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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

What Keeps Us Here is the Love We Have for Our Students:
Solidarity Among Low Wage Immigrant Workers and Students at the University of
California, San Diego

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in

Latin American Studies

by

Nancy Madrid

Committee in Charge:

Professor Rosaura Sanchez, Chair
Professor George Mariscal
Professor Natalia Molina

2012

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The Thesis of Nancy Madrid is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2012

DEDICATION

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all of the individuals who took the time, effort, and energy out of their days to share their stories with me. To the workers who gave up their lunches and had the courage to participate in this study which reveals more than their stories, but another truth to our beautiful UCSD campus. I highly admire and hope to have captured the spirit and dignity with which you fight each day while continuing to care for your students. To the Student Worker Collective, undoubtedly some of the most passionate, intelligent, and conscious students at UCSD, I admire the mind and heart you put into all of your work, and I cannot thank you enough for offering me a space in your organization. UCSD workers and the SWC have become more than my research, but part of my community at UCSD. To Lydia, I very much appreciate all of your help. I thank my thesis committee, especially my Chair Rosaura Sanchez for inviting the workers to come into lecture and inspiring me to work on this topic. Thank you for your continuous guidance and encouragement. Professors George Mariscal and Natalia Molina, thank you for supporting my project and providing feedback that instilled confidence in my writing and motivation during difficult times in the process. I would also like to thank my friends and family who were there during this journey. I especially thank my friends Ruth Marleen, Liz, and Herman. Y a mi mamá, gracias por todo tu apoyo y cariño, esta tesis te la dedico a ti y a los trabajadores con todo corazón.

We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community...Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sake and for our own.

Cesar Chavez

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

What Keeps Us Here is the Love We Have for Our Students:
Solidarity Among Low Wage Immigrant Workers and Students at the University of
California, San Diego

by

Nancy Madrid

Master of Arts in Latin American Studies

University of California, San Diego, 2012

Professor Rosaura Sanchez, Chair

This thesis is situated in the context of the current California budget crisis that began in 2008 and significantly impacted the state's public education system, including the world renowned University of California. This thesis examines the various ways in which Latin@ immigrant housing custodians who constitute one category of low wage workers at the University of California, San Diego have been affected by the crisis. On the basis of in-depth interviews and ethnographic methods this thesis also discusses the ways in which these workers have allied with members of the student organization

known as the Student Worker Collective at the University of California, San Diego. These students represent underrepresented people of color at the University of California whose access to the University of California system is not prioritized in the midst of the budget constraints. This thesis analyzes the ways in which increased workloads have had significantly detrimental emotional and physical consequences for workers, essentially reinforcing existing inequalities pertaining to gender, class, and nationality. This thesis also argues that the Student Worker Collective and workers have formed an alliance through which they collaborate to make change for both students and workers based on the shared identity as people of color and students' personal familiarity with issues of marginalization.

Introduction

This thesis investigates the university beyond its essence as a site that promotes higher learning and privilege for select groups in society. The study will focus on understanding the experiences of low wage custodial workers amidst thousands of academics on one of the world's most renowned universities. The personal narratives of custodians employed at the University of California, San Diego campus will allow understandings which encompass migration, low wage labor, "intersectionality", activism, social alliances, and education. This thesis will provide background information situating the project in the context of the current budget crisis which has affected California and consequently one of the state's most prestigious institutions of public education, the University of California. It is also necessary to situate the experience of custodians in the context of United States-Mexico migration and the infiltration of immigrants, predominantly women, into the low wage, unskilled service sector. I will explore the various ways in which these custodians experience significant change in an institution that has in more recent years undergone significant budget reductions, leading to reduction of personnel and the overburdening of these custodians who have become perhaps the most overworked in the system. This work will focus on the personal narratives of ten custodians who devote their lives to satisfying the sanitary and maintenance needs of UCSD students. Included as a focus of this project will be the new relationship with students that has resulted from custodian's poor working conditions, whose plight has become a concern for students. For this reason I am including interviews with five students who have played a strong role in advocating for workers'

rights, and to a further extent, for larger goals pertaining to social justice. Financial changes in the University of California in recent years have transformed working conditions and had vital effects on the workers' social spaces, specifically in the workplace and their homes. This thesis will examine the manner in which these workers experience the academic setting to which they devote substantial time and effort during work hours, but within which they remain invisible and essentially deprived of rights as workers and human beings, including education rights.

The project will focus on analyzing social inequalities specifically gender, class, and nationality, analyzing the manner in which these existing forms of injustice are perpetuated daily, even within the most unlikely domains. The issue of social inequality raises concerns surrounding the nature of academic spaces that promote progress for specific groups, while excluding others. In general, these inequalities maintain distinctions among individuals and function in a manner that deepens some of these dividing boundaries. While recent economic hardships unfortunately serve to shed further light on the ways in which some individuals are "prioritized" while others are not, they also enable us to see that social boundaries can be crossed and different social groups come together to fend off against the specific barriers that are being instituted.

Methodology and Reflection

My thesis will be focused on custodial staff who are currently employed on the UCSD Campus. I will utilize the terms "custodians" and "workers", and on a limited basis "cleaners", interchangeably throughout this thesis. I will also refer to the term

“janitor”, particularly when looking at literature that addresses the workers in this manner. These terms will refer specifically to the individuals who engage in work dedicated to caring for, cleaning, and maintaining buildings. Custodians have been selected from those working in student housing and common study areas; areas that are highly indicative of the university’s academic setting. Although the study is not focused specifically on recruiting female respondents or individuals belonging to ethnic minorities, due to the high percentage of colored (namely Latin@ immigrant) females in this sector, the majority of respondents will be of this particular background¹. This study will focus on those custodians who have been employed at UCSD for over a year, although a majority of those interviewed had been employed for significant periods of time, as many as twenty years. This study will seek to explore how various inequalities are reinforced by this institution of higher learning. I will include a chapter which explores the relationship that has been formed by the custodians with students on campus as an effort to support an ongoing struggle for a broader vision of social justice. Students were selected from those who have established a close relationship with the workers and participate in the “student-worker alliance” which has formed at the UCSD campus and have been active in defending worker issues and protesting budget cuts. Students interviewed for this study were all members of the UCSD Student Worker Collective (SWC), an organization devoted to issues specific to workers, both on and off campus, that represent the closest bond in the institution between students and low wage workers.

¹ Seven out of the ten interviewed custodians are Latin@ immigrant females.

The methods utilized for this project were guided by the use of ethnography, including a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with ten UCSD custodians and five students from the SWC. The interviews with custodians took place during the custodian's lunch hours on the UCSD campus when they had available free time. Due to many of the custodians' long commute from either Chula Vista, San Ysidro, or Tijuana, the most convenient time for interviews was during the work day. I found that I often had difficulties scheduling interviews with custodians due to time restrictions. As mentioned, although interviews were scheduled during lunch, often times I would find custodians rushed through their meals in order to get back to work, some of them finding it easier to refuse to participate or asking me to come back on several occasions in order to get through the questions. Unfortunately, there were also those situations in which I arrived a few minutes past the worker's noon lunch hour to find they were actually cleaning on their break. This is something I understood well, growing up my mother worked as a "housekeeping aide" in a local hospital. At a young age I became very familiar with the conditions and sacrifices associated with this type of work.

One of the difficulties in recruiting participants was perhaps in the initial approach to the workers. Several workers were hesitant when I spoke to them about the study, despite their freedom to do as they wished during their breaks. Some of them mentioned they would "rather not get involved" and one stated she was outright scared.

A common characteristic that I observed with both those who refused and those who chose to participate was an element of fear. While several of the workers were active in their union and had leadership roles, others experienced a difficult time in

communicating and being open about their experiences. As interviews progressed or as I frequented workers at meetings or protests, I noticed workers began to share more information. Some of them stated “aqui no pasa nada”, indicating their campus or designated area did not face the challenges that others did, but once workers became more trusting and were more open, I found the situation they described was not very different. After workers had finished their breaks or had a few minutes left, I found many of them literally rushed away because they were afraid of being late returning to work. On many occasions, I saw many of these workers worried, stressed about time and the work they had left to do or about being “caught” talking to me. Some even preferred to meet at a separate location than the area where they usually had lunch, for fear of being seen by their supervisors and facing possible consequences for having spoken about their working conditions. For these reasons, I took great precautions to protect the identity of these workers ².

These interviews have been significant and have enabled my gaining of an understanding of how current work conditions for custodians have affected them on a personal level, not only within the social sphere of the workspace, but also in their homes. Interviews were important in understanding the specific backgrounds and stories of each worker, individualizing and adding personality to those often seen as the “cleaners on campus”. During the interviews I was able to learn more about the daily

² In order to protect the identity of interviewed custodians I requested a waiver of signed consent from UCSD IRB. I also scheduled interviews with workers when they found most “convenient” which often included days on which their supervisors and managers were not present. I have also used pseudonyms for all informants.

routine of these workers as well as about how they interacted with others, enabling my participant observation.

I conducted interviews with members of the SWC on campus, typically following meetings that students held throughout the school year. SWC members that were interviewed had been active in the organization for different periods of time, ranging from 2009 until the present. I found that students were highly willing to participate in this project in order to create more awareness about worker issues on campus. Students cited wanting to participate because they felt that the majority of the community at UCSD was uninformed about the situation of workers and believed their participation would help others understand an unseen and often invisible reality at UCSD.

Aside from interviews, I utilized participant observation in meetings, rallies, and delegations organized by custodians and or students that address the specific issues of my project. I attended meetings of the Student Worker Collective each Monday and contributed to the petitions, resolutions, and activities planned by these students. During my time involved with SWC, the number of attendees to meetings reached no more than seven students, of which two were UCSD alumni. From September 2011 until the time I concluded writing this thesis in May 2012, the students dealt with a number of issues, most importantly the inefficiency of ESL classes offered to workers, the disunity and internal conflicts of the AFSCME Union 3299 representing these workers, and a campus-wide petition and resolution addressing working conditions for custodians. My active participation in the SWC meetings and actions, including a presentation of a petition

supporting workers at student government meetings, truly enabled me to understand the goals, challenges, and heart that characterize the work of these students.

I feel that my inclusion of ethnographic research can provide a better understanding of the atmosphere created through the agency of these individuals; this type of research effectively reflects the emotions, reactions, and inclinations of the participants. In addition, I utilized an extensive amount of news articles dating as far back as 2008, regarding custodian and student activism and the changes for students and workers at UCSD and the UC System as a whole. This information was vital in helping to construct a narrative of the specific issues and administrative changes that have impacted workers as well as some of the major activities that have been organized around them. Gathering information through the use of secondary sources has also served to counter the limitations that lie in formal interviewing and observation by providing specific and accurate details regarding events and policies of the university.

Both English and Spanish were utilized during my interviews with workers and students. Interviews were transcribed and then translated into English if necessary, followed by coding and in-depth analysis. In addition, field notes collected at events and meetings also played a significant role in my analysis and documentation of specific events. My analysis resulted in the formulation of three body chapters and a conclusion with the incorporation and consideration of an extensive body of literature which will be reviewed in this introduction.

Literature Review

For purposes of this paper, it is important to analyze literature corresponding to studies specific to custodians, janitors, and those in occupations associated with “domestic” work³. In what follows I will provide an outline of the various issues that have been predominantly explored including exploitation, strategies for survival, and activism. Most of this scholarship has focused on analyzing this group on a larger scale and in relation to union activity. This literature review will also include literature specific to low wage labor in institutions of higher education. The majority of these studies have enabled for an understanding of the unlikely alliances that form within society and the university as a corporation and exploiter of workers in a capitalist system. The following studies not only provide an overview of findings that can be applied to janitors on a near universal level, but also serve as a model for the methodology of this project, considering this thesis deals with a group of research subjects who often experience high levels of sensitivity.

Invisible Workers

Worldwide, occupations devoted specifically to cleaning and maintaining facilities or spaces in particular forms are undoubtedly the lowest paid and require the lowest levels of formal skills and education. The individuals who partake in cleaning malls, restaurants, hotels, and educational sites are among the most economically,

³ The term “domestic work” will refer to any occupation that is related to cleaning, organizing, and maintaining a building or environment, such as that of the household.

socially, and politically abused groups throughout society (Herod & Aguiar 2006). With the rise of neoliberalism, the individuals who occupy these positions tend to become dehumanized, treated as bodies and instruments of labor and often forced to undergo new forms of discipline in the workplace. Workers are expected to adapt to new demands, become flexible in their personal schedules, and withstand new regimes designed to create efficient workers and to maximize profit for employers (Leslie & Butz 1998, qtd in Herod & Aguiar 2006). Although there is very little to be gained financially or intellectually, this industry remains in high demand considering the need for cleanliness will never end and that employment in these occupations can be the determining factor of survival, particularly for immigrant families.

A prevailing theme in literature pertaining to janitors, maids, and domestic helpers is the notion of these individuals as “invisible” beings. This “invisibility” can refer to various characteristics, including the low wages workers are paid and most notably the tendency for individuals to ignore cleaners in public spaces, as their job is solely to “clean” and not necessarily to be integrated into the environment (Brody 2006; Herod & Aguiar 2006). Scholars have noted how one of the degrading elements of cleaning work conditions includes that of workers being kept under close surveillance (Brody 2006). Often times, workers are required to clean spaces during the evening after regular work hours in order to keep them from being seen, a schedule contributing to the devaluation of the occupation (Brody 2006).

Other researchers have sought to understand the manner in which today’s service occupations have developed patterns resembling those of the sweatshop. J.L. Gordon

explains the concept of “sweatshop citizenship” as that not quite pertaining to third world working conditions, but bearing close resemblance when analyzing the conditions that are found in the most common jobs (Gordon 2005 qtd in Aguiar 2006). This notion refers to the fact that many of these jobs do not fail to meet required labor regulations or violate laws, but it alludes to the systematic exploitation of the workers. The manner in which this maximum exploitation takes form, despite meeting minimum wage and safety standards, has been identified as the “systematic depression of wages”, which fails to provide an adequate standard of living for workers and their families (Ross 1997).

Consequently, scholarship revolving around janitors has placed an emphasis on analyzing the activism and movements of custodial and other low wage workers; this literature contributes primarily to understanding conflicts and divisions that rise within organizing and strategies in which social movements can be successful. Of particular interest is the formation of alliances within diverse communities in order to protect and defend these vulnerable groups of workers (Aguiar 2006; Albright 2008; Gordon 2005; Pulido 1998; Tattersall 2009). In seeking to understand low wage work and the struggles that can take place for workers’ rights, scholars have looked at what is termed “community unionism” in which worker’s participation in union activity extends far beyond the goal of attaining fair wages and a contract and instead, seeks to make gains oriented toward the achievement of social justice and the desire to restructure society as a whole (Pulido 1998).

In addition, janitorial scholarship has involved studies of unionism and the issues that make union participation and gains difficult for workers. Scholars note that worker

unionism in general had declined since the 1950s but has recently reemerged. While the majority of workers employed in these fields are women of color, close to over 70%, unionism continued to be limited because due to union exclusion based on gender (Pulido1998). Another specific barrier to union involvement that has been noted has been language. Often workers employed in these types of jobs are of Spanish-speaking backgrounds and are denied translators, inevitably denying them the opportunity to participate (Pulido 1998). However, with the resurgence of unionism, today a vast majority of union participants are women of color and Latina background.

The work of labor sociologist Ruth Milkman contributes significantly to that on custodians and janitors, but also focuses on union activities. In one of her collaborations with other scholars, Milkman contributes to scholarship which has examined the ways in which union organizing for janitors has been successful through the formation of the Justice for Janitors Campaign, one of the biggest campaigns dedicated to recruiting immigrant janitors (Milkman & Voss 2004; Waldinger et. al 1996). The successes of unions ultimately depends on the amount of pressure they are able to apply to employers. Milkman's work also explores the idea that immigrant workers are easier to organize due to strengths in social networks, class based collective organizations, and unity (Milkman & Voss 2004).

Cleaning the University

The work highlighting the difficult experiences of unionized workers is furthered by scholars who have focused specifically on custodians on university campuses and

work that has explained the manner in which alliances have been formed and the mechanisms that enabled for these movements to be successful. These studies analyze the importance of forming alliances with outside actors and people of diverse backgrounds, for example students and professors, and the manner in which these specific alliances have been fundamental in outcomes. Until recently, few studies had focused on the specifics of university janitors; for that reason it is possible to outline the majority of these findings. The majority of these studies have emphasized the oppressive conditions of janitors and the methods of organizing. These studies have been primarily limited to analyzing the activities of workers in public spaces, emphasizing their activities in the sphere of the workplace. This section of the literature review will perhaps be the most vital to my study considering that this scholarship resembles case studies specifically related to my project.

In several studies, scholars have analyzed the manner in which janitors collaborate with students, faculty and community. In Jason Albright's 2008 "Justice for Janitors Campaign" at the University of Miami, Albright conducted a study of the workers who formed a strategic alliance within a conservative and politically disengaged setting. The focus of the study was in revealing how an alliance with outside community actors, specifically the church, enabled a community to experience more mobilization than typical. This work also revealed that the demands of workers who are experiencing oppressive situations can be mitigated through the use of technology (Albright 2008). Albright discusses what is known as "new student activism", contrasting earlier waves of activism to current campaigns in which students become engaged through websites,

formation of widespread organizations, and social networks in order to disseminate information. The case study of the University of Miami illustrates how these new modes of activism can be vital for successes, as they have been in other broader social movements, including those on a global scale (Albright 2008). Literature focusing on low wage activism is crucial in understanding how outside actors contribute to the work of those often left “invisible” by making use of new technological means.

Through a focus on activism led by student-worker alliances in educational institutions, it has also been possible to understand the importance of selecting specific strategies in achieving gains for individuals who are often “powerless” in society. In the study conducted by Cranford and Wilton at the University of Southern California titled “Toward an Understanding of the Spatiality of Social Movements: Labor Organizing at a Private University in Los Angeles”, the focus was on how workers, students, and community members used tactics of spatial transgression around and beyond the campus. The significance of their study resulted in developing the notion of “space” as an active dimension of social movements. Rallies with students, workers, and faculty took place on vital locations throughout the campus and off campus in order to gain attention from outside agents. Cranford and Wilton conclude that the spatiality of social life demonstrates space is centrally implicated in the reproduction and contestation of social relations of power (Cranford & Wilton 2002).

The final study that is significant for purposes of my own research is the article by Mendez and Spady focused on a coalition of students. The study emphasized the alliance formed by different groups that had different resources available to them and focused

more on how unlikely alliances emerge. Mendez and Spady determine that it is the diversity and decentralized organizational structure of coalitions that allows for movements to thrive precisely in situations when “outsiders” join workers. This results in the development of a new community and culture of solidarity within coalitions despite the different race and class based networks to which people belong. This point is theoretically significant for my project considering that many of the UCSD workers who participated in the study come from a particular racial and class background. While students involved in interviews do share characteristics of the workers in terms of identity, their positions within UCSD, as students and not low wage workers, create a critical distinction. However, one thing to consider is that it is possible that some of these workers who have migrated from the south possess higher education that is not recognized in the United States and therefore find themselves currently employed as low wage labor (Mendez & Spady 2007).

These case studies illustrate the tendency for scholars who analyze low wage labor, specifically custodians in institutions of education, to focus on the formation of alliances and the various methods that are deployed in order for workers to make specific gains in a place where they are typically ignored and not integrated. This serves to highlight the need for closer analysis that goes beyond the scope of these studies and that enables an understanding of how custodians currently facing similar issues are being impacted by their perceptions of the university, students, and the new relationship that is being built at a time where solidarity is likely considering the dire conditions of various

groups who are affected by changes in the university. Essentially a focus on education and its correlation with workers is a new dimension absent from previous literature.

Domestic Workers

Most scholarship pertaining to individuals associated with occupations in which cleaning and maintenance are a primary function focuses on the experience of individuals who clean in private households. Various scholars have contributed to an extensive body of literature on domestic workers, including Pierre Hondagneu-Sotelo and Mary Romero. An analysis of domestic cleaners is closely linked with literature on gender and migration, primarily from Mexico and Central America. Literature that deals with migration and gender will be explored in more detail in the next chapter, placing the position of UCSD custodians into context.

These scholars have analyzed the manner in which workers become both highly integrated and excluded in relation to their work environment. Many women from black, Asian, or Latina backgrounds employed in this occupation are often undocumented, a situation which scholars have shown makes them more vulnerable to exploitive working conditions and mistreatment (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007). Less than ten percent of these workers had similar occupations in their home country, a statistic highlighting the fact that it is never the poorest that migrate (Romero 2002). Hondagneu-Sotelo points to the tendency for these poor conditions to be justified due to the fact that women are believed to be “better off” working in the United States than in Mexico. Ethnic and racial divisions are often heavily reinforced through these roles in which women are subject to the

conditions and demands set forth by their typically white, American, middle class employers, who are able to afford these maids due to the influx of immigration and the consequent supply of cheap labor (de la Luz Ibarra 2000). These women are recruited by women in the United States who are in need of someone to assume their domestic responsibilities while they follow a career. This domestic role is supported by existing gender ideologies which dictate that women must care for maintaining the home and also taking care of children. These occupations often require workers to work long hours and on weekends, and significantly tire them to the point where they neglect their own familial responsibilities.

One of the prominent notions scholars address is that of “motherhood”, and the ways in which domestic workers who clean and care for households essentially become the substitute mothers of the children residing in the home, assuming the responsibilities of their employer. Often times employers become jealous of the relationships these cleaners and nannies inevitably form with their children, creating a feeling of resentment (Romero 2002; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997). These domestic workers replace the absent mothers, form affectionate ties with children, and often endear themselves to these children, replacing their own, who are often left in their countries of origin (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997). Distinct categories exist for looking at the various types of housecleaners, since these occupations are organized according to tasks, pay, and hours. According to a study by Mary Romero in 1996, the category which offered the most benefits, flexibility, and pay to workers was that of cleaning homes on a weekly basis (Romero 2002). Through these studies we come to see the experience of domestic workers as one of

exploitation, low pay, discrimination, while noting the assumption of responsibilities and emotional engagement that stem beyond the physical act of cleaning and upkeep.

Thus, literature on domestic work in homes has been highly explored, but a gap remains in understanding the concrete experiences of custodians and janitors, particularly those employed in prestigious sites. Scholarship has been primarily focused on union activity and on understanding these workers within a framework of social alliances, but not much has been done on analyzing the experience or the impact of their everyday work and relationships within academic settings. This thesis will analyze the daily experience of university custodians and their relationships with students, some of which have led to much stronger bonds and increased efforts to defend workers, students, and essentially human rights in various spheres.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my review has outlined current scholarship surrounding custodial workers which places them in the ranks of some of the most exploited in society. Scholarship has emphasized the consequent need and methods for organizing these workers and the importance of building social alliances. Literature on worker issues in educational institutions although very limited, is perhaps the most important in regards to my project. This literature has enabled an understanding of how social alliances can be formed among the most unlikely individuals and supplemented scholarship that focuses on the motivations for activism among diverse groups of individuals, most notably students. Scholarly emphasis on domestic work both offers a space for comparison as well as

evidences the need for more research on individuals devoted to this type of work outside the domestic sphere. These studies help provide a substantial framework for my thesis, but clearly demark the voids that have been left by existing research.

The contribution to scholarship of this study lies in understanding the experience of workers devoted to cleaning in an academic setting on a much further level. This work fills some of the gaps left by scholarship devoted primarily to union activism and the formation of alliances in order to achieve goals by workers.

Furthermore, analyzing the manner in which UC custodians have been affected by the UC budget crisis will enable an understanding of how this “invisible” group is impacted by the system as significantly or perhaps to a greater level than the actual students. This issue is of significance as it provides an understanding of domestic work in the formal sector, particularly in a site of prestige which brags about its values of community and its commitment to excellence⁴.

Analyzing the relationship that has developed between students and workers goes beyond the literature that emphasizes strategies for organizing these groups. This work seeks to bring to light the experience of these workers and the consequent relationships that are formed with students with whom they interact on a daily basis. Moreover, the inclinations for activism of these students will be brought to light, an analysis that

⁴ The UCSD Principles of Community state “We are committed to the highest standards of civility and decency toward all. We are committed to promoting and supporting a community where all people can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of abusive or demeaning treatment”. <http://www.ucsd.edu/explore/about/principles.html>.

enables an understanding of why students are currently active with these workers across the state as well as in the defense of public education at the UC in general, and that explains why this trend may continue.

This thesis will first provide an overview of the current changes in the University of California system which have resulted from the financial crisis in California since 2008. I will illustrate how these changes have had a detrimental effect on students, most heavily on students of color. The next chapter will outline conditions for custodians and the manner in which they have been affected physically and emotionally at their worksite and at their homes through situations reinforcing class, gender, and national inequalities due to the increases in workloads brought on by the cuts in the UC system, which have been used to justify their exploitation. The final chapter will emphasize how the two groups which have been most excluded from UC universities, underrepresented students of color or from working class families and university workers, have formed an alliance. The chapter will seek to understand the motivations and contributions of each group in working toward achieving justice and the struggle to preserve the University of California as a public space of integrity. These chapters will be supplemented by theoretical scholarship, including an analysis of “intersectionality” to explain the position of Latina, immigrant women involved in custodial work as well as student activism, and an analysis of social alliance theory in order to understand the student-worker alliance brought on by workers and the UCSD Student Worker Collective.

Although it can be inferred that the University of California currently could be constructed as the “common enemy” of students and workers who have been highly

affected by wage decreases and tuition increases, it is of interest to understand why these individuals and organizations have united and remained so. Understanding the manner in which the groups perceive one another is pertinent to understanding these motivations and also in understanding the boundaries that have been both consciously and unconsciously crossed. This study will hopefully allow for comprehending the ways in which workers are subject to every day challenges in a community not entirely their own but also the manner in which they understand and have come to endure their work with pride

Chapter 1: The UC in Crisis

Over the past few years the University of California San Diego, as all of the University of California (UC) system and many public universities worldwide have faced a financial crisis and the risk of privatization as a result of the global economic crisis and resulting cuts to education. These changes have significantly affected students, faculty, staff and workers. These financial challenges have produced long disputes and contract negotiation processes for service workers who earn the lowest of wages throughout the UC system.

Since 2009 negotiations have been ongoing over attaining a “fair” contract for low wage workers and led to mass protests of university students, faculty, workers, and staff to oppose long term retirement proposals that would lead to an increase in deductions from 200,000 university workers for pensions which would over long term benefit high paid employees in the system. Protests have also included demands from workers to attain an increase in wages (Asimov 2010). The cuts for workers were the result of the 2009 -2010 budget agreement between the California Legislature and former Governor Schwarzenegger.

Despite the gain in reaching a contract agreement between UC Custodians and the UC System in 2009, many struggles have continued throughout the past three years. Due to the inequitable allocation of money throughout the system, budget cuts continue to affect the workers in various ways. Not only have workers been affected financially as the cost of living rises in UC localities, but these budget cuts have also been used to justify the inability of the UC to hire more staff.

In 2011, the California budget bill allocated approximately three million dollars specifically to service workers. It was later requested by UC President Yudof that the restriction be waived and that instead, the money be used with flexibility in the midst of the five hundred million dollar cut to the UC budget that year. It is currently estimated that about 200 top UC executives were awarded additional retirement benefits, totaling to about four million dollars combined (Beidelman2011). While top executives continue to receive bonuses and six figure salaries and students pay more than three times the previous attendance fees, UC low wage service workers struggle to attain miniscule wage increases and to fight for better working conditions (Beidelman 2011).

Included in the worker struggle has been the support and defense of university students. This chapter will serve to provide a brief overview of the ways in which the University of California has changed over the last few years due to lack of state funding, resulting from a dire national economic situation since 2008. Students who are most impacted by the system are those who are most active in the struggles for education, and in forming relationships and supporting the workers. These students come predominantly from ethnic minority groups and working class backgrounds within the UC. This chapter will provide a background of current financial strains in the UC system and the consequent student action, the hardships that these students, predominantly students of color, face during college, and the prioritization of UC admission for other student groups. These issues will continue to be contributing factors to the low representation of these allies and activists.

UC Students

The University of California System currently has nine out of ten university campuses that rank among the world's best public universities. In addition to the recognized high ranking, the UCs have in previous years been praised for their accessibility as part of the California Master Plan for Higher Education. In 1960 the California Master Plan promised California students access to quality education at community colleges, California State Universities, or UC institutions.

The plan called for higher education to be funded by the state and students would only be required to pay "fees" of which 78 percent was covered by the state of California. Unfortunately, since 2010, the percentage paid by the state has been significantly lowered to forty seven percent as a result of the budget crisis in the state; what has not been dramatically reduced is spending on prisons which continues to be prioritized as it has since 2004.

The financial impacts of this education budget reduction have included an array of measures: furloughs, layoffs, enrollment caps, and drastic increases in tuition. Furloughs obligated 180,000 workers to take anywhere from 11-26 unpaid days during the 2008-2009 year, depending on wage level ("Furlough program begins across UC" 2009). The furlough plan was the preferred method to layoffs in an enormous system that includes five medical centers, three national laboratories, and 225,000 graduate and undergraduate students.

However, furloughs only covered about one fourth of the UC deficit; a ten percent increase in tuition, debt refinancing and dramatic budget cuts at individual UC campuses would serve to fill the rest. As a news article reflected back in 2009, “ The retrenchment at individual campuses will mean fewer student jobs, fewer teaching assistants, a virtual elimination of lecturers (who often teach up to 30% of undergraduate classes in some departments) and the risk that top faculty will flee for more lucrative and stable ivory towers” (Oleary 2009).

In an effort to maintain the “excellence” and top rankings of the University of California System, fees have since then been increased for all students, and the recruitment of non-resident students has increased. Wealthy alumni are being targeted for donations to the university. These new strategies to salvage the ranking and “quality” in UC education, ultimately reflect what many have argued to be the “demise of public education”. California now places 41st in the number of college degrees awarded to high school students, and it is predicted that the state will face a shortage of graduates by the year 2025 (“Excellence for Fewer: California, long a leader in public higher education, is now privatizing it” 2011)

State Action

The UC budget crisis has impacted students, staff, and faculty in various ways. Since 2009, these groups have been actively protesting against these new policies enacted by the UC Regents, the governing body in the University of California System. These Regents hold power under the state constitution and are elected to twelve year terms with

one student from the University of California elected to serve as Student Regent for one year. This administrative body meets every two months for two days, meetings which have often been canceled or rescheduled for fear of protestors.

Since the California crisis in 2008, the severity of the events at the University of California has galvanized the support of students, faculty, staff, and workers who wished to propose alternatives to the future of the system. Students have begun organizing educational and protest activity, bringing the groups together in unity in order to preserve the UC as a high quality institution. These statewide movements that began in late 2009 have continued to occur until recent months.

In late September 2009, students staged the first of several large actions; a few weeks later at a conference held at UC Berkeley, March 4, 2010 was designated as a "State Wide Day of Action". Since then campuses have witnessed several of these events every year up until 2012.

In 2011, UC student protests grew in solidarity with the "Occupy Wall Street Movement", a world wide effort which battles the inequalities and greed triggered by the "One Percent"⁵. In early November 2012, UC Regents cancelled their meeting due to fears of protest, and instead selected a teleconferencing method, which was interrupted by

⁵ "Occupy Wall Street" is a worldwide movement that began on September 17, 2011 in New York City. The movement adopted the slogan "We are the 99 percent" in reference to the growing distribution of wealth and income inequality between the "99 percent" and the wealthiest "1 percent" in the United States.

<http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D9QAJN983.htm>.

the gathering and chanting of hundreds of students. Police used force against students at the UC Davis campus and fifty were injured with pepper spray⁶.

The latest event that entailed state wide mobilization protesting the UC was held on March 4, 2012. The “March 4th Day of Action” drew international attention with road blockages, teach-ins, walkouts, and rallies. Students protested the cuts in both k-12 and higher education for the upcoming year with the decline of federal stimulus funds (“Day of Action UPDATE: At March 4 Protests Rowdy CA Students, Reportedly Armed, Block Campus” 2012)

Despite these continued protests, California students have yet to make a drastic impact or change on the educational system to a massive scale. Access to education has been decreasing on a worldwide basis. A situation comparable to that of the University of California is that in Chile. In the last several months of 2011, tens of thousands of Chilean students have staged numerous large scaled protests, making demands for free education.

After the April 2012 student protest of 25,000 in the capital city of Santiago and throughout the country, the Chilean President announced tax reform benefiting education as well as the lowering of interest rates on student loans. The government’s plan is part of

⁶ On November 18, 2011, students demonstrating on the UC Davis campus were pepper sprayed by university police. Allegations were made of excessive force on students and a number of investigations are currently ongoing, including the appointment of a task force, placing UCD Chancellor Linda Katehi’s leadership under scrutiny. <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/apr/12/local/la-me-0412-uc-davis-20120412>.

the student advocated initiative to make education available to all, however students continue to be upset with notions of education as a “consumer good, and not as a right” (“Thousands of Chile students in fresh reform protests”2012). Most of the education in Chile is currently privatized, with less than half of the student body attending public institutions (“Student Protests Resume in Chile” 2012). The situation in Chile highlights the problem of public higher education on a global scale and offers perhaps a good model for more effectively organizing UC students.

Current Impact of the UCs

All University of California campuses have been impacted in various ways and to distinct degrees, and have all contributed to the decline of the quality of education. Professor and President of the University Council-American Federation of Teachers, Bob Samuels has been active in researching the various factors and changes that have affected the University of California. In a recent article in April 2012, Samuels explains that currently, many classes are being affected due to the number of enrolled students or the number of courses that are being taught. At the UC Riverside campus, classes are averaged to have grown by at least thirty three percent. This increase in class size creates difficulty in accessing instruction and instructor availability, thereby disabling students for completing required courses. Growth of student size and decrease in staff also affect the availability of support programs for students (Samuels 2012). Samuels cites that pension costs will increase to 1.8 billion dollars over the next five years, which can only be covered by unlikely additional state funding or more tuition costs.

The financial crisis of California has also significantly impacted the composition of the UC student population. Since the UC Regents' 1995 ban on the consideration of race, sex, and ethnicity when admitting students to universities in California, and the subsequent Prop 209 elimination of these criteria for outreach efforts and awarding of financial aid, admission for particular groups to the UC system has been highly problematic. Many campuses have students from a variety of backgrounds, but fail to adequately reflect California's population. Asian and White students dominate enrollment. At campuses like UC Berkeley more than seventy percent of students come from Asian and White backgrounds⁷

On the other hand, students of color still make up an insignificant percentage of the population at UCs. This year at UCSD, the population of minority groups declined from an already small percentage. For Chicano students, admits for next fall saw a 12% decline; first generation college students, 12% decline and low income students, 13% decline. Students from affluent backgrounds rose by 68% increase and the number of non-residents, 68%⁸.

The lack of an increase in percentages of students of color coupled with their upbringing in predominantly diverse environments can lead to culture shock for many once they come to campus and sense a hostile environment. This sense of alienation has

⁷ <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2012/04/21/campus-diversity-suffers-under-race-blind-policies-2081929089/>.

⁸ 2012 Statistics provided to me by the UCSD Chican@ Latin@ Arts and Humanities (CLAH) program.

been seen to create other challenges for underrepresented students of color, including poor academic performance at all levels including early education and high school and high dropout rates (Aviles et. al 1999, Oliver et. al 1995, Rendon et. at 2000). These challenges ultimately affect levels of representation of these students in higher education.

It is projected that the diversity of students at the University of California will continue to decrease due to the steep hikes in tuition, which are estimated to reach annual tuition increases of 8% to 16% over the next four years, possibly bringing the fee as high as \$22,068 for the 2015-16 school year, according to a long-term budget plan that the university unveiled last year (Gordon 2011).

Since many minority students at UCs are from working class families, they will either be unable to afford the tuition or will be forced to take out thousands in high interest rate student loans offered to students in financial aid packages.

Another reason that has been cited for a decline in the enrollment of diverse groups at the University of California is the heightened dependence on SAT scores in considering admittance for freshmen. It has been shown that SAT scores reflect the wealth of students being accepted; students who score well are typically those whose parents are willing to and have been able to provide their sons and daughters with private tutoring; they also are the ones willing to make significant donations to the university. Merit based financial aid packages are essentially replacing packages that were previously based on family income. As Bob Samuel notes:

Middle-class students subsidize lower-class students through a system that raises fees for everyone, and then gives a third of the money back for financial aid to the students whose parents make less than a combined \$70,000. It is these same middle-class families that have seen their investments wiped out and their home values plunge. This is the true war on the middle-class: we are now seeing middle-class students dropping out of college because their parents cannot afford the tuition increases. (Samuels 2009).

Further, one of the ways in which tuition is gained by the university is through an increase in out-of-state students. The University of California admitted a record number of freshmen to its nine undergraduate campuses to be enrolled in fall 2012, largely increasing the out of state student population that pays a higher tuition. These students are required to pay nearly three times as much in tuition as their instate counterparts who pay nearly \$12,000 per year. At UCSD this resulted in more than 18,000 potential nonresident students, up forty three percent from the previous year. (Flynn 2012). “We’re thrilled UC San Diego continues to attract many highly qualified and dynamic students,” said Mae Brown, UCSD Assistant Vice chancellor for Admissions and Enrollment Services. “Our students have made tremendous contributions to this campus, helping to establish UC San Diego as a world-renowned, academic powerhouse.” (qtd. in Flynn 2012).

The majority of these students are not from historically underrepresented African American and Latin@ communities. This strategy essentially constitutes what is called “creaming”, ultimately reducing spots for working class students of color who are far

more likely to rely on financial aid. Percentages of students of color overall in the University of California system, already currently stand at significantly low levels⁹.

Despite the impact that budget cuts will continue to have on all students across California, undoubtedly it is those of color and other underrepresented groups that will be the most affected. Many of these students from low income backgrounds find themselves working many hours throughout their college years in order to pay fees or other living expenses (Limb & Organista 2003).

In addition, students from underrepresented backgrounds are often responsible for contributing to their households or supporting their families, an economic situation that creates hardships when students are asked to pay more in tuition, or when financial aid packages are decreased in prioritizing rewards for other students.

Many of these students are politically active, participating in protests and rallies against the University of California, given that they are the most highly to be impacted by a number of factors. They do however, constitute a small number. The insignificant representation of these groups serves as a possible explanation as to why UC students have yet to organize on a scale comparable to those in other nations, such as in the case of Chile noted in an earlier section. It has been noted that a significant factor in determining student involvement is the availability of resources including time (Johnston

⁹ The proportion of admitted African American students stands at 4.4 percent in 2012 and the proportion of Chicano/Latin@s at 27.3 percent in the University of California System.

http://www.ucop.edu/news/factsheets/2012/fall_2012_admits_summary_041612.pdf.

1994, McAdam 1986, Petrie 2004). Thus, it becomes viable to suggest that perhaps a proportion of students of color are often unable to participate in advocating for change due to other commitments, such as work, family care obligations, and perhaps dealing with identity specific issues which may create difficulties for these students.

This poses a serious challenge for creating change in the UC system. Budget cuts are projected for the future 2012-2013 year and are expected to continue in upcoming years. Students of color will continue to be minorities, as those from affluent, majority backgrounds will be admitted to compensate for the financial burdens of the UC. Minorities who do enroll will continue to face various challenges.

This chapter has served to illustrate the various ways in which education becomes increasingly unattainable for students in California, especially ironically, for those groups that represent the largest populations in the state. Currently, it is at the level of UC's low wage workers that we have our largest representation. It is the workers that have joined students in protest activities in support of salvaging California public education during the past several years. Students and workers are undoubtedly the most visible groups in actions and unite against the Regents, declaring similar goals and demanding student and worker's rights that are essentially human rights. Although the low representation of engaged students in protests suggests that change for the UC may not occur anytime soon, student action with workers is highly worth analyzing. The following chapter will focus on UCSD custodians and illustrate the ways in which they too have been impacted by this budget crisis. Their example may perhaps reflect the situation at other UC's but for purposes of this research, findings will remain specific to the San Diego campus.

Chapter 2: ¿Donde quedan los ‘Principios de Comunidad’?

I feel like I don't belong here most of the time. The treatment is very inhumane, I'm ignored. I give my best and only end up stressed out or physically hurt. I sacrificed a lot to be here and I thought I would be better off as a university worker, but I'm so far from that. -Rogelia¹⁰

Rogelia has been employed at UCSD for over eight years as a custodial worker after having spent several years working as a janitor at a San Diego grocery store.

Rogelia experienced injuries in 2011 during what has become known as the “Steam Machine Incident” by UCSD workers and students. She described being devoted to her job despite her “inability to feel welcomed into the UCSD community”.

Currently at UCSD, there are hundreds of employed custodians who are dedicated to cleaning student living spaces on campus who experience similar conditions in terms of work organization as those described by Rogelia. This chapter will focus on analyzing the various manners in which custodial workers at UCSD have been affected as a result of the recent University of California economic crisis. I will illustrate the current experiences and transformations in both the spaces of their homes and work.

First, the chapter will first provide an overview of the workers interviewed in this thesis for this sector of Latin American-U.S. immigration and the consequent infiltration of these immigrants into the low wage sector while noting the conditions that characterize

¹⁰ All names have been changed to protect participant identity.

these positions. I will provide a brief overview of the notion of “intersectionality” to illustrate how race, class, nationality, and gender shape the experiences of many groups, including low wage and UCSD workers. The chapter will essentially argue that working conditions for UCSD custodians have served to reinforce existing inequalities of class, gender, and nationality among what are predominantly immigrant female Latina workers. I will illustrate the ways in which workers’ increased duties have led to physical and emotional difficulties while maintaining financial hardships, and created national barriers through language and perceived discrimination. Lastly, I will highlight the changing workers’ perspectives and their sense of an increased inaccessibility to higher education. Essentially, the chapter will present the manner in which individuals of color, specifically immigrants, are exploited and excluded in a site of higher education. This finding holds consistently with studies that show that groups have less access to education and jobs as a result of detrimental structural adjustments, creating economic and social dislocations (Asch 2004, Davis 2010, Ogbu 1994, Omi & Winant 1994).

UCSD Custodians: Who they Are

I immigrated eleven years ago when my family and I won the lottery in Peru and we came because we thought it was better in this country. Every morning I commute from San Ysidro and it takes me a while, nearly an hour, to get here. -Daniela

The majority of the workers interviewed for this study live in areas outside of La Jolla, southern San Diego communities including Spring Valley, South Bay, and San Ysidro. Several workers currently or formerly commuted from Tijuana, joining the

thousands of individuals who cross the border daily in hopes of attaining a better wage¹¹. Daytime custodial workers at UCSD who work during the day have work hours ranging from 7:30-9am., ending their shifts from 4-5pm; workers' responses indicated a range from an hour to two hours to and from the campus. Workers reside in these communities which are at significant distance due to the expensive rental rates in the La Jolla community, averaging about \$1300, compared to \$900-1000 range in Chula Vista or Spring Valley¹². The commute itself represents economic hardships; time spent in their travel to and from work often dictates the need to extend childcare hours for their children. The distance also means significant amounts spent each week on gas. Moreover, workers who select the convenience of parking at their worksite are required to pay a parking permit of at least \$60 per month required of UCSD staff and faculty regardless of the wages they earn.

Nearly half of custodian and grounds workers employed at UCSD are female, and approximately 57% percent are from Latin@ origins, every participant in this study being

¹¹ Everyday approximately fifty thousand vehicles and twenty five thousand individuals on foot cross the border back and forth from Tijuana, Mexico into San Diego through the San Ysidro point of entry. These individuals commute to shop, attend school, but the majority of them do so for employment purposes. <http://www.otaymesaparking.com/san-ysidro-border-crossing.html>.

¹² 1 bedroom apartments in Chula Vista currently average at \$924 and in Spring Valley at \$961 per month. These averages are based on 143 apartment complex reports in Chula Vista and 29 in Spring Valley. <http://www.apartmentratings.com/rate?a=MSAAvgRentalPrice&msa=7320#b>

of immigrant background or undocumented status¹³. While the majority of workers who I interviewed come from Mexico, there were also two individuals who immigrated from Peru and Colombia, many workers having previously been employed in custodial or other low wage work. Despite the percentage indicating a nearly equal representation of male to female workers in the “Custodial/Services” category, a large proportion of custodians are female and Spanish-speaking Latinas. The saturation of this group in custodial services calls for the need to briefly outline the high influx patterns of Latin American migration into the United States in the last century, which in turn serves to illustrate the consequent predominance of these women in custodial occupations as well as the heightened probability of exploitation resulting from the intersection of their multiple identities.

Latinas, Borders, and *Limpieza*

Since the 1930s women have outnumbered men in terms of migration numbers. The 1996 Immigration Reform Act perpetuated an increase in women’s migration due to the tightening of border controls, which essentially ended the ability of men to migrate in a circular pattern. The end of this cycle of migration and the fact that women became single heads of households in Mexico increased the need for women to work, seek independence, and accountability for their households (Momsen 1999). Immigrant

¹³ These statistics were provided to me from UCSD Affirmative action staff upon request. Custodians were included under the service workers category which is also inclusive of UCSD “grounds workers”, which lowers the overall representation of women. Union members have estimated women to make up close to 70 percent of custodial staff.

women found limited employment options that pushed them into jobs that were unprotected and extremely low paid. Economic pressures produced in Mexico have been the principal driving force behind migration for centuries, and border cities including the San Diego/Tijuana region have witnessed a notable history of commuters for working purposes (Herzog 1990). Many of these commuters have resident status and are able to commute from their homes in Tijuana on a daily basis and engage in low paid work, which often times in comparison to the wage in Mexico, is considerably higher. Many of these individuals migrate to the United States as legal residents, partaking in these economic opportunities and frequently visiting their families on the other side.

Urban areas in the U.S. have become zones for high levels of low wage jobs that have been readily available to immigrants since the latter half of the 20th century. Employers have relied on these workers within the informal, private sector run by large corporations (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). The majority of these workers have infiltrated the South Western region of the United States, primarily California, establishing regional patterns in occupations such as those dedicated to maintenance and cleaning functions (Romero 2002). While in the 1970's and 80's most janitorial and custodial positions were dominated by blacks, an increase in mobility enabled blacks to move on to occupy higher paid positions (Rosenfeld & Tienda 1999). The low level of education of many immigrants from Mexico and the fact that they are more willing to work long hours in an effort to make up for low wages, has led to an overrepresentation of this group in the cleaning industry (Rosenfeld & Tienda 1999)

More recently, scholars have identified a “new urban politics” which places immigrants at the center of “global cities” including San Diego, where they are woven into specific niches and then fitted into racialized spaces which often intersect with gender (Davis 1987; Keil 1998). This engendering process has led to the downgrading of work and is highly visible in the service work that attracts primarily women (Rosenfeld & Tienda 1999). Sasha Sassen had specifically identified the “service complex regime” which theorizes that private corporate jobs are dominated by white males and tend to be overvalued while essentially devaluing service jobs (Sassen 1998). Like black women in the South, Latinas have come to be associated with hard labor within the domestic sphere, a classification that has placed them within specific maintenance and cleaning occupations centered around hotels, servitude and janitorial occupations (Bose & Acosta 1995). As is well known, female immigrant workers who take these jobs are subject to low wages, no benefits, and the violation of protection laws (Fisk et al 2000).

In the past, scholarship on female immigration to the United States from Latin America remained largely unaddressed in academia until scholars began to focus research on the supply and demand factors of international labor and changes in wages across national boundaries during the 1980’s (Cerutti & Massey 2001). Scholars such as Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Rachel Parreñas began analyzing the function of women outside the household and focusing on the institutional and economic levels which explained the experience of women as one of multiple disadvantages as a consequence of racial, gender, and national identity (Parreñas 2001, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001 Lan 2006). Scholars including Patricia Collins have argued that the categories of race and gender

become socially constructed and highly interwoven (Collins 1990). This scholarship suggests the need to examine distinctions created by national difference, citing immigrant status among colored women as an increase in the propensity to experience exploitation in domestic work and other low wage positions (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001).

It is estimated that by the year 2050 Latin@s in the United States will make up about one fourth of the total labor force (36, Toossi 2006). Latin@s employed in low wage jobs is in part due to the recruitment by employers based on articulations of racial meanings (Johnson-Web 2002, Kandel William & Parrado 2005). These articulations in turn come to influence the treatment and practices associated with these individuals' "culture", particularly for Mexican workers which serves in turn to justify practices in the workplace. The "hierarchy" that exists in the labor force placing these people of color at the bottom is reproduced by racist ideologies and the practices that are sustained by them (Maldonado 2009). Essentially, this racialization perpetuates exploitation of the colored individual (Maldonado 2009).

Scholars have concluded that gender and race are not analytical categories, and that it is necessary for them to be combined in order to gain an effective understanding of the manner in which they operate (King 1989, Weber 2001). Scholars note that race and gender are closely interconnected, essentially creating a "gendered" race and "racialized gender", categories that shape the experiences for individuals from every group (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, Amott & Matthaei 1991, Collins 1999, Essed 1991, Glen 1999). Further, according to the "multiple advantage hypothesis", individuals who occupy the lowest position in two or more categories will experience the most

disadvantage as well as least economic rewards; scholarship points to Latina and Black females as current occupants of this position; as they experience exploitative jobs, least authority in the workplace, and earn the lowest wages (Browne 2001, Maume 1999). Documentation and immigration status have also been illustrated to complicate the race, class, and gender nexus, often determining labor market position (Kibria 1994, Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila 1997).

These conditions explain and are reflected in the experience of UCSD custodians. Inequalities pertaining to class will be delineated in the following section emphasizing the less-than living wage custodians earn while experiencing an increase in work and subsequent stressors and anxiety, which inevitably lead to what can be categorized as the exploitation of workers.

Poverty among UC Workers

Over the last several years, UCSD service workers have battled with the struggle for higher wages. In the year 2008, workers across the University of California began to organize for a new contract through protests, strikes, and marches. UCSD workers were very active in this struggle with support of student organizations and faculty, coming to a contract agreement nearly a year and a half later. UCSD custodians are currently represented by the AFSCME (American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees) Local 3299 Union. AFSCME currently represents over twenty thousand workers throughout the University of California system, including the ten university campuses, five medical centers, and agricultural and marine research stations.

The new agreement covered 8,500 UC service employees, including custodians, groundskeepers, cooks, and parking attendants. The new contract included annual wage increases that brought workers who make as little as \$10 an hour now to at least \$14 an hour over five years. (Lybarger 2009).

UCSD custodians are currently categorized under the category of UCSD staff, “Custodian/Maintenance Workers” who currently earn a range of \$14-\$17 per hour¹⁴. While this wage offers advantages in comparison to local janitors, who earn as little as \$8.75 per hour, the wage remains one of the lowest in the University of California System¹⁵. University of California wages have been reported to fall significantly under the poverty level and over 90 percent are eligible for public assistance¹⁶ University of California reports defend the salary level by pointing out in 2009 that union represented employees are closer to the market average than all other categories of employees in the University of California system and the compensation is even 18% higher than

¹⁴ www.blink.ucsd.edu

¹⁵ A 2005 study by the National Economic Development and Law Center analyzed wages of service workers across the University of California System. UCSD employees had some of the highest percentages of individuals living below the self-sufficiency standard in California when compared to other UCs. <http://www.insightcced.org/uploads/publications/wd/High-Ideals-Low-Pay.pdf>.

¹⁶ According to a campaign launched by the AFSCME 3299 Union representing University of California workers, approximately 96 percent qualify for public assistance in 2008. Since wages have not experienced a significant increase in the past four years and the cost of living has risen, it can be effectively inferred that the situation remains the same for a large majority of workers. <http://www.facingpovertyatuc.org>.

counterparts at other institutions¹⁷. However, despite this comparison, the financial hardships and position in the low ranges of socioeconomic status was confirmed by every custodian participant in this study. The high percentage of workers living under the poverty line and suffering family financial struggles reinforces the cycle of poverty amongst working class and immigrant families, many of whom see no possibility for their children to experience higher education, a theme which will be further discussed in a latter part of this chapter.

It is important to provide an outline of the daily lives of workers at UCSD. The workers who are the focus of this thesis are engaged in cleaning the dormitories and apartments for students living on campus and employed primarily during 7:30am-4pm shifts, time slots that increase their interactions with students. Workers are allotted one small break throughout the day and have an hour lunch break at noon. Workers are typically assigned a lunchroom at whatever campus they may be working in, but there are several who do not have access to a room or the room is very small and poorly furnished. Workers assigned to campus apartments are responsible for cleaning apartment kitchens, including sinks, ovens, counters, and floors. Workers must also fully clean bathrooms and dining/living areas, and patios for these students. In dormitories, workers are responsible for the larger common areas and patios, as well as multiple units in each bathroom. In

¹⁷ The most recent report available analyzing wages in the University of California illustrates figures supporting UC's goal of achieving market-competitive pay and benefits for all employee groups.
http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/compensation/payroll2010/employee_pay_summary_cy2010.pdf

both cases, workers must clean floors, vacuum carpets, clean walls, windows, mirrors, doorways, laundry and trash rooms etc. According to the custodian handbook of duties, workers are to use self “initiative” for other miscellaneous responsibilities. These responsibilities can include attending to a variety of belongings or additional areas that are extremely unkempt by students. As one worker explained, students can leave their skateboards, bicycles, books, bathroom items on counters, all of which take extra time to be removed. Since these items create obstructions to custodian duties, their relocation is necessary. Workers mentioned that these additional duties can vary by campus, creating difficulties in accounting for time. Workers’ jobs also go well beyond cleaning; interaction with students creates various additional guardian and parental roles for workers which will be further explored in the next chapter.

Interviewed workers each affirmed the notion of financial difficulty often attributing the low wages with the “unfairness” of an increasingly difficult work schedule. One of the emerging themes correlates with the notion of workers not understanding the contrasting idea of an expanding university in terms of construction and campus growth that doubles their duties while the university argues an inability to pay workers a living wage or improve conditions for them, during a time of “economic crisis”.

A human being that has rights, rights and respect. And dignity, right? The university grows, the abuses grow. Because it is an abuse that they are taking away, that they take away, that they add on (work). Every day it is piling up. I don’t see this as being fair for the worker because if the university grows...when the university grows it’s a corporation, what is the first thing? To contract more people? Because it’s growing right? So I think, I don’t know if my coworkers are in agreement with me and what I

am going to say, but I think that they want a system of slaves and I think that we are not slaves. If the university grows, there should be new workers, new personnel, new everything because the university is growing but we get treated worse and have the same pathetic pay. -Raquel

Similarly, one worker stated they did not have many “complaints” regarding their employment in custodian services at UCSD, but found himself contradicting his assertion when asked about general views toward salary. The worker explained he was a bachelor who lived in Spring Valley and was only responsible for caring for himself, but explained since the budget cuts to the system were used as an “excuse” to increase workload and not pay workers a higher salary, he found himself having a more difficult time understanding the role he played on campus and the importance of his contribution, feeling “degraded” and “abused”.

It doesn't make sense to me that the university continues to build and add more things. It really stresses me out to find out when there are plans for construction. I know my work will only get harder and I or my colleagues can be moved around. My friend who had been working in the same area for years was transferred to another secluded area on campus where there are only two workers responsible for the entire area. I just feel the poor salary is one thing, but I think what hurts the workers more is that we are not being treated with respect-Fernando

Fernando brings up a significant trend captured through sections of custodian interviews regarding salary. Although each worker specified the inability for his or her family to live comfortably and how necessary it is to attain a higher wage, workers spent more time emphasizing the absurdity of the amount of work they were being given, and

feelings of mal and inhumane treatment. Worker's focus on this aspect dictates the importance of dissatisfying conditions and experiences and highlights the impacts that surpass low wages.

El riesgo y costo del trabajo

We are being hurt in various aspects through our job here. We suffer enough as it is from the work overload, we get injured on the job, and then when we are sick or have families that need us to take care of them, we are not able to, or get scolded for requesting, so the cycle continues... –Lupe

The previous quote reflects the sentiments of many UCSD custodial workers as they pertain to their job experience and the manner in which their employment has had an impact on their health. In addressing the routine work overload that custodians have recently faced, the injuries on the job, as well as the health issues that arise in everyday tasks, Lupe makes clear that their physical well-being is exacerbated by their employment as custodians at UCSD.

The most frequently cited complaint among custodial workers pertaining to work organization across the campus was the increased workload. I borrow the term “work organization” from a 2006 public health qualitative study based on conditions for immigrant workers, which defines work organization as the way in which jobs are designed and managed, including compensation, hiring and firing practices, work hours, load, and schedule (252, de Castro et. al 2006)

Over the past year, custodial duties have increased which has in turn created various issues for workers. Through interviews with custodians at each campus it became evident that although not all workloads among custodians have increased to the same degree, they nevertheless had a withstanding physical and emotional impact on workers.

A common trend in housing across campuses which significantly alters workers' schedule, physical condition, and even family life includes the same number of workers being responsible for cleaning an increased amount of buildings. An adequate model is exemplified by workers in Eleanor Roosevelt and Earl Warren Colleges where starting earlier this year, workers were required to clean both campus dormitories and apartments. Prior to their schedule, custodians were responsible for cleaning dormitories on a Monday-Friday basis. Regulations were changed so that workers would be cleaning the dormitories on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and on Tuesday, Thursday they would be cleaning apartment buildings.

Although technically workers would be cleaning the apartments on a less frequent basis, workers explained that the workload increases because the fewer workers are able to focus attention on dormitories and apartments, the more work that is required for them to have the same spaces sanitized to a satisfactory degree. As Raquel explained,

Before you had daily cleaning from Monday through Friday. There the days off were on Saturday and Sunday, so those days you did not get any service. But on Monday, how would you wake up in your suite? Very dirty, right? The bathrooms were really dirty right? So imagine that the dormitories are going to be cleaned only three days per week. For example, let's say Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. And they would give us work because they just extended it, and to us they are sending us to do apartments two days. So why do they tell the students they are going to

have better quality of work when they are taking away services and the student is paying more money than previously. Every day the work is piling up.

We feel really bad that we are not able to clean as well as we used to. Many of us take pride in our cleaning and when we have so many areas to cover, it is not the same. Our work is not satisfactory to us and probably not for our students. We can't go around and say what a good job we did cleaning the spaces and leaving a comfortable environment for students to utilize. We feel overwhelmed and it is draining. I constantly worry about the amount of work I have and if I finish everything I am assigned, I feel exhausted, but not fulfilled.-Maria

The pride workers feel in completing caretaking and cleaning work has been noted by Hondagneu-Sotelo. Domestic workers are proud of the work that they do, and are able to see tangible and “shiny results” (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007). Research on low wage workers has identified the feeling of pride as well as dignity to be present among workers who are engaged in “dirty work”, including janitors (Ghidina 1992, Hood 1998, Hodson 20010). In a sociological qualitative study by M.J. Ghidina, Ghidina analyzed the way in which custodians' identities were shaped through their job related tasks. Ghidina found custodians could view their work positively, particularly when interacting with individuals which created a humanizing aspect for their work, and allowed for the praise and recognition of their labor (Ghidina 1992). However, like UCSD custodians many of these workers must make sacrifices in order to complete their tasks, often bringing physical and emotional injury or harm. It is important to note that increased workloads can represent nearly twice as much work for workers if they are off for sickness or vacation. Workers explained that missing one day could cause them huge setbacks, as their area may not be cleaned for several days.

If I am gone on Thursday, on Friday I am sent to clean what I missed the day before instead of my typical duties for that day. This causes me to neglect my Friday responsibilities which I do not get to until the following Monday, which has then become three times as dirty as back before when these areas were cleaned five times per week. Its unbearable and a really huge burden to catch up, I go home most tired on those days with my back hurting. But this is one of the things that is not realized by the higher-ups who are assigning the work and creating these schedules.-Raquel

Moreover, many workers have become deprived of cleaning products they often utilized for disinfecting. As with the steam machine workers were required to use in 2011, workers have been encouraged to clean using only water. This becomes a greater strain on trying to maintain areas up to a clean standard. The use of water eliminates the need to spend on cleaning products and maintains a “greener” environment, however this coupled with less frequency in cleaning the areas only takes more time and effort for workers to clean.

The stories of Raquel, and Maria offer vital implications. In addition to the fact that more spaces for workers not only prevents them from adequately cleaning them, workers also feel dissatisfied with not being able to do the job well, explaining that their work is something they are very proud of, many of them having dedicated their entire lives to working in the custodian and janitorial industries¹⁸. Clearly, the increase in work load not only requires more physical efforts by workers, but also creates emotional hardships and increased stress for workers. If workers are not able to perform at their full

¹⁸ The majority of interviewed workers stated they had been employed as custodians or janitors previously to working at UCSD. Workers were employed in hotels, homes, and grocery stores.

or at least to the degree that they were used to, than the feeling of accomplishment is lessened.

The stress and emotional impact that come with increased amount of work is not limited to the work environment, but can often times be carried home and significantly impact personal life and relationships for UCSD workers. Often times workers arrive at their homes being extremely tired, not having much energy or motivation for other activities. Every worker explained dealing with work related stress that arose from issues with management and coworkers regarding their workloads.

For Pedro arriving at home after an eight hour shift and an hour of traffic travelling from La Jolla to Spring Valley puts him in a bad mood, once at home he does not want to spend time with family.

Before our work was manageable and now it looks like we are always more tired. One stresses themselves out a lot, many times I get home and say “you know what, today I worked a lot and I don’t want to know anything”. Before when we had our old schedules that we could manage, we would be tired of course but after resting at home we would be fine and be there with our families.

Pedro cited spending less time with his wife and children because he either preferred not to be engaged in planned activities or felt it was necessary to take naps during the week in order to prevent getting sick. The impact that work-related stress, as well as the consequent reduction in time spent with families can have on individuals is further seen in this worker’s story:

The stress from work is difficult when it is combined with other things. I worry about the students not having a clean space or if I forgot to do something because I was busy with something else. Now this worry makes other things hard, other problems become greater than they were before. A few weeks ago, I started talking to someone because I was feeling emotionally weak. It's just the combination of this work now and everything else. This makes it hard for my family to understand because they are not supportive of therapy; they think sometimes they aren't enough support for me and that I am neglecting them.

Further, several workers expressed the notion of the workload being particularly difficult for women. Two of the men interviewed stated they felt that a vital difference between their experience and that of the primarily female custodians was the intensity of the workload. Pedro explained how he was significantly tired and that he "couldn't imagine how much harder it is for women who have the same responsibilities, some of them being of much older age". Female workers indicated they felt more impacted and taken advantage of in general as female workers.

Look at me, I am small and I'm expected to do all this lifting, and am assigned to do areas that are harder for me, more stairs. I know we are equal, but I have noticed that it is harder for women. It's not only harder for us to be listened to, but we get more tired. Either way, neither gender deserves to be treated with little humanity. -Cristina

Workers reflected understanding the increase in workload was something that could be prevented by the hiring of more staff on the campus. Over the past few years, the UC San Diego campus has grown significantly. A major difficulty for the workers here lies in understanding why given the expansion of the campus, there are not enough

individuals to cover the spaces. Workers reflected a sentiment of profound stress when they hear ideas of new housing construction because, while they know it is needed and necessary for students to be more comfortable on campus, they perceive it will affect them personally. Workers emphasized the irony with the increase in student tuition, but decreased service. Workers expressed high concern for students, both in terms of them not receiving adequate service for their dollar and for their health. These workers explained that some student areas are no longer cleaned to a standard that ensures a sanitary and safe environment for students.

Across the campus, I found the construction of new buildings impacted workers in various ways. It is important to note that this occurred in areas where new workers had not been hired. Workers have been sent to new areas for which they have not been previously responsible nor adequately trained for, and are being given additional units or spaces to clean when the individual formerly responsible is sent to cover other buildings. Various workers also cited frequently having an increased load due to short staffing occurring when other employees took time off for vacation or were out sick. Additionally, workers are often given a certain amount of units according to their residential area, for example being responsible for cleaning seven apartment units per day. Although it would seem as though a certain amount of units per day for each worker was a standardized workload, the realities undoubtedly do not reflect that. Many of the units are of different sizes, include more stair cases and hallways of various sizes. Thus, workers are responsible for cleaning larger areas than some of their coworkers in the same amount of time. According to workers, quality and sanitary expectations remain the

same, as are hours for task completion. Workers also emphasize the irony that students are charged more tuition and every year more students are enrolled, but they, the custodians, only become more overburdened, and in some cases severely hurt as a consequence of their working conditions.

The Steam Machine at UCSD

In October 2010 UCSD custodians were ordered by UCSD Housing Dining and Hospitality (HDH) Management to make use of the steam machine model “Karcher DE 4002”¹⁹ to clean dormitories and apartments across campus housing. The steam machine was to be utilized by workers in order to clean more effectively and efficiently and to prevent the use of chemicals that are harmful to the planet. The custodians were previously utilizing a chemical called Diversy-Glance²⁰ for cleaning. The steam machine was to be used instead of the chemicals that has previously been utilized in several campuses and that seemed to have been more costly than the required water usage of the steamer. However, according to worker’s reports, the steam machine was ineffective in thoroughly cleaning the bathroom facilities and forced workers to use more physical energy. There are various other alternatives that are effective and “greener” solutions, but they were more costly, perhaps they were being overlooked by management, The irony of the machine is that it requires more water usage, invalidating the notion of the machine as an “environmentally friendly” tool.

¹⁹ http://www.karcher.com/int/Products/Professional/Steam_cleaners/10921000.htm

²⁰ Diversey Glance cleaner is a glass and multi-surface cleaner that custodians had been primarily utilizing previously to using the steam machine in 2011.

Over a time period of four months, nearly thirty custodians sustained injuries from usage of the machine which included steam burns, nerve damage, chronic neck pain and back pain. Custodians requested to not use the steam machine, but were encouraged by management to continue utilizing the machines and in order to prevent further injury, workers were encouraged to attend exercise classes in order to “better improve muscles and physical condition”. Students from the Student Worker Collective, Trabajadores de MECHA, and UCSD Associated Students organized with workers and had the machine banned in February 2011.

Steam machines pose various health risks, causing severe burns and can be extremely heavy. Many workers had to carry these machines up several flights of stairs, which increased chances of the frequently reported back pain.

The majority of workers who utilized the \$1000 dollar plus machines are women, over the age of 50. Thus, the hardships associated with working with this type of equipment became even more exacerbating.

Of the ten workers interviewed, seven were negatively affected by the steam machine incident to some degree. Workers who were not injured had not been exposed to the machine²¹. Many of the workers shared stories of pain and disappointment, among these is the story of Beatrice who has been employed at UCSD for more than four years. Beatrice sustained injuries from the steam machine on her hands and arms and explained

²¹ Not all areas of the UCSD campus were utilizing the machine before it was banned. However, many of these custodians were introduced to the machine and underwent training and preparation for their usage.

that she repeatedly informed management that she was unable to perform the work because she felt she was being hurt. Management ignored her requests and as a result, Beatrice was left with two hands that required surgery. In June 2011, Beatrice underwent surgery for one hand, and months later was scheduled to have the other treated, also through surgical procedure. Beatrice was out of work for a few weeks, which took up the majority of her sick time. In late Summer of 2011, Beatrice informed management that her surgery was scheduled in upcoming weeks, and was told that she didn't have enough sick hours that were available, nearly scolded for having to take time off despite the fact the reason for her requested absence was due an injury that was caused as a result of the steam machine she had been asked to use at work.

Weeks after my interview with Beatrice, I learned she was out of work because she had undergone the necessary surgery on her other hand. Up until now when I am presently working on this paper, I have been informed by the workers that Beatrice is still out due to the healing of her hand.

Other workers are currently working with AFSCME 3299 Union representatives in effort to fight for sick leave, vacation, and back pay compensation that was utilized by many workers who were unfortunate enough to become significantly injured through their use of the Karcher DE 4002 Steam Machine.

Promoting Bad Health for UCSD Workers

Accompanying the fear of injury on the job which could be sustained through the lifting of heavy items, climbing up stairs, and through the use of dangerous cleaning machines, workers explained they believed their health concerns to be a direct result of

assignments and arrangements issued to them by supervisors and management. Workers explained that their job makes their current health conditions difficult to manage.

Through interviews and observation at worker meetings, I found workers frequently cited difficulty with scheduling appointments for themselves and family or experiencing the complication of current health issues.

Workers who were primarily responsible for the care of their children stated that they are often left with no choice but to make appointments during work hours, especially for serious health issues. This was predominant among workers who worked Monday-Friday shifts. This was said by workers to create problems for them and often escalated any existing or created tensions with management.

This experience is reflected in the narrative of Cristina who is a single head of household and is responsible for taking her four year old daughter to medical appointments and requested time off for an appointment nearly a week in advance. The requirement is for workers to schedule their appointments with at least 48 hours notice. Cristina scheduled the appointment two weeks prior but was told by management a couple of days before that it was a problem for her to be gone considering they were short staffed and that it wasn't a good idea to take the day off. Cristina explained this happens to workers on a frequent basis and many of them will even be called into work when they are out or feel pressured to come in even when they are ill.

They made me feel like so pressured to come into work that day. I don't understand I thought I was doing everything right and then I am told that what I am doing is not supported and will make things more difficult for me later. I am forced to choose with not getting into trouble and taking my

little girl to the doctor to see what is wrong with her. Now, it just creates all types of worry for me.

This example indicates the violation of workers privileges and courtesy entitlements which not only directly jeopardizes the health of the worker's children, but also clearly creates difficulties for workers as mothers, and essentially as women.

Other workers reflected on experiences that complicated their role as mothers. Various workers cited having hardships caused by their not being understood by management. Workers become frustrated and feel attacked as women, and are even made to feel guilty for having young children who have needs that are an obvious priority to the worker.

The story of Yocelyn reflects the increased hardships for workers who are female to maintain their job as campus cleaners. Yocelyn had been working in Warren College on the night shift for three years. Recently, Yocelyn had been switched to the day shift which meant leaving her one and three year old sons at her home in the care of her mother and not spending the majority of the time they spend awake during the day with them. The schedule change was difficult for Yocelyn, but even more dramatic for her three year old who would have a tantrum each time she left for work. Yocelyn explained how her child's daily reactions to her leaving would cause her to arrive at work very nervous and uneasy and she would remain that way during much of her shift. Yocelyn consulted with a medical professional who recommended that she change the situation as it was significantly impacting her mental health.

Yocelyn requested a change back to the night shift and was denied. Yocelyn's manager refused despite the letter from Yocelyn's doctor stating her work situation and consequently, her child's behavior were detrimental to her health. A couple of weeks later, management offered workers in Yocelyn's department to switch to the night shift, the precise request Yocelyn had made days prior. Yocelyn contacted her union and was offered help in writing a grievance regarding the situation.

Conditions affecting the health of workers at UCSD need to be seen in relation to their low wage work as studies on significant trends in deteriorating health conditions for employees have shown. These studies have noted how low wage work including janitorial services is often associated with an increased risk for injuries and illnesses that can be directly attributed to work conditions (Azaroff et. al 2002, Flores & Deal 2003, Krause et. al 2005). Often times these injuries result from the inability or unwillingness for employers to address health and safety hazards for their workers. Worker duties and conditions can be dangerous because of chemical, biological, and most significantly, biological hazards. Lack of safety training, the lack of communication of hazards, and personal protections can create difficulties for workers (de Castro 2006). Often times these precautions are taken for workers, but they fail to take into consideration communication and comprehension challenges, such as language (de Castro 2006).

As outlined in the literature review at the beginning of this thesis, one of the things which serve to protect and improve the conditions of workers is their involvement in unions. UCSD custodians have gained various successes through their involvement in AFSCME 3299, such as the 2009 contract negotiation, but in 2012, union members faced

various issues due to the election of a new slate. Many workers cited they could not depend on the union, and felt that they were alone in their struggle. However, many workers such as Raquel have continued to stand up and protect themselves and offer their support to fellow workers. Raquel explained how workers at other campuses call to ask for her opinion and check with coworkers since they feel they cannot ask the union

Silencio

One of the most cited issues among workers is a feeling of *silencio*, silence and difficulty in communicating and voicing their opinion.

For workers, communication is vital in bringing awareness to the problems and less than ideal circumstances that are encountered on the job. It is estimated that about 63 percent of immigrants employed in the U.S. low wage sector are non-proficient in English (Capps, et al 2003). According to the study, "A Profile of Low Wage Workers", there are about 73 percent of workers who speak Spanish, 29 percent of workers still not being proficient in English despite having immigrated at least 20 or more years ago. Language is undoubtedly one of the barriers encountered by workers at the University of California San Diego among the vast population of majority workers. Despite the stated confidence in communicating English for some of the workers interviewed in this study, all participants chose to interview in Spanish citing that it was their first language and the language in which they could more adequately express themselves.

The lack of proficiency in English can become problematic for workers who are in vulnerable situations. Immigrant workers are more likely to experience inhumane

working conditions, discrimination, and other negative circumstances due to their inability to communicate (de Castro 2006). This theme was prominent among UCSD workers who explained that the language barrier was something that complicated their situation and according to them, creates a number of challenges. These challenges revolve around the attempts for workers to effectively voice their opinions or suggestions in regard to work.

Sometimes I feel like I am not able to say exactly what I want to say to them.. I can find someone to translate or communicate for me, but it's not the same. I think that especially when I am trying to describe something important and not necessarily, not speaking English well just makes it harder for me, us, to be heard. -Lucy

Workers cited language as a problem for why often times their opinion was not taken into consideration and why it was difficult to create favorable conditions for changing disagreeable situations. Furthermore, a common trend among workers is their perception that their assumed inability to speak English is taken by management as an excuse to disregard what they are communicating. As Lupe stated:

There have been so many times where they don't listen to us or they change around what we or they said. Sometimes they try to make us agree to things we understand and then later they switch them around and say we misunderstood what they were saying.

They think that because we are Mexican that we don't speak English. Yeah, many of us don't but it doesn't mean it's all of us. We know a lot of times that things are twisted and made as if we were aware of any (changes) that are being made and then we go and complain about them. I always feel that as a Mexican I cannot say what I feel because even if I do

it's not respected. Not respected because they have more power than us and always use the "miscommunication" excuse. It's just because others have cited it, that some managers and supervisors have figured out it's a way to cover themselves or solve their problem. -Roberta

Furthermore, workers reflected the belief that their opinions were unaccounted for and workers were subject to mistreatment according to gender. Workers explained that because a majority of the workers are female, they are "taken more advantage of" and in the end, become more vulnerable to disrespect and the assignment of unmanageable tasks.

The bosses think that because I am a woman I am not going to say anything and tolerate what they want me to do. I think that some women don't say anything because they are scared and then they think they can treat us all the same. Many of the women are not as vocal about things, but there are some of us that do advocate for ourselves and our coworkers. However, because most of us are female, then it becomes a way for them to think 'oh yeah, we can take advantage and they don't say anything like the men'. They are more afraid of them by nature I assume.-Lupe

Further as Cristina explained, female workers explained that male coworkers can make speaking more difficult for women as well, or that male opinions are taken into consideration at a greater level. Workers cited that men can take advantage of this and use it to drown out female opinion.

Since they know that sometimes their opinions are valued more, they (the men) go and say whatever they feel will benefit them more before we do. This happens a lot, but I've also been in a better situation where someone will speak and communicate what I want to say, or interject and support me, to have my voice heard. This makes me sad but for right now, any

help from my friends here is appreciated and I know they are just trying to help me.

The lack of English proficiency among workers is something that has been acknowledged by HDH administrators for several years. ESL classes are provided for workers on a weekly basis for an hour and a half on Tuesdays and include two levels: beginner and an advanced course. Workers are instructed on grammar and conversation and have weekly homework assignments in addition to being provided with a workbook that enables them to study at home. I attended one of the classes and found the classes to be a fairly comfortable environment; workers were engaged and actively participated in the class. The class appeared to have the potential for producing positive long term results.

However, the class designed to overcome the challenges of English for low wage workers who frequently come into contact with students, staff, and professors is itself something that is available only to “privileged” workers. The class is currently offered in Revelle, a single location for the hundreds of custodial workers spread across six colleges and graduate housing located. The beginning class I observed had a total of three students present the day I attended. The instructor informed me that many workers had stopped attending the classes.

When workers were questioned about English classes, many of them stated they had little information or even mentioned they were not aware of them and requested details. Many of the workers who knew of the classes explained they would like to attend the classes but were not able to continue due to lack of time. Workers who had

previously attended the classes were not able to due to the increase in work. Other workers stated they did not have the time especially due to the fact that classes were located too far from their worksite. The following statement from Claudia highlights the difficulties and ineffectiveness of the English class, and essentially the inability for workers to overcome the language barrier.

I know we have an English class during the week here. The supervisors encourage us to go, but if we do we basically don't have time to get all of our work done. I honestly don't know how other people are able to go, I guess they may have a little bit of a lighter workload. The class is also in Revelle, I might consider attending if it didn't take twenty minutes for me to walk over there. Usually if we want to go, we don't do it because later when our areas aren't clean enough it's obvious-Claudia

I used to attend the classes, not all the time but often, but as I started getting more and more work over the past few months, I honestly haven't been able to. It just doesn't make sense to me. I'm supposed to be improving my skills and the class is supposed to benefit me, but I can't even go. We aren't able to use it, what's the point?! It's sad because I would love to learn because it would help me in so many ways, but as long as we have this arrangement and obligations, then it's not going to be possible. -Lucy

Worker's inability to access the English classes highlights both the impact of their workload, and further, the lack of access and priority for the education of low wage workers. I found that failure to consider the worker's schedule and the subsequent failure to make accommodations that would allow for access to the ESL classes also contribute to the worker's own perception of education, and supplement the changing perspectives that have resulted in alignment with the changing demographics of the University of California in recent years. Despite the countless hours and energy workers invest to create a more comfortable environment for students and academics at UCSD, they exist

in a position with little privilege in the space of the university. This exclusion is noted in the narratives of several workers including Miguel Angel's, who emphasized the failure of the university to uphold to the UCSD Principles of Community²².

The UC has the "Principles of community". It is said that we are a family, where has which gone, right? So that's what has been affecting us a lot, this job where they randomly threaten to do things such as changing your days off. The university claims to have ideals, but clearly they do not apply to us, to workers they don't care about and who they think they can dispose of whenever they want.-Miguel Angel

Education and Social Mobility

One thing that happens here a lot is that we can't have our own initiatives. Sometimes I find ways to be more efficient and get my job done on time well, but if it wasn't authorized by her (manager), then it's not done well. If you are doing something you were not told to do, then it's not being done properly. Our ideas are all taken for granted. -Jose

Jose further explores the idea as he states how he will most likely stay in his job:

I'm a senior custodian and I will most likely stay in this position. I know someone who works in the other building, she's older and has been working here for many years, does a very good job. However, she has applied various times to a higher position, just so that she can get out of this, but each time she is rejected. They really want us to stay where we are, and well we feel that it's impossible for us to afford the education here, we end up not fitting in nowhere. Except for some place where we are holding a mop.

Jose's opinion alludes to the notion of the possibility that immigrant colored workers will stay in their current occupation for a substantial period of time, supported by

²² <http://www.ucsd.edu/explore/about/principles.html>

the fact that many workers have been employed at UCSD for more than ten years in the same low wage service positions. This leads to the important understanding of skill training among workers for themselves and for their families. Of particular interest is understanding how these individuals may perceive education for various factors: the manner in which their own place in the University of California community has changed, and the changes leading up to the privatization of the UC.

Considering the minimum wage²³ for custodial workers, it is not necessarily viable to suggest workers nor their families would themselves have access to the University of California educational system given the reductions in low income scholarships and financial aid. The alternative for these families would be thousands of dollars in loans that are currently offered to students who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Several workers expressed an understanding of the advantages and a high value for education, specifically developed out of their daily interaction in the environment, and the “influence” of students and professors.

I think education is very important. I see the way the kids study here and I want them to pursue the same goals as my students. I want them to attend the university too and learn great things.-Cristina

However, the narrative of Martha further reflects an unfortunate perception of education among UCSD workers:

²³ UCSD custodians currently earn \$13.97 at the “Step 1” entry level and up to \$17.35 at the highest “Step 12” level position. Hr.ucsd.edu/tpp/titlepay.aspx.

I would love for my children to come here, live in the dorms and be good students. This is a very prestigious place. However, I know I can't afford it, even if I worked another job. Honestly, I don't even know what I would have to do to make that happen. I don't know any information about how the system works so I can't really support my child as much as I would like.

For many workers, education is something they had thought of previously, in their homes and for themselves. Various workers had more esteem for education in their hometowns and then dropped the notion once they had been working and placed under these low wage conditions. This is well depicted in Miguel Angel's narrative

I don't think of myself in education. I graduated high school in Tijuana and wondered what I would do next, I had goals to become something but eventually I ended up needing to come work here. Once in the United States, and in this cleaning job, I realized that I am going to be stuck here for a while and don't have aspirations for education. I do not think of myself as a student here and the truth is I don't think it would even be financially possible. When they treat us badly here and we see other kids fighting to stay in this university it just makes it worse. If I don't belong as a worker, how can I be a student? Anyhow, I don't give it any thought.

Many workers at UCSD come from professional and higher skilled backgrounds, having worked as professionals in their country of origin. For example Rebecca worked as a teacher and Lucy worked as a nurse in Mexico. Scholarship indicates that many immigrants from Latin American with professional backgrounds find themselves limited to opportunities in the low wage sector (Moran, Tyler and Daranee 2003, Romero 2002). As workers in this position already, the feeling of exclusion from education only grows with the position at the bottom which is well engrained in workers through their working conditions and the perception that is developed through this experience in conjunction with a university that is becoming a reachable goal for the upper middle class.

However, some workers reflected a determination to challenge the system and expressed hope and a more positive view towards accessing education.

I don't want my daughter to end up like me. She is 16 right now, so I know I still have some time. Education is getting very expensive. I know because they throw it in our face every day. 'We can't hire more people because there is no money, and not pay you more either' ...but that does not stop me. I am here working and making a contribution. Some day my little girl will come here and will get here degree too. There's no reason why she shouldn't be able to.-Cecilia

Despite the lack of information and access to resources conveyed by some workers, several workers explained their willingness to motivate their children and do “whatever necessary” to move them ahead. Several workers explained education was a reason they worked two jobs and made other financial sacrifices. Among the workers interviewed, three of them had grown children who had attended universities and spoke proudly of them. One of the workers stated they were encouraging their children to attend college after having more daily interaction with students at UCSD.

Evidently, despite the challenges and changing perceptions in regards to education that arise for some of these workers, many reflect a positive outlook and hope toward social mobility. These are among workers who refuse to be excluded from the UC and higher education community, in accordance with those who are active in protests and organizing for student and worker justice.

Conclusion

This chapter has served to illustrate the current position of workers under the University of California system. While conditions may vary and considering that this

study was solely focused at UCSD, I have tried to provide a possible picture of the employment experience of custodians and other low wage workers at other UC campuses. Theories of “intersectionality” explain how Latina immigrants have come to occupy their positions as low wage workers, specifically in those occupations devoted to cleaning and care work (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, Collins 1999, Essed 1991, Glen 1999). Workers in these occupations are vulnerable and often exposed to intolerable working conditions, low salaries and discrimination, complications arising in view of their racial and ethnic identities. This chapter has explored how changes in budget at the University of California, have been used to justify and have significantly impacted workers in various spaces. I have illustrated how workers have been faced with increased workloads, resulting principally from the failure to hire staff due to the “budget crisis”. The irony lies in an economically declining university that continues to expand construction, further exacerbating the situation for workers as many of them are made responsible for those new spaces. These changes create difficulties for workers in their work and personal spaces at homes, impacting relationships with family, changing worker perception toward work, the university, and social mobility.

Workers, particularly women, are faced with circumstances that create challenges based on gender and their identity as mothers and primary caretakers of their families and households. Women can often become more physically vulnerable to increased workload and several reported perceiving more difficulty in communicating and found an unwilling receptiveness to their opinions. Moreover, these national inequalities are further reinforced by worker’s status as “immigrant workers” and the language barrier.

Essentially, in an attempt to increase efficiency and promote an environmentally friendly campus, workers are exposed to significantly devastating and hazardous cleaning techniques, including the steam machine in 2011. Other workers are moved to work in areas that do not provide the best conditions for promoting good health, and still others are denied opportunities to care for themselves and their families. This chapter has delineated the ways in which the well being of workers is clearly not prioritized, and instead the current situation in the UC system has perhaps created conditions which serve to reinforce various inequalities, particularly those that pertain to gender, class, and nationality. Ultimately, campus workers become a group whose representation is limited to that of labor, the institution as a site of education and privilege is inaccessible to them just as it is for students from similar backgrounds.

Chapter 3: People of Color, Community members, and Our Friends

It's absurd that you are in college learning new things and finding something truly devastating for an individual in the same environment. It's almost kind of wrong not to do anything about it –SWC Member #1

The previous chapters of this thesis have served to illustrate the exclusion and exploitation of individuals of color within the University of California. However, the reinforcement of inequalities among low wage workers on the basis of gender, class, and nationality in coexistence with tuition increases and demise of the quality in education for students also serve to foster the growth of new relationships. These relationships transcend various boundaries, but are also formed based upon shared identities, consciousness, and overall goals for social justice. Essentially workers and students have become allies against a system which poses various challenges and barriers for these groups within a space of privilege; however, this chapter will delineate how students and workers have managed to organize and resist, and have nonetheless achieved important gains.

I will first present an overview of student activism across university campuses, specifically the movements of students of color that occurred in the 1960's and 70's, decades of heightened student awareness and engagement. Next I will outline the ways in which UCSD students and workers have recently organized, specifically through the student organization known as the UCSD Student Worker Collective (SWC). Next, I will

illustrate the manner in which both groups equally collaborate and contribute to a “common” struggle, explain the backgrounds and main identity characteristics of the students involved in the Student Worker collective as well as the various factors that contribute to their support for workers. I will analyze the ways in which these people of color, mainly Latin@, are currently organizing in the mist of challenges while building community at UCSD in which they are represented in small numbers in educations, but remain strong through collaboration with workers.

Earlier Decades of Student Activism

The students discussed in this chapter as members of the Student Worker Collective identified as students of color, specifically as a specific Latin@ group, “Chicano/Latin@”, “person of color”, and “mixed ethnicity”. The level of activity and involvement of these students allows for their consideration as “activists”. I will utilize the definition of “activism” as the involvement in an on campus organization, community service or an internship devoted to the promotion or elimination of a specific issue (Chamber & Phelps 1994). This definition can be further extended to mean individuals who primarily possess heightened awareness of various levels of influence in society, engaging in demonstrations, petitions, boycotting, sponsoring educational activities, and participating in the intentional consumption of specific products, or essentially what has been deemed those “leaders who contribute to society” (Chamber & Phelps 1994; Levine & Cureton 1998; Page 2010; Rhoads 1997).

The identification of students as people of color creates the ability and necessity to focus on activism specific to this group. Despite distinctions in scale and cause, activism among minorities and students of color in the past provides a model for understanding the current struggles of the Student Worker Collective, particularly when scrutinizing overall goals and inclinations for achieving social change.

Prior to the movements of the 1960's and 70's which were undoubtedly the most eventful, student activism was highly limited and pertained to issues that were local and personally tied to students at particular institutions (Altbach 1979, 1990). During the 1930's students began to mobilize as student diversity increased, many of them coming from immigrant parents, fostering social awareness and liberalism (Altbach & Cohen 1990, Brax 1981). The creation of specific goals, collective actions, and stronger organizations by these students bore resemblance to larger social movements (McAdam & Snow 1997). During the era of the 1960's the issue of free speech, war, and civil rights came to dominate efforts of student activism. By this time, diversity among student populations had increased, increasing interest in culture and the propensity to create organizations that facilitated awareness.

The activism of the two decades included primarily students of color when organizing began surrounding Civil Rights issues, emphasizing improvements for minority groups, including Blacks and women. The Civil Rights Movement posed a challenge to segregation, not limited to Blacks, but served as a challenge to the racism that had structured communities for people of color (Davis 2010). Alliances across cultural and ethnic lines emerged with the formation of the Black Panther Party, Young

Lords, and the Brown Berets, opposing political persecution and discrimination in various social spheres. Linkages across people of color allowed for solidified efforts against international issues that both included and encompassed issues of racism, sexism, and imperialism (Davis 2010). Students of color focused energies on a variety of issues that stemmed from discrimination and unfair treatment of minority groups, but that were dedicated to social justice on various tiers of society.

However, it has been suggested that current education creates individuals who are tied to values of individualism, inclined for competition, and instead have little regard for efforts based on collectivity or benefits to society (Jaramillo & McLaren 2009). This trend is further exacerbated by the increasing privatization of educational institutions, which instead promotes and sets an example for capitalism neglecting the promotion of Marxist ideologies (Jaramillo & McLaren 2009). These have been cited as explanations for the lack, or lessened degree of activism among students. This work is perhaps useful in explaining the current situation of activism among many UC campuses, particularly UCSD which has very small numbers of active students. The trend noted in scholarship of activism among people of color in the past is reflected in the ethnic composition of the Student Worker Collective, despite the fact that this group is made primarily of Latin@ students.

Currently, there has not been an extensive amount of in-depth research analyzing student protests and rallies that have arisen since the budget cuts in the state of California, which have affected student fee increases and are argued by some to have essentially paid

the salaries of faculty and staff at the expense of low wage-workers²⁴. The analysis of student activity regarding these events is highly significant, considering that the University of California is one of the biggest public institutions in the world and is reflective of the budget battles that are occurring worldwide at public institutions²⁵. The following sections will serve to provide recent trends regarding student activism. Through five in-depth interviews with members of the Student Worker Collective and ten with custodial workers in addition to participant observation at SWC meetings and events, it becomes possible to understand an uncommon relationship between two diverse, yet highly interconnected groups of bodies on the UCSD campus. I argue that while students are privileged with education and more likely to be heard by campus administrators in defense of low wage workers, they serve only as an aiding mechanism that offers support to the workers. That is, considering the various elements that contribute to this relationship, it is important to note that the worker's struggle and

²⁴ As noted in Chapter 1, in 2011, the California budget bill allocated approximately three million specifically to service workers. It was later requested by UC President Yudof for that restriction to be waived and instead, for the money to be used flexibly in the midst of the five hundred million dollar cuts UC had taken that year. It is currently estimated that about 200 top UC executives are awarded additional retirement benefits, totaling to about four million dollars combined. <http://www.sfbg.com/2011/06/21/cleaning-ucs-mess>.

²⁵ Professor Michael Burawoy at the University of California, Berkeley notes the world wide economic crisis of 2008 has affected public universities worldwide. The public university is no longer autonomous and can no longer escape impact by the economic market. Burawoy says these universities are only autonomous in the manner they chose to “tackle budget deficits, whether through restructuring its faculties, employing temporary instructors, outsourcing service work, raising student fees, moving to distance learning, etc”. <http://publicsphere.ssrc.org/burawoy-redefining-the-public-university/>.

success cannot solely be attributed to student support, and the complexity of this relationship exists also in the support and aid that is provided from workers to students. I argue that workers play as significant a role in supporting students as (has been more widely acknowledged) students have played in worker issues. This alliance is ultimately possible and formed based on shared identities as people of color in the UC, both groups seeing their collaboration as one that will serve to defend and promote the improvement of their position in society.

The Student Worker Collective

I believe my role is one of a student and ally to the Workers. I feel that my role as a student and ally holds leverage within the university system because students and workers united makes up more than half of the university's population and our influence is hard to undermine and ignore for long periods of time.

In the space of a university campus where a vast majority of students interact with low wage workers on a daily basis, there is but a minority group that comes together to establish a close relationship and essentially what can be deemed a “social alliance” between workers and students at UCSD. It should not be misinterpreted that only students of this particular group have advocated for workers and their own defense against tuition hikes in University of California. Undergraduates, graduate students not possessive of membership in any club, those active in M.E.C.H.A. and other social justice organizations have supported workers over the last couple of years. However, the

organization that has been most active and specific to these issues at UCSD is that of the Student Worker Collective.

The Student Worker Collective was re-established at UCSD during 2009, a time shortly after the state budget cuts began to impact education in the University of California System. The Student Worker Collective (SWC) was founded by organizers from the Kamalayan Kollektive²⁶ and MECHA²⁷ at UCSD, organizations dedicated to increasing activism, consciousness, and awareness among students. Although the SWC is interested in issues with low wage workers worldwide, its main collaboration exists with low wage workers on the UCSD campus. In reaching out to workers the SWC has allied itself with the AFSCME Local 3299 Union. Although the collaboration began with workers who were associated in the union, the SWC is by no means specifically devoted to working specifically with these individuals, but merely utilized union leaders as a mean to establish initial communication and outreach with workers.

One of the main objectives of the SWC is to collaborate with workers on heightening awareness and eliminating less than favorable working conditions for these individuals on the UCSD campus. The organization's mission statement dictates that the "UCSD Student Worker Collective aims to build solidarity across campus communities of workers and students in hopes to empower UC workers and UC students with dialogue

²⁶ <http://kamalayankollektive.wordpress.com/category/community-events/>

²⁷ <http://www.nationalmecha.org/>

and action/events regarding labor rights”²⁸. SWC members meet for weekly meetings and organize what are referred to as “rounds” in which they schedule to speak with workers in order to be informed of the latest working conditions. The organization is currently operating at UCSD with less than ten students and has always done so, however these students have the greatest and most consistent dialogue with workers, actively maintaining contact and not limiting interaction to major events or worker issues that arise on campus.

Since 2009 the SWC has been highly active in collaborating with workers to organize rallies, the delivery of petitions, and workshops to educate both students and workers about ongoing issues and resources. The most noteworthy achievements between the students and workers were regarding events in 2009 and 2011 in which students and workers fought for a worker contract that offered improved benefits and salary to the workers, and two years later when both groups worked toward the elimination of the steam machine issue.

In 2009, the SWC reorganized and registered as an organization due to the circumstances surrounding UC workers on a statewide level regarding the new contract that they had been battling to achieve for over a year and a half. The new agreement covered 8,500 UC service employees, including custodians, groundskeepers, cooks, and parking attendants. Under the old contract, 96 percent of the workers were eligible for some form of public assistance. The new contract included annual wage increases that

²⁸ <http://sustainabilityresourcecenter.ucsd.edu/ssc-catagories/corporate-accountability/student-worker-collective/>

pushed workers who make as little as \$10 an hour to at least \$14 an hour over five years (Lybarger 2009).

The struggle for this campaign included various protests, including a five day strike during the summer of 2008. Workers organized various times across the UC system, including rallies and marches at UCSD. Members of the Student Worker Collective were active participants, leading marches, translating flyers and other important documents into English for workers, and helped to add more pressure on administration. Students explained that through these events workers and students achieved solidarity, visualized in the physical marches and heard through their chanting of “*Si se puede!*”. Although workers were not able to achieve everything they had hoped for, the contract was “historic” and referred to as “the best contract we’ve ever had” by University of California workers (Lybarger2009).

Students from the Collective were always present in our marches and rallies across the campus. We knew we had their support and it was great to know they were behind us and always willing to sit down and figure out strategies with us. They were always right there, right there. This victory over the contract, it wasn’t just ours, but also for the students. This contract was from students, workers, and the union organizers, a struggle of 18 months. 18 months to achieve this contract and there were many students who supported. At least, I as well as any coworkers here, I thank my students. Because they have always supported us, thanks to all of them.”-Rebecca

In 2011, SWC and workers joined again to battle the use of the steam machines on campus. The Student Worker Collective educated students about the dangers associated with the cleaners, which are energy efficient and environmentally friendly, but

at the expense of the health of UCSD custodians. Members of SWC were active in gathering the information of workers who reported injuries and helping them write grievances addressing the inefficiency of the steam machine and their injuries. The effort by students to ban the machine began on January 28th, 2011 with an online social network event calling for students to sign a petition advocating a ban on the machines. Knowing they were limited in the online petition, students approached Associated Students Senator Victor Flores-Osorio and presented a resolution to ban the machines due to safety concerns at a Feb 16 UCSD Associated Student meeting. A week later after edits were made by the document drafted by members of the SWC, HDH announced the steam machines were officially banned from the campus (Hassine 2011).

According to my interviews, the contract of 2009 and steam machine ban of 2011 are regarded by both students and workers as the most important victories in which the two groups worked together. These examples serve to effectively illustrate the partnership between workers and students, as well as the level of student support for workers. Furthermore, students and workers cite the most important thing that has been gained from working together as the actual relationship that has been built.

I think another achievement in general is us as students being able to form these relationships with workers. I mean you're on campus and you're like I hope your day is going well, I think any of these little events we have, I think that in itself, shows there's camaraderie between workers and students, I would say that was the greatest achievement out of all of them. -SWC Member #1

Although members of the SWC are students, the organization plans functions based around worker schedules. Workers are invited to student meetings, and likewise the students are invited to participate in the worker activities. Workers plan activities in which workers and students can interact, primarily potlucks where food is shared, and workers and students become acquainted in a casual environment.

“Workers have our backs”

It is important to note that workers provide vital support for student issues. During various events that have occurred since the budget cuts of 2008, students have been joined by workers across the UC in rallies, demonstrations, and most recently “occupations” of spaces, which protest tuition hikes and cuts to other academic services. Workers actively demonstrate support against the UC system, without necessarily directly being affected in their position as workers by these changes in tuition and academics.

A strong perception of unconditional worker support and motivation to help students’ causes is present in student interviews. As SWC Member #1 stated,

The workers, they’re ALWAYS there for the students, if you get into contact with any worker, union leader in general, they will come. When we led our delivery to *Alta Gracia*, so many workers came it was even more than us students that were actually present there. In terms of them being active on student issues, if they are able to, they are there. The last event we had here, the “Day of Action” against fee hikes, we took over where Center Hall is and workers were there with signs circulating around on their break, and God they had been working there all day. The hour that they have to eat, I mean they’re with us just protesting. What is crazy is that they’re such activists, they just have such a spirit with them, it makes you feel like to compete with them, to be passionate about everything and

regardless of issue, and they're always there. They are always involved in the student struggle.

Furthermore, SWC Member #2 notes the idea of camaraderie among workers and students:

I think the workers are often more committed to student issues. Workers are always there for us, and students are not always necessarily there for the workers. It's as if the workers have a sense of camaraderie in regards to students and workers and I think we could do more if more students had this feeling.

Students cited that workers are consistently present for student functions in which they are invited to participate, many times outnumbering the students. One specific event was the petition SWC students presented to the Associated Students at UCSD in 2011, to pass a resolution which would increase the amount of *Alta Gracia* apparel available at the UCSD bookstore. *Alta Gracia* is a company that carries apparel made in the Dominican Republic which pays living wages to its workers; many universities across the country have launched campaigns to eliminate other sweat-shop made apparel and replace it with products purchased from *Alta Gracia* ("Students Work to Promote Sweatshop-Free Apparel" 2011). Several workers accompanied the Student Worker Collective in speaking to bookstore representatives and offered their support for the issue.

We knew this didn't necessarily have anything to do with us. But we know it's important to the students and in a way it does affect those that are workers like us. We may not be able to do much, but I think it helps the students to know that they are not alone in their struggle to make justice, and any other issue they think is important. -Maria

Furthermore, Workers also exhibit their interest in student issues by attending student meetings that go beyond those organized by the Student Worker Collective. One worker cited attending College Democrats at UCSD meeting:

I go there to support the students because I am interested in knowing the types of issues they are involved in and the ways I might be able to help them too. I don't have a lot of time, but I do what I can.-Rebecca

The previous section has served to illustrate the various interactions between students and workers that have emerged over recent years. Undoubtedly, workers have created a strong alliance with a small group of SWC members and have been successful in fostering motivation to protest local and broader issues of social justice. The next section of this chapter will discuss motives for student participation and further serve to indicate a shared identity between workers and students, which in turn creates a common struggle in which both groups play an equal and essential role.

“Why we care and chose to help”

This section will focus on illustrating how students of color, most notably of Latin@ backgrounds and primarily those who had personal experience or history with low wage worker-related issues are likely to be involved in the Collective. This identification leads to high involvement in campus organizations which when combined with the experiences associated with higher education, allows for these students to not only be supportive and apathetic of worker issues, but to actually become engaged. The collaboration of the two groups represents the cross-cutting of class and position at

UCSD, but workers and students view both of their struggles as one, and in turn, their own. This view supports how students and workers are essential and complimentary agents in this movement and other issues on campus.

Students of the SWC cited origins from immigrant families or themselves as immigrants and indicated a close identification with the worker's struggles. Students were predominantly of Hispanic backgrounds whose families included immigrants from Mexico, Argentina, and Italy, a couple of the students having been born in Mexico and Argentina and brought to the United States as young children. Socioeconomic status of the student's families was highly diverse, ranging from low to upper middle class with parents who worked as professionals. This serves to indicate that ethnic and racial identification of the students is perhaps more significant than class in fostering motivations among students. Regardless of class status, students reflect pride in their identification with immigrant parents and communities:

So I was born and raised in a little suburb outside of LA County, from La Verne and I'm actually half Italian and half Mexican. Both my parents emigrated here from their respective countries and I'm happy to be a first year generation college attendee. In terms of socioeconomic status, I can't say that were middle class because I feel like that doesn't exist anymore, so I'll just say that we are okay. I'm able to have clothes on my back and I can eat.-SWC Member #1

My parents are both from working class, immigrant backgrounds. My dad went from gardening to sheer metal painting. So it's just personal stories of struggle from them and my extended family that got me involved in this. There are many stories even until this day my mom comes and tells me "you know my supervisor gave me this threatening..." you know, little things like when she wants to take vacation time, and her supervisor is implicit like "no, don't take those days". Things like that.-SWC Member #3

I come from a working class family. Personally, I feel like I didn't struggle financially, but I know like my parents struggled a lot to provide me so I really value their work. Personally I never felt it, but now coming to this school I realize what they've gone through, before I never did feel like I was in that class. I am a child of 9, so my mother stopped working when I was born but my father was a gardener for 20 years, so that's the only way he was able to sustain our family. He made a whole business out of it. Fortunately I was able to not suffer from any poverty but I know and always remember that my older siblings did-SWC Member #2

These narratives reflect the strong notion that SWC members have parents who work very hard in low wage occupations and struggle or continue to struggle financially to provide for their families. The previous quotes reflect how although a student may not necessarily identify with most workers based on socioeconomic level, there is an acknowledgement of "struggle" and a sense of appreciation in their parent's immigrant and work experience as well as their minority ethnic and national identities.

Specifically reflecting acknowledgement and identification with struggles similar to that of campus workers is that conveyed by SWC Member #3 and SWC Member #2: This acknowledgement is important considering many of these struggles can be reflected by the experiences of the workers with whom students have established a close relationship with through the collective. Thus, the experience of student's families in these positions can incline these students to not only possess a strong comprehension of situations pertaining to UCSD workers, especially those that go beyond the work place, but also enable them to want to help workers because they are reminders of their family and community.

Worker interviews reflected an understanding of similar reasoning for the motives behind the hard work and participation of SWC students. Workers explained having a strong connection with the students and an understanding of the “sacrifices” made by students families, especially those who are first generation college students, most commonly students of color. As Rebecca stated:

I think that a lot of the students, their parents do the same things that we do so then there are students who tell you “my mom works in this type of job really hard. I understand you, Miss Blanca, Miss Rebecca, etc. I understand you because my mom does this work, she works at a hotel. And well, she gets home really tired. So its appreciation because many of them, they come from Hispanic roots. For example there are people who come from Africa, other places, different parts of the country; they know well how difficult it is to work here. Not all of us come with a crown on our heads right? Eh, I think that our parents work for something, and now these kids they can be in the university studying.

The experiences of these students and the sense of identity shaped by growing up in a primarily immigrant and “colored” families clearly indicates a motivation to become involved in issues on campus that go beyond those directly affecting students. This is supported through work indicating that students of color continue to be the most involved in regards to activism across institutions of higher learning (Heffernan 2000, Levine & Cureton 1998 qtd in Rosas 2010). Students from ethnic back grounds are believed to bring more cultural awareness, tend to become educated through interaction with one another, and essentially broaden their horizons (Loo & Rolisan 1986). Ethnic minority groups on college campuses tend to enhance their academic communities through sociopolitical involvement and are able to provide cultural support for one another. This

activism can ultimately stem from the desire to improve treatment of underrepresented groups in society, which in turn can be achieved through advocating towards efforts that would improve social and economic conditions in society, through which these particular groups are most affected. Thus, identification as a person of color produces the desire to engage in the promotion of change for a wide variety of issues that primarily address those groups.

In her study, Marisela Rosa found that being of African American or Latin@ background had a positive effect on the likelihood for individuals to engage in activism (Rosa 2010). These students also had been involved with leadership training and affiliations in ethnic or racial organizations. This correlates with Munoz's study stating that students are prone to learn and embrace their identities cause they participate in organizations, which can in turn lead to raised critical consciousness (Covarrubias & Reulla, Munoz 1989) In, "Alienation of Ethnic Minority Students", the study by Loo and Rolison indicates that students of color are more likely to establish strong links across organizations with causes related to a variety of social justice and racial issues (Loo & Rolison 1986). Their work illustrates the ability for students of color to organize based upon the achievement of broader goals, and also reflects the ability for students to become engaged in a variety of issues based upon their involvement in one cause (Van Dyke 1998, 2007). This work provides implications for members of the Student Worker Collective who have become involved through other organizations that advocated for worker's rights, with which they continue to maintain ties and actively partake in based on their interest in race and equality.

The work of Loo and Rolison can be seen in conjunction with that of social movement theorist D. McAdam. McAdam explains activities, such as those resembling student and worker rallies of the SWC to be “high risk activism”, considering they requires significant time, energy and sometimes risk in contrast to “low risk activism” which can consist of merely signing a petition (McAdam 1986). McAdam concludes that while many individuals possess the attitude and psychological mind set of supporting a cause, it is a small percentage that actually becomes active in defending or supporting the cause due to a combination of factors. In addition to attitude which compels individuals to partake in activism, they must possess personal identification and the “structural pull” that can stem from a history of activism and an affiliation with other organizations (McAdam 1986).

McAdam’s theories are supported through the small group of students who are both involved specifically with workers issues either through the Student Worker Collective or without membership in a particular organization.

The activist community here is really small, so everyone kind of knows everyone else and just attends everything else and not everyone has an organization necessarily, but is involved in general. I was involved with other organizations and they were involved with this so I was like “okay”. At the time, it was mainly AS internal affairs and the Migrants Rights Awareness. I mean there was a lot of overlap given that UCSD is such a small campus in terms of activism. So I would have a lot of friends that were involved in the organization, so yes they work together”. –SWC Member #5

I initially became involved because my “Femtor,” was leading M.E.Ch.A’s Trabajador@s committee and encouraged me to come to a Student Worker Collective meeting to learn about workers and labor organizing. –SWC Member #4

Interviews confirmed theories explaining student involvement to have stemmed from membership in previous organizations. Most of the students were encouraged by issues they learned about in other groups or through friends with whom they interacted in other activities. In order to better understand the university as a site for fostering awareness and action among students, it is also necessary to analyze the ways in which an environment and pursuit of higher education can affect these students, especially those of color and underrepresented groups.

Agents of Social Change

The identification of students of color with workers coupled with their experience as university students who are educated and exposed to social awareness issues through course material, participation in extracurricular activities or through events on campus has been viewed by theorists as an avenue in which individuals from minority or disadvantaged backgrounds are able to “transform” their worlds through access to education. Four of the five students interviewed from the Student Worker Collective were from the social sciences and humanities. Students’ majors included political science, ethnic studies, history, and sociology. Many of these students were exposed to issues and struggles such as those experienced by UCSD workers in courses and expressed the need and ability to make a difference on our very own UCSD campus.

In understanding the connections between education and activism, the work of Paulo Freire has provides a substantial, theoretical foundation for many scholars, conveyed through his 1970 work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire’s work has enabled

an understanding of the manner in which individuals who are themselves oppressed utilize education as a tool to understand the world from a different perspective and seek to transform existing patterns (Freire 1970). Freire's idea of "ontological vocation" is theoretically significant, presenting the notion that humans act as subjects to transform their world through a developed consciousness and critical approach in dealing with their personal and social realities. Furthermore, Freire defines "critical consciousness", as the values, social justice, intergenerational equity, and political consciousness that is learned through experience. Students should see themselves as agents of social change and resist the teacher as "all knowing" (Freire 1970).

The work of Paulo Freire is useful in understanding resistive efforts created by individuals of color or those who in some manner feel "oppressed". Freire essentially explains that those who are oppressed in society eventually give up and fight against their oppressors. Students confirmed their position as students at UCSD as one privilege in which they were given the tools to understand and advocate for change.

I feel if I was not in a university setting and had not learned what I know now, I would possibly overlook the role of contemporary labor rights and organizing in overarching social justice movements. I am very privileged to be in a setting where I have learned to merge the intersections between immigrant, human, and worker's rights and widen my perception of social justice organizing.-SWC Member #4

The influence of higher education and the understanding of issues pertaining to social justice in motivating students to become engaged in similar issues on campus becomes clear through the narratives of the SWC. Unfortunately, many students on the

UCSD campus are unaware of the situation custodians face. Exploring the relationships that have allowed for students to become informed of custodian issues is worthwhile, allowing for a greater understanding of the relationship that has developed among students and workers which is essential in the establishment of the student-worker alliance.

Familiar Faces on Campus

SWC members cited the development of close relationships with workers as the way in which they were able to become aware of their situations and thus, motivated to organize and support workers. This relationship arises despite some of the divisions or differences between workers and students, including documentation, socioeconomic status, and educational attainment, which essentially place students in a position of privilege on the UCSD campus

Many students attribute having “gotten to know” workers while living in the on-campus dormitories. Students encounter workers on a frequent basis, whether it is in their hall or nearby in college grounds. A significant theme that arises is student’s comfort with the workers on campus. Students pointed out the workers make the on-campus living environment feel like more of a “home” for them because they felt like they could identify with them both in terms of ethnic identity and language. It is important to note that fewer than fifteen percent of UC San Diego’s student population can be identified as ethnic minorities.

As SWC Member #5 stated:

A lot of the workers that were involved worked in the dorms, because I lived on campus. So I spoke to them, they were faces that I recognized. They came from backgrounds that are similar so it was not difficult to identify with them. Once I knew of the issues, I knew I had to support them

Furthermore, the following narrative highlights a sense of awareness and understanding developed through more than the typical frequent interaction of workers and students living on campus, but through an acknowledgement and genuine concern for workers

What motivates me is the sentiment of injustice and indignation that resonates when I hear the experiences of workers or when I see the physical exhaustion and aggravation in worker's facial expressions. The persistence, motivation, and empowerment in worker's words and actions also motivate me. Furthermore, the relationships that I have developed with workers and SWC members also motivates me and sustains me in our collective struggle. –SWC Member #4

As conveyed by SWC Member #5, workers become familiar faces for students living on campus, primarily those who represent ethnic minorities at UCSD. Essentially, workers provide comfort for students and serve as an enabling factor for students' integration and transition into the university community. While most college level students may be open to diversity, many students in the UC system experience what is termed as "culture shock", the disorientation that comes from interaction in a new environment where individuals may be exposed to diverse groups they are not accustomed to (Macionis 2010). Culture shock can have a significantly detrimental effect on student

experience on campus, based primarily on socioeconomic and cultural differences between their background and that of majority, or white students (Loo & Rolison 1986, p 65). Culture shock is an issue on the UCSD campus, which currently has one of the lowest levels of diverse student populations with 68 percent of the student body belong to Caucasian and Asian majority groups²⁹ in Fall 2011. However, a high percentage of diversity is represented in service staff³⁰. Thus, students of color may be inclined to communicate and establish a more personal relationship with workers who come from similar backgrounds and among the few faces they can recognize. These relationships then have the potential to go beyond what is typical of most students and workers, that is stemming beyond those relationships in which workers exist only as “invisible beings”³¹ to students. .

The comfort provided by these workers is highly exhibited by SWC Member #2, who emphasizes a welcoming presence and attitude by the workers despite the difficulties of their job and long work days.

I lived on campus and that’s how I got a close connection to one of them, because I would see these workers every morning, they were really happy but when I got home I could just see that they’re just so tired , but they

²⁹ <http://studentresearch.ucsd.edu/sriweb/UCSDCollegeProfile.pdf>.

³⁰ 2012 figures indicate that over 81% percent of UCSD service workers are Black, Hispanic, Asian, or American Indian identity. Service workers include Dining, Custodial/Grounds workers. UCSD.

³¹ In the introduction it was noted that often individuals who are in occupations in which the primary function is to clean or maintain a home or facility are “invisible” in the sense that they are unnoticed, unacknowledged, or ignored by other individuals in their surroundings. (Brody 2006; Herod & Aguiar 2006).

still always have this positive attitude toward the students regardless of how tired they are. It just made me realize these people are working the whole day. And I could just see how drained they were, that just really touched me right there because it was like I'm coming here going to school, but these people are like the whole day working here, and that's how I got connected to the workers.

As sociologist Richard Freeman discusses in his work, activities directed toward goals for social justice attract individuals who have a direct daily connection and contact with those they are attempting to help, and the situation becomes one in which “people are made real and not abstract...personalizing the face of poverty” (Freeman 2004). Freeman's example is crucial in explaining how the daily interaction between students and workers fosters the appeal to engage in student-worker organized meetings and rallies.

Various SWC members mentioned workers resembling family members, specifically female workers as maternal figures. The majority of workers interviewed also mention viewing and caring for students as if they were their own children. Moreover, the mode of interaction, particularly when workers began to formulate relationships in housing with those who were or would become members of the collective is reflective of this relationship. For example, workers go beyond their role of cleaning, expressing concern for their students. SWC Member #5 explains:

Oh yeah, our apartment custodian had just transferred, I had talked to her and told her I was going to apply to I-house, and she was like “oh okay, let me know I know everyone”. A lot of these women workers, for me personally you get to see them as a “mother figure” that are there for us around campus.

Similarly, to the perception of students recognizing workers as family members, workers acknowledge students as their own

The student struggle is the same as the one we fight against as workers. These are like my children and I am going to defend them in any way that I can. -Rebecca

Various other workers also explained situations in which it became evident that their job was not limited to the duties designated in the custodian handbook, encompassing the function of cleaning and maintenance. Cristina explained how she was once cleaning a dormitory on the weekend and heard weeping coming from the bottom floor. Cristina had a good relationship with these students and discovered a student was very ill, but had gone unnoticed by roommates. Cristina stated she calmed down the student and called for help.

Our job is not to simply clean here, but we watch over the kids as if they were our own. If they are not doing well we worry about them, we see when they have been up studying all night. We really care for our students and this is why we are very disappointed and even embarrassed when we are not able to perform our jobs well due to time constraints, we want only what they deserve. -Cristina

Similarly, Maria explained a situation in which students were arguing over housing for the upcoming year and interfered in order to work out the issue. Other workers cited being witnesses to student conflicts and serving as mediators. These situations help us understand the role workers play on campus housing that highly surpasses their function of maintaining and cleaning student spaces. It is these roles that inspire students

to develop relationships and concern for workers, which essentially enables them to understand and identify with worker struggles, essentially creating allies among students.

Conclusion

During my time researching and writing this thesis, workers continued to face numerous issues which required action on behalf of the SWC. As outlined in the previous chapter, workers continue to face intolerable working conditions which have caused various workers to report stress and effects on both physical and mental health³². In the month of April, the Student Worker Collective drafted a petition advocating for the hiring of more staff and proper management of the employee budget on behalf of UCSD HDH.

Shortly after SWC created an online petition and event on the social media website “Facebook”, housing management reacted with the recruitment of eight custodial workers were hired to fill in for those who had been dismissed or absent from their positions. However, this action comes months after many workers have been out from steam machine injuries or other health reasons, and is not sufficient. According to workers, in one campus alone at least three to four additional workers are necessary in order to provide adequate and thorough service to students and relieve workers of unmanageable workloads.

³² Chapter 2 discussed UCSD workers reports of injuries resulting from steam machine usage, back pain, and exhaustion from work overload. Workers also explained emotional impact of unmanageable work assignments including high levels of stress and loss of pride in daily work.

SWC members are active in attaining over 400 signatures and support from faculty and students. Resolutions were presented at UCSD Associated Students and Graduate Student Association meetings and unanimously passed. SWC members are currently seeking to work with HDH in order to promote sustainable labor rights for workers as well as the allocation of more funds to the department.

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined the main causes for student involvement in worker issues during a situation which is currently affecting every student at the University of California. Evidently, students from underrepresented groups at UCSD, predominantly Latin@s, and those who understand similar experiences of workers through their own family and upbringing are more likely to be engaged in the various struggles currently affecting individuals of color. These students find comfort in a familiar worker presence are the ones who are more likely to form a personal friendship with the workers, become informed of worker struggles, and participate in their cause. Although this group is very small and projected percentages of enrollment for Latin@s and other minorities have decreased for the upcoming year, their presence, support, and solidarity with workers is vital and empowering. The chapter has focused on the interaction and collaborations between both groups and shown how a relationship of interdependence and camaraderie develops. Workers and students manage to contribute to each others' causes and have come to view the struggle of each as their own.

In accordance with social alliance theories, students who currently belong to a small group of privileged students at an elite institution of higher education have managed to cross boundaries that set them apart from low wage-immigrant workers, The

importance of this chapter lies in providing insight into an alliance that is occurring in various locations with the demise of public education worldwide, most notably in the University of California system. This study is helpful in understanding the formation of “unlikely” alliances as education becomes more difficult to attain for individuals, whether it is students who suffer the consequences of budget cuts, or workers who are essentially deprived access both for themselves and their families to a place in which they ironically invest so much time and energy. This chapter is a necessary component of this thesis to illustrate the new relationships that emerge as a result of the changes to the University of California System in recent years. These relationships are essential in a time of difficult changes and allow for individuals to remain proactive, uniting to establish a positive connection that creates and maintains a community in an institution that is becoming more difficult for individuals to access. The main message conveyed in this chapter is that the spirit of activism, dignity, and esteem for education for both students and workers is one that cannot be defeated.

Conclusion

Writing this thesis, I came across the realization that workers were more troubled by working conditions than I had ever imagined. I learned about some issues last year on campus when I heard about the steam machine incident but I had no idea that I would be hearing about new situations or challenges that arose for workers until the present as I write this conclusion. However, I feel this project has enabled me to document a series of problems and come up with various recommendations which I plan to take the necessary steps to put into action.

To help in improving working conditions, it is necessary to continue pressuring HDH to consider the narratives of these workers. While HDH at UCSD reports to be a self-sustained department, it is perhaps necessary to apply pressure to higher administration in order to hire more workers and create manageable workloads that ensure worker safety and comfort.

Although the language barrier that was addressed in Chapter 2 is an issue that will likely take years to overcome, there are various suggestions that can be put into place to make small, but significant improvements for these workers. The ESL classes that are currently offered on campus for workers are of excellent quality and have been in place for a number of years. However, the inability for workers to attend due to a single location of classes on campus and the lack of time in workers' schedules creates the need for a more flexible "program". An idea we came up with during an SWC meeting was to have a "buddy system" for workers, in which we would provide study materials for workers to utilize at home and then have them paired up with a student "buddy" who

would review the materials with them and answer questions. Workers could contact their “buddy” for meetings or questions. We think this idea would work as it will allow us to retain volunteers, since the program would allow for flexibility in these meetings. A similar program is currently offered at UCLA called “SPELLS” which we could look to for reference and recommendations.

One of the other disadvantages that came with the language barrier for workers was the employee handbook which is only available in English. Although there is not an official statistic available indicating the number of workers who are not fully proficient in English, an AFSCME Union 3299 representative explained it could be close to 80%. Moreover, if management has acknowledged that ESL classes are a necessity among workers, it would be logical to have a translated copy of the employee handbook available. This would enable workers to better understand their rights on the worksite, which often are not even questioned by workers due to lack of understanding the language.

Workers would also benefit from discussion and resolution of the issues that are currently impacting the AFSCME Union 3299. The campaign for the new contract is projected to start in June 2012, but given the current disunity among workers, these are bound to be problems that could compromise the benefits.

In order to build student awareness and student relationships with workers, especially those cleaning the residences of the students, it would be important to build a

system utilizing dormitory and apartment Resident Advisors in order to bridge communication between the two groups.

Lastly, it would be important to conduct a number of workshops and resources for workers. These workshops would address needs ranging from citizenship, health information, labor rights, housing, to information for education. It is important for students to leave workers with resources and tools that will allow for an improvement in the various spaces that these workers navigate, most importantly the worksite, family, and home. Members of the SWC will move on from UCSD and although many of them will undoubtedly give back and maintain a relationship with workers, workers can benefit in the long run from resources attained from student and worker organized activities.

The inequalities that are currently being perpetuated at the University of California, San Diego are not noticed by thousands of students, faculty, and staff and will perhaps continue to be neglected for years to come. The current deteriorating financial, ethical, and moral conditions of the UC system pose challenges to access and inclusion for underrepresented groups, including people of color, at all levels, including not only students but cleaning staff as well. A critical message is to understand rising tuition and merit based scholarships effectively decrease opportunities for working class students, which is largely excluding particular people of color (not inclusive of people of color who make up international students). This thesis has effectively demonstrated the manner in which campus custodians have been impacted by the reduction in budgets used to justify their current work arrangement. These impacts go beyond the allocation of greater work assignments and a stagnant wage level; workers have also been affected to various

degrees emotionally and physically in the “domestic” spaces of their work and homes. Language barriers and gender create further complications for female workers, making them even more vulnerable to bad working conditions. My research discovered commonalities with findings by other researchers who have studied workers devoted to domestic work in the informal sector. It has become evident that poor working conditions and difficult experiences characterize these types of workers and differ very little, whether on a prized research university or in a private home.

What is noteworthy is that several of the UCSD custodians commented that they are willing to endure these working conditions due to a love for their job and the students they take care of and often perceive as their children. It is through the formation of some of these relationships that students have come to know the stories of workers and come to acknowledge a common identity. This identity as people of color from diverse backgrounds, but with common struggles many of which pertain to working class members of society enable an alliance and essentially the power to organize and fight for basic human rights: labor and education rights. The alliance formed between workers and students points to the raising of a consciousness on the part of students who have a similar experience in higher education. Student narratives indicate that identification with struggles and issues that surround these workers is the primary factor motivating them to spend their time, energy, and privilege on campus on behalf of their allies. On the other hand, workers too have played a significant role in supporting students both on a personal level and in large organized events in the UCSD community such as the “March 4th Day of Action” and also for campaigns such as *Alta Gracia*. This support and contribution of

workers is something that is not often acknowledged by outsiders, but highly affirmed in SWC's narratives.

As I look toward a future expansion of my work I am considering analyzing different groups of workers both at UCSD and other universities. In my preliminary research I found that other groups of workers are experiencing noteworthy changes and it would be important to conduct in-depth research on these groups, in order to provide comparisons with custodians as well as to perhaps provide recommendations on issues affecting UCSD workers on a larger scale. It would be important to analyze the specific experience of workers, both documented and undocumented, who commute daily from Mexico. Their narratives produced some of the most impactful stories and not enough work is available that focuses on border commuters working in the formal sector. Another significant point of interest would be a more in-depth analysis of gender, including the manner in which gender creates differentiations among workers in the home. Further work could also look into student activism on behalf of a variety of issues in order to understand and possibly influence motivation for action, directed not only towards worker support but advocating for other current issues as well. It would be important to further analyze relationships between workers and students in hopes of understanding how students understand these workers who are often the only ones students can identify and relate to. The important thing is to increase community activism and unity among all groups on campus (ie among Latin@ students, faculty, and workers) and perhaps bring greater change to the system of higher public education.

This thesis has served to provide a current picture of the ways in which some workers and student communities within the UCs, some of the highest rated public institutions in the world, experience oppression, discrimination, and exploitation which ultimately serve to maintain inequalities within our society. While education becomes a privilege for decreasing numbers of individuals, specifically those of color, it is also important to find that it is these individuals who now, as in the past, are most prone to these urgent situations, but are also the ones more likely to make their voices heard, and become committed to passionate protest. Although significant change may not come soon, these workers and students will undoubtedly continue to be empowered and maintain the hope and courage to continue fighting for spaces of justice, opportunity, and integrity.

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