *Grupo Articulacion Justicia en Juárez* was born after this split. It was conceived as a space where organizations and people with different ideologies can meet, discuss, and find common ground to battle the problems that affect the city. *Grupo Articulacion Justicia por Juárez's* core members were members of *Pacto por la Cultura*.

In order to better understand why despite the good faith, talent, and expertise of social activists a unified social movement has not happened, it is necessary to take a closer look at the behavior of social activists and the factors that affect their chances of successfully building this unified movement. These factors can be divided into external and internal factors. Not all the following factors were present in the weakening of these two organizations. Rather, they are the summary of the breaking factors identified by the interviewees and that stem from their experiences in different social organizations.

4.1.-Internal Factors

4.1.1. - Lateness. –Some core activists critique the habit people have of arriving late to the meetings. Most of the people that expressed this criticism have other activities than just social activism. They are already married, sometimes with children and need to have a stable and professional job that allows them to support their families. For them, time is vital and is not to be used waiting for other people. After doing the math, they determine that of all the time that they

⁶⁰ We all Are Juárez.

spent in a meeting trying to organize a number of people, a good amount of it is spent just waiting. They decide then that working with unorganized collectives is a waste of time.

This conclusion takes them through different paths. The first one is to tolerate and sometimes follow this behavior. The second possibility is to create a closed group where they work with people that they perceive to have a similar work ethic. Even though these closed groups still work in coordination with other social organizations and participate in large protests, for the most part they focus on specific goals. They are more likely to work with institutions, public or private, that may help them to achieve their goal. The last possibility is that an activist becomes fed up with lateness as related to unproductivity and decides that the movement is not advancing. Hence her efforts seem to be a waste of time, so she stops participating in social movements.

4.1.2. - Inexperience and Switching Membership. - Youth is by far the largest segment of population that joins a social movement. There are several reasons for this. Some of them come because of idealism, others by a sense of belonging, or even because of the media attention given to a large movement. These dissimilarities create, according to Doctor, “differences in agendas, but also in knowledge and in [the amount of] time dedicated to the *movimiento*”⁶¹ (Diaz, personal communication, February 07, 2012).

During this early age of their development these young activists have a tendency to not be strongly committed to social causes due to their multiple

⁶¹ Diferencias en las agendas, pero también en conocimiento y en tiempo dedicado al movimiento.

commitments such as school and work. Charles makes this point when he says “Students’ groups come as often as rock groups, every year there is a new one, and after one or two years it disappears, but then there is a new one”⁶² (Diaz, personal communication, July 27, 2012). Another reason for this instability is that since they are new in the movement they do not fully understand the internal dynamics of an organization. They need to be taught on how a specific organization works.

This training process takes time from older members of an organization. Sometimes, this is well invested time, but on other occasions people leave the organization taking with them all the time invested. This time spent takes a toll on some older members of the movement, and consequently, they decide to leave open organizations such as art collectives. These collectives are social organizations with an assembly method to create or join a closed organization where there are formal structures, planning, a long term vision, and a specific project to work on; among other characteristics they perceive to be desirable. Still, other people leave because they consider that nothing is getting done as they get frustrated when they see that they have to start all over again every time a new generation comes.

4.1.3. - Inaccurate Assessment of Reality. - As presented before, another factor in social activism is extreme idealism that prevents social activists to perceive reality in an objective way. Idealism seems to be both an asset and an obstacle to achieve social change. On one hand, it helps social activists to believe the idea that change is possible despite the harsh conditions they work under and this belief

⁶² Grupos de estudiantes salen como grupos de rock , cada año sale un grupo nuevo de estudiantes, y al uno, dos años ya no está, pero ya está otro.

keeps them pushing for social change. On the other hand, if this idealism is not controlled by regular doses of reality they may act on false beliefs and therefore, are then more likely to head in the wrong direction. This idealism may come in the form of ideologies that do not respond to the current scenarios any longer. Another cause for having an inaccurate assessment of reality is that they spend most of the time surrounded by people with the same worldview. This creates the illusion that all people think like them, and the few that do not are mistaken. In other words, due to their inexperience in social movements, some people may confuse what their circle of friends/colleagues think is the case to what in reality actually is the case.

4.1.4. - Internalization of the Role as Social Activist.- There is also evidence that suggests that some social leaders have internalized their role of social activists to the point where being a social activist has become not just an activity, but their main personal identity. In consequence, it is hard for them to let go of this position of authority and prestige. They are reluctant to accept other persons' opinions. When a social activist has invested too much of her personhood in social movements, she may demand of other people the same level of commitment. In Sapphire's words "[They get mad] because [other people] do not follow the same rhythm, sometimes it is a matter of rhythm, there is people that are afraid and that is valid, the most daring want everybody to go to their rhythm"⁶³; she continues "I do not want to be a hero; I think that the conception of hero now is to

⁶³ Porque no se iba al mismo ritmo, a veces es cuestión de ritmos, hay gente que tiene miedo y es válido, entonces los más arrojados quieren que todos vayan a su ritmo.

stay alive, it is not a matter of throwing yourself to the slaughterhouse”⁶⁴ (Ramírez, personal communication, August 25, 2012).

Another shortcoming is when an activist may fail to see the points in common but instead focuses more on the differences she may have with other social activists. She thinks that the best way to advance their social causes is through the approach they follow. Point in case, when I asked a social activist why, in her opinion, there was not a unified social movement in Juárez, she answered “because they [other social organizations] do not see that the institutional way [political parties] is the only way to promote durable social change”⁶⁵ (Díaz, personal communication, January 10, 2012). This is an especially revealing testimony because despite the fact that most social organizations are against working within the formal political institutions, she still claims that she is the one that is right. In other words, she is not able or willing to compromise her ideology or to see that other organizations may be right in order to reach a common ground with organizations with a different, but very important, ideology. This position of not being willing to listen to other positions is common to a large number of activists.

4.1.5. - Ideological Disagreements. - Ideological differences is one of the main reasons why there is not a unified social movement. Even though most organizations declare to have a leftist ideology, there are several positions within that spectrum. Some of them are more committed to Marxism, while others prefer

⁶⁴ Tampoco quiero ser un héroe, yo creo que la concepción de héroe ahora es mantenerte vivo, tampoco se trata de ponerte en el matadero.

⁶⁵ Porque ellos [miembros de otras organizaciones sociales] no ven que la vía institucional es la única vía para garantizar desarrollo social sustentable.

a more moderated left. A tangible consequence of the different ideologies they have is how they will approach the fight against the social system. One position is against the formal political system and in consequence they hardly negotiate with the government. A second position is to negotiate with the government when the conditions are right, i.e. when there is no coercion with military policing the streets and repressing the social activists. They are reluctant to work with the government, but they are willing to do it if necessary. The last position is the opposite of the first. They think that the best way to bring positive change is through a strong cooperation with the government, for they are the ones that have the resources.

4.1.6.-Personal Disagreements.- In addition to ideology differences which can be solved, especially because people involved in social movements have a common goal of bettering the conditions of the city, personal differences makes it harder to work with other people. As one of the interviewees said,

During the process of organizing the visit of Javier Sicilia and his *Movimiento por la Paz y la Dignidad* to Juárez, I have differences with Peter and John, as the event was getting closer, the discussions escalated , it was a stressful time. At one time we decided that we have different approaches, and we split up. For a while we kept a distance, but now we are working together again, I mean we are partners, we are pursuing the same goal, I can work with people that may have a different approach, but I cannot work with people that have not work ethics, people that make internal problems public, but then do not come and express their opinions in an organization meeting,

no I definitely will never work with Mariana again”⁶⁶ (Diaz, personal communication, February 08, 2012).

Even though different organizations have the same goal of pushing for social change, those personal differences may take social organizations in different ways, diminishing the possibility of creating a unified social movement.

4.1.7. - Motivations. - Another factor is the motivation that leads one to join a social organization. Rogelio is a part of Colectivo *Vagón*, a very well-respected art collective in Juárez. Vagón has proven their position by their capability to organize events funded by private companies and at the same time being able and asked to collaborate with leftist social organizations. Rogelio told me that one of the main reasons why some leaders fail to build internal and external working relations is because they establish or join a social organization out of hate, not love. In Rogelio’s words:

These are people who have internal problems; they have much anger in their soul.

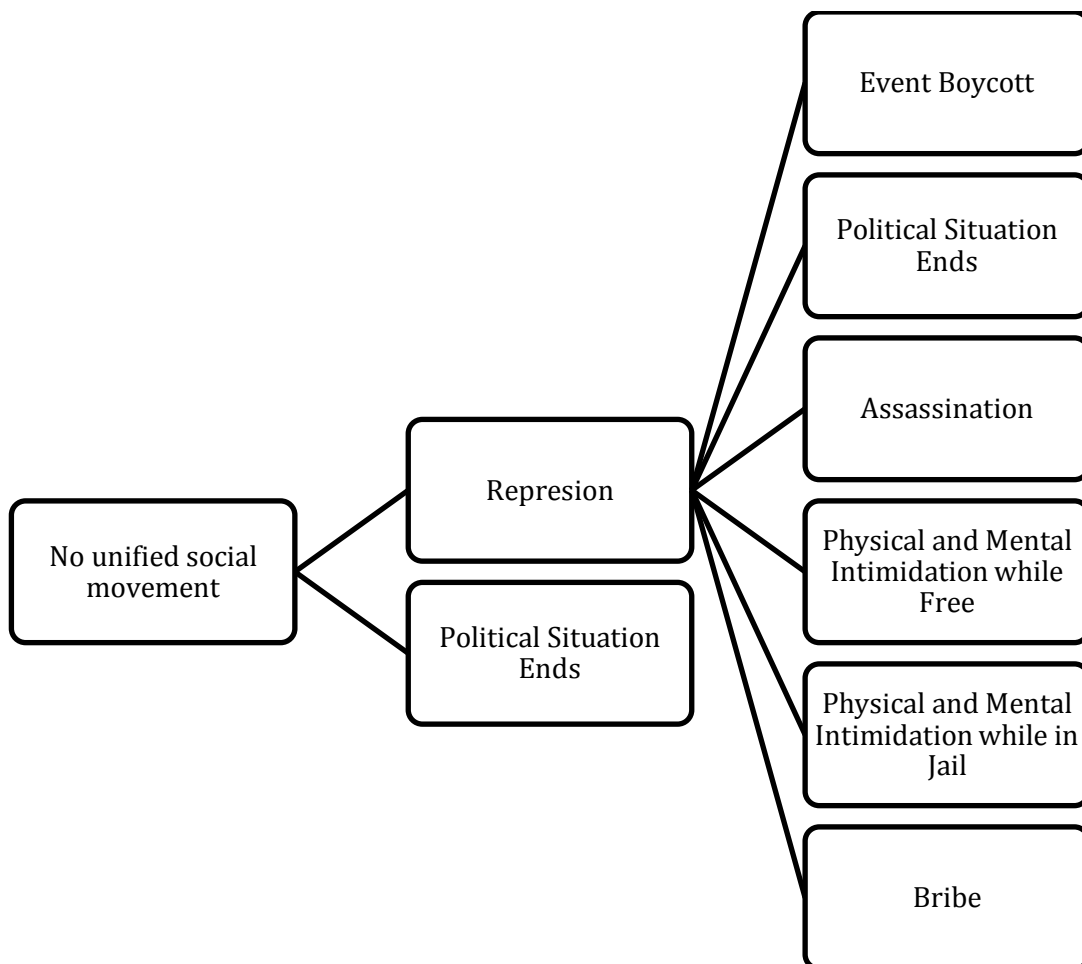
Because of that rancor they could not make it in life. Then, they get to activism as a way to screw the other, the system, or whoever is in front, they do not do it as a way to help... they bring their anger to the

⁶⁶ Durante el proceso de organizar la visita de Javier Sicilia y su Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad a Juárez, yo tuve diferencias con Pedro y Juan, a medida que se acercaba el evento, el nivel de las discusiones escalaba, fue un tiempo de mucho estrés. En un momento dado, decidimos que teníamos diferentes perspectivas y nos separamos. Por un tiempo mantuvimos distancia, pero ahora estamos trabajando juntos otra vez, o sea, somos compañeros, tenemos el mismo objetivo, puedo trabajar con gente de diferentes perspectivas, pero no puedo trabajar con gente que no tenga ética de trabajo, con personas que no tengan ética de trabajo, personas que hace públicos los problemas internos, pero luego no vienen y expresan sus opiniones en las juntas de la organización, no, definitivamente nunca volveré a trabajar con Mariana.

movement, and fight with everyone for no reason. There is no way to work [with them]⁶⁷ (Diaz, personal communication, November, 12, 2012).

Negative people can then have a long-term negative impact on other members because when a person just joins a social organization and has no experience she may think that all organizations are like that, and then she may feel discouraged to participate in another social organization.

4.2. - External Factors



⁶⁷ Éstas son personas que tienen problemas internos, tienen mucho rencor en su alma. Debido a ese rencor no pudieron hacerla en la vida. Entonces se meten al activismo como una manera de joder al otro, al sistema, o a quien esté enfrente, no lo hacen como una manera de ayudar... traen sus problemas al movimiento, y se pelean con todos y por todos, y así no se puede trabajar.

Without a doubt repression is a very significant factor when it comes to explain the reasons why some social organizations are disassembled. Repression has been systematically used in the Mexican political system to deal with voices of disagreement. This practice has been witnessed and documented since at least the infamous students' protest in 1968, the Guerra Sucia in 1971, and the torture, forced disappearance, and assassination of human rights defenders throughout the years. Juárez is no exception to the rule. Rather, it is a city where the use of these tactics has taken activists to be exiled and unfortunately even end their lives.

As some social activists gained political power or were influential in places that were especially inconvenient to the government, they became a bigger menace for the status quo. Arguably, when the government perceived them as a real threat, they increased their systematic repression of social activist. Even though later this systematic repression had an effect on the forms and intensity of participation in activism, at that time it had the opposite effect of what the government expected. Social activists proved their strong will and high sense of solidarity by staying together despite their ideological differences and they took to the streets again. As William said:

Activism was transformed ... [after the tragedy of Villas de Salvárcar] it began to take new forms, if any [form]...besides organizing a march, people did not know what to do. [Before Villas de Salvárcar] there were organizations calling for peace, there were people calling for justice, people calling against militarization, but there was isolation, gaps between each other and some of them would even feel animosity against other social activists,

at the same time, people did not really know what to do; and when Villas de Salvárcar happened that was a very, very ... [critical moment] which began to define fields. It created a new environment ... The activists returned to the streets, we were able to overcome fear and pain, anger, aggravation and everything. Then people got together and organized, in different degrees but there was a unified response⁶⁸ (Díaz, personal communication, July 27, 2012).

Repression against social activists in Juárez has taken several forms and degrees of violence. The degree of violence used against social activists depends on how involved they are, for how long they have been involved, and what causes they are defending. There is a pattern on the levels of repression used to intimidate social activists. They go from an attempt to bribe them to actually killing them. Allow me to elaborate on the topic:

4.2.1. - Bribe. –In Sapphire’s words, “this tactic is used to take advantage of “[one] of the weaknesses of activism, which is that it is sustained by volunteers and free work, a poor society offers less opportunities for a full time activism and concrete efforts”⁶⁹ (Ramírez, personal communication, August 25, 2012). When a member of a social organization or sometimes the social organization as a whole is gaining popular support and with that they also gain political power, the people in

⁶⁸ El activismo se transformó... [Después de Villas de Salvárcar] tomó nuevas formas, [antes] si cualquiera [forma]... además de organizar una marcha la gente no sabía qué hacer. Había organizaciones que marchaban por la paz, había gente que pedía justicia, gente en contra de la militarización, pero había aislamiento, zanjas entre uno y otro y algunos de ellos era incluso personal. Al mismo tiempo la gente realmente no sabía qué hacer, y cuando lo de Villas de Salvárcar ése fue un momento muy, muy... [crítico] que definió a cada quien. Creo un nuevo ambiente... los activistas volvieron a las calles, fuimos capaces de vencer el miedo, el dolor, el agravio, y todo eso. Entonces la gente se organizó, en diferentes escalas, pero hubo un movimiento organizado.

⁶⁹ Ésa es otra de las debilidades del activismo, se sostiene por el voluntarismo y en el trabajo libre, entonces una sociedad empobrecida tiene menos espacios para un activismo de tiempo y de esfuerzo concreto.

the government feel that they represent a danger for the status quo and will mobilize resources in an attempt to buy the cooperation of the social activists. In exchange for economic support, they ask social activists to stop using reactive collective action as protest and manifestations; sometimes they even ask social activists to show public support to the government as is shown by Marisela Ortiz when she said: "State Government gave benefits [for people] to withdraw from the movement, to take care of the government's interest, or to put a counterpart of *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa*, they were used and they allowed it" ⁷⁰(personal communication, March 21, 2012).

This offer of economic support comes in different ways. One of the easiest and fastest ways of attempting to manipulate social organizations is through public funding for social organizations, in Doctor's words "several NGO justify their existence to their sponsor, it is not about the people anymore, but about [getting funding for the] budget"⁷¹ (Diaz, personal communication, February 07, 2012). It is important to note that using resources coming from the government does not necessarily imply that the social organization needs to do what the government asks it to do. "There is no need to be against the government, you just need to be careful not to prostitute the project, especially in electoral times" ⁷² (Diaz, personal communication, January 31 2011). One way to get around government's control is to have another organization, one that already has the

⁷⁰ El gobierno estatal daba beneficios para [que la gente] se retirara de la lucha, o bien para poner una contraparte de *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa*, pero que cuidaran los intereses del gobierno, la utilizaron y se dejó utilizar.

⁷¹ Varias ONG se justifican ante el que los patrocina, ya no es sobre la gente, sino sobre el presupuesto.

⁷² No necesariamente se tienen que rechazar los apoyos gubernamentales, sólo tienes que ser cuidadoso de no prostituir el proyecto, especialmente en tiempos electorales.

Asociación Civil status to issue the receipt. This can be asked from different organizations so that the government may lose track of what organization is really using the assigned resources. This strategy has proven to be useful in keeping independent social organizations from becoming reliant on government's money.

However, there are organizations that do not work with public funding either because they banned or rejected it. It is often the case, as Melvin points out, that public offices would not grant money to “‘red’ organizations”⁷³, (Diaz, personal communication, January 27, 2012), so in order to stay working, some organizations compromise some of their principles and on some occasions even completely stop any form of public protest. In the case of specific social activists, the attempt to negotiate with them takes similar forms. They are offered scholarships to study in other cities or countries, so that they might lose contact with the social movements.

Another form of bribery has been used with some of the mothers that protest to pressure authorities to investigate and offer results about the localization of their daughters. This form of bribery consists of offering them a house or another economic incentive in exchange for them to stop protesting and denounce the impunity that has prevailed on the femicides.⁷⁴ According to third party testimonies, the *modus operandi* for this kind of bribe is that a state government officer gets close to a family and in a friendly and conciliatory tone says something similar to them: “We are doing our best to find your daughter, but

⁷³ Organizaciones pintadas de rojo. Red is a reference to leftists' organizations.

⁷⁴ The author has not direct evidence of this tactic. It came to his knowledge through different and independent testimonies of trust worthy activists.

the protesters are distracting us. You seem to be a reasonable person, why do you not think in the future of your family and accept this house as a token of the good will of our government? Of course, we would appreciate it if you would stop protesting so we can focus our energy on finding your daughter.” It is important to notice that there is not a strong sense of judgment from social activists to people who accept a house. As Eunice said:

I can see why they take it, they live under horrible conditions of poverty; they may even think that their daughters are already dead and that the government is not going to do anything anyway, so in a very pragmatic way of thinking they accept the house as a way to alleviate their problems.

⁷⁵ (Diaz, personal communication, March 13, 2012)

4.2.2. - Physical and Mental Intimidation while in Jail. - This form can take several forms and the level of intensity depends on how much an activist is willing to resist and how important her silence for the government is. The first level of intimidation is the excessive presence of police, military, and/or government agents during the protests. When this tactic fails to dissolve a manifestation and arrests are ordered, they are thrown into jail. Once they are in jail, they are subject to different treatments depending on how much of an obstacle they represent for the government. If they are newcomers, the mistreatment may be ‘limited’ to some punches and verbal threats. These threats may go from mocking them for fighting the government to more serious issues such as death threats to them as well as

⁷⁵ Puedo ver por qué la aceptan [la casa] ellos viven en condiciones de pobreza extrema, probablemente piensen que sus hijas ya están muertas y que de cualquier manera el gobierno no va a hacer nada, así que de una manera muy pragmática aceptan la casa como una forma de aliviar sus problemas.

their families. When they are core activists that have been threatened before, those threats take a more realistic tone.

4.2.3. - Physical and Mental Intimidation While Free.- Another tactic is when some sectors of the government attempt to intimidate social activists who never give an excuse to be put in jail. Marisela Escobedo, co-founder and co-director of “Bring Our Daughters Back Home”⁷⁶, an organization that has lasted eleven years and offers assistance to the families of the victims of femicides, offers a prime example of the techniques used against the most visible activists. The first acts of intimidation were to prohibit her to enter the government offices where the audiences to hear cases of femicides were held. The second level was “phone calls in the middle of the night where I could hear women screaming, men laughing and a little girl screaming: mother... mother help me!”⁷⁷ (Diaz, personal communication, March 21, 2012). These phone calls later escalated to death threats to Marisela’s sons. In reacting to these threats she took them to the United States. As she continued to work through *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa*, they took these threats to reality and actually attempted to take her life on several occasions. In fact, the International Court ordered México’s Federal government to give her a guard. For a time, Marisela learned to survive and keep working even under these harsh conditions, but

Everything changed on March 10, 2010, when I got a threat in a banner that covered the whole door of a school where I used to work. In this banner

⁷⁶ Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa.

⁷⁷ Llamadas en la media noche para ponerme voces de mujeres gritando, voces de hombre riéndose y una niña que gritaba: ¡mamá, mamá, ayúdame!

they threatened to kill me and my family, starting with one of my sons, the one that has been more involved in our Organization, that same day we left the country. ⁷⁸(Diaz, personal communication, March, 21, 2012)

To this day, *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa* still operates, but with the forced exile of both of their co-founders, its capability to assist the families of the victims of femicides was diminished.

4.2.4- Event boycott. - When it is perceived that directly attacking a social movement may become too expensive, they use indirect forms of repression. Boycotting an event is one of these indirect blows. This tactic is used by both the government and ‘competing’ social organizations. When this tactic is used by social organizations, the opposite group organizes an event the same day to bring people to their event and in consequence they do not go to the other event. Other times, they slander the event or the organization in order to discourage people from attending the event. When boycott is used by the government, they utilize the power they have to prevent an event from happening. They can go from denial of a permit to use a public space to blocking a street. In Bernie’s words “the welcome to Sicilia was well attended, but I am sure, we would have had more people if the tanker trunk had not crashed and blocked the main avenue; I am convinced it was not an accident”⁷⁹ (Diaz, personal communication, August 13, 2012). He refers to the incident when a few moments before Sicilia arrived to Juárez to the event in

⁷⁸ Todo cambió el 10 de marzo del 2011, cuando recibí una amenaza a través de una manta que tapaba toda la puerta de la escuela donde yo trabajaba, donde me amenazaban de asesinar a mí, a mi familia, pero que iban a empezar con uno de mis hijos, el que estaba más involucrado.

⁷⁹ La bienvenida a Sicilia fue muy concurrida, pero estoy seguro que hubiésemos tenido más gente si la pipa no se hubiese volcado y bloqueado la avenida. Estoy convencido de que no fue un accidente.

Villas del Salvárcar, a tanker truck crashed on the highway that serves as the main access to the neighborhood, thus blocking the accessibility to the neighborhood

4.2.5. -Assassination. - The last resource to silence a social activist is to kill him/her. Unfortunately, the use of this method increased in Juárez during the years 2008 -2011. This period of terror started with the murder of Jose Angel, son of the well-known activist Josefina Reyes Salazar, on November 2008. Josefina was also murdered on January 3, 2010. Ruben Reyes Salazar was found dead on August 18, 2010, and the bodies of Magdalena Reyes Salazar, Elías Reyes Salazar and his wife Luisa Ornelas Soto were found on February 25, 2011 (Upside Down World, 2012). The murders continued with the shooting of Marisela Escobedo on December 16, 2010 (Mail Online, 2012) on the steps of the Chihuahua State Capital Building, followed by the murder of Susana Chávez; “the 36-year-old poet and activist, was found dead on Jan. 6, [2011] strangled and with her left hand cut off” (Los Angeles Times, 2012).

4.3.-Political Situation Ends. - It is easy to infer that this factor mostly affects organizations that are created ad hoc to respond to a specific situation, and when this situation has been solved or most people believe that it will never be solved, they lose interest. As Sapphire points out “movements come as a reaction, more than as an articulated movement, we take the streets because our issues, because our professor was killed, because the femicides, because we need to find a young girl that is disappeared”⁸⁰ (Ramírez, personal communication, August 25, 2012).

⁸⁰ Los movimientos se dan como respuesta, más que como un movimiento articulado salimos a las calles por nuestras broncas, porque mataron a un maestro, por los feminicidios, hay que ir a buscar una chica porque la desaparecieron.

This reactive pattern places social movements at a disadvantage because they get in a short-term min set where they do not plan ahead and build strong coalitions beyond a specific circumstance. To elaborate on that point, if coalitions are made on an event basis and the union of several organizations gain political power, that political power may disappear once one or several of the organizations that joined the coalition decides to abandon it when they get what they wanted. In that case besides all the political power that is thrown away, activists may leave the organizations with a sense of disappointment because of the lack of solidarity.

Chapter V Closed group vs. Open Group Comparison

The causes of holding a particular ideology can be traced back to economic status, education level, type of education, access to resources and religious belief. However, the fact that members of different social classes favor different ideologies and with that different form of struggle, suggests that there is some form of classism in social movements in Juárez. Picking one form of struggle over another is a tangible effect of having different ideologies; one that has had a deep and negative impact on the possibility of the creation of a unified social movement in Juárez. Usually people that use to be in a power position will choose groups where decisions are made in a more efficient way. This is to say, they will favor groups that cluster people with power to enforce decisions faster. On the other hand, people that traditionally have segregated from the decision making table and have suffered the abuses of the system will look for forms of organizations that get their strength from the number of people that join their organization. Thus they actively pursue forms of organizations that are attractive to people that may have not had previous political experience. Arguably they hold their meetings in open forums with this goal in mind. For the purposes of this work, I divide the different forms of organization into two: closed groups and open groups.

The difference in the organizing method has proven to be one of main reasons of why there is not a unified social movement in Juárez, for this disagreement on how to get together prevented the different groups from having a conversation where they can reach common ground. On one hand, there were groups, that preferred an assembly method, that decided not talk with groups that “asked them not fight the government against the

militarization and do not get together [in political meetings] in public squares”⁸¹ (Gerald, public communication, July 27, 2012), a position that Gerald reaffirmed in the #YS132 national counter-presidential report by saying while presenting the conditions of violence in Juárez, #YS132J had refused to get organized together with members of the bourgeoisie because the bourgeoisie wanted to do it behind closed doors; they wanted to repeat patterns of class domination and ignore the people’s opinion.

I am defining closed groups as the ones where the meetings are held in closed spaces that belong to one or several members of the organizations and attendance is made mostly by invitation. Generally speaking, activists that get involved in these kinds of organizations are goal oriented. People that get involved in closed groups are people who can play an important role on getting things done, because of their position or reputation. For example, according to Bernie, “*Pacto por la cultura*”⁸² was an inner circle, the strength of *Pacto* came from his members, Veronica Colchado⁸³ (Diaz, personal communication, August 13, 2012). They are people that have clear and easy access to different resources, in other words, most of them already have political power as individual, as much as a group. Being a closed group does not mean the closed group does not network with other organizations. On the contrary, they are very active networking with other organizations. The term ‘closed’ refers to the preference of gathering with other people that are willing and capable of making political change in a fast and efficient way in a closed facility. It is important to

⁸¹ Les piden no pelear contra el gobierno, contra la militarización, y no reunirse en plazas públicas.

⁸² After *Pacto por la Cultura* was dissolved they became *Grupo de Articulación Justicia en Juárez* (Articulation Group Justice in Juárez) it was joined by several organizations such as Centro de Derechos Humanos Paso del Norte, Comité de Solidaridad de Derechos Humanos, Red Mesa de Mujeres, Casa Amiga, Comité Médico Ciudadano, Colectiva Arte y Comunidad A.C., Centro de Derechos Humanos de Inmigrantes, Grupo Tonantzín, algunos de ellos son grupos religiosos, Consejo Ciudadano, Plan Estratégico.

⁸³ Era un círculo íntimo, lo fuerte que tenía el pacto eran sus personajes, Verónica Colchado.

note, that being a closed group is not necessarily a conscious and intentional decision, as Sapphire explains, “We did not mean to be a closed group but we became one. That happened, because we could not attract more people. There was much sympathy as we gathered a lot of people, we were around thirty [members] but the core was twelve” ⁸⁴ (Ramírez, personal communication, August 25, 2012).

Arguably, one of the reasons for their preference to get together in closed spaces is that people felt safer, in Bernie’s words “during those years [2008-2010] it was not safe to meet in public spaces” ⁸⁵ (Diaz, personal communication, August 13, 2012). The other reason to get together in closed space/closed groups is efficiency. People who join closed groups found that they were able to reach agreements in a small group with specific goals than they were able to do in open assemblies with open and general goals, where the ever-changing membership and different levels of political experience, forced the group to go over obvious issues repeatedly. There is also the issue of trust, as they are talking about risking issues; they prefer to work with people they know they can trust than work with strangers.

The preferred decision making process is consensus, where everybody agrees on one point. When a consensus is not achievable, the group has several options. The first one is when there is no consensus, but there is not strong opposition either; on that case people who want to do the discussed action do it, and the other people abstain from participating. If the disagreement is stronger, the issue can go to stand by, waiting for one of the positions

⁸⁴ Nunca quisimos ser un grupo cerrado, pero nos convertimos en uno. Eso pasó porque no podíamos atraer más personas, éramos alrededor de treinta [miembros] pero los constantes éramos doce.

⁸⁵ En esos tiempos, y aún ahora, no era seguro reunirse en las calles.

to give in. If the disagreement is too strong and the issue is too important, it can break the group apart.

Open organizations, on the other side, work under the assembly method, where the meetings are held in public spaces such as college campuses, squares, parks, etc. Even though the group of core activists meet alone outside of the assembly, they do it in informal occasions such as parties and gatherings, but when they are 'officially' in their role of social activists they insist in doing it within the assembly. As these groups get together in open space it is easier for every person, regardless of her political experience to join or leave the organization. They do not need to be invited to the group.

The people that prefer the open group offer two main reasons for doing so. The first one is the issue of representativeness. They argue that for a movement to have moral authority it must be democratic and for a movement to be democratic decisions must be made by all people involved. In order to achieve this goal, the decision making process must be done in open spaces where all opinions are represented. The second reason given for open groups is that assemblies are safer than closed spaces, for, according to core activists that join these type of organizations, the government would not kill or kidnap anybody during an assembly. They argue that the more visibility a movement gains, the higher the political costs of attacking them; the higher the political costs, the less chance they movement will suffer repression. This form of organization is preferred by leftist movements. It is important to note that, for the most part, people who prefer this method in Juárez are young and have limited access to economic resources, as most of them do not

have professional jobs yet. Most of the people that join this type of organization are students, as in the case of #YS132J.

In order to better understand the specifics of both forms of organization, I studied two groups, one per form of organization. I focused on how the community building process works, the reason why activists prefer one or the other, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of these different forms of organization. I used the participation observation technique during meetings of both of them. Gaining this knowledge is vital, for as we will see later, the different forms of organization are an important dividing factor.

5.1. - Ethnography of a Closed Group.-This ethnography refers to a meeting of a group working to organize a pro-peace event against the militarization in Ciudad Juárez. Even though this organization was created explicitly to organize this event with people from different backgrounds and different perspectives, a large part of the group of people who attended this specific event is a part of an academic environment. There were fourteen people; five of them hold a PhD; four are in the process of getting their master degrees; three are college seniors; two people had bachelor degrees, were not in academia but were well-recognized in social organizations and have a high personal reputation. Out of the fourteen people, five were male. One of them was about twenty-six years old. The other three were in their early 30's. They were college students and academics. The fifth male was in the early 50's and is a well-recognized social activist. The rest of the attendants were women. One of them was in her early 20's and was a college student, all the other women were already in their 30's or 40's with solid careers in their fields.

All but one of the attendants were bilingual and for the most part the meeting was conducted in Spanish with some brief translation to English for the English speaking person. Even though most people were bilingual, for most of them Spanish was their first language; that might be a reason why the meeting was conducted in Spanish. Since the meeting was to support a peace movement in México, the use of Spanish over English showed a respect for the culture and people in México. Most of the attendants were familiar with each other however, to make sure everybody knew each other the decision was made to make a brief introduction including the name of the organization that every person was representing. For the most part, it was a friendly and cooperative environment, though it was possible to see that there was some level of antagonism between some of the participants. This was inferred by the voice intonation people used when talking to somebody they were relaxed and informal with, and when they were talking to somebody they were not comfortable with; they would use a stronger tone of voice, not to the point of being offensive, but strong enough to be noticeable. This, however, did not affect the environment of professionalism that was present during the meeting.

Since the meeting had a very specific goal and there were time limitations, there was very little informal talk and it was conducted before the meeting, while waiting for more people to show up. Ten to fifteen minutes after the scheduled time to start, attendants were asked to go to the meeting room so the meeting could begin. .

Once the meeting was officially started, the formal discussion took over. While committees gave their report people paid attention and did not interrupt; at least for the first five minutes. At this time a person who had a different opinion from the person

presenting the report, asked for a turn to speak. This started an open discussion where people interrupted each other, until the moderator called to order and assigned turns to speak. At this moment, it became clear some people had some personal if not political differences. However, the moderator made a very good job of keeping people on track and a way of personal discussions. It is important to mention that despite these differences some jokes were exchanged keeping the environment positive and professional.

Even though every person had the right to speak, it was possible to see that there was an informal leadership. The meeting was led by three people. One of the informal leaders was a female and⁸⁶ was in closer contact with different groups in Ciudad Juárez and México, so many of the decisions to be made depended on the decision these other groups made. Since she was the contact person with other groups working on the same event she had to participate a lot. The other two people leading the conversation had participated from the beginning in organizing the event and were highly respected, so it was kind of natural for them to take over. All people were allowed to speak whenever they wanted; they just had to ask for their turn to speak.

The gathering was conducted in a meeting room with all the necessary items and conditions. The room was equipped with a computer, phone, internet access, screens and a table for sixteen-eighteen people, etc. This space is used to hold meetings for the institute that one of the participants works for. For the most part, people remained seated during all the time. Some of them would stand up to go and get some snacks that were placed in the reception area or to use the services. However, the level of energy was high, so people were

⁸⁶ When the name, due to privacy reasons is concealed, I use the pronoun “she” regardless of the gender of the person.

in constant movement on their chairs. There was no movement across the table with the exception of when people needed to pass something to the people in front of them. This place was chosen because of its accessibility and participants were able to walk to the meeting. Some other people got there by cars because either they were going to another place after the meeting or they were coming from a distant place. There is also public transportation to the place, so there was no problem to get there.

The meeting room was part of a facility with a small number of offices. The first thing to see when getting there is the reception, which is in the center of a spacious room. There were a couple of workers that were unaware of the meeting and seemed to be confused about it. When asked, they located the person that was hosting the meeting and then indicated me to go the living room. It is a pretty functional work place with all the necessary items to get some academic work done. It fit perfectly with the needs of the meeting. The building has about five to six offices, two bathrooms, the reception, a meeting room, and, a small parking lot at the back. The meeting room is a rectangle of about five yards by seven yards. In the center of the room there is a table with enough chairs for all the attendants to seat, at the front there is a computer and a bookshelf. It gives the impression of being a place work is done on a regular basis.

What could be considered to be the most important part of this meeting was not so much the physical space, but the social space that was created with the presence of all the people there. By having a place where they could interact and have a face to face conversation, a working space though the amount of time to get organized was limited, it was possible to reach some agreements. The meeting was not free of disagreements and

some personal conflicts seemed to influence the decision making process, however, during the meeting, people with different approaches but the same goal-to have a successful event at the same time that create the foundations of a union between different organizations-were able to openly and cordially discuss the decision needed to achieve these goals.

There were four main reasons for the attendants to make the decisions in a short time, despite the divergent opinions at the meeting. The first and probably the main reason was that they were there with the same goal to help alleviate the violence in Juárez. Second, there was little time, about a week, until the event, so there was not too much room for controversies; decisions, good or bad, needed to be made. Third, it was a fairly homogeneous group of people; so even when they had political differences their problem-solving skills were very alike. In other words, they may have different things to say, but all of them speak the same language. Fourth, most of them were colleagues; they know that they have to see each other for the years to come, so this may have prevented them from showing open hostility towards each other.

The unspoken rules were the cordial treatment and respect for the other person. There were controversies and at any moment there were personal attacks. There were some egos playing a role but for the most part they were contained with the goal of making decisions as fast and efficiently as possible. When it came to spoken rules, the moderator gave people a turn to speak, and the secretary was the only one authorized to interrupt to ask for clarification so she can keep an accurate record of the meeting. Now I will analyze a closed group.

5.2.-Ethnography of an Open Group: #Yo Soy 132 Chapter Juárez

In order to understand how it was possible for #Yo Soy 132 chapter Juárez (#YS132J) to organize a working commission and to be able to send representatives to the national assembly in a period of two weeks, it is important to learn about the social activists and social organizations that were involved in the organization. Core activists were largely responsible for using their networks and experience in social movements to have it functioning in such short period of time. In order to not only have it organized so quickly but also to get political force by increasing their numbers, they needed to find an equilibrium between the implementation of their experience and, in Charles' words "to give an opportunity to the kids to have more participation, more leadership, [because] sometimes [the leadership] goes to the old activists, especially in the speech aspect"⁸⁷ (Diaz, personal communication, July 27, 2012).



Figure 8 Members of the FPC Leading a #YS132 Assembly. Photograph: Luis Diaz

⁸⁷ Y darle chanza a tantos chavos a que tengan más participación, más liderazgo, a veces se concentra en los más viejos, sobre todo en el *speech*.



Figure 9 People Gathering for a #YS132J Assembly. Photograph: Luis Diaz

Even though #YS132J gathers people from different organizations and backgrounds, it is possible to identify (FPC), as its nucleus organization. FPC was organized in 2010 after the inhumane shooting of 16 students in Villas de Salvárcar (Gómez, 2010), while they were attending a birthday party. People from different organizations as well as regular citizens got organized to protest the federal government strategy on the war on drugs because they felt that the presence of the military had caused an increase in the violence. It is important to note that one of the angles of this strategy was the use of the military to patrol the city; the Mexican army has been consistently accused of human right violations (Human Rights Watch World Report Chapter México, 2012). Bernie said “to some degree, the FPC was organized around the *Frente contra la Militarización* (FCM).”⁸⁸ The FCM is a leftist organization that had been denouncing the militarization process as a social cleansing process. FCM was one of the very first organizations demanding President Calderón to order the military to go back to the barracks, as it was indicated by one of their

⁸⁸ Against Militarization Front

chanting: “Juárez, Juárez is not a barrack, take the military out.”⁸⁹ As FPC was losing adherents, the members of FCM became the nucleus of that organization to the point where they now are recognized as FPC.

The other mayor social organization that has been involved in #YS32J, in a lesser degree, is *Movimiento de Regeneracion Nacional chapter Juárez* (MORENA).⁹⁰ This social organization is a national support network in favor of Andrés Manuel López Obrador,⁹¹ the leftist presidential candidate who at that time (July 2012) was competing against the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)’s candidate Enrique Peña Nieto.⁹² The Juárez MORENA Chapter’s membership is around ten to fifteen members who directly support López Obrador’s political project and they bring social services to the communities in Juárez. Some of the members of MORENA have taken part of the assemblies as official members of that group looking to establish a political alliance, for they shared the goal of not having Peña Nieto as the new President of México. This collaboration between MORENA and #YS132J has gone through periods of intense collaboration and periods of distancing, depending on their strategies.

The third group is composed of people that were already politically active in social organizations (such art collectives or by themselves) other than FPC or MORENA. They do not have as deep an experience as members of the FCM and MORENA do, however, the experience they did have was an important source of empowerment for #YS132J.

⁸⁹ Juárez, Juárez no es cuartel, fuera ejército de él.

⁹⁰ National Regeneration Movement

⁹¹ At the time of writing this article, MORENA was considering the idea of becoming a formal political party.

⁹² Enrique Peña Nieto was considered by # Yo Soy 132 a candidate unfairly favored by the main mass media corporations and hence, they argue, the imposition of this candidate goes against democracy. He was recognized by the Electoral Federal Institute as the elected president on August 31, 2012.

For the purposes of this analysis, I adapted the categories mentioned above to the specific dynamics of #YS132J.

Faddish Activists: They are people with little to no experiences in social movements. For the most part they attend the meetings of #YS132J because they feel identified with the demands of the movement, but also because there is a lot of media attention which made them curious about what the movement really is. A large number of them come to the assembly only one time. Others will stay and become active and enthusiastic members of the organization. They bring new ideas and perspectives to the movement.

Part Timer Activists: They have already developed a strong commitment to social change and come from other social organizations where they gained experience and contacts. They actively participate in the commissions of the movement. Even though they are strongly committed to activism, it is not yet their priority. Activism comes after school and work. They already have a political agenda and vision on how they think the political system should work. In addition to working in the commissions, they may also serve as delegates to the national assemblies.

Core Activists: They are strongly committed to social change. Their life is vastly organized around social activism. They have large local, national and international networks. They are not involved in #YS132J just to solve the electoral situation; rather they are fully committed to a long-term agenda of progressive social change. Their level of analysis goes deeper than the other groups. Just like the part timers activists, they also serve in the commissions and as delegates. They are in charge of key commissions such as media and networking.

When an assembly is called, most people arrive on time; however, usually the meeting starts around ten to fifteen minutes after the scheduled time in order to wait for people that may be on their way. Once people are together they choose a moderator to chair the meeting and a secretary to assist the moderator. In principle, any member of the assembly can be chosen to perform the moderator function, however, for the most part; this responsibility was given to the part-time activists and core activists. In order to participate after the agenda had been created by the assembly, people asked for a turn to speak and a speakers' list was created. The only people allowed to speak are the ones who are in the list. An exception can be made when somebody presents a motion. In that case the moderator decides if the motion is valid, if that is the case the person presenting the motion can talk, if the motion does not go through the moderator would prevent that person from talking.



Figure 10 View of the Second #YS132J Assembly. Photograph: Luis Diaz

As consistent with the national movement, in #YS132J the participants of every meeting constitute themselves in an assembly where the decisions are made through direct democracy. In this method the moderator has the proposals made by members of the assembly voted by all. There are two possible outcomes. The first one is visible majority. This one is called when an idea is voted and it is clear that a large majority of people agree on that issue, hence there is no need to count the votes. The second possible outcome is when there is no clear option that is favored by the assembly and in this situation, votes are counted by the person directing the assembly; the option with the most votes wins. It is important to note that this method does not control for non-participation or double voting. Non-participation is not an issue because the proposals come from the assembly, so the vast majority of people vote in either direction. The possibility of double voting is low because most people participate in good faith. However, if a person detects that somebody is voting twice, that person can inform the assembly and if the accusation is true, the person directing the assembly can admonish the person voting twice and ask that person to vote only one time. The second vote would then be discounted from the voting count. Now, I will analyze some of the assemblies.

The first assembly of Yo Soy 132 Juárez was called through the social networks, especially through Facebook, by members of *Comite Universitario de Izquierda (CUI)* a recently dissolved college organization that, when it existed, was part of the (FPC). Since there was not yet an assembly, the time of the first meeting was decided by the organizers, after which the assembly would decide the occasion, time and date. The first assembly was held at The of University of Juárez, specifically in the Institute of Social Sciences and Administration on May 28, 2012, and it was attended by an estimate of 60 people. There

was a fair share of men and women who attended. Most of them were young undergraduate students, with a few graduate students, and some people that were not currently registered students but who recognized themselves as part of the student community. At this point the group was diverse and did not have a common identity, yet the leadership of members of FPC started to be evident. For example, by the end of the first assembly, it was decided to go to the facilities of The University of Juárez Biological Sciences Institute, where the *Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos*⁹³ was holding an audience, in order to ask for money donations, so the delegates could attend the #Yo Soy 132 national assembly in México City. When they got there, the event had already finished and people seemed confused about what to do next. One of the primary members of FPC took a leading role on the discussions about what the next step was. They decided to come the next day and ask for money donations.

Another example of the leadership roles that members of FPC had taken in #YS132J is their dominance in moderating the meetings. During the first meetings, this dominance of part-time activists and core-activist caused some people to feel uncomfortable, underrepresented and not listened to. Some of these people left the assembly, others confronted the situation and when it was discussed they decided to stay involved in the movement. In order to illustrate this position, allow me to present two situations where members of the assembly complained about the dominance of a core activist who was leading the movement. In the first situation, the person complaining left the movement. In the second one, the person stayed and actually became a relevant member of the movement.

⁹³ People's Permanent Tribunal

In the first case, a woman in her early twenties felt that she was being treated unfairly by the moderator, who was a core activist that belongs to FPC because she was not being given the same chance to speak as other people were. In addition to that, based on the number of people that voted in favor of her proposals, it is possible to infer that her perception of the nature and goals of the movement did not match with the majority of people in the assembly. In fact, on her last participation she withdrew her motions on the #YS32J declaration of principles because she was one of the few opposing it.

During the meeting it was easy to see that she was not happy about the way this person was directing the assembly. She actually complained with a friend that was with her about favoritism on who was getting the turn to speak. It is only fair to say that the moderator's attitude did not help to ease the situation. She⁹⁴ would use her prerogatives as the meeting's director to block this person and other people from taking a speaking turn. After that meeting and with visible frustration, the woman that complained about the core activist behavior stopped attending the meetings. This is an example of how the way a core activist conducts herself can bring more valuable members to a social organization or, to some degree, cause them to leave.

On the other side, there is the case of Peter, a young student whose parents have been involved in social activism for a long time. He openly criticized the same core activist for her behavior during a security crisis. This security crisis happened a few days after the #YS132J third meeting where they agreed on passing on flyers to people so they can be informed about the #YS132J reading of the political situation. During this activity two

⁹⁴ When the name, due to privacy reasons, is concealed, I will use the pronoun she regardless of the gender of the person.

members were arrested. In order to pressure the local police to release them, some members of #YS132J lead by this activist protested outside of the police station. They demanded that their partners were brought safe to their presence and charges to be dropped. They did not know that the two members had been immediately released and that they had asked the police officers to give them a ride to a place closer to the campus.

Peter said that the over controlling and agitated behavior of this core activist had not helped to solve the crisis; on the contrary it had worsened the situation. He also said that the core activists had ignored the security committee that had been already established by leading people to protest in front of the police station without consulting with safety committee first. At the same time, Peter said that to be fair, when the situation was developing everybody turned to the core activist because they did not know what to do. He asked the core activist to have a more discrete behavior in the future. The core activist accepted the criticism and people spontaneously clapped. Peter, the person that voiced the discomfort that some members of the assembly had about the prominent role of this core activist stayed and is now a very active member of #YS132J.

In the first case the person that left the assembly was in disagreement not only with the core activist, but with other members of the assembly too. They disagreed about what the movement was about and about the way it should be conducted. She consistently insisted in analyzing the #YS132 National Declaration of Principles point by point and discussing it within the assembly. On the other hand, most people wanted to vote only on the most relevant issues because arguing every single point will take too much time. She did not seem to understand the assembly method and got mad when she was not giving a

turn to speak. As I said before, the attitude of the core activist, using her privileges as moderator to take plenty of speaking turns did not help the situation. In the other case, Peter, as the son of a couple of activists, has more experience in a community decision making process. This experience and the fact that members of the assembly agreed with him caused his position to be accepted by this core activist.

When I asked Gerard, a core activist with more than 20 years of participation on social movements and a prominent member of the FPC, why members of FPC or people that are close to them have consistently run the assembly he said that “a person with experience is needed to run the assembly, otherwise it will be chaotic, and Julio is good at it”⁹⁵ (Diaz, personal communication, July 27, 2012). This is not to say that core activists necessarily want to remain in control of the assembly. On the contrary, based on the time participation chart and the encouraging words that core and part-time activist say to the first timers inviting them to get involved in the commissions, it is possible to infer that they want more people to become active, but first timers may not be able or willing to take over some strong responsibilities yet.

A situation that happened during an assembly reinforces Gerard’s argument. At that occasion the assembly was choosing delegates to the national assembly. The method is that members of the assembly would nominate people to go and then they are asked if they were willing to go. When there is a group of people willing and able to attend the national assembly, they are voted by the assembly and the people with most votes are selected. The whole process takes around twenty to thirty minutes. On this specific occasion, after the

⁹⁵ Se necesita una persona con experiencia para dirigir la asamblea, de lo contrario se vuelve un caos, y el Julio se avienta para dirigir.

process was conducted, about twenty minutes after the election process had finished, one of the persons that had been voted said that her mother had not given her permission to go and she declined her position as delegate. It is important to note that she was new to activism. After a quick vote, her position was given to Ian, an old member of CUI.

I now will run a time-use analysis, to show how much of an influence core activists have in the assembly decision making process.

Percentage of Participacion Time per Group

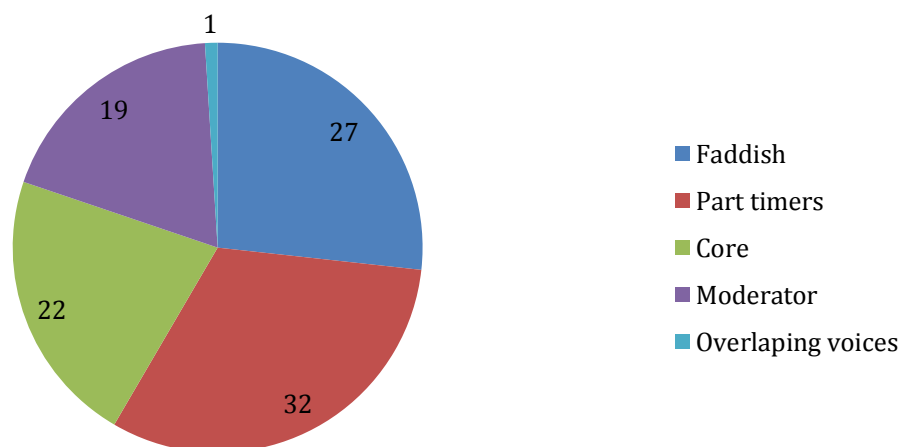


Figure 11 Percentage of Participation Time per Group

Time per Group chart shows how part timers (32%) are the most active group. It is followed by faddish activists (27%) and core activists (22%) as the less participative group. This time distribution suggests that despite their higher experience on social movements and rhetoric ability, features that would easily allow them to take control of the assembly, core activists have taken a step back and let other people with less, but enough experience to participate more. In accordance with this attitude, most of the committees' directors are

part time activists. One can ask, 'if the intention is to get new people more involved, why that is they are not the ones leading the committees? The answer is because they do not have the experiences or the contacts to fulfill these duties, and they know it. Be assured that any member is free to be voted to be a committee director, but usually new comers do not want to take over this responsibility.

The fact that part timers are the group with more participation is vital for the success of the movement. They serve as a joint between core activists and first timers, for even though most of them are sympathetic to the FPC's perspective they are not that strongly committed to it. In consequence, they use a discourse that is less politicized than the one used by members of FPC. This softer discourse is more appealing to the new generation and makes them feel identified with the movement.

Number of Speaking Turns

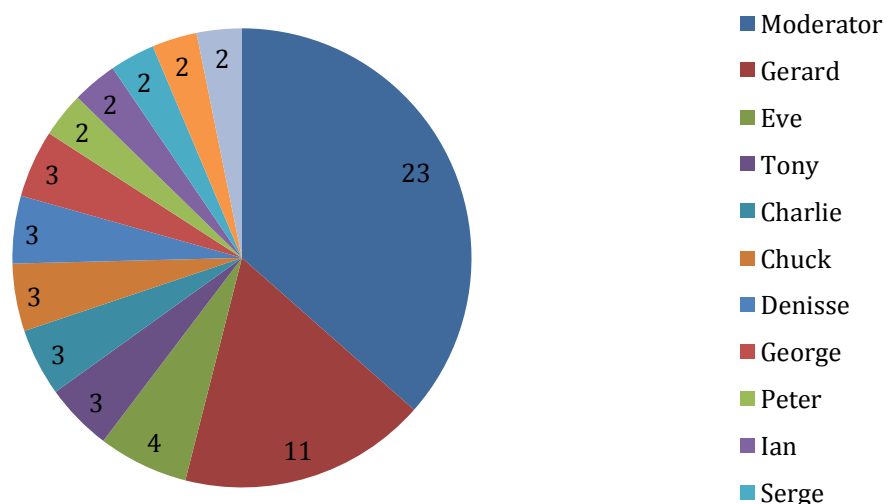


Figure 12 Number of Speaking Turns

Percentage of Participation Time per Member

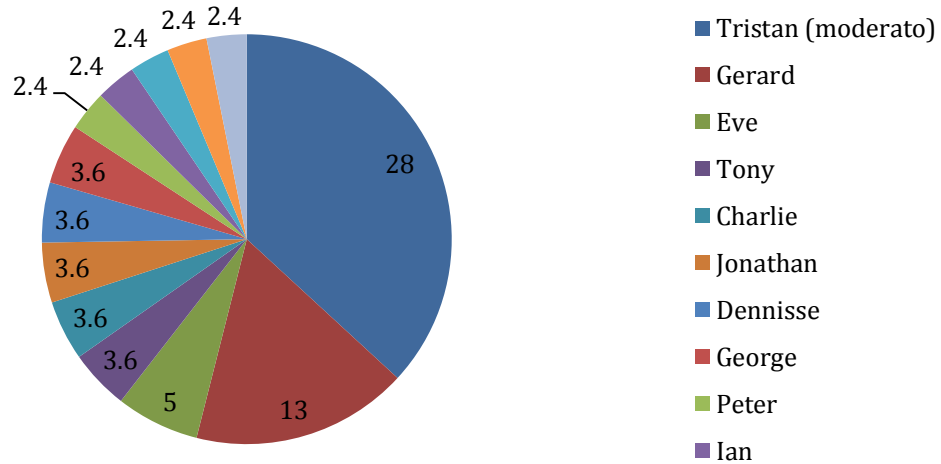


Figure 13 Percentage of Participation Time per Member

Even though core activists, as a group, are the ones with less time participation, in order to fully understand the interaction between the different groups and the core it is necessary to break the Participation Time per Group table into the number of speaking turns and time percentage used by person. By doing so, it is possible to notice that the moderator, for obvious reasons, is the person that talks the most time. He took twenty-three speaking turns or 28% of the time. The second person than used most turns is Gerald a core activist, with eleven times or 13% of the time. He almost tripled the number of speaking turns of Eve, the next person than talked (four times or 5% of the time). In other words, while six part timers and fifteen faddish activists talked to add to the total speaking time; Gerald, by himself, almost used the total time taken by the total of core activists.

In addition to the time and speaking turns it is also important to notice than when Eve, the second person with more speaking turns spoke, she did it to provide information on the commission she was working on and not to push an agenda. However, Gerald gave his position on every issue that was under discussion on the agenda. Gerald's positions

were not blindly followed, but it was clear that he had a large influence on the other participant's attitude, as it is possible to infer by listening another six people referring to Gerald's position when presenting theirs by using phrases as: "I agree with Gerard," "as the partner Gerard said," etc.... In addition to this, four out of seven disagreements were solved in the direction that Gerard favored. These numbers clearly show that core activists, in this case represented by Gerard, but in a behavior that is consistently followed by Julio, in previous assemblies, have a large influence on the assembly decision making process.

It is not possible to say that the unified identity of #YS132J is completely due to an over control of core activists. It is clearly the case that core activists play a vital role on the direction of the movement, but this influence is not dictatorial. The amount of time as well as the disproportionate number of speaking turns can also be explained by the need they have to explain some points to people with less experience. Listening to the proposal that were made by faddish activists is more than enough evidence for the need of the movement to have of the experience of core activists. Some of the proposals that faddish activists made included proposals that were already passed on by previous assemblies; i.e. one of them was to create an on-line newspaper with true information about the political process. This proposal had been already made, approved and actually operated acted upon since the third assembly, so the person was not up to date. This is not to say that the proposals were naïve or misinformed. There are some that were useful and were accepted by the assembly. An example of this were the proposals of bringing information to the neighborhoods, but also other services, such as dentist, doctors, lawyers that the community needed.

As more assemblies went by, a more unified agenda and vision of where they want to take this movement was shaped. This unified vision can be attributed to the time that constant members of the group spend together inside and outside of the movement. As established before, the nucleus of the movement is members of FPC whom had built a common vision among them for over 3 years before #YS132J was created. The ability and disposition of core activists to guide and nurture new comers has been key to this process of integration of new members. Newcomers commit to the work of the movement by working on committees where they spend plenty of time with other members where they build solidarity and union ties. The following Facebook post is a clear token of that process.

The energy that we injected among us was beautifuuuuuul, I was in District 3, I realized the wonderful people who are part of this movement, and it gives me goose bumps to witness how brave and determined that you all are!! Honored to be part of this change!! Strength and congratulations!! ⁹⁶ (Post in the official #YS132J Facebook page).

5.3. - Contentious Repertoires and Performances

Social activists in Juárez use different tactics to promote positive social change. Allow me to elaborate on them.

5.3.1. - Marches. - By far, this is one of the most popular methods among social activist in the world and Juárez is not an exception. In a violent environment as the one that is lived in Juárez, the right organization of a march is vital to protect the wellbeing of the

⁹⁶ HERMOOOOOSA LA ENERGIA QUE ENTRE NOSOTROS NOS INYECTAMOS, ESTUVE EN EL DISTRITO 3, PUDE DARME CUENTA DE LAS MARAVILLOSAS PERSONAS QUE SON PARTE DE ESTE MOVIMIENTO, SE ME PONE LA PIEL CHINITA AL SER TESTIGO DE LO VALIENTES Y DECIDIDOS QUE TODOS USTEDES SON!!!! ES UN HONOR SER PARTE DE ESTE CAMBIO!!!! ANIMO Y LOS FELICITO!!!! (SIC).

participants. Since the success of a march can win momentum for a cause or can diminish its possibilities of success, activists need to make sure they do at least three different assignments:

- The first one is to have a clear goal; the social organization(s) calling for event must know what they want to achieve with this event.

- To promote the event with anticipation, so they get a large number of people on the streets; the larger the number, the less like they will be repressed.

- It is necessary to have a safety committee that will be in charge of bailing out people who are arrested during the event.



Figure 14 View of a march. Photograph: La Unika

In Juárez, marches had been organized even during the harder repression; i.e. *Marcha del coraje, dolor y desagravio*; *Marcha si nos dan a uno nos dan a todos*; *Kaminatas*

contra la muerte; La marcha de los indignados; Marcha del silencio por la justicia en Juárez ⁹⁷ among a number of other marches show the courage of social activist and citizens to fight back a system that is killing them. Most of these marches were successful in the sense of bringing people together and to show the government that there was opposition to the strategy it follows on its war on drugs. However, some of them were not well organized and as a consequence they caused unnecessary damage to the social activists. When this happens, people, especially faddish activists, leave social activism and in consequence the organization is weakened or it may even disappear.

5.3.2. - Support to Official Political Parties. – Even though some social organizations and social activists work within the formal political structure, there is one group that is officially and openly supporting political parties in Juárez. One of them is the Movimiento de Regeneracion Nacional (MORENA) that is supported by Redes Universitarias Chapter UACJ. Redes Universitarias Chapter Juárez was created after some of the founding members were invited by Redes Universitarias México to expose the act of repression against one of the other social collectives that were already doing social work within impoverished neighborhoods. After this first encounter they were invited to create their own chapter at The University of Juárez.

It is important to note that even though Redes Universitarias Chapter UACJ is part of MORENA and getting political support for Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), one of the main goals of MORENA, (according to “Matagalacticos”, a member of Redes Universitarias Juárez) is larger than just getting AMLO to win the México’s presidential

⁹⁷ March of Courage, Pain relief March , If they Hurt One they Hurt us all March, Kaminatas against Death March, The Outraged March, Silent March for Justice in Juarez.

elections in 2012. Their main goal is to help rebuild the social fabric. With this goal in mind they organize multidisciplinary teams that go to the neighborhoods to create structures and social conditions that will help people to build community ties. They have a program called *el acople de la esquina*⁹⁸. In this project they use several methods with this goal in mind. Depending on the abilities and training of the members of the team they provide from medical assistance to psychological assistance to the inhabitants of the neighborhoods. Another vital component of this program and of their agenda is to work with the children, so that the children can grow to be people willing and able to respect other people and work with others to promote common welfare.

Substantial resources are needed to keep these programs working. Getting these resources is a constant challenge for the members of *Redes Universitarias*. Expenses such as gas, cell phone credit, material to work with the children, etc. comes out of their pockets and some members of the political class that donate personal money to them. However, when it comes to larger expenses such as setting up a community library, *Redes Universitarias* relied in national solidarity networks that donate books and furniture to the library. *Redes Universitarias* Chapter UACJ thinks that a social movement needs to work with formal political institutions. Manuel said in an interview that for a social movement to be successful in terms of being capable of creating real social challenge they need to become government because a government that comes from the people is more likely to represent the real interest of the people.

⁹⁸ Friends in the Corner.

5.3 3. - Community Work. - There are social activist that, disappointed by collective actions, have decided to continue working for social change, but they do not it through reactive collective action anymore. They made the decision of working in a grass root movement, they get organized from the bottom up, working with the community in a direct way through a specific project. In other words, they have decided to do what they used to ask the government to do and take matters into their hands. Most of the activists in this category are people that had been part of the social movements' scene for a long time, sometimes for over ten years. They got involved in social movements at a young age, most of them were influenced by their parents. As Kiko stated "I spent my adolescence working with Zapatistas supporting networks, as most of my friends from high school went to summer camps I was sent to training camps where we learned about social injustices"(Diaz, personal communication, October 27, 2012). As they grew and got to make their own decisions they were empathetic to social movements. Consequently they were active in organizing workers, community members, students, etc. They train them on political tactics to force social change. However, little by little or abruptly they came to the conclusion that true social change will not come by gaining small battles with the government but by working directly with the community to raise their education and consciousness level; they take their focus from pressuring the government to work directly with the community. As Marisol said: "Things are not going to get solved only because you take the streets and shout"⁹⁹ (Diaz, personal communication, March 21, 2012). In addition to the time it creating joining protests, they organize specific projects to work directly with the community. *Biblioteca Ma'Juana, Centro de Derechos Humanos Paso del Norte, Nuestras*

⁹⁹ No se van a solucionar las cosas por que vayas y grites a la calle

Hijas de Regreso a Casa, Casa Amiga, CASA are only some examples of the many organizations that work in Juárez with the community.

Chapter VI Findings

Due to the large amount of time that core activists spend on the movement, they also gain an identity from their involvement on the *movimiento*. The more time a person spends on social activism the more her identity will be attached to the *movimiento*. As I have shown when a person gains most of his/her identity from activism, his/her activist identity will become vital for this person, hence this person will defend this identity and will make decisions that favor the strength of his/her position as a social activist, instead of making decisions that will favor the *movimiento*. In other words, the correlation between level of involvement and identity search may turn out to play against the possibility of having a successful social movement. This is because when a core activists has invested too much of her identity on the movement, she may make decisions to benefit her in the sense of getting more attention and to keep her status as a leading figure rather than making decision that benefit the movement.

Even though to core social activists causing social positive social change is one of the highest priorities in their life and they spend plenty of time pursuing this goal, there are several forms of involvement on social organizations. Some of them take their level of involvement on social organizations to the point where being a social activist becomes their full persona. They spend more of their time working and thinking on social issues and not developing other aspects of their being. As Susan Wolf (2004) points out this causes the opposite effect of building better communities because it is important that people offer qualities other than the right moral behavior to the community.

Most members of social organizations establish a personal and close relationship with members of their organization and other organizations while they have social

interaction outside of that circle. However, there are social activists that are so immersed in activism that they have social interaction only within the circle of social activism. These individuals are more likely to develop an extreme commitment to social activism to the point where they are willing and to some degree even eager to offer their lives to promote the social cause. In Julian's words "if they [the military] take my life, I will be happy, for my death will serve to create resistance to the government, so the revolution will come sooner." My research suggests that this position of martyrdom may cause damage to a social movement. This is so because it may reduce the core activists' willingness to negotiate some of their political positions and ideology in favor of a larger social movement because they consider people that are not willing to go that far in their compromise with a social organization to be of less importance for the movement. This may intimidate new coming people that are interested but not yet fully committed to social activism as well as people with whom they have common goals and agendas but with different, not necessarily opposite ideologies. This also create an unfavorable climate to have open discussion where other points of view are also considered, for regular people may feel intimidated when they hear complex terms and theories that may not be a reflection of their perception of reality. This causes some people to leave an organization because they do not feel their ideas are appreciated.

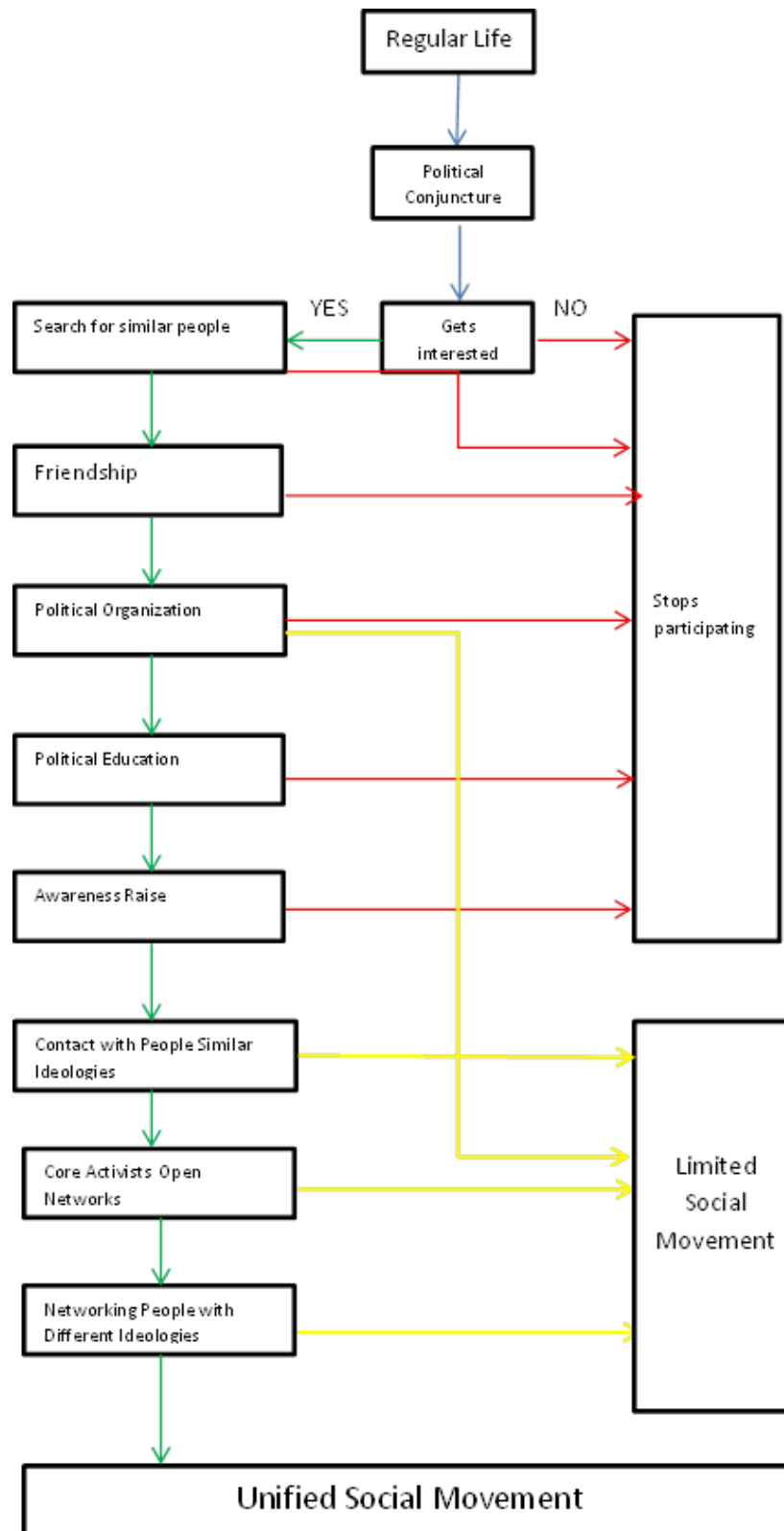


Figure 15 Process to Reach a Unified Social Movement

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Vita

Luis R. Diaz holds a MA in Philosophy and with this thesis he earned a MA in Sociology. He is currently a Ph.D. in Philosophy at the Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana where he is working under the direction of Enrique Dussel. Ph.D. Luis R. Diaz has taught the courses of Introduction to Philosophy and Ethics at El Paso Community College and Dona Ana Community College. His teaching experience goes beyond the border, as he has also taught at the University of Juarez and Preparatoria AltaVista in ciudad Juárez, México. He has attended several conferences as well as given a number of talks on the topics of Social Movements, Ethics, and Political Philosophy.

Luis R. Díaz
C. del Tordo #4911
Col. Arboledas
Chihuahua, Chihuahua, México
lrdiaz2@miners.utep.edu