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Strategies of Student Activism: A Qualitative Study Examining Racial and Social Justice
Organizing on a Midwest College Campus

By

Rebecca J. Lambert

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In

Gender and Women's Studies

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Strategies of Student Activism: A Qualitative Study Examining Racial and Social Justice
Organizing on a Midwest College Campus

Rebecca J. Lambert

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's
committee.

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Abstract

An abstract for the thesis of Rebecca J. Lambert for the Master of Arts in Gender and Women's Studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato, Minnesota

Title: Student Activism: Exploring Racial and Social Justice Organizing on a Midwest College Campus

A college campus can serve as a reflection of the larger issues occurring within society. In working to address topics such as racism, sexism, classism, or homophobia, student activism plays a critical role in an individual's experience in higher education. The need for a safer campus, the desire to change university policies and various other factors contribute to the motivation for students to join campus organizing groups, but such activism is a practice that has significantly contributed to the college student experience. What may not be as apparent, however, are the strategies that are used by students to organize on college campuses, especially when those strategies might be identified as feminist techniques. In addition to the techniques students use to organize, the spaces they create for addressing racial and social justice issues are worth examining. Coalitional spaces offer an opportunity for diverse students to gather to discuss their lived experience in hope of creating social change on campus. This thesis expands upon previous feminist research on student activism and organizing on college campuses and examines the types of strategies students use to engage in racial and social justice activism. In this study, I explore the strategies and organizing techniques used by students to mobilize around racial and social justice issues at Minnesota State University,

Mankato. Recommendations for future research and implications on student activism are also discussed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The current political climate on college campuses is one of heightened tensions around the issues of racial and social justice. The deaths of Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, and Sandra Bland have spearheaded national protests and debates about increasing racialized violence against communities of color. Feminist intersectional movements such as Black Lives Matter have informed local student activism and engagements with police brutality and violence against transwomen of color. When larger social justice issues reach college campuses, students have their own ways of organizing to challenge structural systems of oppression (Ransby). Examining and understanding student methods of organizing allows for deeper comprehension of the effects of their activism on college campuses. The motivations of students and the strategies they use for organizing offer a glimpse into their lived experiences on campus. Scholars bell hooks and Bernice Malka Fisher argue that feminist pedagogical principles play a significant role in student organizing, creating an environment where marginalized groups and experiences are centered. As activism takes shape around racial and social justice issues, de-centering the white, male, cis-gendered, privileged atmosphere of the university becomes critical to effective campus social change. To that end, researchers Anne E. Wagner and Kim Case argue for the use of feminist pedagogical strategies to unlearn racism and other oppressions. These strategies may not be explicitly used within all university classrooms, but feminist pedagogy has a place within critical pedagogy and developing a critical awareness. Additionally, creating safe spaces where students can discuss their lived experiences to center and examine experiences of racism and sexism is another form of feminist pedagogy that is useful in activist spaces. The researchers Bell,

Love, and Roberts argue that this kind of environment is best for unlearning these behaviors, which can ultimately lead to transformative social change.

Not only are the strategies used for student organizing important, but so is the space that students create to do this work. Research shows that coalition spaces also benefit from a feminist lens. Scholar Bernice Johnson Reagon argues in favor of coalition spaces being a space of discomfort, even for those that enter with good intentions. She claims that the discomfort pushes people into a new space of coalition work, to work through issues and create a truly unified effort.

In addition to pedagogy, allyship is essential to understanding student organizing for racial and social justice. The term “ally” has gained popularity recently, yet discussions tend to focus on the behaviors of allies, rather than the label. Researcher Andrea Ayvazian argues that an ally is an individual that represents a dominant social group that organizes against those privileges. Allies become an important part of student organizing around racial and social justice issues because they are fighting to change the campus climate for all students, to make it better for all students. In addition, feminist researcher Charlotte Bunch argues that healing is an important component of allyship. This allows people to process experience together, creating a fuller activist environment. Finally, social movement and student activism are also critical in this research project. Researcher Barbara Ransby claims that student activism has changed society and that administrators should embrace the opportunity to have dialogues that create change.

In this project I use focus groups to bring together students that are working to address racial and social justice issues on the Minnesota State University, Mankato (MSU) campus. Working with various student organizations, formal and informal, this

study seeks to examine and identify the feminist organizing strategies that are used by students on campus to address the various oppressions they face on campus daily. This study does not strive to examine only feminist organizing strategies, and asks students about their general activist activities. I argue that students will be using a variety of organizing strategies and that many of them will be feminist, yet students are not deliberate in using feminist strategies for campus activism. Using focus group discussions conducted with three groups of students from Minnesota State University, Mankato, this project attempts to identify the feminist organizing strategies that students use when organizing for racial and social justice on the MSU campus. I argue that the techniques students use to organize around racial and social justice comprise elements of feminist strategies.

What I discovered was that students do use a variety of organizing strategies, but do not explicitly label their work as feminist. I also discovered that students engaged in racial and social justice activism seek out partnerships and work to build coalitions as they work to create social change. Third, the notion of “safe” space is something that is desired, but not always attainable in this work, but is also not a requirement of such work as feminist scholars point out. Finally, focus groups revealed the institutional obstacles students shared that they must navigate when trying to organize for racial and social justice issues on campus.

Student Activism at Minnesota State University, Mankato

In order to analyze current student activism on campus, it is helpful to have an understanding of previous periods of student activism on the Minnesota State University, Mankato campus. In the 1960s, anti-war demonstrators were vocal on the national level

about their disagreement with the decision to engage in the Vietnam conflict. In 1964, the first major student demonstrations occurred in various cities across the country and by 1970, students at Minnesota State University, Mankato, known then as Mankato State College (MSC) organized their own campus protests (Nickerson). For the most part, student protests were nonviolent, but there were a few instances of injury. Protest activities included marches from campus to downtown Mankato, teach-ins, sit-ins, and blocking the bridge to enter Highway 169. In addition to anti-war protests, MSC students showed solidarity and also expressed their opposition to the incident at Kent State in Ohio, where four students were killed by the Ohio National Guard. As the protests continued on campus, various groups partnered to conduct teach-ins. For example, in November 1972, students representing the Student Mobilization Committee, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, The Minority Groups Study Center, and some faculty members sponsored a Vietnam War teach-in in the Centennial Student Union (Nickerson).

James Nickerson, President of Mankato State College during this time, wrote the book *Out of Chaos: Reflections of a University president and his Contemporaries on Vietnam-era unrest in Mankato and its Relevance Today* and chronicled the events occurring at the time. He states that:

“Unlike a number of other cities with colleges, Mankato relied on an unconventional approach during the Vietnam era. Rather than harsh treatment, strict supervision and isolation...the attitude of officials, monitors and others in contact with the demonstrators was that of support and assistance, to be sure that

the exercise was successful. After all, demonstration was a legal enterprise and deserved support as such” (37)

The support given to student protesters created an engaged learning environment for the students. While it was a time of deep unrest, students voiced their concerns and beliefs through marches, sit-ins, and other actions, and some were more successful than others. As the events of the Vietnam War era demonstrate, MSU Mankato has a history of student activism and the work of those students can still be seen on the campus today. There are two memorials on campus dedicated to the student activism of the time, one commemorating the students killed at Kent State and Jackson State and the other recognizing the Vietnam War.

More recently, students organized a protest on the MSU campus to support the Black Lives Matter movement and the events that occurred at the University of Missouri. Racial tensions have been building on the Missouri campus and included the following events: a swastika etched in a stairwell, the student body president being called the n-word, and a group of Black students rehearsing for a homecoming performance were interrupted by being called the n-word. As a response to the lack of attention to these instances, student protesters blocked the University President’s car during the homecoming parade, leading the group to demand the President’s resignation. In addition to the lack of attention to racism on the Missouri campus, the football team threatened to stop engaging in any football related activities, including weekly games. In solidarity, MSU students gathered in the Centennial Student Union and shared experiences of racism and sexism, while also offering words of support and encouragement for continuing to organize around these issues (Mankato Free Press, November 17, 2015).

Aligning with the need to understand the ways that students expressed their solidarity with the University of Missouri protestors and organized on campus, I argue that feminist strategies were included in their activist activities.

Organization of the Chapters

Chapter two situates this research within existing scholarship. The literature review is comprised of three sections: Feminist Pedagogy on Anti-Racism, Social Movement Theory, and Theories of Intersectionality. The section on feminist pedagogy addresses pedagogical strategies for undoing racist behaviors, creating spaces to dismantle those behaviors, and the concept of allyship. The section on social movement theory explores collective action, coalition building, and student activism. Finally, the section addressing theories of Intersectionality illustrates how the concept moves from the classroom and into activist spaces.

In the methodology section, chapter three, I discuss my rationale for examining the feminist principles used in student activism, why I selected focus groups as the method of study, and my rationale for the project. I also reflect on my positionality within the study and discuss some of the limitations involved in the research.

Chapter four, the results chapter, I explain how the three themes, feminist principles, coalition building, and intersectionality, emerged within each focus group. Finally, chapter five concludes this research project and points out what my analysis means for research on feminist principles involved in student organizing on college campuses, including recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Many campuses across the nation have a long history of student activism. Student-led activities have ranged from marches, to walk-outs, to most recently, “die-ins.” While these types of demonstrations receive a great deal of attention, there is less focus on the strategies that guide such student engagement, especially when feminist techniques may be involved. Understanding how feminist principles shape student activism demonstrates the importance of including such strategies for creating social justice. This literature review demonstrates how feminist theory and feminist pedagogy have contributed to student activism on college campuses. Student organizing is a reflection of the issues students deal with on a daily basis within the academy. The following section provides an overview of feminist pedagogy on anti-racism as well as a contextual understanding of social movements and coalitions, and theories of intersectionality.

Feminist Pedagogy on Anti-Racism

A simple definition of pedagogy offered by Robin J. Alexander states it is “both the act of teaching and the discourse in which it is embedded” (507). Understanding pedagogy as the way that people are taught is an important aspect to education and the process of learning. It is also an important tool when people need to unlearn and change harmful behaviors, which typically occurs when one engages in the fight for racial and social justice. This study not only explores pedagogy, but goes deeper into various types of pedagogy, including feminist and anti-racist pedagogy, to understand the strategies students use to change campus attitudes. In order to understand how students use feminist pedagogical principles as a part of their organizing strategies, it is important to first

recognize the role of anti-racist practices within feminist pedagogy. Feminist pedagogy has become a central teaching mechanism in the field of gender and women's studies, but it can also translate into organizing spaces outside of the classroom. Social justice work around issues such as racism and sexism benefits from an instructional tool that centers women's experiences and accounts for the differences of those experiences. Since my research seeks to understand the role that feminist strategies play in racial and social justice activism on a college campus, it is important to examine anti-racist pedagogy.

It is useful to first explore feminist pedagogy as a base of anti-racist feminist pedagogy. Bernice Malka Fisher argues that feminist pedagogy uses techniques to be inclusive, reflective, and collaborative, while also centering the experiences of women, and encouraging individuals to challenge systems of oppression. Fisher also states that feminist pedagogy is "*the value of social movements*" to give voice to the needs and desires of oppressed people and to move society toward social justice" (Fisher 25, emphasis original). All of these descriptions provide the groundwork for examining the role of feminist pedagogy within an organizing space such as a college campus. I agree with Fisher's explanations of feminist pedagogy and find that they provide a valuable connection between feminist and anti-racist teaching and organizing practices.

Building from Fisher's work on feminist pedagogy, I now move to the theme of anti-racist pedagogy. Anti-racist pedagogy can be described as teaching techniques to help unlearn racist and oppressive behaviors (Case 17) Anne E. Wagner provides some critical insight into the importance of this type of instruction. In *Unsettling the Academy: Working through the Challenges of Anti-Racist Pedagogy*, she explores practical approaches for such teaching strategies in the university classroom setting. While

students that are engaging in campus activism may not experience this form of feminist anti-racist pedagogy in each classroom, they can utilize these strategies in their activist spaces. In this piece, Wagner offers a broad definition of anti-racist pedagogy, arguing that it challenges the traditional foundations of learning, which are rooted in white male privilege. This white, male, and privileged space is exactly the kind of environment that students are trying to dismantle within the academy. Wagner also states that this form of teaching creates unique qualities within a learning environment because it challenges people to engage in material on both a mental and emotional level. This type of pedagogy provokes emotional and sometimes contentious reactions from individuals, making it important that all involved are prepared to navigate those reactions. Additionally, Wagner suggests that framing the environment of the class is important to learning. One way to establish a context in the learning environment is through stressing the importance of speaking from experience, another way that anti-racist pedagogy creates non-traditional learning environments. This point aligns with Fisher's notion that feminist pedagogy centers the lived experiences of women. By centering lived experiences and speaking from those positions, student activists can attempt to engage with transformational, anti-racist pedagogical practices.

In their piece, *Racism and White Privilege Curriculum Design*, authors Lee Ann Bell, Barbara J. Love, and Rosemarie A. Roberts argue that the best way to teach about racism is to generate spaces for people to discuss their life experiences in a way that helps them situate those experiences within the context of structural racism and white privilege (Bell, Love, and Roberts). Their point aligns with Wagner's position highlighting the need for experience to act as the learning tool for anti-racist pedagogy. Generating spaces

that allow people to share their lived experiences is a critical aspect to this research study because the students that organize around racial and social justice issues are creating these spaces for themselves. Students try to create spaces for dialogue around race, racism, and privilege, which are prompted by people sharing their stories with these social structures, specifically on campus. I agree with the authors and believe that this kind of space is critical for individuals to engage with concepts in order to unlearn racism. Conversational spaces are less formal, which may be less intimidating, allowing people to share their experiences honestly.

In addition to anti-racist pedagogy, allyship plays a critical role in social justice work. The notion of being an ally has received more attention in recent years, but while the label grows in popularity, more discussions center on the behavior that characterizes an ally. The discussion of allyship is important to this study because people acting in this capacity provide a significant function for completing anti-racist work. In the context of student organizing, students that organize across their own identities and that support campus activism, such as white people that work for racial justice and men that work to end sexism, could be considered allies. This section will examine the roles of allies and the behaviors that categorize people as such.

Andrea Ayvazian offers a useful definition of ally and states that an “ally is a member of a dominant group in our society who works to dismantle any form of oppression from which she or he receives the benefit” (Ayvazian 625). Ayvazian also provides another helpful description of ally behavior claiming that it includes “taking personal responsibility for the changes we know are needed in our society, and so often ignore or leave to others to deal with” (Ayvazian 625). These definitions set expectations

for the role of an ally in the work of racial and social justice and point to behavior as well as intention when working across identities to create social justice. Ayvazian also states that ally behavior is an “intentional, overt, and consistent activity that challenges prevailing patterns of oppression, makes privileges that are so often invisible visible, and facilitates the empowerment of persons targeted by oppression” (Ayvazian 625). The notion of behavior being intentional, overt, and consistent is important in ally work because it emphasizes the need for people to situate themselves within systems of inequality and actively work to dismantle oppression.

Taking risks and being intentional about behavior formulates trust and builds the base for social change. The idea of deliberate and visible ally behavior is in conflict with a study done by Kim Case, where she discusses some of the issues with white women’s ally behavior. In her study, Case points out that some women have difficulty acting in these three ways. In her article “Discovering the Privilege of Whiteness: White Women’s Reflections on Anti-Racist Identity and Ally Behavior,” Case discusses the various reasons that white women choose not to intentionally address racism, resulting in a contradiction in their anti-racist desire and behavior. The women that Case worked with stated various reasons for remaining silent when confronted with racism, including fear of disapproval, desire to avoid conflict, feelings of being ineffective and feelings of exhaustion. The inaction of women that claim to be interested in anti-racist practices may cause tension within multicultural relationships, and may even be seen as betrayal.

Gloria Anzaldua builds on the issue of betrayal in ally relationships in some of her work. Anzaldua argues that being an ally means that people are helping each other heal (Anzaldua 617). It is through this process of healing that people expose themselves to one

another and create opportunities to work together against oppression. She also states that to accomplish this type of alliance work, people must situate themselves within their identities and their beliefs about certain topics. Placing oneself in this location as an ally allows for others to understand your positionality. This also facilitates space for an open, honest, and challenging dialogue to begin, which creates the foundation for an ally relationship. Promoting challenging discussion opens the door for trust, another important aspect of an ally relationship. Finally, Anzaldua addresses risks that are involved with allyship, especially the possibility of betrayal. Betrayal invokes complex emotions including sadness, anger, unsafe, shame, and disempowerment. Behaving as an ally does not guard against betrayal, but it does create a space for mistakes to be made and opportunities for growth.

Anzaldua offers an excellent foundation for understanding allyship, and Craig John Alimo builds on this with his framework of social justice allies. Craig John Alimo offers two terms that are useful for framing the ally work that is executed by student activists. In his article, *From Dialogue to Action: The Impact of Cross-Race Intergroup Dialogue on the Development of White College Students as Racial Allies*, he discusses social justice allies and racial allies. He defines social justice ally development as “the process by which agents evolve into advocates for social justice” (39). My study supports Alimo’s research because students that choose to engage in campus activism are positioned at the crossroads of these two ally behaviors. Students organize to voice their concern and desire to change the campus environment. My view is that these students offer a strong foundation for social justice allies to be advocates for racial justice.

Social Movement Theory

Social justice requires direct and collective action, and typically works better when done in collaboration with others working on similar issues. It is also important to understand the ways in which diverse groups might come together to form effective coalitions for social change. A social movement is a collective action and social movement theory is an important theoretical tool for understanding the various states of conflict and change that occurs in society. Social movements challenge aspects of our society and offer a path for social change. Using this lens, student activism plays a critical role in working for social change. Typically, social movements are analyzed from one of two perspectives: sociology and political science. Sociologists study the cause and growth of social movements while political scientists study the effects on laws and policy (Costain and McFarland). Student activism is uniquely positioned to address both of those perspectives, creating a space for feminist coalition social movement.

The concept of coalition work is critical to social movement and collective action. Coalition spaces allow for people with an interest in working for the same issues to come together to create change. This work, however, is not always easy. In the essay, *Coalition Politics: Turning the Century*, Bernice Johnson Reagon argues that coalition spaces are not safe spaces, they are not home. These spaces challenge those who enter them, even when they enter with good intentions and this challenge is what makes them uncomfortable. Reagon is correct in her stance that social change will be most effective coming from an uncomfortable space because those that are engaged in coalitions have to process and work through challenges to reach social change.

With diversity in mind, Edwina Barvosa-Carter argues that the notion of “multiple identity” (Barvosa-Carter 112) allows diverse groups to unify and organize to create coalitions that work for social justice. Barvosa-Carter defines multiple identity as “a concept in which the self is made up of a number of different but integrated identities” (113). These identities can include sexuality, class, ability, race, geographic location, and many others. This is an important concept to the work of student activists because it brings diverse people together to attempt to dismantle racism and change racist behaviors. Barvosa-Carter describes three implications for coalition building based off of the idea of multiple identity. She states that people identify with more than community, which allows them to relate to more than one group, which then allows them to engage with and support more than one group. She also states that multiple identity contributes to new characteristics being formed, resulting in coalition growth and progress. Finally, she states that multiple identify affects the relationships of those involved in the coalition. Diverse coalitions are more effective when common ground is found among members. This idea connects back to Reagon’s point about coalition space. These spaces may be challenging for those involved, but creating a flexible environment that accounts for individuals’ various identities permits meaningful social change.

In her piece, *Making Common Cause: Diversity and Coalitions*, Charlotte Bunch argues that diversity is a key component to coalition work, aligning her with both Reagon and Barvosa-Carter. Bunch begins her piece by arguing that the concept of domination must be interrogated within diverse spaces in order to challenge power hierarchies and embrace difference. Additionally, Bunch encourages individuals to not be defensive when discussing oppressive behaviors and attitudes. This kind of behavior only

continues to oppress people and limits the experiences of those that become defensive, hindering the coalition process. Finally, Bunch states that effective coalitions must work past “divisive reactions” (53). Such reactions cause conflict that can derail the effort of the group. It is critical to work through behaviors such as defensiveness, taking things too personally, and limiting women to issues related to marginalized identities to ensure a strong coalition space. Bunch offers a reminder that coalitions are not only conceptual, they are tangible, and must be treated as such.

Finally, students play a key role in social movements. College students have a long history of engaging with political issues on campus to show support for, or disagreement with political issues (Ransby). Civil rights marches, protests against the Vietnam war, and current Black Lives Matter protests connect college campuses to larger social and political issues, while drawing attention the student interests. In the book, *Freedom’s Web: Student Activism in an Age of Cultural Diversity*, Robert Rhoads offers a definition of student activism as “visible public protests organized by students to call attention to a particular concern or set of concerns” (Rhoads, vii). Including a focus on multiculturalism, Rhoads goes on to explore student activism and argues that collective awareness is needed for movements to gain strength.

As Barbara Ransby argues, youth have and continue to challenge academic institutions to interrogate their principles (Ransby). She contends that “in the past decade alone, college and university students have been a pivotal force in political movements for social change” (Ransby, 1). Student activism occurs in various forms, but the goal remains to create social movement and change structural oppressions. Ransby also claims that those that work within universities, such as administrators, faculty, and staff, should

view this action as a learning experience for the institution and use student organizing to foster campus conversations. Ransby is right that activism should be welcomed by the university and should be seen as a way to promote dialogue to address the critical issues students face in their education.

Theories of Intersectionality

Intersectionality has become a critical tool for interrogating women's oppression since Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the concept in the 1980s (Crenshaw). As a theoretical tool, it positions lived experiences of women of color at the center of analysis and creates a space for understanding the multiple identities that shape a person's life. Intersectionality is a useful tool for understanding the ways in which students addresses racism and sexism on campus, but also how it may be used in the design of their organizing activities. While it has been a transformative theoretical instrument within the academy, it also relates to the work of activism.

In *Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis*, Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall categorize intersectionality studies into three sections: applying intersectionality to teaching and research, investigating intersectionality as a theory and method, and applying intersectionality beyond the academy. It is this last category, beyond the academy, that I employ in this study. In this area of intersectionality, the authors argue that the theory can travel outside of the academic realm by arguing that "praxis has been a key site of intersectional critique and intervention" (Cho, Crenshaw, McCall 786). The authors define praxis as various movement driven occurrences within a social justice and advocacy frame. They also point out that as part of these advocacy efforts, theory should inform practice, and

practice should inform theory, creating a space where intersectionality produces knowledge outside of the academy. They state “that some practitioners mobilize intersectionality as a tool to interrogate and intervene in the social plane while others seek to interrogate intersectionality as a theoretical framework...” (Cho, Crenshaw, McCall 786). It is this intervention into the social structure that I situate this study with student activism around critical issues of racial and social justice. To be effective, students must be intentional with the use of intersectionality to address all aspects of the experiences of students involved in the organizing efforts. This use of intersectionality must also provide a space of coalition to bridge together the efforts of various groups that pursue social change.

The idea of organizing diverse students lends itself to an intersectional approach. It would be logical then, to reason that individuals who join these efforts are aware of the intersectional connections between identities. While the term intersectionality may not be a term that all students are familiar with, the idea of it may still be present in many people’s reason for attending student groups that want to organize to address race, class, and gender issues on campus. In *Challenging the Status Quo: The Role of Intersectional Awareness in Activism for Social Change and Pro-Social Intergroup Attitudes*, by Nicola Curtin, Abigail J. Stewart, and Elizabeth R. Cole support this idea through their idea of intersectional awareness (IA). They define IA as the occurrence where people understand inequalities from a multi-perspective position. They claim that “individuals who are aware of structural inequities, including IA, are likely to engage in collective action” (3). Students that participate in campus organizing are participating in collective action to interrogate racism, sexism, and classism, among other oppressions. My own view is that

the people who engage in racial and social justice work possess various levels of knowledge of intersecting oppressions, along with understanding how those oppressions shape people's lives, and our society. The notion of intersectional awareness connects well to the idea that intersectionality can travel beyond the academy and into activist spaces, which was proposed by Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall.

I have chosen these key bodies of knowledge to guide my research for numerous reasons. Each author contributes separately, yet offers connection points to other's work, creating the foundation for a strong study of anti-racist feminist pedagogy, coalition building, and theories of intersectionality in racial justice work. This literature review demonstrates the ways that each of these bodies of knowledge contribute to feminist praxis and create social change.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this research was to examine what feminist principles are employed for student organizing on the Minnesota State University Mankato campus. I conducted focus groups with MSU students to gain insight into the strategies used for student activism around issues of racial and social justice, making this project a qualitative research project. The questions I used as guides in this study were the following: 1) what strategies are used by students organizing around racial and social justice? 2) how do students utilize coalition practices to organize on campus? 3) how does intersectionality show up in organizing spaces on campus? and 4) how are students creating safe spaces on campus to organize around intersectional issues? These questions are significant because of the current political climate on college campuses across the country, expressive of heightened awareness around racism and violence against people of color. It is significant to understand how the students of Minnesota State University, Mankato are addressing similar issues on campus and how feminist techniques emerge in this organizing.

I hypothesize that Minnesota State University, Mankato students will incorporate a variety of organizing strategies into their activism, but may not intentionally use feminist organizing techniques. This could occur for a variety of reasons including: a fear of labeling any strategy as feminist due to negative connotations with the label or not being aware that a strategy is feminist in nature. It seems unlikely that feminist foundations do not exist within student engagement, which returns to the idea that students may not be able to label such practices as feminist. Students and student groups often collaborate with various groups or university partners, using the feminist label,

specifically to categorize organizing strategies, could deter people from participating in such partnerships.

Theoretical Framework

This study is interdisciplinary in scope, drawing from Gender and Women's Studies and Sociology. I used Grounded Theory, a sociological framework, to guide the data collection process. I also use a feminist theoretical frame to structure this study. Victoria Bromley states that "feminist theory provides frameworks for understanding our lives, the means to envision the way things could be different, and the strategies for taking action and making change" (43). A feminist lens centers gender, creating a space for generating new knowledge. This study was also conducted through an intersectional lens to ensure that race, gender, sexuality, and class were centered for data collection and analysis. Using such a feminist research approach was critical for examining student activism on a college campus because it connected interrogating systems of oppression with a goal of social justice and change.

As mentioned previously, this study also used Grounded Theory (GT) as a guide for this research project. GT can be defined as a way to "generate or discover a theory or abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon that relates to a particular situation grounded in the experience and perceptions of the participants" (Komives et al 594). This framework is ideal for this project since I used focus groups to gather data. In these groups, participants shared their experiences and perceptions about specific issues regarding race and gender on campus, and I analyzed the data based on these conversations. Grounded Theory is also an interdisciplinary tool, which is again useful for an interdisciplinary field such as Gender and Women's Studies. Additionally, Hesse-

Biber states that this approach (of Grounded Theory) to data analysis “provides a way to develop ‘progressively more abstract conceptual codes that are called categories to synthesize, to explain and to understand’” (395). GT begins by the researcher closely reading the data line by line and then coding those lines with either pre-established codes, or identifying emerging codes. This approach was useful for conducting focus groups because it allowed me to examine what was happening in each group, and assess both actions and statements of the participants. Grounded Theory was beneficial for trying to assess social action on a collective level, which was what this research project sought to do.

Focus Groups as Method

Focus groups can be understood as group interviews where a moderator facilitates a discussion among a small group of participants. Essentially, they offer the opportunity to listen and learn from people (Morgan). The focus groups used for this study consisted of up to seven current MSU Mankato students per group. Students had to be eighteen years of age or older, but could be undergraduate or graduate status. Each group provided a different perspective on campus activism, providing the opportunity to learn about multiple aspects of campus organizing. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber states that “a focus group is a small discussion focused on a particular topic and facilitated by a researcher” (233). This method allowed me, as the researcher, to focus a small group of students on the specific topic of racial and social justice on the MSU Mankato campus. Additionally, focus groups enable a large amount of data to be collected in a short period of time and are also suitable for qualitative research. As David Morgan points out, “qualitative methods are especially useful for exploration and discovery. Focus groups are frequently

used to learn about either topics or groups of people that are poorly understood” (12). This statement summarizes how effective focus groups and qualitative research are for exploring the use of feminist techniques in student activism. Additionally, a feminist approach to focus groups emphasizes the expressed reality of the group while working within a nonhierarchical setting. It allows the researcher to hear the participant’s language, concepts, and structures for understanding their social world (Wilkinson). This is important to feminist research since it is also intended to promote women’s voices and lived experiences.

In this research, I asked students to engage with and discuss topics that many consider to be sensitive, including race, gender, class, sexuality, and other oppressions. It was important to provide a space where students felt comfortable talking about racial and social justice, among other topics that could have come up in conversation. Hesse-Biber states that “the collective nature of focus groups makes them particularly useful for the research of sensitive topics” (239). This is due to the fact that people with similar experiences are able to share and discuss those instances, especially if the experiences represent instances of discrimination. People who have shared similar experiences may be willing to talk more openly about those experiences, but I also had to account for an initial reluctance for group sharing. To do this, I fostered a sense of respect and comfort for the participants and the information that they shared within the focus group. I reminded them that although the sessions were audio recorded, those recordings would not be shared with anyone outside of the study and that their information would remain confidential. Additionally, recruitment was another important factor for fostering and maintaining comfort and respect. I recruited from formal and informal student groups

from the MSU Mankato campus. It was the goal that each focus group would be a small sample of a larger student group that those students represented. For example, if members of the Gender and Women's Studies club were interested in participating, one of the focus groups would consist of 4-7 members of that group discussing campus issues of racial and social justice. This would account for the students from formal student groups that felt more comfortable sharing within a space with people that they already know and trust.

The themes I used for my focus group questions include feminist pedagogy on anti-racism, student activism and coalition building, and intersectionality. Including questions around feminist pedagogy allowed me to assess the strategies that students used to engage in activism on campus. Organizing techniques such as teach-ins, speak outs, and consciousness-raising groups have roots in feminist pedagogical principles, yet this foundation may not transfer to current campus organizing. Additionally, by asking student about their activism, I was able to explore what factors motivated them to engage in these activities. I inquired about how they see issues of racism, sexism, and class surfacing on campus. I also addressed the theme of coalition building to examine how students work together to address such issues on campus. Finally, I asked them about any partnerships they have created and why, and was interested in exploring how students create "safe spaces" on campus to have these conversations.

I used various strategies for recruitment of the focus groups. First, I reached out to Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) on campus and emailed the president that was listed on the university RSO website. In addition to the RSOs, I recruited from informal student groups. I use the term informal to refer to the students that are not members of an

official RSO, but have been involved in activist activities and meetings involving those activities on the MSU campus. I am aware of at least one informal student group that meets to discuss racism on campus, so I again shared my research project to determine if anyone was interested in participating in one of the focus groups. Finally, I recruited through the various centers on campus, such as the Women's Center, the LGBT center, the Multicultural Center, and OASIS. Flyers were distributed with my contact information. I conducted the focus groups on the Minnesota State University, Mankato campus, in a room in the Centennial Student Union and audio recorded the sessions.

Reflexivity and Positionality

I came to this project with a great deal of interest in and support for activism around issues of racial and social justice. I also came to this project with some skepticism that feminist principles are intentionally incorporated into student action. While these aspects are important, it was much more critical for me to understand my role as a researcher around issues of race, gender, and class. My various identities contributed to my in-group and out-group status that potentially impacted this study. Many issues fall into the categories of racial and social justice and my positionality bears multiple effects. For example, as a white, heterosexual, cis-gender woman who carries additional privilege by being in graduate school, some students may not fully trust that I can capture the concerns raised around race, gender, and class in the focus group. This was a fair question and I worked to maintain an awareness of this as I facilitated and analyzed each group. I wanted to assure the participants that I represented their concerns as accurately and fairly as possible. Various aspects of my identity stated above presented challenges at various times. For example, as a white woman interested in sexism, any white female

students that identify as feminist could feel more comfortable discussing experiences of sexism around me in the focus groups. Those same students could address issues of racism differently with me because I was seen as a safe place to voice concerns around whiteness on campus. On the other hand, students of color could have approached conversations around race differently with me than they would with a researcher of color. I wanted my participants to feel as comfortable as possible in the focus groups so that they shared their lived realities, so that I captured a realistic picture of racial and social justice issues on the Minnesota State University Mankato campus. I worked to make sure that all identities were validated and respected. I also have my own experiences of witnessing racism and sexism on campus and needed to appropriately address those feelings as they surfaced within these conversations.

Data Analysis Technique

I began data analysis by transcribing the audio recordings of all three focus groups. Once transcribed, I coded the data for themes and patterns. In order to look for these themes, I carefully reviewed the records for certain codes within the transcriptions. I used the following codes to analyze the data: feminist principles (FP), coalition building (CB), and intersectionality (I). It was also interesting to see how the codes overlapped and connected among the three focus groups. In addition to these codes, I looked for themes that emerged within and among the groups that provided insight into student activism on campus, including uncommon and outlier themes.

Limitations

In addition to my in-group and out-group status, there are several other possible limitations to this study. Accommodating multiple schedules was a minor limitation. I

alone scheduled the dates and times for the three focus groups. I did lose some potential participants because of conflicting schedules. Additionally, my data does not symbolize a representative sample of students. I have combined data from all three focus groups, resulting in a total of 13 people, making it difficult to apply the findings campus-wide and claim a representational study. A final limiting factor is the time that I needed to conduct these focus groups. I had to complete three sessions by the end of January, which meant that my recruitment had to happen quickly and at the beginning of the spring semester. This was a challenge because students were settling into their classes and may not have been in the mindset to participate in such research.

Chapter 4: Results

In the following chapter, I will discuss the results of the focus groups and delineate common themes. Using direct quotes from focus group participants and a grounded theory framework for analysis and interpretation, I discuss the various strategies students use for campus activism. Scholars and social justice practitioners report that building diverse, inclusive, feminist spaces for activism of racial and social justice result in more effective organizing around issues (Albrecht & Brewer 1990, Crass 2013). Student activism on the Minnesota State University, Mankato campus led me to inquire about what strategies and organizing techniques were used by students when addressing issues of racial and social justice.

Originally, I expected that students would not be intentional in using feminist principles in their racial and social justice organizing, but that feminist principles would exist in their activities. I also expected that coalition building and intersectionality would play integral roles in student activism. This chapter presents the findings of my analysis for the three focus groups that I conducted on the MSU campus. In this chapter, I discuss the feminist principles that emerged as part of student activism on campus, as well as how these students approach coalition building and incorporate theories of intersectionality into their activism. To ensure confidentiality, no names of students will be used in this discussion. The three main coding terms I used for analyzing focus groups are 1) student organizing, 2) coalition building, and 3) intersectionality. These themes also align with the themes of the research questions. Since this study seeks to determine the feminist strategies and techniques that may influence and shape student activism, these

three themes will be analyzed and interpreted for feminist strategies using a grounded theory approach.

Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is rooted in sociology and was developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the late 1960s. Judith Wuest summarizes grounded theory as “a method of uncovering the basic social and structural processes of a situation at both the symbolic and interactional levels” (Wuest, 127). In other words, grounded theory allows a researcher to understand the perspectives of participants, while also examining the world in which the participants make meaning of their lived experiences. Additionally, grounded theory allows for the researcher to represent all of the knowledges and experiences of those who participate in the study (Clarke). As a feminist research method, grounded theory allows women to be knowers and validates their experiences as legitimate sources of knowledge (Wuest).

Focus Group Methodology

Focus groups are defined as “an informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics” (Wilkinson, “A Feminist Method” 221). Generally, focus groups are small, containing five to ten people, and are conducted like interviews. Researchers that utilize such groups host multiple sessions and then analyze the qualitative data for results. The use of focus groups as a method of research has grown in recent years. Individual interviews have often been used to gather qualitative data, but gathering several people together to discuss an issue offers insights into the lived experiences of participants, and a chance to create grounded theory based on these experiences. Focus groups also allow for participants to interact with and challenge each other, creating a

unique opportunity to collect this type of data not typically available in one-on-one interviews, adding depth and richness to the data collected (Wilkinson). Focus groups are also beneficial to feminist research. For example, Sue Wilkinson states that “focus groups enable feminist research to be ‘naturalistic’ insofar as they mirror the processes of communication in everyday interaction” (“A Feminist Method” 227).

The use of focus groups also gained popularity among feminist researchers. Jennie Munday points out that many feminist researchers argue that focus groups feminist researchers address feminist praxis, highlighting research addressing:

“The experiences and empowerment of marginalized groups, rejection of essentialism and exploration of the social as constructed rather than given, consideration of the collective as opposed to individual nature of social life, contextualization of data, and addressing the power inequalities that exist between the researcher and researched” (Munday 233).

This study seeks to examine several components Munday mentions in her statement, including the experiences and empowerment of marginalized groups, exploration of the social as constructed, and the consideration of the collective rather than the individual. While focus groups have many benefits, they also include some challenges. Possible limitations include: difficulty summarizing and interpreting the open-ended responses, the small sample size limits the ability of the researcher to generalize the data to larger populations, and focus group responses could be dominated by more talkative members (Stewart and Shamdasani). Despite these potential limitations, focus groups remain a popular research method. However, no research process is devoid of faults and this method is most suitable for this research study.

Study Methodology

Data Collection

The data collection phase of this study was conducted over a period of three consecutive days in January 2016. Twelve RSO's were identified from the MSU multicultural student group webpage for recruitment for this project. Initially, it was the intent of this research to conduct two focus groups with formal RSOs and one with students not associated with a formal campus RSO. Recruitment was conducted through various techniques, including emails to RSO presidents listed on the university student organization website, direct emails to students engaged in campus activism, direct appeals to undergraduate students in lower level GWS courses through GWS faculty members and Graduate Teaching Assistants, and distributing flyers, which were placed in the Women's Center, LGBT Center, OASIS office, and the Multicultural Affairs office. The makeup of the focus groups reflected the recruitment strategies and resulted in a diverse sample of students. One focus group represented a formal student RSO, the other two consisted of students not affiliated with a formal RSO. In total, there were 13 participants, with two leaving early, resulting in 11 participants who reported demographic information. Six participants identified as white or European American, one identified as Latina, and three identified as Black or African American. There were nine women and one man. Ages ranged from 21-28 and represented eight upper-level undergraduate students and two graduate students. Participants were not offered any compensation for their participation in this research project. As each session began, participants were notified of their rights as human research subjects. Additionally, each

individual signed consent forms and agreed to keep the discussion confidential. Each focus group was audio recorded.

As the graduate student principle investigator, I was the only facilitator for each focus group. I created a field note worksheet to aid in capturing observational notes and themes, which included the list of questions (please see Appendix A for focus group questions). Focus groups lasted from forty-five minutes to ninety-five minutes. I served as a facilitator of the conversation, allowing for individuals to freely respond to each question and each other. With participant's consent, I transcribed each audio recording using a tape recorder that was borrowed from the University library and transcription software.

Focus group #1 was the smallest of this study and was held in the student union. This group represented non-formal student groups and were active in racial and social justice organizing on campus. This group was particularly interested in issues of racism on campus. Focus group #2 was also held in the student union. This focus group represented a Minnesota State University Recognized Student Organization and was concerned about safety on campus, sexism, and diversity. All participants at the meeting were members of the RSO. The energy of the second group was one of familiarity and comfort. It seems that members felt comfortable sharing personal information with the group since they all knew each other. The participants of this group were all undergraduate students, but most of them are upper level students and will graduate in May of 2016. Topics of racism, sexism, and classism came up in this discussion. Social media came up the most in this group. It appears to be a significant place for witnessing and experiencing racism and sexism on the MSU campus, specifically social media apps

such as Yik Yak and Snapchat. Being an RSO, this group approached its activism through and within the structure and policies of the university. This group was the most homogenous in terms of race and gender. While mostly white and all female identified, there was one woman of color that was a part of the initial discussion, she left the group early.

The third focus group was comprised of five participants. Not all of the participants were as familiar with each other as the second group, but the members did seem to at least be acquaintances. However, this did not appear to impact the information that the group shared. Members of this group were concerned with campus racism, aftey, and visibility. They also shared personal experiences with racism on the MSU campus. This focus group had a radical, anti-institutional approach to their social justice organizing. This focus group was the most diverse, representing various ages, races, and genders. Additionally, this group contained graduate students, which provides a different perspective and experience when it comes to student organizing.

Data Analysis

The transcription process was time intensive and took twenty-five hours to complete. In order to maintain accurate data, all transcripts were thoroughly examined by me, the graduate student principle investigator, and I analyzed each transcript using the same process. Typed transcripts were hand-coded and analyzed for the three themes of 1) feminist pedagogical strategies, 2) coalition building, and 3) intersectionality. I did not use any computerized software for data analysis. The data was analyzed using the themes of: student organizing, coalition building, and intersectionality, and was organized by code. Additionally, I found that several new themes emerged from data analysis,

including exhaustion, safety, and a false sense of diversity on campus. The following discussion represents the final result of the coding process, including common and emergent themes.

Scope of Study

The results of this study are the outcome of the confidentiality offered to focus group participants. I asked students to provide examples of their lived experiences on campus through their organizing. I also reiterated that no names would be used in the reporting of this data. Minnesota State University, Mankato is a small institution, making it even more important to ensure participant confidentiality.

Findings on the Emergence of Issues of Race, Gender, and Class on Campus

All of the focus groups started with the same question: how do you see race, gender, and class playing out on the MSU campus? This question was designed to get the participants thinking about the ways in which they witness and/or experience issues of racism, sexism, or classism on campus. I found that students' level of engagement with activism is affected by how often they encounter oppression. The most common way students experienced racism was through every day microaggressions, which can be defined as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (Sue, et al 271). One student started the session by saying "*this is a pretty racist campus.*" Another participant simply said "*it's a mess, to be honest.*" Other comments included: "*they [racism, sexism] are everywhere...they just kind of come out of nowhere*" referring to the ways in which

students experience various microaggressions on campus. Another student stated *“It’s very sexist as well...especially pertaining to rape culture.”*

Feminist Strategies of Student Organizing

In order to discover the feminist strategies students use in their activist organizing on campus, I asked the following questions about student organizing in general: how do you go about organizing on campus around race, class, and gender, and do you try to develop partnerships to do your organizing? The research question that guides this section of analysis is: what strategies are used by students organizing around racial and social justice? An objective of feminist activism is to create social change, in addition to an equitable social structure for everyone (Bromley). Many of the activities that the students engaged in represent these objectives, and therefore, are classified as feminist strategies of student organizing. Feminist strategies manifested in the following three ways: 1) feminist pedagogy, 2) consciousness-raising, and 3) radical feminism (hooks, Echols).

Feminist Pedagogy

Feminist pedagogy, which Bernice Malka Fisher defines as “teaching that engages students in political discussion of gender justice” (44), while also being collaborative, centers the experiences of marginalized individuals and questions oppressive power relations (Fisher). One participant described an example of direct action to address racist and sexist behavior of a professor.

“We’re like, ok no, this is a problem and we got together, we hand wrote letters...and we had a conversation with [a university official], nothing got

done so it continued. So then we decided that we were going to organize a walkout...with some other people that were feeling the same way.”

Similarly, another student discussed her general style of organizing:

“So as far as simple organization, I have to be in contact with a whole bunch of people and there are so many offices in this school...and it’s just combining a whole bunch of information and then feeding it back to the students”

Both of these examples illustrate the importance of collaboration that seeks to question and challenge institutional racism and power. In the first example, direct actions such as letter writing and in-person conversations led to a larger, unified effort of a walk out to express opposition to racism in the classroom. In conjunction with the walkout, students approached organizing from a collaborative perspective. In the second example, the student employs a feminist strategy of including various people in the activism, representing students and university official’s involvement.

Consciousness – Raising

Another foundational feminist strategy of activism, consciousness-raising, also emerged from group dialogue. Consciousness-raising can be understood as “a model for generating knowledge from the authority of individual women’s experience” (Kolmar & Bartkowski 55). Shifts in awareness and examining power relations are also aspects of consciousness-raising (Fisher). Looking to create a shift in awareness, one participant asked:

“How can we create specific programming and make sure the students who need it, i.e. white students, get funneled into those programming...can we create a

curriculum that students have to go through when they come here to the university?”

In a similar vein of addressing issues, one participant said:

“I am very opinionated and I do address it whether people like it or not...we need to talk about this stuff. And teaching other people, cause I can't do it by myself...if they're thinking about it, if it's getting brought up, that's a good thing, you know. And I will not apologize for being oppressed, I will not apologize for getting angry, you know, and I will talk about it”

Another participant shared *“I just talk to people...I start having conversations with people...we start discussing ad I hear them out and I just create personal connection.”* Not expecting people to agree with one another, but still holding space for constructive dialogue around racial and social justice is a tool of feminist pedagogy. Students find opportunities for such conversations in various places, including on campus and off campus in the community. All of these examples seek to shift the awareness of individuals, or raise consciousness.

Radical Activism

A final example of feminist strategies in student organizing on the MSU campus was the interest in radical forms of activism and social change. In this study, I use a definition of radical as a strategy for imagining a new social order, one that does not subordinate women or any minority (Weedon). This is a helpful frame when there is a desire to completely change a system or social institution. One student stated that *“we're not allowed to be as radical as we want to be”* indicating that any act of resistance designed to change the structure of the institution is not supported. In trying to work

within people's desires to try to create change within the institution, the student tells people *"to be as radical as they need to be...because that is the only way in which you can actually address the issues that you would need to, without really limiting yourself and diluting it."* Here the student expresses an interest in pushing through traditional institutional avenues to create social change. Similarly, another participant stated:

"I think in some ways it's become more apparent to me as we hit those roadblocks and stuff, that the university may in some way intentionally or unintentionally be framing what we can be social justice-y on that stuff. I have...connections to the need for safer dorms and awareness of sexual assault in dorms. And I was talking to a friend about it and he said well why aren't you doing anything about it? And I'm like, we've put our blood, sweat, and tears literally into stuff and the university shut it down"

In each example, students engaged in activism that challenged the status quo, and could result in institutional change. They are challenging the power dynamics, seeking to disrupt the routine ways of how things are done. Their actions are not met with support and students experience a sense of retribution for pursuing change in such a manner. The critical finding here is that while attempts at radical change are stifled, leading students to figure out other ways to bring about institutional change, minority students must find coping mechanisms to survive the continued experiences of the intersections of racism and sexism on campus.

Coalition Building

Coalition building is an important aspect to student organizing at MSU. Rarely does a social justice issue affect only one group of people, therefore, it becomes critical

to bring numerous groups together to work for social change. To understand what feminist strategies emerge in coalitional organizing, the research question guiding this section is: how do students utilize coalition practices to organize on campus? Coalitions are integral to activism and many feminist scholars provide critical thoughts on how coalitions should form and function to be able to create social change. The question asked in this section sought to understand if students try to develop partnerships, how they create “safe” space to address issues on campus. All members of the focus groups expressed active intent to develop partnerships, at the same time, they expressed mixed feelings on the effectiveness of those partnerships. For example, one participant answered “*I would say I absolutely do*” and then went on to share:

“And I understand the power of group effort, but I also understand the power of the individual but you need both because the world is full of opposites...so yes, I try very hard to involve as many people from as many different backgrounds or groups that I can, as long as we have the same goal in mind”

Another participant responded “*yes, because when we hit those roadblocks...having more people involved makes it seem like a bigger issue.*” Working to include as many different perspectives as possible within a coalition space to create social change is a feminist strategy.

Another feminist principle within the strategy of coalition building is bringing together people with different perspectives to organize and work for the same goal, which materialized from all three focus groups. One participant stated that:

“It’s so important to build those connections between groups and RSOs because if you guys have an even somewhat common goal, it’s going to help your

message reach even more people” while another student stated “I would love to focus on Black specific issues. That doesn’t mean I’m not here for any other issues...politically, I’m there for you, it just means that I would love to work on the types of problems that I faced as a Black woman.”

These statements, in addition to the statement in the previous section illustrate the feminist strategy of bringing various groups together; validating that we all bring our own perspective to the work, yet validating that idea that different groups can work together for a common goal. The conversations around collaborating with diverse groups of people led some members of the focus group to discuss their problematic experiences with allies.

The concept of allies is an important one in terms of working for social justice, and there is no universal definition or agreement on the definition. But, as discussed in the literature review, and supported by data collected in focus groups, a person’s behavior, in addition to their words, demonstrates the role of an ally (Case). For example, one participant states:

“It’s frustrating, particularly when you have allies that are not Black, especially when the allies are white. So they often take over the conversation, they often try to dictate the agenda of the type of work that you want to do.”

This student points out the need for allies to understand their roles in social justice organizing. White allies in the fight for racial justice must be aware of their role in such organizing work and ensure that they are not the ones at the center of the work.

Similarly, another participant said:

“You can be the most progressive ally in the world. You can be a progressive feminist, but you will never understand, as an ally, what it’s like to be in the shoes of that...but understand where they’re coming from and listen and don’t try to make it your own struggle.”

Listening and centering the lived experiences of marginalized people are examples of supports that allies can offer in the organizing process. Participants in the focus groups are working to address concerns of campus safety, racism, sexism, and diversity and this work is stronger when various people work together to address such topics. Students experience various levels of support from allies on campus. Depending on the level of support in these relationships, it can shape the effectiveness of student organizing. Another participant connected allyship and solidarity in the work of racial and social justice by stating:

“Those who are willing to do the work with you are not necessarily the best fit for you. And then how do you go about, do you actually forgo one of the few possible allies that you have and just do that shit on your own, or do you stick with them? And how do you establish boundaries to? You have to define what solidarity means in this context and how you can use your solidarity. I think people think solidarity is you express it verbally without action or you just show up. And I feel like solidarity entails more than that. It’s more complex than just showing up and saying I support you.”

This student highlights the complexity of working across diversity when engaging in activism, and the importance of the actions that people put into organizing. It is important

for allies to offer more than words of encouragement, those words should translate into actions of support if allies are to truly stand in solidarity.

Intersectionality

The theory of intersectionality is critical to feminist praxis. An analytic framework developed by feminist legal scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw, it centers and creates space for the lived experiences of marginalized groups. Intersectionality as an analytical lens is important in student activism because the lives of marginalized students should serve as the center of organizing on campus. The research question guiding this section is: how does intersectionality show up in organizing spaces on campus? The participants of the three focus groups demonstrated an awareness of the concept and its significance in organizing, especially when they discussed coalitions, allies, and accountability.

When asked “why do you think it is important to be an activist for issues of race, gender, and class on this campus” a participant responded with “*it’s about taking everybody, everybody’s needs and using my skills and assets to put it out there on the table and say OK, what are we going to do with this now?*” Acknowledging that the needs of everyone matters when organizing around an issue demonstrates the importance of intersectionality within this person’s notion of student organizing. She also stated that “*a leader is not the individual to be seen simply as the individual, they are still a human being, they are still just a person, but they are the representation of people as a whole.*” Humanizing people is another component of feminist pedagogy (Fisher) that can transfer into organizing. Humanizing people’s lived experiences, validating the perspectives from such experiences can cultivate a more diverse organizing space. Another participant

stated that “*white folks need to know they have a horse in this race too and that it’s...detrimental for them if those issues are not addressed.*” The student points the interconnectedness of social justice issues, and that racism is not just an issue to be addressed by people of color. Intersectionality calls attention to the importance of centering oppressed viewpoints while also acknowledging the importance of including all perspectives. The participant’s awareness of intersectionality contributes to their awareness of the need to include various standpoints within campus organizing.

Institutional Obstacles

The final research question I included in the study was: how do students navigate around institutional constraints? While the degree of frustration with the institution varied, all of the participants discussed having to navigate within institutional constraints when trying to organize on campus. Retaliation was a main theme that emerges from the focus group. One student commented:

“How can you even decide to do the work that needs to be done to make this university a bit, less racist...if you know you’re going to be retaliated against? And that puts your education, if you work for the school, your employment in jeopardy”

Similarly, another participant stated:

“Last year, you could only organize so much when you worked for a certain department. And even if you’re just a regular student, they kind of covertly, I use that term loosely, put you on a list. You know it’s kind of like a watch out list...so it’s very possible to organize, it’s just, are you prepared to deal with the consequences.”

Learning to navigate around institutional retribution creates stress and pressure on students that are experiencing other constant struggles on campus. Another participant agreed that there are consequences for organizing and goes on to describe the power dynamics involved in some of the institutional constraints by saying:

“You have to look at the power dynamics, you know what I mean, when you have white people in power that don’t like what you’re saying, it’s very possible for them to cut off any sort of opportunity that you might have for livelihood. And being a college student, we’re already poor, we already can’t afford to be in college. So when you’re saying OK, I’m going to do this because it’s right but then you cut off all chances of getting a job or getting admitted into grad school or getting a GA position, things you need in order to afford college, and you cut that because you want to stand up for what’s right, it’s a really hard choice.”

It is a significant finding that students feel blacklisted or barred from economic and academic supports for engaging in student activism around racism on campus. Students are left with choosing between protesting to make the campus more inclusive or navigating a hostile educational environment. While there was agreement that students experienced backlash, such as being targeted and losing out on job opportunities for engaging in particular activist activities, I found competing opinions and experiences regarding ease of working within the structure of the institution. For example, one participant stated:

“The actual organizing of the event is fairly easy. There’s a lot of us motivated to go ahead and put on those events. But, it’s been discussed; the difficult part is

getting people interested in wanting to come to those events. We have a lot of support here too by faculty members, so it is fairly easy to put on the events.”

Comparably, another participant added:

“I would definitely agree with that, I think we have a lot of opportunities to organize things. The university makes it easy to schedule events, rooms, spaces. They’re pretty flexible in terms of what you can do. I’ve never run into an issue where they’re like you can’t do that unless it’s for something extremely controversial...it can still be kind of a hassle to organize things, but I think the opportunities are there and that’s one thing that the college campus does allow us to do...but I can see someone who doesn’t know how to navigate the system, doesn’t have mentorship, someone who hasn’t had access to the information, where do you even start? So if someone has a great idea, but they’re not part of anything or don’t know people that can help them, they’re not going to get anything accomplished.”

This participant is a member of an official RSO on campus, which possesses access to university resources such as meeting rooms and event space. In comparison with other participants’ experiences, students that do not belong to an RSO, this student feels that organizing is easy to accomplish, but only with the knowledge and access to the university system. Students must conform to and operate within the policies of the university to address campus injustices. Yet there are still limits to the effectiveness of working within established guidelines. Discussion emerged about the failure of an exploratory initiative to address sexual assault awareness on campus and in residential

dormitories. As the tentative project moved forward, students experienced institutional constraints. One student stated:

“In light of the initiative, it does kind of seem that if you are going to run into obstacles, you’ll most likely be told to stop what you’re doing...because even though we do have a lot of support, there are still some areas, like you said, when it’s too controversial.”

A final obstacle that students face is with the need to be a Recognized Student Organization on campus to be able to create change on campus. This relates to a larger structural issue of university policies, which a student comments:

“You have different groups, they can’t really intermingle. So maybe creating that space or restructuring how student organizations form. Maybe changing the process, maybe recognizing that informal student groups do exist and then allowing them to actually accomplish things. So you can’t really reserve a space on this campus if you’re not an RSO, so if you’re like-minded students who got together and wanted to do some political work on campus, you have to get certified as a recognized group and then you probably don’t want that cause that means that you’ll have an advisor who will limit the type of work that you can do.”

I found that students face various institutional impediments when organizing around issues of racial and social justice on campus. While experiences differed regarding the ability to move through the challenges, the focus groups expressed an inability to fully engage in activist activities when such activities were deemed too controversial by the institution. Participants expressed their belief that activities that

directly addressed issues of racism and sexism on campus are a particular target of suppression. For example, some participants that were concerned about campus sexual assault wanted to pursue an on campus initiative to raise awareness of sexual assault within the university dorms. This initiative was not met with support and students were not encouraged to continue with their planning. One participant stated: *“it does kind of seem that if you are going to run into obstacles, you’ll most likely be told to stop what you’re doing...even when we do have a lot of support, there are still some areas, like you said, when it’s too controversial.”* In this situation, student activists had little power to fully engage in organizing around campus sexual assault and had to abandon that particular project.

Concluding Questions

I ended each focus group concluded with questions intended to direct participants to a broader social outlook. The final question was: if you had a magic wand, what message would you have people on campus understand that they don’t now? On the surface, this question can appear frivolous, yet the answers were anything but flippant. Participants utilized this opportunity to highlight serious issues that need further attention on campus. Answers ranged from specific issues such as: safety, debunking the myth of reverse racism, and understanding white privilege, to more abstract ideas such as: *“the value of differences,” “the history of what it means to be Black in America”, “dismantle the systems that oppress us,” “a better sense of empathy,”* and that *“the world does not revolve around you”* Finally, one participant stated

“If I had a magic wand and I really could just wave it over the whole campus, I would have every faculty, staff, student, even people who were visiting, feel what

I feel every single day. Cause I felt like, if they really felt it, their hearts would just sink...and for them to look around at all of us ethnically diverse people and say, I didn't get it, but I do now."

This statement summarizes the sentiment from all participants. The false sense of diversity that is portrayed on campus is harmful to all students, yet serves as motivation for student activism at MSU. Feminist techniques such as consciousness-raising, uncomfortable coalition, and intersectionality can create a space for empathy and social justice on the MSU campus.

Emergent Themes

In addition to the themes that guided the study, three themes emerged, including 1) exhaustion, 2) safety, and 3) a false sense of campus diversity. These themes also display feminist strategies when employed in the frame of social justice and student activism.

Given the obstacles students face when organizing on campus, it is expected that many of them experience exhaustion and burn out. When discussing strategies for motivating other students to engage in campus activism, one participant stated:

I refer to people who will say, yep, I'm down, but then they don't show up, I refer to those people as energy suckers. They will literally take everything that I have and it's like, oh yeah, this is really great, thank you, da da da da da, but then they don't do anything with it. And now I'm here, expunged and I have nothing to show for it. And that's where the exhaustion and frustration and anger comes from"

The lack of support from peers at times and the feeling that one is responsible for change is one type of exhaustion that participants discussed.

The notion of safety came up in the context of coalition space. The feminist scholar and activist, Bernice Johnson Reagon, argues that coalition spaces are not meant to be safe or comfortable (Reagon). Such spaces are meant to be uncomfortable, to be a place of agitation that propels people to reflect on their biases and move toward social change.

“Someone was saying it is exhausting doing this kind of work, they were speaking in terms of educating people about racial issues, but it is exhausting to get people to open their eyes and realize that everything they’ve been taught their whole lives is not how things are.”

Sharing a similar sentiment, another participant discusses the lack of resources for reporting and confronting racism within the institution, stating:

“So you put all your effort into recruiting students of color, but you don’t put any mechanisms in place to make sure that these students succeed. That is, they experience racism in the classroom...they don’t have any resources...the thing that gets me is that as a student of color, I’m not, I don’t know the process to deal with racism. If it’s a professor, then who do I talk to?...and it’s fucking difficult, sorry for swearing, it’s really difficult, like, and it’s exhausting.”

This participant’s statement highlights another experience of exhaustion, navigating a system that does not support students of color. Exhaustion is also experienced through established partnerships when organizing. In discussing partnerships with allies, one student stated *“so even when you’re organized, we have to deal with very*

exhausting types of allies. And then you also have to deal with the limitation that is put on you.” In the same session, another participant followed that comment by saying:

“Definitely, I like the word you used there, exhausting. It’s exhausting to explain to allies and then those that are anti-Black or pure racist, of what you’re trying to accomplish. It takes so much out of you.” The feminist strategy of self-care (hooks) is a strategy that can address the exhaustion and burn out that student activists are experiencing. Students take up self-care when they choose to take a break from being the constant teacher about racism and sexism.

The notion of safety appeared in each focus group as well, but in varying contexts. I initially approached the topic of safety from the perspective that Bernice Johnson Reagon offers; the idea that organizing spaces are not meant to be safe or comfortable. What I found in this study was that safety transpired in various ways for participants, including personal safety, safety within organizing spaces, and protection from retaliation. Additionally, participants expressed safety in terms of a lack of resources and support when reporting experiences of racism and sexism, but also in the context of feeling safe on campus, or feeling safe within organizing spaces, or even feeling safe to be able to organize without retaliation. When discussing the course of action for reporting racism by professors, one participant stated *“I don’t have a safety net at all and that is a problem.”* Similarly, another participant stated *“I honestly don’t know how to speak freely in front of everybody. You just can’t. You can’t tell people everything.”*

Personal safety was another issue expressed among the focus groups. When a participant was asked how she addressed racism on campus, she said: *“I hate being in a*

position where it's dangerous to be me, so I approach these issues of differences with extreme hesitation that can be seen in my language." Another participant used the example of recent campus meetings with representatives from administration to highlight concerns of personal safety. She stated:

"They're finding that people don't feel safe in the dorms. Students of color, international students of color, LGBT students, female students, female identified students, it came off that they seemed to refuse to realize or refuse to accept that there are students that are fearing for their lives... "I just wish it was like truly safe for everyone that is suffering from having to fear here, cause that's fucking bullshit that kids have to feel like they're afraid here."

This student directly speaks to the lack of personal safety for students on the MSU campus, particularly marginalized students. This finding implies that student safety is not a high priority for university administration.

While notions of safety within organizing spaces emerged, there was a point in which a participant in the second focus group shared:

"I think it's difficult to create a safe space, especially in any type of...social justice setting, because you're always going to upset someone and I think that's part of the territory that you are one. But if anything, I think it makes all of us better because we have to learn how to navigate those experiences and we have to learn how to be uncomfortable."

Students are experiencing concerns around personal safety, but also realize that the coalition spaces they use to organize for social justice will be uncomfortable, and some accept that.

Participants were directly asked how they created spaces where they felt free to talk about racism and sexism on campus. In examining the notion of “safe” space further, it is clear that there are limitations and advantages when it comes to activism. Some feminist scholars encourage people to push the limits of comfort within organizing spaces, in order to create social change (Reagon). Pushing through discomfort and celebrating differences leads to honest conversations about people’s lived experiences, creating opportunities to address issues from various angles to benefit more people. The data show that “safe” spaces can mean more than just a physical location. Some students expressed that safe space is about the people: *“you really have to find that group of people that are willing to learn and make mistakes and hold themselves accountable.”* Another participant discussed the notion of safety within the classroom and shared:

“I would also say that weird, crazy honesty is super important because I’ve been...in setting where I’ve had certain feelings about a professor and they’ve been apparently the complete opposite of what a lot of other people have experienced, and so I felt comfortable sharing and then further along in the semester witnessed things that were completely manipulative of a situation in order to...get a rise out of the students and to cause problems and it completely changed my thoughts on things and it no longer makes me feel comfortable sharing because I felt like I was duped into feeling comfortable.”

Often times, advocates of feminist pedagogy support the creation of classroom space that feels safe for students to engage with course material and express their ideas. Perhaps the desire to have the classroom as a “safe” space is another way that feminist principles emerge on campus.

Visibility becomes an aspect of creating “safe” spaces. It can be difficult for minority students to even feel welcome and know there is an opportunity for holding such conversations. One student talked about the visibility of physical space:

“One of the things I absolutely hate about this campus in particular...is that they scream diversity yet they stick the multicultural center far back and away. You would never know it was here unless there were students that were actually in there, and that would tell you, hey, there’s a place we can hang out. I hate that cause it shows you what the campus really cares about...so when you talk about creating a way in a space, it has to be visible. Because out of sight, out of mind, that is this campus’ mentality...unless you see it, you can’t, you just can’t create a space...so I believe the only way you can create a space and a venue and an avenue for...courageous conversations...is that it has to be visible.”

In agreement, another participant added: *“yeah, visible and it has to be ongoing.”*

One explanation for this lack of visible space is that the spaces that do exist are not promoted, or presented as spaces for minority students. Another participant shared:

“I feel like making the spaces that are designated a safe space as actually safe. So the MCC, is it safe for students in the sense that that’s a place they could fully express themselves in terms of their ideas and they can actually voice concerns? No, it really isn’t...and you can’t really do anything about it because you can’t say anything...so there’s really no safe space on this campus.”

There are spaces where safety is important and people need it to start the conversation. But once people are in organizing spaces, safety becomes less important and the work is the priority. Limits of “safe” spaces foster inauthentic conversations about racist and sexist experiences that students are dealing with on the MSU campus. In other words, the need to feel safe within a space hinders what people share, or think, about their experiences, therefore limiting the change that can be created from that space. Expecting organizing spaces to be safe confines the work that can be done. Additionally, limitations arise if one group’s need for safety defines the work space and overtakes the goal of social change.

Experiencing Diversity on Campus

A final theme that emerged in the focus groups relates to students experiencing a false sense of diversity on the MSU campus. Students from all three focus groups discussed that the university promotes diversity as a recruitment tool, but diverse students are not supported on the campus once they are here. One student stated:

“I think that the campus tries to pride itself on being diverse. I know we’ve got a lot diversity events, clubs, that kind of thing, but when it actually comes to engaging students that aren’t in those groups, that aren’t participating in those clubs...are you really benefiting from those things?...It’s weird because this is a school that prides itself on being diverse and having diversity, but it doesn’t always feel that way when you’re actually here.”

Similarly, another participant shared:

“yeah, they’re trying to be more inclusive and diverse, but they’re doing it with protecting white student’s feelings...the fact that you’re saying white people

experience racism is backwards, or they think prejudice and racism is the same thing.”

Discussion also centered around attempts by the university to promote campus diversity, and how it fails to represent the actual demographics of the campus. The specific example of diversity photo shoots that utilize current students to promote diversity was also brought up in conversation. A participant who was involved in one of the photo shoots shared: *“We weren’t actually hanging out on campus, we were selected for scenarios, so you two walk together, you two stand here and these people are going to be in the foreground. It was kind of this falsified diverse photo shoot.”* In addition to photo shoots, the university website was discussed as a promotion of false diversity. A participant said: *“If you’re going to use my brown face to sell this ridiculous dream of diversity, I expect something out of it.”* Another participant followed up by saying: *“They did a good job on the website, I’m not going to lie...I would actually believe this place is pretty multicultural aware and diverse as well.”* The problem with selling a false sense of diversity to minority students is that it creates a false sense of support for their arrival, effects retention, leaves them with no supports while they are here, and contributes to the daily occurrence of racism.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This thesis demonstrates the strategies that students employ to engage in activism around racial and social justice on the Minnesota State University, Mankato campus. I argue that feminist principles of organizing are present in the techniques of student activism. The strategies that students use to organize their efforts to create social change are a central aspect of student activism. Understanding these techniques and exploring the impact on college campuses grows knowledge regarding social change within universities. This thesis demonstrates that feminist principles of organizing are present in student activism on the MSU campus. This chapter summarizes this thesis research study, discusses the methods used for data collection and analysis, examines implications for future research related to this study, and offers recommendations to facilitate student activism.

Overall, I learned that feminist organizing principles were incorporated into student activism on campus. Many times, there are negative associations with feminism, which discourages people from associating with it. This thesis demonstrated the ways in which student activists include direct and indirect strategies for campus engagement addressing racial and social justice issues. Results show that students do use feminist strategies when organizing on the MSU campus, because, as demonstrated in this research study, they use these techniques to create social change, a core principle of feminist organizing.

The rise in student activism across college campuses nationally has brought attention to the importance of such activism. Students engage in such activities to protest specific issues or the university itself. Recently, students have been gathering to protest

the culture of racism and violence on campuses. At the University of Missouri, students protested continued acts of racism, leading to the resignation of the University President, while also sparking actions at other institutions in Nebraska, Oregon, Massachusetts, Illinois, Kansas, and Minnesota (Pauly and Andrews). These acts of solidarity illustrate the prevalence of racism on college campuses and serve as a call to action to transform university settings. These national issues connected locally to Mankato. MSU participated in multiple solidarity demonstrations, including a rally in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and a speak-out in support of the students at the University of Missouri.

Using a variety of feminist strategies, such as feminist pedagogy, consciousness-raising, and radical feminism, students strive to address issues of racism and sexism on campus. Feminist pedagogical practices emerged in student organizing because they sought to center the experiences of marginalized students, embrace collaboration, and work to create social change. Direct actions such as letter writing and staging a walkout were used to bring awareness to instances of racism and sexism.

Coalition building was another component to student activism. I found that a majority of the participants of this study approached organizing with intentions to create partnerships. While the result of such partnerships varied, some successful and some not as successful, collaboration was still valued. Participants also recognized the significance of coalescing with people that have different perspectives, but want to reach the same goal. Allies are also an element in coalition building. The perspectives toward allies varied among participants. Some voiced frustration when dealing with well-intentioned white people who could not see past their privilege, while others found it challenging to

foster collaborations that were more than just a cultural and social gathering. Although ally experiences varied, there was consensus around the need to engage with allies to further the goal of campus social change.

The participants of this study were aware of the importance of intersectionality and worked to incorporate that framework into their organizing. Valuing differences and creating partnerships were included in initial activist strategies. Students in this study also worked to center the lived experiences of marginalized individuals as an approach to their organizing efforts.

This study also discovered that institutional obstacles play a critical role in student activism. Participants that engaged in racial and social justice activism experienced retaliation from various campus outlets. Some students felt that their economic security was threatened if they organized too much, including a lack of job opportunities. Students also felt that their ability to organize was often thwarted, especially if they were addressing controversial topics. The rules of navigating the university system are not made clear to everyone, and students reported having to maneuver through unexpected obstacles that hindered their ability to organize. Sometimes, they were directed to completely disengage from a project, with no recourse for addressing it later.

Three additional themes of exhaustion, safety, and a false sense of diversity on campus emerged from this study. First, exhaustion was common among all participants in each focus group. Students described feeling this way because they are constantly dealing with instances of racism and sexism, with no support or resources for addressing the problems. Safety was another theme that emerged from this study. Referring to personal and spatial safety, participants expressed a lack of safety on campus. Students do not feel

secure enough on campus to be themselves. Some felt it was even dangerous to express their whole identities on campus. This lack of personal safety transitioned into living spaces and participant expressed their feelings of insecurity in living spaces, such as campus dorms. Finally, students felt there was no space where they could speak freely and organize. While feelings of safety in coalition spaces are not necessarily priority, it is important for students to feel secure in being on campus. The final theme that emerged from this study was a false sense of campus diversity. Students reported that although diversity is marketed to students, it does not exist once they are here. This included a false representation of the students that are here, and deficiencies in the resources provided to marginalized students. Fear of retaliation and lack of safety would typically deter people from pursuing change, yet the participants in this study exemplify strength and resilience.

Conducting focus groups with students who may or may not have an affiliation with feminism was insightful. It helped me understand the ways in which feminist strategies are used within social settings. As a department, Gender and Women's Studies is a relatively new addition to the university, with classes and programs beginning in the 1970s. But the strategies and principles of the field are not new to organizing spaces. Given these results, future research can be conducted with students enrolled in Gender and Women's Studies (GWS) programs specifically. My study worked with students from various programs engaged in racial and social justice activism on campus. It would be interesting to explore how GWS students use feminist principles for organizing and how they view the use of such techniques. Does it make a difference if students are taught in a feminist classroom and experience activism as part of course pedagogy?

Additionally, conducting more focus groups and including surveys could add to the depth of the analysis and understanding of student's perceptions as to the importance of incorporating feminist principles in student activism. This could also reduce the negative association of the "feminist" label.

Additionally, the majority of participants in this study were undergraduate students. Recognizing the high number of upper-level undergraduate and graduate students participating in this study, I wonder how the activism of new undergraduate students presents itself on the MSU campus. Further research can be done specifically with freshman and sophomore students to examine their awareness of campus activism, their level of engagement with social justice issues, and their strategies for creating social change.

Student activism is a part of any college campus, and MSU is no different. Historically, student activism was at its peak during the Vietnam War where students and community members collaborated and marched to express their opposition to the events of the time (Nickerson). Student activism is still an important component to the educational experience at Minnesota State University, Mankato and I recommend the following actions to facilitate student activism on campus. First, the university should support the work of student activists. For example, it was an objective of the MSU administration involved in the Vietnam protests to actively support students in their organizing. The intention was to foster respectful dialogue without stifling the voices of the students. A similar approach would be beneficial for the current administration. This study found that students do not feel supported or heard by university faculty and staff, therefore mechanisms could be implemented to address these gaps. Mechanisms such as:

allowing non-formal student groups to use meeting rooms on campus and allowing student workers to fully engage in campus activism. Requiring that a group must be formally registered with the RSO office restricts student access to campus resources. Whether involved in an RSO or not, students have the right to access campus resources. Lifting this constraint would show that the University support all student engagement, not just the student engagement that is sanctioned by the institution. Also, allowing student workers to participate in student organizing eliminates retaliation and expresses a sense of solidarity with students and their desire to correct the issues they face on campus.

Feminist principles have a unique place within student activism on college campuses. They offer alternatives to traditional ways of organizing, strive to embrace differences in coalitions, and ultimately, create transformative social change.

Intersectional movements have the greatest chance at creating change, yet our social structure still seeks to divide rather than unite. We owe it to our student activists to listen to their experiences and work to change the institution so that everyone has access to an effective educational environment.

Appendix A: Focus Group Questions

Student Activism: Exploring Racial and Social Justice Organizing on a Midwest College Campus

Focus Group Questions:

Student Organizing:

- How do you see race, gender, and class (diversity) playing out on the MSU campus?
- How do you go about organizing on campus around race, gender, and class issues?

Coalition Building:

- Do you try to develop partnerships to do your organizing? Why or why not? How?
- How do you create space where you feel free to talk about issues of race, gender, and class?
- How do you address issues of race, gender, and class on campus?

Intersectionality:

- As students interested in race, gender, and class issues, how do you motivate others to help work on these issues?
- Why do you think it is important to be an activist for issues of race, gender, and class on this campus?

Wrap-Up/Possible Clarification:

- If you had a magic wand, what message would you have people on campus understand, that they don't understand now?
- Is there anything you heard here tonight that was important to you that you want to address before leaving?
- I would like to ask about something that was said earlier...
- Is there anything that was not discussed that is important to talk about?

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