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Expanding Citizenship: Workplace Democracy and Citizen Engagement in Food Cooperatives

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EXPANDING CITIZENSHIP: WORKPLACE DEMOCRACY AND CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT IN FOOD COOPERATIVES

A Thesis Presented

by

Cecile Reuge

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science
Specializing in Food Systems

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Accepted by the Faculty of the Graduate College, The University of Vermont, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science specializing in Food Systems.

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Abstract

Food cooperatives play a central role in the local food movement. In addition to supporting the local economy, the cooperative movement lists “concern for the community” among their seven core principles (Healthy Foods Healthy Communities Report, 2012). Food cooperatives, however, are typically consumer-owned and primarily assert democratic control over buying practices rather than workplace operation (University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives, 2009). Therefore, unless allocated a separate means for advocacy, cooperative workers often have less autonomy than they would if they were organized and had the means to collectively negotiate their benefits and work environment. This article argues that the efforts of worker-run governance bodies are integral for securing worker citizenship yet are often excluded from the efforts of consumer cooperatives. Using a mixed methods approach that includes focus groups, individual interviews, and textual and policy analyses, this study looks at the impact of unions on the social, political and civil rights of workers in two unionized food cooperatives in Vermont. Specifically, it examines the relationship between cooperative and union governance structures and the role of each institution in generating citizen engagement both in and outside the workplace. In this study, citizenship is defined as access to social, political, and civil rights. Study findings suggest that workers view management and the union as the prime decision-making bodies and the benefits of consumer membership as mainly consumer-oriented and vaguely community-based. Interview data generated with workers and stakeholders indicates that the union plays a pivotal role in promoting citizen engagement and workplace democracy in food cooperatives.

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Introduction

In the summer of 2013, as I was beginning to recruit interview participants for this study, I came across a film screening of a movie entitled “Shift Change,” which purported to be about worker-owned businesses that compete successfully in today’s economy. The full name of the film was “Shift Change: Putting Democracy to Work,” so I attended the screening, along with friends and acquaintances from United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers (UE) Local 255, on the evening of June 12th, expecting to find answers about what truly constitutes a democratic workplace. In addition, I sought examples of food businesses that defied the prevailing standard of poverty wages while challenging the traditional workplace structure that involves various tiers of management overseeing rank and file workers.

The film was remarkably educational and shed light on some of the major discrepancies between worker cooperatives and traditional workplace structures. However, a majority of the film centered on empowerment through cooperative ownership rather than the specific benefits and compensation packages these cooperative employees received. Though I assumed that worker cooperatives did not involve hierarchical management structures, several coops featured in the film did in fact adhere to such a model. Lastly, many key stakeholders who offered commentary about worker cooperatives mentioned the idea that such enterprises promoted “concern for the community.” Nonetheless, there was no attention paid to the communities where the materials for the products made in these worker cooperatives were harvested, nor the effects that these products had on communities outside of their origins. Although these thoughts were primarily based on first impressions, I could not help but question the

validity of the assertion made in the title of the film- that worker cooperatives foster workplace democracy.

Immediately following the film, there was a brief panel discussion in which representatives from cooperative business spoke about what it means for them to be a part of a cooperative. Among the panelists was Mollie O'Brien, Board President of the City Market consumer board, who used the opportunity to speak about the positive aspects, for all who are involved, of owning, operating, and working a consumer food cooperative. O'Brien would be the face of City Market that I would see at future events related to cooperatives as I continued to follow this vein of curiosity for the next year of my graduate career.

At the end of the panel presentations, the audience was invited to ask the panelists questions about the cooperative they were there to represent. At this time, Elizabeth Jesdale, President of Union Local 255 at Hunger Mountain, a food cooperative located in Montpelier, Vermont, responded to O'Brien's praise of City Market by pointing out that the workers at both City Market and Hunger Mountain were unionized. Therefore, she said, they were guaranteed bargaining rights over their working conditions as well as their wages and benefits. In addition, she explained that the General Manager, who is appointed by the Consumer Board at both stores, was responsible for hiring and firing rank and file employees and lower level managers, which had not been clear in O'Brien's presentation of the store.

Elizabeth Jesdale's statement sparked my interest in unions and food cooperatives. Although City Market and Hunger Mountain are consumer cooperatives and therefore mainly serve consumers, consumer cooperatives were founded on similar

principles as worker cooperatives. According to Jesdale's assessment, unions are a site for workplace democracy and political engagement. However, after watching "Shift Change" and noticing the internal contradictions of worker cooperatives, I questioned to what degree the cooperatives and labor advocacy organizations that were local to each of these areas played a part in determining workers' level of engagement. Furthermore, I wondered if and how workers perceived these institutions as increasing their access to "democracy" and what they believed democracy to mean. I sought to use my thesis as an opportunity to explore the dynamics between unions and consumer cooperatives as well as worker perceptions of decision-making at unionized food cooperatives, from which attitudes towards workplace democracy emerge. Having dedicated years to volunteering and supporting the efforts of the Vermont Workers Center and the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers, I was aware of the effects labor advocacy organizations have on worker engagement in governance internal and external to their workplace. Therefore, in addition to exploring workplace democracy, I set out to research the impact labor advocacy organizations have on governance that applies to workplace standards.

This thesis investigates work in the food retail industry through the lens of citizenship. I examine how individuals and institutions (both inside and outside the workplace) construct citizenship, illuminating the factors of citizenship that both constrain and encourage political engagement and workplace democracy in the food industry. For my research, I conducted two case studies set in City Market and Hunger Mountain, which were the only two unionized food cooperatives in Vermont at the time of this study. In an effort to study the effects labor advocacy organizations have on labor policy, I conducted a policy analysis using a social constructivist model as my theoretical

framework. My primary methods include interviews and focus groups, which I initiated with workers, policy makers, and labor advocacy stakeholders. My research is framed around the following questions: 1. How do citizenship practices and demographic variables of food workers in unionized food cooperatives and the broader regulatory framework inform the work of labor advocacy organizations and policy makers in Vermont? Within this question, I seek to answer the following sub-questions: 1a. How do workers view decision-making and compensation in their workplace? In what types of decisions do workers engage? 1b. Who makes the decisions and what opportunities do they have to engage in this process? What are the barriers that prevent workers from engaging in decision-making at their workplace? 2. What types of strategies do labor advocacy organizations and policy makers employ to influence the impact of the broader regulatory framework on citizenship? In addition, I ask the following within this question: 2a. What policy-oriented and non-policy oriented tactics do labor advocacy organizations use to affect the broader regulatory framework? 2b. To what degree do policy makers view labor advocacy organizations as playing a pivotal role in the formation of policy? 2c. Do policy makers view the opportunities for public participation to be sufficient? Through answering these questions, I aim to create a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of our current political system, as it pertains to workers' rights and decision making.

In this thesis, I argue that the union is the principal means through which workers at unionized food cooperatives influence decisions related to working conditions, pay, and benefits. Unions also serve to encourage civic engagement outside the workplace, providing the clout that is necessary to make more sweeping policy changes that would

affect unionized and non-unionized workers alike. Although workers view the consumer cooperative as a mechanism for building community and making food more accessible to all, most workers who participated in this study recognized the union and management as the prime decision makers.

Literature Review

In this literature review, I examine how individuals and institutions (both inside and outside the workplace) construct citizenship and factors that constrain citizen engagement in governance and the workplace, with a focus on the food industry. I will discuss how citizenship manifests in the workplace and in society at large as well as the history of unions and consumer cooperatives working with one another to further a joint vision. Lastly, I will review literature about the struggles posed to those seeking to participate in governance structures and constraints to citizenship related to race, ethnicity, and gender. Since it is possible for people to perform and access the benefits of citizenship in various settings, I use the following literature to restrict the terms in which I will operationalize citizenship.

Citizenship and the State

Citizenship is broadly defined as the relationship between individuals and the communities in which they live and is most commonly understood as the relationship between the individual and the state (Dwyer, 2010). Therefore, the degree to which one is involved in or excluded from one's community, through institutions and interpersonal relations, is a measure of citizenship. This definition is in no way the only definition of citizenship considered to be of significance by theorists, however it is the definition that is most relevant to this study. Researchers in the social sciences have identified clear ways to gauge levels of access to the rights and obligations connected to citizenship. These approaches involve an emphasis on one or more aspects of the citizenship framework proposed by T.H. Marshall, which is comprised of social, political, and civil

rights. The concept of citizen politics, for instance, defines full citizenship in terms of access to political rights (Wagner, 1996). According to this model, full citizenship is determined by the degree to which the people are empowered to participate in and how their varied self-interests are reflected in policy. Social citizenship, a concept that was derived from British welfare legislation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, places a specific emphasis on social rights within Marshall's approach. Social citizenship decrees the universality of welfare rights and equal status (Dwyer, 2010). Within this framework, "the question of provision, of who/what institutions should provide the welfare services and benefits to which citizens are entitled" is essential (Dwyer, 2010, 16). For example, employers currently play a critical role in providing benefits such as healthcare in the United States (Fronstin, 2004). In accordance with social citizenship theory, if these services are not delivered, one's social rights have been violated.

Non-profit organizations provide a substructure for citizen engagement in governance, though with varying success rates. For instance, Tradeau conducted a series of case studies to observe constructions of citizenship in the shadow state, a term which refers to the transfer of responsibility for providing basic social services from state institutions to local non-profit organizations in ways that have expanded the influence of state regulatory agencies (2012, 442). This research was conducted in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan area over a 10-year period. He concludes that organizations that focus on participation at the local level and through democratic governance were the most effective at engaging people. Although this study primarily relates to citizenship and citizen engagement on a societal level, Tradeau's concentration on citizenship in

terms of legal documentation and political rights is of relevance to my analysis centered on rights-based citizenship for state-designated citizens and non-citizens.

Citizenship and the Workplace

Like citizen politics, the concept of workplace democracy serves as a dynamic vision for an exemplary engagement of the political rights and duties connected to citizenship. Workplace democracy, as viewed by labor advocates, has its origins in the labor movement of the 19th century in the US. During this time, the labor movement was characterized by periods of singularity, in which the union represented only skilled craftsmen, and periods of plurality and strength, in which workers of all different skill levels and demographics were represented. According to Fantasia et al., by 1886, the Knights of Labor, a prominent labor organization of the time, managed to “mobilize almost 10 percent of the US working class, across skill level, nationality, race, and gender, into militant local assemblies spread across the entire country (2013, 2).” Employers, however, launched a counter-insurgency and rapidly stamped out this movement using tactics that are illegal today. In its place rose the American Federation of Labor (AFL), a union of craft-based workers, which promoted a more conservative, relatively less militant agenda.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), a large union made up of “low-skilled” workers from mass production industries, which was known for being radical and militant up until this point, attempted to form alliances with the Democratic Party as a tactic to increase membership in the union. This alliance, however, proved to be unreliable as legislative efforts such as the Act, which

had devastating effects for the labor movement, passed without resistance from the supposed political allies of the CIO and the legislature as a whole failed to pass comprehensive labor reform. In 1955, the Congress of Industrial Laborers joined with the American Federation of Labor to form what was essentially a coalition of unions, at which time they acclimated to the vision of the AFL. Throughout the next three or four decades, productivity squeezes caused many employers to cut labor costs, decreasing wages and carving out union organizations using strategies now permissible under the Taft-Hartley Act. It was not until the mid-1990s, when the top ranks of the AFL-CIO were replaced with more radical-minded leaders, that the labor movement would regain the strength needed to fight back against such assaults. (Fantasia et al., 2013)

In light of the tumultuous history of the labor movement and the fallibility of worker participation programs, Fantasia et al. (1988) adopt the definition of worker control for workplace democracy that is expanded upon in future studies on labor such as one conducted by Collom in 1991 on American attitudes toward workplace democracy (2003). In surveying American workers, Collom used a spectrum of workplace democracy on which worker control is at one side and worker participation is at the other. Worker control was broken down into the following two categories: personnel control and production control. Production control referred to influence over decisions regarding new technology, work organization, and changes in products whereas personnel control referred to decisions about discipline, pay level, and layoff policies. Job satisfaction and union representation were two areas where there was found to be a distinct trend toward wanting more or less worker control. The more influence a worker had over production, the more satisfied they were with their jobs, and the less likely they were to be in favor of

further worker empowerment. Those who were less satisfied with their jobs were more likely to be in favor of personnel and production control. Unionized workers were more likely to have some degree of personnel control than non-unionized workers. Of the unionized workers, those who had struck before were more supportive of personnel control whereas those who had not struck were more supportive of worker participation. (Collum, 2003) In their earlier study, Fantasia et al. hold that absolute workplace democracy "...means that workers make the decisions and management has only the powers delegated (and revocable) by the workers." (1988, 469) In this study, I commit to this same notion of genuine workplace democracy and therefore seek out examples of worker control over personnel and production decisions. Job satisfaction and unionization are also themes that emerge in my own data hence I will draw on Collom's previous research to corroborate my findings.

In a 1995 study, George Cheney examines the limitations of workplace democracy within the context of Mondragon worker cooperatives in the Basque region. In his analysis of workplace democracy as an ideal, Cheney points out that while participation is a necessary part of democracy, this characteristic alone does not form a complete version of democracy. According to Cheney, workplace democracy can be broadly defined as "...a system of governance which truly values individual goals and feelings as well as typically organizational objectives which actively fosters the connection between those two sets of concerns by encouraging individual contributions to important organizational choices, and which allows for the ongoing modification of the organization's activities and policies by the group." My research draws on Fantasia et al.'s definition of workplace democracy as well as Cheney's to explore how labor

advocacy organizations embolden food cooperative workers to participate meaningfully and make autonomous decisions in matters that are related to their livelihoods, both individually and as a group.

Attitudes toward workplace democracy differ significantly between managers and workers. It is common for workers to view workplace democracy as an avenue for worker empowerment, while managers view it as a method to enhance productivity and quality (Collom, 2003, 62). Worker participation represents one key component in the effort to achieve workplace democracy. Worker participation can take a variety of forms, such as worker ownership programs and problem-solving groups. However, without institutional support, these programs have frequently been used by employers as tools to denigrate workers' power (Fantasia et al., 1988). Many researchers have noted that unions are a key institution for ensuring greater worker autonomy and empowerment and hence workplace democracy (Fantasia, 1988; Collom, 2003; Sawchuk, 2009). Other bodies that seek to positively influence workplace democracy include workers centers and work councils.

Unions function as a substructure for citizen engagement in the workplace as well as a vehicle to promote worker autonomy. Sawchuk, for instance, conducted a case study that focuses on the citizenship of migrant workers in the auto parts industry in Canada. He concludes by making a series of recommendations for union action to alleviate the problems of the migrant workers, hence simultaneously recognizing the union's strengths and weaknesses as a structural means that workers have at their disposal for making change (2009). My research demonstrates the struggles that union officers and

representatives often face when attempting to encourage participation in the union, as well as the barriers that workers perceive as preventing them from participating.

Consumer cooperatives have experienced periods of growth and decline since their rise in the mid-1800s. Consumer members, however, consistently maintain the same primary objectives for their consumer cooperative, which are as follows: price, quality, and selection advantages (Deller et al., 2009). While store-based consumer cooperatives were initially founded on principles of democratic control and run entirely by members who worked in exchange for “member discounts,” most stores today hire professional management who are then responsible for hiring rank and file staff. Although the way in which store-based consumer cooperatives operate has changed over the years, the primary goals for consumer members have remained the same.

As I will discuss further in the results section of this paper, unions and consumer cooperatives do not currently maintain ties with one another in the US context, or at least not in any official sense. Currently, the only relationship between the consumer cooperative and the union at City Market and Hunger Mountain is between the General Manager, who is appointed by the Consumer Board, and the bargaining unit responsible for negotiating the contract. However, at one point in history, there was in fact a bond between consumer cooperatives and unions, in mission and in praxis.

Unions and Consumer Cooperatives

In 1844, a group of weavers in London formed a consumer cooperative they called the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers after being fired and then blacklisted by their employers for attempting a weavers’ strike the previous year. Ann Tweedale, the only

woman in the group of cooperatives owners, suggested that, "...if they couldn't organize to gain better wages, at least they might organize as consumers for lower prices." The Society was founded on a platform of the following cooperative principles: "1. Open membership, 2. Democratic control based on one member-one vote, 3. Promotion of education, 4. Dividends in proportion to purchases (rebate principles), 5. Limited interest on capital investment, and limit on number of shares any member can own, 6. Political and religious neutrality, 7. Cash trading, no credits, 8. Active cooperation amongst cooperatives." That same year, America's first major consumer cooperative was established by a journeyman tailor in Boston under similar principles as the Rochdale Pioneers.

Throughout the remaining half of the 19th and early 20th century, there were many examples of consumer cooperatives and unions working in unison. In 1875, the Sovereigns of Industry, a labor group that maintained affiliations with the Knights of Labor, built up approximately 100 local councils, several of which operated cooperative stores that adhered to the Rochdale principles, and had 40,000 members in about twenty states. William H. Earle, the founder of the Sovereigns of Industry, said that the organization was to be dedicated to "...elevating the character, improving the condition, and, as far as possible, perfecting the happiness of the labor class" (Earle, 1874). While fighting for higher wages and better working conditions for their 800,000 members, the Knights of Labor were also constructing a massive chain of cooperatives with a mission to abolish wage slavery and replace the capitalist wage system with workplace democracy (Curl, 2010). This was part of their scheme to establish what they termed a "Cooperative Commonwealth," in which the government was confined to providing

infrastructure and public utilities while the rest of the economy was made up of cooperatives regulated by the people. In 1917, the American Federation of Labor asserted that consumer cooperatives were a “twin remedy” with trade unionism for the plight of the American worker, which prompted industrial unions to launch several cooperative stores all around the country (25, Coughlan et al., 1975). There are no recent examples of such strong synergy between the consumer cooperative and labor movements as there were during this time period. In this study, I call attention to workers’ perceptions of the consumer cooperative and the influence this structure has on their work environment as well as on management and union relations.

Policy Analysis

In order to assess what strategies policy makers employ to influence the impact of the broader regulatory framework on citizenship, I refer to the works of Ingram et al. on social construction and policy design. I use Ingram et al.’s “types of target populations” to chart how policymakers view the political power and social construction of the target population. In this model, the target population is defined as one of the following types: dependents, advantaged, contender, or deviants. All types are mapped out as having either more or less power and positive or negative associations. For the purposes of this project, I will focus on dependents, advantaged, and contender types. Dependents are considered to be politically weak and less deserving of financial investment but generally carry positive constructions. On the opposite end of the spectrum, contenders are regarded as strong, but bear negative associations. The advantaged are the most fortunate type as these groups are powerful and positively constructed as deserving of investment. I

will use these types to interpret the responses of policymakers about their support or opposition to a particular bill.

Constraints to Citizenship

The criteria for citizenship are negotiated both in and outside the workplace. Using existing literature, Tonn and Peitrich document the constraints posed to citizenship in the everyday life of Americans, with the assumption that a democratic approach to governance is the most likely way to secure a sustainable future as a society (784). Constraints to citizenship in governance are simplified into categories of work, consumerism, lack of social capital, personal fears and anxieties, and built-environment constraints. The authors conclude that these constraints converge at two main points: time and human psychology. In other words, they claim that an individual's time to effectively participate in governance and his/her strength to bear the risks associated with participation are impeded by work, lifestyle (consumerism, lack of social capital, personal fears and anxieties), and built environment constraints. The future of democracy in the United States will continue to devolve if these constraints to citizenship are not assuaged. Therefore the authors charge employers and government with the task of alleviating these constraints for citizens through various means such as decreasing the number of hours people are expected to work (Tonn and Peitrich, 1998). In my study, I look at the role of worker advocacy organizations and policymakers in encouraging worker participation in workplace and state governance as well as what factors encourage and deter workers from engaging in these processes. Tonn and Peitrich provide crucial

insight into employment factors that are already discouraging and/or limiting worker participation in governance related to long hours and disruptive scheduling.

Constraints to citizenship in the workplace, such as threats to union security and welfare provisioning, create further barriers to practicing active citizenship in governance. In his reflections on the culture of the labor movement, Rudy (2009) determines that the belief system of market fundamentalism is pervasive in the US: workers are viewed by their employers as mere commodities and are therefore subject to wages and protections that correlate with their market value. “Low-skilled” workers are then placed in low-wage jobs with few/limited protections. According to the same study, migrant workers are often hired over non-migrants due to an assumption that it is acceptable to provide these workers with lower wages and fewer rights, which employers see as advantageous for maximizing profits. Accounts of racism as a constraint in the workplace are also well documented in labor research (Sawchuk, 2009; Gordon & Lendhart, 2007; Schlosser, 2002; Waldinger et al., 2008).

Constraints to citizenship for workers in the food industry are equivalent, if not worse in some areas, to US workplaces overall. In a survey conducted by the Food Chain Worker’s Alliance, 86 percent of food workers were found to be earning poverty wages (2012). As is generally common in US workplaces, the predominantly low-wage worker population surveyed in this study also lacked healthcare (83%) and paid sick day benefits (79%) (Liu, 2012). The percentage of those making a subminimum wage is higher across the board for people of color (Black, Latino, Asian, American Indian), than for Whites. Similar to what Rudy observed in his study, almost half (43.6%) of the undocumented workers in the food system are reported to earn sub-minimum wages and are estimated to

experience wage theft at a much higher rate than documented workers. Citizenship barriers, whereby an individual's access to social, political, and civil rights is limited, exacerbate these racialized dynamics in the workplace.

Within the food system as a whole, retail food work constitutes 13 percent of employment in the food industry (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). Front line workers in food retail, who make up the bulk of food industry jobs (86%), earn less than their counterparts in food production, processing, and distribution and are only surpassed by front line workers in food service (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). Food retail workers report part time employment as the most challenging aspect of their work due to the impact this has on their ability to maintain a secure income, access employer-sponsored health insurance, and plan their life outside of work (Food Chain Workers Alliance, 2012). Although 62 percent of workers in food cooperatives are employed full time compared to just 43 percent in conventional grocery stores, according to a study on food cooperatives in northwestern New England, a large portion of food workers in both types of retail are part time (Hoffer, 2013). Food System workers also use food stamps at more than 150 percent the rate of use by all employed frontline workers in the U.S. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010).

The state of Vermont, while heralded for its progressive policies, is not immune to these dynamics. The Vermont food system accounts for approximately 16 percent (or 56,419) of all private sector jobs (Farm to Plate Strategic Plan, 2012). Food workers provide the public with essential goods and help to preserve the quality associated with the Vermont brand. As the local food movement in Vermont continues to grow, it is crucial that workplace democracy and citizen engagement also move forward. Rampant

accounts about the lack of worker protections and benefits in the food industry indicate that there is a clear need for a workplace and a polity that reflects the varied self-interests of the people and specifically rank and file workers. In this study, I call attention to the important connections between citizen action in policy matters and in the workplace, including the ways in which citizenship barriers can limit broader engagement in both spheres. Using the results, I will then evaluate areas in need of development and/or cooperation between policy makers and labor advocacy organizations and institutions.

Methods

Approach

Community Based Action Research is a form of participatory research in which the researcher works with participants to identify and investigate an issue that is experienced by the participants. In this case, I chose to work with the United Electric Union (UE) as the body that represents rank and file workers at both cooperatives and plays a pivotal role in shaping worker citizenship. As a former employee and chief steward at City Market as well as a current union representative for the UE, Chad McGinnis acted as a guide for this research process, providing invaluable input that aided in the formation of my research questions and approach. Kimberly Lawson, who has acted as the union representative for City Market and Hunger Mountain since unionization in 2003, provided knowledge that is crucial to my understanding of workplace democracy at both case study sites.

Since the UE is a member-run union, worker leaders are positioned to have a key influence over decisions that affect worker citizenship such as the amount of paid time off guaranteed to full time employees. Stewards are the primary worker leaders in union Locals who are responsible for assisting their coworkers with grievances, fielding questions about the contract, and organizing new members into the union. A Local is a group of workers in one or several workplaces that form together in solidarity to form a union. The teams that negotiate new contracts every two years are usually made up of people who are elected by the membership, often including stewards, and have been familiarized with the concerns of their coworkers and are therefore equipped with the knowledge to determine which areas of the contract to focus on. At each Local, there is at

least one union steward in every department. In order to honor and reflect this structure of grassroots leadership, I recruited union officers to review and provide feedback on my proposal materials and perform outreach on my behalf. At the first Membership Meetings I attended in the spring of 2013, I was introduced to the leaders at each Local. I offered to share my thesis proposal with those who were explicitly interested and had spare time to provide feedback. Leaders who could not accommodate this commitment into their schedules and busy lives provided much assistance in other ways, namely in organizing their coworkers to take part in this study. Those who agreed to assist with recruitment were given fliers that contained answers to anticipated questions about this study as well as my contact information.

In the winter and spring of 2013, as the steward team kicked off their next series of contract negotiations, I received the permission of the stewards and union representatives to attend membership and contract negotiation committee meetings at each Local. The purpose of attending these meetings was to get a better understanding of how each of these bodies operate and determine the contract priorities for each workplace. This also served as a setting in which I could build relationships with stewards who are active in these committees and who would eventually assist me in recruiting workers for interviews. These meetings were also the subject of avenues for worker participation and the source of either negative or positive feedback from workers whom I would later interview.

Having spent the past five years, or since 2008, actively organizing on campaigns oriented to workers rights in the Burlington community, I had already started to build relationships with cooperative workers and union representatives and to gain their trust.

Beginning in the fall of 2013, I was invited to union local gatherings that occurred approximately once a month. Although these gatherings mainly served a social purpose, workplace matters inevitably emerged as topics for conversation. I heard several stories about customer and worker relations that exposed the everyday challenges of working at two of the largest and most profitable food cooperatives in Vermont. These stories helped me further value and appreciate the labor of retail workers at two cooperatives where I am a patron.

My research follows the format of an explanatory case study in which I explore the relationship between a worker's possession of social, political, and civil rights, the sum of which comprise their access to citizenship, and engagement in workplace governance. The methods I describe in the following sections correspond with my case study protocol as I identify key respondents as well as data collection activities. My primary unit of analysis is the network of labor advocacy organizations and policy makers that affect citizenship in this region of Vermont. I draw upon original qualitative data in order to describe each case and draw conclusions about the relationship between workers who lack or possess citizenship and the labor advocacy organizations and policy makers that influence citizenship.

Fieldsites

City Market was founded as the Onion River Cooperative in 1973 as a buying club located in the Old North End of Burlington. In 2002, having grown significantly in members and in physical size, the cooperative membership made the decision to move to the current location in downtown Burlington. In 2013, the store made a gross profit of

over 13 million dollars and maintains a membership of approximately 9,100 people. Within the past decade, the gross profit and cooperative membership has been growing steadily each year (City Market Cooperative, 2013).

Hunger Mountain began as a pre-order service in Plainfield, Vermont in the late 1960s where the Plainfield Cooperative is located today. In the early 1970s, having outgrown their storefront in Plainfield, the cooperative membership decided to move to a location in downtown Montpelier and eventually to their location on Stone Cutters Way in Montpelier where the store can be found today. In 2013, the store made a gross profit of over 7 million dollars and boasted a membership of approximately 7200 people (Hunger Mountain Cooperative, 2013). Today City Market and Hunger Mountain are two of 16 food cooperatives located in the state of Vermont.

Interviews and Focus Groups

In the spring of 2013, at a time when I was eager to begin data collection, I decided that the focus group was the best method for collecting data on citizenship as it afforded workers from each department the opportunity to develop and discuss collective ideas. In the summer of 2013, however, shortly after beginning recruitment, I discovered that focus groups were logistically impossible to conduct with the number of workers I intended to interview because of scheduling conflicts and in the time allotted for data collection. As an alternative that allowed for workers to react to the responses of other participants while expressing the terms of their citizenship, I decided to conduct individual, semi-structured interviews and to facilitate focus groups whenever possible. In order to enrich the individual interviews, I asked probing questions that were informed

by the responses of other participants. For instance, the topic of the cull, a collection of expired or marred foods reserved for staff, came up frequently in my first few interviews/focus groups with workers at Hunger Mountain; therefore, in the subsequent interviews, I brought this up if the interviewee did not already mention it. These probing questions usually elicited comparable feedback from individual interview participants and created an effect that would be similar had these workers been given the chance to interact. After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in June of 2013, I began to conduct interviews and focus groups that followed the requirements of Exempt IRB Approval.

City Market has approximately 180 rank and file workers at any given time whereas at Hunger Mountain there are approximately 140 rank and file workers. The biggest departments at both Hunger Mountain and City Market are grocery and prepared foods while the smallest are the front end and produce. Given this information, I attempted to focus my recruitment efforts on grocery and prepared foods while excluding the smallest departments- facilities and membership services. At each store, grocery has several sub-departments, including health and wellness, meat and seafood, cheese, and receiving. The prepared foods department is divided up into the kitchen and deli at both Hunger Mountain and City Market. Together, the kitchen and deli sub-departments at Hunger Mountain are larger than any department in the store. In order to obtain a more representative sample, I endeavored to reach out to workers across sub-departments in Grocery and Prepared Foods. The kitchen at City Market includes many refugee workers who speak English as a second language, whereas at Hunger Mountain this sub-department is relatively homogenous in terms of nation of birth and languages spoken.

Therefore I conducted two focus groups with workers from prepared foods, one made up of workers that spoke English as a first language and another made up of workers that spoke Swahili as a first language, as well as an additional interview with a native English speaker. For the latter focus group, I sought out the assistance of a Swahili interpreter.

At City Market, the front end is broken up into cashier and bagger positions whereas the Front End at Hunger Mountain is made up only of cashier positions, therefore at City Market I attempted to recruit people from both positions. The produce department at both stores is small compared to other departments and is primarily made up of stocker positions; hence I found the recruitment procedure in this department to be relatively straight-forward. By recruiting people from a wide array of departments and positions and with varying English-speaking abilities, I endeavored to capture the experience of workers with differential access to citizenship.

In the late summer of 2013, I began to recruit workers at City Market and Hunger Mountain Cooperatives for interviews. Having built relationships with stewards at both stores and having explained my project to them in detail, I decided to ask select stewards who had the time and willingness to assist me with outreach. For data collection purposes, I documented my interviews using an audio recorder with the participants' permission. Workers who agreed to participate received compensation for their time in the form of a 10-dollar gift card to their place of work. This support came from my advisor Teresa Mares and her grant-funded work in food security in addition to support from the Food Systems graduate program at the University of Vermont.

At Hunger Mountain, one steward in particular took the initiative, recruiting 20 workers in the span of a week. I then followed up with these individuals by phone to

confirm a time to meet. I also made myself available twice a week for up to 18 hours, on the premises so that people could ask questions about my project and confirm a time with me in person. The remaining two interview participants were recruited by coworkers who had already participated in the study. This worker-led effort to recruit interviewees by word of mouth allowed me to complete this process in just three weeks.

At City Market, recruitment efforts required more time and work on my behalf. Earlier in the summer, I was able to accomplish 10 interviews thanks to the help of the department stewards. After this initial success, however, stewards expressed that they lacked the time and energy needed to recruit more participants between their work and union activities. One steward advised me to create a flyer that contained information about the study to elicit interest from workers. I took this suggestion into account and created a flyer that listed when and where people could participate, information about the study, the compensation that was being offered, and my contact information. Over the next week, I distributed 20 or more flyers and informational sheets to either a steward or past participant from each department who had agreed to assist me in advance. These point people then disseminated the quarter sheets to their coworkers and posted the flyers in areas of the store to which I did not have access, such as staff bathrooms and break rooms. I conducted the remaining 13 interviews either on the outdoor café premises of City Market or at the nearby Fletcher Free Library over the course of 3 weeks. After conducting two of the said interviews, I was approached by the General Manager (GM) at City Market, who informed me that I could not conduct interviews on the premises without permission from the consumer board. Upon his request, I provided the GM with my interview questions and a note about how I intended to use the information I obtained,

with the assumed consequence of not being able to move forward with conducting my interviews on the premises without his permission. After reviewing this information, he allowed me to continue my study with the expectation that I would provide him with my final results. These events transpired over the course of a few days during which time I conducted all my interviews at the Burlington Public Library. I was pleased to have resolved this minor discrepancy on cordial terms with management, since it could have become a conflict of greater proportions if it had remained unchecked.

I wrote my interview questions with the theoretical definition of citizenship by T.H. Marshall in mind. The first question functions to warm up the participant before I begin to ask more personal questions regarding citizenship. The questions in the first half of the interview, all of which can be found in Appendix 1, are intended to assess the political and civil rights of the participants using a framework of workplace matters on which they are or are not allowed to make decisions or provide input. In the second half of the interview, the questions become oriented to social rights and, with this transition, slightly more personalized to the life experiences of each individual. The social rights that I focused on include pay, employee benefits, such as healthcare and paid time off, and food security.

For the coding and analysis of the data, I used a digital tool called Hyper Research Software. To start, I created a codebook with 15 groups that are listed as follows: Advancement, Consumer Cooperative, Decision-Making Bodies/Setting, Decision-Making Nature, Demographics, Department, Employment Status, Finances, Food Access, Living Situation, Past Employment, Social Security, Store Dynamics, Union Rules/Conduct, and Work Environment. Most of these describe matters that directly

relate to the workplace whereas a select few (Finances, Food Access, Living Situation, Past Employment) are more closely associated with the home. All of these groups contain three or more codes that I then applied to the responses of those I interviewed.

In addition to my interviews with food workers, I conducted three stakeholder interviews. On December 3, 2013, I interviewed Kim Lawson who has worked as a UE union representative for approximately 25 years and has represented Local 203 and Local 255 since they unionized in 2003. Later that day, I interviewed Chad McGinnis, a recent hire of the UE and a former City Market employee and Chief Steward. Lastly, I interviewed James Haslam, Executive Director of the Vermont Workers Center since 2007 and long time labor activist. For the purposes of data collection, I used an audio recorder to document these interviews with the permission of the participants and then selectively transcribed sections of each interview that appeared to be the most vital to this project. I chose these three individuals because of the important role each of them play in advocating for comprehensive and progressive labor reform. Lawson and McGinnis's direct affiliation with UE as either past or current representatives of Locals 203 and 255 make them ideal participants for this study. The Vermont Workers Center is a grassroots, member-run organization whose mission is to organize for human rights, and more specifically, as it relates to this project, work with organized labor to strengthen workers' rights. In 2006, Haslam and the Vermont Workers Center assisted in creating the Vermont Employment Law Handbook, which has since functioned to help working people in Vermont understand their rights and responsibilities at work. In addition to sharing an office with Locals 203 and 255, the Vermont Workers Center lists UE Locals 203 and 255 under organizational partners on their website which indicates a clear

relationship between these institutions and provides a further rationale for including Haslam in this study.

Chief stewards play an extremely important role in increasing participation at union locals, therefore, they tend to have a profound effect on the political rights of the workers they represent. The chief steward oversees all the grievances that are investigated and filed at their Local by themselves and individual stewards throughout the store in addition to requesting information from management in order to process grievances in an informed manner. Given the vital function of chief stewards in a typical UE shop, I decided to interview the chief stewards at both Locals in addition to the interviews I conducted previously with their coworkers.

Since union representatives and chief stewards play similar roles at the UE, the questions that I asked these two groups were the most similar. I had already built rapport with these individuals throughout the research process therefore organizing my questions into a particular order was not of primary concern. I did, however, attempt to follow the standard practice of ordering my questions from broad to narrow; hence descriptive questions like “Describe the process of contract negotiations?” were placed at the beginning while more specific questions regarding decision-making were situated at the end of the interview (Refer to Appendix 1). Since the union acts as a vehicle for worker participation, my questions for both union chief stewards and union representatives addressed the barriers, challenges, and opportunities for participation in the union and in overall workplace matters. I inquired about leadership changes within the past few years or in the time that the chief steward had been working at the cooperative. One question

that I asked chief stewards and union representatives addressed the relationship between the union and the cooperative, or whether this existed.

As the Executive Director of the Vermont Workers Center, James Haslam oversees the strategizing of the various campaigns that the organization facilitates related to healthcare, labor rights, and state budgeting. For many years, Haslam has been involved in fights to increase the state minimum wage, mandate break time, and unionize workplaces, among other efforts. Since being hired at the VWC, Haslam has been involved in collective bargaining efforts all over the state and is therefore in a position to understand how to engage with working people using a multi-faceted approach. I asked Haslam questions about how the VWC engages with workers who are already unionized, worker rights struggles in which the VWC participates, and non-policy oriented tactics that the VWC employs to ensure rights for workers.

Policy Analysis

Workplace democracy is inherently influenced by state labor regulations. Therefore as labor regulations progress to provide workers more autonomy through collective bargaining and guaranteed social benefits, workplace democracy becomes more widespread. Many stakeholders are involved in the legislative process, including lobbyists, policymakers, and the community members who are anticipated to be effected by the legislation. Hence, I incorporate input from the various stakeholders in my analysis in order to gain a more well-rounded perspective on these issues and their impact on workplace democracy.

For the purposes of this project, I use social constructivist policy theory to analyze the following bills- House Bill 208, House Bill 552 and Act 48. Each bill was identified for its explicit connection to the benefits that the food workers I interviewed consider to be the most valuable. I use the interview data I collected to gauge the participation patterns and policy experiences of food workers as facilitated by the union. In order to decipher the role of labor advocacy organizations like the VWC in mobilizing the target population and instigating policy change, I use data from the interview that I conducted with James Haslam, Executive Director of the VWC, in December of 2013. I apply data from my interviews with UE representatives Kimberly Lawson and Chad McGinnis to an exploration of the ways in which the union initiates worker involvement in policymaking and stakeholder opinions about how these bills will affect the workplaces they represent. Lastly, I utilize data from individual interviews I conducted with the Chair of the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs, Kevin Mullin, and the Chair of the House General, Housing, and Military Affairs Committee, Helen Head to examine social constructions of the target populations by each politician. Representative Head and Senator Mullin occupy key positions of influence in the legislature as the chairs of two committees through which labor legislation tends to travel. Head and Mullin also represent two opposing viewpoints, Head being a Democrat who is known for voting in favor of progressive labor legislation and Mullin being a Republican who has the reverse voting record. I used an audio recorder to record each interview with the permission of each policymaker involved.

As I will discuss further in the results section, paid time off, healthcare, and higher wages were the three benefits that came up the most frequently for workers when

asked “What do you think of your benefits? Is there one that you value over the others?” Therefore it seemed to be the most logical to focus on current legislation that either protects or improves the current standards under which the interview participants work. If passed, House Bill 208 would require employers to provide up to 7 days of paid sick leave to their employees. “An act relating to raising the Vermont livable wage” or House Bill 552 proposes to raise the Vermont minimum wage to \$12.50 an hour. Lastly, Act 48, or “An act relating to a universal and unified health system,” passed in 2011 with the intent of creating Green Mountain Care in order to contain costs and provide healthcare as a public good to people throughout the state. I discuss in more depth the ways in which these standards compare to those of the current union contracts in the results section.

As experts in the field of organized labor, Lawson and McGinnis were ideal candidates to ask about the effects these pieces of legislation would have on unionized workers and more specifically on workers at City Market and Hunger Mountain Cooperatives. My questions were mostly tailored to address the ramifications these bills would have on workers at both cooperatives; however, my last question covered worker participation in policymaking more broadly. In my interview with Haslam, I asked questions about his thoughts on the effects of H. 208, H. 552, and Act 48 on workers who were already guaranteed such benefits.

In February of 2014, I conducted individual interviews with Representative Helen Head and Senator Kevin Mullin. During these interviews, I inquired about the emergence of each piece of legislation, why they supported or opposed it, and how it could be improved upon in future legislative reviews. At the end of each interview, I asked broader

questions about their thoughts on public policy and the role of organized labor in the legislative process.

Close Reading of Documents

Document analysis is typically used as a means for triangulating and contextualizing data collected through the implementation of other qualitative research methods. In this case, I used documents that have mostly been obtained through my collaboration with UE leaders. These documents serve to broaden my knowledge base about Locals 203 and 255 and provide me with some of the necessary background information for understanding the context of the workplaces that are the focus of this project. Document analysis is considered particularly appropriate for qualitative case studies such as the ones that are featured in this project (Bowen, 2009). Although I have not completed a full document analysis, this thesis integrates a close reading of documents at hand in areas that are explicitly mentioned by interview participants as points of importance. For this project, I have completed a close reading of the following documents: Local 203 and 255 union contracts, classifications of grievances, union newsletters, union survey results, and membership and contract negotiation committee meeting notes.

Since becoming unionized in 2003, City Market and Hunger Mountain negotiate a new contract approximately every three years. The contract is negotiated between the union and management negotiating committees with input from stakeholders in both parties. This document determines essential work rules and standards such as paid time off, grievance procedures, and definitions of substitute, part time, and full time employment. Therefore it is crucial to my understanding of workplace democracy and

worker rights. I specifically chose to look at union contracts from the 2013 and 2010 negotiating sessions in order to highlight changes that have occurred over time.

Each steward is responsible for directing the grievance procedure in their department and accompanying workers to disciplinary meetings with management as well as organizing their coworkers. The grievance procedure is the main option for recourse that employees have available to them for issues they have with either coworkers or management. The chief steward is responsible for documenting and organizing grievances, so that they may be referenced for future contract negotiations, as well as providing support to their fellow stewards. For this project, each chief steward was courteous enough to synthesize the data they have on grievances and inform me, based on this information, of the areas in which they received the most grievances. I used this information to identify situations discussed in the interviews that need further observing. This information also helped me to further understand the grievance procedure and how employees follow this procedure.

During contract negotiations, the union sends out updates in the form of leaflets and fliers to all of their membership, informing them of updates in the contract negotiation process, what was discussed at a membership meeting, the status of a grievance, and political actions related to labor. Over the course of contract negotiation sessions, newsletters are sent out that make explicit mention of controversial proposals from management or of management's opposition to one of the union's proposals. Newsletters are written by alternating members of the contract negotiation committee and then placed in each member's personal work mailbox. For the purposes of this project, I used union newsletters to track the change and development of each contract throughout

the negotiations as well as to discern the opposing viewpoints of management and the union.

Several weeks before contract negotiations begin, union leaders distribute a survey to all the members to determine the top three priorities that the committee will focus on during contract negotiations. These surveys also allow employees the opportunity to list any concerns they may have regarding their working conditions that are not covered by the closed-ended questions. With the assistance of union representatives, I was able to obtain the data from the closed-ended questions, which I then corroborated with the information I had on each participant's most valued benefits.

Between January and June of 2013, I attended select Local 203 and 255 membership meetings. Membership meetings occur at both Locals on approximately a monthly basis and are open to the public as an opportunity to learn more and/or participate in union matters. Depending on the time of year membership meetings are scheduled, they consist of steward and contract negotiation updates as well as announcements about upcoming events. The purpose of going to membership meetings was to gather information about how these meetings were conducted and what types of matters were discussed. I was also able to get a sense of how many people typically attended these meetings and how new participants engaged with those who were already involved and perhaps occupied formal positions in the union. Given other research commitments, I attended two or three meetings at each Local.

Between April and June of 2013, I attended select Local 203 and 255 contract negotiation committee meetings, which totaled approximately 10 hours of participant observation. These meetings are held on a random basis to determine union proposals and

discuss strategies for contract negotiations with management beginning in the summer. I was unable to attend contract negotiation meetings between the union and management, so negotiation committee meetings were the best time to gather information about union proposals and potential management proposals that may be discussed at future, closed-door meetings. At the meetings I was able to attend, I took extensive field notes about my observations regarding the process and content that was being discussed.

Limitations of Study

When I decided upon City Market and Hunger Mountain as my field sites in the Winter of 2013, I did so with the knowledge that I had established social networks at both locations prior to this project. I anticipated utilizing these networks for conducting outreach and developing a foundational understanding of how unions and food cooperatives operate. The workers whose help I sought proved to be extremely skilled at recruiting their coworkers for union-related causes—as I noted previously, one worker succeeded in recruiting 20 of her peers in the span of one week. Most of those who aided me with outreach for this project, however, were affiliated in some way with the union, thus the sample of workers I interviewed constitutes what is often referred to as a convenience sample. Therefore, my recruitment methods could have had significant effects on the types of workers who participated.

The average wage of a City Market employee is 11 dollars and 40 cents per hour whereas the average worker at Hunger Mountain is receiving an hourly wage of 13 dollars and 64 cents, which, in both cases, amounts to an income over 20,000 dollars per year assuming the individual is working an average of 40 hours per week. Nevertheless, a majority of participants at both stores claimed to earn a household income of less than

20,000 dollars a year. This distinction between my interview sample and the average cooperative employee is the result of a convenience sample or indicative of the several workers I interviewed who worked part-time or as substitutes.

This is the first study I have completed that has required the extensive use of mixed research methods. Therefore, I entered this process expecting to encounter several challenges that are typical when conducting mixed-methods research on a large scale for the first time. Had I embarked on this project with substantial research experience in my recent history and with more time to conduct this study, I may have, at that point, decided to extend my research into non-unionized food cooperatives. However, since I was aware of the just cause and at will employment differentiation mentioned earlier in this section, I determined that I would have posed too great a danger to non-unionized employees' job security as an inexperienced researcher. Nonetheless, I recognize that this research would likely serve an important purpose in drawing distinctions between unionized and non-unionized food cooperatives.

Results

Interviews and Focus Groups

Before each interview and focus group, I asked participants to complete a brief demographics survey. Therefore, I begin this results section with an outline of the results from the demographic surveys I distributed at each cooperative. Results are presented in correlation with the order of interview questions, beginning with workers' comments on what they enjoyed and did not enjoy about their work. Views on hours and scheduling at both cooperatives follow. I examine who workers believed to be the power holders in decision making and what factors they saw as barriers to their participation. Workers comment on their perceptions of the different types of decision-making processes at each workplace, and on perceptions of the union. Following this section, I explore whether or not workers find their wages to be sufficient for supporting themselves and their dependents. To assess food security for cooperative employees in the discussion section of this paper, I take a look at where workers shop and what characteristics they find to be unique, if any, about working at a cooperative. Lastly, I reflect on a focus group conducted with two Prepared Foods General Staff at City Market and construct a narrative from their responses about the experience of working as a refugee at City Market. In order to avoid redundancies, I present my results from each cooperative together and note distinctions between the two workplaces.

Of the twenty-two people with whom I conducted interviews and focus groups at Hunger Mountain, 36.36 percent made under 20,000 dollars per year, 31.82 percent made between 20 and 30,000, 13.64 percent made between 30 and 50,000, and 18.18 made 50,000 or above. Approximately 27.27 percent of participants had worked at Hunger

Mountain for less than 2 years and 72.73 percent for 2 years or more. Approximately 54.55 percent of participants worked full time hours, 22.73 percent worked part time, and 22.73 percent worked substitute hours. Approximately 59.09 percent of participants accessed government assistance programs, 18.18 percent of whom used SNAP/EBT, and 50 percent used healthcare. About 27.27 percent of interviewees noted that they had dependents in their household. For highest level of education completed, 9.09 percent of the sample answered postgraduate education, 31.82 percent answered four-year degree, 9.09 percent answered two-year degree, 13.64 percent answered some college, and 36.36 percent answered high school. Approximately 13.64 percent of participants were of mixed race, the rest being White/Caucasian. The average age of the participants was approximately 40 years.

Of the twenty-three people with whom I conducted interviews and focus groups at City Market, 56.52 percent made under 20,000 per year, 30.43 percent made between 20 and 30,000, 8.69 percent made between 30 and 50,000, and 4.35 percent made over 50,000. Of those who participated in this study, 43.48 percent had worked at City Market for 2 years or more and 56.52 percent had worked for less than 2 years. Approximately 78.26 percent worked full time hours and 21.74 percent worked part time. About 43.48 percent of participants accessed government assistance programs, 17.39 percent of whom used SNAP/EBT and 30.43 percent used healthcare. When asked what the highest level of education was that they had completed, 4.35 percent answered postgraduate education, 43.48 percent answered four-year degree, 21.74 percent answered two-year degree, 21.74 percent answered some college, 4.35 answered high school, and 4.35 answered elementary education. Of the participants from City Market, 13.04 percent were African

American, 13.04 percent were mixed race, and 4.35 percent were Latina while the remainder were White/Caucasian. The average age of participants at City Market was approximately 32 years.

The workers I interviewed from City Market were more likely to be making less income and to be college-educated than workers at Hunger Mountain (Figures 1 and 2). Participants at Hunger Mountain were typically older and had worked at the store for longer than workers at City Market. A majority of the workers I interviewed from the Front End at City Market (80%) were under the age of 30 and had been working for less than two years. All other demographic variations were spread evenly across departments and bore no significant correlations.

According to a 2002 study on food retail workers in the United States, one-third of the workforce is between the ages of 35 and 54 years, or what is referred to as “prime working years,” 85 percent is White, with the remainder 10 percent Black and 4 percent Asian American, and 37 percent is part-time. My participant samples from City Market and Hunger Mountain, therefore, mirror the racial composition of the national average to the extent that they are majority White. The average age of a Hunger Mountain participant was closer to that of the average retail food worker in the US than that of a City Market participant while the percentage of part time and substitute workers in my sample from Hunger Mountain far surpassed the national average. Below is a series of charts that show the similarities and differences in demographics between participants at City Market and Hunger Mountain.

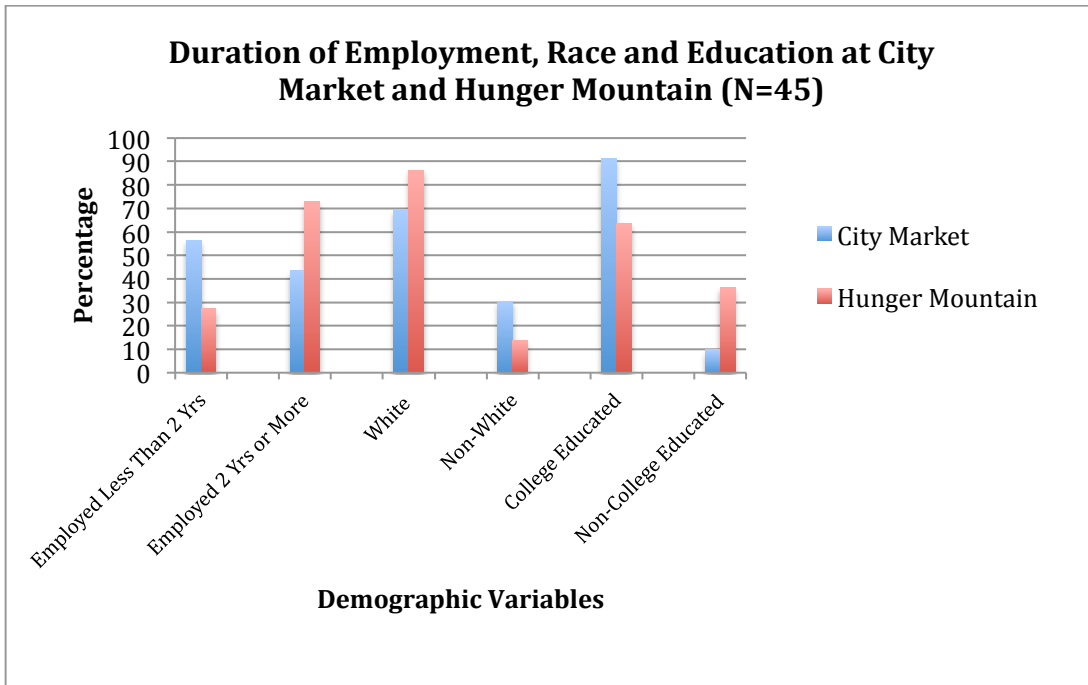


Figure 1

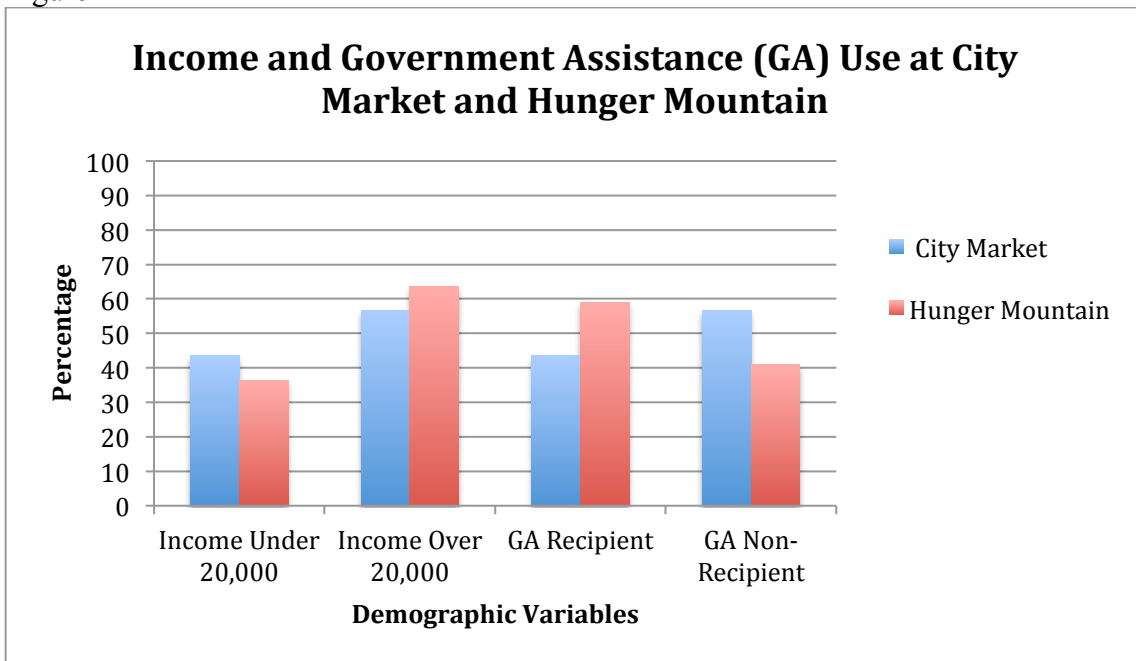


Figure 2

Colleagues and customers were cited as sources of both satisfaction and annoyance. In general, however, this question yielded a number of different responses

from participants. Workers tended to mention interaction with different people, a sense of camaraderie with their coworkers, and dealing with fresh produce as well as direct contact with growers as features of their work they enjoyed. In terms of what they did not enjoy, workers cited an even greater array of aspects including inconsistent schedules, disrespectful customer attitudes, fast-paced working environment, precariousness of their employment status (as a substitute), and disorganization within their department or the store overall.

Scheduling was a contentious topic for several participants and a clear entry point into the topic of general citizen engagement in the form of participation at work. At City Market, each individual's sense of satisfaction with their schedule was usually correlated with a department whereas at Hunger Mountain this sense was correlated with their employment status, as substitute employees have the least reliable schedules. A substitute worker at Hunger Mountain spoke succinctly to the plight he and other substitute workers faced with regard to scheduling:

...This last week was the first week that I did not work 40 hours in 4 months but you know you have to still be concerned about, in the end, you know, where does the income come from in two weeks if I don't have the hours... It's totally unpredictable and it generally kind of restricts you because it's like, well maybe I'll go find a job over here and work for two days you know down the road doing something else. And well yeah, but what if they need me on those days?... you know again it's not a guaranteed employment. It's not getting hired, it's not like you're here you do this every week for us and we pay you.

At City Market, workers in the Prepared Foods and Grocery departments expressed the most frustration in regards to their schedule, whereas workers in Produce appeared to be, for the most part, satisfied. One worker described scheduling in the Produce department as follows, “And scheduling in the produce department is unique in that we have more autonomy than some of the rest of the store does so in a sense, even though the manager makes the schedule, we do get a say in when we work and what shifts and such...” The workers I interviewed from the Front End at City Market, many of whom were students, described management as “accommodating” and “flexible” in creating their schedules.

For many workers, this task was seen as an explicit responsibility of managers who could solicit varying levels of input from workers. Workers’ scheduling needs at City Market were markedly different than those of workers at Hunger Mountain for various reasons on which I speculate here and examine further later on in this section. Prospective reasons include: the fact that there is a larger student population working at City Market, more workers at Hunger Mountain are supporting dependents, and, at City Market, it is common for workers to be employed part time and as substitutes at Hunger Mountain. The following statement of a City Market employee demonstrates the effects of employing students on scheduling at the Front End:

... We have a lot of people who’ve just graduated from college and we have probably like five or six people who are currently in school, if not more. I’m at the top of the people that are on the list that; I’m the highest seniority student so I get better hours because of that... Students’ schedules are obviously worked around more than people for whom this is their day job, like they don’t have to go to another job or another school after, those people usually work in the mornings

because those are the times that they can swing. So a lot of just the student population are in at the night closing. So yeah I think that the schedule definitely, I think the student schedules affect the people who aren't students a lot more because they're like fit in between when everybody else can't work.

If workers did not find the opportunities to participate in their scheduling to be adequate, it was because they had determined these opportunities to be meager or the hours that were offered to them to be scarce or inconsistent. Workers mentioned seniority as an integral factor in determining the amount of say they had over their schedules.

According to Collom's study on attitudes towards workplace democracy, influence over production decisions, like scheduling, can lead to a sense of overall job satisfaction and less desire for further control (2003). In addition, workers who are dissatisfied with their work tend to support worker control over production and personnel decisions. If union stewardship were considered a measure of desire for worker control and empowerment, one would notice some resonance between Collom's findings and my own. Workers at the Front End, for instance, were relatively content with their schedules and had fewer stewards than any other department in which my interview participants resided. This department also maintains the highest attrition rate in the store, which may also account for why it has so few stewards. At City Market, part time employees have set schedules that may fluctuate at various points in time whereas substitute employees have irregular schedules that are entirely dependent on the needs of their part-time and full-time coworkers. Though substitute employees at Hunger Mountain had little influence over production decisions like scheduling, they did not occupy any steward positions, suggesting that they did not desire worker control over decision-making.

However, as Collom affirms in his study, personnel influence does not translate to production control nor vice versa.

When asked if they could participate in the decision-making process at their workplace, approximately seventeen workers at City Market said yes, or somewhat, and five workers said no. At Hunger Mountain, eighteen said yes or somewhat and two said no. Select participants at both stores did not provide a response. A majority of the workers discussed participation in decisions that pertained to operations in their department or the entire store. Many workers believed that management had the greatest degree of say in how decisions are made about day to day work and that, for this reason, they could choose the quantity of participation they commit. Often times workers recalled being able to provide input about an issue they had to their manager in certain instances, at which point they emphasized their manager's receptiveness, or lack thereof, to their concerns.

The position each individual occupied significantly impacted his or her level of autonomy over decision-making. One worker at City Market, for instance, remarked that he was "completely autonomous" in the decisions he made about his department as a buyer. Similarly, a worker at Hunger Mountain recognized the concentrated power of the buyer in Grocery, stating that a lot of the decisions were actually made by the buyers. In contrast, a cashier at City Market stated that she was unable to make decisions "...other than what happens at my register," going on to explain that there are rules at the Front End unlike any other department "... because you deal with money."

Similar to scheduling, a worker's ability to participate in decision-making processes sometimes depended on their department. At both stores, workers in Produce

appeared to have the most amount of say in decision-making. In the following instance, a worker in Produce at Hunger Mountain describes her experience with decision-making:

We definitely have a lot of say in what we do. I'm given a side, so I work, it's called the Left Side, I can pretty much arrange it however I want, cull whatever I think looks bad and. But when it comes to the pricing, prices are set and if I think something is not selling I go to my manager or basically my manager's assistant and I say- "This should be on sale." She says, "Okay." Let's discuss it with her manager and it comes back at a sale price.

Workers in the Produce departments at both stores appeared to follow a trend that Collom mentioned in his study where workers with influence over production decisions, like work organization (scheduling) and changes in products, had a greater sense of job satisfaction and less desire for further worker empowerment. When asked if they could participate in decision-making at their workplace and how they participate, most produce workers said that they did not feel the need to participate since they were generally satisfied with their jobs. Rather than participating in union decisions, workers participated in department huddles and conversations with their managers, both of which only carry weight over production decisions. Since produce workers bore significant influence over production decisions, they were generally satisfied with their jobs and therefore did not seek out means for worker empowerment such as participating in the union.

Workers mentioned barriers related to time, work schedule, and job stability that prevented them from participating in decision-making processes related to work matters. At City Market, it was most common for employees to cite job satisfaction as the reason

why they were not more involved in decision-making whereas at Hunger Mountain, employees indicated that time and work schedules were the two most significant barriers. There was a distinct correlation at both stores between employment status (full time, part time, and substitute) and ability to participate in decision-making. Part time and substitute workers were more likely to be either unable or unmotivated to participate due to the reasons just listed. In two specific instances, one at City Market and the other at Hunger Mountain, employees cited discrimination, in the form of sexism or ethnocentrism, as a barrier to their participation in decision-making. The City Market employee alleged that he had been discriminated against due to his age and English speaking ability when he applied for a promotion within his department. He eventually filed a discrimination case, through the union, against management and was rewarded with the position for which he had originally applied. A female-identified employee at Hunger Mountain claimed that her manager in the grocery department did not listen to her opinions because of the fact that she was a woman. In addition, the kitchen expansion often came up as a clear example of the lack of worker input in the decision-making process at Hunger Mountain.

Tonn and Peitrich speculate that work acts as a constraining factor to one's citizenship by limiting the amount of time one has to participate in governance. As part of this phenomenon, they allege that workers are too preoccupied with bearing through hard economic times that have made job insecurity, stagnant wages, and longer hours more commonplace to engage in state and/or community governance. Tonn and Peitrich claim that, "Workers, both as individuals and through their unions, have been virtually powerless to stop the onslaught of work (787, 1998)." It is clear from my research, however, that unions have given workers a greater sense of job security and provided

guaranteed incremental wage increases. Even still, time is one of the number one limiting factors preventing workers from participating in workplace decision-making. As I will discuss further in the policy analysis section of this paper, unions play a critical role in encouraging participation in policy-making; therefore workplace and state governance are, to a certain degree, bound up in one another.

For substitute workers at Hunger Mountain, unpredictable hours and the “flexibility” they reserve for their employer reflects their position as commodities that are expected to respond to the ebbs and flows of the market as needed. These traits associated with the commodification of workers are reflected in Rudy’s discussion of market fundamentalism (2009). Although they have a certain degree of job security as union-represented employees at Hunger Mountain, their work schedules are such that they must stay available in order to attain the number of hours they need to live on their earnings. One substitute worker at Hunger Mountain compared his experience as a substitute to that of a “freelance grocery clerk” in which “you don’t know if you’re going to get the same amount in your check every two weeks.” As several participants also mentioned, many employees at Hunger Mountain start as substitutes and later progress to more permanent positions. In fact, fifty-two percent of those who currently work at Hunger Mountain are employed as substitute or part time employees.

Worker participants seemed to have varied understandings of how decisions pertaining to their employment were made. At both stores, a majority of the workers described processes facilitated by both the union and management. At Hunger Mountain, approximately thirteen people mentioned that decisions were made by the union and management together, five said they were made by management, as a stand-alone group,

nine said they were made by open book management, and two said they were made by the cooperative. At City Market, the union and management were mentioned as decision-makers by eleven people, the union by two, management by eight, and the cooperative by two. Some employees at City Market stated that they did not know how decisions were made and who made them, as in the following example from a worker in Produce: “I guess I don’t really know who makes the decisions for like pay and stuff but I’m assuming it’s a cooperative so the people vote for it but I don’t know what exactly they vote on. Whether it’s salaries, pay and stuff like benefits, I’m not really sure who makes those decisions...” In general, workers at Hunger Mountain ascribed slightly less power to management than did workers at City Market. However, open book management at Hunger Mountain was incorporated into a description of decision-making, at times, more than management and the union.

Worker participation programs at Hunger Mountain like open book management and huddles deal with matters related to production, such as sales and changes in products sold, and are instituted by management. Fantasia et al. find that worker participation programs such as the ones mentioned do much more to weaken unions and worker solidarity than to strengthen them, by encouraging workers to monitor each other’s productivity (1988). A few employees at Hunger Mountain suggested that managers used open book management as a way to pressure employees to work more efficiently by directing them to look at areas where store sales have dropped. As I will discuss later in this section, employees are already self-motivated to evaluate their peers’ work ethic, and worker participation programs further exacerbate this tendency. At Hunger Mountain, for instance, where these programs are more prevalent, a higher

number of employees mentioned erosion of work ethic as a downside of having a union. However, despite frequent mention of these programs at Hunger Mountain, workers have generally maintained a stronger contract than workers at City Market, which includes higher wages, on average, and more paid time off, and which cedes less power to management. This evidence suggests that worker participation programs have not negatively impacted the union or worker solidarity. Nonetheless, since there are fewer worker participation programs at City Market than at Hunger Mountain, I am unable to determine whether or not these programs have a significant impact on the union and worker solidarity.

In order to assess the impact of worker participation programs on the union's effectiveness, I asked Kim Lawson as well as two workers who served as officers in either Local how they felt about the participation programs that existed at their respective places of work. Lawson initially stated that these programs are "... mostly things that management can say that they use to invite participation but they don't on any real level." She went on to say that surveys administered by the union have suggested that members of both locals (over 70 percent of total workers at both stores) do not feel like they have opportunities to participate in real meaningful ways and that they are not being listened to. According to Lawson, some workers at Hunger Mountain complain that there are often staff shortages when employees leave the floor to attend a huddle or open book management meeting. One officer at Hunger Mountain expressed a similar sentiment as Lawson towards open book management:

Management likes to tell us that we have a say in our workplace outside of the union with this new thing they have called open book management where we see

all the numbers and we play these little games. But when it really comes down to it, they don't really give us a say --- the working environment is really determined by management, solely.

By contrast, an officer from City Market commended these programs for giving workers an opportunity to participate, as, in her opinion, any program that was intended to increase participation was positive. Though researchers such as Collom argue that a taste of power may cause a worker to seek more control, Fantasia et al. assert that worker participation programs are specifically crafted to prevent workers from expanding their scope of participation (Collom, 2003; Fantasia et al., 1988). Based on my interviews with workers and stakeholders, it can be speculated that worker participation programs in unionized cooperative settings cause workers to surveil each other's productivity and to feel a false sense of empowerment at an increased rate.

Workers who stated that decisions were made by the union and management, which represented a majority at each store, demonstrated that decision-making power was shared between management and the union and was, therefore, sometimes fraught. Despite propositions that the consumer cooperative makes decisions related to work at the store, the cooperative has little to no control over work-related matters except in indirect or rather trivial ways. The Board of Directors or Council, which is the entity that represents the consumer cooperative leadership, is elected by the consumer membership and stands to make decisions that primarily affect the consumer membership. The Board or Council is responsible for hiring the General Manager who then oversees the employment of all lower level managers and rank and file workers. Therefore, contradictory to what some workers (and customers) may think, these consumer

cooperative workplaces are in actuality structured in accordance with the traditional workplace hierarchy in which managers possess power over the livelihoods of rank and file workers.

When asked about the benefits and downsides of having a union, some workers at City Market stated that they did not know enough about the union to have this information. Of the people that were able to answer this question, which was a majority of participants, most attributed their job security and good benefits to the union's presence. At City Market, workers cited job security in approximately nine interviews and access to good benefits in approximately seven as advantages to being in a union. An additional four participants believed that empowerment or the ability to participate in the creation of a contract were noteworthy benefits. Workers at Hunger Mountain spoke at great length about the union in general. At Hunger Mountain, job security was cited in approximately eleven interviews, access to good benefits in nine, and empowerment in four.

Workers at both cooperatives listed poor work ethic and/or a lack of rewards for good work ethic more frequently than any other downsides. At City Market, erosion of work ethic was mentioned approximately four times, adversarial relations three times, and dues twice. At Hunger Mountain, erosion of work ethic was raised as a downside in approximately eleven different interviews and adversarial relations was raised in two. Within the discussions of eroding work ethic, participants often believed the union's seniority policy, which grants preferential access to advancement opportunities and scheduling slots to those who have been employed the longest, to be problematic. In this

instance, a worker from the Grocery department expresses his grievances regarding seniority and the existence of strict job titles:

You get an employee and you kind of build the position on their strengths rather than just expecting somebody to fit into this mold and that's kind of the way it is at City Market and it's really really frustrating because, like I mentioned earlier, you see a lot of people come in, have a lot of ability, a lot of capability and- well you're a stocker. And maybe a position will open up but if not, you know, just wait just wait just wait [sic]. Rather than being to, you know, give people the position they really deserve. You know, management's hands are tied behind their back.

As is evident in his comments, this worker believes that the union prevents management from awarding those that have good work ethic with a promotion. In the following statement, a Hunger Mountain employee describes a scenario that is opposite from the one just portrayed but is influenced by a similar sentiment about work ethic:

I think it's made it easy for people who aren't necessarily the most reliable workers to stay as not, you know, being necessarily a, I don't want to say reprimanded but you know, made, held accountable for their actions. So that's been kind of a bummer which the union has been trying to change. They've seen that the union is, you can't fire people here. It's like impossible and, which is great you know as far as job security if you're a worker whose calling out all the time or just not working in general when you are here then it's very unfair you know to those of us who are working.

At both stores, contract negotiations were the most frequently mentioned feature of having a union, more than elections, meetings, and grievance procedures.

Most of the workers I interviewed, many of whom were accessing 3 Squares Vermont (Vermont's administered program of the federal SNAP benefits), claimed to get a majority of their household food at their place of work. Some attributed the accessibility of this food to their employee discount, which is marginally higher than the full consumer member discount at both stores (approximately ten to twelve percent). At City Market, all but three people said that they bought a majority of their food at their place of work, ten of whom suggested that the food was more accessible because of their employee discount. Approximately five people at Hunger Mountain said that they bought a majority of their food outside of their place of work. Sixteen of the interview participants at Hunger Mountain said that a significant amount of their food came from the cull cart. Nine workers mentioned the cull as their favorite benefit, sometimes alongside another benefit like the store discount or paid time off. The cull is what employees call leftover produce and grocery foods that are reserved for them because the foods are too aesthetically unpleasing to sell to customers or past their expiration date.

Many interviewees discussed having a distinct appreciation for working at a consumer cooperative and dealing with "local" and/or "fresh" produce. At Hunger Mountain, eighteen of the twenty-two participants emphasized either their consumption of or gratification for working with natural foods whereas at City Market only twelve of the twenty-three participants made explicit mention of this. Some participants expressed dismay towards the cooperative's failure to adhere to its mission, which I will discuss more later in this section.

Workers at both cooperatives generally found their benefit packages to be satisfying. At Hunger Mountain, when asked what their favorite benefit was, workers responded with a variety of answers, which included paid time off, healthcare, wages, the cull, and discount. Although the answers to this question were diverse, the most common favorites were cull and healthcare. I would attribute this to the fact that a significant percentage of the workers I interviewed are substitutes and therefore often do not receive a full benefits package. At City Market, most workers replied that healthcare was their favorite benefit. Although healthcare was a favorite benefit for workers at both stores, six Hunger Mountain participants and three from City Market critiqued their healthcare plans. For the purposes of this study, healthcare includes medical, dental, and eye care.

Upward mobility was also a relatively contentious topic amongst workers. Workers at both stores agreed that these opportunities existed, but their opinions then diverged about whether or not the opportunities were substantive. Approximately nine workers at City Market and ten at Hunger Mountain said concretely that these opportunities were substantive. Many workers at Hunger Mountain believed the opportunities to be somewhat lacking because of low attrition rates. At Hunger Mountain, workers who had started as substitutes highlighted how difficult it was for them or their coworkers to advance. In the following interview excerpt, a worker from Hunger Mountain shares her experience advancing from substitute to full time employment status:

It took me over a year to get a full time position, to even get a permanent shift because when you're a sub and you don't have a permanent shift so you have no seniority and once you've established a permanent shift you can establish

seniority over another employee. So it took me over a year and I was really lucky that somebody just happened to be leaving to go work on a farm and to become, I became full time all at once, I went from being a sub to just full time whereas a lot of people take on a four hour shift here, a six hour shift there and have to work their way up to full time to get their benefits.

Some workers at both stores spoke to the fact that they did not wish to become managers because the pay was insufficient for the amount of work for which they would then be responsible. At both stores, this topic also brought up the negative feelings some participants had about seniority as a criterion for upward mobility, as is alluded to in a previous quotation regarding the benefits and downsides of having a union.

At City Market, workers liked the idea of cross training, training for more advanced positions in outside departments, as a means of promoting upward mobility, but did not believe that it was common to have such opportunities. Of the twenty-three people I interviewed at City Market, ten believed cross training to be a good idea, four suggested that it was not a good idea and two believed that it already existed to large extent. Those who believed that it was not a good idea based this mainly on the amount of their personal time and business resources they anticipated the extra would require. At Hunger Mountain, being employed as a substitute was viewed as a form of cross training, therefore cross training was already seen to be an institution here.

According to Kim Lawson, training and advancement opportunities was mentioned as one of top three priorities in the 2013 contract negotiation survey conducted by Local 203. Although cross training represents a possible option for providing advancement opportunities, all the prospects had not yet been hatched since union leaders

were never delegated this task. Therefore, during the 2013 contract negotiations, the Local 203 Contract Negotiation Committee pushed for the creation of a Training and Advancement Committee. Instead, management and the union agreed to create an evaluation process in which the union would first distribute a survey and then review the survey information in the context of all-staff meetings and discussion groups of union leadership in order to develop improved training strategies. Although cross training may become one way in which workers seek out advancement, concerns regarding the production costs of cross-training signify how management might react to such an option.

Most of the workers I interviewed were cooperative members at their workplace. When asked what they thought of the member benefits, many replied with positive feedback, usually highlighting the member discount and patronage refunds. Some workers mentioned themes of community and the idea of “being a part of something bigger.” One worker at City Market reflected on her experience in customer service as a cashier- “I like to be right in the Burlington community, like right in the center of things. And I see a huge cross section of people everyday and I love that about it too.” In some cases, participants were prompted to talk about their positive thoughts on the benefits their customers received as consumer members, which they themselves did not access. For instance, one employee spoke at great length about the Food For All Program, which is offered to customers who access government assistance. Of those who stated that they were not members at Hunger Mountain, a few people mentioned that this was because they wished to avoid expressing support for the cooperative or simply because of the cost of being a member. One employee at Hunger Mountain described his rationale for not being a member in this way:

The transition from what used to be about, I think a long time ago, what used to be about food politics and now its about, it really does seem to be about selling high priced preppy food to the population of Montpelier which is kind of, kind of higher, higher income bracket. And we seem to be catering to that and I think that's affected our mission a lot. Or what, what would've been thought to be the mission 10 or 20 years ago.

Some employees also described having the opposite sentiment towards cooperative membership, as indicated by a worker in the Grocery department at Hunger Mountain, "...I think our council does a great job in making these things happen because when we have that professionalism, we're able to give back to the community." At City Market, those who were not members gave no explicit reason for this.

A few workers, primarily from City Market, were speculative about why the store needed a union when it was a consumer cooperative to begin with. This is evidenced by a statement made by one worker from the Grocery department:

And it kind of blows my mind that a place like City Market needs a union, I mean it's cooperatively owned. What's the incentive of the cooperative itself, I mean there's no dedication to shareholders. Shareholders are the members that shop there and work there. The General Manager doesn't have you know a huge interest in trying to keep all your money for themselves.

Nonetheless, as mentioned prior, the consumer board does not make decisions related to work matters and is, in fact, prohibited from being involved at any point in contract negotiations at either store.

In both cooperative stores, the union's contract with management guarantees a baseline of social benefits, such as healthcare, paid time off (or combined time off), and a series of pay grades within which an employee can advance, for all part time and full time employees.

However, when asked if they could support themselves and their dependents on what they make, a majority of the workers at both stores either said no or expressed hesitance and stated that they could "just get by" (a common phrase used by those who were living in accordance with their means) or that they would not be able to support dependents if they had them. A few people professed to have debt, which they suggested put their income needs at an unreasonable level, or a level unlike that of their peers, despite the fact that, in 2011, the average U.S. household was 70,000 dollars in debt (Census, 2010-2011). One worker at City Market laid out her expectations for a livable wage, which her City Market wage did not live up to:

Well I just think, I mean like I said- we make more than this counterpart Price Chopper but still we don't make enough money to live on our own or if you did you wouldn't be able to have a vehicle, I mean you should be able live on your own, and have a vehicle, I'm not saying a Beamer or live in a high rise down by the lake but I mean you shouldn't, if you don't want to live with roommates, you should be able to make enough money working full time so that you could not have to deal with the roommate thing and live outside of the greater Burlington area which would mean you have to have a vehicle. You can't do that on what we make...

In their opening statement during contract negotiations, management asserted that City Market employees do make a livable wage. To support this claim, they cited a chart in which they had recalculated the average wage of a City Market employee compared to that of the average single working person in Burlington. Management held that the average City Market employee had fewer living expenses than the average single working person in Burlington taking into account their healthcare and transportation benefits. Nonetheless, as is evidenced by my interview data, this “livable wage” does not factor in other costs such as those associated with owning a car, living alone, or having dependents.

Prepared Foods General Staff

At City Market, the most unsettling focus group I conducted by far was with two refugee workers from Prepared Foods. At the time of the interview, both participants were working at City Market as “Prepared Foods General Staff,” one of the two lowest paid positions at the store. These workers expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the opportunities they had for participation and advancement in the workplace. Neither of these participants could support themselves and their dependents on what they make. One participant concluded the interview by stating, “What we want is dignity and respect at work,” which seemed representative of the feelings he conveyed throughout the rest of this focus group.

For the purpose of keeping the identities of the participants in this focus group anonymous while simultaneously rendering their opinions separate from one another, I will call the male participant Dialo and the female participant Justine. At the time of this

focus group, Dialo had worked at City Market for more than one year and reported Swahili to be the primary language spoken at home. His household annual income, which he used to support himself and his six dependents under the age of 18, was under 20,000 dollars a year. Justine had been working for just over a year at the time of this focus group and also reported Swahili to be the primary language that was spoken at home. She used her annual income of under 20,000 dollars a year to support herself and her four dependents.

Participants discussed their interactions with customers and coworkers as positive aspects of their work. Both Dialo and Justine, however, explained instances in which they felt mistreated by their coworkers and/or bosses. In the following passage, Justine describes how she feels when her boss asks her to look at them in the eye, a behavior which the interpreter explained was disrespectful in some African cultures, “I don’t like them telling me that you have to look my eyes, look my face, I mean face to face, that is too much of American.--- I feel very bad and I feel that I’m being forced. It’s like talking to me like you are talking to a young kid. That thing disturbs me so much.” Dialo specified that being talked to in a loud voice and being told to do things were aspects of his work that he did not enjoy.

When asked who makes decisions about work-related matters, Dialo replied that there is a manager for scheduling and a manager for finances. Justine said the following in regards to how decisions are made and the extent to which she is involved, “They say that when we came here we don’t have so much we can say and whenever I go to work we just do whatever they tell us but for now, recently, things are changing at City Market.” She then spoke at length about her issues related to scheduling, “Before we

would call and say that you were not feeling well and they would accept that and no big deal but now if you happen to say, unless it is an emergency, the managers they talk.. it doesn't go well with the management.” According to Dialo, people who work as full-time Prepared Foods General Staff at City Market must work every other weekend, otherwise they risk having their hours cut.

Both Dialo and Justine felt that the opportunities they had to participate in decision-making were minimal or non-existent. Dialo provided this distressing testimony in response to a question about opportunities for participation:

The answer is simply no because we are never involved in the decision making... we hear that City Market has a union but we are still not involved in the union.. I'm sorry to say this but among us, though the Africans that are works there, none of them is even a member of the union.. but we are only true that you are members because you get 5 dollars from every pay check for the membership of the union. They do their own meetings, they do whatever the solutions they come out with they just come to feed us the solutions but we are never in the decision-making or in the meetings.

He went on to discuss the union council in which he said there are no representatives from the African community. When asked what he thinks are the barriers that keep him from participating, he said that the union did not attempt to involve him. Justine added that she did not know how to vote in the council elections, especially on days that she is normally scheduled to have off.

On the subject of upward mobility, Dialo said that the opportunities were not substantive. Among them, he said that there were two who have been there for four years

and have been promoted and another two who have been there for the same amount of time and have not been promoted. According to Dialo, management has said that he and his coworkers are hindered by their lack of English language and experience, even though some workers do, in fact, speak English. Dialo believes that management and supervisors are responsible for providing workers with the experience and training they need in order to achieve advancement. Dialo described his plight in seeking upward mobility as a refugee in the workplace as follows:

The same people who have been there four years are the ones who are showing the new cook how to mix all these and then the next day the person you showed is your supervisor.. will be your supervisor and you are the one who showed him how to... that's because he is a refugee.. he doesn't have papers, he doesn't have the skills, and he doesn't have the certificate.. but he has all the skills..

Justine stated that she occupied the same position as the one in which she started and that, given the present situation, she did not see herself being moved.

When asked about the benefits and downsides of having a union, Dialo first asked for clarification about which union- the labor union or the cooperative union? I found this overlapping designation of two different governance structures to be particularly interesting given the history they have in common. When this point was clarified, he said that he only hears about the union as an entity that provides them with job security but that, since he is not involved, he has no way of knowing whether or not this is true. When asked this same question, Justine said dismally, "They only get my 5 dollars."

Dialo and Justine both valued healthcare more than any of their other benefits. As far as pay, both participants said that they were not able to support themselves and their

families on what they make. Dialo alleged that, although the wages were enough to support a single person, they were not enough to support families and that, for this reason, he is forced to rely on the government for assistance. Justine said the following about her pay, “Even if this is not enough, even if I tell them it’s not enough they won’t put more than that.. so we just accept whatever we get.” She then said that she accepts what they are given for pay.

Neither Dialo or Justine bought the majority of their food from their place of work. Dialo stated that he got a majority of his food from Costco, Hannaford, and the Dollar Store whereas Justine said that she gets this food from Costco, Price Chopper, and Hannaford. Both participants said that they do not shop at City Market because of the high prices. They agreed that the main benefit from being a member at City Market was the discount and that their main barrier to accessing the food that they need was a lack of finances.

At the end of the focus group Justine and Dialo stated their remaining feelings about the union and working at City Market more generally. Justine summarized her feelings about the union as follows, “You need to talk to the union secretary because if they are in the union, they need to know what does the union do for them because they should not be having problems at their place of work if the union is there so the union should start working, it should be working.” Dialo then added, “Because we consider the union as the syndicate and the syndicate must be strong to fight for the right but the union is under the management so that is not our benefit but it is the management’s benefit.”

In Sawchuk’s study, the union is considered to have a profound impact on the experience of migrant workers in the auto industry. Therefore, Sawchuk’s suggestions

qualify the union as the entity responsible for activating political participation amongst migrant workers and improving their work experience. Similarly, Dialo charges the union with the function of acting as a syndicate for the workers. As he states, if the union is not serving its purpose, management will benefit by putting their interests before those of the workers. In the event that I describe in the next section, the union is clearly attending to their syndicator role and responding to a civil rights violation. Dialo and Justine's testimonies, however, demonstrate the need for a mechanism through which the workers can protect and improve their social and political rights. Dialo suggested that there is more representation of the refugee community in the union's elected board.

English Only Policy

Shortly after conducting a focus group with Dialo and Justine, an incident involving an English Only policy in prepared foods mobilized several kitchen employees, many of whom were multi-lingual and refugees, to participate in decision-making. This rule held that workers in prepared foods would be "encouraged" to speak English by their managers to ensure their safety and well being.

In accordance with the grievance procedure protocol, the union filed a first-step grievance and then a second-step grievance when the first-step was denied by management. In a grievance procedure, there are three grievance steps that can be pursued in order to force management to reconcile with the issue. At a first step grievance meeting with management, one prepared foods worker from the refugee community brought his immigration papers in which the federal government assured him that he would be never be discriminated against. Upon showing this paperwork to management, he asked management how they could initiate such a discriminatory policy when the

federal government made him this promise (Interview with Kim Lawson, December ,2013). Nonetheless, the union pushed the grievance forward to step two when management refused to engage with the issue.

On November 18, 2013, in response to the supposed “rumors” of an English Only policy in the kitchen, Pat Burns, the General Manager of City Market, sent an email to City Market employees in which he stated that there is no English Only policy in the prepared foods department or in any part of City Market. In addition, he wrote, “Rather than this being a grievance, it seems to me as though this is a miscommunication. I believe all of this started from one inappropriate remark from a Manager, regarding speaking English only in the kitchen.” Union leaders from the Prepared Foods Department assured me that, at the same time this email was being written, Prepared Foods Managers were, in fact, enforcing an English Only Policy. Though not included in official store policy, the English Only rule was declared and enforced by managers within the prepared foods department to supposedly “reduce conflict” between prepared foods general staff, a position that is primarily done by refugee workers at City Market (McGinnis, 2013). On November 21st, just three days after Pat Burns sent this initial email, he agreed to meet with the employees affected by the policy in order to apologize and assure them that they may speak their own language when talking with each other. This action suggests that he conceded that such a policy did exist in some form.

On November 22nd, UE Local 203 circulated a flier to employees at the store entitled *Words Count- Actions Count More: What’s Really Going On At City Market*. The flier reads:

On October 24th, a department manager told employees during a meeting that there would be a new ‘no Swahili’ rule—that is, employees would not be allowed to speak in their own language. When a union representative objected, management said they would allow ‘only Swahili when necessary.’

Towards the end of this document, the union asks management to issue an official written assurance that employees can speak their own language and to agree to participate in training “specifically designed to help workplaces be more inclusive and equitable.” On November 25, 2013, a settlement was reached between management and the union that was two-fold: first, management would issue a written and verbal statement that says that employees in the kitchen are allowed to speak their native language when speaking with each other without fear of management instructing them otherwise; second, the union and management would collaboratively arrange a racial diversity training for managers and employees.

This event received a tremendous amount of attention on social media sites such as Facebook and in community racial justice groups. On the UE Local 203 and Vermont Change Committee Facebook pages, there is evidence that suggests patrons of City Market organized to submit notes in City Market’s customer suggestion box opposing the English Only Policy. When the grievance was settled in late November, approximately ten to twelve community members gathered outside of City Market on a cold night to cheer on the workers who were engaged in this struggle as they announced in a press release that they had won their demands. Community members planned to picket outside the store that same night had this announcement not been made.

Shortly before this incident came to a head, one kitchen employee who was a member of the refugee community stepped up to become a steward in the prepared foods department. According to Collom's study, job dissatisfaction leads to a greater desire for worker control over production and personnel decisions and access to some degree of participation generates a desire for more control. Therefore, this incident as well as other factors that caused workers to feel dissatisfied, may act as catalysts for worker involvement in the union and, furthermore, desire for more control over decisions.

Stakeholder Viewpoints

Of the stakeholder interviews I conducted with key union representatives, steward, and labor advocacy organization leaders, the most important points emerged in stakeholders' opinions about union-cooperative relations and the effects of progressive labor legislation on unionized workplaces and vice versa. When asked if there are any differences between the consumer cooperatives the UE represents and the non-cooperative businesses, Lawson stated that the cooperative management may be "more polite" during contract negotiations but that otherwise there is no difference. In contrast, when asked if the union had had any solidarity with the consumer cooperative, the City Market chief steward responded that unions are seeking to further a mission similar to that of the consumer cooperative:

It's definitely an interesting parallel because we both share the cooperative's ideals and the union's perspective and I feel that being able to promote the buy local--- keeping your workforce local is also very important. So whereas you could have all these temporary workers working for minimum wage, that doesn't

fit the cooperative model. You want a workforce that's local, that's going to last, that's going to be proud to work there and the union really enforces that and drives that home to our stewards and members.

She went on to explain that, although their missions are similar, the Board of Directors does not have an influence on them nor do they have an influence on the union. Although the consumer cooperative purports to have a vested interest in the community, cooperative management reveal that they have for-profit motives which, at times, disincentive them to keep the workforce local. For example, City Market managers hire students in areas of the store like the front end, despite a large percentage of the applicants being non-students, in what is likely an attempt to ensure that workers are not reaching the higher pay grades. Finally, Haslam asserted that unionized workplaces play a pivotal role in providing rank and file support for progressive labor legislation such as paid sick days and that this legislation consequently raises the floor for future contract negotiations at unionized workplaces.

Policy Analysis

H. 208, also titled “An Act Relating to Absence from Work for Healthcare and Safety,” was first introduced to the Vermont House of Representatives in the spring of 2013. In preparation for the spring 2014 Legislative Session, a coalition, which consisted of community organizations like the Vermont Worker’s Center, Working Vermont: Coalition of Vermont Labor, and Vermont Commission on Women, was formed in order to breathe new life into this bill and ensure its success in the 2014 Legislative Session. If passed, this bill would grant workers one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked at businesses with over 4 employees, with a maximum accrual of 56 hours in a 12-month period. Although City Market and Hunger Mountain employees currently receive paid sick time, it is estimated that there are 60,000 Vermont state residents who do not (Voices for Vermont’s Children, 2013).

An Act Relating to Raising the Vermont Minimum Wage, also referred to as H. 552, was read for the first time in January of 2014 in the House General, Housing, and Military Affairs Committee. In the Spring 2014 Legislative Session alone, there were four bills that proposed to raise Vermont’s minimum wage up to varying amounts that were proclaimed to be “livable wage” rates. I chose this specific minimum wage bill due to the attention that it received from the Vermont Worker’s Center, an organization that is crucial for determining the legislative priorities of the Vermont labor movement and policymakers. This bill was the first of its kind to warrant a public hearing in the 2014 Legislative Session. If passed, this bill would raise the minimum wage to 12 dollars and 50 cents an hour, with an extra five percent increase or more every subsequent year after its passing. The lowest starting wage at City Market is 9 dollars and 50 cents per hour and

12 dollars per hour at Hunger Mountain, therefore this bill would affect workers at both stores.

In the Spring of 2011, Act 48, originally entitled H. 202, passed out of the state legislature and into the hands of the Green Mountain Care Board, with the stated intention of containing costs, providing affordable and quality health care to all Vermont residents, and maximizing the receipt of federal funds allocated to each state in accordance with federal legislation (Act 48, 2011). According to the Vermont Government Website's overview of Green Mountain Care, the universal healthcare system will be in full effect when the Affordable Care Act waiver is available which constitutes the main receipt of federal funds as is previously referred to. Act 48 is therefore intricately tied to the Affordable Care Act and hence became difficult for policymakers and stakeholders to separate over the course of our interviews. Thus, I mainly focus on how healthcare reform, with a specific emphasis on Green Mountain Care (GMC) and the Affordable Care Act (ACA), is anticipated to affect organized labor. Although employees at City Market and Hunger Mountain have access to healthcare through their employer, the cost distribution between the employer and the government may change. Also, part-time and substitute employees currently do not have access to full healthcare coverage therefore healthcare reform will ultimately impact whether they decide to enroll in a plan provided by the government or their employer.

Policymaker Viewpoints

According to Helen Head during our interview, paid sick days legislation was first introduced in the statehouse in 2004, shortly after she and then Representative Sarah

Edwards attended a conference in Washington DC where paid sick days came up as an issue for working people. The year of 2014 marks the first year that the earned sick day legislation has progressed past the committee in which it was first introduced. She attributed the recent momentum of H. 208 to the significant efforts of the Paid Sick Days Coalition.

When asked if she would vote for the bill as it is currently written, Head affirmed that she would and then preceded to explain why she was in favor of the amendments that were proposed and eventually ratified when the bill was in her committee: General, Housing, and Military Affairs. The amendments included an exemption for employers with four or fewer employees and a minimum threshold of 240 hours an employee had to work in order to be utilize their paid sick time. When asked why she supports H. 208, she stated, “Because it’s is an important piece of public policy to move the issue of earned sick days forward. It would be a significant victory for Vermont workers and their families.” The three testimonies in support of H. 208 that Head found to be the most important were from the Vermont Worker’s Center, the Vermont Commission on Women, and Voices for Vermont’s Children.

Head believed that organized labor would be affected by paid sick day legislation despite the fact that most organized labor her committee had spoken to already received paid sick days or the equivalent of combined time off. She provided the following rationale as to why-

What we’ve found from some of the work we’ve done on minimum wage and other employee benefits in the past is that making sure that state policy is responsive in these areas for all workers improves awareness of them overall so

that when unions negotiate a contract, it can strengthen their hand in securing the continuation of those benefits or, in many cases, the improvement of them.

She went on to say that this was why the coalition for paid sick days includes organized labor groups like the Vermont AFL-CIO. Lastly, Head said that her committee had done “a fantastic job” drafting a strong bill and that she would like to keep the bill strong as it passes through the legislative process. As a testament to her commitment to this bill, Head said that she planned to maintain communication with the Speaker of the House and Senators to ensure the bill’s passage.

Helen Head reiterated that the purpose of H. 552 is to raise the minimum wage from the current 8 dollars and 73 cents an hour to 12 dollars and 50 cents an hour. Since her committee has not yet taken testimony for this bill, she said that it is hard for her to be specific with her critiques. Head mentioned that part of the reason they have yet to take testimony is because they are waiting to receive the results of a study on the impact of raising the minimum wage on various state programs. Although Head recognized that this bill may save the state money by causing people to leave state programs, she is wary of pushing people just over the standards for eligibility while it is still too difficult for them to live on what they make, demonstrating the significance of this study. When asked whether or not she would vote for H. 522 as it is currently written, Head responded, “I’m very supportive of the concept of raising the minimum wage but I don’t have enough information as to what level would be fruitful and achievable.”

In terms of the effects this bill would have on organized labor, Head alleged that the effects would be positive because raising the minimum wage would “help them as they are negotiating contracts with the state as they negotiate contracts within the trades,

within various employers- if the minimum wage is raised up it helps to further attention to wages, it helps lift their boat in negotiations going forward.” This reaction is similar to the one she had in response to H. 208 in which she demonstrated the attitude that higher labor practice standards may allow the union to negotiate for more gains in the next contract.

When Act 48 came to a floor vote in the House of Representatives in 2011, Representative Head voted in favor of it because this bill puts us on the path to decouple healthcare from employment and ensures full and adequate healthcare coverage for all Vermonters. She explained that when people transition jobs, they often go through periods of unemployment or underemployment, making it difficult to preserve their healthcare. She believed that having multiple payers in a system is administratively costly for healthcare providers and therefore a single-payer system is the most feasible for Vermont.

When considering what effects Act 48 may have on organized labor, Head suggested that the reactions from organized labor to this bill may be mixed. She stated the following, “I think that organized labor has been reluctant to, in some cases, to be supportive, fully supportive of healthcare reform because... it fears that in the process they might get coverage that is less than what they had gained through collective bargaining.” Since the financing recommendations from the Green Mountain Care Board had not yet been issued at the time of this interview, Head was unaware of what the possible compromises workers would be asked to make, however she revealed that employers may be asked to give a payroll tax.

The last set of questions I asked Representative Head were related to the legislative process as a whole. When asked about the purpose of public policy, Head emphasized the characteristics of “fairness” and “efficiency” in the operation of government. She considered organized labor to play an important role in providing input to the general public and the legislators, specifically towards legislation associated with labor and healthcare. Head found the current opportunities for public participation to be acceptable, stating, “I believe that we’re flexible here in the statehouse. And here in Montpelier and in our home. We respond pretty easily and I think there are opportunities for both individual and group contact with legislators.” Paid family leave is a problem in the workplace that Head foresees tackling in the legislature through the passage of House Bill 652, which provides for employee-funded paid leave.

Senator Kevin Mullin was hesitant to classify paid sick days as a problem since he was not a legislator who was sponsoring H. 208. He eventually conceded that legislators introduced this bill because they agreed that paid sick time was an issue that the private sector was not addressing. When asked if he would vote for this bill as it is currently written, he revealed that he had not read through the bill since it was amended and passed out of the General, Housing, and Military Affairs Committee. Soon after H 208 was first introduced into the House, he was invited to speak with a group of proponents for this bill to whom he promised, “if it passes the house, that we will take the time in the senate to take it on.” This version of the bill, however, as well as the latest version of the bill, which, at the time, had just been amended by the General, Housing and Military Affairs Committee, contained two problems that would prevent him from voting in favor. First, he was concerned that the bill did not contain any restrictions on when workers could

utilize their paid sick time, which, he suggested, would encourage workers to use all or the remaining sick time they have at the end of the year so as to avoid losing this benefit. Second, he implied that there should be an exclusion for part time workers in the following exchange-

Reuge: Are there any other problems that you see in the bill as it is currently written other than this 'use it or lose it' statute that you see as problematic?

Mullin: Well I'm trying to remember. I think there was an hour threshold. Is that still in there? For hours worked?

Reuge: Yea. So it's effective after the employee has worked 240 hours.. that was just instated in the last committee. And then also there's.. people get one hour for every 30 hours worked.

Mullin: Is there any exclusion for part time employees?

Reuge: I don't believe so no..

Mullin: So a high school student that's working after school.. so maybe 10 hours a week, they would be entitled paid sick leave?

He then stated that he would be "looking into" such questions with his committee if this bill made it to Senate Appropriations and that he was striving to make sure that the bill did not "cut back on opportunities for people to enter the workforce." Although Senator Mullin did not explicitly state that the bill should exclude part time workers, he suggested as much. He also expressed unease about the potential burden paid sick time would place on businesses in the following response:

But you know, I, but we hear repeatedly from businesses that have come before my committee because of all the uncertainty that's out there about the

implementation of healthcare reform and everything else, they're just saying 'please don't keep adding onto us.' So.. this would be one more thing that they would be upset with us on and the reality is that we could probably draft in a way that doesn't really hurt them in any way.

Senator Mullin conveyed interest in bringing "strong proponents of the bill," the business community, employment law specialists, and staff from the Department of Labor and Agency of Commerce and Community Development to the statehouse in order to give testimony on H. 208 and ensure that there are no unintended consequences of passing this bill.

When asked how this legislation would affect organized labor, Kevin Mullin stated that it could either help them or hurt them. In other words, though this legislation may appear to be a victory for the labor movement as a whole, it may also provide workers less impetus to join a union. He went on to argue that an unintended consequence of passing this bill may be that workers are no longer given vacation time and are instead only allotted the sick time guaranteed to them in this bill.

Senator Mullin again proceeded to outline the intent of H. 552 in opposition to his own views on the topic of increasing the minimum wage. He asserted that select legislators support this bill because there are a number of working people who are using government assistance programs and legislators believe that an increase in the minimum wage would potentially lessen dependence on government programs. He then stated, point blank, that he does not agree with these legislators. When asked how livable wages emerged as a problem in the legislative process, he responded that, although select

legislators have concern about this issue, he does not foresee H. 552 or any other bill related to livable wages moving out of committee in either the House or the Senate.

According to Senator Mullin, Vermont was the one of the first states in the country to enact a bill that linked a minimum wage to a cost of living increase. At the time, he argued against the bill and in favor of legislation that would determine a final and proper minimum wage rate. Correlating the minimum wage to a cost of living wage, Mullin argued, would not deter people from returning to advocate for continual increases in the minimum wage as the President Pro Temp, Peter Shumlin, and the Minority Leader, John Bloomer, argued it would. He then explained why he believes that a universal increase in the minimum wage would be detrimental to workers and the economy:

You already saw by Executive Order President Obama raising it to 10.10 on government contracts. The reality is, is government contracts should probably be higher than 10.10. But the reality is that the minimum wage doesn't just apply to those types of jobs. It applies to the kid that's in high school that is starting out, it applies to the disabled person who's working at Price Chopper you know bagging the groceries, it applies to the woman in the wheelchair that is working at Walmart that is cleaning out the bottom shelves. And you have to ask yourself- will Walmart or Price Chopper and others continue to hire people if they're going to make the wage, you know, basically close to 50 percent higher under this 12.50 proposal? And so the unintended consequences of this bill could be that the most vulnerable could lose employment.

As an alternative to a universal increase in the minimum wage, Senator Mullin suggested that the legislators consider categorizing the minimum wage by business sector.

According to Senator Mullin, however, increasing the minimum wage at all would create an inflationary effect in which workers being paid the new minimum wage have less buying power as businesses raise their prices to compensate for the wage increase.

When asked from whom he would seek out testimony, Senator Mullin explicitly mentioned economists who he would ask to retrieve “hard economic data” on job losses and actual benefits. Kevin Mullin took a similar stance on how House Bill 552 would affect organized labor as he did on H. 208 stating, “they would probably claim it as a victory but I don’t think it would really help them much.” Although he did not go into any further detail about why H. 552 would not help organized labor, he explained that if workers were to use this increase in the minimum wage as a bargaining chip or claim this as a victory, employers like himself may feel hard-pressed to give all employees the same percentage increase in their wages (Senator Mullin owns a movie theater business in upstate New York).

As understood by Senator Mullin, the goals of Act 48 were as follows: “to make sure that all Vermonters had the right care at the right time, to encourage prevention and wellness, to contain costs within the system, and to try to create a system where we would have high quality doctors, nurses, and other medical care providers providing the absolute best care.” Although the Federal Affordable Care Act will help to contribute to our uninsured in the future, Mullin explained that it has already caused a tremendous amount of damage by facilitating a failed exchange. Therefore, those whose efforts would normally be spent on the implementation of Green Mountain Care were now preoccupied

with the failed exchange of the ACA. For these reasons, Senator Mullin alleges that the ACA was the greatest setback to the implementation of Green Mountain Care by causing the public to lose their confidence in the government's capabilities. Senator Mullin asserts that the ACA alone has set Green Mountain Care back by at least two years.

When asked how Act 48 could be improved, Senator Mullin explained his past and present work with the Senate Finance Committee. When Act 48 was in this committee before being brought to the Senate Floor in 2011, Senator Mullin and his fellow committee members looked at what the average Vermonter had for an insurance policy and set the actuarial value of the new healthcare policy based on this information. Today, the Senate Finance Committee is tasked with determining what the benefits package will look like exactly. Senator Mullin spoke highly of the safeguards in this bill, stating that Act 48 is equipped to help Vermonters avoid bad insurance, ensure that quality professionals maintain their position, and access financing through a "fair, equitable, and sustainable" tax plan. Senator Mullin did not specify the testimony of any particular individual or organization as being the most moving, stating that all the testimonies were moving since healthcare touches everyone.

Senator Mullin suggested that Act 48 would take a contentious bargaining item for unions off the negotiation table and therefore could benefit organized labor in this way. However, for union members that have "Cadillac plans" or, in other words, expensive healthcare, (which Mullin claims are somewhat common amongst union members) their actual values are greater than the average Vermonter's, hence this legislation could be detrimental to them.

Senator Mullin said that the purpose of public policy was “to create the best possible legislation that will help the most people.” When asked what role his organized labor constituents played in the legislative process, Mullin responded that they play “too much of a role.” He went on to explain that lobbyists from groups such as organized labor come to the statehouse with the goal of skewing the perspective of legislators in order to advance their own agendas. He alleged that in his committee alone, there are half a dozen labor lobbyists at any given time. Senator Mullin believed the opportunities to participate in public policy to be sufficient, calling Vermont a “citizen’s legislature.”

Representative Head and Senator Mullin clearly view the populations that will be affected by these pieces of legislation differently therefore the solutions they propose to these societal problems with which the policies attempt to grapple are vastly different. Although Act 48 will have implications for workers in all sectors of the economy, paid sick days and an increase in the minimum wage will particularly affect low-wage workers who do not receive either of these benefits or who, in the case of the workers in this study, have only secured or partially attained these benefits through collective bargaining. Therefore, I explicitly looked for excerpts in which the legislators described the low-wage workers who are subject to these legislative measures.

Mullin’s characterization of the target population becomes obvious when he explains the ramifications of House Bill 552: “It [the minimum wage] applies to the kid that’s in high school that is starting out, it applies to the disabled person who’s working at Price Chopper you know bagging the groceries, it applies to the woman in the wheelchair that is working at Walmart that is cleaning out the bottom shelves,” all of whom, he claims, will not have work if the minimum wage is increased so drastically. Senator

Mullin, therefore, socially constructs the target population as “dependents” who are deserving of sympathy and pity however not of actual investments since they do not have a strong role in the creation of national wealth (103, Ingram et al., 2007). Some examples of “dependents” are students, mentally handicapped, and families in poverty. Other similar portrayals of the target population re-emerge at other points throughout this interview. For instance, “the high school student that’s working after school--- maybe 10 hours a week” is a segment of the population Senator Mullin believes should be excluded from paid sick day legislation (Ingram et al., 2007). As Ingram et al. point out, target populations are often subdivided so as to “...direct benefits to the most powerful and positively constructed of the subgroups (104, Ingram et al., 2007). Though subtle, Mullin places greater importance in the needs of older full-time employees in certain industries rather than younger, part-time employees who work in industries where workers are less deserving of a higher minimum wage or paid sick days. This subdivision suggests that Senator Mullin follows a similar precedent when designing other policies that are projected to affect a similar target population. As far as from whom he would seek testimony from for H 552 and H 208, Mullin explicitly mentioned economists, government officials, members of the business community, and employment law specialists.

Representative Head primarily refers to the target population as “workers” and “families” who are entitled to social welfare like paid sick days and higher minimum wages. In terms of increasing the minimum wage, she claimed to be weary of inadvertently disqualifying those who are on or under the current poverty line from accessing

government assistance programs and still require this aid. Head therefore socially constructs the target population as the “advantaged” group who is deserving of social welfare and occupy an important position in the political sphere given Head’s allegiance to the Vermont Democratic Party. Head stressed the importance of the testimonies she had heard from the Vermont Workers Center, Voices for Vermont’s Children, and the Vermont Commission on Women.

Representative Head and Senator Mullin also anticipate these bills to have different effects on organized labor. Head believes that both the provision of paid sick days and a higher minimum wage will “strengthen the union’s hand” in contract negotiations, similar to Haslam’s prediction that these legislations would “raise the floor” for all of labor. In contrast, Mullin asserts that, if these bills were passed, workers would have less of an incentive to join a union, suggesting that the only reason to join a union is for the enhanced benefits. I will return to this topic later in this section when I discuss the legislators’ perspectives on the role of organized labor in the legislature.

Although Representative Head did not express a desire to make any further changes to H 208 other than those she was part of making in her committee, Senator Mullin made several suggestions that he believed would improve the implementation of this legislation. First, he recommended that the bill contain restrictions on when workers can take their paid sick time so as to avoid workers in any given business taking their sick days simultaneously at the end of the year. In the past, workers have, at times, used this benefit as a tactic to exert pressure on an employer by taking their sick time all at once. Mullin’s amendment to this bill takes this power away from the workers. Secondly, Mullin advised that part time workers be excluded from this bill. Part time workers

constitute a large segment of the workforce at Hunger Mountain and City Market therefore, if H 208 was to pass with this amendment, part time cooperative employees may be at risk. Lastly, Mullin suggested that this bill may threaten unionized workers' access to vacation time by guaranteeing them only sick time. As we see with Hunger Mountain and City Market employees, however, it is possible for workers to have a Combined Time Off plan in which they have a certain amount of paid sick days and vacation days.

Both legislators expressed some unease about providing feedback regarding H 552. Representative Head was hesitant to make suggestions about how the bill could be improved before taking testimony for this bill and hearing the results of a study about the effects of increasing the minimum wage on recipients of government assistance. Nonetheless, she clearly stated that she was in support of “the concept of raising the minimum wage.” Senator Mullin, on the other hand, suggested that any increase in the minimum wage would result in inflation, which would negatively effect the same workers this bill is targeting to help. If there was to be an increase in the minimum wage, he argued that the increase should be final. He also proposed that the minimum wage be categorized by business sector, suggesting that workers in certain sectors are more deserving of a high minimum wage while others are less deserving. This proposal correlates with his prior comments that indicate that he has socially constructed the target population as “dependents.”

Representative Head and Senator Mullin were in agreement that the opportunities for public participation in the legislature and engagement in policymaking were sufficient. Both individuals went as far as to commend their efforts and those of their

colleagues for making it easy for the public to participate in the legislature by being flexible and accessible. Head and Mullin did, however, disagree about the role that their organized labor constituents play in the legislature. Mullin inferred that these constituents already played “too much of a role” in the legislature, stating that there were already at least half a dozen labor lobbyists on any given day in his committee alone. Prior to this assertion, he accused labor lobbyists of trying to skew the opinion of the legislators by presenting one-sided information. Contrary to Senator Mullin’s assumption that “organized labor constituents” were lobbyists by default, several UE activists from Locals 203 and 255 testified in favor of House Bills’ 552 and 208 passage during the Spring 2014 legislative session and for the passage of Act 48 during previous legislative sessions. These UE activists were either serving as UE stewards or members and therefore were testifying at their own free will and were not paid for their time at the statehouse. Nonetheless, Mullin appears to be morally suspect of union affiliates and socially constructs them as “contenders” that have ample political resources at their disposal however are negatively regarded in the legislature for reasons such as those Senator Mullin cited. According to Representative Head, however, organized labor plays an important role in the legislature and Vermont legislators hold the opinion of organized labor representatives in high regard when making decisions about public policy. This feedback leads me to believe that her construction of workers as “advantaged” also applies to organized labor, which implies that this group is entitled to the benefits of social welfare and to the political power that they wield.

Stakeholder Viewpoints

Kimberly Lawson, the union representative for Locals 203 and 255 since 2003, provided concrete feedback about whether or not these bills will have immediate impacts on workers at City Market and Hunger Mountain. In contrast, former City Market employee and union activist Chad McGinnis offered commentary on the potential impact of these legislations on City Market and Hunger Mountain workers in the future. James Haslam provided even greater context for how these bills will affect working people overall, unionized and non-unionized. These responses represent community stakeholder views about the impact of progressive labor legislation on working people and the value of worker participation in policymaking.

When asked if H. 208 would impact paid time off for workers at City Market and Hunger Mountain, Lawson responded that it would not bear immediate effects for workers at either location. Workers at both stores are granted what is called “Combined Time Off” which is intended to be used for vacation, personal, and/or sick time. Holidays, however, are separate from this period of time. Lawson explained the system as follows:

Both locals have a PTO (paid time off) system in which paid time off is not separated by vacation or sick time. Holidays are separate. City Market employees get between 200 and 300 hours (between 5 and 7.5 weeks) a year depending on their years of service. Hunger Mountain employees get between 160 and 280 hours (between 4 and 7 weeks)...

In fact, in the 2013 contracts for Locals 203 and 255, part time workers get slightly less paid time off than the full timers to whom Lawson referred.

Lawson mentioned that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) would have significant implications for part time and substitute workers, since this legislation entitles those who work an average of 30 hours a week or more to healthcare benefits through their employer. Lawson stated the following in regards to the ACA, “This will have a definite impact at Hunger Mountain where a number of employees are substitute employees or who work regular part time hours and also work substitute hours to make enough wages to live.” Lawson then discussed a proposal that the union put forward during 2013 contract negotiations to extend full healthcare coverage to substitute and part time employees. Hunger Mountain management declined this proposal, arguing that while they had to provide healthcare coverage under the ACA, they did not have to do so without contributions from the employees. Lawson anticipated that healthcare coverage for substitute and part time workers would be a major struggle for the union during the 2015 contract negotiations. Lawson indicated that it was too early to tell whether or not Act 48 or Green Mountain Care would have an impact on healthcare access at either store.

According to the 2013 Hunger Mountain Contract, part time workers may work up to 64 hours in a consecutive two week period if they were hired after August of 2005, leaving some eligible for healthcare under the ACA. The definition of a substitute worker is “Any employee who does not have a regularly scheduled shift for more than six (6) weeks in a row but who does work unscheduled shifts that total at least twenty-four (24) hours per quarter.” Given this information, substitute and part time workers who work an average of 30 hours a week or more would be required to have access to healthcare through their employer under the Affordable Care Act.

In regards to H. 552, Lawson maintained that the effects of a minimum wage increase depended on the amount of the increase. An increase to \$12.50, Lawson said, would have a definite impact on workers at both stores since the starting wage at City Market is \$9.50 and \$12.00 at Hunger Mountain. Lawson held that, “a livable wage or higher minimum wage would more likely have an impact at City Market where wages below what they should be.”

When asked if the union encourages worker participation in policy making, Lawson stated, “In the UE, the members really do run the Union.” She then described a policy process that occurs at the biennial UE national convention in which union Locals bring forward resolutions to either change policies in the union as a whole or to support policies at a state or federal governance level. The resolutions are then debated and voted on by the convention delegations. The Policy Action committee outlines the policy priorities of the union for a two year period which the union as a whole then votes on.

At the 73rd National Convention, the policy “plan of action” was broken down into the following categories: Independent Political Action, Healthcare for All, Protect Retirement Security, and Defend Civil Liberties. Within each of these categories is a wide array of action plans and educational activities that union leaders and members are instructed to initiate and/or facilitate, from state and federal political participation to guarding against attacks on Medicare and Medicaid. Among this list are two actions that are pertinent to participation in policymaking and healthcare reform. The following statement from the Policy Action Committee’s plan demonstrates the union’s commitment to progressive labor legislation, “Calls on the union at all levels to emphasize basic political action education, including the need to promote positive

legislation, and emphasizing political action at the state and local level.” The union also appears to have a great deal of faith in Vermont’s move towards single-payer healthcare, as indicated by the following, “Calls on the national union to continue to educate the membership on the need for a single-payer healthcare system to provide a real solution to our health care disaster, and to promote the Vermont single-payer initiative as a state level example (UE 73rd National Convention, 2013).”

As stated previously, my interview with Chad McGinnis was focused primarily on the long-term effects of an increase in the minimum wage, paid sick time, and healthcare reform for workers at Hunger Mountain and City Market. McGinnis believed that the provision of paid sick days through House Bill 208 may provide Locals 203 and 255 some leverage should they need to bargain for an increase in paid time off during future contract negotiations. McGinnis suggested that this legislation would provide workers even more leverage if it was to explicitly designate sick days as separate from vacation and personal time.

McGinnis commented specifically on how the ACA would impact City Market and Hunger Mountain workers rather than Act 48. He suspected that the ACA would affect Locals 203 and 255 upon entering contract negotiations, given what he called the “messy” implementation on a national level. To conclude on this topic, McGinnis expressed the following about the ACA’s impression on workers,

While there is some good in the new law, there is bad as well and a lot of uncertainty on top of that. It has certainly complicated bargaining of health insurance. Over the course of the past year a lot of employers were making health insurance proposals to us out of panic, fearing drastic increases to the cost of

employer provided health plans. It has provided a ready made excuse for employers to try to drop workers from insurance by reducing their hours, or hire part timers, ratchet down coverage, etc.

McGinnis said that an increase in the minimum wage would have no effect on workers at City Market and Hunger Mountain since “even the lowest paid employees at these locations are paid above that level.” If the minimum wage was increased to the livable wage, on the other hand, McGinnis supposed that all workers would be impacted. In relation to worker participation in policymaking, McGinnis said that, while the union does not endorse or fund politicians from either party, they are likely to be found “mobilizing behind” or “against” issues. McGinnis closed the interview with this remark: “Workers’ political action should look more like the occupation of the Wisconsin statehouse and less like a campaign for the democrats.”

Aside from providing extensive feedback about the effects of H. 208, H. 552, and Act 48 on workers in Vermont, James Haslam explained the overall role of the Vermont Workers Center (VWC) and unions in catalyzing workers throughout the state. Without being prompted by questions, Haslam delved into the history of the VWC’s involvement in legislation that determined to increase the minimum wage. According to Haslam, the VWC was formed in the late 1990s by a group called Central Vermonters for a Livable Wage. After dedicating much time and energy towards passing new legislation, they won a bill in 2000 to increase the minimum wage, which was then followed by a number of victories in the form of small incremental increases in the minimum wage. The final victory piece of legislation required the minimum wage to be indexed every two years, or, in other words, be increased in accordance with inflation on a biennial basis. Haslam

believed that House bill 552 presented a legitimate opportunity to increase the minimum wage, since the Democratic Caucus had recently proclaimed increasing the minimum wage to be among their top five priorities.

When asked how the VWC engaged with workers who were already unionized, Haslam articulated the following,

Our philosophy as an organization has always been that the best way to create change and the only way to make any substantial change is people taking collective action together against those who hold power. And so it's a lot easier and more direct and successful to do that when you're in a situation on a workplace level and can form a union and it's a lot easier for us, a workers organization that's trying to work for, not just one group of workers, or one sector, or one geographic area... we're a statewide workers organization.

Haslam then asserted that the organized part of a working class, or, in this case, unionized workers, have historically strived to take action together and win benefits for the entire working class. He then cited several past progressive labor regulations, such as laws that restricted the use of child labor, as having been won first in unionized workplaces.

Haslam suggested that when benefits such as paid sick days are governed for, they then do not need to be negotiated into a contract and nor can they be taken away, leaving unions the opportunity to bargain for other gains. Haslam mentioned a law what was passed in 2004, which granted whistleblower protections to healthcare workers, as an example of a law that mainly benefited non-union workers but was fought for and won by union workers. Haslam stated that the VWC was “drawn to experiment and explore new ways of taking collective action and changing and enforcing workers rights standards

even in non-union industries,” which provided justification for the VWC to be working on legislative reform.

Similarly to his previous response, Haslam suggested that paid sick days would “raise the floor” for those who were already receiving 7 days of paid sick time. For workers who have collective bargaining, this legislation would allow them to bargain for other additional benefits. For those who do not have collective bargaining but have paid sick days, it would have the same impact but with a less guaranteed outcome since these workers do not have a stake in decision-making. Haslam described raising the minimum wage as having the same effect on workers who are already guaranteed these benefits in unionized and non-unionized workplaces. He synthesized his thoughts on the matter by stating that such legislation would “strengthen the hand” of unionized workplaces and “raise the floor” of non-unionized workplaces. When asked to comment on City Market management’s reconfiguration of the livable wage for City Market employees, Haslam took a stance against such actions, stating that, “you can’t eat benefits.”

In regards to healthcare reform guidelines of Act 48, Haslam said that this would have a significant effect on working people in Vermont as it proposes to decouple healthcare from employment. Haslam alleged that this could be “liberating” for some working people whose family’s healthcare would no longer depend on their employment. Haslam put forward the following scenario to convey this idea,

We have certainly known lots of working people who have descent healthcare benefits attached to a certain job that keeps them locked into that job even though it’s bad for them mentally and physically for many years because the

consequences of leaving the job would put their family in jeopardy under their access to healthcare.

Haslam then launched into an explanation of the funding for Vermont healthcare reform, throughout which he emphasized equitable financing and state savings.

Lastly, Haslam was asked to discuss non-policy oriented strategies the VWC uses for making change. Haslam mainly spoke about the community support that the VWC offers to union campaigns, which tends to entail calling for employers to abandon union-busting tactics and respect the rights of their employees to organize a union. In addition, the VWC builds community backing for legislation that would allow for new groups to organize into a union such as homecare workers. Haslam stated the following as a testament to the VWC's commitment to unions, "Essentially it all takes some form of collective action. The ideal workers rights situation is collective bargaining through forming a union. We have the right to do that. And you know we're trying to expand those rights to include the early educators and the homecare workers but it's very hard." He went on to explain how the VWC endeavors to organize people across job sectors in order to target specific industries, such as fast food, with demands from a group made up entirely of working people from all different employment backgrounds.

Synthesis

Workers' access to political, social, and civil rights at City Market and Hunger Mountain depended largely upon job title, employment status, department, and legal citizenship. Workers who occupied higher paid positions closer to management, such as buyers, typically had opportunities to participate in personnel and production decisions

that their counterparts in lower pay scales did not have while also maintaining higher incomes and better social benefits. Therefore workers in higher pay scale positions possessed greater access to political and social rights than workers in lower pay scales. Part time workers and particularly substitute workers at Hunger Mountain tended to be less aware of how decisions were made and engage less in decision-making than their coworkers who were full time. This information suggests that part time and substitute workers have fewer political rights as well as social rights, given that their benefits are limited compared to their full time counterparts. Part time and substitute workers were also committed to either other jobs or obligations outside of work, which often minimized the time they had to participate in workplace decision-making. Workers in the Produce departments at both City Market and Hunger Mountain demonstrated a particularly interesting pattern in the way in which they engaged in production decisions but rarely in personnel decisions as opposed to many of their coworkers in other departments who engaged in both types of decision-making. Having expressed satisfaction with the opportunities to participate in decision-making, these workers viewed their political rights as uniquely production-oriented. In addition, their satisfaction with the decision-making and general sense of autonomy bore negative implications for their desire to further their political rights and social rights so as to attain more of their basic needs. In my interviews with Justine and Dialo, they indicated clear feelings of disenfranchisement, which were connected to factors such as inadequate compensation, inaccessible benefits, exclusion from decision-making, and, at the present time as well as later when the English Only Policy was established, discrimination in the workplace. At different points in the interview, they attributed the psychological risks as well as

exclusion they experienced in the decision-making process to their legal status as refugees in the United States as well as to their identity as “Africans” and foreigners. The social, political, and civil rights of these workers were the most compromised out of all the participants I interviewed.

The standards for all workplaces in Vermont are set according to state law. Therefore, policymaking is the most overarching way to make change to citizenship in the workplace. Labor advocacy organization stakeholders and Representative Head were in agreement that any progressive labor legislation would raise the bar for all workers, regardless of whether they are unionized. In contrast, Senator Mullin accredited unions with the sole power of making economic gains rather than as a body that is capable of fundamentally changing the way decisions are made. More importantly, labor stakeholders and Representative Head supported these pieces of progressive labor legislation whereas Senator Mullin did not. Senator Mullin also expressed an unfavorable attitude towards organized labor constituents unlike Representative Head who spoke of this group in positive terms.

As the chairs of the Senate committee on Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs and the House committee on General, Housing, and Military Affairs, both legislators occupy positions that are key to the success of most progressive labor bills relayed through the Statehouse. Committee chairs are granted the power of deciding when to hear certain bills and how to conduct committee meetings therefore both legislators also possess a great deal of influence over the fate of these bills. Even in the case that a progressive labor bill was to be passed out of the House, a Senate committee could stop the bill in its tracks. Their characterizations of organized labor could, then,

have an impact on their support for a bill as the opinions and presence of this group becomes more prominent.

Labor advocacy organizations play a salient role in encouraging participation from workers and union members in the legislative process in ways such as testifying at the statehouse and issuing formal statements in support or opposition of legislation. As Haslam highlighted in his interview and as is demonstrated by the heightened activity of members from Locals 203 and 255, unionized labor constituents are the primary group of advocates for the labor movement as a whole. The Vermont Workers Center and the UE especially spend a great deal of time mobilizing their membership to support current union drives and organizing efforts as well as pushing legislation that would allow new groups to organize a union. Haslam and Lawson share the ideology that unions are the best way for people to achieve goals pertaining to workers rights. As Lawson pointed out in her interview, workers who are unionized can advocate for themselves without fear of retaliation. Whereas policy changes affect all workers uniformly, unionized workers make choices as to what they want to change about the conditions in which they work. Haslam and Lawson also share the belief that opportunities to participate in policy making are insufficient which is a clear point of divergence from the opinions of Senator Mullin and Representative Head who both believe that opportunities for public participate in the legislature are sufficient.

As far as bringing about immediate change and improvements to worker engagement and citizenship at City Market and Hunger Mountain, I think it is vital that we explore the following areas as the two points in which there is the most versatility: employment and legal citizenship status. Currently, substitutes and part time employees

constitute a large portion of the workforces at both stores. In order to increase the amount of time and commitment workers are willing to dedicate to workplace improvement, I would advise that workers at both stores advance steps to phase out and replace these positions with full time positions. Justine and Dialo revealed the plights of being a refugee worker at City Market, including the disrespect they often felt from their manager and coworkers and their exclusion from the union. Although one refugee worker went on to become a steward following the English Only Policy incident, workers from the refugee community did not occupy a single seat on the Executive Board, the union's official governance body. As a means of working towards meeting the needs of this group, I think that refugee workers should be trained and activated to become part of one or both of the union's official decision-making bodies (Executive Board and Bargaining Team). Improvements to factors such as job title and department would require a complete reorganization of the departments and overhaul of the traditional, hierarchical workplace structure and therefore are not as likely to occur.

In regards to policy-making, there is obvious disagreement between labor stakeholders and policymakers as far as what is the best way to engage labor constituents. In order to enhance communication, I would recommend that policy makers consider the possibility of having those who constitute the majority of the target population (in the case of H. 208, H. 552, and Act 48- laborers) determine options for public participation that would lead to increased involvement from this group. For labor organizations to strategically pass a bill through the statehouse, it is critical for these groups to reflect on the role of the Committee Chair and what motivates the individual that occupies this position in state government.

Summary

At City Market, the greatest percentage of participants had worked at the store for less than two years (56.5%), possessed a four-year college degree as their highest educational achievement (43%), made less than 20,000 dollars per year (56.5%), and were White (69.5%). At Hunger Mountain, the greatest percentage of the participants had worked at the store for more than two years (71%), possessed a high school diploma (38%), made less than 20,000 dollars per year (38%), and were White (90%). Workers' access to political, social, and civil rights varied by job title, department, employment status, and legal citizenship at both stores. While some workers were inclined to view their political rights as purely oriented to production decisions, others saw their political rights as pertaining to personnel decisions. This crucial difference in perspectives leads to a dichotomy within the workplace whereby some workers believe workplace democracy has been attained while others do not and/or feel that they must continue to work in order to maintain it. This difference ultimately affects the vitality of the union, for if workers believe that they already have decision-making power, they are less likely to participate in decision-making processes facilitated by the union leading to a less member-run union. A worker's level of autonomy and participation over production and personnel decisions was often impacted by one of the factors listed previously. For example, workers in the Produce department at City Market and Hunger Mountain tended to gauge the opportunities for participation to be satisfactory despite the fact that most of these opportunities exclusively pertained to production. At City Market, refugee workers in Prepared Foods were more likely to experience a lack of opportunities to engage in production and personnel decisions and view their benefits and pay as inadequate for

meeting their needs and those of their families than non-refugee workers from Prepared Foods and other departments. When compounded with the English Only policy that was instituted for a brief period in the Fall of 2013, it is clear that these individuals do not possess full range of social, political, or civil rights. Similar to participation in national or state-wide governance, time, interwoven with job title and employment status, was the most common barrier for citizen engagement in the two workplaces.

As James Haslam indicated, although Workers Centers play a crucial role in supporting collective bargaining for those who are not yet unionized, they also serve to mobilize already unionized workers around struggles and labor policies that are more likely to affect their non-unionized counterparts. From Haslam's perspective, it is currently the job of the legislature to lay the foundational standards for labor law and the responsibility of the workers to build unions in order to make any further improvements they wish to see in their workplace. According to his logic, the better the foundational standards, the loftier are the union's goals for making change. Therefore, as Mullin observes from his employer perspective, progressive labor legislation such as H. 208 and H. 552 may encourage or oblige an employer, most likely upon pressure from their employees, to increase their workplace standards, regardless of whether or not their employees are unionized. Though Lawson argues that H. 208 and Act 48 will not have any immediate impacts on workers at City Market or Hunger Mountain (excluding H. 552 which would effect a significant number of employees who are currently not making this amount), McGinnis take the stance that both pieces of legislation will, in fact, have more long-term effects on workers. McGinnis shared Haslam and Representative Head's position that an increase in the number of paid sick days for workers guaranteed by law

would likely increase the union's leverage whereas he concurred with Senator Mullin on the point that the Affordable Care Act may have detrimental affects on workers. As evidenced in documents drafted by United Electric's Policy Action committee, the union endorses comprehensive healthcare reform and specifically provides backing for Vermont's single-payer legislation. In addition, the union's commitment to drawing up such documents and encouraging workers to testify in support of progressive labor legislation as well as their workplace actions demonstrate their dedication to working within the realm of policymaking and also outside of it. As McGinnis emphatically stated at the close of the interview, "Workers' political action should look more like the occupation of the Wisconsin statehouse and less like a campaign for the democrats."

In my interviews with Senator Mullin and Representative Head, their characterizations of the target population for these pieces of legislation became clear. Senator Mullin was more likely to sympathize with and provide a platform for business owners and professionals while Representative Head sought out and submitted to the opinions of stakeholders within the labor movement including low-wage workers themselves. In an important segment of each interview, Representative Head revealed that she held the opinion of organized labor in high regard whereas Senator Mullin, in stark contrast, said that organized labor already played too prominent a role in the statehouse and was an unwelcome presence. Representative Head demonstrated that she saw value in unions when she advanced the idea that progressive labor legislation would raise the floor for all workers. Senator Mullin, however, relegated unions with simply the power to make economic gains as evidenced by his assertion that, if H. 208 and H. 552

were to pass, there may no longer be as much of a justification for workers to join a union.

Conclusion

Along with having more CSAs and farmer's markets than any other state per capita, Vermont touts a growing number of cooperative businesses such as retail food cooperatives. Although food cooperatives boast better wages and healthcare coverage for their employees than conventional grocery stores, it is evident from this study that employees in food cooperatives undergo many of the same challenges in maintaining fair and equitable working conditions and provisions as employees at non-cooperative businesses (Coop: Healthy Foods, Healthy Communities).

The union's arrival at City Market and Hunger Mountain was unique in different respects. At City Market, the store was on the verge of collapse due to financial instability therefore employees bargained for higher wages, with a commitment from management to work towards livable wages and periodically disclose information about the store's fiscal standing, and protection of their benefits (Interview with Kim Lawson, 2013). Shortly after City Market unionized in 2003, a manager at Hunger Mountain who is now the President of Local 255 since voluntarily demoting to a non-managerial position, sought out the assistance of United Electric when the healthcare benefits of a majority of her coworkers came under threat by management. While one story speaks to the importance of union representation for protecting benefits that were thought to have been secured, the other sheds light on the advantages of transparency and accountability from management of which the union can make due request.

Compared with a 6.7 percent difference between the wages of food cooperative and conventional grocery store workers, unionized blue-collar workers make 23.3 percent more than their non-unionized peers (Coop: Healthy Foods, Healthy Communities;

Economic Policy Institute, 2011). In addition, the wage disparity amongst women and people of color in unions tends to be smaller than in non-unionized workplaces (Economic Policy Institute, 2011). Although the union at City Market attempts to engage with refugee workers in the prepared foods department, as is clear from incidents like the English Only Policy, it is questionable as to whether or not they are successful in their endeavors. Logistical factors limit the union's ability to reach out to these workers in certain capacities. For example, the union once considered having the contract translated into Swahili so that certain workers in the prepared foods department who do not read English could have full access to the contract. However this forty-three-page document would cost them upwards of nine hundred dollars to translate, making this task financially unfeasible for the union. The overturning of the English Only Policy represents a clear victory for refugee workers in terms of civil rights protection. Nonetheless, my focus group with Justine and Dialo demonstrates that refugee workers in this department occupy a marginalized standing at the store overall and possess lesser social and political rights than their coworkers.

In 2013, 14.1 percent of grocery store workers were represented by a union, which, though the highest industry rate in the retail trade sector, is a decrease from 20.4 percent of the workforce in 2000 (National Bureau for Economics Research). Despite there being low union density in food retail, the difference between the rights of unionized versus non-unionized workers in this industry is stark. A 2002 study concludes that unionized workers in the food retail industry earn wages that are nearly a third higher than their non-unionized counterparts and that 68 percent of this group have health insurance through their employer as opposed to just 36 percent of non-unionized workers

(Institute for Women's Policy Research). As previously discussed, unionized workers are legally entitled the right to bargain a contract with management to which both parties then must hold each other accountable in order to avoid the legal repercussions associated with a contract breach. Although this process does not always satisfy every individual worker's needs, as is evident by the feedback I received from some interview participants in this study, collective bargaining functions to represent the collective interests of a group of workers therefore the contract and, ultimately, the union exists to reinforce this goal.

According to the Food Chain Workers Alliance Report, food retail workers were most concerned about the impacts of part time work on their job security, personal well-being, and healthcare access. At the time of this study, approximately 20 percent of the workforce at City Market worked part time whereas approximately 50 percent of the workforce at Hunger Mountain worked part time or were substitutes. Therefore part time work is still a condition that is common at both stores and, as demonstrated by this study, is a characteristic that bears negative implications for worker engagement in decision-making in addition to the adverse affects perceived by retail workers on a national scale. In fact, the circumstances that led up to unionization at Hunger Mountain are circumstances that are all too common today at superstores such as Walmart where workers have either been demoted to part time employees or replaced entirely by part time or temporary workers since the passing of the Affordable Care Act. Like the administration at Walmart, Hunger Mountain management nearly agreed to this condition as a way to avoid providing employer-sponsored health insurance. While part time and substitute work still exists at City Market and Hunger Mountain, these workers have the

opportunity to negotiate the terms of their employment unlike their counterparts at Walmart.

Compared to the food system as a whole, the retail workers I interviewed at City Market and Hunger Mountain use food assistance from the government, particularly food stamps, at a higher rate than food system workers. It is unclear whether this is due to external factors, such as differential food costs in the state of Vermont, or whether food retail workers do in fact use food stamps at a higher rate than frontline workers in other sectors of the food system. Regardless, the significantly higher rates of food stamp usage amongst food system workers compared to other industries points to a glaring contradiction of the workers on whose backs the food system is built going hungry.

Workplace democracy is a predictor of the degree to which workers are able to meet their needs, such as food, through playing a meaningful role in the decision-making process at their workplace. According to George Cheney, the two main criteria for workplace democracy are individual feelings and goals and organizational objectives. Though individual feelings and goals in relation to work may differ across one workplace, workers share one universal goal of working and that is to support themselves and their dependents on their earnings and benefits. With this information in consideration, City Market and Hunger Mountain, as retail organizations, serve two main purposes, the first of which is to sell food and the second to provide employment. Therefore, labor comprises a major part of workplace democracy, placing greater weight on personnel decisions related to matters such as pay and benefits, which the union has greater control over.

Policymakers in this study expressed drastically different views about the target populations of progress labor legislations H. 208 and H. 552. In retrospect, I feel as though my time pursuing Senator Kevin Mullin, the conservative lawmaker I interviewed, was symbolic of his commitment to the labor and working classes overall. It wasn't until my second attempt at arranging an interview time with Senator Kevin Mullin, for which I went to the statehouse to sit in on a committee meeting for 2 hours in order to get his attention, that he participated. Representative Head, on the other hand, identified the Vermont Workers Center and organized labor groups as key stakeholders and testimonies to consider during her committee's review of H. 208, H. 552 and Act 48.

Based on the results of this study, unions and workers centers, particularly the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers Union and the Vermont Workers Center, play an important role in policy making. The United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers union provides needed assistance through testimony in support of progressive labor legislation such as H. 208 and H 552 and organizational clout with their designated Policy Action committee. The Vermont Workers Center views unions as vital partners in passing progressive labor legislation and allowing others the opportunity to organize a union free of intimidation from management. Although they acknowledge that unionized workplaces will likely not be significantly impacted by progressive labor bills since they already achieved these advances in their contract, James Haslam of the Vermont Workers Center asserts that these pieces of legislation will likely raise the floor for all workers, regardless of whether or not they are unionized. As Kim Lawson states, the biggest most universal benefit a union can offer is just cause employment, which ensures that workers are not fired without good reason.

Future Work

In the United States today, unionized food cooperatives are much less common than traditional food cooperatives. As previously explained, I chose not to study non-unionized or traditional food cooperatives due to time constraints and inexperience in mixed methods research. The history of unionization at Hunger Mountain and City Market in the early 2000s, however, reveals that food cooperatives are not always designed to meet the needs of all who are involved in the system. Therefore, I take this opportunity to implore seasoned researchers to study workers' rights and citizenship at standard food cooperatives in which the workers are not unionized. Given the fascinating trend in decision-making demonstrated amongst workers in the Produce department in this study, I suggest that future researchers examine the broader effects working in this department has on involvement in production and personnel decisions.

In the winter of 2013, I learned about a food cooperative in Hillsborough, North Carolina called Weaver Street Market that is worker and consumer owned. This model is particularly intriguing since no such store existed in Vermont at the time of my study and such a place would offer one the chance to directly compare the governance structure of a worker-owned food cooperative to a unionized food cooperative. For this reason, I urge researchers to consider studying food cooperatives of this kind to provide a source of comparison for those I chose to focus on in this study.

Lastly, my policy analysis demonstrates that certain conservative legislators have negative views of organized labor, associating this entire group with paid lobbyists. After hearing Senator Mullin's views and opinions about a minimum wage increase and the

provision of paid sick days, I could not help but beg the following question internally- Do negative predispositions about organized labor have an impact on the likelihood of progressive labor policy passing? If so, how? At this time, when union density in the United States is already so low (union membership rate is 11.3 percent- Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013), I strongly encourage researchers to investigate this phenomenon, perhaps in states with more conservative legislators.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What do you enjoy about your work? What don't you enjoy?
2. How are decisions made at your workplace?
3. Do you have a say in how your schedule is made?
4. Are you able to participate in the decision-making process at your workplace? If so, how? If no, why?
5. Are there opportunities for you to advance/for upward mobility in your workplace? If there are opportunities for you to advance, are they substantive?
6. What do you think are the benefits of having a union at your workplace? What are the downsides?
7. Do you feel like you make enough to support yourself and your dependents?
8. Do you have benefits that you receive from your work? What do you think about those benefits? Is there one that you value over another?