EVERYBODY IN AND NOBODY OUT: OPPORTUNITY NARRATIVE AND THE RADICAL FLANK IN THE
MOVEMENT FOR SINGLE PAYER HEALTH CARE REFORM

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I analyze over twenty years of the United States Single Payer
Movement. I began this analysis with the following questions in mind -- What is the
Relationship between opportunity and grassroots mobilization? How do activists understand
opportunity? What is the role of narrative in this process? I grounded my analysis in a feminist
epistemological and methodological stance, which is rooted in the understanding that all
knowledge is located and that we can learn much by privileging the voices from marginalized
positions. This research involved participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and
content analysis.

This research has resulted in a significant contribution to social movement theory by
further explicating the relationship between opportunity and grassroots opportunity. I argue
that social movement actors develop understandings about the opportunities that they face
through the practice of narrative. This narrative practice is an integral aspect in the process of
pragmatic liberation, or the practice of liberation, through which social movement actors seek
to empower themselves and a wider audience of constituents. Even during time periods in
which there is less political likelihood that the movement will achieve its goals, movement
activists are able to mobilize constituencies by constructing narratives of opportunity outside of
the material realm. A more diverse system of narrative practice that is rooted in multiple types
of opportunity facilitates greater diversity in movement mobilization.