

A METAPHYSICAL EVOLUTION: REALIZING A SPIRITUALIZED (IN)VISIBLE
ACTIVIST THEORY

A THESIS

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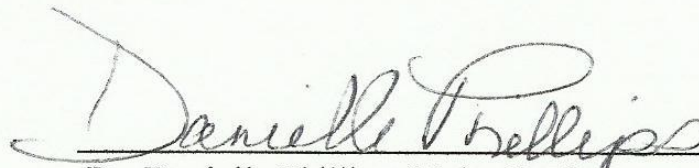
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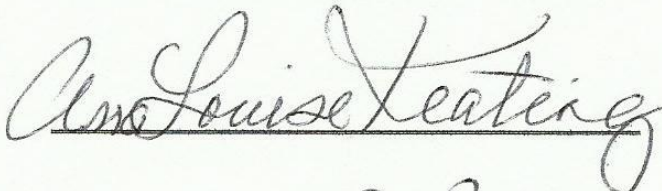
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To the Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Patience Funmilayo Osume entitled "A Metaphysical Evolution: Realizing a Spiritualized (In)visible Activist Theory." I have examined this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Women's Studies.



Dr. Danielle Phillips, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:




Department Chair

Accepted:


Interim Dean of the Graduate School

DEDICATION

For all those who commit to an act of humanity, without cause for recognition while striving to exist in the midst of overwhelming obstacles, thank you.

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ABSTRACT

PATIENCE FUNMILAYO OSUME

A METAPHYSICAL EVOLUTION: REALIZING A SPIRITUALIZED (IN)VISIBLE ACTIVIST THEORY

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When I think about the term “*invisibility*,” I cannot help but draw from memory about the social and political effects invisibility has inflicted upon marginalized and subjugated groups, such as women, the disabled, or people of color(s). I reflect on how the term “invisibility” can be utilized to generate greater awareness of the self through social performance, such as acts of humanity. These acts of human consideration allows for the observation of human interconnectivity and at some instances place doubts on varying notions of communal support that emerge during social interaction. The intent of my thesis is to expand on this idea: to develop a theory that not only redefines invisibility as a progressive term whereby its meaning shifts from how we perceive the word, but by drawing from the practice of metaphysics as a means to emphasize that being actively (in)visible can be a form of spiritual activism.

Therefore, I redefine ‘invisibility’ by enclosing ‘in’ into brackets (in), which I characterize as the internalization of change within the self and (Visibility) [lower or upper cased] as a reflection of this internalization, which can be understood as a self-projection of social change. My theory aims to identify how the individual(s) execute acts

of humanity that function as ways to create social awareness as “unseen” activism. I define a *Spiritualized (In)visible Activism* as a precarious engagement of a divine awakening for critical cognizance dedicated to social change, expressed within a secular framework, which can be expressed as an embodiment of being actively (in)visible. I discuss how the variance of the self suggests that the willingness to act is based upon personalized virtues, such as kindness, and not as a ritualized performance, like social advancement. I also discuss what makes up the components and externalities of being actively (in)visible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION: ENVISIONING (IN)VISIBILITY, SPIRITUALITY, AND PRACTICE	1
Chapter Summary	3
Theoretical Inspirations	4
II. INTEGRATING (IN)VISIBILITY WITH SOCIAL PERFORMANCE	13
III. SPIRITUALITY AS SOCIAL CHANGE	32
Externalities of an (In)visible Activist Theory	33
Criteria's/Characteristics.....	39
IV. EXTENDING SOCIAL THOUGHTS ON PERFORMANCE	43
V. CONTINUOUS REFLECTIONS	48
WORK CITED.....	50

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. The stages of conocimiento	5

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: ENVISIONING (IN)VISIBILITY, SPIRITUALITY, AND PRACTICE

“Go placidly amid the noise and haste,
and remember what peace there may be in silence.
As far as possible, without surrender, be on good
terms with all persons.
Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to
others, even to the dull and ignorant; they too have
their story.

--Max Ehrmann

Explorations about human treatment appear as an interdependent component to the notion of social performance, but the realities of oppression and struggle, which overlap within varying moments where acts of kindness emerge to inform us that ideas like tolerance and difference. These ideas become necessary elements that expand our individual experience. These ideas also influence how we perceive human connectivity; thus, words like “invisibility” define the modes in which we choose to acknowledge the other. However, feelings and actions like fear and violence become expressive contagions that intensify any stage of social interaction, which further confirm our cultural ascent or decline. The excerpt from Max Ehrmann imparts a cognitive response to the instability of human understanding about difference—by undertaking a metaphysical outlook, like silence, a sense of self-performance emerges as an affirmation of one’s existence. In this thesis, I will discuss the ideas that encourage some people to engage with movements of

social change, which tend to degenerate into egocentric ideologies, like social capital or direct reciprocity and create varying levels of social disconnect. Then again, I also explore how acts of kindness demonstrate form of social transformation through (in)visibility. Again, I redefine ‘invisibility’ by enclosing ‘in’ into brackets (in), which I characterize as the internalization of change within the self and (Visibility) [lower or upper cased] as a reflection of this internalization, which can be understood as a self-projection of social change.

(In)visibility operates on a multidimensional perspective that allows social transformation is envisioned within a womanist praxis, spiritual activism, and social performance. Through this alternative lens, we broaden our attentions to see how other sites of existence incorporate varying levels of action/emotion that emulate a true-to-life experience, such as social performances. I utilize three theoretical inspirations: Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept *Conocimiento*, Thich Nhat Hanh’s teachings on *Mindfulness*, and Layli Maparyan’s principles about *Vibration*, illustrate how an (in)visible activist theory constructed upon spirituality bolsters explorations in social performance. As I use the term “(in)visible” represented as a state of existence within varying uncertainty and arriving to a sense of actuality. I bracket the prefix to elaborate on how transformation occurs first within the self, the space between “(in)” and “visible” represents the pathway through which transformation shifts within the self and then materializes outwardly.

A spiritualized (in)visible activism attempts to focus on how the emission of vibrational energies can result from practices such as *conocimiento* and mindfulness. These forms of practices perceived not only for the variance of individual cognizance, but through the merging of both culminates in being actively (in)visible. The inner working of (in)visibility identifies the moments when self-transformation moves outwardly from the self as a way of transforming and/or deserting the other and the environment. This presents an opportunity where self-transformation emerges through the mindfulness of all others, by transcending the repetitive discourse within everyday encounters. ⁱ

Chapter Summary

In chapter one of my thesis, I expand on the theoretical frameworks that inspired my redefinition of invisibility as a term grounded within a metaphysical condition, by exploring how (in)visibility redefined as a research exploration extends the discussions about activism through social performance. In chapter two, I discuss the literary background for why and how some individuals engage in the endeavor to help others in order to create social change, but also reveal that some forms of social performance are required to fashion varying levels of collective solidarity. Individuals use channels, like social capital, community, and mutual benefits, as defining points for individual/civic-engagement. In chapter three, I expand on my research methods, as externalities of an (in) visible activist theory such as, the self-reflexive process, the criteria's and

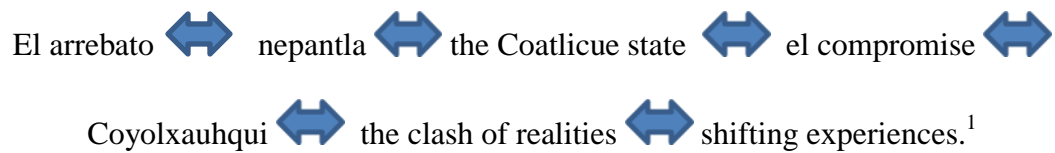
characteristics that involves creating the staging process for a social performance within an (in)visible activist theory.

In chapter four and five, I engage in discussions about the implications of (in)visibility as a social performance theory and propose a continuous solution-focus dialogue on how organizational strategies within social movements can reflect a genuine obligation that works towards acknowledging difference from a larger perspective. Hence, activities, such as mindfulness and *conocimiento*, encourage individual participation, by allowing the practitioners to recognize the opportunity for civic engagement to emerge from a dubious source, like an act of kindness, which works from the self in order to comprehend that human struggle is interconnected.

Theoretical Inspirations

Gloria Anzaldúa's concept *conocimiento* illustrates radical altruism because the self, empowered through the transference of empathy reaches across all boundaries of difference. Anzaldúa defines *conocimiento* as an activity where the self accomplishes such actions while surviving the traumas of the lived experience, by developing an imaginal-spiritual/political version of reality in conjunction with all others (571). I focus on this process of social interaction because it emphasizes that human connectivity, while negotiating the avenues that entail sharing knowledge, draws one's attention toward a multivariate level, by breaking out of our constricted senses. This framework withstands

all manners of the status quo that restrict human agency. I emphasize that the internalized-self generates tactics and strategies that exemplify the desire for self-actualization in relation to others.



The seven stages of *conocimiento* as illustrated above depict Anzaldúa’s emphasis on how the self negotiates movement while engrossed within the harsh realities of the lived experience. I broaden the framework of *conocimiento*, by partitioning the seven stages into two main stages of social performance: conflict and resolution. These stages of performance depict a radical conversion in which the self engages in a purging process that confronts reality as a lived and relived pain.

The first stage, *conflict* consists of Anzaldúa’s term *el arrebató*, which she defines as a “violent attack or a rift with a loved one,” (546) which I visualize as the various social violence i.e. institutionalized xenophobia exacted upon the self. Her second term, *nepantla*, which she defines as the struggle between the self and self-expression that culminates to a dichotomous consciousness (548), provides the stage to illustrate how emotion and action are intertwined ideas that aid or restrict movement. I describe this

¹ The seven stages of *conocimiento* observed as a pathway of knowing are interchangeable and can occur at varying instants (546-670).

dichotomous consciousness as a rupture of the self from one's origin, a performance that identifies and portrays the symbolic externalities that affect the self. Anzaldúa's third term *the Coatlicue state*, which she depicts as social unconsciousness and the fourth term, *el compromiso*, the clash of representation (546-670) are recounted as interplay of the self and the other grappling for their existence within the larger social structure. The stage of conflict concentrates on the progression of radical change and recognition of flaw personified as physical epitomes.

The second stage, resolution consists of *Coyolxauhqui*, which Anzaldúa describes as a process of rewriting one's history; (558-9) however, I reframe as recreating one's fragmented piece of existence as a performance that moves towards illustrate the various literary archetypes that affirm one's social and political history. Anzaldúa's phase of *the clash of realities*, she describes as the emotions that are emerge from the overwhelming experience of every day struggle (563), which I construct on a stage that gives spaces for social actors to witness social conflicts as notions that are hinged between the seen and unseen realms of existence. Finally, the phase of *shifting realities*, which she describes as a moment or moments where transformation becomes a site of knowledge, by using the knowledge achieved as a means to navigate movement within society (568-9). I envision Anzaldúa's concept of shifting realities as a transformation within a dramatic framework. The stage of *resolution* involves bringing the notion of performance full circle whereby the components of suffering or agony from the lived experience recognizes the error

within dominant societal ethos, which results in the essence of liberation whereby the self becomes critically awakened.

Ultimately, the dynamic performance that emerges within these two stages is the groundwork for which (in) visible activism concentrates on individual action and the structures that hinders movement, which proves that the lived experience is a continuous staging and restaging of social performance. For instance, the platform “el arrebato,” (546) which I would refer to as social violence centers on the interplay of action- demonstrated as a “violent attack, rift with a loved one, illness, death in the family, betrayal, systematic racism and marginalization” (Anzaldúa 546-47). This lived experience illustrated as a split of the self from its place of familiarity and a thrust into a fragmented state of existence, presents the self “positioned within a continuous dialectical encounter with different stories, situations, and people” (Anzaldúa 546-47). This position exemplifies the progression of consequence, freedom, and agency, by transfiguring practices of resistance that entail a “collective dream and consensus reality” (Anzaldúa 546-47). That is why, within this level of performance, by being actively (in) visible one can observe an individual’s endeavor from a position of awareness generates a connection to the other by expressing one’s struggles.

In essence, the inception of an active (in)visibility occurs from being the other- one who sifts through the shattered state of existence, by identifying the self as the other

from a state of consideration, which illustrates that change requires an internal dialogue that emerges as an astute action. Anzaldúa's spiritual conversion of the self within the stages of *conocimiento* gives emphasis to the notion that while individual movement occurs in relation to others, social themes, like space, which impart the symbolic boundaries that support specified actions and behaviors becomes part of cultural tradition.

At the same time, the idea behind symbolic boundaries and space place restriction on the development of genuine practices of acceptance. Richard Schechner asserts that actions, like violence, become a means to redirect attentions from the physical to symbolic boundaries when created restrict and determine access, which also in turn maintains hierarchy (57). Hence, (in) visible activist theory could be used to distinguish how some spaces, like the workspace and public space, overlap into social units, like the family. However, the traditional notion of collectivism hinges upon agreed ritual actions within a given space, by expanding the idea that solidarity can be achieved through maintaining practices of sameness; thus, the structure of uniformity and the physical structures are places where- thought and action that emerge as a ritual that carries discourse from one solution-based idea to another.

Within this framework of transference, a ritualized structure within *conocimiento* illustrates the relationality of struggle, which becomes vibrational because through that lens of connectivity the practice of mindfulness emerges as a form of healing. A

spiritualized (in) visible activist approach studies how the self navigates the range of action/emotion within the lived-experience. Along these lines, Thich Nhat Hanh in *A Lifetime of Peace* expands on the impact of the lived-encounter from an internalized perspective, as a realization that extends from the body and the mind, which ultimately generates inner healing. Hence, chapter two of my thesis expands on how the internalized effort of mindfulness develops into to a commitment to a performance of “conscious living, breathing, walking, seeing, witnessing, and listening” (Hanh 73). I draw attention to how the self willfully maintains direct and constant relativity with the body and the environment. The act of mindfulness presents an opportunity where the self and the other can be transformed, by distinguishing that the performance of mindfulness is like the planting of a seed that requires daily care. For this reason, a spiritual (in) visible activist concept operates as a cultivator of consciousness that pays close attention to the moments where internal shifts identify as the self-being mindful of others.

Hanh declares, “Mindfulness is an important agent of our transformation and healing, but our seed of mindfulness has been buried under many layers of forgetfulness and pain” (149). By staging how a binary opposition engages the self in a continuous internalized struggle, illustrated within Hanh’s idea of the “two opposing selves,” (4) we examine how the self struggles to define and redefine what constitutes right and wrong to reconcile peace with the other (4). For instance, discussions about how to regulate gun control laws present individuals at polar oppositions on the Constitutional right to bear

arms and gun violence being viewed because of human nature. Consequently, an internalized opposition also sets the stage for how Westernized concepts of freedom and representation address and disseminate the notion of difference into confined boxes of existence. I emphasize that my concept of (in) visible activism endeavors to construct and reconstruct a cultural- relationship, by not overlooking reoccurring patterns of oppressions, but building upon those patterns to illustrate ideals of control as moments where a “*make believe*” or “*make belief*”² (Schechner 42) performance develops. Thus, a spiritualized (in) visible activist theory seeks to examine symbolic boundaries, like social roles, that influence one’s identity within everyday encounters that allows action to be conveyed as a make believe or make belief performance.

Thich Nhat Hanh’s five aggregates: “form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness of being,” (4) when utilized exemplifies a state of existence experienced by many individuals, histories, like systematic oppression are moments where those fixated memories observed as spiritual constraints that distance the self and the other. Thus, this position of reality does not allow room for change. Hanh also asserts, “How could we continue to live if we were changeless? To live, we must die every instant; we must perish again and again in the storms that make life possible” (8). In essence, the continues experience of interactional struggle as a constant reality that

² A *make belief* act focuses on intentionally blurring the lines between boundaries that influence a spiritual, social, and/or political engagement. While on the other, a *make believe* act maintains the distinctions between those boundaries (Schechner 42).

allows for change, but one that emerges from a genuine encounter involves using one's body, emotions, knowledge of the other, and presumptions, and reason from a stance as a means to comprehend the variance in social conflict.

I highlight on this model of awareness because an active (in)visibility demonstrates this positioning, as a process that observes how social awareness operates as an increase of the spirit within that reaches out to close the cracks between the self and the other. Layli Maparyan delineates that “applied metaphysics,” (121) an outcome that identifies that “feelings and actions are not isolated and disjointed moments outside the cycles of life, but integral parts of the universe” (Marmysz 31). Similarly, an externality of applied metaphysics focuses on the principle of performing miracles or vibration generated as the emission of energy, an unseen force that flows within all beings, such as the inception to act against injustice becomes an emotive performance to examine. However, it is also important to acknowledge that while some individuals may not be willing to act on intuition, some individuals are guided by a personalized ethos, reason, and /or empathy.

Vibration is ruled by principles that transport all thoughts, emotions, and ideals outwardly. Maparyan articulates vibration as a set of laws that are governed by mathematical ethics that identify the patterns, levels of consciousness, and ranges in frequencies (122). For the most part, the essence of vibration allows for the transmission

of action and emotive responses to be experienced on a dynamic level that allows interaction to be transmuted as a conscious engagement that vibrates either a positive or a negative energy. Vibration evolves within a two-step system: the inner/ “the self and outer work/ the world” (Maparyan 12). In using Maparyan’s categorization of vibration, I attempt to envision how the self emits vibration to alter one’s immediate surroundings because the desire to act and how that desire becomes an acknowledgment of matching those energetic or vibrational emissions outwardly to others and our environment through social performance.

CHAPTER II

INTEGRATING (IN)VISIBILITY WITH SOCIAL PERFORMANCE

Prior and present research efforts on social change suggest that notions of charity are endorsed or rejected due to the collective action problem (Willer), upstream and spatial reciprocity (Nowak and Roch), and the expansion of social capital (Putnam). They impart valid arguments about why individuals choose to engage in social movements and/or activist groups. In spite of their observations, I assert that the dynamic relationship occurs between individual/collective performance, participation, and social movements, which I perceive within a metaphysical framework and offer that the notion that the self and the other are entities contingent upon each other, and independent.

The bodies of literature I engage with reveal that the reasons individuals take part in social movements as a means to exhibit human connectivity have shifted over time. By placing works on spiritual activism, social capital, and the dramatics in conversation with how civic engagement is measured, I present a different perspective to how social movements have become grand visible dramatics integral to social transformation. Along these lines, I also make a parallel to Maparyan's notion, "the triad of concern" (36), which she describes as a pathway that connects and expands the human-to-human, human to nature and human to spiritual relationships (35). Hence, there lies a deeper association

to why individuals seek to gain membership into specific social groups as a means to demonstrate social solidarity.

As previously discussed, Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of *conocimiento* exemplifies a conversion in which self-transformation occurs from an aspect of understanding one's own despair through thought and action, and how that internalized energy moves outward. Anzaldúa's description of "nepantla," a process that engages in "seeing through human acts both individual and collective, allows you to examine the ways you construct knowledge, identity, and reality, and explore how some of your/others' constructions violate other peoples' ways of knowing and living" (544). In this fashion, an (in)visible activist theory observes the disruption when self-awareness should come out form engagements with the other comes across the other during moments, like in "nepantla." Anzaldúa's theory sets the stage for how the inner workings of the lived experience vary in terms of situational conditions, while an (in)visible activism silently, but purposefully engages individual(s) in ways that speak to the complexity of why one's utilizes a specific belief/choice system.

Nevertheless, I recognize that my preconceptions frame the foundation of this thesis, particularly how I use the term (in)visibility as a progressive approach to observing social transformation. By no means do I argue for the erasure of other scholars' critiques on the historical effects of invisibility upon marginalized individuals and

groups. For this reason, in this paper invisibility is redefined as (in)visibility that examines social acts as critical reflections of the self that shape identity, which may restrict or broaden social interaction. Even so, this definition does not cling onto extreme “idealistic” notions of social change, but attempts to delineate a clear understanding that only through accepting our individual differences can genuine change emerge.

(In)visible activism presumes that social awareness is a discernible commitment to social change, but transmitted as active (in)visibility. Active (in)visibility observes acts of kindness as a form of mindfulness that not only draws on the interconnectedness of all being/non-beings as a means to create social awareness, but encompass a third space that examines difference in relation to the larger surroundings. The act of observation can take place during any degree of social encounter, such as, minor small talk to large topics about social injustice but is dependent upon being undetected by all others.

The emphasis on spirituality as social awareness highlights how notions of the unseen guide our actions and interactions; thus, mindfulness described as an aware state of living-that becomes an impressed example of committing to a deed without any foreseeable incentive enact notions of human connectivity. (In)visible activism involves creating stages of interaction to envision transformative change as a performance through the mindfulness of all others, which in due course, I hope, transforms the world. Therefore, I emphasize that the concealed dimensions of existence are influenced by

visible dominant cultural traditions that shape our perceptions and senses. By examining the exchange of social interaction within acts of human connectivity, I explore how certain performances convey deeper extensions of the self.

This thesis focuses on aspects of individual to group forms of participation in practices like volunteering that promote a specific type of desired collective action. Notions of reciprocity and solidarity are perceived as conditional outcomes that further enhance individual participation. I underlined the conditions that empower individuals to participate, by reflecting on why varying levels of engagement also become situations that reproduce the social issues that plague society in the first place. All the same, the notion of collective participation are extended into other areas of existence, which further alters how the self engages with contexts of spirituality, acts of kindness, and social performance.

I draw from Nowak and Roch's arguments that propose studying reciprocity as a random walk within general social and public networks, which they situate as "the idea that a person, who has just received help, may not only help one other person...but also several other people" (608). Thus, the purpose for examining the notion of mutuality from a larger social framework further extends my inclinations about how do one-person offers other persons help that allows the notion of reciprocity to become an explosive increase in acts of kindness. This a benign contagion manifests from an internalized

desire for change to be realized within society, by acknowledging that change can happen even in small-undulated outcomes.

Activism has been historically observed as grand public and collective acts against or in support of oppressive structures. I explore a different perspective of activism by considering the transformative possibilities of individual civic participation, such as acts of kindness, by situating how such moments can be observed as activism. I expand on how performances of considerations for others are a self-internalized outlook on social change as an attempt to shift perceptions about grandiose ideas of social action. This form of social action becomes a more doable and self-realized act that can be exemplified through the merging of the self, spirituality, and activism. Thus, the practice of piety is not based upon the acknowledgment of others as a selfless act, but by employing (in)visibility as a progressive term that examines how emotion shapes our ability to perceive, sense, and discern words that generate specified meanings, which guide our actions.

Maparyan proposes a similar encounter in which she describes as “the Creative Presence,” (35) whereby humans as creators express and construct the interrelated networks of the divine and secular, interaction becomes a creative and ongoing process (41). This is not to disassociate how notions of invisibility have influenced and shaped the lives of many marginalized and subjugated individuals or the research endeavors that

use invisibility as a means to emphasize the absence of concern by institutional and social structures.

However, I aim to develop a theoretical model that redefines the term “invisibility,” by modifying the overlaid meaning of “being unseen” to “being active,” which examines a different standpoint to how sometimes change may have to take an inconspicuous position for its effects to be continuously experienced. This engagement suggests that some individuals can utilize (in)visibility as a radical act that examines how social practices are contingent upon specified beliefs and/or emotions that shape our participation within social movements. I draw from discussions on substantive areas, like social capital, collectivity, freedom, and reciprocity, which are central components to my argument that some acts of performance influence individual participation in the first place. In addition, I enlarge the discussions about voluntary associations, by inserting that there lies a dynamic interplay between the metaphysical and acts of compassion that allow for symbolic boundaries to emerge as warrant but varied emotional reactions.

However, these boundaries are essential to observing how some social contexts seem to require a realistic, rational, or emotional response. For instance, the control and demonization of Black bodies in printed media provide a blueprint for how some individuals choose to associate specified ideologies of representation as real and factual to the larger Black populace. The concept of representation proposes a symbolic

circumstance, such as blackness equates to dirtiness, as an ascribed characteristic that become generally accepted and observed as existential fact. The notion of the self within the identification process generates a symbolic category that encompasses meanings in a “threefold relationship between the individual, a response, and a social act” (Mead 356) and each are independent within the reality of interaction. Therefore, “an individual’s gesture is meaningful, or significant, only if it elicits the desired response from the person to whom it is directed” (Mead 356). The self within a given circumstance reveals individual action as a pivot and symbolic act.

Maparyan’s *triad of concern* (36) emphasizes the interplay of reaction patterns, which she describes as a pathway to perceiving the forces that operate between the seen and unseen sides of existence. These pathways of examination allow interconnectivity to be viewed from a wider perspective, unlike human relationships, which evolve from a one-side view. This outlook seeks to embrace other schemes of creation such as, spirituality and nature, as a path to vibrational transformation (36). (In)visibility extends this form interworking by focusing on the human-spiritual-nature relationships as a performance source that emphasize how some action, like self-negative encounters, generate a physical disconnect from all others. Maparyan claims that by embracing and practicing the concept of vibration we recognize that everything generates a frequency; how we produce that frequency, which ranges from positive/negative becomes the indicator of how we “coordinate our practice of vibrational based change with that of

others” (123). The concept of vibrational transformation concentrates on how interconnectivity can be generated and transferred, by discerning the actions and emotions that further affirm the human condition within a Westernized context. An (in)visibility practice seeks to harness the concept of vibration through social interaction as a means to reflect a level of authenticity that is real and recognizable.

In *Blowing Alone*, (2000) Robert D. Putnam underlines the growing numbers of reproduced discourse and agents of control. I aim to offer a different perspective to the discussion of social change and collectivism. I will examine how social capital, upstream reciprocity, freedom, and collectivity highlight on why and how some individuals freely choose to remain detached from aggrandized notions of altruism, volunteering, and philanthropy. This logic also suggests that some individuals engage in activism through philanthropy and volunteering as a way to expand aspects of selfhood, which allows the self to generate social capital or direct reciprocity. I argue that “the self” negotiates identity and is dependent on the context of social engagement: hence, I draw upon Mead’s social framework of the “I” and “me” to better expand on how boundaries become representative of the social products, which develop into cultural traditions.

The emphasis focuses on how individuals convey certain types of behaviors during a social encounter, as an attempt to generate social transformation, which is connected to social construction and variance of selfhood, and (in)visibility. I also argue

that the act of ritual shapes the self within specified spaces, such as within the academy. There, notions like freedom and agency become empowering words that aid the self in realizing and/or experiencing resistance, openness, and/or neutrality when expressing ideals that are different from the norm. A ritualized performance can be viewed as how acts shift from thoughts to actions, which occur on a subconscious level that over time results in merging of both forms. In addition, I also expand on my ideas about activism by juxtaposing theoretical works on metaphysical practice, freedom, and the self.

I draw from Putnam's claims (2000) about civic engagement in which he revealed that a high growth of American voluntary associations divided into three bases: church, work, and community, were sects where more groups continued to emerge claiming to give voice to social difference (49). Putnam also indicated a degree of hastiness for individuals to participate with the cultural and political structures that influence public viewpoints about the importance of large organizations (49). Imaginably, the notion of membership dealing with benevolence has shifted and taken a more political agenda. However, the literature reviewed for this section of my thesis revealed that the idea of being "visible" in all sense of the word has been fractioned down to limiting human existence as a grouping process whereby symbolic boundaries, like patterns of social exclusion, emotionally influence how individuals subjectively perceive difference. Lamont and Molnár confirm that "only when symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon can they take on a constraining character and pattern social interaction in important

ways” (168-69). Their assertions about how symbolic boundaries affects every facet of social interaction draw parallel to my inclinations about how the dichotomous production of group interactions that supports ideas of monetary gain, stratified sameness, and isolation occur within movements for social change. Perhaps the social boundaries that we create to motivate calls for social justice further detach issues like, poverty or discrimination that affect difference because some processes of grouping are established upon the fact that we are “free” to engage in concepts that categorize the self and the other into “*us*” versus “*them*.” Therefore, I propose an alternate way of examining social interaction within the context of how we construct movements of social change, by rethinking about the individual perceptions that blur the lines between the personal and communal.

There are many reasons for why individuals engage in one social movement or another, and it may seem that at some point we acknowledge that our existence or experiences are not created within a self-enclosed vacuum. The effort to move towards reinforcing social and communal bonds based upon social capital does not guarantee that acts of oppression or subjugation will cease to exist. Putnam claims that one’s readiness to engage in acts of altruism, volunteering, and/or philanthropy is centered upon the measurement of the social capital gained (116). Hence, by examining the historical displacement of civic engagement we observe that social connectivity has been critically redefined in terms of capitalizing on human kindness. Putnam’s longitudinal data

highlights the decline in individual participation in groups of social action, which emphasized why this participation decrease had occurred. I elaborate on his findings as a realization that perhaps the historical idea of what constitutes civic engagement should be redefined in terms of maintaining human connectivity as an (in)visible approach that concedes the variance in difference to exist, by doing away with visible, yet constrictive boundaries.

Putnam also reveals that “with the invention of new techniques for stimulating financial giving by ordinary Americans—such as, the community chest, the community foundation, and the gradual professionalization of fund-raising and volunteer management. The number of community chests exploded from 39 nationwide in 1920 to 1,318 by 1950, covering 57 percent of the U.S. population” (117). Putnam’s statistical findings further reiterate why social capital has redefined collectivity as a reflection of individual and spiritual disconnect from others, which is a significant contribution to why social conditions, like educational debt or wealth disparities, cultivate an exclusionary and selective communities.

At the same time, ideas about community such as, mutual obligations and social connections are also, what Putnam suggests guides to how some individuals develop social capital. In addition, Fulkerson and Thompson (2008) theorize social capital as an evolutionary “notion that intellectual ideas progress in a cyclical pattern (i.e., old wine in

new bottles)” (537). Thus, social capital has become a paradigm that creates two kinds of competing and overlapping sites: normative social capitalists and resource social capitalists, which are incentives that influence individual participation, and become part of collective action (540). In other words, the resource social capitalist site draws attention to how specific performances function as a process that guides individuals to enact certain actions or rituals of treatment that affirm their accumulation of power. In other words, an extreme act of affirmation of status displays how an individual can be a supporter of inequality due to their distorted view of collectivity.

Principles of interactionist and conflict tradition highlight on how collective oppression continues to be sustained within long-established paradigms, like political and social systems, which illustrate how the pattern of power and prestige becomes an engrained idealization within collective action. For example, Fulkerson and Thomas (2008) assert that an individual joins an organization as a means to make friends with other members and by doing so expands her/his friendship network, which in turn becomes a resource that is interchangeable with other forms of capital.

Along this same vein, collectivity within a network of friendship appears to be based upon the idea that sameness in thoughts, beliefs, or ethics is the path to human solidarity. Willer’s research on “the collective action problem” draws parallel to illustrate how activism or collective participation has shifted from being about human connectivity

to ideals that maintain and promote the notion of reward, emphasizing the attainment of social status, and the benefits of self-sacrifice (2009). I believe that “the collective problem” stems from redefining collectivity as not only being a group of individuals coming together to serve a similar course of engagement, but a group of different individuals connecting to one or more particular social issue and coming together for a specified time to address those issues. Hence, collectivity should be observed as a short-term commitment and not a long-term engagement. I also recognize that my preconceptions about activism influence my definition of collectivity; I do not discount the great and many works that many collective groups have achieved. I offer a different perspective to the conceptualization of collectivity as part of my framework in redefining (in)visibility. By highlighting how collective action can be redefined through research that illustrates that collectivity and human connectivity have become separate instead of contingent upon each other.

I expound on Willer’s research study 4, which focused on how gaining status encouraged group contributions, (35) in which he revealed that status and reward were the defining factors to why individuals participate in-group contributions. The notion of status carries conceptualized ideas about hierarchy. Ultimately, I suggest that by redefining the old-established framework of what comprises collectivity, we are able to move towards collective action that not only acknowledges difference, but also builds upon the fact that individual difference is what represents community and not sameness.

The notion of status elaborates that as groups pay respect to individuals for their contributions to group efforts, the group in turn conveys that respect for the individual by encouraging group-oriented behaviors. This shifts the dynamics within macro-level occurrences, such as identification and solidarity, to a broad relevance to collective action, and binds individual concern for respect and social standing as collective action (Willer 26). On this basis, I assert that the idea of status has become a condition that further dissociates individuals from realistic notions of collectivity; “victims of long-term subordination and marginalization [have been ignored] because they have ‘failed’ to pull themselves out of a culture of distrust and have thus been unable to develop the ability to act collectively” (Fulkerson and Thompson 540). This thought also acknowledges the implications of why exclusionary tactics are created upon extreme concepts about collectivism, but its benefits are for a chosen few. All the same, collectivity within the framework of a spiritualized (in)visible activism generates a space whereby individuals are not only able to redefine collective action as an individual act, but realize that from a single exchange of compassion, change can emerge as a single source that creates a transmittable cycle.

The framework of reciprocity reveals that in carrying out an act of kindness, a mutual effect occurs that allows action, comprehended as the intent of being, which manifests in varying ways. Nowak and Roch’s assertions about direct reciprocity offer another perspective to examine how collective actions are acts of cooperation that emerge

as repeated encounters between individuals as principles of ‘I help you and you help me’ (605). They not only acknowledge reciprocity as acts of kindness that can generate a means of social change, but more so the idea of upstream reciprocity a more difficult evolutionary perspective to comprehend (605). Upstream reciprocity can be described as humane acts that originate from an indiscriminate state of being (Nowak & Roch 607). However, outside this framework, the notion of (in)visibility examines how the vibration of kindness becomes a ripple effect of reciprocity, by studying the different ways in which individuals choose to enhance or diminish cooperation.

(In)visible activism observed as an act of freedom from discursive control is perceived in relational terms for the “distinctive patterns of power and vulnerability;” (Pettit 66) thus, the self in relation to others may or may not be entirely a discourse-friendly engagement. However, Nowak and Roch emphasize such an engagement as ‘imitation updating,’ in that individuals indiscriminately assess their position in proximity to others within their community (607) proves that movements of spiritual social change are necessary to counteract the belief that collectivity and solidarity are achieved through self-centered means or the perpetuation of sameness.

The notions of reciprocity is defined through interaction that allows some individuals to factor their place within society as an effective approach in order to lend a helping hand, but are guided by the notion of gratitude. Gratitude becomes the (in)visible

force that propels individuals to act with the principle of mutuality with no regard for dispositions, such as race and/or sexuality. For example, Nowak and Roch assert that “gratitude may be the key to understanding upstream reciprocity; our analysis demonstrates that gratitude and other positive emotions, which enhance the willingness to help..., can evolve by natural selection” (608). On the one hand Nowak and Roch claim that individual gratitude can be a solution to collective action, while on the other hand, they observe gratitude as a physical choice, which exemplifies that freedom is also a prerequisite to action. Essentially, freedom is not only a physical choice, but also an emotional and spiritual determination that engages an individual to act with reason.

The idea of freedom is an extension of one’s power and self that allows the process of interacting with the other become a definitive struggle that hinders the dynamic of generating social capital and motivating collectivity and upstream reciprocity. The freedom to interact enhances the notion of why many individuals, like people of color(s), are not bestowed with the shared belief that if ‘I help you [then] you help me’ (605). Her/his existences are not negated; thus, freedom can be observed as an advantageous principle that is implemented by a chosen few.

In *A Theory of Freedom* (2001), Phillip Pettit claims that freedom occurs within three overlapping characteristics that conceptualize freedom as a “discursive control, rational control, and a volitional control” (65). Pettit explains that freedom, as a rational

control is a theory of free action that perceives the self and the other. Whereas freedom as a volitional control is a theory of “the free self and only by extension, [freedom is] a theory of free action and the free person” (65). However, freedom explored as a discursive control not only shapes social perception about marginalized and subjugated individuals within the larger framework of grouping and collective action, but also intensifies how the context of freedom within specified social structures, like stratification, influence and manipulate how some individuals are perceived. Freedom as a discursive control places some restrictions upon how some individuals choose to participate within collective action and social movements.

Freedom as a discursive control particularizes that freedom grants an individual agency, but permits freedom in a sense that will be consistent with her/his undergoing the discursive influences of others (Pettit 70). Thus, Pettit argues that discourse arises as a duality that can be examined as encompassing relational and ratiocinative characteristics. Ultimately, freedom illustrates how “distinctive patterns of power and vulnerability” (Pettit 66) emerge, as a result of the self being unable to relate to the other, and this engagement may or may not be entirely discourse friendly.

Therefore, a spiritualized (in)visible activist theory endeavors to illuminate individual and collective freedom as separate entities from religious fundamentalism and political nationalism, which encourage the steadiness of societal disconnect and the

suppression of social transformation. As a result, I redefine freedom as an individual(s) purpose to enact continuous and vibrational transformation through the lived-recognition of difference, by replacing practices of conformity and separatism with forms of spirituality. This alternative way of thinking about the self and choices is the foundation of spiritualized (in)visible activism.

Social capital, collectivity, upstream and spatial reciprocity, and freedom are viewed as concepts that motivate some social movements to develop structures that do not function as separate entities from the larger construction of ritualized performances. However, the conception that if a small group of people come together to create some level of social change; these individuals should be viewed as pieces from the same cloth, cut exactly to the same specifications, is unbelievable. On the one hand, grouping creates an atmosphere that allows ideas, like collectivism and social capital, present an occasion when the self can reconceptualize facets of identity, increase the lived-experience, and generate social connections.

While on the other hand, grouping also influences how self-performance can become absorbed by one's positioning within a group. For this reason, collective action conveys to the individual that the notion of reward, an inevitable and required condition stipulates respect be achieved through any monetary means. Hence, the basic idea that human respect is a state of being that internally draws from the self, by deflecting similar

ideas/thoughts outwardly. Therefore, an act of compassion provides an alternate approach to suggest that some individuals may draw upon the notion that survival of all sentient beings is contingent upon creating a rippled effect of concern by extending a helping hand.

CHAPTER III

SPRITIUALITY AS SOCIAL CHANGE

In this chapter of my thesis, I discuss in what manner an act of kindness becomes an individualized practice of social change that gradually extends the notion of individual/inner spirituality, an unseen idea that over time becomes visible. As stated earlier, I define Spiritualized (In)visible Activism as an engagement enmeshed within a social performance context that emerges as a critical cognizance dedicated to social transformation. This form of observation expressed as an embodiment of active (in)visibility. My emphasis for exploring an act of kindness, as a facet of a social movement, not witnessed by large audiences is to extend the notion that such individualized acts over time shift into activism. This type of activism can also affect change on a global scale, observed not just as civic engagement or the monitoring of social identity, but also as radical altruism, my theoretical model queries to what end can selfless acts, like speaking out against violence and cruelty.

While previous literary studies in performance studies like Augusto Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed* shed new light on the varying forms of repression: bureaucracy, customs, politics, as sites where conflicts arise and influence the encounter between the self and the other become important components of the larger social, political, and economic constructs (25). However, researchers have not focused on how and why these

forms of repression function as systems that diminish individual and collective efforts against inequality, which epitomize components of any Greek tragedy (25). Boal asserts that the art of tragedy involves wo/man being part of nature whereby the achievement of objectives, like happiness or justice, are centered upon the correction of one's action; hence, catharsis, like cognizance become the end-purpose within the system of tragedy (27). In effect, an (in)visible activist theory sets the stage in conjunction with Augusto Boal's concept of 'Invisible Theatre'³ as a conjoined practice that examines the tragedy within social drama and performance.

Externalities of an (In)Visible Activist Theory

The organizations of traditional sociological approaches to the self connected with Goffman, Mead, and Foucault have enlarged our perspective about identity formation, power, and reflexivity. Poststructuralism and queer theory have now drawn our attentions to how the lived experience influences how 1.) *The self internalizes the potential for social change* and 2.) *How that change becomes a realized act*. I particularize these ideas within social interaction, as symbolic boundaries within a social context wherein (in)visibility become a reflective lens of self-awareness.

³ *'Invisible Theatre'* consists of the presentation of a scene in an environment other than the theatre, before people who are not spectators. The place can be a restaurant, a sidewalk, a market, a train, a line of people, etc. (Boal 213).

The exterior idea of an (in)visible activist theory argues that the relationships between the seen and unseen realms are overlapping spheres engrossed within notions of the dramatics. Therefore, I propose a dramatic exploration of spiritual practices as a way to diffuse the reoccurring patterns of a discursive interaction between the self and the other. Layli Maparyan writes that spiritual activism a, “transformational activity rooted in a spiritual belief system or set of spiritual practice” (119) pulls on the dynamics of the invisible world by emphasizing the spiritual connection between all beings (living/non-living). Hence, focusing on the external shifts that emerge because of self-recognition within a socio-experimental milieu, there are moments when (in)visibility will no longer be perceived as a progressive awareness, but as visible efforts initiated by the self during any encounter with the other.

An (in)visible activist theory extends the act of fluctuating ideas about social performance and practice by shifting the boundaries of presentation between the actors and audience members. This form of performance focuses on the aspect of spirituality as a process of intervention. With this understanding, the notion of vibration illustrates the patterns in which thoughts, emotions, and ideals generate a multileveled experience of simplicity and/or complexity. While such moments display a level of dramatics, which are considered as spectacle within Invisible Theatre, an active (in)visibility works toward determining how the inner/outer consciousness of the self and the self--realized other are transformed or unrecognizable through notions of the dramatics.

Equally, the invisible nature within Boal's form of theatre focuses on using the theatrical energy as a liberated process that affects social interaction (215), while the concept of an active (in)visibility uses the idea of vibration grounded within "spiritual constructionism" to extend social attentions from what constitutes or defines activism. Spiritual constructionism entails occupying a third position that observes how organized forces extend and reduce human affairs within an interconnected network of existence (Maparyan 40). Hence, I perceive that interconnectedness lies not only through examining physical interaction within a metaphysical framework, but also political and social settings. Therefore, an (in)visible activist theory integrates the theatrical energy within 'Invisible Theatre' comparable to the spiritual and creative energies in spiritual constructionism as a style of performance, individually unique, but socially predisposed.

Interactionists stress that the self and "the contingent nature of identity does not rest on the universality of the reflexive process, but the acceptance of the self process as universal does not mean that the self can simply be reduced to language; thus, stressing the primacy of social action" (Callero 120). While Callero highlights an important component of social acceptance of the self, I focus on how we perceive the self in connection and/or dissimilarity to others and the pre-established notion of social hierarchies. I assert that the reflexive process as an externality of (in)visibility surfaces as the lived-experience whereby reflexiveness involves--"the turning back of the experience of the individual upon her/himself—that the whole social process is thus brought into the

experience of the individuals involved in it” (Callero 119). In essence, while an individual’ identity entails being reflexive and coming to terms with varying social meanings attached to the self, reflexivity evolves within a series of happenings.

The variance of the self and the lived-experience provides an explorative framework in which we can examine how the historical social meanings about identity such as, blackness socially associated with uncleanliness, or disability as a contractible contagion. I place emphasis on the performance within these social meanings highlight on the restrictiveness of agency upon some individuals due to race or physical predisposition.

According to both Callero and Perinbanayagam, “like most other acting organisms, humans have a sophisticated system of signs and gestures that enable and constrain perception, reflection, and action” (120). In view of their thought, if comprehending the self rests on the process of reflexivity, my own view is that how do we negate language that has created a word system that supports the subjugation of difference in terms of external components such as race or gender, which influence social performance? It is apparent that “the self, conceived in ways that allow for agency, creative action, and the possibility of emancipatory political movements;” (Callero 120) then again, the self examined within a pragmatic framework whereby forces of dominance and control such as, the police/law pose as discursive or fragmentary products

further restrict the marginalized self to be perceived or understood. Thus, examining the marginalized self constructed within the spatial constraints of Westernized ideology, calls for the context of the self, conceptualized “one that extends beyond the immediate definition of the situation to include the historical and cultural settings where unarticulated assumptions about the nature of the person have their origin” (Callero 121). For this reason, I anticipate that current historical and cultural discussions about the self provide the contextual ideas to consider how the inner sphere as a private experience and the outer world as a public experience overlap at certain moments during social interaction. Hence, being actively (in)visible examines the interworking of these two spheres through social performance.

Active (in)visibility as an experiential idea, examines the self within the lived experience as a way to realize the internal and external shifts that emerge outwardly from the body and mind. Again, I expand on (in)visibility as a critical lens that examines the symbolic meaning-s within spatial boundaries, and the ways in which certain social actors explore spiritual practices such as, mindfulness, *conocimiento*, and/or vibration as processes for social change. I also suggest that our everyday acts of existence such as, walking and talking broaden our exploration for human connectivity from a visible engagement which operates on an (in)visible level, by maintaining direct and constant relativity with one’s own body, the other, and the environment. Particularly through the act of mindfulness, presents an opportunity for self-transformation while being

cognizance of the other. Maparyan asserts that, “human affairs, world conditions, and like, are as much a product of forces operation on the invisible side of reality as they are a product of forces operating on the visible side of reality” (36). Maparyan highlights on the symbolic contingent of invisible and visible acts. Hence, the driving and external force in being actively (in)visible is to explore how both outlooks of reality depict the conditions that influence individual action through creating a space where system of binaries, spectators, and/or extremists’ influence the dynamic interworking of social performance. I advocate for a different kind of social movement, guided not only by thoughts of human connectivity, but goes beyond the physical acknowledgement of difference. Then again, difference recognizes that the act of protest does not come from only creating a visible demonstration of opposition, which has already been predetermined by political infrastructures, but by fostering a metaphysical solidarity, in which bodily interactions become transformed. M. J. Alexander renders a similar engagement, by claiming that a metaphysical solidarity becomes the acknowledgment of difference, achieved through having a genuine hunger and desire to know the other (265). I wholeheartedly agree that the process of knowing as an external effort extends that fosters vibrational change, which requires addressing questions about the desire to know the other comes from recognizing the discrepancies within institutional and systematic categorization of individuals as a means that places the self and the other at oppositional ends.

Along the same lines of transforming social interaction, I also propose that the self consider reconfiguring how social movements are created and reposition individual attentions to sites unseen. Reed claims that “social movements-the unauthorized, unofficial, anti-institutional, collective action of ordinary citizens trying to change their world-have shaped our politics, our culture, and our political culture as much as any other single force” (xiii). Reed’s assertion places emphasis on how social movements have shaped our perception of all others and the world around us. However, I also do not presuppose that all individuals are receptive to notions of metaphysics, but I anticipate that based on the premise that religion has influenced varying aspects of our existence, the opportunity to propose a different course of action is vital to any movement/idea of social change.

Criteria’s/Characteristics

I particularize on the criteria and characteristics that frame the externalities for which a spiritualized (in)visible activist theory becomes a motivated form of social change. Social change, demonstrated as a social encounter between social actor(s) and spect-actor(s) through an elaborate staging of social drama. Similarly, to Augusto Boal’s dramatic exploration, which he describes as the *poetics of the oppressed*,⁴ the spectator,

⁴ *Poetics of the oppressed*- focuses on the action itself: the spectator [spect-actor] delegates no power to the character [social actor] either to act or to think in his place; on the contrary, her/himself assumes the protagonic role, changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions, and discusses plans for change (Boal 122).

which I depict as the spect-actor, is the focus of change, which the character, which I depict as the social actor, engages in creating the social dynamics for the performance. (In)visible activism strives to stage the poetics of oppression as a social encounter that consists of the spect-actor, as the research focus, the social actor, as an informed catalyst, and the performance grounded on spirituality as an active form of communication.

The social actor and spect-actor encompassed within a simulated performance that mirrors specified social measures, which may place constraint upon how the self navigates social ideas such as, freedom, community, and/or connectivity. As previously mentioned, Anzaldúa's stages of *conocimiento* serves as the creative locale for which a social event is generated through which individuals "who witness the scene are there by chance" (Cruz 213). Essentially, (in)visible activism studies the social preconditions for how performance illustrates the difference between genuine emotional reactions versus the influence of dominant cultural perceptions.

The practitioner: as the researcher generates the experimental atmosphere that observes social performance in regards to varying topics ranging from freedom to representation and spiritual vibration. The practitioner tries to identify the critical moments of spiritual awakening/suppression that occurs within the self-when faced with certain social struggles.

The social actor: works with the practitioner to create the experimental milieu, s/he functions as a catalyst for the spiritual engagement. There are no limits to how many social actors (females/males) are involved with the staging process; however, they have creative leniency and assist the practitioner (researcher) in capturing various societal catastrophes as random encounters.

The spec-actor: a random number of individuals who are in any place, for any given amount of time, but are unaware of that the event occurring is simulated. Individuals compelled by their personal ethos and through their participation are examined for emotion and reason. The spec-actor is the practitioners' main focus within the interactional process and observed for emotional complexities and variances; thus, the emergence of conflict stresses if the self is truly free to act in presence of societal violence due to dominate ideals that have become cultural tradition.

In drawing attention to how specific acts such as, planned rallies, enhance or diminish everyday experience whereby some performances considered as a *make believe* performance create the very social realities that enact action or a *make believe* performance. These performances create a distinction between what is real versus what is pretend (Schechner 42) and becomes the focus for how some misguided emotion and reasoning evolve into dominant cultural thought. Hence, performances such as, acts of kindness are make believe because they incorporate both side of the metaphysical

existence and call for action against social conditions like, class oppression, by distinguishing the differences between reality and idealism. (In)visibility as a position of observation seeks to exemplify the notion of performance within practices like, conocimiento and/or mindfulness and what it constitutes to be actively (in) visible.

CHAPTER IV

EXTENDING SOCIAL THOUGHTS ON PERFORMANCE

The notion of spirituality as a practice for social change allows for a constant reevaluation of dominant ideologies and social beliefs. As a result, I extract from several theoretical foundations. Concepts such as altruism, reciprocity, and freedom are realities that sometimes perplex individual and collective movement. In this section, I engage in theoretical discussions, which require focusing on solution-based action. I query how social interaction can encompass a level of authenticity whereby the self-while engaging with the realities of oppression-envisions change first within its self and moves outwardly.

First, observing both the emergence of political and symbolic violence, i.e. power relations that are coercive, present the conditions that demonstrate that spiritual transformations are necessary. I draw on how the parameters within social justice movements relate terms that enable individuals to develop strategies that challenge authoritarian and political control. Because of these constructs based on the physical and symbolic constraints of culture, the identity undergoes scrutiny whereby “social identities, such as race and gender operate as bodily markers; thus, physical markers on and through the body are lived as material experience, visible as surface phenomena, and are determinants of economic and political status” (Alcoff 102). Ultimately, observing

how identities visually operate in relational terms accentuates the phases of social interaction that influence or restrict individual freedom and movement. The infrastructures that support political control provide a seeming stage for an (in)visible activist theory to question spaces of authority whereby some performances support a make believe engagement.

Recent studies like Nowak and Roch's do not only shed new light on how the evolution of upstream reciprocity can be a potential area for exploring social change on a large scale. These studies also infer that an unlikely new source, such as an act of kindness, proves that the evolution of cooperation begins from emotion and reason occupying a space, which infers that preserving human existence is contingent on adapting dynamic random acts that call for the willingness to help others as an extension of the self.

Although the notion of spirituality may seem trivial, it is in fact crucial in terms of today's concern over extreme religious ideologies. However, what is at stake here is that current long-established definitions surrounding identity and performance are not separable from the self, but linked to how some individual(s) transmit discordant-emotive reasoning as dominant cultural tradition. Alcott asserts that understanding the self only in relation to "social ascriptions and cultural traditions, [which] include beliefs and practices may unquestioned loyalties to communities, are therefore all in conflict with achieving a

self in any full or meaningful sense” (Alcoff 48). In essence, while the self may engage in acts for communal cohesiveness, social practices that generate the framework for which the self incorporates notions of sameness require more exploration. By means of examining the self in social and political infrastructures, we are able to understand why some conflicts in emotive reasoning are intertwined with performance, which are tools that influence and/or warp perception.

The concept of an active (in)visibility extends the notion of performance, by using the idea of witnessing through the spect-actor as a means to highlight on the visible conditions that are vital to understanding difference. However, to what end does this visibility restrict individual movement within the society? By discerning how the self operates through the allocated roles and structural interactions (Alcoff 103), what is unseen within dominant cultural traditions enhances the process of social interaction between the self and the other. I build upon this platform to establish that the essence of spirituality as a practical defense against oppressive patterns generates a harmonious and/or strident commonality, which enlarges the framework of difference.

(In)visible activism connects with the notion of difference because of its approach to social change is being different while maintaining an active (in)visible (neutrality) stance and observing the social exchange within social dramas and performances (Turner 77). In my attempt to unravel the complexities surrounding social drama, conceptualizing

how the act of performance shifts within specified sites that may employ authoritarian notions of representation, dissecting performance aesthetics, such as those illustrated within *conocimiento*, connecting ideas about freedom, action, and collectivity, which intersect with my concept: (in)visible activism.

For instance, I stress that the liminal space⁵ where the self shifts between significant sites of social engagement and daily practice details how ritualized acts of charity become commodities or secularized proves to be a vital component in my research endeavor. In addition, granting that an act of kindness within a moment of injustice can be a motivator that supports one's personal moral belief, the concept of social drama hones in on the *aharmonic process*⁶ (Turner 75) that originates from a rise within social conflict or dominant ideologies, which restrict spatial movement.

Nevertheless, I believe that by generating an experience that captures how people embody and perform specified models of the lived-experience, whether based on central or peripheral ideologies, calls to question how the notion of performance infers that the dichotomy between emotion and reason further legitimates the practices of cultural and symbolic violence. Even so, I am aware that several social implications arise affecting the

⁵ Victor Turner's concept of liminality calls attention to the liminal stage, which focuses on the ritual performances that harness the drama of living; thus, a liminal existence refers to the "in-between actions or behaviors such as, initiation rituals (67&77).

⁶ *Aharmonic process* addresses four main phases of public action: the breach in social relations, social crisis, redressive action, which infers on the replication of rational or irrational idioms, and reintegration of social groups (Turner 75).

framework of (in)visibility, especially the traditional definition of invisibility, which has influenced how difference within the larger social and political infrastructures becomes confined to totalitarian ethics. One of the implications that arise reveals that (in)visibility may personify physical violence due to the unpredictability in human reaction within the structural forces that support the current social and political regime i.e. class, ethnic/racial, disability, and/or gender/sexual inequality. Physical violence as an inference that affects how (in)visibility as a theory is perceived due to emotions, which become beliefs that are passed down as cultural practice.

Yet, I assert that the self-examined from a personal or neutral standpoint provides a unique lens to observing how dominant beliefs solidify into ideologies, which shape cultural traditions. In addition, Anzaldúa's literary portrayals of the lived experience within *conocimiento* reveal that while a huge discomfort surrounds discussions about the lived experience, social interaction and performance have become sites of exchange whereby the liminal space between the self and representation are no longer separate components of identity formation, but interrelated. Hence, calling attention to how dominant perceptions about what constitute as so-called rational action are intertwined with the mental constructs that in turn maintain the physical and symbolic infrastructures.

CHAPTER IV

CONTINUOUS REFLECTIONS

Spiritual activism creates an opportunity whereby meanings and perception undergo a shift, guided by the notion of connectivity through which actions, such as acts of kindness are moments perceived as minimal efforts toward social change. I assert that such moments are also witnessed as a powerful force that can evolve over time into radical and selfless performances of social transformation. For that purpose, (in)visible activism as an observatory process that draws from spiritual foundations such as *conocimiento* and mindfulness is perceived through vibrational surges that occur within the self in efforts to connect with others.

The new vision of self internalized activism is realized through social interaction, the idea of connecting the lived experience to difference as a critical lens that explores the diverse stages of a *make belief* and/or *make believe*⁷ scenario, becomes the basis for which (in)visible activism attempts to challenge dominant social thought from a realistic and spiritual standpoint. As a result, spirituality applied as a source of healing and transformative means observes any and/or all restrictive processes of preservation. In

⁷ A *make belief* act focuses on intentionally blurring the lines between boundaries that influence a spiritual, social, and/or political engagement. While a *make believe* act maintains the distinctions between those boundaries (Schechner 43).

essence, what is observed are the ideas and thoughts that guide individuals to preserve inherited emotions and reasoning, which may further disguise genuine human treatment!

Building on previous discussions about spirituality, the self and social change, which propose that transformation occurs from forming a relationship with one's own self and extending that idea outwardly through thought and action. I perceive spirituality as a social engagement that overlaps between spiritual, political, and social spheres. For that reason, I assert that using an observatory position between those scopes of experience allows for witnessing the range of reactions to self-transformation and difference. (In)visible activism recognizes those differences, lets them exist, and uses the idea of difference as a means to affect others. I believe that spiritual activism is an alternative avenue to observe how social transformation can evolve, especially within a Westernized milieu. Spiritual activism also becomes a holistic means in which self-transformation occurs as a transference from the self to others and then becomes a collective transformation. Therefore, I aim to generate a series of performances that expound on dominant social and cultural traditions/beliefs, by drawing on conceptualized notions of representation and freedom. In other words, the mainstream idea of creating a simulated event is to observe how the self becomes perplexed within stages of coerciveness, which presents an opportunity where spirituality, applied as a healing and transformative means, observes the self/participant striving to do away with or preserve oppressive ideologies.

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ⁱ I also assert that this process will be a future ethnographic research endeavor, which I envision as *The (In)Visibility Performance Project*: a series of social performances that engage with spiritual concepts, like *conocimiento*, mindfulness, and vibration as a means to observe how/why misunderstandings emerge within social interaction.