CHALLENGES IN ORGANIZING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: PRIVILEGE AND RESISTANCE IN THE LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN AT GREEN COLLEGE

By

kristin marie haltinner

Submitted to the
Faculty of the College of Arts and Science
of American University
in Partial Fulfillment of
Master of Arts
In
Sociology

Chairs:

Celine Marie Pascale, PhD
Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, PhD

Dean of the College
24 April 2006
Date

2006
American University
Washington, D.C. 20016

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
CHALLENGES IN ORGANIZING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: PRIVILEGE AND RESISTANCE IN THE LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN AT GREEN COLLEGE

By

kristin marie haltinner

ABSTRACT

The living wage movement, developing in the 1990's, is a new effort for equitable wages, characterized by vast coalition building and novel movement actions. The possibilities and dangers of coalition building and using new tactics for change have been widely studied in social movement literature. This research attempts to examine the challenges, as they are understood by students, in forming a living wage campaign at a college or university. By analyzing interviews with student participants, through the paradigms of ethnomethodology and poststructural discourse analysis, several patterns emerged: the privilege of student-activists and students, as well as the resistance by student activists to privilege. Students called on larger discourses of race, capitalism and social movements to understand their relation to other students, workers, and the administration. Such discourses shaped and limited the activists' talk about the campaign as well as their actions.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank everyone for their patience and encouragement with this both this project and my frazzled self as I pursued it. I would like to express my gratitude to the people willing to read countless drafts for grammar errors: Dennis and Joanna Haltinner, Tim Hammond, and Meghan Karels. Special thanks to Sandy Linden for her patience in answering all my questions and her ability to keep our department together. I am also grateful for the people who first started me on my journey to seek justice: Dr. Jyoti Grewal, Dr. Norma Hervey, Dr. Guy Nave, Dr. Kim Powell, Dr. Novian Whitsitt, Meghan Karels, Danai Mupotsa, and Lindsay Sumner, I will always be grateful for your care, encouragement, and high expectations. I promise to always make you proud. Also, thank you Dr. Dickerson and Dr. Stone for your mentorship throughout my Master’s program. Finally, and essentially, I would like to exclaim my indebtedness to my committee: Dr. Celine Pascale and Dr. Vidal-Ortiz. Celine, thank you for your labor – above and beyond the call of duty – spending countless hours helping me with this project, even while on sabbatical. Your high standards matched with encouraging confidence in my ability to do this work truly made it possible. Salvador, your patience, flexibility, encouragement, and feedback meant so much to the completion of this project. I am forever grateful. Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Dennis and Joanna Haltinner, once again for their love, encouragement, support, and pride in me.

I love you all.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.............................................................................................................................ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS....................................................................................................iii

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION.......................................................................................................1

2. LITERATURE REVIEW............................................................................................5
   Living Wage Campaigns.......................................................................................5
   General Overview of Social Movements.............................................................9

3. METHODOLOGY....................................................................................................22

4. DATA COLLECTION..............................................................................................27

5. FINDINGS.................................................................................................................29
   Privilege................................................................................................................29
   Resistance............................................................................................................46

6. CONCLUSIONS.......................................................................................................57

REFERENCES.......................................................................................................................62
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2002), in the year 2000, thirty-one million U.S. residents lived below the poverty level. Of this, 6.4 million were labeled as 'working poor' indicating that they performed full-time work, but, nevertheless, earned an income that fell below the poverty line. In a nation that declares in its founding documents "liberty and justice for all," such severe inequality, among hard-working residents, becomes problematic. As a response to this poverty, a new social movement in the form of living wage campaigns has emerged to raise the living standards of low-wage employees. The United States claims that all people have the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". As such, it logically follows that all people deserve the possibility of maintaining a lifestyle that is neither rapt with concern about where one's next meal will come from, nor filled with terror regarding how one will pay for her or his child's health care. The struggle for such a basic human right places living wage campaigns in an important space as these movements consist of organized workers, student-activists, and community organizations collectively striving to ensure that community members have access to their basic needs. Recognizing that social movements face various obstacles in coordinating successfully, this thesis analyzes the challenges present in the living wage campaign at Green College. This will be accomplished through analyzing interviews conducted with members of the campus...
'Justice for Janitors' campaign.

A living wage is distinct from the concept of minimum wage and is defined as a standard for wages requiring that an individual, working forty hours a week, is able to afford housing and utilities, food, health care, transportation, and have money for minimal recreation (ACORN 2006). Nationally, a living wage is set at $9.06 per hour, but this varies greatly between regions (ACORN 2006). Furthermore, the determined amount of a living wage differs if measurements take into account use of social services. For example, in Washington DC, a single parent with two children would need to earn $25.39 per hour in order to cover her or his family's basic needs. However, if her or his income is subsidized by food stamps, section 8 housing support, childcare subsidies, and governmentally subsidized health care, he or she would need to earn $9.90 per hour to cover basic expenses (Pearce 2005) in contrast to a DC mandated hourly minimum wage of $7.00.

It is important to note that living wages are not limited to income. Campaigns also include demands for health care benefits, vacation, institutional wage disclosure, community advisory boards, environmental standards, and union-friendly policies (ACORN 2006). The argument at the root of living wage campaigns is that tax dollars should not be used for subsidizing businesses through paying for social services underpaid employees need to survive (ibid).

Several different forms of living wage campaigns have emerged, the most prominent are those targeting university campuses following the victory at Harvard

---

1 ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, has been one of the front running organizations in regards to Living Wage activism and research.
University, and those aiming to change city-, county-, state-wide policies launched by Baltimore's success (Tilly 2001). As I will illustrate in brief, aside from the differences in policies targeted for change (public policies versus university policies), these living wage movements have similar characteristics. According to, what is regarded as one of the leading organizers involved in living wage campaigns, the Association for Community Organizations for Reform Now, living wage campaigns are uniformly focused on the practice of coalition building: incorporating community organizations, religious leaders, and workers in their drive for living wages (ACORN 2006).

Living wage campaigns, beginning in the 1980's, were a novel platform of organizing for workers' rights (Johnston 2002). In 1994, Baltimore became home to the first city-wide successful living wage campaign marking the beginning of the living wage movement (Shapiro 2006). In the first ten years of organizing, 130 successful campaigns were launched (Luce 2003). ACORN (2001) finds that living wage campaigns are effective in raising the quality of life for workers, increasing consumption in local retail stores, and reducing the use of food stamps and other social services. Concurrently, they argue, living wages have no negative effects on businesses: there is no incentive for them to relocate outside of districts with living wage ordinances and the bulk of the expense to businesses can be covered through marginal cost increases.

Through their organizing strategies of coalition building, living wage campaigns are placed within an important niche in movement organizing, making them ideal for this research. Like many movements, living wage campaigns involve people from different

---

2 There is also a rapidly growing International Labor Movement emerging out of the World Social Forum conference in Porto Alegre in 2001; however, that is not the focus of this thesis.
experiences, backgrounds, and organizational memberships. Living wage campaigns become a model for movement organizing, not only through the construction of expansive coalitions, but based on their remarkable success (Reynolds and Kern 2004; Olson and Steinman 2004).

In order to explore the challenges that living wage campaigns face when developing across socially constructed differences, I examined how participants of a living wage campaign talked about their experience organizing across lines of class and race. I analyze these interviews using methods of standard inductive analysis which I then examine through the interpretive paradigms of ethnomethodology and poststructural discourse analysis in order to better understand how students talked about organizing the living wage campaign conducted at Green College. This analysis is framed through an examination of living wage literature placed within a larger framework of social movement literature.
Living wage scholars examine several distinct elements of the living wage movements. These elements include challenges with implementation (Kern 2001; Reynolds and Kern 2004), potential for campaign success (Luce 2004; Levi, Olson, and Stienmann 2002) the effects of campaigns on society (Newmark 2002; Quigley 2003) the role unions play in such movements (Luce 2003) and novel organizing techniques (Olson and Steinman 2004; Merrifield 2000) within living wage campaigns.

In regards to challenges in living wage implementation, Kern (2001), through providing an historical overview of campaigns, examined the argument that living wage campaigns reduce the number of people hired at a business. She concluded that such criticism is unwarranted and employment levels do not change. Additionally, Reynolds and Kern (2004), using case studies, explain that the bulk of the opposition exists within the industries and businesses that profit from maintaining low wages such as the National Federation of Independent Businesses, the National Restaurant Association, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and their lobbying group, the Employment Policies Institute. Reynolds and Kern (2004) also investigated municipal living wage campaigns that occurred prior to 2003 to look at the role of unions. These scholars argue that union involvement in living wage campaigns adds dramatically to campaign success primarily
because unions bring political connections, legitimacy, and resources such as money and staff. The result of this network is a revitalization of the strength in organized labor.

In addition to observing, and countering, criticism of living wages, living wage campaign scholars research possibilities for campaign success. Luce (2004) used case studies of cities that have had successful living wage initiatives and applied living wages to explore issues of implementation. Luce concluded that living wage ordinances and policies are more likely to pass if they involve extensive citizen’s participation in the process. She argues that policy makers have little interest in passing living wage ordinances and will only do so in reaction to citizen demand. She further proposes that living wage campaigns’ future success will be correlated with their ability to organize with “broad sectors of society” including workers, religious leaders, and various community organizations.

Levi, Olson, and Steinmann (2002) explored living wage ordinances but suggest that the effects of living wage campaigns have not yet been seen. However, they suggest that preliminary consequences, such as the direct improvement in workers lives and increase in networking between unions and community organizations, are evident. They concluded that living wage campaigns prove that coalitions across different demographic groups are possible and assist in successful policy implementation.

Neumark (2002) examined the effectiveness of campaigns within a historical framework asking if living wage movements are effective in improving the quality of life for low-wage workers, are successful in reducing urban poverty, and whether or not municipal workers or low-income families receive greater benefits. He concluded that living wage campaigns do increase the wages earned by low-income employees and are
successful in reducing urban poverty. However, he finds that this is paralleled by a slight increase in unemployment. Newmark also argues that unionized municipal workers and low-income families with varying degrees of union ties benefit equally from the policy.

Quigley (2003) contends that city policies are not enough. Inspecting the history of U.S. politics and contemporary living wage campaigns, Quigley discusses the need for a living wage based on both U.S. values and economic benefits of full employment. He then calls for U.S. citizens to engage in a national debate on living wages suggesting that a solution to wage problems is in creating a constitutional amendment guaranteeing adequate pay for all those willing to work.

In addition to studying campaign successes, living wage literature discusses organizing tactics. Part of this discussion includes an examination of the role of unions within living wage campaigns. Luce (2003) discusses the possibility for tension between unions and living wage campaigns. She argues that contemporary union organizing is resistant to both networking with community members and using hard-fisted tactics. She concluded that unions would be more effective if they learned from living wage campaigns strategies of coalition building between the community, clergy, and people with diverse political leanings, and engaged in direct action, rather than avoiding conflict. Luce also notes that, in instances in which unions participate in the campaign it adds to union strength following the dissolution of the campaign. However, when unions remain apathetic or oppose campaigns they have difficulty re-organizing within a city. She recommends that unions monitor the enforcement of ordinance changes through such practices as training workers and law enforcements on new policies, a space in which Living Wage Campaigns often get trapped.
In addition to examining the relationship between living wage campaigns and unions, living wage scholars study networking strategies within the movement. For example, Olson and Steinmann (2004) examined the successes of living wage campaigns focusing on their organizing strategies. The scholars researched both the content of living wage ordinances and the individuals involved to study barriers to organizing and elements that contribute to movement success. They concluded that living wage campaigns provide unique organizing strategies in that they are often “bottom up, not top-down”, include vast, diverse coalition building, successfully make moral appeals, and combine traditional movement strategies such as protesting (128). Furthermore, Olson and Steinmann concluded that, while living wage campaigns have improved wages for individuals, they have also called for a social conversation on policies regarding labor. However, they suggest that the major contribution of living wage campaigns will be in their skills at coalition building, creating lasting links between unions and communities, returning to local organizing, and framing issues in ways to change policy.

Merrifield (2000) suggests that novel organizing techniques contribute to the success of living wage campaigns in his case study of the organizing in Los Angeles. He concluded that the accomplishments of living wage campaigns are based in their use of novel, abrupt tactics, to build a wide coalition. This coalition provides a space in which people who often feel “downgraded into the ranks of a floating relative surplus population” are able to organize with church leaders and student-activists through working for a common goal against a common ‘enemy’, often the figureheads behind the unjust wage policy (44). Overall, living wage literature examines contemporary discussion on living wage campaigns and discusses struggles faced by campaigns, tricks
to success, goals, and organizing strategies. The next section of this paper will place living wage debates in the larger discussion of general social movement literature.

**General Overview of Social Movements**

Living wage literature is situated within a larger body of social movement literature. Social movement literature covers three theoretical frameworks to explain social movements: deprivation theory (Davies 1962), mass-society theory (Melucci 1989) and resource mobilization theory (Zald and McCarthy 1979). This body of literature attempts to classify social movements based on the magnitude of change they seek (Aberle 1991) their membership (Garner 1996), the importance of a collective identity (Snow 2001; Snow and McAdam 2000; and Hobson 2003), and organizational strategies (Stryker 2000; Reed 2002; Beverley 2003). This section will provide the reader with a brief overview of Social Movement literature including an summary of the main social movement debates, and literature related to civil rights, women’s liberation, labor, and student movements.

Social movement literature covers three basic theoretical explanations for social movements: deprivation theory (Davies 1962), mass-society theory (Melucci 1989), and resource mobilization theory (Zald and McCarthy 1979). Davies (1962) examined social movements throughout history to develop deprivation theory which asserts that movements typically emerge after a period in which social reforms have been put into place and social change slows. In this situation, Davies argues, people become dissatisfied with their position and react with rebellion. Melucci (1989) explains that social movements often attract people who are socially isolated, giving them a chance to
form a collective identity with others. This identity serves to provide people with a larger sense of purpose and subsequently movements take on both a personal and political agenda. Zald and McCarthy (1979) explain, through a series of case studies, that the success of movements can be linked to the availability of resources. In their resource mobilization theory they argue that these resources include money, people, and the media and that resource levels vary throughout the lifespan of a movement.

Social movements are also characterized by the magnitude of change they seek. Aberle (1991) uses a case study of the Navaho and argues that movements can be classified into four types: alterative, seeking limited change; redemptive, seeking selective radical change; reformative, seeking small changes among an entire population; and transformative, seeking mass radical change.

In addition to theoretical explanation of movements and the magnitude of change they seek, general scholarship describes movement participation and structure. The bulk of participants are made up of the support base, classified as people who identify with and participate in a movement. Garner (1996) discusses the homogeneity in movements and argues that it is linked to maintaining a distinct ideology. Her evidence is in the fact that movements on the left tend to be made of people with lower levels of wealth and property contributing to their fight for economic equality and public ownership while those on the right consist of property owners who fight for protection through fascism and Nazism.

Collective identity is also a topic discussed throughout social movement literature. Snow (2001) argues that collective identity of group members is essential to organizing an effective movement. However, this becomes difficult due to challenges
that exist when getting people from different backgrounds and experiences to identify collectively. Stout (1996), based on a case study of the Piedmont Peace Movement, suggests that, within a movement, workers and students or community members often have difficulty communicating with one another. She demonstrates how this struggle is due to constructed social distance based on racial or economically-based differences.

Snow and McAdam (2000) additionally propose that collective identity is a way in which people co-identify and argue that participants in contemporary movements are engaged in a ‘collective search for identity’ because modern society fails to provide sufficient grounding for constituting satisfactory identities. Furthermore, they suggest that movements provide people with the prospect of confirming their social identities and that movement participation is thus partially explained by the need to validate existing identities (2000). Hobson (2003) calls for a new understanding of identity based in the concept of “contested identities”. This suggests that individuals do not simply join a movement and undergo the processes of identity convergence but instead there is a negotiation of identity between group members throughout the process of organizing.

Likewise, Fraser (2000) suggests that movements serve to “enforce separation, conformism and intolerance” (32). She calls for a new recognition struggle that does not ignore identity, but moves past it to create space for “non-identitarian politics” in which all voices are heard and respected.

Organizational strategies are also a focus of social movement scholars. Stryker (2000) and Reed (2002) each consider that, historically, the majority of social movements have been fairly homogenous and inspect organizing strategies to explain this lack of diversity. Stryker (2000) distinguishes between ‘old social movements’, those which
predominated the 19th century and typically recruited members from a single social class, and 'new social movements' which developed during the later part of the 20th century. He suggests both movement types were fairly homogenous, but that new social movements are distinct as they employ organizing strategies such as those used by other movements including feminist, civil rights, gay rights, peace, environmental, and anti-globalization movements. Reed (2002) discusses that these strategies include focusing on notions of collective identity, principles, and lifestyles and materialized most frequently from middle class communities. Such methods of organizing are unlike previous labor movements that primarily involved workers (Reed 2002).

Beverley (2003) suggests that organizing around collective identity reproduces hegemonic discourses that seek assimilation. Instead, he argues, there needs to be an abandonment of identity politics in movement organizing and radical redefinition of multiculturalism. Specifically, he argues that, within movements, there needs to be a shift to thinking in terms of “popular subject positions”, a notion understood as organizing with a focus on the maintenance of heterogeneity and an absence of “overarching interpellation” that attempts to define movement members. From this method of organizing, movement size could grow as people do not feel marginalized and are able to work together in opposition to a common adversary.

Movements also can be conceptualized based on their goals. While not an exhaustive list, several social movements are relevant to the organizing of living wage campaigns including: the civil rights movement, the women’s movement, the labor movement, and student movements. This section will briefly discuss the main arguments within the aforementioned movements.
Civil Rights Movements

Current civil rights movement literature consists of three main conversations: discussions on successes and failures in past civil rights movements (King 1987; Manning 1991; Findlay 1993; Barnett 1993; and Luders 2005), new areas for organizing (Cannon 2004, Field 2004), and the prospect of new models for multi-racial coalition building. (Guinier and Torres 2002; Marable 1997)

King (1987) examined her participation in SNCC, the Southern Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, concluding that this organization occupied a unique space in movement organizing as it was able to maintain black leadership, cultivate black grassroots activism, and appeal to white students. Marable (1991) explored the role that race and class play in organizing social movements. He investigated past movements determining that there is a great challenge organizing poor white people with middle-class black people based on their social locations and political ideologies. Findlay (1993) analyzed the importance of the networking of congregations that occurred during the civil rights movement, suggesting that ‘church people’ made up a substantial portion of the people involved in the civil rights movement. Barnett (1993) used a historical analysis to critique the civil rights movement based on the ways in which the roles for women were limited to specific positions, and women were often made invisible. Blumberg (1990) also explored the civil rights movement of the 1960’s and suggests that there was a disappearance of women in power positions. Luders (2005) evaluated the successes and failures of the civil rights movement of the 1960’s. Luders argues that the achievements of the civil rights movement can be understood through their consequences: civil rights
movements prompted the dramatic conflict necessary for racial policy changes when economic and less radical actions would have failed.

Some civil rights movement scholars such as Canon (2004) and Field (2004) examine trends in contemporary movements. Canon suggests that, following the 1980's, civil rights movements have shifted to include conversations on Affirmative Action, Slavery Reparations, English as a national language, and immigration. Field (2004) suggests that there has been a recent increase in hesitation surrounding conversations on race including discussion on Affirmative Action and conversation among politicians. She sees future organizing to have an increased attention to coalition building with a new focus towards recognizing the shared future of people rather than social change as a tactic to pacify opposition (255).

Possibilities for coalition building are discussed by Guinier and Torres (2002) and Marable (1997). Guinier and Torres (2002) concluded that colorblindness, or ignoring racial differences, has failed and instead, we need a new 'political race project' in which multiracial coalitions are organized. They argue that, through multi-racial coalitions, internal hierarchies can be exposed. Guinier and Torres further suggest there is a need for power-sharing and true democratic participation which, they assert, can overturn hierarchical divisions within movements. Marable (1997) argues that desegregation did not erase the problems black people in the United States face and new forms of inequality have surfaced. He further contends that attempts to organize collectively creates a context in which “people ‘born’ into different racial identities begin to see themselves in new ways” creating a blurring of ethnicities (31). He therefore suggests that, in order for
social change to occur, people need not focus on the creation of a color blind society, but in securing democratic reform.

Scholars of Civil Rights movements find successes in organizing based on coalition building and networking. They point to challenges in organizing across racial, class, and gender lines. Additionally, civil rights movement scholarship examines contemporary movement trends including participation in national discussion on Affirmative Action, reparations, language, and immigration. Finally, these scholars point to possibilities for future organizing investigating possibilities for coalition building.

Women’s Liberation Movements

Within literature that falls under contemporary women’s movements there is discussion on issues for current action (Luker 1984; Faludi 1991), and possibilities for greater inclusiveness (Combahee River Collective 1986; King 1990; Roth 2004, and Nicholson 1995).

Arguments circle around specific policy items such as abortion or the oppression faced by women. Luker (1984) examined the differences between women who participate in pro-life and pro-choice abortion activism, determining that education and occupational experiences lead women to have distinct understandings of femininity, motherhood, and pregnancy. Faludi (1991) analyzed anti-feminist movements, sexist government policies, and media messages. She used statistical data to demonstrate the continued oppression faced by women and concluded that the feminist movement is just beginning.
Another argument of women’s liberation movements centers on notions of coalition building. The Combahee River Collective (1986) examined gender as it relates to other forms of oppression investigating how, in adolescence, the socialization process of children has clear racial and gendered expectations. The Combahee River Collective seeks racial solidarity in order to end the ‘fear’ black men have of feminism. Adding to the discussion is King (1990), who argues that racial and economic oppression has been incomprehensible to white women within the feminist movement and there needs to be a movement among women of color to simultaneously challenge sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression. Building the conversation further, Roth (2004) explored how Chicana, black and white feminist movements developed separately, and argues that, in order to succeed, they need to collectively develop an intersectional approach to alleviating oppressions. Nicholson (1995) suggests that in order to prevent the marginalization of certain groups within a movement, one must look at the process of identity and embodiment differently. She concluded that, in order to have an effective movement, feminists need to realize that their understanding of ‘woman’ is based on their own localized history, rather than an essential and natural subject.

Women’s liberation scholars examine contemporary issues in movements such as abortion and economic inequality as well as possibilities for greater inclusiveness in organizing.

Labor Movements

The Labor Movement consists of many smaller movements all organizing for workers rights. They can be broken down into those examining movement challenges
(Masters 1997; Wood 1997; Clawson and Clawson 1999; Lewis-Colman 2004; McCartin 2004; Nicholson 2004), and potential for new labor movements (Katz 2002; Isaacs 2004; Haberland 2004; Donahoe 2004).

Shown previously, one topic examined by labor movement scholars is the challenges faced in organizing. Masters (1997) analyzed unions examining the reasons for their decline. He traced twenty-eight major unions in the United States, investigating trends in membership, wealth, political capital and power in unions. Masters suggests possibilities for reorganization and asserts that, if unions are willing to deviate from historical methods of making demands and mobilize their resources in new ways, including greater networking with community volunteers and communication with employers, unions will have a resurgence of support and success.

As mentioned, several scholars examine organizing challenges. Wood (1997) investigated the difficulties in organizing labor movements based on the spread of globalization. She suggests that people have begun to see this notion as a 'natural' process limiting people's ability to problematize and change capitalist structures. Wood concluded that, what is needed, is a strong domestic labor movement in order to ground future movements which may or not be transnational. Her conclusions are drawn from a roundtable for labor student-activists held by the Monthly Review. In addition, Clawson and Clawson (1999) examined the decline in labor organizing success, attributing it to changing demographics, union inaction, legal shifts, globalization, and neo-liberalism. They further suggest that new tactics must emerge including the use of feminist tactics and industry-wide organizing, and networking with communities. Furthermore, Lewis-Colman (2004) asserts that the 1980's and 1990's were some of the most challenging
years for labor in the United States as evidenced by a decline in union participation; acceptance of poorer wages, benefits, and treatment; and an increase in conservative politics, free-trade policies, and loss of manufacturing jobs. Lewis-Colman concluded that, although the situation of workers in the U.S. is getting more difficult, there is hope in radical grassroots labor movements. McCartin (2004) also suggests reasons for the decline in labor movement success. He sees a hesitation to use strikes as a method of organizing because certain strikes have simply resulted in replacement workers, such as what occurred with the loss of union strength following the PATCO strike. McCartin asserts that this is one of the major symptoms regarding the loss of strength in the union movements. Finally, Nicholson (2004) argues that the success or failure of labor union organizing is tied explicitly to the political climate and that the state has greater control than is generally believed. He further suggests that it is due to the promises and limits of democracy that labor struggles have flourished or faltered.

Possibilities for the future of labor movements are also investigated within the literature. Katz (2002) examined recent changes in union size and popularity, as well as shifts in employment related to processes of globalization. She concluded that unions need to work on merging successful collective bargaining tactics and revitalizing union participation in order to prevent an increase in low-wage employment. Isaacs (2004) observes a decline in union success and points to ‘wildcat strikes’ as an emerging element of Labor Movements. She sees nonunionized workers striking collectively, illuminating the inaction of unions in certain local labor sectors such as West Virginia coal mines and the Teamsters in Illinois.
Labor movement literature examines the challenges faced in labor organizing such as expanding globalization, conservative politics, and loss of union strength. Scholars also analyze possibilities for movement success including union revitalization, non-union based organizing, and networks with community members.

Student Movements

Literature on Student Movements centers around two primary characteristics: the role of student activists in civil rights organizing (Franklin 2003; Bradley 2003; Urrieta 2004; Altbach 1997). Franklin (2003) reviewed movements led by African American students during the 20th century. He points to the important role that black student movements had in questioning society in the 1920's and the civil rights movement. Franklin suggests that the involvement of student movements has a great deal to do with the success of larger campaigns in which they operate. Bradley (2003) performed a case study of the SAS (Student Afro-American Society) at Columbia University and their involvement in the “battle for Morningside Park”, a movement in opposition to the school’s plan to build a gymnasium in a Harlem community park. Through this study, Bradley determined that this movement was a success because of the power developed through networking between SAS, black community members, and white student radicals. The power of the coalition, he asserts, was stronger than that of Columbia University.

Not only has the role of student organizing been critical in the success of civil rights campaigns centering on the rights of African Americans, but also among Chicana/o rights. Urrieta (2004) examined the power of student activism in the Chicana/o
movement through a case study of 1968 walk-out in East Los Angeles. She traced the continuation of Chicana/o organizing in support of several issues over the past 50 years including bilingual education, and queer rights. She concluded that, in order for movements to succeed, they need to be locally focused, personally relevant to participants, and organized of networks of different people.

The effect of student movements on larger campaigns is further explored by Altbach (1997) who investigated student movements in the United States suggesting that they have not been as radical as the media portrays. Further, he argues, U.S. student movements will not occupy a space of revolutionary change like can occur in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, U.S. student movements will have a role in social change.

While literature on student based social movements includes a great deal of reflection on the role of student student-activists in larger movements, social movement literature in general provides a clear framework to understand the organization of the Green living wage campaign. It is important to note that there is a great deal of overlap between the different social movements. For example, King (1988) investigates the situation of black feminists caught in the crossroads of the Civil Rights Movement, woman’s movements, and class based movements. Using a historical analysis, King concluded that there needs to be a movement and ideology that merges these three campaigns for collective action. This points to the fact that movement categorization is highly nuanced.

Throughout social movement literature, scholars point to challenges in organizing with people from distinct backgrounds, yet suggest that coalition building is essential to movement success. They also explore a need for a collective identity within movements
as it has the potential to produce social distance resulting in tension between members and between members and the community. Collectively, these bodies of scholarship provide information for organizing tactics important to living wage campaigns. Civil rights movements and women’s liberation movement scholars assert that there is a need for greater coalition building to develop adequate power for successful movements, a goal of living wage campaigns. Research on student movements and labor movements produce a frame in which to place living wage campaigns. My research aims to place the campaign at Green College, a student campaign for labor rights, within the larger body of social movement literature.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the struggles faced in the living wage campaign at Green College, I used standard inductive analysis to examine patterns and negative cases that emerged in interviews with members of the campaign. Inductive analysis is a systemic analysis of text that allows researchers to discover dominant and significant patterns within data, as well as exceptions to these patterns to understand social reality (Silverman 1985). The use of negative cases allows researchers to continue refining their hypothesis and develop an accurate analysis rather than simply label deviate cases as unique (Ryan and Bernard in Denzin and Lincoln 2003). In order to analyze the patterns produced in my research, I used the interpretive paradigms of ethnomethodology and poststructural discourse analysis. Ethnomethodology examines meaning-making in interaction and provides information on the ways that students constructed their understanding of the living wage campaign. This is further contextualized by a poststructural analysis that examines how larger social discourses of difference are at play in talk about organizing. Through these interpretive frameworks I will try to demonstrate what specific challenges are present in interactions between movement members as well as the discourses that constitute these struggles.

Developed by Garfinkel (1967), ethnomethodology has its ontological grounding in the belief that reality is a process constantly undergoing reconstruction. Regarded as
“the most analytically radical and empirically productive” (Holstein and Gubrium 2005:483) strategy to investigate the accomplishment of social order, ethnomethodology attempts to understand how social interactions are formed and maintained through an examination of the production of meaning-in-interaction (Francis and Hester 2004). Ethnomethodologists are interested in how social activities are formed and managed by participants, asking how “cultural knowledge” is used to accomplish social situations and activities (Francis and Hester 2004). To ethnomethodologists, the way of examining meaning-making is through analyzing texts of interactions to see how people make sense of the situation. This locates agency for individuals within conversations as they are able to selectively employ specific language tactics for successful interactions.

For ethnomethodologists, the search for the foundational social knowledge entails “temporarily suspending all commitments to a priori or privileged versions of the social world” (Holsten and Gubrium 2005:486). To examine how people make sense of an apparently objective social world in the production of talk and interaction, ethnomethodology considers basic aspects of talk such as turn-taking, conversational openings, ‘adjacency pairs’ and how ‘institutional’ talk produces social order (Heritage in Silverman 2001, Francis and Hester 2004). Membership categories are another set of ethnomethodological tools. For example, the category ‘family’ consists of members such as mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers. Each individual family member may have other categories of which they are members, such as friend, employee, or student. However, when the membership category of ‘family’ is relevant, members may potentially be held accountable for their behavior as a family member. When one of these activity expectations is violated, other members may question one’s performance as
a member of that category. The potential questioning serves to hold people responsible
for behaving in accordance with their situationally relevant membership category
(Pascale 2005). Ethnomethodology provides tools for examining talk in interaction to see
how membership categories are accomplished and made relevant in local contexts.

Poststruturalist discourse analysis begins with Foucault and develops through
Derrida and Butler with influences from such scholars as Lacan and Barthes. Foucault is
regarded for his analysis of discourses and analytic strategies including archaeology
while Derrida is credited with developing the practice of deconstruction: the opening up a
text in order to examine a variety of meanings and interpretations. Poststructuralism
shares the ontological belief of ethnomethodologists that, while there is an understood
reality, it exists because of culturally produced meanings. Postructural epistemological
understanding is that the meaning given to reality can be known through exploring
discourses as conditions of possibility. Discourses are systems of historically relevant
ideas that configure the circulation of knowledge and power determining what is
important and true. Discourses function to limit what is say-able in a given situation
and, as such, ideas can be deconstructed to provide insight into the societal circulation of
knowledge and power (Mills 2003). Importantly, Foucault argues that the ‘subject’ “is
produced in discourse” and “cannot be outside discourse” (Hall 1997:55). Not only does
discourse produce subjects, “figures who personify the particular forms of knowledge
which the discourse produces”, but the discourse also “produces place for the subject…
from which its particular knowledge and meaning most makes sense” (Hall 1997:56).
This regulation of discourse is also the space in which accountability is examined.

Foucault suggests that there are internal and external procedures that regulate the
production of discourse that determine who has the authority to speak on a particular subject (Mills 2003). Poststructuralists incorporate an understanding of knowledge and power in their analytic practice of archaeology. Archeological methods are based on the understanding that the speaker has to operate within preestablished linguistic framework when talking: meaning does not come from the individual, but from larger discursive practices. This method does not simply consider a historic past, but explains events and the ways in which discourses pattern what happens (Kendall and Wickham 2003). In many ways, archeology is a “snapshot, a slice, through the discursive nexus” (Mills 2003).

One fundamental difference between the two analytic strategies is their understanding of context and agency. Ethnomethodologists analyze talk in a local context to understand how meaning is constructed. In contrast, poststructuralists examine cultural discourses, investigating the production and circulation of knowledge and power. Therefore, in order to continue it must be clear that, while fundamental differences exist between the approaches of these two methodologies, they complement each other in important ways. One important connection between ethnomethodology and poststructuralism is their ontological foundation. As mentioned, both analytic strategies view reality as a process that is constantly being reconstructed/reproduced. This shared ontology is imperative for establishing their compatibility as analytical frameworks.

Pairing these two frameworks ameliorates some of the criticism typically aimed at each. For example, ethnomethology is criticized for its lack of attention to larger cultural and political contexts based on its detailed examination of local interactions (Silverman 2004). Furthermore, ethnomethodology and standard inductive analysis are thought by
many scholars, most notably Foucault, to assume a universal truth and esteem a particular form of knowledge (Scheurick and McKenzie, 2005). In contrast, poststructuralist analysis is often criticized for being a formal theory that is not grounded in empirical analysis (Silverman 2004, Saukko 2003). Most researchers agree that ethnomethodology contributes significantly to the understanding of the production of meaning in interactions while discourse analysis incorporates larger discourses into research to understand the cultural patterning of speech (Silverman 2004). By combining these two approaches, one is not only able to develop an understanding of talk in its conversational context, but also within its genealogically based localized historical context.

Furthermore, the two interpretive frameworks collectively provide a means to analyze both a local practice and broader social context. Ethnomethodology requires a localized grounding of analysis, using text for proof. This analysis does not question the motives or desires of speakers, simply the patterns that emerge in conversation (Heritage 1984 in Silverman 2004). Poststructural analysis also scrutinizes the construction of an apparent reality, but does so by pulling further away from the actual text to recognize how larger cultural and political contexts influence meaning-production (Silverman 2004). Ethnomethodologists find meaning in the texts of interaction while poststructuralists locate meaning in contingently produced historical discursive practices.

These analytical techniques complement each other in important ways allowing the researcher both a close textual reading to examine meaning-making as well as a larger discursive analysis that examines the circulation of knowledge and power.
The data collected for this analysis was gathered through in-depth interviews conducted with members of the Green College Living Wage Campaign. This college is located in a metropolitan area of the Eastern United States and was selected based on the willingness of movement members to participate in interviews. I used snowball sampling to contact known members of the campaign and was able to interview all of the members still present at the college as well as staff who were peripherally involved. My interview sample consisted of five of the main student organizers, one student who was involved and dropped out during the process, two faculty members, and one administrator. The students consisted of two men and three women, all of whom were white and from middle to upper-middle class backgrounds. The faculty members and administrator were only tangentially involved in the campaign as part of an advisory committee established by the college president. One faculty member was a middle-aged white woman and the other was a white male of the same age. The administrator was also a middle-aged white woman. I, as the interviewer, am positioned in a similar social space due to my background as a middle class white woman from the Midwest. For the last several years I have worked in campus movements and have found myself faced with struggles similar to those the student-activists at Green College dealt with. The interviews ranged between one and two hours in length and were conducted by the standards of ASA ethical practice. Within my analysis, I use pseudonyms to refer to all participants. I will refer to
practice. Within my analysis, I use pseudonyms to refer to all participants. I will refer to students who participated in the campaign as ‘student-activists’ and non-participating students as ‘students’. I recorded, and self-transcribed, all of the interviews with students, faculty and administrators.

While it would be preferable to have transcribed in-depth interviews with workers, this presented unforeseen challenges. Unlike the students, faculty, and administrators, the workers were unable to grant me interviews during their work day and instead often had to talk with me as they worked or during their lunch breaks. Workers involved in the living wage campaign included custodial staff and food service workers. Based on the nature of the interviews, and the perceived threatening content of discussion, I was unable to record and transcribe these interviews. However, their content is of important consequence to understanding the challenges of organizing across perceived categories of difference; therefore, the information gained through worker interviews will be used to provide a foundational framework with which to place information gained through transcribed interviews.
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

In this analysis, the method of standard induction was used to study interviews with movement participants. I then employ the interpretive paradigms of ethnomethodology and poststructural discourse analysis to examine both the construction of meaning-in-interaction as well as the circulation of discourses. These analyses resulted in two main patterns: the production of privilege and resistance.

Privilege

A central pattern that emerged among my interviews with students who participated in a living wage campaign at Green College concerned issues of cultural privilege. This occurs through the way that student-activists produce themselves as different from workers. Privilege is also apparent in the politics involved in the emergence of the living wage campaign and the inaction of students.

Privilege was constructed in the ways that students created themselves as distinct from workers. The discomfort student-activists had organizing with workers was one example mentioned by every interviewee. Thaddaeus, a twenty year old white man from a middle-class background in the North-East, summarized this sentiment when he discussed challenges in organizing: “a lot of the students, and me too, didn’t really feel comfortable talking to workers”. This statement reproduces workers and students as different and points to discomfort that is an outcome of, but also forms, social distance.
In order to understand why students were uncomfortable talking with workers, it is important to examine how students talked about their interactions with the workers whom they hoped to support through the living wage campaign. For example, 24 year old Mike, a white man from a middle-class area in the Mid-Atlantic region, explained his discomfort in terms of language:

There is a language barrier to the custodial workers. Many of the workers didn’t speak English, so that was very difficult… It was a lot more complicated and I think what [we] did end up having to do then was, unfortunately, not to talk directly to workers but to have to go through their union and of course all our union reps were bilingual. So it kind of put a barrier between.

In this excerpt, Mike frames a language barrier as something that simply exists, rather than as something that is created through situational interactions. His characterization, “there is a language barrier,” appears as an objective statement of fact. Further, he attributes the existence of this barrier to “custodial workers” who did not speak English rather than to students who did not speak Spanish. In this sense, Mike places the responsibility for a “language barrier” squarely on the shoulders of the custodial workers. In addition, the way Mike conceptualizes “the problem,” shapes the way that he and other students conceptualize a solution leading the student-activists to turn to the union representatives for help with communication, rather than seeking out bilingual students. In this brief excerpt the privileged position of white students is produced through the way Mike named difficulties they faced as being “a language barrier,” the way that he attributed this barrier to the workers themselves, and by the way he conceptualized a solution to their mutual communication troubles. In this sense, the custodial workers not
only faced a problem of wage equity, they are themselves constructed as a problem for the white students who seek to help them.

Importantly, students also talked about their discomfort in ways that were not attributed to language. Anna, a New-England born middle-class white woman, also in her mid-twenties, responded to questions about challenges in organizing with the following statement: “The food service workers were mostly African American and speak English so the issue wasn’t language. But you could see instead students I think are concerned little much with not knowing how to approach people”. In this excerpt the privileged position of white students is produced in the ways that vocational position and race are naturalized as locations of meaningful difference. Privilege was also apparent in the way that students were named as “concerned” in opposition to ‘unapproachable’ African American workers, attributing the lack of communication to racial difference. This first suggests that there is something different about African American workers and the white students and, secondly, that these racial differences are something which needs to be overcome. It is also important to note how the use of a footing shift positioned the student in a space of awareness. By stating “you could see” she places herself in the role of observer who is simply stating what would be obvious to anyone.

Dani, a 25 year old white woman from New England, also discussed difficulties in incorporating worker voices in the movement when she discussed the topic of race: “Well there were like ongoing discussions […] people did make statements that were somewhat offensive and they didn’t know, there wasn’t really an active discussion of [racism]”. In this comment Dani unpacks some of the fear the white student-activists had...
in facing their own racism\textsuperscript{3}. Dani was clearly aware of racist statements being made, and was troubled by them. However, the majority of students “didn’t know” that they made “somewhat offensive” comments. This statement characterizes white student activists as ignorant of the way that they perpetuated racism. Seeing as there was no “active discussion”, the option to not deal with, or not be aware of, racism clearly position students’ privilege. Furthermore, the remarks were understood as being only “somewhat” offensive. This characterizes the speaker as being in a position to determine the degree to which a remark can be perceived as offensive. Privilege is constructed the ways in which the students’ racist remarks are understood as a result of unawareness, and the way that student-activists place themselves in a position to determine what degree of offense racial remarks should produce.

In addition to issues of race, issues of class also provided a space for the manifestation of privilege. Meghan, a white woman from the Mid-Atlantic region, discussed class when she talked about challenges in organizing with workers:

\begin{quote}
Within the group, at least what I found, a lot of people weren’t really focusing on poverty as being an almost immediate need that needed to be fixed for these people. And, I felt like that because that wasn’t really being understood or really defined as being a priority.
\end{quote}

This statement first serves to reproduce the social distinction of student-activists “people” and workers “these people”. The workers are further characterized as needing help from the student-activist (“fixed for these people”) positioning these different categories in a

\textsuperscript{3} It is important to note that there is a distinction between race, racialization, and racism that need to be acknowledged. I embrace the ideas of Darder and Torres (2004) in \textit{After Race} where they differentiate between race as an essentialized social ideology, racism as an hegemonic social force, and racialization as “an ideological process of ‘delineation of group boundaries and of allocation of persons within these boundaries by primary reference to (supposedly) inherent and/or biological (usually phenotypical) characteristics’” (citing Miles 1989). However, among activists these distinctions are not always clear and notions of race, racism, and racialization are used rather interchangeably in their talk.
hierarchy. Meghan shows that students are not "focusing", "understand[ing]", or "priorit[izing]" economic oppression, reproducing and normalizing the lack of awareness and empathy of white students. Furthermore, the students are also positioned in a way that allows them to categorize and rank oppressions as "priorities". Privilege is produced by hierarchically reconstructing social distance between workers and students, normalizing the lack of empathy on the part of students, and constructing students with the ability to measure levels of oppression.

The worker-student dichotomy had several other effects in organizing that allowed for further manifestations of privilege. For example, Thaddaeus discussed the challenges faced in organizing with workers stating, "A lot of [the challenge] was trying to interview workers because we had to kind of make sure they wouldn't get in trouble. That was a concern". This statement further reconstructs the worker-student dichotomy stating "we" in opposition to "they". Furthermore, the notion that students were in a position to "make sure" that workers would not be threatened, takes agency away from workers and places students in a protective position. This advances the construction of a hierarchy between students and workers as student-activists become virtual parents to the workers based on a fear that they would "get into trouble". Such characterization positions students in a privileged position over workers, a position that can be used as to explain certain actions such as an absence of worker voices in the campaign.

Issues of privilege also arose in discussions of 'recruiting' students of color to participate within the campaign. Four of the student-activists discussed the whiteness of
the organization, and one mentioned the internal questioning whether or not to ‘recruit’ students of color for participation. Dani discusses the practice of recruitment: “That was a problem, and there was the question of… do we actively go out into the university community and try to get students of color to participate? Is that tokenism? So, there were debates over that…”. This statement points to the question of whether or not the student-activists should “actively” recruit students of color for a movement already formed. They understand the homogeneity to be problematic, but, in thinking that a possible solution to the “problem” was to recruit students of color, the students did not critically reflect on why students of color did not join in the first place. However, the student-activists also find their solution imperfect and question whether or not the practice of recruitment is “tokenism”. In Dani’s comment, privilege was reproduced through positioning student-activists in a way that caused them to not suggest a solution to exist in critical self-reflection and potentially change movement strategies to be more attractive to Latinos and African Americans, but instead find the solution to changing movement demographics in the questionably problematic/tokenizing method of active recruitment.

Privilege is also evident when student-activists discussed their peers. Student-activists discussed the lack of involvement by other students based on the ‘sexiness’ or ‘romance’ of a movement. Every member of the movement mentioned that living wage campaigns was simply not a “sexy”, “romantic”, or “exotic” issue for students to organize around and discussed the preference of students to devote their attention to international issues. Anna declared her belief that students prefer to devote their attention to distant issues stating:
I feel like a lot of the students here... jump on a cause halfway around the world and, not that that isn’t important but, you know, these are the people that clean up after you every day, the mess that you make. And it’s like they don’t care because it’s not as romantic, you can’t take an alternative spring break there, so why do you care?

Anna’s account serves several functions. She first explained the position taken by students not involved in this issue, labeling it as an issue of “romance”. Anna stated that the students have romantic notions of oppression and injustice. To students, it seems, domestic and local oppression became unimportant when compared with the “romantic” draw to “cause[s] halfway around the world”. The notion that oppression can be “romantic” served to reproduce privilege: the framing of oppression in terms of ‘sexiness’ constructs students as able to ignore certain injustices. Additionally, the focus on international issues and problems to which one can travel on “an alternative spring break” rather than issues facing people that “clean up after you every day”, produced a ranking of oppression that categorized ‘foreign’ and ‘local’ injustices as not only different, but in competition with one another. Additionally, people oppressed by non-local forces became a more romantic and erotized “other” that privileged them over the local and ‘known other’. In a sense, the oppression of people within one’s social circle was naturalized and seen as ‘simply the way it is’ rather than a system of oppression that needs to be challenged. Ultimately, the invisibility of the oppression of workers created a space in which students remain apathetic to the plight of their neighbors without guilt. This excerpt also was able to position the student-activists in contrast to their peers as student-activists are produced as not sharing the tendency to romanticize oppressions nor privilege ‘exotic’ oppressions over domestic injustice.
Meghan explained the ways in which privilege was produced as students accomplish their membership category. Meghan told a story that illustrated such categorization as she was describing the challenge student-activists had in getting other students to join the movement.

[There were] two women, on their lunch break, like in the little common area. [They] were watching... a Latina soap opera or something and this guy on the floor literally came in, and they were eating their lunch, and changed the channel. And... I just couldn’t believe that he did that, and, when I said something to him about it, cause I tried to approach him nicely because I wanted to know what his argument was... why he should be able to do that, he was like ‘Well I’m the one who pays tuition and board here’ ‘this is my dorm’. And I was like ‘I know but don’t you have a TV in your room’ and he was like ‘Yeah but I’m heating up some food’. I’m like ‘Well they are on their lunch break, they should be able to watch what they want to watch on their lunch break’.

Meghan’s story highlights several issues. The issue of social hierarchy is clearly present. The student makes himself recognizable and relevant as a student by discussing how he, in a sense, owns the space based on his tuition payments. This positions him in a different category than the workers, who are not constructed to be able to claim such ownership and instead appear as passive and peripheral figures. In this account, the student-activist produces herself differently, as someone aware of the plight of the workers, and different from the other student. This creates a tertiary relationship: students as performing oppressive acts, workers as victims, and student-activists as attempting to resolve this oppressive relationship. The production of such relational categories affects the ways in which these groups interact and the expectations to which each group may be held accountable.

Privilege is also produced through the ignorance of the ways in which poverty is oppressive. It is furthered by a discussion on the ways that non-student-activists
explained their inaction. Anna’s comments, as she discussed struggles working with other students, illustrated several issues:

I think a lot of times the counter-argument was ‘Well, that is what the market can bear’ or ‘... the indication that somehow it is a choice. You know, these people chose to do this or...kind of feeling like that is not adequate. We have to look at what kind of jobs there are in the markets. It isn’t just what the markets can bear.

In order for this statement to make sense, Anna had to presume that I had a comprehension of the basic counter-arguments towards labor activism. This is demonstrated in the way she called on my understanding ("you know") of cultural presumptions that characterize ones employment as a personal choice. Furthermore, Anna’s comment made several points relevant. First, it pointed to the fact that worker oppression was not seen as an issue to organize around to all people. This was explained in two ways, both through a discussion on “what the markets can bear” and employment as a “choice”. Privilege is produced as students are placed in the position to explain the oppression of custodial and food service workers as based on worker entitlement to a limited amount of income based on “the market”.

Privilege was also produced in the lack of action by students in relation to the oppression of workers. Thaddaeus, while talking about the challenge student-activists faced in organizing with additional peers, stated:

That there was...limited response by actual students is even more appalling. I mean, I read [that there are homeless, and barely surviving employees], and I was like, ‘I believe it’, but it’s horrible and I just felt like students here were just not responding to it.

By stating the students “were just not responding”, Thaddaeus first reproduces the student-activists, primarily himself, as distinct from students based on their level of
response in regards to fighting oppression. He further characterizes students by their “appalling” lack of reaction. Through these statements Thaddaeus had additional accomplishments. He portrays students as being in a position to ignore the oppression faced by people they encounter on a daily basis. Due to the invisibility of this issue, students are not faced with the guilt that this oppression is being perpetuated by an institution which they fund. Privilege is produced in apathy of students in the face of oppressive circumstances. Student-activists are also positioned as privileged in the ways in which they have the ability to interpret the inaction of students.

This lack of reaction to worker oppression becomes more meaningful when students are shown to be alternatively active in defending their own loss of money. As Roy states:

I just think, in general, it is that people don’t like losing their money...They feel like giving a living wage is going to make them lose money. So I feel like it needs to be one of their strategies to say ‘You are not going to lose money, we are going to make the university pay for this.’ if this is the universities’ business we are going to make them pay for it.

This statement shows several important issues. Roy first makes the point that “people don’t like losing their money”. This comment reconstructs the notion of ownership of capital and suggests that students place great importance on personal wealth. Not only does capital provide access to television use in the common room, but also rationalizes the perpetuation of oppression. In his comments, Roy does not problematize the students’ position that personal capital outweighs justice. Instead, he replicates this belief in his proposed solution, shifting funding for a living wage to the corporation and allowing students to maintain their wealth.
Also within the interviews, the apathy of students is explained by the inexperience students have with poverty. Dani, in discussing attempts at organizing with peers, stated: “It seemed that we were having challenges reaching out to members of the [Green] community because this wasn’t an issue that many people on this campus had personal experiences with”. In this statement, Dani makes normative inaction based on ignorance. Dani stated that students do not have “personal experiences with” poverty and that this inexperience caused “challenges” in “reaching out to members of the community”.

Personal experience becomes defined quite restrictively as students are surrounded by workers and interact with people on a daily basis, yet are said to have no “personal experiences” in relation to poverty. In this frame, Dani’s statement suggests a lack of understanding and empathy on the part of students. This production of students as lacking empathy prevents the student-activists from being able effectively to “reach out to” others students.

Another statement by Roy discusses student inaction:

Not very many people that go to this school have family members that are part of the service sector ...so they are not seeing the repercussions of the lack of a living wage, so they don’t have it as a priority... A lot of students, especially if they are out of state, they don’t know the cost of living in DC, most of them live on campus, they don’t know it’s hard to find a 1 bedroom apartment for under $500 in this city...so many of these people don’t even live off campus, much less pay their own rent, you know what I mean?

Roy’s statement that students to not have personal ties to the service sector and subsequently cannot see “the repercussions” of insufficient wages reconstructs the excuse for student inaction based on apparent unawareness. It is as if the students’ ignorance is used to construct them as innocent. Furthermore, Roy’s statement produces student-
activists as different from students. Calling students “these people” and “them” clearly constructs distance between these groups of people: if students are using ignorance as a reason not to empathize with financial struggles, student-activists or ‘these people’ are acting and subsequently must have found a way to overcome this paralyzing ignorance. Student-activists resist their privilege in many ways throughout the interviews, as will be discussed later in this thesis.

The talk of students about the living wage campaign is articulated through discourses of race and capitalism. For example, consider the construction of dichotomous identities between African American and Latina/o workers and white student-activists in these excerpts that privileges white people. Theorists Turner and Tajfel (1979) argue that identity construction often occurs through the production both ‘self’ and ‘other’. Furthermore, the resulting categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are given meaningful characteristics that inform and pattern behavior between groups. These categories develop social meaning as historical forces shape their construction. In the interviews conducted of participants in the living wage campaign several categorical formations were constructed: the protective student-activist- the vulnerable worker- and the ignorant student being the most prevalent.

Discourses of race and capitalism intertwine in the talk of student-activists in the production of privilege as workers were blamed for uneasiness in attempted communication, were in need of protection, and constructed as guilty for their social position. These characterizations carry historical weight and reproduce social discourses

---

4 It is important to note that, while in Sociology ‘Latino’ is an ethnicity, the talk of the students uses ‘Latino’ as a racial category.
characterizing working class African American and Latina/o people. For example, even though the United States is a nation without an “official” national language, immigrants are continually blamed for a failure to learn English quickly and assimilate accordingly. The national ‘melting pot’ becomes one in which, rather than a merging of people to create a novel U.S. identity, there is an expectation for newcomers to ‘become’ the white, middle class standard.

Not only do the interviews reproducing hegemonic discourses that blame discomfort on African Americans, Latinos, and those living in poverty, but discourses surrounding white paternalism are also reproduced. Paternalism is rooted in historical racist discourses that produced notions of white superiority. Believed to be in a position of greater intelligence and ability, the notion of “the white man’s burden” developed and served to legitimate horrid oppressive actions including imperialism and slavery. The notion that white people, as a superior race, needed to care for and control black people and Latinos persists in U.S. society justifying the ‘top-down’ structure common in social movements through claiming that black people and Latinos need ‘help’ from white people in organizing effectively. The historical construction and contemporary maintenance of this discourse through contemporary media images are described by Entman and Rojecki (2001) in their book The Black Image in the White Mind.

A discourse on paternalism is reproduced within the interviews as students describe themselves as “needing” to “help” vulnerable workers. The fact that the workers were not included in initial organizing plans and discussions of organizing “for” and not

---

5 This term originated in the poem “White Man’s Burden” by Rudyard Kipling (1899) in reference to the imperialist actions of the United States in the Philippines. The notion of ‘white men’ needing to care for black and Latino people, has continued to pervade social thought, and the phrase “white man’s burden” is used colloquially to indicate this belief.
“with” workers further reproduce paternalist discourse of ‘white knows best’. These discussions are made more important when placed in conversation with the student-activist belief that workers could not, or had not, considered organizing on their own. For example, Meghan, when talking about relationships between student-activists and workers, made the following statement that was echoed by several other student activists: "Many of us were assuming that these people hadn’t already thought of wanting to organize". The belief that workers are unlikely to or incapable of organizing themselves calls on historical racial discourses of the incompetence of Latinos and African Americans. This is rooted in the same historical construction that established notions of “the white man’s burden” and concepts of white superiority. Discourses of black inferiority pattern thinking in U.S. society as shown in a study performed by Stanford professor Paul Sniderman reveals that 34% of white conservatives and 19% of white liberals agreeing that ‘blacks are lazy’ and 21% of white conservatives and 17% of white liberals concurring that African Americans are ‘irresponsible’ (Marable 1997:14). Belief of black inadequacy, irresponsibility, and laziness are reproduced as the student-activists discuss their thoughts on the inability of workers to self-organize.

The cultural grammar of laziness and unintelligence is also called up in the characterizations of Latina/o workers who are characterized by their language ability and not as individuals. Throughout the interviews workers are seen as difficult to communicate with because of their use of Spanish. This calls on national discourses that construct Latin Americans and immigrants as a unified category, producing both as unintelligent because they are perceived as incapable of speaking English and lazy for not trying. It is a discourse that pervades public policy, commercials, films, and television
shows. Examples of the circulation of this discourse include the reaction of people to Judge Barry Tatum’s order that a mother learn Spanish (Barry 2005), the “Frito Bandito” (Martin 1999), the TV show Kingpin (Gonzales 2003). The linguistic separation of student-activists and workers, with student-activists being able to communicate with administrators, privileges students and produces workers as unable to both express themselves, and communicate with others. It also reproduces discourses surrounding ignorance and laziness and implies that workers need students and union representatives to negotiate for their rights.

In addition to paternalism, the practice of tokenism has a cultural history that places the Green living wage campaign in larger contexts. Rather than a national discourse, the challenge to social movements to appear diverse is produced within student-activist circles. Tokenization is common within white-dominated social movements as white student-activists recruit African Americans and Latinos in an effort to gain support from marginalized communities and paint themselves as diverse, perpetuating and replicating racialized structures. This practice again reaffirms the notion that the homogeneity of the movement is not based on problems within the movement, but lies with the Latin and African Americans who refrain from joining. Appell (2003) explains this by stating:

...tokenism and paternalism take place in many organizing efforts by white-dominated groups fighting the prison-industrial complex. Having been criticized for their perpetuation of racism or equipped with an understanding that racism has been a major barrier in the movement for social justice, many well-intentioned white folks wish to incorporate an anti-racist approach into their work. Seeking a quick resolve, the problem of racism is often superficially addressed, however. Focusing on tangible and visible solutions, they tokenize individual people of color... Does not
the fact that whites are able to select people of color for inclusion in our efforts reaffirm...power and privilege? (81)

These practices are reproduced within the living wage campaign at Green College as student-activists discuss recruiting students of color to participate in their movement.

This discourse prevents student-activists from asking what is preventing students of color from joining in the first place.

In addition to the circulation of a discourse on race, discourses on ‘the market’ were evoked in the talk of activists. Students and administrators reproduce social hierarchies blaming ‘the market’ for inequality and remain apathetic. For example, in the interviews students were recorded as stating such things as:

People clearly remember their econ 101 classes and basically saying, ‘That is what the market can bear’ or ‘That is the going rate’. ‘That is the way it is.’ - a very fatalistic attitude as if the market were some mechanism that should kind of pop out results that we should all have to live with no matter what... taking that argument as if the Market was some thing within which the government cannot interfere but then not recognizing that the fact that the government then offers social services [which] makes it possible for the market to bear such low wages but not willing to see that link between [what is] economic and [what is] political.

In this excerpt Mike states that the belief that the market is a social force over which people have no control are taught in basic economics classes, indicating its pervasiveness. Through this statement, Mike attempted to point to elements of the discourse on markets as controlling people and naturally patterning social hierarchies and preventing students from seeing that another world is possible. This acceptance limits possibilities for change in the economic structure of the college because, within this capitalist framework, businesses are regarded as profit-driven at the expense of workers: a concept that is reconstructed throughout the interviews consequently making the college administration...
akin to greedy corporations. Such a characterization becomes increasingly poignant within a climate of the Enron, WorldCom, Halliburton, and Martha Stewart corporate scandals creating negative discourses surrounding businesses.

Not only did activists report this pattern of thought, but professors involved in the campaign did as well. One professor, Dr. Roberts, stated:

I think that after a lot of discussion it became clear to the people who finally had to make a decision about this that you could not separate living wage issues from the university’s own wage policy – that we had. Which was a policy to try to make all of our wages and salaries competitive within the region and, presumably, that competitiveness was going to pay attention to at least the most crucial elements of living wage.

In this statement, Dr. Roberts clearly accepts the ‘natural’ forces of capitalism and the market over the need for people to have living wages. She clearly recognizes competition with other institutions to be the necessary path for setting wage levels. This evokes a discourse on markets and positions competition as the driving force for wages, prices, and employment. The acceptance by the students and administration of the inequality demanded by capitalism, and their role in perpetuating this injustice shows that capitalism is deeply entrenched in U.S. society and rarely are people able to conceptualize a different world. While capitalism the bureaucratic nature of the administration was frequently challenged, there were never proposals made to restructure college governance.

This discourse on markets shapes solutions to student apathy. For example, rather than challenge the idea among students that owning capital is worth more than equality, student-activists shifted responsibility for payment onto the university. This reproduces discourses that support private wealth and individualism over collective support. Rank

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
(2005) and Shipler (2005) provide further information on the construction and continuation on this value system.

As discussed, the talk of student-activists serves to produce a discursive formation of privilege. This formation is patterned by socially relevant discourses on race, class, the market, and choice that construct specific ways of thinking and talking about employment, race, and social position. The next section will frame this analysis with an examination of the production of resistance throughout the interviews.

**Resistance**

Student-activists resisted their privileged positions by attempting to surmount the ignorance of students, the administration, and themselves. They also endeavored to directly resist oppressive forces that affect workers.

Throughout the interviews, student-activists attempt to erase their social power through efforts to distance themselves from other students through a discussion of their personal connection to poverty. For example, Meghan stated, when discussing why she got involved in the movement, “My mom has always been involved in union organizing and my mom herself is a janitor”. This statement created a direct tie for Meghan to the workers’ struggles. For students who did not have familial ties, the decision to join the movement was based on connections to workers. For example, Roy stated: “Many of us had relationships with workers on a personal level through knowing them throughout the school”. Roy’s statement helped to construct the student-activists as distinct from other students because they can understand the complexity of poverty and the challenges that workers face based on personal relationships. While it was early established that students
lacked experience for them to empathize with the situation of workers, student-activists were able to evoke family ties and friendships, using this connection to poverty to explain their understanding of the workers’ struggle. In this manner, the student-activists are able to give themselves greater credibility in their actions, and, in a sense, claim the struggle as their own.

As mentioned, student-activists illustrated that having a personal connection to poverty is important in one’s position as a student-activist because such connections place student-activists in a social position distinct from both workers and students. The following statement, by Mike, shows how a personal connection enables one to sustain their movement participation: “You have to make it a personal touch so people will feel it. That is very important. You can’t campaign forever, but you have to have something very personal to you”. This comment furthers the characterization of student-activists as unique in that they have made this personal connection. It also informs the ways in which student-activists understand organizing with their peers suggesting that, in order to get people to fight for change, they need to “feel” the issue. Furthermore, personal ties are understood to contribute to sustainable action on the part of activists. This perception shapes the organizing tactics used by the movement, frames methods student-activists employ to connect with other students, and helps student-activists understand their continued devotion to the movement.

Anna discussed additional issues that needed to be addressed by student-activists to resist privilege:

I think that, generally, one thing we are combating is the invisibility of the workers - which is just kind of scary. You know they are in the
undergrads literal living space cleaning their dorms and bathrooms and yet they are not seen.

This statement first furthers the unique production of student and student-activists, as student-activists are understood to behave differently in regards to relationships with workers. While students' actions treat workers as invisible, Anna shows that student-activists understood the way that this invisibility was accomplished. She takes this invisibility for granted, yet counters it with the notion that students are implicated in the production of invisibility, pointing to the “undergrads” who are unable to see workers. Anna’s statement further illustrates the recognition that student-activists felt a need to resist the manifestation of privilege and invisibility. While the workers are naturalized as being invisible, making it appear to be an essential trait, resistance is produced in the way that responsibility for the situation is placed on students.

Resistance to privilege also occurred as students attempted to breech the barrier between themselves and workers. For example, Meghan mentioned the ways that student-activists tried to talk with workers:

We did this one worker appreciation day where we, you know, got carnations and had little messages. We prewrote some out and had people to fill them out and give them to the workers just to...recognize them and see them, the students, you know.

It is clear, in Meghan’s statement, that the student-activists understood that making workers visible was an important part of their movement. The use of flowers and messages was understood as an attempt to bridge the gap between students and workers. This effort shows recognition of a social division, as evidenced by the fact that student-activists state that they want their action to be a message for the ‘students’. This suggests that the staff recognition event was done in part to challenge the erasure of workers by
the student body as well as the feeling of invisibility that may be sensed by workers. Thus, resistance occurred on two fronts: it was struggle against the divide between workers and students as well as the invisibility of workers to students.

Resistance was also accomplished through attempts at communication with workers through adapting to language issues. Roy discussed the process of information gathering when he stated:

We had our surveys actually translated into Spanish. Very different, it was difficult getting things in Spanish and for the workers to understand what they were. It was a lot more complicated and I think what [we] did end up having to do then was, unfortunately, not to talk directly to workers but to have to go through their union and of course all our union reps were bilingual.

The process of translating surveys clearly was an attempt to overcome linguistic barriers. However, Roy also stated that workers failed to really “understand what they were”. This reproduces notions of hierarchical differences between students and workers, placing blame for misunderstandings on the shoulders of workers, rather than mistranslations or misactions of students. Essentially, in pointing to the resistance of student-activists, Roy reproduced notions of linguistic barriers and the tactic of organizing through unions as a solution. This points to the establishment of the movement without worker consent, and the problems that emerge with top-down organizing.

The active resistance to linguistic barriers is one example of how student activists were aware of their privilege. Mike, in the following comment, further demonstrates how student-activists were conscious of their social power:

I think one of the issues too... I, on a personal level, fought with, or had to deal with is that it is very tough because truly there are very different worlds and a lot of the students, and me too, didn’t really feel comfortable talking to workers.
At first glance, this seems to be another example of how student-activists lacked “comfort” in talking with workers. However, it also points to a level of resistance in that student-activists “fought with” social distance. Yet, it is important that, after stating discomfort was something Mike had to “fight” with, he then weakens the magnitude of this statement claiming that, instead, he had to “deal with” it. The shift is given greater meaning in the labeling of the source of struggle the ‘different worlds’ that workers and student-activists lived in. In this statement Mike claims that it is a difference in experience that produces distance in communication. Such a claim is significant when matched with the aforementioned assertions that students had “personal” experiences with poverty because of their families. Mike clearly shows the challenge for students as, while organizing with workers, they attempted to resist their privileged position.

The students also discussed how the movement itself was an act of resistance. This is shown in the following statement by Roy:

One of the struggles in organizing a living wage campaign is that, as activists, we choose, many of us chose, not to get involved in campaigns ...to replace those that are oppressed... The workers are facing much oppression from their jobs and, unfortunately, one of the reasons these campaigns are necessary in this capitalist world, one of the reasons I got involved in it, and part of how we organized was based on the idea that, even though we don’t feel it is appropriate, for us to claim the struggle of the workers as our own, we do know that in this capitalist driven society and at a private institution, the organization, the corporations that are responsible for the oppression at this institution are responsible to paying constituents and, unfortunately, not to their workers. And as long as the workers are at risk of serious backlash by taking serious action... It is one of those struggles where, as long as we are witnesses, to use our consumer power or use our constituencies as students and as paying members of this organization, this community to speak on the behalf, or at least express their message.
Roy’s statements point to the way in which activists reproduced and attempted to resist the oppression of workers, yet also points to the difficulty organizing without the perpetuation of privilege. Roy reproduces the privilege of activists suggesting that student activists are positioned “to replace those that are oppressed”. However, he subsequently critiques this self-placement saying “even though we don’t feel it is appropriate”. This statement reproduces privilege, but also shows the ways in which Roy is attempting to distance student-activists from privilege and to use their position to fight injustice. This indicates that student activist felt that their privilege was a point of agency in movement organizing, but were troubled by the fact that they, in essence, were taking a movement from the workers. By going on to rationalize the position of activists, Roy indicates an understanding that there are no other options available for the movement, other than student-activist take-over. This also served to reproduce notions of worker vulnerability and lack of agency, as Roy conceived of the workers’ position to be limited in options based on fear of administrative retaliation. By calling on notions of the formidability of capitalism and reproducing the vulnerability of workers, Roy is able to make sense of the role activists played in the struggle.

After discussing how difficult it was to talk with workers, and how the workers voices were not sufficiently heard, the student-activists discussed the spaces in which communication did occur. The following statement was made by Dani:

So we organized by meeting as often as possible with the workers and the administration, if possible. And with the union representatives. This woman named Clara García, who was the local union organizer, and María Perez, their treasurer at the time, [they] worked with us very closely.
As shown in the statement with Dani, the activists also attempted to resist their privilege through finding the voices of workers by working closely with the union. As discussed earlier, activists' actions were shaped by notions of language and positionality leading them to seek assistance from the union, rather than from bilingual students or workers. This excerpt also presents a partially negative case in that it is the only time in which the meetings with workers were described as overwhelmingly successful. This can be explained in the ways in which, when talking about the union involvement, Dani described the successful ways in which information was gathered whereas other activists discussed union participation as a necessary method of resolving a problem of language.

Resistance was produced in the ways that student-activists talked about the administration. The following is a statement by Dani:

So, then we had to start pushing. We got the support, we interviewed the workers, we got the information, we have two reports actually that are valuable—the living wage committees and ours. Now we need to do something about it. So we started, really, simply collecting signatures for petitions...

This excerpt clearly explains the difficult process that the student-activists undertook to fight for living wages. The need to 'push' suggests a clear resistance on the part of the administration. Furthermore it outlines a clear decision about what methods work in organizing. The underlying theme is a replication of historical methods of protest: information gathering moving to petitions. The decision implied that the student-activists felt that the administration would respond to such tactics. Additionally, this excerpt shows that, despite the discomfort they had with communicating with workers, the student-activists attempted to bridge the gap through interviews. It is important to note that many of the student-activists felt that the interviews were insufficient and the
discomfort in talking with workers manifested itself within these conversations limiting
the connection between workers and student-activists. Furthermore, when I talked with
workers, I was told that there was frustration among workers because only a few people
were interviewed and that the interviewees were not chosen randomly. Maria, one
worker, mentioned that there were a lot of other workers interested in having their voices
heard, but had no platform for doing so.

Greater action also occurred to resist the position of the university. In his
interview, Mike stated:

So we did a little event, a little march and we presented the petitions... Basically saying 'look we have students and faculty signatures' and look, we have all this support on campus, you have the information you need. You need to take action you need to make a decision.' --- So ok, what happened? We ended up introducing a rally..

In addition to petitions, students undertook a different tactic used historically in social
movements: holding a rally. Again, this reconstructs historical notions that, when faced
with strong opposition, people in power will take notice. This again limits movement
development, as the same tactics are used repeatedly. Mike's statement, and this
assumption, further constructs the administration as being a reasonable body that will
respond to requests from students. Unfortunately, in this movement, and many others,
that was not the case.

Resistance is produced in the way that talk is patterned through a larger discourse
of activism that limits thinking and talk about organizing in a way that restricts student-
activist’s selection of movement tools. Historically, the notion of student activism has
meant using protesting tactics such as petitions and rallies. As discussed, these were the
primary methods used by students in the living wage campaign and there was little consideration of other possibilities. The following statement by Mike demonstrates:

We wanted to get our resolution passed so we went to – the undergraduate conference – so everyone knew about this campaign. There was a lot of publicity in [the] papers – we had events sponsored so everyone knew about it, we had fliers, petitions, so everybody knew about it.

In Mike’s statement, he demonstrated the understanding student activists had in regards to both other students and effective organizing strategies. Through the described actions, it was clear that Mike understood students as being people who received information through conferences and newspapers. Furthermore, he perceived students to be willing to change their behavior once they were aware of issues of injustice. These tactical decisions are made through evoking discourses on student organizing that construct movements to challenge bureaucratic oppression as relying on negotiation methods of traditional education, petitions, and fliers.

A discourse on union-activism was also evoked in the student-activist interviews. This first occurred through the use of the union to hear the voices of workers rather than turning to bilingual students or workers. Unions have been famous for their ability to be the voice of workers since they emerged as a powerful entity following the civil war (Commons 1918). Students turned to a traditional, and socially recognized, tactic of labor organizing, unions. Furthermore, the selection of organizational tactics from the history of unions demonstrate that the student-activists were influenced by discourses on union activism. For example, the following statement by Roy shows the influence of the union on action: “we knew the union wanted to be more tempered in their demands...
and I never figured out what the workers wanted”. This indicates that the students subscribed to historical organizing programs drafted by unions, rather than the emerging model that includes hunger strikes, tent cities, and the occupation of buildings, often undertaken by university-based living wage campaigns.

A discourse on student-activism, within activist circles, also shapes the placement of students in the movement. Student-activists repeatedly discuss how their social location places them in a position in which they can act on behalf of workers:

Unfortunately, our goals were not as in tuned with the workers as I would have liked, but I did see how we had the benefit of being able to take high risks and, as long as they didn’t feel like we were putting them at risk, we almost could serve as the outside agitators that could push the struggle a little bit.

Mike’s statement evokes discourses of student activism that reproduce ideas of the place of students within movements. College movements tend to be led by students from middle class backgrounds that have the level of social comfort to devote time and resources to movements. In Mike’s excerpt it is shown how the understanding of students within social movements legitimates the use of top-down organizing and the ways in which the students did not feel a need to be completely “in tuned” with the workers because workers were not being put “at risk”. This was also influenced by the discourse on race previously explored that positioned students in a paternalistic role in organizing.

In summary, activists drew on union-based and student-movement discourses when talking about the actions of the student-activists. This discourse is centered on union strategies of top-down organizing and negotiations. While there is a parallel discourse on radical student movement activism that stresses radical tactics such as
fasting, rioting, and building takeovers; these tactics are typically understood to deal with such topics as war and the movements of the civil rights movements of the 1960’s. However, in successful living wage campaigns, such as those at Harvard and Georgetown, these radical tactics have been employed. Perhaps, now that living wage campaigns have grown in recognition, the discourse on labor movements will shift providing new tools for student-activists.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

On the surface, it is clear that the student-activists faced several challenges in organizing the campaign. They found opposition from fellow students who were neither interested in spending their time organizing, nor in paying for fair wages. However, on a deeper level, there are additional challenges that these student-activists faced in movement organizing.

It is clear that the privilege, which enabled student-activists to organize this campaign, also constrained them from organizing a wholly effective movement. There was a construction of social distance that prevented workers and student-activists from uniting. This social distance clearly demonstrates the way that discourses on race, including inferiority and laziness, continue to circulate within the United States and affect even those who are attempting to fight oppression. Racialized othering unmistakably occurred, placing blame for social distance on workers. It further forced student-activists to act as if workers had essential characteristics such as ignorance in organizing or debilitating vulnerability and thus limited campaigning strategies. For example, student-activists mentioned feeling that workers were unable to organize themselves. This thinking justified the absence of workers within the movement, and reproduced racist thoughts of paternalism and inferiority.

Student-activist also evoked public discourse on capitalism and activism. It is
clear that discourses on the market formed a formidable challenge for the student-activists. Students and administrators alike were able to claim that inequality and oppression was "just the way it is" and that they had no role in creating inequity and thus, no responsibility for changing it. The way that discourses on the market and choice were evoked contributed to the naturalized understanding of the relationship between race and employment position in student-activist talk and reports of student comments. Such discourses prevented people in privileged positions from, not only seeing their role in oppression, but from taking responsibility for changing oppression. These beliefs added to the difficulty of the movement. As mentioned, when faced with opposition from students, including the belief that one's personal wealth is worth more than a living wage for workers, student-activists reacted by explaining that students themselves would not have to pay rather than challenging the value given to personal capital. This reaction undoubtedly demonstrates the pervading ideology positioning capitalism as natural as students chose not to challenging the value placed on individual wealth. Furthermore, organizing tactics were limited to petitions and rallies, and the movement was done 'for' workers subscribing to past understandings of activism.

Not only was the fact that workers were only peripherally involved in the movement a result of the internalization and reproduction of social discourses on race and class, but it also distinguishes the living wage campaign at Green College from those at other institutions. As discussed in the literature review, the campaigns with marked success have been organic, grassroots movements led, if not by workers with significant worker involvement and input (ACORN 2006, Reynolds and Kern 2004, Olson and Steinman 2004). The inadequate involvement of workers at Green College could have
limited movement solidarity, attention from students and the media, and the strength of the campaign. These discourses framed the struggle in was that severely limited the chances for movement success.

Additionally, the campaign at Green College differed from other living wage campaigns based on their reform tactics. The student-activists reproduced behaviors used in historical movements, but did not move beyond these to attempt ‘novel’ tactics that are often employed by living wage campaigns (Olson and Steinman 2004). For example, at Georgetown University, students held a fast on the university lawn to protest unfair wages while, at Harvard, students occupied the administrative building for several days. In the examples of both Harvard and Georgetown, their ‘novel’ tactics in demanding reform were coupled by pressure from other people in their coalition. At Harvard fellow students and workers continued to protest outside of the administrative buildings in which the student-activists fought. Media contacts reported on the movement and added to pressure for change. These sorts of networks, though mentioned as characteristic of living wage campaigns (Olson and Steinmann 2004), were not established at Green College and may have contributed to a lack of movement strength.

As demonstrated in the literature of social movements, it is firmly believed that coalition building is needed for the next phase of social change. Scholars on living wage (Olson and Steinmann 2004), civil rights (Guinier and Torres 2002, Marable 1997), women’s liberation (King 1990, Roth 2004), and student movements (Bradley 2003) all discussed the need to organize with distinct groups in order to build power strong enough to challenge oppressive structures. The literature can be interpreted as stating that networks are also needed in order to overcome the discourses that pattern social distance.
Discourses on capitalism, race, and class circulate and contribute to the production of social distance by preventing people from working together effectively. In order to defeat the tendency for activists to reproduce privilege and oppression, activists and scholars need to recognize the ways in which they reproduce notions of race, class, and capitalism in their talk and organizing strategies, as well as develop new models for organizing that have the potential to minimize the creation of social distance.

It is evident that more research needs to be done to see if and how movements have been able to organize without the reproduction of social distance. If Marable (1997) is correct in asserting that through democratically reformed multiracial coalitions new understandings of difference will emerge and, if Guinier and Torres (2002) are accurate in stating that hierarchical divisions can be overcome through power sharing and democratic processes, there needs to be analysis done on how such reforms can occur.

One suggestion to overcome the reproduction of oppression and social distance in movement organizing is suggested by John Beverley (2003). Beverley argues that, rather than organizing movements on a unified collective identity, a process which erases important differences and voices, organizing should revolve around true movement heterogeneity. People would unite, not based on a common identity, but in opposition to a similar force which may affect people in different ways not understood by other members in the movement. This model of organizing is not based on complete understanding of one another, or assimilation, but an acceptance of difference and can prevent the perpetuation of distance to create a firm front against oppression. This would cause a radical restructuring of social movements. More research needs to be done to understand the effectiveness of theories such as Beverley's once implemented in
movements such as living wage campaigns. Furthermore, while Beverley's suggestion is a potential start, research needs to be done to understand how student-activists can break free from the reproducing privilege.

While social movements have had a lot of successes throughout history, it is important to recognize the ways in which activists reproduce hegemonic discourses of race, class, and capitalism. The situation of Green College demonstrates the ways in which privilege is used to create and maintain social movements, but also how such positionality reproduces oppressive social hierarchies which activist are attempting to resist. The potential for more inclusive models of organizing, and greater levels of success exist. It is up to activists, workers, and scholars to begin to reconceptualize models of organizing that will challenge oppression from both within the movement, and against targeted institutions.
REFERENCES


ACORN. 2006. “ACORN and Living Wage.” Retrieved February 16th (www.livingwagecampaign.org)


