

VANCOUVER'S LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN:
SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

by

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Abstract

This thesis presents the findings of research on a living wage campaign conducted by low-wage hospital support workers. First, I conducted an analysis with a mobilization theory framework to assess whether a campaign strategy that utilizes the extended set of collective action frames associated with social movement unionism can compensate for the effects of severe economic environmental conditions on labour bargaining power. Second, as identity narratives have important consequences for social movement mobilization, I assessed how story modes shape identity assertion and alliance building within a social movement unionism organizing model.

Based on findings from interviews with the outsourced workers, I recommend modifications to mobilization theory because within a social movement unionism model, campaign success depends, in part, on workers actively shaping the interpretive framework, and on social cohesion within the union's horizontal network. While a depressed economic environment may dampen the power of interpretive framework resonance and social cohesion to achieve economic success from a campaign, successes in worker empowerment and skills can still be achieved. It is worthwhile to continue social movement strategies through a poor economic period to maximize the economic gains that are possible under the conditions as well as to empower and train workers into activists, and to organize horizontal networks, thus laying the groundwork for social movement expansion and success, when economic conditions improve.

In addition, the findings reveal that the worker activists presented associational declarations of their alliances and atrocity tales of their hardships as their favoured motivational tools for mobilization. In their atrocity tales of hardship, activists asserted

value-based identities to encourage mobilization, while associational declarations indicated that in order to build alliances activists selected an identity to emphasize their similarity to a given potential ally. These findings indicate that the basis for identity construction and assertion to encourage micromobilization is contingent on the type of social movement organizing model, alignment of activist and public values, and the nature of the ally audience.

Preface

The research presented within this thesis is the living wage campaign component of the “Health Care Support Workers’ Study.” For my contribution to the research component, I identified the topic of study as Vancouver’s living wage campaign and created the questions in the living wage section of the interview tool. I also conducted 60 interviews with the study respondents and completed all of the data analysis. I am the lead co-author of the following two manuscripts, from which work presented throughout the thesis is drawn. My written contribution to the two manuscripts is approximately 90% of the material.

Ptashnick, Melita and Daniyal Zuberi. Under review. "Immigrants Organizing for a Better Future, While Hoping to Keep Their Jobs: Social Movement Unionism and Fighting for a Living Wage during a Global Economic Crisis."

----- . Under review. "Identity Narratives in a Living Wage Campaign: Favored Story Modes, Primary Identities, and Micromobilization."

This research study received ethics approval from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board at the University of British Columbia as noted on ethics certificate H07-00465.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is two-fold. First, the thesis examines how a social movement unionism strategy of participation in Vancouver's Living Wage Campaign benefited members of the Hospital Employees' Union during a global economic crisis. The analysis is conducted with a mobilization theory framework to assess the application of this theory to a campaign strategy with an extended set of collective action frames in an environment of severe economic conditions. Second, this thesis examines the pervasiveness of identities constructed across different identity story types by living wage campaign activists, who are unionized hospital support workers in the Vancouver region. The analysis also explains how identity selection influences micromobilization.

The context of Vancouver's living wage campaign is rising neo-liberalism, which necessitated a shift in union strategy from business unionism to social movement unionism. Globally, neo-liberal approaches to restructuring public sector health care systems have resulted in low pay and work intensification (Buchanan and Briggs 2005; Lethbridge 2004). In the Canadian province of British Columbia in 2002, the newly elected right-of-center provincial government's *Health and Social Services Delivery Act* breached their signed collective agreement with the Hospital Employees' Union (HEU), which represents more than ninety percent of the support workers in hospitals and long-term care facilities in the southwestern part of the province, including the greater Vancouver region (Camfield 2007; Stinson, Pollak, and Cohen 2005). Bill 29, the *Health and Social Service Delivery Improvement Act*, eliminated collective agreement provisions for health care workers and unilaterally removed job security and no contracting-out clauses from the collective agreements of thousands of health support workers. The

government initiated the contracting-out of HEU jobs with the loss of employment for more than 8,000 HEU members (Camfield 2007; Stinson, Pollak, and Cohen 2005).

Between October 2003 and July 2004, housekeeping service employees in all 32 Lower Mainland hospitals and 9 facilities on southern Vancouver Island were privatized. Several hospitals and long-term care facilities also contracted out dietary workers, security, and laundry services during this period.

By the time the HEU won the right to represent the privatized hospital support workers, both the collective agreements and the workforce population were vastly different from the pre-privatization period. Privatization and outsourcing drastically reduced the wage rates of hospital support workers, including housekeeping and food service employees. For example, hospital housekeeping staff, whose jobs were outsourced as a result of privatization, then earned 26% less than the national average wage for housekeepers in hospitals across Canada (Cohen 2006). When subsequent legal action and illegal work stoppages failed to reverse the outsourcing or wage reductions, the HEU confronted new challenges during collective bargaining for its increasingly diverse and divided membership (Cohen 2006). The union needed a potent campaign strategy to improve the wages and benefits of the contracted out workers, who then earned far less than other union members and had much weaker benefits as a result of privatization. Therefore, the union decided to join forces with other labour and community social justice organizations in a living wage campaign to motivate rank-and-file mobilization and increase public support (Cohen 2006).

In the social movement unionism model, labour builds power by mobilizing rank-and-file members and partnering with community organizations to address broad social

justice issues, such as a living wage (Rhombert and Simmons 2005). A growing number of unions are pursuing economic issues within broader social justice platforms of social movement unionism, including immigrant rights and issues of dignity. Dating to the mid 1980s, the Service Employees International Union 's (SEIU) Justice for Janitors campaign in the U.S used a strategy that included public demonstrations to shame corporations, which were making large profits at the expense of the working poor (Chun 2005; Fantasia and Voss 2004; Lopez 2004b). In 1995, the election of the former president of this progressive union to lead the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) on a platform calling for a switch to a more activist labour movement and away from the conciliatory approach towards corporate rule of his predecessor signalled an important shift in the labour movement (Lopez 2004b). In Las Vegas in the 1990s, for example, Local 226 of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union (HERE) successfully utilized social movement unionism to build support for labour initiatives from immigrant rights groups in the community (Chun 2005; Voss and Fantasia 2004). Yet these campaigns were largely conducted during a time of relative economic prosperity. The effectiveness of the social movement unionism strategy has not yet been studied in a period of global economic crisis, with its added dimensions of elevated job insecurity and increased future uncertainty, in particular for a population that already holds precarious socio-economic positions: ethnic minority immigrant female low-wage workers.

Furthermore, even with widespread feelings of unfair treatment among outsourced workers, it may be difficult to mobilize workers, who need motivation to overcome barriers to participation, such as biographical availability, excessive fatigue from work

intensification, family responsibilities and intimidating managers (Cunningham and James 2010). Some scholars suggest that living wage campaigns may be effective vehicles for union member mobilization as they allow union members not only to express themselves from their positions as workers, but from the multiple facets of their identities within their local communities and the broader society (Johnston 2001). However, research on what identities workers specifically express in a living wage campaign has been limited.

Identities are negotiated and asserted during social interactions as people construct meaningful identities and refute demeaning imputed identities (Corrigan-Brown 2005). Shifting from an undesirable identity to external recognition for new more desirable identities can be a goal of activism (Bernstein 2008). Such a shift may be particularly attractive to low-wage workers, whose work identity is often stigmatized. Research among members of a homeless community demonstrated that stigmatized people constructed identities of dignity using identity talk strategies (Snow and Anderson 1987). Research among members of the peace and justice movement with activists not linked to stigmatized jobs found that social movement members communicated themes of becoming aware of an injustice, joining the movement, and increasing movement participation through identity stories (Hunt and Benford 1994). However, the research did not examine whether a constructed identity permeated multiple categories of stories, which have effects on different aspects of mobilization.

The purpose of this thesis is two-fold. First, I examine how severe economic environmental conditions affect the outcomes and collective action frames of a living wage campaign. I analyze the collective action frames: how participants framed what a

living wage meant to them, what social movement unionism strategies were employed, and how motivational reasons constructed for collective action were altered. I assess the outcomes using mobilization theory to determine if the extended set of collective action frames associated with social movement unionism can compensate for the effects of severe economic environmental conditions on labour bargaining power. While the economic outcomes of the campaign were less than hoped for by workers, there were important intangible gains.

Second, this thesis examines the pervasiveness of identities across different categories of identity stories. I also explain how identity selection influences micromobilization. As distinguished from macromobilization processes such as alterations in opportunity structures or power relationships, micromobilization refers to the interactive processes used by social movement organizations and their actors to influence or mobilize target groups to pursue collective interests (Snow et al. 1986). Collective identities are important to mobilization studies because they are required to translate individual interests and actions into collective agency (Bernstein 2008). According to mobilization theorists, this sense of agency, which is a set of beliefs known as collective action frames that collective action can make a difference, is one necessary component for successful social movement outcomes (Badigannavar and Kelly 2005).

I found living wage activists most frequently drew motivation from associational declarations and atrocity tales to make their action decisions. While the “helper of others” identity and immigrant cultural identities appeared in both story categories, as part of associational declarations the assertion of a given identity was affected by the type of group to whom activists were declaring their association. In atrocity tales, activists

constructed these identities as value-based identities related to family and community. Living wage activists presented their selected identities – helper of others and cultural identities – in identity narratives that described the activists’ model of inclusion: a living wage for all to support family, community, and immigrant incorporation. The choice of an inclusive model derived from the desire to broaden public support and to further activist mobilization.

In the literature review section, I begin with a description of the effects of neo-liberalism on union power and disadvantaged workers’ wages. The following three subsections discuss the literature on social movement unionism and living wage campaigns, and then introduce motivational theory. In the final subsections of the literature review, I discuss the literature on identity construction in social movements and by disadvantaged workers.

Literature Review

The Neo-liberal Environment

A trend towards growing neo-liberalism in Canada and the province of British Columbia, both currently dominated by right-of-centre governments, has adversely affected union power and wages for disadvantaged workers. As globalization accelerated the reduction in state regulation of industries, the focus of companies shifted to labour cost reduction in order to increase profits (Blyton et al. 2001). While Canadian union density has remained relatively stable over the past several decades, unionization has shifted as the economy has moved away from manufacturing towards service industries, such as health care, and neo-liberal government and employer efforts have successfully

weakened union power (Camfield 2007; Dinardo and Lemieux 1997). The health care sector is dominated by female workers, particularly at the bottom end of the wage distribution, where women of colour fill most non-professional, non-management or non-supervisory positions in Canada and the United States (Brofenbrenner 2005). Workers also faced a decreased real value of the minimum wage as the inflation adjusted rate was worth only two-third of the 1960s minimum wage; while minimum wage increases were recently passed in the U.S. and in many other Canadian provinces, they have remained stagnant in the province of British Columbia (Christofides and Oswald 1992; Dinardo and Lemieux 1997; Tilly 2004).

Social Movement Unionism

A few Canadian unions are starting to turn to social movement unionism with the hopes of gaining power and public support to counteract neo-liberal institutions and the trend towards neo-liberal policies, such as privatization. In the traditional business unionism model, union bureaucracy focuses on collective bargaining and contract enforcement. Active involvement by members is limited and even considered somewhat unnecessary (Cornfield and Canak 2007; Hurd 1998; Turner and Hurd 2001). The social movement unionism model, by contrast, includes coalition building with other socially conscious organizations and encourages mobilization of the general union membership to achieve collective solutions through political action for broader social and economic justice issues (Cornfield and Canak 2007; Hurd 1998; Turner and Hurd 2001). Drawing upon a broader power base through alliances with community organizations that can apply pressure on employers, social movement labour engages in political actions, which aim to counteract the bargaining power of transnational corporations and to address

human rights issues of social and economic inequality (Hurd 1998; Johnston 2001; Turner and Hurd 2001). This strategy is particularly important in the neo-liberal environment because government's reforms to labour legislation often limit labour's avenues to legal recourse (Kumar and Murray 2002).

In a social movement unionism strategy, unions also look internally to increase their power base. To sustain involvement, unions found that the general membership needed to be empowered with a sense of ownership in the planning and execution of activism strategies (Sharpe 2004). On-going leadership development of workers supports participatory democracy in social movement unionism at the union rank-and-file level (Sharpe 2004). For example, the Trades Union Congress's Organizing Academy in London fostered activism through training with many unions hiring the organizer graduates to lead successful campaigns, even in previously difficult to organize sectors (Holgate and Wills 2007). Collective action tactics, such as petitions and marches, allow workers to experience the empowerment of social movement unionism and dissipate fear of negative outcomes (Lopez 2004a; Lopez 2004b).

Living Wage Campaigns

The shift to social movement unionism can overlap with union involvement in a living wage campaign as an example of a broader community commitment from labour. Living wage campaign frames can provide enhanced motivation for union member mobilization because union members are not only expressing themselves from their positions as workers, but from the multiple facets of their identities within their local communities and the broader society (Johnston 2001). Campaigns that engage workers'

multiple identities are more likely to be able to mobilize workers because associational identities politics can help individuals to develop collective solidarity (O'Brien 2008).

In addition to increasing wages, living wage movements can advance employment conditions and benefits as well as family and community life for workers. In conjunction with London's living wage campaign, the public sector union has secured significant improvements in working conditions and contract terms for its members (Holgate and Wills 2007). Benefits from the receipt of a living wage may also include more time and money for family, a decreased need to hold multiple jobs, and more time and finances to support education upgrades as well as participate in community organizations (Luce 2004). In addition to wage floor improvements, living wage movements may seek to discourage outsourcing and privatization in the public sector and to create standards for the appropriate distribution of public funds (Luce 2004).

Social and cultural perspectives, which are influenced by place and time, affect the meaning of a living wage (Mackenzie and Stanford 2008). In contrast to the minimum wage, which is the legal minimum employers must pay, the living wage reflects what full-time earners in a family need to make to meet a basic level of economic security based on the costs of living in a specific community rather than live in poverty (Richards et al. 2008). In British Columbia, the province with the highest child poverty rate, the living wage calculation not only included nearly \$1000 per month to directly support child care expenses for two children, but also covered the cost of two college courses annually for parents to update their education to improve their chances of future upward mobility and thus the opportunity to provide better financial support for their children.

Mobilization Theory

Mobilization theory contends that the key internal factors for union success in recruiting activists and securing improved bargaining results are the collective action frames, which are promoted by union leaders and adopted by workers (Badigannavar and Kelly 2005). Collective action frames provide strategic interpretations of the issues, solutions to the presented problem, and motivational reasons for people to engage in collective action (Noakes and Johnston 2005). Mobilization theorists argued that collective action frames in successful campaigns generated a perception that the union was effective in voicing the main concerns of workers, a strong sense of social cohesion and identification with the union, and a focus of blame for worker problems on the employer rather than on impersonal forces (Badigannavar and Kelly 2005; Kelly 1998).

Mobilization theorists also suggest that collective action is affected by opportunity, which depends, in part, on the balance of power among corporations, government, and labour (Kelly 1998; Tilly 1978). Hence, collective action frames can be affected by environmental conditions that influence labour power, such as the state of labour markets (Badigannavar and Kelly 2005). For example, Badigannavar and Kelly (2005) argued that labour market conditions, which provided workers with fewer exit strategies, would create a weaker bargaining position and may decrease the union's perceived effectiveness. In an argument contrary to mobilization theory, researchers have contended that framing may also include efforts to emphasize political and cultural opportunities rather than constraints or framing can emphasize activists' agency to increase opportunity (Benford and Snow 2000). For example, unions engaged in social movement unionism attempt to mobilize the general union membership using an

expanded set of frames, including dignity and justice, in addition to economic terms (O'Brien 2008). I will analyze whether a campaign strategy that utilizes the extended set of collective action frames associated with social movement unionism can compensate for the effects of severe economic environmental conditions on labour bargaining power.

Identity Construction

The self, a working compromise between identities asserted by oneself (personal identities) and those assigned by others (social identities), develops during the process of social interactions (Mead 1934; Snow and Anderson 1987). During the course of social activism, a third category of identities – collective identities – can develop from perceived shared experiences or attributes with the social movement group (Corrigan-Brown 2005). In order to demonstrate perceptions of his/her own identity, construct collective identities for the social movement, and align personal and social identities with a collective identity, an activist may undertake identity reconstruction through a method such as identity storytelling (Corrigan-Brown 2005; Hunt and Benford 1994).

From ethnographic research on the peace and justice movement from 1982 to 1991 in the United States, Hunt and Benford (1994) found that social movement members communicated their activist identities in stories categorized into six types: associational declarations, atrocity tales, war stories, guide narratives, disillusionment anecdotes, and “personal is political” reports. During associational declarations, activists would communicate aspects of personal or collective identity as they pointed out their similarities and differences compared to other individuals and groups (Hunt and Benford 1994). For example, a member of Nebraskans for Peace (NFP) indicated that he became involved with that particular organization because it presented both a local and a global

perspective, which also was important to him personally. A fellow activist noted that he switched his membership from another social movement organization to NFP because it did not emphasize conformity to the same degree. Atrocity tales focused on unjust acts committed by opponents and results of injustices; war stories recounted the feats of activist heroes in the face of hostile opposition or conditions (Hunt and Benford 1994). Guide narratives illuminated that activists' personal identities were aligned with collective identities, in part, through relationships with charismatic leaders (Hunt and Benford 1994). In disillusionment anecdotes, activists explained how a situation or person altered their perceptions, so their identity changed from naïve to conscious, and in their "personal is political" reports, activists infused personal everyday experiences with political significance.

However, Hunt and Benford did not examine what identities activists commonly constructed or the pervasiveness of these identities across the different types of story categories. On the one hand, particular identities may be strongly associated with given situations. For example, more salient identities can be self-reinforcing in a context where there is a higher degree of receptivity to situational hints for behaviour reflecting the more salient identity, rather than a less important identity and behavioural expressions of an identity serve to confirm that identity (Stryker 2000). Identities can also become functionally autonomous of the circumstances, in which they and their degree of salience were initially formed (Stryker 2000). Hence, some identities are specific to a situation or two, while other identities may have relevance across a broad range of contexts (Snow and McAdam 2000). As a collective identity translates individual interests into collective agency (Bernstein 2008) and social movement participants use narratives as motivational

tools to form collective action decisions (Sandstrom, Martin, and Fine 2010), I argue that it is important to determine what identities activists frequently construct and how common these identities are across different narrative types.

Negotiating for Dignity

Identity construction in activism stories is a process, in which low-wage workers could potentially negotiate identities of dignity. In their work life, the organizational culture of low-wage service work, such as enforced deference, often results in experiences that can lower workers' self-esteem; low-wage workers may seem invisible to others or when they are noticed, they may be looked down upon as occupants of lowly positions (Ehrenreich 2001; Newman 1999). Yet, when role-based identities imply a demeaning self, individuals are more likely to construct and assert identities that diverge from their social identities (Snow and Anderson 1987). For example, previous on-the-job ethnographic research revealed that while low-wage workers viewed the challenges in low-wage work as shared, they did not construct class-related identities, such as working poor, as primary identities (O'Brien 2008). In addition, in the context of a social movement, how a group frames its collective identity depends on factors such as its links to allies, the type of opposition, and the situation (Polletta and Jasper 2001). I examined how relating accounts of their living wage campaign activism through various story modes, including those that depict allies and opponents, provided opportunities for low-wage workers to construct personal and collective identities of self-worth.

In addition, I explored how these newly constructed identities affected micromobilization for low-wage, immigrant workers in a living wage campaign. Research has shown that experiencing the feeling that it is possible to create change

through collective action can elevate a person's belief that he or she as an individual has the ability to complete specific behaviours needed to produce the desired result in a given situation (Corrigall-Brown 2005). Value-based action can result in such a positive feeling, if the values are affirmed, because values create meaning and direction for members of a culture (Gecas 2000). Previous research also demonstrated that charismatic leaders linked members' actions toward movement goals to members' value identities, which increased the salience of the collective actions and identities, and elevated self-efficacy, self-esteem, and the feeling that one's actions were true to one's self – self-authenticity (Gecas 2000). However, in a social movement unionism model, which was the organizing system employed by the Hospital Employees' Union in the living wage campaign, it was the general union membership not the union leaders, who formed the heart of social movement activism. Therefore, I analyzed the connections the activists themselves make between values, identity, and collective action.

Additionally, many of living wage campaign participants were new immigrants and thus were exposed to both the cultural values of their countries of origin as well as those of their post-immigration host country. Neither literature on immigrants nor social movement participation has given much attention to immigrant collective action (Klandermans, van der Toorn, and van Stekelenburg 2008). Hence, I also analyzed how immigrants with potentially conflicting sets of values from their countries of origin and new host country negotiate the meanings of the campaign values in light of their multiple and potentially divergent understandings of value priorities. Here I address the following research question: how did exposure to potentially divergent cultural values affect mobilization of immigrants in a social justice campaign?

In chapter 2, I present the study methodology and sample characteristics. Then in chapters 3 and 4, I describe the research findings: first on social movement unionism during a global economic crisis, then on identity construction in social movement narratives. Finally, in chapter 5, I explore explanations for the campaign outcomes and discuss the application of mobilization theory. I also consider the narrative modes favoured by the activists, the pervasiveness of their primary identities, and the effects of identity selection on micromobilization.

Chapter 2: Methodology and Sample Characteristics

In consultation with the Hospital Employees' Union, invitations for health care support workers to participate in the research interviews were distributed at union meetings. Support workers, who expressed an interest in participating in the study, signed up and provided their contact information. In addition, some participants were recruited via snowball sampling methods, when respondents mentioned friends and colleagues who were interested in being interviewed. The disadvantage of the sampling approach is that the sample includes a disproportionate number of support workers active in workplace issues and with the union. However, the benefit of working with the union is that it allowed access to the sample, which otherwise would have been difficult or impossible to achieve because privatized employers managed communications with outsourced workers through a complex pager system arranged out of suburban office parks. Additionally, the richness of data collected with a qualitative methodology as compared to survey data compensated for some of this sampling bias (Small 2009).

The data for this thesis are from the "Health Care Support Workers' Study" to assess the effects of privatization and efforts at union revitalization for outsourced workers. From 2007 to 2009, 65 digitally-recorded interviews were completed with housekeeping and dietary support workers, who worked in hospitals and care facilities in the Vancouver region. The interview protocol created by Dan Zuberi combined closed- and open-ended questions on topics including income, family, work experiences, and community involvement. The identity-related living wage campaign questions, which I created, were added to the interview tool for interviews starting in July 2009.

The findings presented in this thesis are based primarily on the qualitative data collected from semistructured interviews. During qualitative interviews, respondents can speak with agency as they narrate stories of self (Byrne 2003), which made this methodology particularly suitable for research on identity construction. The data were collected in in-depth, face-to-face interviews that lasted from 1 to 3 hours. To facilitate an atmosphere of comfort, participants selected a space, such as their home or neighbourhood coffee shop, in which to complete the interview.

The interview transcripts were coded and analyzed with the help of qualitative research software (Atlas.ti). First, I conducted open coding to identify the key themes of interest from the transcript data (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). Next, I initiated focused coding to develop subtopics, identify links, and distinguish variations (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). Finally, I further scrutinized analytic themes and connections to elaborate them within theoretical frames.

The Respondents

The descriptive statistics for the sample are presented in table 1.

Variable	Full Sample (N=65)	Immigrant Subsample	Identity Subsample
Age (mean)	50 years	50 years	50 years
Gender (female)	85%	84%	86%
Visible Minority	89%	93%	86%
Immigrant	94%	100%	86%
Post-secondary Education	62%	66%	67%

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

The data presented in chapter 3 are from a subsample of 61 respondents that includes only the participants who are immigrants. Most (93%) of the respondents in the subsample are members of visible minority groups, with more than half self-identifying as Filipino. As would be expected in the health care field, 84% of the interviewees in the subsample are women. Many (66%) of the interviewees in the subsample have post secondary education in their countries of origin, which has not been recognized by Canadian employers or professional associations. While a high percentage of the subsample (90%) are more than 40 years of age, 69% of the interviewees have annual incomes of less than \$30,000. Due to low wages starting at approximately \$10.25 per hour in privatized hospital support work, nearly one-third of the participants in the subsample work multiple jobs and only about half of the respondents in the subsample have any savings at all.

The data presented in chapter 4 are from a subsample of 28 respondents: those participants whose interviews included the identity-related living wage campaign questions. Most members of the subsample were visible minority, immigrant women with post-secondary education. Twenty-four of the respondents (86%) in the subsample were women, a gender composition that is similar to the population of low-wage health care workers. Women tend to be overrepresented in most low-wage, care jobs (England, Budig, and Folbre 2002). The average age of the workers interviewed in the subsample was 50 years old. They were food service employees and housekeepers working in hospitals and care facilities – health care support workers in departments that these types of institutions tend to target for wage squeezes (Appelbaum et al. 2005). Typical of the low-wage working population, in which minorities are disproportionately represented

(Kmec 2003), many of the interviewees (86%) in the subsample were members of visible minority groups. The proportion of visible minority members in the general population of Vancouver is only 36.4% (Reitz 2007). Most of the respondents (86%) in the subsample were first-generation immigrants, 58% of who had arrived in Canada in 1990 or later. Two-thirds of the immigrant members of the subsample had post-secondary education in their countries of origin, but qualifications of immigrants are devalued because foreign-acquired credentials often are not recognized by Canadian employers or professional associations (Reitz 2007).

In the following two chapters, I examine how these workers, who hold precarious socio-economic positions, engage in activism to gain empowerment and assert advantageous identities.

Chapter 3: Social Movement Unionism during a Global Economic Crisis

In this chapter, I present findings on the effectiveness of social movement unionism during a global economic crisis. The global economic crisis started to peak in the fall of 2008 as financial market conditions in OECD countries reached their lowest levels in more than fifty years (Levinson 2009). This period coincided with the initial stages of the living wage campaign action phase. Living wage campaign actions then intensified in the months leading up to the May 2009 provincial election. Meanwhile, the financial climate worsened as the Canadian unemployment rate rose from 6.8% in December 2008 to a peak of 8.7% in August 2009 with British Columbia experiencing one of the largest increases in unemployment in the country (Usalcas 2010). With this context in mind, I analyze the collective action frames: how workers framed what a living wage meant to them, what social movement unionism strategies were employed, and how motivational reasons constructed for collective action were altered. I argue that while the economic outcomes of Vancouver's living wage campaign were less than hoped for by workers, there were important intangible gains in worker empowerment and skills.

Framing the Issues

A Living Wage Meant a Fair Wage

Within the collective action frames union leaders promoted a definition of a living wage as a fair wage that addressed issues of equality, self-respect, and dignity (Hospital Employees' Union 2008). Many of the workers adopted the concept of a living wage as a fair wage, and then further adapted the definition to align with their perspectives based on experiences. Immigrant workers defined fairness in relationship to citizenship claims,

responsibility level, and dignity. Based on claims for equality as citizens, some pointed to the government and corporations as entities that used the efforts of workers without the appropriate level of remuneration. Hospital housekeeper Paola Rozero¹, a mother of two children, noted:

Everybody pays taxes and... I think we should have the same treatment and right. Now we are not... That's not fair. Private companies are not treating people well at all. They are taking advantage and... I know the government is kind of a business... too. They don't really care, but they should.

Frustrated, housekeeping aide Lawan Metharom indicated, "I want to quit the job. Why? It's a hard job and I think [the] wage is not... compared to the responsibilities... It's not equal."

What is an appropriate wage rate, a living wage rate? Ruby Das, who immigrated from Iran to Canada in 1995 and now works as a housekeeping aide, specified what hourly rate is fair and dignified in her view, saying: "It should be nineteen [dollars per hour]. But sixteen [dollars per hour] is ok for me. It's fair at least because... your feeling is not good, [when] you're working for thirteen dollars for this job... You feel bad." Respondents talked about their self-worth as a person being devalued, if their hourly wage rate was too low. The proposed hourly rate for Vancouver's Living Wage campaign is between sixteen to seventeen dollars (First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition 2008).

¹ The names of the respondents interviewed and the institutions at which they work are pseudonyms to protect their identity.

To construct specific wage rates defined as fair based on concepts of equality as citizens, level of responsibility and dignity, respondents drew on comparisons to the wages of other workers with perceived equivalent jobs or to the wage of their own jobs prior to privatization. Sixty-three-year-old Erika Koch, a hospital housekeeper, pointed out: “You know how much they get in Ontario? \$16.75! ... I think \$16.75 I would be happy with.” Those that used the level of responsibility in a job to construct a fair wage rate usually based their assessments on information from personal networks or experiences and considered either the wage rates of friends in similar jobs or their own wage rate prior to privatization as a fair benchmark. Food service attendant Cheryl Manapol stated that a fair wage would be, “eighteen dollars... because I have a friend who used to work at [a major Vancouver hospital] and [now] she works in [a major Vancouver college] and she’s given for starters \$17.55 and then after the training it becomes eighteen something.” Dietary aide Adya Maibam, who worked in both the pre-privatization and post-privatization period, stated, “I used to work before [privatization, for] \$19.47 [dollars per hour]. That’s a good amount for me.”

The privatized members of the HEU also compared their wages and benefits to other HEU members. Housekeeper Paola Rozero compared her situation as an outsourced hospital housekeeper to that of hospital care aides, who are HEU members employed directly by hospitals. She noted, “We are not really connected to the main union... There’s an agreement for the care aids and there’s an agreement for us. Why?” Several interviewees described differences in terms of benefits. For example, dietary aide Ernesto Cortez mentioned that “other members have pensions, [but] we don’t have it.” Privatized workers sometimes described themselves as outcasts from the health care team.

Outsourced cleaners work on the wards just like health care team members, such as care aids covered by the HEU public sector contract and nurses under the British Columbia Nurses' Union agreement, yet as Erika Koch, a privatized support worker from the housekeeping department remarked: "Other people have [statutory] holidays. They have two days, and they give us one, or none! Some holidays we get no pay, and this is not right!... There are some... the nurses get paid and the care aids, like we're not getting paid. It is not right; we should get them paid, just like anybody else." These inequities were viewed as an example of immigrant workers being treated as second-class citizens. The loss in dramatic decline wages from the pre-privatization to post-privatization periods were viewed as unfair. Housekeeping aide Peter Wu noted the drastic drop in wages caused by privatization as: "After the privatization, our wages, we're only making half." Workers viewed their current wages and benefits as unfair from a comparative perspective, across provinces, occupations, and time.

Presenting the Strategies

Introducing the Living Wage Campaign

Concepts of social movement unionism started to take hold for some union members as opportunities for leadership training and political action began to emerge. Early on, the HEU organized training sessions where members learned that a living wage campaign meant working together with community and international activist groups to access a dignified standard of living and working (Hospital Employees' Union 2007). Forty-six-year-old Rosa Bunter, who works as both a dietary aide and a housekeeping aide, was engaged in leadership training and living wage activities. She stated, "I will

be... at summer school at UBC, for... leadership. That's five days... This coming Saturday, I'm not working, so I have to go give out the list that's for the Living Wage Campaign."

While there was definite interest from workers for political education and action, their very position as low-wage earners often working multiple jobs created temporal and financial obstacles to participation. Dietary worker, Isabella Tacata, who was seeking training and participation opportunities offered by the union, described the obstacle of restricted time for activism that members face, particularly employees who work long hours at multiple jobs. She said: "I am attending [HEU] seminars... We are active in our local, in our union... We do our meetings after our work. That's the only time we can sit down and try to... plan for our union, so we sacrifice our time." Housekeeping aide Juanita Romero, who works three jobs, just did not have time between jobs for activism, so she had to take time off of work to participate in the campaign, sacrificing pay in the short-term to fight for a future living wage. She discussed the sacrifices that participation entailed: "Education, that's the one it [the union] provides, but sometimes I sacrifice some of my job in the morning for the functions... When you go to a meeting... I don't get any paid." Despite the difficulty, Juanita reported,

I was involved in a subcommittee on political action; I was elected as a secretary for living wages... I just leading and just want to share that with my co-workers, but it must be [as] a mentor, [so] that the distribution of labour is more better... It's up [to] the workers... to know what is their right... They need to be educated.

As the Living Wage Campaign became more formalized, the union organized educational components to disseminate Living Wage Campaign instructional information more widely to the general union membership. For campaign success, the union wanted to expand active union participation to include actions not only from union stewards and other position holders, but to stimulate interest from members, who previously had remained in the background. Not only would this expand the internal power base, which is a primary goal within the social movement unionism model, but it would spread the time and financial commitments across a larger number of participants.

To inspire campaign participation, the union used a multi-pronged approach including site visits, mail outs and conference meetings to introduce the living wage calculations to the wider membership and encourage strength through unity. For Filipina Diana Mamaril, a housekeeping aide and mother of two young children, it was important to learn how low her wages were in comparison to the average Canadian. She commented,

The HEU, they have these pamphlets, brochures that they sent out. They also have this [sheet] where you can sign, if we want to support the living wage and how much living wage we wanted. It is about [how] work should uplift our living not leave us there and also comparing wages for the average people... to what we're making.

At the opening conference 46-year-old Daisy Utak, who is employed as a housekeeping aide, found out “about the research on how much you should get paid, while living in the Lower Mainland.”

The union also drew on encouraging international examples of strength through unity. Members, such as Diana's co-worker Mark Pilande, who also is an immigrant from the Philippines, heard from:

Speakers from London, one from the Philippines... [that] in the Philippines, people are united, if they want to have a strike, then all of them goes out and support. They have... groups that are campaigning for more wages – union groups, community groups... It's similar to living wage because they have low wages that are not enough... They are suggesting [to] us we want to go in unity, so we go on with the purpose of having that living wage... [and the speaker from London] talked about how they come up with a group that pushed the government to give a living wage. They unified with each other for the campaign.

This opening message of strength through unity was a particularly important building block for the Living Wage Campaign as the HEU planned to forge connections across hospital sites, activist organizations, cultural communities, and the general public to gather political clout for the movement.

Going into High Gear: Rallies, Speeches, and Petitions

Campaign actions ranged from mass rallies to the sharing of personal experience stories with the goal of fostering horizontal networking across sectors to increase the union's bargaining power. Forty-eight-year-old Maria Ganpule, who immigrated to Canada from Fiji in 1982 and now works as a housekeeping aide, described a public display of multi-union support. She stated:

There was an announcement that we were going to have a living wage rally... people should come. They [the union] were paying for the gas, so everybody said, “O.K. let’s go, carpool”... Five, six unions were involved... They showed their support and did whatever they could... to voice their opinion to make it one. We all walked together...and we were singing, “We can not make our needs with the... wage we are on right now.”

Aware of the power of relating personal experiences, the HEU also arranged for members to share their compelling stories through the media and on activist panels. Sitting on an activist panel at a community meeting, twenty-four-year-old Anna Balil, a refugee from the Punjab region of India, who works as a housekeeper, reported, “I gave a speech... I just tell those things, which I’m facing each and every day... that I’m having a hard time to pay my billing, I can’t save my money and... I can’t spend too much money on me like for shopping, going outside, having fun.” Equally important for both Anna and union strategy was the overt support from aligned activist organizations. She described the experience:

I met a woman; she was for women organization and human rights... They were speakers too and they said, “We are with you”... They don’t know us and still they’re helping us, so it’s our responsibility to speak up and to do something about ourselves and we have other people’s support too. So I feel really good about that, really confident.

In addition to gathering support from hospital employees and activists, elements of the Living Wage Campaign were designed to directly gather public support.

Given the union members' demographics – with many of Filipino or East Indian descent – the union's campaign strategy included petitioning at local religious sites and cultural events. In some cases the campaigners met with resistance, when religious officials viewed political activism as being contrary to religious themes. Dietary aide Amarita Kohli immigrated to Canada from the Punjab region in 1977. She explained:

Some church, they don't want to listen [to] us, some they refused. They said, "No, church is different... it's only for the peace,... but some, they said, "O.K., you can put your table and you can tell the people what the living wages mean." Indian church I went, Chinese Buddhism, then we went to [a Christian church] – churches and temples.

However, picking up the story, dietary aide 42-year-old Gaya Johl, also a Punjabi immigrant, related just how successful petitioning can be – both quantitatively and qualitatively – when activists can align with supportive religious organizations. She said,

Last year... we went to the temple... one day and we just put the table outside there and then everybody like sign this [petition]... 3,500 [signatures] on that day... At first they think we work in the hospital, [so] we get too much money and then we explain it's like everything is been cut down now, we get [paid only] \$13 dollars [per hour] and then everybody is shocked... They're saying it's very shameful.

With increasing strategy aggressiveness, campaigners organized presentations to politicians as a primary audience including "flying squad" sorties. Akin to quick strike military manoeuvres into enemy territory, groups of activists in the flying squad surprised government politicians at their own offices and events challenging them to initiate a

living wage. Flying squad activities culminated in the climatic presentation of the 15,000-signature petition to the provincial premier. The actions were timed for maximum effect – pre-election. With the completed petition in hand, the immigrant activists had to deal with the problem of tracking down their main target, the provincial premier whose Bill 29 had contravened the HEU’s collective bargaining rights and outsourced workers in the first place. Finally, the workers met with some luck as single-mother Freda Bansal explained, “The week of election, we were protesting at all the MLAs [Members of the Legislative Assembly in the province] offices, all Campbell’s favourites.” Housekeeping aide Maria Ganpule continued,

[In] one of the office, ... they have the volunteers’ list name, it said that Gordon Campbell was coming to [a Vancouver area Liberal MLA]’s office that day... We [now] know where he’s coming, so we’ll make a special sign for him because every day we had different banners, but that day we had special particular thing, “Mr. Premier Gordon Campbell we have 15,000 petition [signatures] to serve you on the Living Wage Campaign.”

Despite the advantage of surprise, flying squad members met with significant resistance from the right-wing political machine, which tried to block their protests. “When we went to give the petition to Premier Gordon Campbell, ... the people who were supporting him, they came... in front of me and my banner and started hitting on my head,” reported Maria. Fellow flying squad member, Daisy Utak, a housekeeping aide at another hospital, indicated that, “he has some security around... He was blocking my way to go to the premier.” Watching, Maria saw that, “he [the Premier] was escaping,”

but then “Daisy took the petition and gave it to him, saying ‘I’m from HEU and we’re on Living Wage Campaign and I have 15,000 petition [signatures] on the members on Living Wage Campaign and we need the answer for this.’ Bitterly Maria remembers, “Nothing was on the news. Nothing. There were so many news reporters. So many! And they took the pictures! I heard... they paid them a big money to censor all this publicity.”

One week later the Liberals were re-elected and formed another majority government. Shortly thereafter, the problematic results of neo-liberal fiscal policy became apparent not only at the provincial level, but across the globe with the worsening of the global economic crisis. The increased instability that the economic crisis added to the lives of these workers, who already occupied precarious socio-economic positions, become pivotal, when union members voted on whether or not to escalate their confrontation with the government and begin strike action.

Altered Motivations for Collective Action

Bargaining in Times of Recession: The Pivotal Vote

When an economic recession initially appeared as a possibility, Living Wage Campaign activists retained hope that positive spin-offs from the campaign, such as documented living wage calculations and the 15,000 signature petition of public support, would result in significant gains at the bargaining table in terms of improved wages and benefits. Single-mother Freda Bansal remarked, “The living wage with all that calculations they had done, it was a very good tool when we went to the bargaining table to show the bosses that... if you are paying this much to people, how people’s life is...

How much rent anybody is paying, how much food cost.” “They are seeing the formulas,” noted Diana Mamaril, who supports four dependents.

Similar to the quantitative visual aid of the living wage calculations, campaigners also thought the sight of a massive petition would motivate shamed employers to raise worker salaries to a living wage level. Amita Pamintuan, educated as a midwife in the Philippines, but employed as housekeeping aide in Canada, commented, “We got so much signatures and I think it help us improve our... bargaining. When our contract ended, they present that to our employers.”

Unfortunately for the workers, the initial bargaining talks produced an offer for only a small improvement in wages from the private employers. “The first offer that they were giving to us was [an increase of] \$1.25 over a year and we rejected it ‘cause that’s a struggle... Some of these members are working two jobs. Life for the families are very hard because you don’t have time for your kids,” exclaimed cook Frederico Hilaga, a father of three children. Incensed with this paltry offer that would put hourly wages at \$14.30, well short of the \$16.74 living wage rate and nearly \$5,000 less annually, “95% [of members] agreed to get a strike vote,” reported housekeeping aide Penny Bagga.

However, when it actually came time for the strike vote, workers faced multiple elements of instability from environmental conditions – job insecurity during a rising recession, minimal income during a strike, and for some, fear from a background of political oppression in their country of origin, which all combined to alter workers’ motivation for collective action. A warning from union personnel, which showed the limits of union protective power in the current environment, was the first trigger to shift the membership away from strike action. Penny’s co-worker, Renata Patel recalled that

“union people they came... before... the voting day... and they said, ‘You guys, if we say we not agree [to the proposed contract] and then you guys lose the job.’ Penny commented, that “lots of people are getting their mortgage, they have to pay their bills. If we go on EI [employment insurance benefits], what do [we] expect to get in income? You can’t afford your family life on that.” Housekeeper Anna Balil said: “What I heard from my co-workers [is] that it’s recession time and at least we have job... They don’t want to go for strike.”

For the largest ethnic group of outsourced workers, memories of repression back home may have added to their perception of increased job insecurity. Juan Laguatan, who immigrated to Canada from the Philippines in 2005, explained: “The people is mostly come from the Philippines. We live[d] in a very tight political oppression. They have the background of being oppressed. They are afraid. The people say ‘That’s enough. We are afraid to lose our jobs.’” Furthermore, as housekeeping aide Maria Ganpule pointed out, “Even if we go on strike, we don’t make much money on strike either,... so 73% voted” to reject strike action.

Privatization made social movement unionism necessary, but outsourcing and the recession also increased the insecurity of workers, limiting their willingness in this case to take risks to achieve gains in terms of wages and benefits. While social movement unionism may make workers feel more connected to community, in a time of global financial crisis there is heightened vulnerability for those with precarious baseline job security to popular scripts, like “you’re lucky to have any job, these days”.

The Confidence to Speak Up for Rights

While the tangible gains in wages and benefits during collective bargaining were limited, Living Wage Campaign activists nevertheless expressed how their involvement in the campaign provided intangible assets, which could well strengthen their motivation and position for future rounds of activism and negotiations. Refugee and housekeeper Anna Balil recalled, “Before, I was so scared that if I speak up, then I’m gonna be fired... I learned we have to speak up... I feel really confident now... I think about our humanity... All of our co-workers have to speak up.” It’s also about learning how to communicate with difficult people. Dietary aide Don Lok remarked, “[I learned] how to communicate with other people ...It’s a good experience because some people is very nice and some people not, but you learn how to communicate with them.”

Having the confidence to fight for rights can also advance immigrant incorporation by providing opportunities for workers to engage politically in Canadian democracy and to learn about government officials, policies, and institutions. As Filipina Diana Mamaril, a housekeeping aide, explained,

It’s hard in the Philippines, when you kinda disagree with... one politician, you can easily get killed... I don’t have the guts to do this in the Philippines, but here I do have. One of the things with this living wages, I was able to speak with Liberals [provincial right-of-centre governing party] and tell them my story... I learned that if you fight for your rights, there’s nothing to fear... It made me strong, it made me become more activist ‘cause I’m not an activist before... here I can say what I want.

Fighting to improve the wages and benefits that socially exclude them from mainstream society creates politically aware and active immigrants, who feel more like they can affect society. Hospital housekeeper and Italian immigrant Tracy Malucci recalled,

There was one evening ... we had politicians come to each of the tables...

They sat down and asked us questions and they were taking notes and I just thought, "They're really interested in this" 'cause then I said, "What do you do with all this?" And he said, "Well, we're going to work on it." He didn't just sit there and go, "Uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh." They were really into it. They were really asking. Of course, it was NDP [provincial left-of-centre opposition party], but they were really asking questions. So I thought, "Okay, well, we're making a difference here."

For Tracy, campaign experiences expanded her political motivations to the extent that "it's perked an interest in maybe wanting to pursue politics more than ever in my life ... I've even asked them [the union] if we can get more involved with maybe the NDP and going on circuits with them, talking about how important it is to have a living wage... I want the cause to be on TV constantly."

The union has generated a new set of leaders, from among their most disadvantaged and vulnerable rank-and-file.

Empowering the new worker leaders politically and engaging not only these workers but also their communities has the long term potential of reshaping the provincial and federal political landscape. The immigrant activists recognize that the rights ensconced within a living wage campaign are meant not only to improve the lives

of the workers, but from a broader social justice platform, goals within a living wage campaign also are created to reduce community inequalities. Community coalition building activities during the campaign have heightened workers' awareness that activism can have benefits for the community at large. Housekeeping aide Eve Nicdao explained that a "living wage can help us... not only for the housekeepers, [but] the whole community in order to lift up the people living in the community not to live in poverty."

Discussion

Part of the reason that workers may have been somewhat disappointed with the economic outcomes of the campaign may be due to overly optimistic expectations and a limited understanding of the complexities of collective bargaining. While it is reasonable to expect that a petition of public support would buoy labour's call for a living wage, the petition only held 15,000 signatures, so the visual evidence of public support that the bargaining committee could be present at the bargaining table was actually relatively small. While to motivate participation in the living wage campaign it was important for union leaders to encourage the results that the activists produced, such as the petition, the union also needed to better explain the intricacies of collective bargaining to the outsourced members. Most of the outsourced workers were new members of the HEU, so they did not understand the difficulties of attempting to translate social movement ideals into reality at the bargaining table given the complexities of the bargaining process, which included bargaining with three different multinational corporations.

Intra-union discrepancies in the treatment of its members will be another obstacle that the HEU must overcome, if more members are to consider union activism as a credible opportunity for empowerment, status, and planning ownership. Workers

constructed their perceptions of a living wage and an appropriate benefits package within the frame of fairness. Concepts of fairness can rest upon the perception of a rule itself or the application of a rule (Dimaggio 2001; Lee 2007); in this case study, workers questioned both the validity of the rules and their application. Not only were the workers subject to different contracts than other health care employees, but contracts for HEU members differed within the union for its privatized versus its non-privatized position-holding members. The HEU needs to integrate the outsourced workers more into general union activities and leadership, so they do not feel like second-class union members. The union could arrange for non-privatized workers in the HEU, who are familiar with bargaining techniques, to provide workshops for the privatized workers.

A union strategy that did work successfully during the current campaign to build leadership skills for the workers was the availability of a range of activism opportunities. Unlike the Justice for Janitors campaign, in which the willingness of the low-wage Latino immigrants to participate was due, in part, to their historical participation in collective political struggles in their countries of origin (Milkman 2006), a large proportion of the participant group in Vancouver's living wage campaign were Asian women, who did not have previous activism experience. Therefore, it was important that workers could initiate their participation in the living wage campaign in a less aggressive role such as collecting petition signatures at a cultural or community event, where they felt comfortable. Union staff then provided instruction and support to those workers, who could take on more assertive activities in the campaign such as public speaking and flying squad membership.

The leadership and empowerment gained by the living wage activists also encouraged them to get involved in additional political actions. Vancouver's living wage

campaign participants lent their support to the living wage campaign in the city of New Westminster. In response to the campaign, New Westminster city council passed a policy, which stated that workers employed on the city's property be paid the living wage (McMartin 2010).

In the next chapter, I examine how the activists constructed and asserted identities in social movement narratives that illustrated strategies to mobilize not only their co-workers, but the whole community towards the goal of a living wage.

Chapter 4: Identity Narratives in Vancouver’s Living Wage Campaign

In this chapter, I examine the relative pervasiveness of different constructed identities across identity story types, and explain how identity assertion influences micromobilization. I argue that while two of the activists’ favoured identities – the “helper of others” identity and immigrant cultural identities – appeared in both of the story modes from which living wage activists most frequently drew motivation to make their action decisions, the basis for construction and assertion of a given identity was dependent on the type of story mode. Associational declarations indicated that to construct alliances activists selected an identity to emphasize their similarity to a given potential ally; whereas in their atrocity tales, activists asserted value-based identities to encourage mobilization

Favoured Identities

The identities most frequently asserted by participants for themselves were helpers of others (46%), fighters (25%), and cultural identities (32%)². The respondents described their identities in response to the living wage campaign questions in the interview tool (see appendix A). For some participants, the helper of others and fighter identities overlapped. When asked about her experiences communicating with the public and politicians during the campaign, housekeeping aide Renata Patel, a 58-year-old immigrant from Fiji, remarked, “I love this kind of politics – go help people and fight for wage campaigns.” Some respondents saw participation in the living wage campaign as one stage in a long term commitment to volunteer work. Renata viewed campaign

² The total of the identity percentages exceeds 100% because some study participants asserted more than one identity.

activities as a replacement for her previous volunteer work helping needy people. She said, “Before I union goes,... I [was] involved helping people... the needy people... I go help like volunteer... cooking and save the food, and talking to the needy people.” For Renata’s housekeeping coworker, Freda Bansal, the campaign offered an opportunity to help others now using a fighter’s stance before she takes up community service to help others in her retirement years. She commented:

I really want to be try to help out people because still so many people are so scared to speak up, but I’m at this age that I say I don’t care anymore. If they’re going to turn around and fire me, I’m just going to drop everything and see what happens. Because I’ve been fighting all my life, and then there is sometimes that it comes to a point because now my kids are what, grown up, so I can speak up. I’m not so scared... Now I really want to be with the union, so I can help out somebody... who doesn’t have a voice.

When asked what she thinks her life will be like in 5 years time, Freda said, “I’m going to retire. I’m going to join all these women’s groups and do lots of community service... Even if I ... retire, I am still trying to help people out.”

Identities shape collective action (Benford and Snow 2000). While the rhetoric of fighting for rights was evident, as would be expected for participants of a social justice movement, these activists are also involved in care work. Housekeepers prevent the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections among hospital patients, and dispose of used needles to prevent needle-stick injuries. Dietary aids prepare meals for people with severe allergies, diabetic patients, and those who have difficulty chewing food. Hence, their concepts of self also included identities positioned as helpers of others. Participation

in the campaign afforded workers an opportunity to draw on these dual identities: helping others, while fighting for a living wage.

Activists usually expressed the third type of salient identity, their cultural identity, in connection with their job's wage level; workers explained how their immigrant identities mattered to their perceptions of what constituted an appropriate wage rate. In one strategy, immigrants with a strong cultural identity suggested that difficult experiences in their countries of origin altered their perceptions of campaign outcomes as compared to native-born participants. Dietary aide Lila Otero, who emigrated from the Philippines in 1998, thought her campaign perspectives were different than people who were born in Canada "because being an Asian,... we have more hard experiences than the Canadians... In the third world, we have many experiences that we went through, rough, difficult times compared to a Caucasian." Identity talk is impression management (Snow and Anderson 1987). To put their low hourly wage rate in a better light, so it did not reflect poorly upon them, some newcomers constructed a cultural identity that suggested a perceived superior ability to live in financially difficult circumstances as compared to native-born Canadians.

For others, a salient cultural identity was associated with a sense of indignation that immigrants are less valued. This sense of indignation can motivate activism. Housekeeping aide Diana Mamaril, who immigrated to Canada from the Philippines in 1999, observed that "sometimes we are treated like second-class citizens... Because we are immigrants, we have to do the lowest level of work – like the dirty jobs." Diana said this treatment "made me strong. It made me become more activist."

But are these three identities – the helper of others, the fighter, and cultural identities – powerful enough to affect activist identity talk and action across a number of different story modes depicting activism situations? Identities differ in their degree of pervasiveness, with some identities having relevance across a broad range of situations, while other identities are specific to only a situation or two (Snow and McAdam 2000). In the next subsections, I examine whether activists expressed the helper of others, fighter, and cultural identities in their identity talk anecdotes from associational declarations to war stories. Did these three identities influence the construction of additional identities in various types of identity talk tales or were they supplanted by more salient identities in particular situations? How did identity selection influence micromobilization?

Associational Declarations

By far the most common type of identity talk among living wage participants was associative claims. Activists told stories that depicted their alignment with unions and like-minded politicians. They shared their perspective that a living wage was for all, and learned from associates who had different cultural backgrounds. While the helper of others, the fighter, and cultural identities all made their presence known in the associational declaration identity talk, another identity, the union member, also emerged as a salient identity in this type of identity talk.

Activists frequently engaged in associative claims to align their personal identity with the collective identity of being a member of the Hospital Employees' Union. Meeting people from other groups or organizations outside of the HEU at living wage campaign events was often the trigger for a worker to tell about how they felt a sense of

belonging to the union. “It changes my view of the union. Now I see... they’re pretty supportive on us, which I didn’t know before,” remarked Filipina housekeeping aide Dolores Magpayo, after taking part in a rally and gathering petition signatures from members of the public. Relating a story of her experiences during her speaking engagements in the living wage campaign, housekeeper Tracy Melucci recalled that her sense of union support was not just limited to the HEU. She said: “The nurses union,... B.C. Ferries union,... teachers... Every single union we talked to... told us, ‘If you guys go out on strike, we’re there.’ So we had the support – we have the support.” An improved alignment of personal and collective identity gained during the campaign can also lead to increased political action beyond official campaign events. For housekeeping aide Diana Mamaril, interactions during the campaign with people, who were external to the HEU, caused her to “feel more like I belong. Like we are supported by the union,” to the extent that on her own time she adopted the collective identity for political purposes. She indicated that, “During the Canada Day in our community,... I can communicate well with the NDP [the left of centre provincial opposition party], if I say ‘I’m a member of the HEU.’”

Less commonly, in part, because their previous experiences with another union, the Industrial, Wood, and Allied Workers’ (IWA) union, were a number of years in the past, some health care support workers engaged in dissociative declarations – contrasting positive relationships with the HEU to negative experiences in the IWA. Dissociative statements occurred when activists described how the HEU’s living wage strategy compared to previous bargaining strategies. Workers distanced themselves from the IWA because it was perceived to be aligned with management or the industrial sector. Fifty-

one-year-old Eve Nicdao, a housekeeping aide, remarked, “The IWA was the company’s union... It wasn’t for the members.” In addition, with the experience of the Hospital Employees’ Union in the health sector, the hospital workers thought it fought more effectively for their rights than had the IWA union, whose experience primarily came from activities related to workers in male-dominated, industrial occupations. As a group constructs its own identity in relation to other groups by contesting the content that the group’s boundary encapsulates (Adams 2009), the shortcomings of the IWA union caused the hospital support workers to move it outside of the boundary, which encircled the collective.

When conveying their inter-union associations and dissociations, activists’ union member identities were influenced by fighter identities. Living wage campaign activists associated themselves with unions that promoted collective action frames in support of fighting for workers’ rights. This allowed activists to align their personal and collective identities as fighters, and to extend these identities to the broader umbrella identity among union associates – the union member.

Campaign activists also noted that left-of-centre politicians held similar perspectives to those of workers, which resulted in supportive political actions. Political support included speeches and appearances at living wage campaign events. “We told them about the living wage campaign, how they can help us,” explained dietary aide Lila Otero. “NDP [New Democratic Party]... politicians, when we were doing that, they gave speech... for the community, to all the people that goes in the meeting... to help us for the living wage campaign,” Lila said. Sometimes the political support was given in return for political action from the activists. “In the living wage campaign [at] activities like

Philippine Independence Day and some senior citizens' parties,... the NDPs... were so supportive with the living wage campaign,” recalled Filipina housekeeper Amita Pamintuan. She continued, “When they wanted to be elected, they tell to [housekeeping aide Juanita Romero] that they can support us, so we support them. We go house-to-house [canvassing].”

As compared to the fighter identity that underscored their associations with unions, activists described their social interactions with left-of-centre politicians as exchanges between helpers of others. Social interactions among union members were more militant; whereas collaborations between activists and NDP politicians took on a more diplomatic tone.

Drawing on their identities as helpers of others, the health care support workers also iterated that their activism in the campaign was aimed at garnering a living wage for all, not just for themselves. “It is our rights to say that we need this campaign, Living Wage Campaign, not only me, but all the other people that needs also a Living Wage Campaign,” proclaimed 53-three-year-old housekeeping aide Felica Habalo. The workers saw the campaign as a vehicle to educate the public about their right to a living wage. By holding out a helping hand to all that needed a living wage, activists turned some opponents into allies. Housekeeper Tracy Melucci related a story of such an occurrence. She said,

I’ve done a lot of public speaking. Going out and getting people to sign petitions, the wearing of the green t-shirts. Just out there pounding the pavement, raising awareness... It’s not just a union thing. It’s everybody needs a living wage, and as we talk to people, we find out that

everybody's hurting. It's not just us, because one person said to me, "Oh, the housekeepers are whining about their wages again." And I said, "Well, how are your wages?" And she says, "Well, I'm only living on \$9 an hour." And I said, "Oh, so you need a living wage." And just all of a sudden, you know, it was like – yeah. She got it.

To encourage public support, social movements attempt to strategically align their solutions to a problem with the attitudes of the public (Sandstrom, Martin, and Fine 2010).

Canadians are familiar with a model of inclusion – the health care system itself. The public strongly supports the principles on which they believe the national health care system is based: equity and fairness (Romanow 2002). In addition, they consider that equal access to health care is a right of citizenship (Romanow 2002). Health care support workers drew upon mainstream Canadian cultural stories of inclusion to present their own new model of inclusion – a living wage for all. Programs based on models of inclusion have received more public support than exclusionary models, which tend to stigmatize those who were the focus of the program.

The theme of inclusion was also prominent in the activists' cross cultural associative claims, which described effective strategies and support learned about during the campaign. Filipino housekeeping aide Mark Pilande learned that like Vancouver's campaign, international living wage campaigns propagated the theme of strength through unity. He remarked, "Most of my friends at work or my co-workers are from India. [I learned that]... in India... they have unity when it comes to pushing the government to come out with a living wage." He learned from living wage campaign speakers from

London, England that unity among members within the campaign there also was an important factor that helped pressure the government into giving a living wage. Stories of cross cultural associations also told of opportunities to gain new leadership skills or mutual support. Dietary aide Don Lok, who immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong in 1995, said:

Most of them in our country, in Hong Kong, most of them they follow the structure. But here, everyone have their experience – have their idea.

They will plan out their idea. They can talk to what they want, what they think. Is more easy and then – it's more easy to get the mutual understanding here, even though we have different idea.

For Filipina dietary aide Lila Otero, sharing stories that revealed similar experiences across cultures reduced feelings of isolation. She reflected, “I learned many things socializing with many different kind of people, many different nationalities. Hearing their stories, maybe their stories are the same like my experience. So it helps me. It boosts sometimes me, when I'm low... When hearing about all those stories, I don't feel alone, so it's good.”

The campaign participants' responses revealed how they were reconstructing their identities to transform them. The activists responded to collective action frames promoting strength through unity. They sought ways to express mutual understanding across cultures in support of a collective identity for the campaign group as a whole. Not only did this increase group cohesion, but activists gained knowledge from members of other cultures and together combined the knowledge into new skills.

In associational declarations, the salience of a given identity was affected by the type of group to whom activists were declaring their association. Identity talk in the form of associational declarations explained how activists created militant union member identities through horizontal networking among unions during the living wage campaign. The helper of other identity was more salient in diplomatic exchanges with like-minded politicians or the general public. When interacting with campaign participants of other cultures, activists expressed cultural identities as they exchanged learning experiences to gain cross-cultural knowledge in support of a collective identity. In each situation, by highlighting the identity that resonated most with the group to whom their association was being directed, activists were able to create a strong bond with the group to support the living wage campaign. During their interactions with associates, information also flowed across the bond, so activists learned new skills and strategies, which they used to enhance micromobilization.

Atrocity Tales

For living wage activists, the most common theme that threaded its way through the atrocity tales was that the living wage campaign aimed to eliminate the need for workers to hold multiple jobs. With a living wage, workers would be able to provide for their children, have time for their families, and maintain good energy levels. Many workers learned about this representation of campaign goals at living wage meetings. Dietary aide and mother of three children, Clara Puno commented, “I went to the HEU conference last year, and that’s where I heard it’s about people who have two jobs because one job is not enough for the family.” Activists did not have to be in the position of being a parent working multiple jobs themselves to be emotionally touched by this

theme. Their emotional connection to the theme was also through their associations with co-workers, who had to hold multiple jobs to meet the basic needs of their children.

Hospital housekeeper Francine Rankin, a mother of two children, recalled that at a living wage campaign meeting, “They had in tapes with women speaking how they had to work two jobs because they weren’t earning enough to feed their kids and – well, it’s definitely true. I mean, lots of women I work with work two jobs.” More than one-third of the respondents with children living at home reported working two or more jobs, and still had an average annual income of only \$29,000. Hospital housekeeper Helen Massri, who works two jobs, wonders how parents have the energy to take care of children on top of working multiple jobs. Without a living wage, what will be the future for the children whose life chances are reduced? Helen commented:

I am worrying a lot about people who have children... They have to work two, three jobs. They don’t see their children, their family... I go home exhausted. I can’t clean. How they look after the kids also and they care about education? How they save some money for their education?...

Budget is not enough. The kids are prevented from many things... So my expectation [is that a] living wage should save some time, save some money for the families, save some energy also.

The desire to improve the lives of children motivated living wage participants to identify antagonists – the private corporate contractors – and to mobilize against them.

Pamela Castles, a hospital housekeeper and mother of three children, said:

Nobody should have to work two to three jobs just to be able to pay rent and put food on the table – not having the opportunity to take their kids

out to go to a McDonald's or go to see a circus... A lot of the companies today, it's like they want more for nothing... We're talking people here – to them the almighty dollar is more important and at what cost? And it's costing a lot of people. That's not right. And that's not fair. And that's not the way it should be.

In the atrocity tales, activists represented private company employers as their antagonists, for who money was more valued than people, especially families. “The family need the benefits, and wages and the supports for their daily living,” argued hospital cashier and mother Dana Singh, an immigrant from India. She explained, “We represented that to our employer before our contract, but employers, they are not [emotionally] affected by... what we were trying to say... because they had to pay... They don't care whether there is living wage [for families].”

The activists drew on their helper of others identities, which they expressed as value-based identities when describing the consequences of a living wage on the lives of children. When employers threatened these values – which were important components of the activists' concepts of self – the workers' responses were particularly emotional. Adverse consequences for children and families were strong motivators to action for the workers. Campaign organizers effectively promoted a collective action frame – a living wage to support families – that resonated with activists' personal values.

Several participants put forward concerns that working multiple jobs also impeded immigrant incorporation. The lack of free time made it difficult for immigrants to become involved in their neighbourhood communities, so they missed out on community building activities that could have increased their sense of belonging in

Canadian culture. Filipina housekeeper Luisa Talong's hopes as an immigrant for the good life in Canada influenced her involvement in the living wage campaign. She commented,

I'm hoping that... my co-workers will not suffer like what we are doing right now... These people are having those two or three jobs, which make very hard for them to establish their living in Canada because... our life here is... you have to get up and work, work, work and then sometimes I don't have no time for socializing. I just had to lie down and rest and then sleep and then go the next day.

Not being able to participate in community activities blocks an avenue of experiences through which immigrants can change the social controls in their post-immigration country. Normally, a person learns about and generalizes the individual attitudes of group members as a reference, when carrying out social projects (Mead 1934). In the development of self, the generalized reference attitudes of others function as social controls over the behaviour of an individual; however, the self can also cause a person to assert himself or herself against conventions and cause changes to the attitudes of others, thus modifying the generalized reference attitudes that function as social controls (Mead 1934). However, immigrants, who work multiple jobs, miss out on opportunities for social interaction with their neighbourhood community members, in which they could learn about and change the reference attitudes held by the group during the process of completing community projects. Hence, to learn about and change social controls that are not in their best interests, immigrants need to participate in the construction of new ones, during community building activities, by inserting their own

attitudes into the compilation of community members' attitudes that form the reference for social control. A living wage would mean that immigrants would not need to work multiple jobs, leaving them with more time to engage in expressions of self in the community that alter social controls. The modified social controls would include the attitudes of immigrants and thus improve immigrants' sense of belonging and incorporation.

War Stories

Living wage campaign activists engaged infrequently, or not at all, in the four remaining types of identity talk: war stories, guide narratives, disillusionment anecdotes, and personal is political reports. While atrocity tales emphasize the immoral acts of villains that result in injustices and position the storyteller as someone who wants to take action against the injustices, war stories focus on the accomplishments of heroes in the face of hostile opponents or situations that demonstrate how a social movement participant becomes committed after facing heightened danger (Hunt and Benford 1994). Housekeeper Tracy Melucci narrated what could be categorized as a war story:

We got kicked off of hospital property and what it was, it was a long clothesline and people would take these little squares and write in them their problems with not having a living wage. And it would be hooked onto this line – it was amazing. And people were honking as they were going by... It's been fun. It's been interesting... I just wish that we could do more.

A symbol of traditional women's work, the clothesline, was transformed into pleas of protest, which the employer saw as threatening. The hospital's response to force

protesters off the property, in part, galvanized Tracy's desire to engage in further actions. The positive public support during the clothesline protest also prompted Tracy's response, in part. This example illustrates how more than one type of identity talk, in this case, a war story and an associational declaration, can occur in tandem. Categorizing a given story under a particular identity talk label is not necessarily clear cut because components of several types of identity talk can occur within one story.

Not all war stories describe activists' increased commitment to the social movement; a subcategory of war stories tells of activists burning out (Hunt and Benford 1994). While stories of becoming campaign weary were not common among living wage activists, they did occasionally occur. The following is the story of one participant's exit from the campaign. Housekeeper Penny Bagga recalled: "We work so hard, and look what we got. Every time, when they [the union] phone us, 'Let's go for a faith group' or 'Let's go to churches' or if there is any Indian function, going all over and that's the time we want to meet all the people to tell them what we are doing at Living Wage... Saturday, Sunday... not going out with our family... I was really disappointed. I spent so much time,... [but] they didn't increase our wages... It's not worth it." In this case, any intrinsic rewards that were potentially available to this participant involved in the cultural aspects of the campaign were overshadowed by her disappointment over her perception of the anticipated economic returns.

Guide Narratives

Living wage campaign worker-activists seldom told guide narratives. In this campaign, workers were at the center of the action in the various types of tales. Even in the guide narratives, guides were positioned as relatively minor players, whose role was

to provide support to workers. When housekeeper Anna Balil, a refugee from the Punjab region of India, learned that some of her employers had unexpectedly turned up at the neighbourhood cafe to listen to her first speaking engagement for the campaign, her initial reaction was “No, I don’t want to speak up. I was so scared that if my employers are there they are going to threaten me or harass me.” However, a HEU staff representative reassured Anna that, “This is totally safe. No one can say anything to you.” Anna was glad that she persevered with her talk because, “My co-workers really appreciate that too. All of them came over and they said ‘You did really good. Thank you.’ They were clapping. They were so happy and not [only] nurses or staff, there were outside people as well and they came over and they said ‘You did really good and you speak up really good.’”

As low-wage, immigrant workers, the activists occupy a precarious social and economic position. They face job instability. For some, there is the memory of political oppression in their country of origin. Guide narratives outlined the role of union staff for quelling workers’ fears, when campaign experiences were perceived to increase the workers’ position of risk.

Disillusionment Anecdotes and Personal is Political Reports

Disillusionment anecdotes were rare and personal is political reports did not occur. By definition, disillusionment anecdotes are tales, in which the narrator describes how an event, person, or condition dispels the tellers’ illusion about an extant reality and replaces it with a “truth” (Hunt and Benford 1994). However, the activists are health support workers, who experience the difficulties of trying to make ends meet without a

living wage on a daily basis. They generally did not harbour any illusions that needed to be dispelled about what it was like to live without a living wage, so disillusionment anecdotes did not form a significant portion of their story repertoire.

In addition, their positioning as the victims, at who the campaign goals were directly aimed, also helps to explain why the living wage activists did not engage in personal is political reports. In these reports, activists, who are removed from the lived experiences at which a movement's goals are directed, create an indirect link to increase their sense of collective identity. For example, in their research on the U.S. peace movement, Hunt and Benford (1994) described personal is political reports, in which activists delineated how mundane personal everyday events would trigger their awareness of the human suffering caused by war in far away places. In the living wage campaign, the activists themselves were experiencing the suffering of living on less than a living wage.

These final four types of identity talk – war stories, guide narratives, disillusionment anecdotes, and personal is political reports – did not occur in sufficient frequency to be able to determine if the helper of others, the fighter, or cultural identities would commonly occur in any of these types of accounts. The minor roles that these four types of identity stories hold for campaign participants suggest that they did not resonate as strongly with the activists as the associational declarations and atrocity tales, through which the three broader identities commonly made their appearance. Activists more frequently drew motivation from associational declarations and atrocity tales to make their action decisions.

Discussion

The type of campaign model influenced the choice of narratives modes that activists employed for micromobilization. A social movement unionism model emphasizes horizontal networking and the centrality of the rank-and-file membership to the union's internal power base. Therefore, Vancouver's living wage campaign practices focused on alliance building and workers relating their experiences of trying to make ends meet. In line with these campaign foci, activists most commonly chose to tell associational declarations and atrocity tales.

I found that the type of story mode affected the basis for construction and assertion of a given identity. Associational declarations illustrated that activists chose to deploy their identity that was most similar to the identity of their potential ally in order to build an alliance. However, in their atrocity tales, activists asserted value-based identities to encourage mobilization. Associational declarations showed that activists used a wider range of identities in their alliance building activities as it was important to match a particular identity to a particular ally. However, when the audience was more heterogeneous, activists relied more on their atrocity tales with the associated value-based identities as their tools for micromobilization. Value-based identities, in which individuals conceive of themselves in terms of the values that they hold, usually are relevant across a broad range of situations (Gecas 2000).

Next, I turn my attention to an in-depth discussion about the activists' power to take action during a recession and their strategies for micromobilization illustrated through identity narratives.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

In this section, I first discuss campaign outcomes using mobilization theory to assess if the extended set of collective action frames associated with social movement unionism can compensate for the effects of an environment of severe economic conditions on labour bargaining power. Second, I discuss my assessment of how story modes shape identity assertion and alliance building within a social movement unionism organizing model.

To start, I provide a summary of the study's main findings on the effectiveness of social movement unionism during a global economic crisis, and then discuss how the findings relate to mobilization theory. I consider the collective action frames: how a living wage was defined, what social movement unionism strategies were utilized, and how motivational reasons for participation were altered. I assess how the campaign outcomes interact with the collective action frames and environmental conditions. Finally, I analyze the application of mobilization theory in this situation of severe economic conditions and expanded collective action frames associated with social movement unionism.

Next, I discuss why the two favoured story modes are the products of a social movement unionism organizing model. I also explain how the type of story mode affects the basis for construction and assertion of a given identity. Finally, I examine how the nature of a potential partner audience conditions identity selection for activists, and how identity selection influences micromobilization.

Social Movement Unionism during a Global Economic Crisis

Workers actively shaped the frame of fairness, which union leaders initiated to frame perceptions of a living wage. Union leaders indicated that a living wage should address issues of equality, self-respect and dignity. Workers voiced more specifically that a living wage meant equality based on citizenship rights, remuneration associated with responsibility level, and the dignity of their self-worth. To privatized workers, determination of a fair wage rate was primarily calculated based on comparison to wages earned prior to privatization or to wages of non-privatized workers employed in similar jobs.

Early in the campaign, the more active union members appeared to appreciate the initial opportunities for leadership training and political action in connection with living wage campaign activities. However, even they commented that participation meant sacrificing already limited resources, including pay and personal time. As the Living Wage Campaign grew, the union strategized a multi-pronged approach to distribute the opportunities for involvement more equally among the general membership, as free time was very limited for many of these workers, who simultaneously worked multiple jobs and/or balanced family care responsibilities.

Typical of a social movement unionism model (Cornfield and Canak 2007; Hurd 1998; Turner and Hurd 2001), the Hospital Employees' Union engaged in horizontal networking; thus, union actions supported its intended campaign message of strength through unity. The union also tailored campaign activities to maximize the use of the strengths particular to its activists and environment – the personal experience stories of the workers, the demographic make up of its membership and the political activity timing

within its environment. From their campaign experiences, workers expressed feelings of social cohesion with allies found across the developing horizontal networks.

Feelings of empowerment and hope carried over into the early stage of contract bargaining. Many respondents said that Living Wage Campaign strengths, such as the petition and the living wage calculation report, would positively affect the union's bargaining power in contract negotiations. When an undesirable contract offer was tabled by the transnational corporations, workers initially were strongly motivated to escalate collective action and take a strike vote. However, rising fears of job loss associated with a worsening economic recession plus concerns about minimal levels of strike pay, and for some workers, memories of pre-immigration political oppression altered the motivational level for collective action. These severe environmental factors, when added to the already precarious circumstances faced by immigrant low-wage workers resulted in a rejection of collective strike action.

Instead, worker activists focused on motivations for future collective action. Many expressed an ongoing sense of empowerment and noted improved communication skills. Workers appreciated the confidence they had gained to voice their opinions in support of their rights. As part of their new found experience to speak up, workers expressed a desire to expand their political actions. They also recognized the broader extent of the social justice platform associated with the campaign's social movement unionism model: activism is aimed to reduce inequalities for the whole community.

Frame Resonance, Social Cohesion, and Measurements of Success

Union leaders successfully constructed an interpretation of a living wage that resonated with the perceptions of workers. Not only did workers adopt the leadership

definition of a living wage as a fair wage, but the budding activists actively deepened the definition to align it with their personal experiences. Frame resonance rests, in part, on the centrality of the values within the frame to the lives of social movement participants (Benford and Snow 2000). I build on the work of Bloemraad (2002), who found that Canadian immigrants were likely to express views of citizenship from a perspective of social participation. In Canada, the government provides financial support to ethnic community associations as encouragement for members to become citizens, so citizenship is linked to notions of assistance and inclusion (Bloemraad 2002). My findings indicate that workers expected fair wages based on concepts of equality as Canadian citizens. They were paying taxes like other Canadian citizens, so they expected to receive a fair Canadian wage. A positive alignment of interpretive frameworks is also important for participants' evaluation of solidarity (Roth 2008).

Union leaders were also successful in generating solidarity through horizontal networking. Thus, as recommended by a social movement unionism model social cohesion was not only defined within bargaining unit boundaries, but was expanded to include external allies within other unions, community activists groups, and the general public. For example, shared experiences of migration and post settlement stigmatization among immigrant workers and immigrant community members generate solidarity (Milkman 2000; Milkman 2006), so campaigns that draw on workers' multiple identities are more likely to be successful in mobilization.

However, a resonant interpretive frame and broad-based solidarity were insufficient to gain significant bargaining returns during a global financial crisis. The economic environment significantly altered workers' motivational levels to escalate

collective action. Workers' perceptions of the multiple risks, particularly economic ones, that would need to be faced limited their willingness to engage in more aggressive collective action and resulted in only small economic gains from bargaining.

However, I would argue that there are other ways of measuring success beyond present economic returns. My arguments build on those of Fantasia and Voss (2004) and Weinbaum (2004). In social movement unionism, successes and defeats take place in the context of a long-term process of expansion with failures seen as motivators for greater creativity in the next step (Fantasia and Voss 2004). Activists can also develop strategies and arguments that create conditions for future success; in Tennessee, laid-off factory workers, who engaged in community-based activism, were unable to win back their jobs, but they altered local institutions and their local social movement laid the groundwork for regional and national social movements on issues of contingent work (Weinbaum 2004). My findings show that through their campaign participation, workers can also gain a new sense of empowerment, new skills, and new perspectives on community and their desire to effect political change. While the severe economic environment constrained their political ability to achieve economic gains in the present, the activists reframed their interpretation to emphasize the intangible gains from the campaign. The intangible gains from the recent campaign could strengthen their activist position for the future, when they seek better economic gains in future campaigns and bargaining rounds, after the economic recession eases. The passage of a living wage policy in New Westminster as the economy began to recover indicates that continued activism can make a difference.

Applying Mobilization Theory in the Context of a Global Financial Crisis

Within the framework of mobilization theory, Badigannavar and Kelly (2005) argued that collective action frames in successful unionization campaigns generated a perception that the union was effective in voicing the main concerns of workers and a strong sense of social cohesion and identification with the union; however, I would argue that the expanded set of frames associated with social movement unionism leads to a rethinking of mobilization theory. Within a social movement model, the workers are at the core of union activism. Thus, while union leaders may initiate an interpretive frame for a collective action campaign, such as a living wage campaign, it is the voices of the workers themselves that frequently carry the campaign message. Therefore, in a social movement unionism model, successful campaigns include actions of agency by workers to take part in the shaping of interpretive frames that resonate with their values.

Along with worker empowerment, social movement unionism strategy includes horizontal networking. Thus, while a strong sense of social cohesion and identification with the union is important for campaign success, social cohesion and identification extends beyond the boundaries of the collective bargaining unit. Within a social movement unionism model, campaign success depends, in part, on social cohesion with members throughout the network – other activist organizations, community groups, politicians, and the general public. Workers not only identify with the union, but draw on their multiple identities within the community to identify with allies in the larger network.

While within mobilization theory, Badigannavar and Kelly (2005) contended that economic constraints from the labour market constraints could weaken bargaining power,

contrary to mobilization theory, Benford and Snow (2000) pointed out that framing efforts may also emphasize activists' agency to increase opportunity. My findings support the combination of these arguments. The fears of job instability and lost wages during a global financial crisis did prevent workers from engaging in strike action, a collective action tool that in better economic times can be an effective bargaining lever. On the other hand, workers reframed their interpretation of campaign success to emphasize the intangible gains, which could increase their opportunity for economic successes in the future. Next, I examine how the social movement narratives from the campaign illustrated the activists growing sense of empowerment as they constructed and asserted identities to further campaign goals.

Identity Narratives

Living wage activists constructed and asserted three primary identities for themselves: helpers of others, fighters, and cultural identities. While previous research in the food service and hotel industries suggested that low-wage workers voiced collective worker identities along industry categories only as lower order identities (O'Brien 2008), I found that activists, who were employed as support workers in the health sector, often saw themselves as helpers of others, who could speak up for the rights of those who were too afraid to speak or could not speak for themselves. In contrast to O'Brien (2008), who argued that workers with collective solidarity believed that broad social mobilization could enact social change although they did not necessarily endorse unions, I found that worker-activists presented themselves as fighters for social justice with strong union associations in a living wage campaign, which expanded mobilization through social

movement unionism. While I agree with O'Brien (2008) that associational identity politics around nonworker identities, such as cultural identities, is useful when organizing political action from below, I contend that worker and unionist identities also play vital roles. The aspects of an industry that attract workers, such as opportunities to help others, can also provide motivation for those workers within a social movement. In addition, projecting a unionist identity during inter-union networking is a beneficial strategy to broaden movement mobilization by creating associations with multiple unions and their members.

While the activists expressed their fighter identity mainly during associational declarations, the helper of others identity and cultural identities pervaded both of the living wage activists' favoured story modes: associational declarations and atrocity tales. My findings support the literature which contends that identity pervasiveness, the amount to which an identity organizes collective action and its centrality to self-concept, is conditioned by the creation and maintenance of distinctive practices related to the identity (Cornell and Hartmann 1998). While few respondents had much experience in a social movement or union prior to their current jobs, many study participants had held positions in other helping occupations in health care or education in the past. Experiences associated with immigration status or ethnicity also had occurred over a longer term. Hence, the creation and maintenance of practices related to the fighter identity were relatively recent occurrences that drew from a smaller base of life course experiences, which resulted in the fighter identity's lesser degree of pervasiveness relative to the helper of others identity and cultural identities. From identity pervasiveness, I next turn my attention to a parallel concept: identity storytelling mode preference.

Micromobilization

Previous research has not recognized the effects of a social movement's organizing model on the mode of identity storytelling (Hunt and Benford 1994); I found that the social movement organizing model influenced the types of identity story modes, which participants used as motivation for collective action. The union-led living wage campaign in Vancouver used a social movement unionism model, which by definition focused on horizontal networking with social justice organizations, and mobilization of the general union membership. For collective action motivation through narratives, the living wage campaign activists relied primarily on the two identity story modes – associational declarations and atrocity tales – that most closely supported the foci of social movement unionism. As part of the horizontal networking strategy, the Hospital Employees' Union promoted a living wage campaign message of strength through unity. Influenced by this message, the activists' associational declarations highlighted links to other organizations and individuals that supported social justice issues. In line with a social movement unionism model, in which the general union membership is considered to be the heart of a union, another key component of the living wage campaign strategy was to feature opportunities for the low-wage workers to tell their own stories of trying to make ends meet in their daily lives. This campaign focus provided the campaign activists with much experience relating how their current wages meant they often had to work multiple jobs, leaving little time for family and community activities; the activists translated their stories of hardship into atrocity tales on the same themes.

The type of story mode affected the basis for the construction and assertion of a given identity. As mentioned, within their atrocity tales and associational declarations,

living wage activists constructed and asserted both the helper of others identity and cultural identities. Yet, in the atrocity tales, activists constructed these identities as value-based identities related to family and community, whereas in the associational declarations, identity assertion was affected by the type of group to whom the activists were declaring their association. While previous research found that charismatic social movement leaders were more likely to be successful motivators because they were perceived to personify the movement's values (Gecas 2000), I found that it was the activists who motivated through their atrocity tales, in a social movement unionism model centered on the activists themselves. These stories of the personal experiences of the workers and their colleagues emphasized the importance of family time and community participation – values that the movement aimed to support through its goal of achieving a living wage.

My contribution to the literature is to support arguments that activists display their identities in the context of potential reactions from and to influence their audience (Einwohner, Reger, and Myers 2008). While previous research suggested that participants in a social movement emphasized their similarities to one another to construct a collective identity (Einwohner, Reger, and Myers 2008), I found that activists also emphasized their similarities to potential allies to construct alliances. In addition, I found that activists used identity selection to project these similarities. Associational declarations, which are accounts of networking with various partner audiences, highlight how the nature of the partner audience affects the selection of identity that activists assert. Specifically, I found that in the process of making allies, the living wage campaign activists asserted the identity that they perceived was most similar to the identity asserted

by a given audience. For example, when conversing with left-of-centre politicians, who the activists perceived to be helpers of others, the activists asserted their own helper of others identity. When communicating with immigrant colleagues of various cultural backgrounds, immigrant activists asserted their own cultural identities to exchange learning experiences. In other words, to mobilize enhanced participation from allies in support of the campaign, activists chose to portray an identity with features in common with the ally's perceived identity in order to find common ground for communication.

Conclusion

Based on my findings from a social movement unionism model enacted during severe economic conditions, I suggest several modifications to mobilization theory. When a social movement unionism model is in effect, campaign success depends, in part, on the resonance of the interpretive framework with workers to the extent that they actively take part in shaping the framework, so that it aligns with their experiences and values. Secondly, campaign success within a social movement unionism model depends, in part, on social cohesion and identification both within the union and within the larger network developed through horizontal networking. Finally, while severe economic conditions can minimize the power of frame resonance and social cohesion to achieve economic success in a campaign when the environmental conditions are in effect, successes in worker empowerment and skills can be achieved. Furthermore, activists retain the agency to reframe the interpretive framework to emphasize how achieved non-economic successes position them to increase their opportunity for economic successes, when the severe economic conditions subside.

This research adds a nuanced view to the literature; in the climate of economic crisis, the gains from social movement unionism may be less tangible and more long-term. While previous research warned that living wage campaigns have the potential for activists from union staff or coalition partners to substitute for workers rather than empowering workers to develop their confidence and voice their own opinions (Clawson 2003), I found that if interpretive frames resonate with workers and strategies are constructed to make workers the central actors, then even in an environment of economic crisis, activism can increase empowerment, leadership, and incorporation. The persistence to continue living wage campaigns long-term is needed, so that the intangible gains in worker empowerment and skills can be joined with resonant interpretive frameworks and broad-based social cohesion, when the economic environment is not in recession.

Using data from qualitative interviews with outsourced health care support workers who participated in Vancouver's living wage campaign, I also examine the pervasiveness of the identities that the activists constructed across different narrative modes, and explore how identity selection influenced micromobilization. I show that in alignment with a social movement unionism campaign model featuring horizontal networking with social movement organizations and individuals, and mobilization of the general union membership, living wage activists mostly drew motivation for collective action from narratives describing associations with social movement organizations and individuals, and from stories relating how their personal experiences and those of their colleagues provided political action incentives. I explain that the type of narrative mode affected the basis for activists' construction and assertion of their helper of others identity

and cultural identities, which appeared in both of these two narrative modes. Finally, I indicate that activists asserted their identity that was most similar to their perceived identity of a potential partner in order to construct an alliance, so partners could be recruited in support of the social movement.

While activists construct collective identities within the context of structural inequalities which movements seek to realign (della Porta and Diani 2006; Meyer, Whittier, and Robnett 2002), social movement participants may actually select a model from the cultural stock of the dominant cultural group as a tool, then repackage the model within a desirable interpretative schema to render the situation meaningful and motivating to potential movement participants and sympathizers (Noakes and Johnston 2005). Drawing upon mainstream Canadian cultural stories that included public support for models of inclusion, such as the national health care system, in their social movement identity stories, living wage activists promoted their own new model of inclusion – a living wage for all. Programs based on models of inclusion have received more public support from Canadians than exclusionary models, which tended to stigmatize those who were the focus of the program.

While the research focused on a campaign that used a social movement unionism organizing model, future research should examine social movements that use organizing models, which align with a broader range of narrative types. Activists would then likely relate war stories, guide narratives, disillusionment anecdotes and personal is political reports with sufficient frequency, so researchers could assess how these story modes affect the basis for identity construction and assertion.

Overall, the findings of my study indicate that the basis for identity construction and assertion to encourage micromobilization is dependent on the type of social movement organizing model, alignment of activist and public values, and the nature of the ally audience. I advance the findings of Hunt and Benford (1994) by showing that activists preferentially engage in story modes, which are aligned with the social movement's organizing model, to further micromobilization. Building on the arguments of Gegas (2000) that successful motivators are perceived to personify the movement's values, I contend that in a social movement unionism organizing model, it is the activists themselves, who lead the motivation for micromobilization and increased public support by asserting value-based identities that personify values, which are important to both movement participants and the general public. Finally, I advance the findings of Einwohner, Reger, and Myers (2008) by showing that not only do activists emphasize their similarities to one another to construct a collective identity, they also assert an identity similar to potential movement allies as a method of ally recruitment. Identity narratives in a social movement unionism model support strategies of rank-and-file mobilization, and horizontal networking with allied social justice organizations, to increase public support for movement goals.

This case study is important for the study of social movements because it shows that a multipronged approach with a range of activism opportunities is important to gain participation from low-wage workers with limited prior activism experience. This strategy will build a union's internal power base, which is a goal of social movement unionism, because it spreads the participation over a larger group of workers, who each have limited time for participation, since their low wages make it necessary for them to

work multiple jobs to make ends meet. Secondly, a graduated approach to assertive activism opportunities enables neophyte activists to feel comfortable and supported as they progressively participate in more aggressive activism.

With the effectiveness of business unionism curtailed by neo-liberal government and corporate efforts to lessen labour power, currently the best option for labour even in poor financial environmental conditions is social movement unionism. While ideally it would be better for labour to fight for gains during better economic conditions, the volatility of the market, the complexities of arranging bargaining with multiple transnational corporations, and the timing of political opportunities do not always make it possible to predict and wait for good economic times. It is worthwhile to continue social movement strategies through a poor economic period to maximize the economic gains that are possible under the conditions as well as to empower and train workers into activists, and to organize horizontal networks, thus laying the groundwork for social movement expansion and success, when economic conditions improve.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Living Wage Campaign Interview Questions

XVI. Living Wage Campaign

128. Have you heard of Vancouver's Living Wage Campaign? Yes No
→ If yes, how did you learn about the Living Wage Campaign?
(*Directional note to interviewers: if no, go to question 141*)
129. Are you involved in the Living Wage Campaign? Yes No
→ If yes, what is your involvement? What are your roles?
(*Directional note to interviewers: if no, skip boxed section, go to question 139*)
130. How has the Living Wage Campaign affected your life?
(Wages and benefits, work life, family life, community life, education, savings?)
(*Note to interviewers: Probe to cover the different components listed in brackets*)
131. What have you learned from your experiences in the Living Wage Campaign?
132. What rights proposed by the Living Wage Campaign are important to you? Why?
133. How well do the results of the Living Wage Campaign meet your expectations?
Are there any surprises?
134. Who goes with you to Living Wage Campaign events?
(Coworkers from the same department, union acquaintances, family, friends?)
135. How does meeting people from other groups or organizations outside of the HEU at Living Wage Campaign events make you feel about the union?
136. How does meeting people from other groups or organizations outside of the HEU at Living Wage Campaign events affect your interest in activism?
137. How useful do you find the HEU's participation in the Living Wage Campaign as compared to previous bargaining strategies?
138. What changes to the Living Wage Campaign would you recommend?
(Different types of events, broader focus, communication in other languages?)

139. Are there obstacles that prevent you from attending Living Wage Campaign events? Yes No
→ If yes, what obstacles do you encounter?
(Location, work hours, family responsibilities?)
140. Are there aspects of the Living Wage Campaign that make you feel uncomfortable? Yes No
→ If yes, what makes you feel uncomfortable?
(Discrimination, connection to other interest groups, public speaking?)

Appendix B: U.B.C. Research Ethics Board Certificates of Approval



The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road,
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL- MINIMAL RISK RENEWAL

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Daniyal M Zuberi	DEPARTMENT: UBC/Arts/Sociology	UBC BREB NUMBER: H07-00465
INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:		
Institution UBC		Site Vancouver (excludes UBC Hospital)
Other locations where the research will be conducted: Some interviews may take place in respondents' homes, or community centres or coffee shops near their homes. None will take place in health care work settings.		
CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Melita B. Ptashnick		
SPONSORING AGENCIES: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) - "Outsourced: Hospital cleaners and support workers"		
PROJECT TITLE: Health Care Support Workers Study		

EXPIRY DATE OF THIS APPROVAL: July 24, 2010

APPROVAL DATE: July 24, 2009

The Annual Renewal for Study have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board

Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair
Dr. Ken Craig, Chair
Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair
Dr. Anita Ho, Associate Chair