

INTERRACIAL POLITICAL COALITIONS:
AN ANALYSIS OF JUSTICE FOR JANITORS CAMPAIGNS IN HOUSTON, TX

A Thesis

by

GLENN EDWARD BRACEY II

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

December 2008

Major Subject: Sociology

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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

Interracial Political Coalitions:

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(December 2008)

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The history of the United States is one of racial division and conquest. People of color have employed every method of resistance available to them to defend themselves against white racist aggression. Large political coalitions among racially oppressed groups have been relatively rare in United States' history. Political scientists and sociologists have revised downward early predictions of coalitions among these groups. Most contemporary social science details the problems confronting interracial alliances but do not detail empirically supported solutions. This thesis fills the gap in the literature by analyzing two interracial political campaigns in Houston, Texas. In so doing, I use extended case method and grounded theory to define the organizational structures, ideologies, and political climates that skillful organizers have used to successfully launch and maintain political coalitions among African Americans, Latinos, and whites. Through participant observation, in-depth interviewing with organizers from Justice for Janitors campaigns in 1986 and 2006, and content analysis, I extend social movements and critical race literatures.

The thesis extends Bell's interest convergence theory to include struggles for civil and economic rights conducted in the new millennium primarily in support of Latinos. Contrary to the political process model and in support of interest convergence theory, I find that Justice for Janitors campaign outcomes depended on whether white policymakers clearly saw whites' interests in supporting racial justice. Even with similar political climates, organizers' achieved success through sacrificing Latina janitors' racialized interests to bring union demands into agreement with white policymakers' goals. This case study gives close attention to one aspect of the union's negotiations of the 2006 political climate, namely the union's careful framing of the movement to minimize discussions of race in a white racist context.

Finally, this thesis also looks inside the movement and analyzes the roles that personal racial ideology and organizational structure played in the trajectory of the 2006 campaign. I conclude with a discussion of interracial political coalitions and what lessons future organizers and aggrieved parties can learn from Justice for Janitors' efforts in Houston, Texas.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my grandfather, Leslie Durant (1916-2004), whose love and dedication created and sustained our family, and whose patient conversation and life story made me politically aware as a young child, and whom we all love and miss beyond words....Pop-pop, I finally made my grade.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Joe R. Feagin, and my committee members, Dr. Almeida, Dr. Brown, and Dr. Moore, for their guidance, patience, and support throughout the course of this research.

Thanks also go to my friends and colleagues and the department faculty and staff for making my time at Texas A&M University a beneficial experience. This is especially true of those who made the trip from Florida to Texas in 2004. My deepest appreciation also goes to everyone involved in the Justice for Janitors campaigns in Houston whose hard work and dedication truly has improved the lives of thousands of people and inspired thousands more.

Finally, thanks to my mother, father, and sister for their encouragement.

NOMENCLATURE

ACORN	Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now
CRECEN	Centro de Recursos Centroamericanos
SEIU	Service Employees International Union
TMO	The Metropolitan Organization

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND THEORY

In February of 2001, Talmadge Branch, chairman of the Maryland state legislature's Congressional Black Caucus, entered the 27 Package Lounge in Perry, Florida and attempted to buy a beer. A white bartender refused to serve Representative Branch in the main section of the bar. Instead, she informed him that he would have to exit the building and enter through the back door where he would be served in a separate room where all other Black people drank. Shocked at the insult, Representative Branch contacted the NAACP and filed a discrimination lawsuit. The case received national attention and press. Reverend Al Sharpton and the Florida Black Caucus held a march down Highway 27, including a walk through the 27 Package Lounge. Black leaders and many supporters then met at a Black AME church across the street from the bar, calling for state and federal investigations and heavy sanctions against the bar owners. Despite the national attention and reluctant action from Governor Bush's administration, very little has changed for African Americans in Perry, Florida over the past five years. *De facto* segregation remains, as evidenced by a 2003 incident in which a hotel attendant screamed at Black paying customers, "Hey! No coloreds in the pool!"

My experience conducting research in Perry and speaking to state representatives on their behalf brought a frightening truth to light: African Americans in Florida simply did not have enough political clout to compel whites to respect Blacks' civil rights.

This thesis follows the style of American Sociological Review.

Particularly concerning was that this was the case in the post-Civil Rights Movement era and in a state with a large and politically powerful Hispanic population. The experience shattered my assumption that all people of color share similar interests and perspectives with regard to racism and white supremacy. I understood that even in the post-Civil Rights Movement era, the need for eternal vigilance remains. No single racial group has enough power alone to effectively defeat white supremacy. Consequently, the need for coalitions among people of color is as great as ever.

Unfortunately, coalitions among people of color do not occur with the natural ease I previously assumed. Various racial and ethnic groups have differing perspectives on racism in the United States and have different goals they wish to attain. Recognition of these facts led to me to adjust my research agenda from studying Black politics in isolation to examining coalition politics. Although several researchers have focused on interracial coalitions from a variety of perspectives (Meier and Stewart 1991; Omi and Winant 1994), none have examined the strategies and tactics necessary to mobilize across racial lines on a local level. This thesis attempts to fill that gap by asking two central questions: 1) how are interracial political coalitions formed; and, 2) how are interracial political coalitions maintained?

I chose the Justice for Janitors/SEIU (Service Employees International Union) campaign in Houston, Texas, as a case for several reasons. First, it clearly presented as a functioning interracial political coalition that has formed fairly recently and has had to endure in the face of severe opposition. Its mere existence in such a hostile climate also positioned the Justice for Janitors to have a great deal of academic significance. The

2006 campaign served as a counter to social movement analyses that predict failure for interracial coalitions, especially in hostile climates. Secondly, the Justice for Janitors campaign in Houston gave me an almost unheard of opportunity to study the same movement attempting to achieve the same social goals under very similar conditions. When I began the study, I could not be sure the movement would succeed. When it did, at least nominally, I had an ideal set of cases from a research perspective (although I would rather the events in 1986 not occurred), in which one effort ended in failure and the other with success. Most of all, I hoped that the 2006 Justice for Janitors campaign would provide a visible and replicable model for interracial coalitions in a host of situations. In some ways, it did. However, as I discovered and discuss in Chapter III, the benefits to people of color may be extremely limited.

Social Movements and People of Color's Interest in Predicting Success

Social movement literature experienced a resurgence after the Black Civil Rights Movement as scholars began to criticize the basic assumption of participant irrationality inherent in classical social movement theory and asserted the rationality of movement participants (McAdam 1982). This new assertion, however, rests on the premise that social movements, which are often very costly to participants, produce real results for aggrieved populations. In fact, movement emergence rests largely on organizers' ability to convince potential participants that their plans of action are appropriately timed and likely to produce positive results (Snow and Benford 1988).

Because racism and sexism are ideological apparatuses that take structural form in American political, economic, and social institutions, white women and people of

color (including people of color who are immigrants) represent the most oppressed populations in American society and, thus, are most likely to constitute aggrieved populations in need of effective social movements to improve their conditions (Bell 2004, Bullard 2000, Feagin 2000, Lopez 1996, Omi and Winant 1994). Their status as the most oppressed populations not only makes them the most likely to need and participate in social movements, it also makes men and women of color the most vulnerable to repression. For this reason, activists and potential participants in social movements must evaluate movements carefully, if not skeptically, before becoming involved.

Important here is that, perhaps more than any other population, people of color have a strong vested interest in the advancement of knowledge that more accurately predicts movements' likelihood of success *and* the character of that "success." Likewise, scholars have devoted much effort to predicting the outcomes of social movements and the tactics most associated with successful outcomes (Banaszak 2005, Bronfenbrenner and Juravich 1998, Gamson 1990, Stearns and Almeida 2004). This study tackles those issues by asking, why do some social movements designed to improve conditions for people of color succeed while others fail? Why do the outcomes of "successful" movements frequently produce more symbolic victories than significant substantive improvements for people of color? This study furthers the interests of academics, activists, and aggrieved populations by adjusting the political process model to include aspects of Bell's interest convergence theory, thus providing a theoretical framework that all interested parties can use in real time to evaluate organizations,

tactical options, potential coalition partners, the likelihood of movements' success, and the probable character of positive outcomes.

Testing Interest Convergence

McAdam (1982) and Tarrow (1998), among other scholars, suggest that the combination of access to resources, skillful use of mobilization strategies and techniques, and exploitation of sometimes unpredictable political opportunities contributes to the outcomes of social movements. Bell (1980, 2004) and other race scholars (Feagin 2000), however, suggest that when social movements involve racially oppressed groups as the chief beneficiaries, outcomes are more dependent upon racist ideology and white elites' perceived interests than the mobilizing strategies employed by people of color. Using in-depth interviews with organizers and coalition partners, participant observation, and secondary sources, this study examines the role that race and racism played in the mobilization and final outcomes of two Service Employees International Union (SEIU) -Justice for Janitors campaigns in Houston, Texas. Comparison of two cases in which SEIU employed many of the same mobilization tactics but achieved completely divergent outcomes provides a rare opportunity to examine the limits of the political process model and the importance of ideological aspects of society, such as racism.

The Political Process Model

Although a great deal of social movements research is derived from studies on the Black Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s (McAdam 1982, 1986; Morris 1984), social movement theories and race/ethnicity theories have developed with

remarkably little cross-fertilization. Social movements theories have focused largely on structural and political aspects of movements and the political environment, precluding, in the minds of its mostly white authors, the inclusion of race theory. The dominant model in social movements literature, McAdam's (1982) political process model is exemplary of an overly structural framework that gives too little attention to the role of ideological constructions, such as racism, in movements' emergence and development.

As stated above, although the political process model is primarily intended to explain movement emergence, the implicit assumption of McAdam's model and subsequent developments by other scholars (Almeida and Sterns 1998, Tarrow 1998, Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986) is that a sufficient combination of resources, skillful mobilization, and manipulation of expanding political opportunities will increase the likelihood of a social movement producing a positive outcome for the aggrieved population. This assumption remains, regardless of the nature of states' responsive action. Even severe state repression is not determinant of movement outcomes, as repression can serve to stifle or inflame movement participation depending on organizations' leadership structure and use of framing techniques (Francisco 2005, Tarrow 1998:72). Therefore, although Bell's interest convergence theory centers primarily on movement outcomes, it offers a valuable critique of the political process model by suggesting that the factors McAdam claims are sufficient for movement emergence and development—and thus the acquisition of positive outcomes—are irrelevant to outcomes in the absence of a convergence between elite whites' interests and the interests of people of color.

This understanding hangs on the assumption that movement survival is dependent upon the movement producing some positive outcomes over time (and thus remaining viable and legitimate among aggrieved populations). Thus, McAdam's statements concerning movements' long-term survival can and must be read to imply movement successes of various degrees (beyond the basic success of survival itself). Therefore a sharp contrast exists between McAdam's political process model and Bell's interest convergence theory. Where McAdam claims that the exercise of political leverage is the central factor determining the development and success of a movement (1982:52), Bell would claim that continued convergence of interest between white elites' and people of color's interests is *the* determinant factor of racialized social movements' maintenance and success (2004:69).

Drawing considerably upon resource mobilization theories, McAdam's (1982:40) political process model delineates four factors determined to be essential to movement emergence and development—the structure of political opportunities, strength of indigenous organizations, degree of cognitive liberation, and the level of social control exerted by elites. The first three factors are pertinent to movement emergence and sustainability, while the level of social control indicates elites' reaction to the new movement. Disruptions and challenges to the underlying assumptions upon which the political establishment is built constitute political opportunities in McAdam's model. As these opportunities occur, indigenous organizations obtain resources and strategize to take advantage of those opportunities. These structural opportunities, however, must be met with a collective cognitive liberation, a shared understanding of problems, causes,

and means for successful resistance for a movement to emerge. Elite response may range from acceptance of challengers' goals to murderous repression.

Tarrow and Political Opportunity

Several authors have extended and developed McAdam's model and concepts. Tarrow (1998) further defines political opportunities, giving five dimensions of political opportunities. Among these dimensions determining political opportunity, three are central to this study—the evidence of realignment within the polity, emerging splits within the elite, and a decline in the state's likelihood to repress dissent. Tarrow's dimensions assume the presence of a "competitive establishment," in which elites struggle for power and may align with insurgent groups to form a ruling coalition. This assumption is a weakness of the political process model as it relates to racialized social movements because with respect to people of color's efforts to assert racial equality in opportunity and substantive outcome, no such competitive establishment exists. All whites receive white privilege, and as such have a vested interest in denying the claims of people of color (Bell 2004, Feagin 2006). Historically, whites have acted in defense of racial interests, sacrificing their economic and political interests in the process (Du Bois [1903] 2003, Feagin 2006).

Framing

Snow and his coauthors (1986) develop McAdam's cognitive liberation concept by highlighting the importance of frames to galvanizing potential participants' support for shared understandings of conditions and means for resistance. Implicit in the framing literature is the idea that, assuming movements' goals remain constant, effective

frame alignment results in shared understandings of the problems and necessary remedies (Snow and Benford 1988). However, in racialized social movements, people of color and whites may unify around a shared frame and desired outcome, but fail to have a true coalition around the desired significance of those outcomes. Martin Luther King, Jr. gives an excellent example, suggesting that white and Black members of the Civil Rights Movement shared the value of formal equality and the goal of integration, but had differing definitions of equality. Blacks understood equality to have meaning only with respect to practical outcomes; whites claimed equality as a state of (at best moderate) progress (Feagin 2000:247). Although some framing scholars might suggest this break represents an incomplete frame alignment, many race scholars understand this fissure to be a permanent result of racism and the power of what Feagin calls the “white racist frame,” and thus a racial, rather than a framing, problem (Bell 1987, Feagin 2006).

Inadequacy of Political Process Model for Racialized Movements

The point here is simple. The political process model is adequate for analyzing social movements with political and structural goals. However, it does not contain a sufficiently developed theory of race to apply to racialized and other ideological movements. The political process model considers racism as a social feature that can create aggrieved populations complete with sentiment pools for mobilization, cultural symbols useful for framing, and strong indigenous organizations. However, the model’s focus on political and legal structures assumes that activists’ ultimate goals consisted only of realizing structural changes to legal and political structures. While activists certainly did effort to adjust the structure, these goals were clearly intermediate goals on

the path to achieving racial equity in terms of eliminating structural and ideological racism and its economic, political, social, and ideological manifestations (Bell 2004).

As Feagin (2000, 2006) powerfully describes, systemic racism has shaped and continues to dominate social institutions and life in the United States. Systemic racism “encompasses a broad range of racialized dimensions of this society: the racist framing, racist ideology, stereotyped attitudes, racist emotions, discriminatory habits and actions, and extensive racist institutions developed over centuries by whites” (Feagin 2006:xii). White racism is in every facet of American society and impacts people’s thoughts, emotions, and actions. For elite whites, system racism produces material and ideological benefits as elite whites are placed at the top of wealth-generating institutions while having their personal worth and value constantly reinforced. Working class whites sacrifice financial gain in exchange for the privileges of whiteness, including access the white resources and a sense of superiority to people of color. People of color, on the other hand, are victimized by white racism in every part of their lives. They suffer unjust impoverishment, as whites benefit from their labor, and a lack of economic and political resources. Additionally, as whiteness is held as good and ideal, blackness is devalued, resulting in constant challenges to people of color’s self-worth. Consequently, people of color are forced to perpetually resist white racism through a variety of forms, including collective action. Whenever people of color engage in resistance, the goal, therefore, is broader than the strict political goals McAdams observes. Racialized social movements are strikes against white supremacy in the form of systemic racism and thus have economic, political, structural, ideological goals. The purpose is to free people of

color from systemic racism in its codification and its everyday application. This is always the case with racialized social movements, and models must take these ultimate goals into account when attempting to explain successful movement emergence, development, and outcomes. In the absence of these ultimate goals, intermediate goals have little meaning.

SEIU Frame Expansion to Include Racialized Goals

The relevance of race and immigration has not been lost on union organizers. Responding to decades of decline in membership and political influence, many unions, including the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), shifted their focus in the mid-1990s to emphasize organizing new members. Immigration patterns, capitalists' decisions to move corporations South and away from union strongholds, and the effects of racism resulted in a high concentration of Latino-Americans, African Americans, new Latino immigrants, and women of color working in the service sector. Lacking political strength, unions were forced to use mobilize workers and achieve first contracts through contentious means (Voss and Sherman 2000).

Consistent with critical race theories (Lopez 1996), SEIU has not been able to build interracial coalitions based on class lines alone (i.e. labor versus capital) without making more racially salient claims. Instead, unions have had to emphasize social justice issues, spanning far beyond a narrow focus on wages. Among these explicitly racially salient goals are increasing SEIU efforts to achieve civil rights, immigrants' rights, and progress on other social justice issues (Voss and Sherman 2000). Subtler references to relief from racism, such as an emphasis on recognizing immigrants' and

minority workers' dignity, have also garnered support from these communities. Latino, immigrant, and African American workers have responded favorably to adjustments in campaign goals, making SEIU the largest and fastest growing union sector in the United States.

Interracial Coalitions – Occurrences

Despite numerous political science theories and empirical findings suggesting interracial and interethnic coalitions are improbable (Kim 2000, Meier and Stewart 1991, Vaca 2004), coalitions of this type have occurred under certain structural conditions. Okamoto (2003) found that racial segregation can produce a panethnic identity among people of Asian descent that is useful for organizing social movements. Racial segregation is deemed necessary to create intergroup interactions, common economic interests, and a sense of a common fate, which organizers can use to mobilize participants. Nagel (1995) and Padilla (1985) also find that Latinos of various ethnicities are willing to coalesce around the “Latino” panethnicity when acceptance of that *racial* category, which is already imposed by whites, permits access to political and economic resources. Hispanic and Asian ethnics' decisions to organize around panethnic labels does not occur without racial oppression and successful resistance. Occasionally, panethnic coalitions facilitate further coalescence between Latino and African American groups. Jesse Jackson's rainbow coalition of the 1980s and 1990s is perhaps the most famous example, propelling Jackson into serious contention for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination.

Interracial Coalitions and Tactics

Organizing vulnerable minority and immigrant populations has proven difficult for the SEIU, including its subsidiary, Justice for Janitors, which organizes and services labors in the custodial sector. Justice for Janitors organizers have had to resort to contentious politics and direct actions to accomplish their goals (Voss and Sherman 2000). While these combinations of noninstitutional tactics have been gained positive results, organizers are unsure about the relationship between tactics, combinations, and conditions. Therefore, campaigns frequently involve multiple contentious strategies to ensure success. Bronfenbrenner and Juravich (1998) found that using five or more direct action greatly increased the probability of campaign success.

Race and Social Movements – Bell’s Interest Convergence Theory

Nevertheless, discovering the number of direct actions necessary for campaign success does not shed sufficient theoretical light on *why* certain tactical combinations work and under which conditions. Such knowledge would save organizers a great deal of money and energy by allowing them to strategically select tactics rather than constantly employ as many tactics as are available to them. Interest convergence theory aids in the process of selecting tactics by highlighting the fact that the most effective tactics and strategies will be those that either capitalize on preexisting interest convergences between white elites and people of color or create interest convergence between these two parties. Mere embarrassment and moral claims without an additional compelling white elite interest, usually in terms of political or economic pressure, are very unlikely to generate successful outcomes, according to Bell (1980, 2004).

Finally, while the political process model assumes that movement outcomes are determined by power struggles between social movements and the establishment, interest convergence theory provides two racially-informed means for the resolution of conflict between movements and elites. Both McAdam and Bell assume the existence of a competitive establishment, with respect to power (not racial) dynamics. Bell contends that the resolution of racialized social movements will be characterized as either race-sacrificing or interest convergence. Race-sacrificing resolutions are those in which white elites and white dissenters reestablish white unity by sacrificing the interests of protesting people of color. Interest convergence conclusions occur when white elites realize that making minimal and temporary concessions to people of color will further a larger white elite political or economic interest. Chapter III, which follows a chapter on methods, is a test of Bell's and McAdam's theories.

Social Movement Unionism and Framing

Chapter IV transitions from a focus on established social movement theory to a grounded theory study of the framing techniques employed by the SEIU in the 2006 campaign only. A grounded theory approach allows me to create a new theoretical perspective based solely on data acquired in the field. In this case, the SEIU's framing techniques allowed me to craft new concepts about how framing works in the context of a racialized movement. Traditionally, social movement scholars have assumed that social movement organizations (SMOs) adopt a single frame that either succeeds or fail in a particular campaign (Snow and Benford 1988). Recently, scholars have recognized the flexibility movement unionism offers revitalized SMOs to use a multitude of frames

during a single campaign, but researchers describe these movements as using a general “social justice” frame (Schneider 2005; see Borland 2006 for an exception). Such a broad label is problematic, however, because social justice can be both a singular frame (such as Archbishop Fiorenza’s statement that “we must stand with the janitors in their struggle for justice and dignity”) and an umbrella term for movements struggle for broad social goals in addition to traditional labor outcomes (Houston Justice for Janitors 2006a; Johnston 1994). Additionally, scholars’ unspecified characterization of SMO’s use of the social justice frame is especially problematic because it obfuscates organizers’ skillful tailoring of messages and transitioning between a variety of sub-frames depending on target publics and political conditions.

This research sheds light on how and why organizers’ use of various sub-frames under the social justice umbrella shifts with time and political conditions. One of several benefits of social movement unionism to organizers is that it allows emphasize or deemphasize particular subordinate frames depending on union needs. Where previous movements’ activities were constrained by frames selected to aid movement emergence, but not facilitate contentious action (Snow and Benford 1988), social movement unions can utilize frames that are most appropriate for each stage of a campaign without appearing inconsistent as conditions change and campaigns enter different phases.

Chapter IV, therefore, documents how SEIU/Justice for Janitors is taking advantage of the framing flexibility afforded by social movement unionism. During the solidarity building phase of the campaign, Justice for Janitors successfully recruited a broad labor-community coalition by aligning its frame with several community

organizations and constituencies. Organizers were able to maintain frame coherence and minimize resistance by emphasizing janitors' maternal status and potential benefits of the campaign to Houston's families, even as the campaign's stated goals revolved principally around traditional labor issues. The mother/family frame was useful for movement emergence and gaining public sympathy, but the popular ideology surrounding mothers and families precluded placing mothers in dangerous situations during disruptive actions. Consequently, organizers shifted from an emphasis on families to emphasizing civil rights and racial coalitions. By presenting the organizing campaign as a social movement for social justice, SEIU was able to drastically shift its framing strategy, without appearing inconsistent or opportunistic. Justice for Janitors strategy in Houston demonstrates the framing benefits of social movement unionism and elucidates the strengths and weakness of various social movement frames, including the mother/family frame.

Chapter V takes another turn, moving from movement-wide analysis to a narrower focus on individuals' ideologies on race and how those views impacted the movement. Generally case studies evaluate how conservative or moderate a movement is without measuring the attitudes of the members comprising the movement. Even when members' thoughts are considered, they are not always evaluated qualitatively. Consequently, subtle (or even overt) racial ideologies may go understudied by scholars. Because I am interested in understanding the potential for forming interracial coalitions in a host of contexts, studying the racial ideologies of coalition members was extremely important. If coalitions can only survive when all members are well schooled in radical

Black and Latino scholarship, coalitions may be difficult to form and maintain. If however, little more is required than excitement and conviction that one is “doing good,” coalitions may be easier to build but easily dismantled by whites’ counterarguments. In Chapter V, I find that a multitude of racial ideologies coexist in the Justice for Janitors coalition. These various ideologies impact the organizational structure, a structure which may be useful as a model in other contexts.

CHAPTER II

METHODS AND DATA

My principal methodology is that of participant observation, in service of the extended case method (Burawoy 1991). Extended case method involves examining phenomena that are not predicted by existing theory, then adjusting those theories so that they satisfactorily explain previously anomalous cases. I employ this method principally as a means of understanding the SEIU Justice for Janitors campaign as a social movement, giving more attention to race ideology on a macro rather than micro scale. As is evident from my theoretical discussion, I am concerned that the dominant paradigm in social movements research, namely the political process model, ignores major issues in some social movements such as the importance of systemic, but non-structural, power ideologies (e.g. racism, sexism) and assumes inside knowledge and a perspective of politics and social movements that activists rarely possess. These concerns as they are, I am not here prepared to take up the task of theory construction from scratch. Because this study is currently limited to only one social movement of a particular character, I do not feel well positioned to reject established theory in favor of a theory I have adduced from my empirical research.

Instead, I employ the extended case method as a means to strengthen McAdam's political process model. Rather than completely rejecting the political process model, I attempt to improve it by including Bell's interest convergence theory so that the political process model is better able to explain both the trajectory and outcomes of social movements which are marked by significant and obvious racial [under]tones. The

inclusion of racial dynamics and ideology compels the reconstruction of McAdam's highly structural theory, but may not require its complete refutation.

I employ the extended case method in the following ways. I chose my project as a test of both Feagin's systemic racism theory and McAdam's political process model. Throughout the data collection process, I have engaged in data analysis and the reconstruction of the political process model. I have done so both in isolation (i.e. thinking in academic terms) and in dialogue with the respondents and participants in the SEIU campaign. I have allowed participants to shape and reshape my understanding of data (interviews and textual analysis) in terms of participants' intentions and shared understandings. The final analysis, however, is entirely my own and at some important junctures breaks with that of SEIU organizers and some supporters.

As mentioned above, my goal here to reconstruct, rather than completely refute, McAdam's political process theory. In so doing, I chose to study the Justice for Janitors campaign in Houston, Texas because it exemplified several anomalies in social movements theory. First, it represents an interracial coalition between Blacks and Latinas in a geographical region that has experienced high levels of contention between these groups in recent years (Vaca 2004). Secondly, this social movement is interracial for aesthetic and ideological reasons beyond the mere numerical power accumulation goal presumed by traditional coalition theories (Meier and Stewart 1991). These theoretical anomalies stretch the political process model and necessitate the inclusion of ideological factors McAdam previously ignored.

In my chapter on the SEIU as a social movement (Chapter III), I do not develop concepts and operationalizable variables consistent with theory construction. Rather, I focus on how SEIU is impacted by and responds to the general racial climate in the United States and Houston particularly. In so doing, I hope to elucidate the roles that class ideology and inter-regional networks play in this unionization effort. I also show how racial prejudice among the general public, covert racial understandings among participants, and established coalitional tactics lead SEIU/Justice for Janitors to cooperate with and further entrench racism in American society.

The fourth chapter employs a different methodology from the chapter devoted to understanding Justice for Janitors as a social movement. In this section, I am more concerned with race and racism on a micro scale. Consequently, I shift from the extended case method, which emphasizes anomalies and the restructuring of theory, to grounded theory techniques, which emphasize themes and concepts. I employ this method as a means for understanding how framing and sentiment pools (Snow and Benford 1988) contribute to the maintenance of social movements.

Consistent with the grounded theory method (Glaser and Strauss 1967), I examined written and oral information gathered from SEIU events, offices, and interviews. Building grounded theory is an inductive approach to scientific study, requiring researchers to gather and analyze data in the absence of existing theory. Researchers recognize themes that emerge from the data and build categories that represent the themes. Researchers then return to the data to further evaluate and develop the categories. For this thesis, I coded the data according to emergent themes across

several data sources, which are detailed below. My goal here is to discover effective means for generating participation in social movements, maintaining participation, and mitigating outside challenges. I also analyze the data with regard to how themes are used to appeal to various audiences at different points in the movement.

How Race Impacts Methodology Choice

The fact that “race” is a social construction, rather than a biological fact has practical implications for my research methodology. The social construction of race is a constant and contentious process (Lopez 1996; Omi and Winant 1994). Consequently, the legal and practical definitions of racial groups change across time and space, and the relationships, hierarchical status, resistance/repression tactics, and proximate goals of racial groups change with historical circumstances. Because my interest is interracial political coalitions, the shifting nature of race and race relations precludes my ability to firmly establish a grounded theory of interracial coalitions that is transhistorical and/or trans-spatial. As Pulido (2006) demonstrates, regional contexts are crucial for understanding coalition development even within contemporary historical periods. Shifting dynamics between white ethnics (Gordon 1964) and interracial groups such as whites and Asian Americans (Takaki 1989; Tuan 1998) are readily available and indicate the impossibility of discussing coalitions apart from historical context.

My work is especially sensitive to historical contexts for several reasons. First, an important aspect of social movement theory, including McAdam’s political process model, is the shifts in power that may occur from broad social changes such as the industrial revolution or mass migration patterns. Obviously, my work on interracial

coalitions involving Latinos is predicated upon the massive increase in Latino immigration since 1965, and especially since 1990. The sheer number of Latinos immigrating to the United States, particularly the Southwest, has heightened white fears (Maharidge 1996) and provided Latinos with a sense of empowerment.

Secondly, the emergence of colorblind racism as the dominant national discursive paradigm following the legal gains of the Black Civil Rights Movement presents very different challenges to interracial coalition building than existed before 1965. For instance, the context of legal and overt segregation, coupled with extreme violence against integrationists made the process of recruiting whites to Freedom Summer (McAdam 1986) very different from the process of recruiting whites to help rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. The WHOM (“we have one minority”) defense, that goes part and parcel with color-blind racism discourse, has become a major means of preempting charges of racism in an organization. Therefore, political movements of every type now have legal and social reasons to appear to be interracial. This is a new historical phenomenon that has two significant consequences for coalition research. First, it forces researchers to define interracial coalitions in ways that are more meaningful than simply including one minority. Secondly, it challenges the dominant view in sociological and political science literature that interracial coalitions form to achieve numerical power in a pluralist electoral framework (Meier and Stewart 1991; Meier et al. 2004; Vaca 2004). As I will demonstrate below, the Justice for Janitors coalition in Houston was strategically designed to be interracial for image reasons as much as for power needs.

Data Collection

My principal method of data collection was participant observation. From February to October of 2006, I attended dozens of SEIU rallies and press conferences, taking extensive field notes at each event. I also took and collected photographs of rallies and marches, later coding these images according to emergent racial themes and the slogans used to frame the Justice for Janitors campaign in the eyes of the public.

The bulk of my data was obtained through twenty (20) semi-structured in-depth interviews with participants in the Justice for Janitors campaign. SEIU members were chosen for interviews according to their position within the movement and availability. People tasked with developing political contacts, organizing janitors for union activities, and providing research for the campaign were critical respondents. I chose respondents from outside the official SEIU team according to recommendations from leaders within Houston's Justice for Janitors campaign. Respondents were asked to recommend individuals and organizations who had been the most helpful and engaged in the campaign. I also requested interviews with people who attended rallies and appeared to be vocal participants within their respective groups. In each case, I made phone or personal contact with participants before scheduling interviews. Most interviews were 90 to 120 minutes in length.

Seven respondents are members of SEIU charged with organizing, strategizing, and executing the campaign in Houston. The remaining thirteen (13) interviews are with members of the various coalescing groups supporting the movement. Seven interviews are drawn from African American members of supporting groups with the largest

African American memberships—ACORN and BlackDems. Two interviews are from The Metropolitan Organization (TMO), which had the largest white membership of the most supportive community organizations. Three interviews are with Latina members of principally Latino organizations—NALEO, CRECEN. Additional interviews were drawn from individual supporters and members of smaller supporting groups (ex. medical students from Tulane University who spoke at a rally). Finally, I obtained quotations from the public statements of four major politicians who supported the Justice for Janitors movement—Councilman Adrian Garcia, Councilman Peter Brown, U.S. Representative Al Green and U.S. Representative Gene Green. Broken out by racial group, eight respondents are African American, four are white, and nine are Latino. By gender, fourteen respondents are female; six are male.

My data have several key limitations. First, my status as a monolingual (English) researcher precluded interviewing some Latino supporters and I was occasionally reliant upon other participants for brief translations of activities during rallies and press conferences. With very few exceptions, SEIU events are bilingual, complete with immediately translated speeches and written materials in both English and Spanish. Therefore, my linguistic limitations were significantly mitigated.

Secondly, due to limited financial resources and time constraints, I have chosen to interview campaign participants and coalition partners exclusively. I chose not to gather data about individuals and organizations which chose not to join the Justice for Janitors coalition. Consequently, with respect to determining the factors that lead to participation in coalitions, I have essentially selected my sample on the dependent

variable. Therefore, I will not comment on the factors leading to coalition participation. Instead, I focus on the communication (including framing) and networking strategies SEIU employed to build and maintain an interracial coalition.

Finally, as a case study, every conclusion drawn from this research may not be easily generalizable to other circumstances. As mentioned above, historical circumstances, regional characteristics, and particular histories between local networks all impact this campaign and force Justice for Janitors strategists to adapt accordingly. Nevertheless, I believe several conditions affecting this campaign impact racialized social movements in nearly every contemporary American context. Among these ubiquitous conditions are: the presence of divergent interests between racialized members, organizations, and white elites; the need to respond to color-blind racial ideology; and social movement organizations' attempts to affect the political climate by using networks and media to expand or contract the relevant political environment in ways that benefit social movement campaigns.

Social Movement Organizations

The 2006 Justice for Janitors campaign in Houston benefitted from the support of innumerable social movement organizations and individual citizens. Over 100 community leaders signed the original letter in advance of officially launching the campaign on April 30, 2005. In the interim, dozens more have signed on and participated in the campaign. For the purposes of this analysis, I focused on a few organizations and individual politicians that SEIU officials indicated were most active

and essential to the campaign. To facilitate reading the remainder of this work, I will briefly describe each SMO.

Two natural coalition partners in this effort were the local branch of Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) and The Metropolitan Organization (TMO). According to its website, ACORN is “the nation's largest community organization of low- and moderate-income families, working together for social justice and stronger communities.” ACORN is an international, multiracial organization. In the United States, ACORN is primarily African American, but in Houston, the racial balance of participants in the Justice for Janitors campaign from ACORN was about 60 percent African American and 40 percent Latino. SEIU relied on ACORN to reliably turn out attendees for public events and protestors during the strike phase of the campaign. ACORN members frequently spoke at public events, displaying the possibility for Blacks and Latinos to work together effectively on class issues. ACORN and SEIU are frequent partners in janitors’ campaigns because janitors are always low wage workers. ACORN lists several SEIU locals as official organizational partners. The relatively new Houston Local 5 is not yet on that list.

The Metropolitan Organization (TMO) was also a natural ally. On its website, TMO defines itself as, “an organization of congregations, schools and other institutions dedicated to developing power and leadership among ordinary citizens to transform democracy in the City of Houston.” TMO boasts its diverse membership of Hispanics, Whites, and African Americans. It is also multid denominational, including Catholic churches and charities and mainline protestant denominations. A sister organization of

the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), TMO was founded by Former Archbishop Fiorenza in 1975. Fiorenza would later strongly support the 2006 Justice for Janitors campaign, opening the campaign with the powerful line, “God is not pleased.” TMO provided the support primarily Latino Catholic churches and white clergy, in addition to charitable support and volunteers, to the Justice for Janitors campaign.

The next most important supporters are CRECEN and BlackDems. Directed by Teodre Aguiluz, CRECEN has served Latino immigrants in Houston since 1982. CRECEN primarily helps central American immigrants and provides daily necessities, such as housing assistance, and legal assistance for citizenship. The 1986 Justice for Janitors campaign in Houston was primarily organized by immigrants rights organizers who worked closely with CRECEN. One organizer from that time still works with the organization. In the 2006 campaign, CRECEN was indispensable. CRECEN organizers helped SEIU staff find and recruit enough janitors to legalize the union. CRECEN also turned out supporters for public events. Importantly, CRECEN is much more race critical than SEIU/Justice for Janitors. Where SEIU uses pluralistic language to discuss the American racial and political environment, CRECEN’s language and images overtly invoke histories of harsh white racism against Latinos and centers white racism as an ever-present enemy.

Founded by James Robertson in 2005, BlackDems has quickly grown into a influential organization in Houston politics. BlackDems is the younger wing of the Black Democratic Party in Houston. They use PAC money and grassroots connections to promote local and state candidates. They have been credited with creating the

margins in several city campaigns. BlackDems provided SEIU organizers with connections to local politicians and Black leaders.

CHAPTER III
INTEREST CONVERGENCE THEORY
A CASE STUDY OF JUSTICE FOR JANITORS CAMPAIGNS IN
HOUSTON, TEXAS

Despite achieving formal equality during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, African Americans continue to experience living conditions and life chances far inferior to those of whites. The general public may not have every statistic memorized, but most African Americans are well aware of the fact that Blacks trail whites in terms of income, wealth, education, and a host of other statistics that affect the daily lives of all Americans. The African American community is also extremely concerned with disproportionate incarceration rates, high levels of infant mortality, and a host of other ills besieging the community. The regular occurrences of egregious police brutality and public anti-Black statements by politicians and celebrities provide constant evidence that both covert and overt white racism are alive and well.

Likewise, the Latino community, contending with many of the same effects of systemic racism, has increasingly expressed its dissatisfaction. Traditional Latino organizations, such as the League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) have been instrumental in popularizing these concerns. Although immigration is by no means strictly a Latino phenomenon, the American media and public frequently discuss immigration with exclusive attention on undocumented Latinos. Many immigrants' rights organizations, most of whom principally service Latino populations, have

launched impressive national mass-actions of protest designed to protect immigrants' human rights and promote laws that further immigrants' interests.

Living with the effects of racism, both past and present, has generated a desire among Latinos—long-time citizens and recent immigrants alike—and African Americans to find political and organizational means to improve their conditions. In 1995, as Latino immigration received increased political attention, AFL-CIO members responded to the long-term decline of union strength in the United States by electing leadership that strongly favored organizing new members. Several member unions, including the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), responded by “revitalizing their repertoires of contention,” including a return to the use of direct action tactics designed to “prevent employers from conducting ‘business as usual’” (Voss and Sherman, 2000:312). These unions also turned their attention to organizing and mobilizing previously underserved populations such as women, minorities, and immigrants (Voss and Sherman, 2000).

The overrepresentation of women, minorities, and immigrants in the service sector and SEIU's strategic shift toward organizing new memberships created a seemingly natural partnership between employees and the union. Employees' desire to improve their life conditions, including the desire for increased pay and access to healthcare, converged with the union's desire to increase its strength by organizing new members. Thus, the union provided an organizational structure through which previously underserved segments of the labor force, namely women and minorities, were able to voice concerns and mobilize. Over the past decade, SEIU has successfully

capitalized on these conditions and is now the largest and fastest-growing union sector in the United States.

SEIU's growth and expansion into the largely unorganized South indicate that the partnership between the union and minorities in the service sector has greatly benefited the union. But how has this partnership of convenience served the minority and immigrant communities who have coalesced with the union in organizing campaigns? In this thesis, I examine the formation, trajectory, and outcome of two major SEIU/Justice for Janitors campaigns in Houston, Texas. I ask, what conditions produced divergent outcomes in these campaigns, and how did race and racism influence the outcomes of these campaigns? Finally, I consider how our theoretical understanding of racialized social movements' may be enhanced by analyzing revitalized union drives?

Using in-depth interviews with organizers from the two campaigns, interviews with major coalition partners, and secondary sources, I conduct a two-part analysis of the role of race and racism in the campaigns. The first section is a comparison of the 1986 and 2006 campaigns and an analysis of the conditions that led to divergent outcomes. The second section exclusively examines the 2006 campaign. Here I analyze the SEIU's actions at the national and local levels with regard to participants' racialized interests.

Justice for Janitors in Houston

Like most of the nation's largest cities, Houston is a "majority-minority" city.¹ The U.S. Census estimates over 42 percent of Houston's 1.9 million residents are

¹ Houston is the fourth largest city in the United States. The largest three—New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago—are all majority minority. Additionally, many of the largest southern cities—Atlanta, Dallas, Miami, San Antonio, Memphis, among others—are also majority minority.

Hispanic. Non-Hispanic Blacks and Whites constitute 23.2 and 27.8 percent of the city's population, respectively. The Census Bureau also estimates that of Houston's 527,442 Mexican-origin residents, 13.36 percent (70,442) are foreign born.

Approximately seventy (70) percent of the foreign-born Mexicans are not American citizens, and the janitor population is disproportionately drawn from this population.

Texans are generally eager to tout their state as unique, as if it remains culturally, if not politically, distinct from the rest of the country. Despite this local pride, in many ways Houston represents the Weberian ideal type of a southern city. Land developers and big capital have created what has historically been called a "free enterprise city," where big business thrives in the absence of governmental oversight (Feagin 1988). As an SEIU lawyer said during an informal interview, "The irony here is that capital is completely unregulated, but *people* are totally regulated." Located in a right to work state, Houston has promoted a good business climate by maintaining low tax rates and establishing itself as the only major American city with no zoning laws. Currently, Texas is home to 176,000 people making at or below minimum wage, more than any other state (United States Department of Labor).²

Houston's pro-business climate has cost its Black and Latino communities dearly. The city provides very poor transportation, healthcare, and waste disposal services, disproportionately impacting minorities and low-income laborers (Feagin 1988). Houston's janitors, the majority of whom have been Latina for at least the past two decades, have been forced to provide for their families with very little public

² For more information, see the October 2006 report detailing wages in Texas at: http://www.bls.gov/ro6/fax/minwage_tx.pdf

assistance and substandard services. Given this climate, many janitors welcomed Justice for Janitors organizers and a few volunteered to help win union recognition by lobbying fellow janitors.

SEIU and Immigrants Rights

While all janitors were eager to improve their pay and working conditions, many had additional concerns about how the campaign might impact undocumented workers. Even during the strike phase, only about one third (an estimated 1,700 of 5000) of eligible janitors joined picket lines, despite Justice for Janitors' efforts to compensate them for lost wages through its strike fund (*Houston Chronicle* 2006). *Pulso Latino*,³ the Spanish-language affiliate of the *Houston Chronicle*, reported that undocumented workers were concerned that if the Justice for Janitors campaign succeeded in raising wages, cleaning contractors would shift to hiring documented workers. For these workers, immigrants' rights and efforts to organize with SEIU are inseparable interests. Undocumented status forced many of them into the custodial labor market in the first place. Without significant improvements in immigrants' rights, the most vulnerable workers (and their families) will be unable to reap the benefits from a hard fought campaign. It is a difficult tension for the majority of Houston janitors. SEIU is well aware of this tension. A respondent who assisted the failed 1986 campaign commented on the importance of centering the immigrant experience in organizing campaigns:

³ *Pulso Latino* had far superior coverage of the janitors' perspectives of the campaign, including obtaining rare interviews with undocumented workers. Undocumented immigrants' preference for the Spanish-language paper and the trust implied in that choice are indicative of the racialized nature of the campaign. My status as a monolingual English speaker limited my access to this portion of the janitors. I rely on Google.com's automatic webpage translations to read *Pulso Latino* and refrain from using direct quotes due to the translations' rough quality.

I think a lot of mistakes were made by the labor movement initially because they would treat all Spanish-speakers equally. And they would always think that somebody who spoke Spanish was enough...[M]ost of their organizers were either non-Spanish speakers and if they spoke Spanish, they tended to be third or fourth generation. They were far removed from the immigrant experience...[Now] many of them are immigrants. Or, like [name of Justice for Janitors organizer], are close to the immigrant movement. And have experiences [in the immigrant rights movement].

SEIU learned from the 1986 campaign and many others that employing recent immigrants and first generation Latina organizers was necessary for understanding workers and gaining their trust. That communication is a two-way street. The strategic decision to employ immigrants and people close to the immigrant experience provides a well-placed voice for immigrants within the union itself. As evidenced by their presence at immigrants rights marches, many organizers supported immigrants rights (with more than just official statements) and made immigrants' interests known.

The Failed 1986 Campaign

SEIU has been seeking opportunities to organize in the South for several decades. In 1985-1986, SEIU attempted to organize workers in several buildings in one of Houston's many business centers.⁴ Then, as now, the janitors were almost all Latinas from various Latin American countries. Salvadorans, Mexicans, and Guatemalans represented the largest ethnic groups. These workers were employed by ABM (American Building Maintenance Industries), which would later be the largest company targeted in the 2006 campaign. Using many of the mobilization techniques the union would employ 20 years later, organizers began lobbying janitors to join the union. The

⁴ As mentioned earlier, Houston is an unplanned city. Consequently, it does not have a singular "downtown." Instead, development has occurred around approximately five major business centers. The 1986 campaign centered on one of those districts.

union formed an interracial coalition of community organizations, religious groups (including holding meetings in an African American church), legal support, and moderate support from local politicians. On the date set by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), janitors in four buildings voted to join the union.

Consistent with the pattern of the 2006 campaign, after winning official recognition, the union began negotiating a first contract with ABM while training workers in social action techniques and ways to resist repression. The campaign appeared to be progressing smoothly for the first several weeks after the union won legal recognition. Some organizers were surprised, however, when a little over a month into negotiations, ABM colluded with the federal government to launch a massive repression campaign:

Well, probably during that week, the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Services) raided the only buildings that had voted union. This company had 69 contracts in the downtown area. So they only raided the two that voted union... [T]he leader, a Salvadorian, as he was being put into the wagon—being taken to the facility—was told by the agents, “Union in your country, not in this country.” So there was an obvious union-busting tactic by the INS. There were only 30 workers who basically decided—who actually stuck to the plan in terms of the training. The majority were deported immediately, primarily to Mexico.

Because many of the janitors were mothers and, in many cases, the only breadwinners for their families, the massive deportation was extremely difficult for immigrant workers’ families and the larger community:

[W]e had women who worked in the buildings who left their children with babysitters. [NAME of Catholic clergy], we went to talk with him, and they organized a food bank for the families. The Central [American] community did get together a couple of times to march.

Organizers continued to attend to the special needs of these immigrant families. One of the lawyers for the campaign assembled a team of attorneys who were able to gain citizenship rights for most of the workers who were still detained by the INS.

As stated above, the 1986 campaign revealed a great deal about the importance of remembering the unique perspectives and interests immigrants have during organizing campaigns. Discussing the 2006 strike, a veteran of the 1986 movement and coalition partner in the 2006 campaign continued to recognize the link between janitors' interests as immigrants and low-wage workers:

I share with some people the concern of this large bureaucratic structure that is organizing the process of organizing the community, but I think you can't lose sight of the fact that it is the community that is valuable. You can't lose sight of the fact that the decision to go on strike Saturday was made by hundreds of immigrant workers. So even if you don't support the large bureaucratic structure that is putting it together, you have to respect the immigrant workers who are going to *their* lives on the line.

This respondent's consistent reference to the janitors as "immigrant workers" demonstrates recognition of the janitors as whole people with a range of interests, including interests in immigrants rights issues that extend beyond the limited goals of the SEIU. The respondent's focus on "the community" as valuable, rather than referring only to the people's role as laborers and their relationship to the union, further illustrates the 1986 campaign's focus on immigrant workers' needs rather than the International's organizational interests.

The Successful 2006 Campaign

The 2006 Justice for Janitors campaign actually began in 2004. SEIU leaders, including Eliseo Medina and Andrew Stern, discussed their desire to extend the union

into the South. Declining union membership and the exportation of jobs from the Midwest conditioned the transition. SEIU leadership selected Houston as its target site because the city had a large Hispanic population, several faithful SEIU allies (including TMO and ACORN), and had explosive potential. The symbolism of organizing undocumented workers in Texas could catapult SEIU into other industries, such as city workers and security guards.⁵ In advance of the campaign, SEIU hired a single organizer to make connections for the union and strengthen ties. The organizer found some resistance from other unions and the general Houston business community, but she did not discourage the union leadership from moving forward. That is not to say resistance from the Houston business community was not substantial; this group, after all, had already demonstrated a willingness to literally deport workers before recognizing unionization. In fact, organizers said Houston had a resistance, unique to itself. In addition to the usual suppression tactics—changing janitors’ working conditions, lying to workers about the union’s interests, targeting activist janitors for dismissal, and threats of deportation—the Houston business community could count on a peculiar and strong anti-activist sentiment amongst its members and Houston at large.

SEIU’s next step was a long process of educating janitors about the union by hiring organizers and recruiting volunteers to meet janitors outside downtown high-rises after their shifts. Eventually, SEIU determined which issues were most salient to the

⁵ In addition to organizing janitors, SEIU has successfully unionized a host of security workers in other states and could have done the same in Houston. However, union leadership, including Medina, chose to organize Latina janitors rather than the primarily African American male security guards in Houston. This early decision is indicative of the impact white racism has on interracial coalitions and this campaign in particular. The decision also foreshadows the racial sacrificing that was key to winning longer hours, higher wages, and vacation pay at the conclusion of the campaign.

janitors by having them fill out surveys asking if wages or healthcare or childcare was the most significant issue. Over nearly a year, Justice for Janitors gathered signatures before finally gaining approval to launch the recognition campaign.

On April 30, 2005, Justice for Janitors held a major conference in the George R. Brown convention center in Houston. Having gathered support from local priests and clergy, city councilmen, U.S. Congresspersons, and major SMOs in Houston, Justice for Janitors held a successful rally. For the next six months, the union continued to work for recognition until finally achieving it in November of 2005. During that time, janitors who supported the movement faced much resistance from supervisors. Twenty-five of the 35 janitors who participated in the opening strike had left their jobs within a year's time. Nevertheless, the union marshaled national support through sympathy strikes in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and multiple other cities. It also raised a considerable strike fund and supported the one third of the more than 5,300 janitors covered by the first contract during the 2006 strike for a first contract. The union employed disruptive tactics including sit-ins that blocked downtown traffic and interrupted corporate meetings to drive businesses to the bargaining table. On November 21, 2006, the five largest cleaning contractors in Houston offered a first contract to the union, ensuring higher wages and healthcare opportunities for Houston's janitors. Under the terms of the contract, unionized janitors' salaries will increase from \$5.30 to \$7.75 per hour over a two year period. Additionally, employers agreed to offer janitors longer hours, paid holidays, vacation time, and healthcare in 2009. Having achieved their stated goals, the union claimed an unmitigated victory for all its janitors.

Divergent Interests – The International and Immigration Rights

Although some of the 1986 organizers also served in the 2006 campaign, current SEIU leadership does not make connections between janitors' economic and immigrant rights interests. Comments by Eliseo Medina (International Vice President of SEIU) on a PBS online special featuring the Justice for Janitors campaign in Houston are illustrative of the International's view of janitors and their interests:

We don't ask [about legal status] because it doesn't matter to us whether they are documented or undocumented because as far as we can tell, whether they are US citizens, legal permanent residents, or undocumented, they are all making the same low-wages.

Despite the attempt to frame it as a focus on equality, the International's willful ignorance of individuals' legal status does not eliminate the obvious fact that most of the janitors are undocumented. It does, however, serve several key purposes for SEIU. First, it served to undermine cleaning companies' tactic of scaring the janitors by telling them that union organizers were actually Homeland Security agents looking for undocumented immigrants.⁶ Secondly, remaining ignorant of individuals' status allowed SEIU to focus on wage and healthcare issues, rather than an unwinnable fight over immigration rights.

However, immigrant workers do not have the luxury of ignoring their immigrant status when it is politically inconvenient. Their economic and social interests are intimately tied to immigrants rights, as is their likelihood of benefiting from union contracts over the long-term. Although the janitors themselves may be unaware of the

⁶ This tactic is not likely a reference to the 1986 raid. Few people remember the event and veterans of the campaign do not speak of it in front of janitors for obvious reasons.

1986 deportation, SEIU leadership is well-aware of past campaigns. Pretending immigrants' legal and racial status is irrelevant is to segment their humanity and subject undocumented janitors to high levels of repression. It is important to note that the janitors would not be subject to deportation as a threat if they were white or, obviously, documented. The threats are clearly dependent upon janitors' racial and legal status. The international cannot be unaware of the role race and legal status play in the threat. Likewise, they cannot be ignorant of janitors' interests in citizenship rights.

Nevertheless, in their rhetoric, national SEIU leaders continue to place the interests of the International above the interests of the janitors. Again, Medina's comments are illustrative:

We need to make sure that immigrants become a part of our struggle. And I think that when we do that, we're going to have a stronger, healthier labor movement... The janitors have said that they want to be able to establish a minimum wage of \$8.50 as a standard. They want to be able to have health insurance as a standard. They want to be able to have a full-time job so they don't have to work 2 and 3 different jobs in order to make ends meet. (PBS – Now; October 27, 2006).

Notice the International's orientation toward the workers, making immigrants part of the *union's* struggle rather than the union becoming part of the janitors' struggle for dignity and fairness. Clearly the union's organizational goals are paramount in minds of SEIU's top leaders. In fact, union goals are so central to union leaders' focus that they regularly present the union's stated goals as the whole of janitors' interests.⁷ Although janitors

⁷ The Houston Justice for Janitors website (houstonjanitors.org), similar to Medina's comments, frequently represented the campaign's stated goals as janitors' goals. The website did not contain, however, information directly supporting immigrants rights, relative to the janitors the union represented.

clearly are interested in wage increases, healthcare, and longer hours, these statements reflect union framing more than the sum of janitors' interests.⁸

Race Sacrificing – SEIU, the Federal Government, and Immigration

The two Justice for Janitors campaigns in Houston, Texas, provide scholars with the rare opportunity to study identical phenomena (a Justice for Janitors organizing campaign) with divergent outcomes under similar conditions. The similarities between campaigns are striking and significant. Obviously the fact that the same organization organized both campaigns in the same location, even using some of the same union employees, is helpful for comparing the cases. Additionally, both campaigns took place during the second terms of pro-business, second-term Republican presidents—Reagan and Bush—in midterm election years in which Republicans lost dozens of seats. The timing is not coincidental. Several months before the strike began, a regional director for the 2006 campaign told me that Justice for Janitors wanted to conduct the strike during election season to maximize support. Other campaigns have also taken advantage of election years (Rudy 2004). The strategic timing ensured SEIU similar political opportunities in each campaign.

Importantly, both campaigns occurred when immigration reform was a major political issue. In 1986, President Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), granting amnesty to an estimated 2.7 million undocumented immigrants (Laham 2000). To date, President Bush has been unable to pass immigration legislation,

⁸ In fairness, the union did pole workers during process of winning recognition and ask which issues were most important to janitors. Janitors' responses were tallied and their top two interests—wage increases and healthcare—became the featured issues. The pole, however, was not open-ended; janitors chose from five options, none of which were immigrants rights. The pole, therefore, precluded issues that SEIU did not pre-approve, some of which are central to the immigrant workers' lives.

but he has publicly stated support for comprehensive immigration reform, including a guest-worker program (White House Press Release). Both policies have been highly criticized as favoring big business.

The similarities of both campaigns—organizational consistency, Republican presidents in years with rising Democratic support, the importance of immigration reform in both contexts—lead social movement scholars who employ the political opportunities model to ask why campaigns that occurred under similar circumstances concluded with completely opposite results. Bell's (2004) interest convergence theory provides a possible explanation.

Social movement scholars may first attempt to attribute the differential campaign outcomes to the growth of the Latino community's political power over the past two decades. The Latino community has climbed from 22.4 million in 1990 to 41.9 million in 2005 (U.S. Census), representing the fastest growing segment of voters. Latinos' numerical growth and increased political power, however, do not account for the different outcomes of Justice for Janitors campaigns in Houston. First, if political opportunities were sufficient in 1986 for the advocates of Latino immigrants to win amnesty for millions of undocumented workers, would not those opportunities also be sufficient for protecting a few hundred from deportation? Secondly, the political process model primarily discusses political opportunities with regard to movement emergence and the aggrieved population developing a sense that an opportunity exists to win gains through collective action. In both cases, movement emergence did occur, as janitors voted to be represented by SEIU. Therefore, the growth in Latino's population and

political strength does not explain the divergent outcomes of the 1986 and 2006 campaigns.

Scholars who emphasize the importance of disruptive tactics (Bronfenbrenner and Juravich 1998; Voss and Sherman 2000) might point to unions' return to direct action as a possible explanation. Tactical explanations are also inadequate because ABM and the INS conducted the raids only a month after janitors won union recognition. Despite SEIU's revitalization, the 2006 campaign waited nearly six months before launching a strike to gain a first contract and engaging in disruptive tactics. Strong anti-immigrant sentiments among whites and the business community's knowledge of unions' revitalized campaign style suggest that severe repression, such as deportation, was at least as tempting an option for big business and the government in 2006 as it was in 1986.

Interest convergence theory does, however, provide a framework for explaining the differential outcomes. Interest convergence theory states that powerful factions of whites settle disputes between them by sacrificing the interests of people of color. The rejuvenation of the labor movement has created a significant conflict between white capitalists and white labor leaders. Historically, unions rejected proposed partnerships with African American laborers. Although big labor is no longer segregationist, even officially supporting immigrants rights, its leadership is disproportionately white.

This is true for Justice for Janitors and the SEIU as well, which had a white campaign director and mostly white leadership at the top levels of the International. One

white organizer in the 2006 campaign noted the continuing effects of historical segregation in the labor movement:

We are pretty integrated in the office, but, yes, the director is white and so are most of the leaders [at the International level]. I think that's because of how the union started in Chicago with a lot of Polish workers. So, like, [name of high-level leader], their parents were union so [that person] grew up in labor all their life, and they have tons of experience. Once some of the new people [organizers of color] get experience, I would expect the leadership to change in 10 or 15 years. If it doesn't, that would mean there is a problem.

That problem may already be existent. Several organizers of color expressed frustration with the racial characteristics of the leadership hierarchy, noting that they had more experience than some of the white leaders. In the course of researching the campaign, I discovered that at least one Latina organizer was hired as a campaign director by another organization. This suggests that some of SEIU's people of color are qualified to hold upper leadership positions currently held by whites.

The disproportionate number of whites in leadership is important because it creates a dynamic in which white business and government officials are negotiating with white union leaders who do not consider the racialized interests of their workers and place the International's interests above those of the janitors.⁹ These white spaces create opportunities for whites to adhere to race-sacrificing "silent covenants" (Bell 2004) that would not exist if racially sensitive people of color who are close to the immigrant experience were in leadership positions.

⁹ Ironically, but predictably, organizers regularly report that janitors felt more comfortable with white leadership. Organizers cited a belief among janitors that since whites hold the economic and political power in the US, whites would be more effective when representing janitors' interests.

SEIU actions concerning immigrants rights indicate that the leadership ensured a positive outcome to the 2006 campaign by sacrificing janitors' interests to achieve organizational interests. Early SEIU actions signified distance between the union and local immigrant communities and foreshadowed the union's later willingness to sacrifice janitors' interest in obtaining citizenship. SEIU created tension in the coalition of community supporters by donating \$50,000 to The Metropolitan Organization, which is a network of religious groups, without giving any financial support to groups who dealt closely with the immigrant community:

[T]here was a conflict when money was put into The Metropolitan Organization, which didn't even have a Spanish-speaking organizer on staff...Some of the initial meetings that were had where they would come after they received that money and they didn't even know what the issues were in the immigrant community. So that established a tension. ...they had much more of an interest in getting church congregations to support them and the Church as an institution as opposed to those of us who worked in immigrant communities for a long time.

According to one coalition partner, local conflicts, such as the funding incident, reflected tensions at the national level between SEIU's upper leadership and immigrant rights groups:

So there was this process and this tension continued with many of the groups locally and on the national level at many turns during this period. And I think [it] continues to because of the "We Are America" campaign that exists today, and SEIU is part of and was instrumental in putting together on a national level, I know that many immigrants rights groups, like one of the ones I belong to, we did not agree with that position or the tactical response to the Senate Bill, but saw SEIU as sort of the sponsoring entity.

The "We Are America Alliance" is a national coalition of major groups, including the SEIU, that supports a proposal for national immigration. Officially, the group supports a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, but immigrants

rights groups have opposed the “We Are America” plan because it features a guest-worker program. Under the plan, immigrants would have to work in low-wage jobs for several years, without civil rights, such as voting, and would not be guaranteed citizenship at the conclusion of the “guest” period.

The now defunct plan represented an obvious potential boon to large corporations who could continue to employ immigrants, but without fear of fines for hiring undocumented workers. Benefits to SEIU are less obvious. An immigrants rights activist, who was present during Senate deliberations with immigrants rights groups and labor unions at the height of mass mobilizations for immigrants rights, detailed SEIU’s interest in creating a guest-worker program:

[T]he corporations had been meeting with SEIU, had been meeting with other unions, and they [the unions] were looking to take the contracts of a guest-worker program. We found out later that it was SEIU, specifically Eliseo Medina (International Executive Vice President of SEIU)...He was the one that worked very hard for S. 2611 to pass, and with the help of the Latino Caucus, under the direction of Luis Gutierrez (U.S. Rep. D-Ill 4th), who is a Congressman in Chicago, Il.

Senate Bill 2611 offered SEIU a tremendous opportunity to cement its position in the South and greatly increase its influence by organizing immigrants in the guest-worker program. The program represented a clear conflict of interest between organizational goals and the interests of janitors. As a coalition partner stated:

SEIU is the largest union in the nation. It is a powerful institution that knows and understands power relations *vis-à-vis* its interests. Where [community organization] understands it *vis-à-vis* the immigrant community and its relationships of those issues that particularly are considered the primary issues, which is the legalization question.

SEIU leadership is well aware that for most of the janitors it represents, gaining full citizenship rights is most important goal, without which joining the union may do them little good. Nevertheless, when faced with a choice between supporting janitors' most fundamental needs and forwarding organizational interests, the union aggressively worked to improve its position at the expense of most of its Houston membership and nearly 12 million undocumented immigrants nationwide.

Despite the union's strategic use of a Latino executive to conduct negotiations, its largely white leadership was instrumental in guaranteeing that the Houston campaign, on which so much of the union's reputation depended, would be successful. Union decisions to abandon undocumented janitors' chief interest in gaining permanent legal status and promote the union's expansionist goals is a clear example of major interests sacrificing the interests of people of color to settle a dispute between powerful white factions. In a hostile political climate in which raids against undocumented immigrants continue, union officials were able to guarantee federal neutrality in 2006 by uniting the International's interests with those of white elites and sacrificing people of color's interests in the process.

Conclusion

The goal of this research is not to criticize SEIU's leadership or accuse them of betraying the people they represent. I am quite convinced that the individuals at that level are honestly attempting to improve living and working conditions for all people working in the United States, especially those low-wage workers whom the union represents. Having spent some time with organizers at the local in Houston, I can say

with absolute certainty that each of them is completely committed to the best interests of the janitors. Local organizers work tirelessly and make tremendous sacrifices to win good contracts for previously powerless workers. All of them have my greatest admiration and respect.

This paper is intended, however, to shed light on the importance of race to social movement emergence and outcomes. My findings are consistent with Derrick Bell's interest convergence theory. Having successfully mobilized janitors for change, SEIU's initial campaign to organize Houston's janitors ended in repression by the federal government because SEIU was unable to demonstrate a harmony between union interests and those of whites in policy-making positions. White elites took advantage of janitors' racial and legal status and deported the workers, separating families and intimidating the immigrant community in the process. SEIU was able to achieve movement success in 2006 by sacrificing the racialized interests of Latina janitors and uniting union interests with white elites' desire for guest-worker programs that would greatly benefit the business community.

Race has not been sufficiently considered in social movement literature. The color-blind era represents a great challenge to the effort to connect social movement and race theory. Scholars will have to avoid the temptation to ignore the racialized nature of groups' decisions and pretend that the era of racial equality has already arrived. It has not. Scholars will also need to resist the tendency to accept the WHOM ("We have one minority") defense as a cover for organizations' white leadership structures and racially problematic decision making. Developing an accurate body of knowledge concerning

social movements will require a constant focus on the penetrating impact of ideological and structural racism on every aspect of social movements' development, trajectory, and outcomes.

Applying this general point to current social movement literature, the fact that many of the organizers in the 1986 campaign had strong ties to community organizations that served immigrant populations was critical to keeping immigrants' interests at the center of the campaign. Most of the 2006 campaign organizers were not indigenous to Houston's immigrant communities. Therefore, although the practice of bringing veteran organizers from outside the local union is important for generating direct action campaigns and increasing the likelihood of winning contract negotiations (Voss and Sherman 2000), it may also facilitate race-sacrificing silent covenants that harm the communities social movements claim to be serving. Perhaps the increase in successful campaigns is partially due to exogenous leaders' willingness to recognize silent covenants with white elites, as well as the use of noninstitutional tactics. Future research should consider this possibility.

Additionally, I hope this work will be of some assistance to minority and immigrant communities as they search for effective strategies for improving their communities. Indigenous community organizations and leaders have long expressed concern about the power of large, bureaucratic organizations to dominate grassroots movements and take advantage of the people's efforts without significantly advancing the community's interests. My findings suggest this is a legitimate concern. Large organizations have the power to subtly coopt movements by effectively eliminating

community goals from public discussions, replacing community interests with organizational interests in the mass media. The more important a particular social movement campaign is to the exogenous organization, the more incentive exists to hijack the movement.

It is important that movement activists and participants seriously consider how racism impacts movements and the potential for elite whites to engage in race-sacrificing as a means for ending social movements. People of color can protect themselves against manipulation and race-sacrificing covenants by insisting that indigenous leaders hold structural authority in exogenous organizations, which these leaders can use to interrupt negotiations that are based on sacrificing the [unstated] racialized interests of represented communities. Additionally, people of color can take advantage of insights from interest convergence theory by either strategically using tactics that force white elites and policy makers to operate in people of color's interests or crafting their requests to conform to whites' core interests, such as capital accumulation and national security.

In the short term, it is essential that people of color who are indigenous to the aggrieved community hold leadership positions because only they possess both a white racial frame and a racial counter frame, with which to interpret events and from which to select strategies. Although many Americans laude advances in race relations and often consider the structural work complete (Bonilla-Silva 2003), the gap between whites and people of color remains. That distance remains in terms of access to political, economic, and social resources, and it remains in terms of how each community sees the world. The colorblind discourse of the post-Civil Rights Movement masks the fact that whites

never fully recognized and internalized the Black perspective on white racism. Consequently, nearly all whites still lack an understanding of the systemic nature of racism in the United States. Most whites do not understand how racism shapes their own understandings of phenomena and dictates which actions are appropriate remedies. For this reason, people of color must lead movements and work hard to constantly employ a resistance frame throughout the movement. The connection between frames and actions is critical to all movements, as chapter four explains.

CHAPTER IV
HIDING UNDER MOTHER'S SKIRT: FRAMING THE 2006
CAMPAIGN

It is difficult to overstate the importance of cognitive frames to many social processes, especially social movements. Frames are the most fundamental tools people use to make meaning of the world around them and their lives in general. Goffman defines frames as “schemata of interpretation” which individuals use “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” occurrences in their life space (1974:21, quoted in Snow et al. 1986). Frames help individuals determine which observations are important, what relationships exist between observations, and what meanings to ascribe to said observations and relationships. Consequently, social movement organizers spend much time and energy studying and crafting particular frames for key constituencies’ consumption.

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and its subsidiary, Justice for Janitors, have successfully adopted “social justice” as their primary frame for numerous campaigns in the United States over the past fifteen years (Milkman 2006). In this thesis, I discuss SEIU’s uses of the social justice frame when addressing different audiences. Justice for Janitors organizers skillfully used the social justice frame in its broadest conceptualization for coalition development, but chose to emphasize motherhood and family frame, one of the subordinate themes within social justice, when addressing audiences outside the activist community. After briefly discussing SEIU’s coalition building process, I devote most attention to the union’s use of

motherhood/family as a frame in the artistic works the movement produced to reach the larger society.

Family as Primary Subordinate Frame

Social justice served SEIU well as an umbrella frame for coalition building with community organizations, but the union employed a more nuanced strategy in communiqués designed to frame the movement for the non-activist community. Although the union did occasionally refer to the social justice master frame, most public statements from campaign leaders did not explicitly reference the social justice frame. Instead, most publications contained two or more of the sub-frames (motherhood/family, labor, race/immigration, religion) and related them to one another. In these framing opportunities, rather than explaining union goals in terms of the pursuit of social justice, goals were justified by relating sub-frames to themselves. Most often this cross justification involved a subordinate frame, such as labor, gaining legitimacy through its relationship to the motherhood/family sub-frame.

This use of the motherhood/family frame is particularly interesting, given that motherhood/family is the one subordinate frame without a major coalescing organization specifically dedicated to it. SEIU is obviously labor focused. TMO and ACORN are primarily concerned with spiritual and working class issues, respectively. BlackDems and CRECEN are dedicated to racial and immigrant justice, but no single organization is primarily concerned with family issues. Yet, organizers employed motherhood/family as the primary subordinate frame. This reality, of course, begs the question: why? What

utility does the motherhood/family frame have *vis-a-vis* the broader social justice frame, or rival subordinate frames?

Data from independent supporters and antagonists in Houston indicate that SEIU's emphasis on families produced favorable attitudes among many citizens and mitigated criticisms from opponents to a greater extent than could rival subordinate frames. In the following discussion, I first detail Justice for Janitors' use of the motherhood frame in communiqués with non-activist communities. Through protest art, YouTube videos, and information on the Houston Justice for Janitors webpage, campaign organizers forwarded a particular construction of motherhood and family, which they used to generate popular support for the unionization drive. I conclude with a discussion of the implications SEIU's use of motherhood and family as a primary subordinate frame had on the campaign and the utility of the frame.

Protest Art

The importance of art¹⁰ in social movements is undeniable, yet understudied (see Adams 2002; Jasper 1997; Sanger 1997; Eyerman and Jamison 1998). Art serves many critical functions in social movements, including framing grievances, mobilizing resources, and even representing the movement itself (Adams 2002). Art is an ideal tool for these purposes because it can convey information and engage a dialogue of emotion between the SMO and external publics. In the era of the Internet, in which the general public can selectively access websites and news information about an SMO at any time,

¹⁰ Adams defines art as “representations of reality or an idea, created with a consideration of aesthetic conventions. It includes music, the plastic arts, theatre, and art posters” (2002: 21). I share this definition, noting that SEIU's YouTube videos are professionally produced “with a consideration of aesthetic conventions” and in many ways represent a new form of public theatre.

visual arts' power to deliver messages and emotion without relying on the presence of an SMO member is particularly useful and cost-effective.

Much of SEIU's framing activity revolved around visual displays on the Houston Justice for Janitors website and at public events. These artistic expressions were essential to the framing process because they effectively dramatized janitors' experiences as obviously problematic and in need of immediate redress. Unlike communiqués primarily designed to build the coalition of community organizations, Justice for Janitors art was marketed primarily to the general public. The social justice frame was easily accessible to established organizations because these organizations had previous knowledge and critical perspectives on key issues, such as the relationships between race, labor, and healthcare. The general public did not have the same knowledge. Consequently, SEIU had to draw on different collective understandings to reach unorganized audiences. To accomplish this task, the union chose to emphasize the motherhood/family frame and use art as the primary medium to dialogue with the public. Similar to the coalition building process, the union did not attempt to reeducate general public. Instead, SEIU conceded the dominant ideology concerning motherhood and portrayed the janitors as model mothers. In so doing, the union was able to center children as the primary victims of capitalists' abuses and the ultimate beneficiaries of successful unionization of janitor-mothers. An unstated consequence, however, is that these framing choices reinforce white supremacy by establishing white ideals as normative standards.

Motherhood/Family in Featured Image

Whether one happens to drive by a protest event, surfs the janitors' homepage, or walks into campaign headquarters, the first image one sees is the featured image of the Justice for Janitors campaign. (Figure 1 is the featured image as it appeared on the Justice for Janitors website: houstonjanitors.org.) This painting was recreated on t-shirts janitors and supporters wore at public events; it hangs as a large mural in the Houston Justice for Janitors headquarters, and is prominently displayed on the Houston janitors' website. For many people, this featured image of the Houston campaign is the basis for their first impression of the campaign. As such, it is very important to the union's framing process and the overall trajectory of the campaign.



Figure 1: Featured Image of 2006 Houston Justice for Janitors Campaign

The painting, created by Los Angeles-based artist Irene Carranza specifically for the Houston campaign, highlights all of the major themes of the Justice for Janitors campaign. The central figure is a young, presumably Latina, mother with a blank look and eyes drifting off to the left, carrying her infant child. Over the mother's left shoulder are a Catholic priest and uniformed Latina janitor, both standing tall with

determined looks on their faces. In the distant background, just over the mother's right shoulder, is the Houston skyline sitting atop a banner, which reads "Health Care for all" and features a medical doctor examining his patient. Finally, a purple banner, reading "justice" in both Spanish and English, is draped on the young mother's immediate right.

All of the union's major frames—social justice, labor, race, family, religion—are clearly represented in the piece. However, the relationship between these frames is significantly altered. The social justice frame has ceded its umbrella status to motherhood/family. The mother and child dominate the foreground, and all remaining figures (i.e. janitor, priest, doctor, and pennant) stand in support of the young family. Although the word "justice" appears clearly, the only explicit reference to a broad push for complete social justice (as opposed to justice exclusively for janitors) is the "Healthcare for all" banner, which is relegated to the distant background.

SEIU is careful, however, to construct the newly dominant motherhood/family frame much more clearly than its broad social justice successor. In the image, the mother is presented as a "total mother" (Wolf 2007) who has no interests or activity beyond that of caring for her baby. Unlike all other people in the painting, the mother is not wearing a uniform that links her to some sort of income-earning enterprise. Though most observers assume the featured mother is a janitor, she is not dressed as a one. Instead she is clad in a comfortable off white top, best suited for caring for her child, presumably at home. Even within the mother/child dyad, the child's bright white linen wrap draws the eye to the infant, defining the child as the center of attention and the mother as secondary. The mother's clasped hands and preoccupation with physically

supporting the infant underscore the helplessness of the young family and seemingly necessitate intervention by the priest, doctor, and janitor on behalf of the powerless mother and child.

This representation of motherhood is in-keeping with the dominant image of motherhood in the larger society. The woman ceases to be an individual, sinking into the rather invisible half of a romanticized mother/child dyad in which the mother makes every imaginable sacrifice to ensure an optimal future for her child (Stabile 1992; Lupton 1999; Wolf 2007). This traditional representation diffuses negative stereotypes of hypersexual Latinas (Feagin 2006) and enables SEIU to play on observers' more positive emotions.

In the complete version of the ideal nuclear family, a breadwinning husband/father provides both sustenance and protection for the dependent and completely vulnerable mother and child. The SEIU depiction, however, is devoid of a protective husband, leaving viewers with a great deal of sympathy for the pure and vulnerable mother and child. The public's emotions are further tapped by the artist's skillful use of the Madonna image and other religious connotations to call forth recollections of the Virgin Mary and infant Christ, a representation that taps powerful religious sentiments in Catholic and Protestant communities. The parallel further amplifies the innocence and worth of the mother and child and shames onlookers who, like the innkeeper, fail to aid the young Christ.

Taken in whole, the painting defines Justice for Janitors as a broad movement in support of vulnerable young mothers and infant children, providing powerful religious

and emotional motives for independent citizens to lend support. Lost in all of this, however, is the fact that Justice for Janitors is fundamentally a labor movement organizing working janitors, relatively few of whom are unsupported mothers of infants. To paraphrase Rudy (2004), it's called Justice for Janitors, not "Money for Mothers" or "Income for Infants." In the process of defining SEIU as a defender of helpless mothers and children, the union effectively redefined janitors as stay-at-home mothers. Ironically, if the janitors were ever able to live out that middle-class construction, they would be neither financially nor occupationally in need of a service employees' union.

Redefining janitors may be a calculated decision designed to ensure external public support, however, the representation is not without negative consequences. In social movements, art communicates messages to movement participants, as well as potential participants (Sanger 1997). This was clearly the case with one former Justice for Janitors organizer, who criticized the painting's implicit message about janitors' efficacy:

This campaign is just different from other campaigns. I mean in other cities, the janitors had control. They were meeting with each other after work, talking in shops and stuff like that—making plans and getting other workers involved. Now, it's very like the janitors don't do as much. It's not a janitor-led thing. Even, just look at that picture. [Describes featured image.] She looks all weak and helpless, but that's not how janitors are.

This organizer suggests the image's presentation of janitors as "weak and helpless" is indicative of a problematic power differential within the campaign. In the former organizer's assessment, SEIU leadership conceives of, and thus presents, Houston janitors as impotent. This conceptualization justifies concentrating a greater amount of control in union organizers hands rather than with janitors. In turn, Houston

janitors, being inexperienced with unionization efforts and unsure of their roles, follow the union's lead and do not take unilateral steps to form the union. As such, the featured image of the 2006 Justice for Janitors campaign both reflects SEIU leadership's beliefs about workers and impacts workers' actions within the campaign.

YouTube – Healthcare and Motherhood

The painting is unquestionably the primary visual representation of the campaign, but for those whose interests are piqued by SEIU's website and campaign, the union constructed YouTube videos that further dramatize the central issues of the Justice for Janitors campaign. Each video is a vignette of a particular janitor, all but one of whom is female. The videos are an excellent source of data on SEIU's framing techniques because, like the painting, they are professionally constructed images targeted to the larger society and designed to define the campaign and elicit popular support. Like the featured painting, the YouTube videos emphasize motherhood as the dominant frame, legitimating all goals and protest activities by centering janitor-mothers and children as the primary beneficiaries of unionization.

Ercilia Sandoval, a janitor with GCA, became "the face of the Justice for Janitors campaign" in Houston. This was due both to her tireless dedication to the unionization effort and her unfortunate diagnosis of breast cancer shortly after the union gained legal recognition. Despite the obvious difficulties the cancer caused, Sandoval and SEIU tried to turn the situation into a positive by using Sandoval's condition to highlight the need for janitors to gain access to health insurance in their first contract. Organizers featured Sandoval nearly every chance they could get. (Figure 2 is the most frequent

representation of Sandoval on the Justice for Janitors website: houstonjanitors.org.) The union successfully nominated Sandoval as a finalist for *Glamour Magazine's* "Woman of the Year." She was also a speaker at numerous public events and was chosen to represent the janitors on the negotiation team for a first contract.



Figure 2: Sandoval and Family

In addition to these and other means for attracting attention to Sandoval's story, SEIU featured her in a YouTube video, which has been viewed by more than 6,000 people (YouTube 2006a). The video opens with Sandoval brushing her youngest daughter's hair. Sandoval immediately begins discussing janitors' need for health insurance, claiming "Right now, if I had health insurance, I wouldn't have to be going through what I'm going through." She continues, detailing her condition and hospitals' refusal to treat her because she did not have health insurance. That discussion is followed by Sandoval slowly walking the audience through the process of telling her two daughters (approximately five and eight years old) about the diagnosis, emphasizing the emotional pain both she and her daughters continue to experience as a result of the cancer. Tying her story back to the unionization drive, the video cuts to Sandoval

speaking at a rally reading a statement about her hopes for a contract with health insurance. Union producers conclude the spot with a short epilogue stating that the temporary state health insurance Sandoval was able to secure was set to run out long before her treatments were concluded. At the time of this writing, the Houston Justice for Janitors website had a request for supporters to donate money to cover Sandoval's medical expenses.

This extremely touching vignette is extraordinary in terms of particular content, but typical of SEIU's framing techniques in their YouTube productions. Each video focuses on a particular worker grievance, in this case, janitors' push for employer healthcare. Producers dramatize the issue, in part by emphasizing the janitors' motherhood status and the union's positive impact on children. In the process, the videos make motherhood the primary frame, redefining janitors as primarily mothers rather than workers and centering children as the union's chief beneficiaries.

In the Sandoval vignette, the emphasis on Sandoval as a mother is manifest throughout the video. Despite claiming herself as a current employee of GCA Services Group, Sandoval is never seen at work or preparing for work. Instead, she is consistently pictured attending to her young daughters, mostly at a park and at SEIU protest events. The girls are so central to the vignette that in one scene, the girls are pictured at a rally holding an SEIU poster and their mother is only partially in the frame. In another scene, the girls are playing in a park fountain. The camera slowly pans away from the girls to Sandoval, watching lovingly from the side. In both cases, "mother" is clearly secondary to child, demonstrating Sandoval's dedication to the "total

motherhood” construction of her status as a mother and legitimating her as a sympathetic figure.

The constant visual inclusion of the children serves as a context for all other themes Sandoval discusses in her vignette. Even as much of the voice over focuses on the importance of health insurance and corporations’ moral obligation to provide it, the visual backdrop of Sandoval with her family indicates that family values, rather than social justice, legitimates SEIU’s push for healthcare in the first contract in terms of family values. At another point, Sandoval briefly invokes the justice frame, “We’re fighting for the union – with SEIU. We’re going to show these giant companies there are many of us poor people but we are powerful. It’s a huge injustice they’re doing to all of us.” However, this statement is made precisely at the moment when Sandoval’s daughters are on pictured at a protest and Sandoval is only partially in the frame. The combination of the collective “we” language in the voice over and the image of the protesting girls equates the children and janitor-workers, including the children among those struggling for and benefiting from unionization.

In addition to the visual context, Sandoval’s commentary carefully contextualizes each issue and subordinate frame in terms of motherhood and family. For instance, throughout the video, Sandoval raises religious themes, including a story she recounts about her family’s coping mechanisms for dealing with the cancer diagnosis: The day I gave the news to my girls my older daughter, Genesis said, “Let’s not cry anymore.” When she sees me crying, or when I get depressed, she says, “Remember the promise we made?” I feel I have to get motivated for them and I ask God for a miracle

that will let me live a few more years to see them grow up. I have faith in God that we're going to win the contract, a good contract. And also to have health insurance, which I need now more than ever. Si se puede!"

Here Sandoval connects her spiritual beliefs to the union's goals, implying that God will help the janitors secure "a good contract." Defining a good contract as one that includes health insurance that can provide the help she needs "now more than ever," the implication is that a contract that includes health insurance is the manifestation of the divine miracle Sandoval hopes will help her mother her children for years to come. The unionization campaign thus becomes the means by which God is delivering a miracle. The union and God are therefore linked in deed, thus legitimizing all Justice for Janitors activities, as both entities work to uphold the traditional relationship between mothers and children.

Making the centrality of the motherhood/family frame explicit, Sandoval directly states, "My daughters are the inspiration for me to continue in the SEIU campaign." Consistent with the "total motherhood" construction, Sandoval's sole purpose for all of the sacrifices she makes in support of the SEIU campaign, indeed her purpose for living in the face of cancer, is to support her daughters. Her interests as a Latina immigrant, laborer, even spiritual being, are all secondary to her role as selfless mother. As illustrated in the featured painting, SEIU organizers hope to mute the more contentious parts of janitors' identities and minimize hostility toward the campaign itself by recasting the movement as promotion of traditional motherhood.

Austraberta Rodriguez – Wages and Motherhood

SEIU's use of motherhood as the predominant frame is most apparent in the YouTube (2006b) video highlighting Austraberta Rodriguez. Rodriguez is a Latina immigrant who has been working as a janitor in Houston for 27 years. A proud grandmother, she is among the senior janitors in the union. Like Sandoval's video, Rodriguez's vignette emphasizes one of the janitors' primary grievances while employing several subordinate frames and justifying the campaign in terms of traditional motherhood.

In Rodriguez's case, the primary issue is wages. The video begins with Rodriguez explaining that she immigrated to the United States because of the hope of financial prosperity it offered. She tells of her subsequent disappointment, making \$1.90 an hour when she began working as a janitor and now, after nearly three decades of service, still making only minimum wage. An SEIU silent insert informs the audience that "the cost of living in Houston has increased twice as much as Austraberta's salary." This substantive information is dramatized by images of Rodriguez's modest home, in which she "didn't have anything. Just the bed I slept on, my clothes...that was everything."

After this early dramatization, the vignette abruptly shifts to a focus on motherhood and family. As a scene plays in which Rodriguez is exchanging hugs and kisses with her granddaughter, Rodriguez states, "The granddaughter I care for is Alexandra Zamodio. I care for her during the day while my daughter works. She's generous, loving, and she smiles a lot with me." In an instant, SEIU transforms

Rodriguez from an aging, underpaid immigrant laborer into the doting *de facto* mother of a toddler. Therefore, even janitors with adult children, are recast in the image of the helpless mother in the featured painting.

Having redefined Rodriguez, SEIU attempts to elicit sympathy from the audience by showing that the janitors share traditional “American values.” Obviously, the images of a grandmother playing with her grandchild play into that theme, but SEIU goes farther. Rodriguez recounts a story about telling her grandchildren to study hard to have a good career and shares her hopes to “get ahead...having a little extra.” Finally, Rodriguez simultaneously draws on traditional white notions of the “American dream” and the Black Civil Rights Movement, stating, “I have a dream. To be able to buy a house [sic]. My American Dream [sic] is to buy a house so that if someday one of my daughters can’t live with her husband...or a grandchild...I would have something to offer them.”¹¹

The punctuation here is not accidental. The first two “sentences” are clearly one continuous thought, but are punctuated to clearly allude to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech. Ties to the Black Civil Rights Movement are especially important to social movements in the United States because it is widely regarded as the most successful insurgent movement. However, SEIU touches on these racial undertones only briefly, using the capitalized “American Dream” to show janitors’ shared values with the white American community.

¹¹ Elipses are in the original YouTube text.

As with most of SEIU's framing materials targeting larger society, the labor and racial frames are subordinate to the motherhood/family frame. Rodriguez says her dream of "getting ahead" and eventually owning a house is for the purpose of "having something to offer" her family. Rather than claiming that three decades of service should earn a person enough salary to at least purchase a home, which would be consistent with a labor or broader social justice framing, Rodriguez's economic hopes are legitimized only by her willingness to sacrifice her life dream to her children and grandchildren. This is made all the more extraordinary by the fact that Rodriguez defines her daughters and grandchildren as currently living in ideal nuclear families, with present fathers and mothers who ably provide for the family, including housing Austraberta. Everyone—Austraberta, her daughters, and her grandchildren—are therefore worthy beneficiaries because they are all either total mothers or idealized vulnerable children.

Conclusion

To the casual observer, SEIU's Justice for Janitors campaign in Houston appears to be the latest manifestation of labor unions' reincarnation as social justice movements, complete with broad goals and general justice framing. Indeed, most analyses of social movement unionism have painted recent union movements with the broad social justice brush. This may be because academics are a relatively organized audience with a long history of working with unions on campaigns (see Bonacich 1998; Lopez 2004; Pulido 2006). A closer look, however, reveals that while SEIU consistently employed religious, racial, motherhood, and labor themes in its framing efforts, the union maintained a broad

social justice umbrella when framing the campaign for other community organization, but used motherhood/family as the predominant subordinate frame when targeting the larger society. The significant shift indicates that Justice for Janitors organizers believe social justice and motherhood have attributes that resonate better with different communities. The benefits of a social justice frame for coalition building are clear in that a broad frame allowed organizers to recruit established community organizations without expressly asking groups to compromise their ideologies or requesting either party to dedicate resources to goals unrelated to the organization's primary mission.

The benefits of the motherhood/family frame for targeting unorganized publics are less obvious. However, I have identified four key attributes of the motherhood frame that make it ideal for use as a predominant frame for reaching the public. First, the particular construction of motherhood forwarded in SEIU framing—a domestic, “total mother”—is ubiquitous and generally uncontroversial in the United States. This traditional version of motherhood is so dominant that even lesbian mothers measure and defend themselves according to the domestic ideal (Hequembourg and Farrell 1999). The ubiquity of traditional motherhood ideology allowed SEIU to draw on motherhood/family themes without first educating the public about the concept. Because people are so familiar with traditional motherhood roles, SEIU was able to frame janitors' interests in the YouTube videos by simply placing images of janitors and their families in the background. Subliminal framing tactics are very effective and avoid the confrontational tones (and reactions) associated with some frames, especially race and immigration.

Larger society's familiarity with traditional motherhood stands in direct contrast to people's lack of knowledge of social justice. Calls for social justice imply that people share an understanding of a particular social phenomenon as problematic *and* agree that a specific vision of social reality represents "justice." Most people, however, do not understand the exploitative relationship between capital and labor. Even those who do may not clearly understand the relationship between capitalists (building owners), intermediary firms (contractors), and labor (janitors). In these types of situations, the diagnostic aspect of framing requires a great deal of education that is difficult to disseminate to the public at large. By redefining the relationship between capitalists and janitors as a struggle between capitalists and mothers, the union eliminated much of its need to educate the general public. Because community organizations already share a notion of at least some part of society as problematic, engaging them in a movement on the basis of a struggle for social justice does not require much effort to educate.

A second benefit of the motherhood/family frame is that is amenable to both of the dominant political viewpoints in the United States. In his path-breaking analysis, Lakoff (2004) demonstrated that conservatives employ a "strict father" worldview, emphasizing traditional gender roles and self-reliance. On the other hand, liberals primarily view the world from a "nurturing parent" perspective, valuing interdependence. The traditional motherhood construct SEIU draws on suits conservatives in that it supports traditional gender roles and satisfies liberals who recognize children's dependence on their parents for economic and physical health needs. To the extent that "social justice" is defined in the public's imagination, it

derives from a liberal nurturing parent framework in which the state creates structures that enable all people to flourish and protects the vulnerable from exploitation by the powerful. Neither this general vision nor any of the particular policies it entails (such as unionization and affirmative action) are universally shared in the fiercely Liberal United States. If anything, the strict father model is in ascendancy in the post-Reagan conservative revolution. SEIU and its coalition partners' idea of social justice, including living wages for undocumented immigrants and social supports for their children is not in-keeping with the strict father model.

Third, SEIU benefited from the erasure of women that occurs when women become mothers. Gendered constructions in which women's interests as women apart from children are effectively erased as children's interests are amplified effectively force SMOs to center children when using the motherhood frame. Children are exceptionally useful because Western society presumes children innocent, and in the current arrangement, ascribe a great deal of sentimental value to children (Kagan 1998). Consequently, centering children engenders sympathy from the audience. Children are also not forced to answer difficult questions associated with frames that deal specifically with adults. The labor frame accents adult workers who are subject to criticism as lazy or unworthy of better-paying jobs. Racial and immigration justice frames face stiff criticism, especially in the hostile post-9/11 atmosphere. Children's legal immigrant status (assuming they are born in the U.S., regardless of parental status) and the fact that they're worth is not based on merit allow the union to bypass these criticisms. Indeed, on even the most vicious conservative blogs, people posted harsh anti-immigrant and

anti-union statements, but never spoke negatively of janitors' motherhood or their children (see *Lone Star Times* 2006).

Finally, Justice for Janitors' choice to recast janitors as traditional domestic mothers also redefined the union movement as a supporter of the status quo, rather than a challenge to it. One organizer noted that the union faced three kinds of opposition in Houston, "There's opposition from business owners and people that don't think unions are good things. But then there's this weird kind of Texas thing, like, 'this is Texas, and we don't have that here.'" Whether the "that" Texans "don't have that here" refers to unions alone or social justice movements in general is unclear, but what is clear is that the union faced an unusually strong dedication to a very conservative status quo in Houston. Shift attention away from the union's challenge to business owners' treatment of janitors, helped the union avoid some of the Texas-specific resistance to liberal movements it would otherwise have faced.

In the end, SEIU's framing choices were instrumentally chosen in response to the different political environments presented by the population of community organizations and the larger society. Scholars should give more attention to SMOs' use of variations of the social justice frame in varying contexts. Social movement organizations might also consider the effect their use of particular subordinate frames has on the larger society. Certainly some feminists may object to SEIU's promotion of a traditional form of motherhood in its framing materials, claiming that particular presentation serves to oppress the very women the union purports to uplift. Because the traditional motherhood image targeted unorganized publics, it is doubtful that feminist groups

abstained from the Justice for Janitors coalition in protest of the framing tactics. However, the absence of a critical feminist group did create an environment in which SEIU could conveniently use the motherhood/family frame as predominant subordinate frame. Future scholars may examine how the presence of a feminist organization effects the political environment within Justice for Janitors' coalition and the framing mechanisms the union employs.

Just as the absence of critical feminist groups paved the way for a framing strategy that undermined feminist issues, the structure of the Justice for Janitors coalition facilitated strategies that precluded critical racial statements and tactics. The Justice for Janitors coalition of 2006 certainly included some members and organizations with critical racial frames, but these frame were subverted in favor of "moderate" frames that do not challenge the broader public's white racial frame.

CHAPTER V

RACE IDEOLOGY IN THE JUSTICE FOR JANITORS COALITION

When I began studying the Justice for Janitors movement in Houston, I did so with two naïve assumptions. First, I assumed that interracial coalitions necessarily consist of race conscious primary actors and allies whose developed and critical personal insights into the impact of racism on society compelled them to action in social movements. Secondly, I assumed that similar critical frames of understanding regarding race created an atmosphere in which all participants in the coalition would have almost constant close contact as they worked together to achieve movement goals. My thoughts were derived from the assumptions of the rainbow coalition paradigm, represented most obviously by Reverend Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow/PUSH coalition. Simply put, I assumed Black and Latino participants in interracial coalitions recognized that their respective racial/ethnic groups had similar experiences and life chances due to the effects of structural and interpersonal white racism (Meier and Stewart 1991). Consequently, these Blacks and Latinos would participate equally and closely in social movement organizations (SMOs) that overtly named and resisted white supremacist forces in their lives and communities. Liberal whites who, by some rare and unique process, had become anti-racist would join the coalition on principle and in solidarity with aggrieved Latinos and African Americans. After my first interview with an official with the Justice for Janitors campaign, I was convinced all my assumptions applied to the Justice for Janitors campaign of 2006. I was wrong.

The errors in my logic are multiple. Some errors are detailed in previous sociological research, others less so. First, SMOs and their members do not always merge into indistinguishable units each time they collaborate. The separation helps SMOs retain credibility with their members and helps the larger coalition maintain flexibility as the political environment changes and new issues gain greater salience (Snow and Benford 1988, Tarrow 1998). Second, the logic of the rainbow coalition is inherently flawed. Blacks and Latinos often see themselves as more similar to whites than to one another, and whites are not the passive political actors the rainbow coalition theory presupposed (Meier and Stewart 1991). Consequently, one should not expect to see a large and powerful rainbow coalition in operation, especially in the movement-hostile South. More academic experience before beginning my field research would have disabused me of these and many other false expectations and saved me the surprise.

Naïveté notwithstanding, the more significant challenge to my original assumptions about interracial coalitions was finding that a shared critical race perspective among activists and allies is not a precondition for forming a lasting and successful multiracial coalitions. Strictly speaking, the Justice for Janitors coalition for the 2006 campaign was clearly multiracial (Latino, Black, and White, with a few Asian Americans), but racial ideologies among participants were inconsistent. Many activists were clearly race conscious and grounded in the critical perspectives of previous racialized social movements (e.g. Black Nationalism, Chicano Movement). Perhaps a larger share of activists held much less developed racial ideologies and seemed to rely either on analyses that emphasized class over race or on perspectives that intertwine

stereotypical racial beliefs with occasional critical analyses. Nevertheless, both camps worked extremely hard across racial lines to achieve movement goals.

However, the differences in ideology were not inconsequential. The combination of ideological differences among leading activists and a general belief among all participants that the colorblind ideology of the non-movement affiliated publics precluded overtly critical stances encouraged Justice for Janitors and its partners to promote colorblind discourse publicly. Consequently, critical perspectives were forced into the backstage. Race conscious views and motives were expressed only as personal stances and consequently denied the force and legitimacy of the more palatable colorblind friendly discourse. Relegation of the critical racial frame to the backstage has the result of freeing SEIU to be the moderate front man, without having to make commitments to “radical” and unpopular racial positions (e.g. immigrants rights) that are not immediately relevant to the campaign’s stated goals.

Additionally, although social movement scholars may argue that, in general, maintaining separation between coalescing SMOs is common and may be a helpful strategy that maximizes membership and flexibility for the movement, I argue that the lack of a universal critical race perspective necessitated structural separation between coalition partners. SEIU effectively served as a hub for the coalition. Coalition partners generally operated bilaterally with SEIU rather than all coalition partners making joint decisions. Consequently, coalition partners did not interact with one another very often without going through SEIU. This coalition structure minimized opportunities for disagreements based on racial ideology. It also aided Justice for Janitors’ goals by

decreasing the movement's flexibility, effectively forcing the movement to focus on Justice for Janitors goals exclusively by severely limiting opportunities for other potential interests to gain popular support within the coalition.

Race Ideology Among Activists

Race ideology among activists involved in the 2006 Justice for Janitors campaign in Houston, Texas was often grounded in critical race perspectives developed by activists in the civil rights movements of the 1960s and further developed by contemporary race scholars. Several of the activists were familiar with classic race texts, such as *Black Power* (Carmichael and Hamilton [1967] 1992), and much of Feagin's contemporary works, particularly *Racist America* (2000), among other critical texts. Across racial groups, activists spoke of this conscientious racial frame as a motive for participating in social movements that benefit people of color.

A white Justice for Janitors activist exemplifies the influence of race consciousness teaching as both a motivator for action and a means for interpreting social phenomena. Discussing the campaign he finished just before coming to Houston, this respondent diagnosed the issue in systemic terms:

[I worked in] a majority African American city with a history of not just racial discrimination, but concerted efforts by whites in the metro region to keep the white political supremacy. So this was an issue for both fair housing and [wages]. The fair housing [campaign], we regarded ourselves as a civil rights organization so that was the mission of the organization. Everyone who worked for it understood that. The living wage campaign in some ways was a civil rights—the majority of participation was African Americans, traditional civil rights organizations of the region. Participating organizations—part of the coalition—the NAACP, Baptists ministers—it varied a lot. Umbrella organizations, the home grown civil rights organizations, which was very very interesting in some ways. Trying to dismantle the system of disenfranchisement. Very aggressive resistance [from whites].

Rather than reduce the undeniable inequalities in the majority African American city to the accumulation of interpersonal discrimination, this respondent adopts a systemic racism frame to explain the causes of inequalities in housing and wages. He explicitly names whites as a racialized group with interests in maintaining white supremacy in the political arena. His diagnosis of the situation as one in which whites are using institutional power to accomplish white racist goals lead him to join civil rights organizations that tried to “dismantle the system of disenfranchisement” rather than aiming to educate presumably well-meaning whites.

The systemic racism framework also permitted this Justice for Janitors activist to recognize his white privilege and motivated him to join the Houston campaign. Asked why he came to Houston, this activist cited his family’s support of the campaign and a sense of obligation to act in response to his privileges as a white person:

The last piece I think is recognizing privilege. I was sent to a really good public school system. I was in college. I was thinking, “What is the way to use this?” I could sit around and try to disavow it, or I could treat it like it was a responsibility. And I could try to answer that question, what to *do* with this given the opportunity.

Having learned in classes how whiteness granted him access to opportunities people of color do not have, this respondent was moved to participate in the Houston campaign.

Janitor-organizers from Chicago likewise had a race critical perspective, although it was less academically polished than the college-educated organizers’ views. In an interview before a rally, two middle aged Latino janitor-organizers, whom SEIU flew to Houston at least five times over the course of the campaign, eagerly shared their views on how race impacted the movement:

The terrible way they treat the janitors and the poverty they're in is because of Republicans, nobody else. We met Barack Obama. He should be president [of the United States]. In Chicago, African Americans and us [Latinos] work together. It's not like here [Houston and the local Justice for Janitors]. In Chicago, we have Black managers and directors. We work together.... You have an education so may have heard or you know, a lot of US land used to be our [Mexicans] land. They ask why we are coming here. It was our land! Someone said America is a land for immigrants and now they [whites] say this is our land. We were here before them...and so were you guys [African Americans]!....It's the Klu Klux Klan, the Minute Men; those guys say that stuff.

These janitors response is clearly derived from a sense of linked fate with African Americans that is borne of both a racial analysis of American history and their lived experiences in Chicago. Throughout their response, the janitor-organizers constantly reference whites as oppressive of both Blacks and Latinos and highlight points that indicate these oppressed groups can successful coalesce for change. There is no way to avoid the importance of class in what is nominally a labor movement. However, the respondents' initial reference to Republicans as the solely responsible party for janitors' personal and economic suffering is clearly designed to link race and class and serve as a transition from the labor framing of the movement to a racial frame. As of 2004, a full 90 percent of Republican voters were white; conversely nine of 10 African Americans vote Democratic (ABC News 2008). Also, the Republican Party has a reputation, especially in labor circles, for being pro-capitalists and anti-worker. The immediate and unprompted reference to Senator Obama highlights the racial emphasis.

The Obama reference not only aids the janitors' argument that whites are Latinos and Blacks real enemies in this battle, it also serves as proof that Black and Latino coalitions can work. The janitor-organizers follow the Obama reference with one closer to home, explicitly stating that Latino and Black janitors are thriving under Black

management. They conclude their response with a history lesson about Aztlan, redirecting my attention to our shared fate and common racial oppressor. They link the KKK and Minute Men as one in the same, thus tying anti-Latino sentiment to the long history of white terrorism against African Americans by the KKK. The Latino organizers' racial lens is thinly veiled. Simply put, whites are actively and unjustly oppressing both Blacks and Latinos; Black and Brown coalitions of resistance are necessary and already demonstrating their effectiveness. The direction toward an institutional response and later advocacy of disruptive shaming tactics against white resisters indicate their understanding of the problem as systemic and institutional rather than interpersonal.

Other activists rejected a systemic racism approach in favor of class-based frame. Members of ACORN, a major coalition partner with a mix of Black and Latino members, were almost uniform in emphasizing class over race with respect to the need for unionizing Houston. After noting that most ACORN members in Houston are African American, I asked an ACORN leader "Obviously, most of the janitors in this campaign are Latinas. How do you motivate your members, especially African American members to support a cause like Justice for Janitors?"

We have ACORN chapters across Houston and the nation. Our membership is interracial, both in Houston and the rest of the nation. I don't look at it as an immigrant issue where it has to do with race. I just look at it as people trying to get out of poverty. It just happens that the janitors are [Latinas].

Unlike the previous respondent, who named whites as a race-interested opposition to people of color's push for economic access, this African American respondent attempts to ignore the racial aspects of the Justice for Janitors movement and reduces the issue to

a class struggle in which a non-raced group of people are trying to get out of poverty. Given that this respondent is answering a question about motivating African Americans to mobilize in support of Latinas, the respondent is doing more than defining a personal perspective. She is prescribing a way forward for building Black and Latino coalitions, namely ignoring race and emphasizing only class. Interestingly, although I did not mention immigration as an issue, the racialized aspect of Latinas' immigration status is prevalent in this respondent's mind that she brings up the topic without prompting. Immigration status is unavoidable in this discussion because Latinas' ability to demand higher wages is severely undercut because most of the workers are undocumented. This undocumented status, obviously, is equally tied to their racial identities. Therefore, despite this respondent's best efforts, even in a discursive sense, the race of the Latinas cannot be ignored.

Other African American ACORN members went further in their minimization of racial analysis and support of a class-based frame. These respondents, a man and woman who gave a joint interview, insisted that class interests effectively made Latinos and African Americans into a single racial group:

[Man:] We are all one big minority group. Many minorities are subjected to unfair pay and denied the American dream. Civil rights and workers rights go hand in hand; they are one in the same. Both should be given fairly at the same time.

[Woman:] Ditto. Injustice to one is injustice to all. If they walk on one, they will walk on us all....

This response represents an extreme exaltation of class over race as a major axis of inequality and should not be confused as simply the extreme form of a sense of linked fate. If the respondents had been extending the concept of linked fate, racial differences

would continue to be relevant. Whites would be present as oppositional figures against whom Blacks and Latinos are forced to ally. Instead, the opposition in the response is presumed to be a capitalist elite who erase all meaningful differences between Latinos and Blacks via class oppression (unfair pay) rather than racial oppression. Ironically, the respondents' class emphasis is designed to facilitate Black and Brown alliances, but research suggests that class only frames often hinder such coalitions because they ignore essential racialized Latino needs such as bilingual education and aid with immigration legalization (Vaca 2004).

Finally, where some members of SEIU and its coalition partners either adopted systemic racism or class only as dominant racial paradigms, other participants oscillated between these frameworks and problematic cultural deprivation descriptions of people of color. This is because most people are what Feagin (forthcoming) describes as multi-framers. Although one frame is dominant, people may alternate between frames depending on the priming stimulus and the situation. People of color and some activist whites possess both the white racist frame and a racial resistance frame that manifests in the arguments in their interviews. These arguments were overwhelmingly disproportionately directed toward the African American community. Surprisingly, most often these arguments were made by African American participants. I suspect this is because my own racial identity gave me greater access to Black respondents' more candid thoughts about racial groups, especially African Americans. Nevertheless, the comments provide insight into some key coalition partners' understanding of race. These respondents' views are important to this analysis because systemic racism and

class-centered frames both presume that a dominant group is using structural power to unjustly oppress a subordinate group. The responsibility lies outside the aggrieved community (i.e. janitors) and the universe of coalition partners. Respondents who negatively stereotyped communities of color shift responsibility for inequality at least partially to the victimized group. This shift creates potentially disruptive divides between coalition partners and threatens to divide the movement from the community it purports to serve.

Generally, anti-Black sentiments rose from a frustration that the Black community in Houston was not more militant and active, even before the Justice for Janitors campaign began. Using a nearly clichéd phrase, several Black activists, including this member of SEIU, regularly claimed a “slave mentality” dominated the African American community in the South:

So, I think that there's this mentality –this southern mentality that, you know, that unfortunately kind of dates back to a time that we [African Americans] were oppressed.... I honestly think that it's like the slave mentality. And it's education. [Names three southern states.] But I've lived in all three states and black people aren't even literate. You can't even put a sentence together. What is up with you? Come on! At a certain place, you've got to help yourself. You know, public schools, for whatever they're worth, they're still a place where you can feed your mind. And we sell people on just getting by....And I think that that's what happens in the South, is that for [Black] people who don't have that talent or who aren't musically inclined or something like that, you've got to rely on your ability to get a regular job. And when you go in [to an employer], if you have a crazy name or you're too dark or your hair is this, there is already this, “Oh, she must be crazy or something. She must have an issue. Or she must be stupid.” And then if you open your mouth, what comes out of your mouth just reinforces, “I've got a dumb nigger on my hands, so I'm not giving her any money.” But if you sit down, you go in there and you don't have the -- and it's sad that you can't be yourself--but you also have to understand this is not about self; it's about dollars. And I need my money.

This respondent alternates between a cultural depravity argument and a critique of whiteness. The activist begins by strongly stating that southern African Americans are trapped in a slave mentality that “dates back to a time that we were oppressed.” The mentality manifests in Blacks’ drive for education and presentation when seeking employment. In both cases, Blacks apparently hurt themselves by making bad choices. That Blacks are simply making choices is evidenced by the opening reference to the end of legal slavery as identical with the end of white on Black oppression. Presumably, for nearly a century and a half, African Americans have been free of oppression but failed to take advantage of that freedom.

The respondent’s condemnation of southern Blacks is tempered slightly by implicit criticisms of continuing white oppression of African Americans. The respondent presupposes a white employer who is evaluating a Black applicant. She assumes that the white employer is prejudiced against African Americans and, based nominally irrelevant data such as non-Anglicized names and skin color, thinks of the Black applicant as “a dumb nigger” and subsequently discriminates against the applicant. The respondent suggests that African Americans should be able to “be yourself” without facing discrimination, but repeatedly insists that adhering to the white standard is a reasonable request. Thus the activist places the majority of the responsibility for African Americans’ racial oppression on African Americans themselves.

Black activists beyond SEIU followed in this pattern. A Black member of a key

coalescing SMO gave this assessment of the African American and Mexican American communities:

But people who have come over here by choice and who have maintained their original culture and their original family – is really family based and their value systems, are generally more successful. They have the tools to be successful in American society. And some of the involuntary minorities, Africans who have been here since slavery and Mexican Americans who were kind of sucked into American, don't always have those same advantages because they've lost what we've lost, a lot of our culture and a lot of our value system, a lot of what it takes to put in the work to be successful.

While the conditions of a group's immigration to the United States greatly affect their access to economic and legal resources that influence each subsequent generation's life chances, this activist is not making a claim about access to tangible resources. Instead, this respondent is claiming that African Americans and Chicanos have forever lost access to value systems that are necessary for each community's future advancement. Consequently, although white racism may responsible for minority groups' cultural losses and white standards may continue to disproportionately disadvantage people of color, the respondent places considerable blame for African Americans' and Mexican Americans' social status on these groups' cultural depravity.

An additional Black activist in yet another core coalition SMO connected presumed cultural depravity to social movement emergence. After publicly stating that “race did not affect [my decision to participate]. Respect is the issue, regardless of culture,” this traveling activist privately whispered to me, “Organizing ‘us’ [African Americans] is the hardest thing to do. We get committed—send kids to college, own two or three cars—and get scared to lose our jobs. Plus we don't know our constitutional rights.” After redefining race as “culture,” this activist asserts that African

Americans are more prone to selling out and lacking commitment to progressive social movements than is any other racial group. The respondent essentially blames Blacks' supposed poor character and commitment for their relative lack of organization and continued oppression.

On first blush the variety of racial views among activists in the Justice for Janitors coalition may be disturbing. Race cannot be reduced to class and efforts to do so can result in hostility between Black and Latino groups. Even worse, harboring beliefs about Black inferiority, even if it is only cultural, has obvious potential to negatively impact the treatment of Black participants and the larger Black community during campaigns. Nevertheless, given that SEIU did manage to largely achieve its stated goals of raising janitors' wages and providing healthcare via the first contract, one could interpret the presence of multiple, and occasionally negative, views on racism within the coalition as a sign that coalitions are not as fragile as they might appear.

Managing Ideological Differences

SEIU's successful negotiation of ideological differences does not mean that the differences were not threatening and did not require strategic adjustments. I argue that Justice for Janitors leaders managed ideological incongruence among coalition members and even SMOs through two strategies. First, SEIU effectively relegated critical perspectives to the backstage. Justice for Janitors instead presented an image of itself and its movement that was consistent with colorblind discourse. More race critical perspectives were still present, but their adherents either revealed them in semipublic ways or only in the deep backstage. Second, SEIU structured the coalition in a way that

minimized contact between coalition partners whose race philosophies did not easily agree. In so doing, SEIU minimized potential for conflict by setting the movement agenda and being the major direct contact for each coalescing SMO partner.

As I state in the chapter on SEIU's use of motherhood as a dominant public frame, SEIU carefully crafted and maintained its public image throughout the 2004-2006 Justice for Janitors campaign in Houston. In addition to the dominant motherhood frame, SEIU made a concerted effort to appear multiracial, without appearing militant. This can be a difficult balance to strike, but it was necessary because militancy would threaten SEIU's public support and the legislative support that comes with public favor. Conversely, a monoracial coalition would threaten the movement's legitimacy with relevant SMOs, especially BlackDems and CRECEN, and make future campaigns to unionize city workers and security guards more difficult.

To guarantee a multiracial public persona, SEIU strategically placed people of color in the public eye. This process occurred on multiple levels. First, SEIU strategically allied with SMOs that were race-specific and would guarantee turnout. Shortly after launching the campaign, Justice for Janitors' African American political coordinator, Amber Goodwin, joined the BlackDems. BlackDems aided the Justice for Janitors effort by connecting Goodwin with supportive political officials, which was key to the movement's success. However, in interviews, several members of BlackDems who were not privy to the passing on of legislative contacts noted that perhaps the organization's most valued contribution to the campaign was providing a sense that the Black community largely supported the effort:

Right now, it's just been more of contributing with the name because it does help. That's one of the reason why political organization, does help that we are named black because people want to stick that endorsement on, to be quite honest. Put African American on something. And also with helping with the discussions and some of the planned discussions.

Securing the BlackDems' endorsement *and* ensuring their presence at panel discussions, which usually doubled as press conferences, allowed SEIU to claim support from the Black community, even without forming deep ties with most African Americans in Houston.

Likewise, SEIU hired organizers who had long ties with local SMOs, including Latino-specific groups, such as CRECEN. These organizers brought their expertise and connections to the Justice for Janitors campaign. Previous connections were valuable resources that helped keep SMOs committed to the Justice for Janitors campaign, even when SEIU and a coalescing partner had disagreements about strategy. One such disagreement revolved around how much support SEIU should give the immigrants' rights movement that was occurring during the campaign. CRECEN, which focuses primarily on Central American immigrants, wanted to dedicate a great deal of attention and resources to immigrant rights. SEIU did not want to divide its efforts. However, according to a CRECEN organizer, long standing relationships between Justice for Janitors field organizers and CRECEN leadership formed an effective channel through which CRECEN privately negotiated with SEIU for support for the march. The outcome was not what CRECEN sought, but the disagreement did not break up the Justice for Janitors coalition.

Of course, the most explicit means of guaranteeing a multiracial public persona was paying SMOs to turnout members to events. The union set a minimum turnout for major events and paid TMO, CRECEN, and ACORN to turnout their members at the fora. TMO had access to Catholic churches with large Latino and white congregations. It also had access to liberal white churches and religious leaders who could represent the white community at public events. CRECEN and ACORN provided Latino and African American faces. Every major press conference had a substantial number of members from each of these groups. SEIU also ensured that a multiracial panel of people spoke at the events.

The union softened its racial persona publicly by emphasizing non-race critical perspectives during events. Usually, speakers played on populist class-based arguments for supporting the campaign. For instance, at the event at which SEIU members voted to strike for a first contract, Councilman Adrian Garcia exclusively discussed class issues. He began by discussing his mother's experience as a janitor before building to a crescendo of "It's not fair..." statements:

It's not fair that as hard as you work, companies in Houston want you to stay in poverty! It's not fair! It's not fair to decide between food and a doctor! It's not fair that you earn \$5.15 to \$5.30 per hour. *No es justo!*....I know it's very difficult for these companies when they're making hundreds of millions and billions of dollars. It's hard for them....

Nowhere in their speeches did any councilman or U.S. congressperson mention the obvious fact that 98 percent of the janitors are Latinas. The presumptively race-neutral class frame prevailed exclusively. Even SEIU's chief negotiator avoided raced language, deviating from the class frame only to employ the motherhood theme.

Instead race critical perspectives were relegated to the backstage. Each of the headquarters of the coalescing SMOs had some reference to a major civil rights leader. Often, the SMO or individual members of the SMO posted race-critical quotes in the semipublic space of their offices. For instance, one organizer posted quotations from Malcolm X, “It must be long enough,” and Che Guevara:

We must carry the war into every corner the enemy happens to carry it: to his home, to his centers of entertainment; a total war. It is necessary to prevent him from having a moment of peace, a quiet moment outside his barracks or even inside; we must attack him wherever he may be, make him feel like a cornered beast wherever he may move. Then his moral fiber shall begin to decline. He will even become more beastly, but we shall notice how the signs of decadence begin to appear.

At no point before the strike did SEIU publicly cite Malcolm X, obviously because his reputation is more militant than other historical leaders. And certainly references to bloody war were off limits. However, organizers frequently alluded to these quotations as inspirational and saw themselves as part of the movements leaders like X and Guevara began. One white organizer, toting at least five books on the Chicano movement, including more militant aspects, plainly stated, “I see this as a continuation of the Chicano movement.” Organizers’ references to these quotations became even more common as they entered the strike phase, but they were always amongst themselves. It was as if the organizers had a silent covenant with SEIU that having a militant frame on race and movements was acceptable, even necessary for internal legitimacy, but only under condition of keeping said beliefs from the larger public.

Indeed, coalition partners beyond SEIU followed the same prescription. Participants who favored more militant race stances and strategies on several occasions

asked that I stop recording when I asked direct questions about how racism impacted janitors' conditions or their decision to participate in the movement. Although multiple respondents indicated that they saw the movement as an effort to fight against white supremacy, only one white activist actually used the phrase on tape. Usually respondents cited fear that the larger public would negatively respond to critical race language as the reason for hesitating to name white supremacy as the real target of the campaign. In these moments, respondents acknowledged that colorblind discourse dominates public race discussion with the effect of precluding even discussing tangible racial equality or progress. On occasion, respondents would explicitly say that they feared their careers would be ended if they were quoted making remarks about struggling against white supremacy.

The difficulty here is one that Delgado (1989) notes in his article on the power of narratives for civil rights movements and organizations. Stories have the power to reveal previously hidden facts and emphasize features of events that dominant groups do not want to recognize. Stories also have the power to expose the real motives of oppressive groups and legitimate aggrieved populations' emotions and motivate them to action. However, the subjugation of critical race perspectives, even within what is regarded in social movement literature as one of the most contentious and aggressive social movements in the United States at present, indicates just how entrenched white supremacy is in every social institution. Even our most aggressive activists are afraid to speak the words white supremacy for fear of terminable repercussions.

Having relegated critical perspectives to the backstage by managing public statements during press events and offering no protection to activists who publicly state that white supremacy is a powerful force and the ultimate enemy in the movement, Justice for Janitors movement employed the second structural tool for managing ideological disagreement within the organization. Rather than manage the movement as a collection of SMOs in which each has an opportunity to offer widely heard input on movement tactics and decisions, SEIU primarily maintained the coalition by meeting with coalition partners one at a time. Smaller coalition partners, such as the BlackDems, were effectively coordinated via relatively informal communication with Justice for Janitors officials who participated in organizational meetings. A member might inform the leader of an organization of SEIU's next event or ask for the event to put on the agenda. Larger coalition partners, such as TMO and ACORN, garnered direct attention from SEIU leadership. These groups usually met separately with SEIU, which allowed the union to broker different deals with each group. For some time, SEIU managed to secure equal turnout at events by paying white-led TMO over \$2000 per event while asking ACORN and CRECEN to volunteer the same support. When the latter organizations learned of the covert operations through informal channels, SEIU was forced to pay all three. By keeping the means for communication limited and essentially requiring major groups to go through SEIU, the union could effectively censor ideas, especially radical ones, without risking losing a large faction of its coalition partners. Even at major public events, the members and leaders of the various groups did not appear to interact a great deal. Members of each group sat in different sections of the

auditoriums, which ensured little exchange of ideas among members. Most leaders and speakers were approached by SEIU organizers before the events and spent most of the events either with their members or sitting on stage waiting to speak. The coalition, in structure and sometimes appearance, was functionally segregated.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the predominance of colorblind rhetoric in American discourse, systemic and structural racism have always and will continue to fundamentally shape the United States' social institutions and the everyday lives of all who attempt to call the United States home. As is always the case, those who suffer oppression, namely people of color, constantly resist white racism through a variety of means. People of color's resistance and the outcomes of that resistance are limited by the resources of the aggrieved population (McAdam 1982, Tilly 2004) and the structural political avenues the dominant group makes available for official redress (Tarrow 1998, Piven and Cloward 1977). However, as this thesis has shown, the racial structure is as consequential for social movements as is the political structure. The power of racial oppression reshapes interactions among people of color and the social movements they generate. At every step, people of color must resist white racism—first, by rejecting enough of the white racial frame to see other people of color as coalition partners rather than enemies. Then, interracial alliances must contend with constant white attempts to either completely reject people of color's claims or reshape movement outcomes in a way that further entrenches white supremacy.

The discussion in Chapter III on Bell's interest convergence theory applied to the 1986 and 2006 Justice for Janitors campaigns clearly illustrates the power of white resistance in people of color's movements. Whites can crush movements, as in the 1986 case, or find ways of using movements to benefit white interests (e.g. 2006). Whites'

demonstrated willingness to use all kinds of methods to squelch or disempower countermovements has not ended resistance, but it has reshaped that resistance. As we saw in Chapter IV, SEIU framed the movement in terms of motherhood to minimize the obvious racial aspects of the movement. In the process, the union recasted Latina janitors, deemphasizing their raced and classed identities in favor of a gendered one. In the process, Justice for Janitors not only misrepresented the great majority of its potential members, it reinforced white standards with regard to gender and family structure. The motherhood frame allowed the union to argue that the janitors are “just like you.” Implicitly, that “you” was defined as white and ideal. In essence, in both the outcome and framing, the Justice for Janitors campaign of 2006 reinforced the central feature of the white racial frame, namely that whiteness is unproblematic, normal, and ideal. Consequently, whites continue to benefit materially from the exploited labor of Latinas and African Americans and ideologically from narratives of white goodness.

The material and ideological reinforcement of white supremacy was in some ways predictable, given the internal dynamics of the campaign. External forces, such as white business and political elites’ opposition and institutional forms, represent severe challenges to insurgent organizations. In the face of such daunting challenges, movement leaders and participants must be ideologically aligned and jointly focused on resisting white supremacy if they hope to avoid defeat and cooptation of their goals. Such unity is difficult to cultivate and maintain in the contemporary social environment in the United States. As I discussed in Chapter V (and Chapter III to a lesser extent), members of SEIU and its coalition partners did not share a common understanding of

racism and white supremacy. Views varied from problematic, even racist, views of Blacks and Latinos to very insightful critiques that named and sought to dismantle white supremacy. In the coalition at large, and in the singular selves of many participants, multiple racial frames were at play, making it possible for the coalition to oscillate between radical stances (e.g. CRECEN's ideology, disruptive strike techniques, and Black Civil Rights Movement themes) and accommodationist positions (e.g. facilitating the guest worker program). Given the external pressures, race stratification within Justice for Janitors, and the structure of the coalition, outcomes that resulted in buttressing white supremacy were inevitable.

Future interracial alliances, especially those in the South, must take note of the successes and failures of the Justice for Janitors movement. The internal differences in race ideology manifested in conflicting opinions of how to define and deal with consensus and crosscutting issues in Black and Latino communities. Consensus issues are those by which each member of a particular oppressed class has a reasonable chance of being victimized (Cohen 1999). For instance, most African Americans experience or believe they are likely to experience harassment from white police officers, making police harassment a consensus issue in the Black community. Because consensus issues can affect the entire aggrieved population, including the elite within that population, leaders among the oppressed often direct community attention and resources toward battling consensus issues. Crosscutting issues, on the other hand, do not threaten all members of oppressed populations equally and, consequently, receive much less communal support (Cohen 1999). Indeed, leaders of aggrieved populations may

sacrifice the interests of those targeted by crosscutting issues in an effort to resist consensus issues. Issues impacting gay and lesbian African Americans are exemplary of crosscutting issues in the Black community.

Throughout the Justice for Janitors campaigns, members and coalition partners constantly battled over which issues to define as consensus issues and how to handle crosscutting issues. Predictably, organizations worked hard to define all issues as consensus issues. SEIU's use of motherhood as a movement frame is an attempt to redefine crosscutting issues, such as racism and legal status, in terms of the consensus issue, motherhood. Because only a certain type (i.e. white normative) of motherhood can garner consensus, using the motherhood frame required a great deal of work on the part of media operatives within the movement.

Some crosscutting issues were unavoidable, however. In previous interracial coalition attempts, issues such as allocation of government jobs and acquisition of high-ranking leadership positions within the movement have been defined as crosscutting and zero-sum, and severely limited outcomes for Blacks and Latinos (Meier et al. 2004). Within the 2006 coalition, immigration and legal status loomed large as potential crosscutting issues. Nearly all of the Latinos in the SMOs were firmly of legal status. Indeed, above the rank of organizer, Latinos in the coalition were generally from families that had been in the United States two or more generations. Their legal status was something they took for granted. Many, if not most, Latina organizers were undocumented and issues surrounding immigration policy and recognition of rights were central to them. During the immigrants' rights marches, coalition partners and other

protestors tried to make immigration a consensus issue by pointing out the even Latinos from families that are well-established in the United States have and depend upon undocumented friends and relatives. They also highlighted the shared fate Latinos have, especially if all Latinos are viewed as suspect and required to constantly prove their legal status.

The attempt to make immigration a consensus issue failed, however, because after the Black Civil Rights Movement, whites adjusted the strict Jim Crow tradition of excluding all people of color from access to white resources. Instead, a limited number of people of color may be appointed to positions in which they have access to white leaders and small sets of resources in exchange for representing and disciplining the racial groups from which they come. Consequently, some privileged Latinos within the coalition, especially those belonging to pro-assimilation SMOs (e.g. LULAC), are in a state of advanced marginalization vis-à-vis whites, in which they feel they must police the “less respectable” members of their racial group in order to gain access to whites’ resources (Cohen 1999: 27). Medina’s choice to make the Faustian bargain to support the guest worker program and sacrifice the interests of undocumented Latina janitors reflects his status as suffering advanced marginalization.

Coalitions should take head of the difficulties crosscutting issues represent. These issues provide powerful opportunities for whites to separate coalition partners and coopt movements’ goals. Explicit conversations among coalition partners that spell out a clear and critical view on racism in the United States and how that impacts movement strategy may help movements form coalitions that are more resistant to white cooptation.

In an environment of ideological unity, interracial alliances may be able to use coalescing structures that involve greater dialogue among all coalition partners and limit opportunities for any one partner to sacrifice the interests of the movement.

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APPENDIX A



HARRIS COUNTY GREEN PARTY

creating a just and sustainable future

[about us](#) | [get involved](#) | [calendar](#) | [resources](#) | [in the press](#)

A major Social Justice effort is happening in Houston: 1 PM, Saturday, April 30, 2005.

This is an excellent opportunity to work on one of our Key Value Pillars.

ACORN and SEIU are working to organize Janitors and to fight for a Living Wage and Medical Benefits here in Houston. Both organizations have put out flyers for an event this Saturday 4/30/05 to be held downtown. The flyers are included below. Please Read.

You can show up at the George R Brown Convention Center at 1:00pm. Or you can contact ACORN and take a bus to the event at 12:00 noon. Or contact Earl at 713-532-3003. Or contact Rev. Fana, Social Action Coordinator at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, at 713-256-5740.

1. ACORN ANNOUNCEMENT (ACORN is Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now)

MINIMUM WAGE IS NOT ENOUGH!

No one can raise a family on \$5.15 an hour with no health insurance!

Be a part of this historic event to support the

Justice for Janitors Campaign

We are fighting to win

LIVING WAGE JOBS in Houston!!

Join forces with ACORN, SEIU, janitors and all other low wage workers to fight

for everyone's right to have:

Living Wages
Benefits
Health Insurance
Vacation Pay
Respect on the Job
Bring your family, your friends and your co-workers –
Living Wage jobs affects all of us!

Saturday April 30, 2005

1:00pm

George R. Brown Convention Center

Free bus Transportation provided downtown and back

Meet at 12:00 PM any of the following locations for bus transportation:

Acres Homes: St. Monica's Church 8421 W. Montgomery 77088 Fifth Ward:
Church of Nazareth 3902 Brewster 77026 Third Ward: Shape Community
Center (Live Oak & Alabama) 77004 North Side/ Heights: Christ the King 4419
N. Main 77009 North Forest: Light House Missionary Baptist Church 9707 N.
Wayside 77078 Spring Branch: Holy Cross Church Wirt & Long Point 77055 Villa
del Sol Apartments 4000 Hollister Shady Village Mobile Home Park 5711 Yale
Shrine Bookstore: 5309 Martin Luther King 77021

Call ACORN to reserve your seat on the bus and ACORN t-shirt for the rally!

(713) 868-7015

2. SEIU ANNOUNCEMENT (SEIU is Service Employees International Union)

April 30th is the beginning of the campaign Justice for Janitors

to seek Justice, Dignity and Respect

for all Janitors working in commercial buildings in Houston

Join us for this historic event to achieve:

Just Wages!

Health Care!

Benefits!

RESPECT & DIGNITY

George R Brown Convention Center

1001 Avenida de las Americas

Saturday, April 30, 2005

1:00 pm

For more information call 713.514.0005

Community, Religious, and Elected Leaders in Houston are Uniting To Win...

Justice for Janitors

The 8,000 janitors who clean Houston's office buildings are paid less than \$11,000 a year and do not have access to affordable health care. Nearly the entire workforce is part-time and janitors report they frequently are exploited on the job. Like janitors in most major cities, nearly all Houston janitors are immigrants, working hard and paying taxes, but forced to live in poverty by their employers, most of which are national corporations.

Houston janitors are uniting to form a union with SEIU to win just wages, affordable family health care, full time work, and better treatment on the job.

Janitors Joining the Fight for Affordable Health Care for All Working People in Houston

Houston is in the midst of a severe health care crisis that is putting a major financial strain on workers, businesses, taxpayers, and public budgets. One in four Houstonians – about 1 million city residents – do not have health insurance.

The janitors' organizing campaign is joining the ongoing community-wide efforts of ACORN, TMO, and others to improve access to secure, affordable health care for all working people in Houston.

In other cities across the country, SEIU's Justice for Janitors campaign has been

working closely with community and religious organizations, fighting the tide of rising health care costs -- and winning. At a time when employers are forcing workers to pay more of the cost of health care, community support is helping SEIU janitors in other major cities win contracts that maintain and even expand employer-paid health coverage, helping to ease the burden of health costs on taxpayers and public budgets; in Boston, for example, family health coverage extends to part-time janitors and even includes vision and dental care.

About Justice for Janitors and SEIU

For two decades, SEIU's Justice for Janitors movement has helped low-wage workers achieve social and economic justice and earn broad-based support from the public as well as religious, political and community leaders. More than 200,000 janitors in more than 28 cities throughout the United States have united in SEIU (Service Employees International Union), America's largest union of building services workers. Please visit our website at www.justiceforjanitors.org.

For more information, contact Adriana Cadena at 713-514-0005 or cadenaa@seiu1.org

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VITA

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EDUCATION

1998-2003	B.A. in Political Science (laude), University of Florida
2004-2008	M.S. in Sociology, Texas A&M University

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Racial and Ethnic Relations, Social Movements, Race and Gender, Critical Race Theory

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Department of Sociology, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
Graduate Research Assistant to Dr. Joe Feagin, August 2004-May 2008
 Provide research, editorial, and other support for Dr. Feagin's projects as requested. Conduct research program on topics related to racial and ethnic relations. Research and identify government, private, and university sources of funding for research on race related topics. Investigate University support services for securing funding for faculty and graduate student research.

PUBLICATIONS***Encyclopedia Entries***

Bracey, Glenn and Joe Feagin. Forthcoming. "White Racism." Invited by the *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society*, edited by R. T. Schaefer. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.