Educating for Social Justice?

Hierarchy and Principles of Equality in the Staff Experience at an Elite Quaker School

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April 18, 2003
Abstract

This paper is an appeal to Haverford College to live the Quaker social justice values it professes. I outline contradictions between the college’s statements of its Quaker egalitarian principles and the inequalities described to me by staff members during months of fieldwork conversations. I argue that Haverford currently fails to practice social justice because it does not account for the economic and cultural hierarchies that undermine its Quaker principles. These hierarchies pull staff, students, faculty, and administrators apart and prevent the attainment of the college’s Quaker ‘community’ ideals. Although the college claims to educate for ‘social justice,’ it fails to apply these principles to inequalities on its own campus. The exclusion of the staff experience from its pedagogy of ‘social justice’ leads me to argue that the college has failed to meet its educational goals as well. My analysis draws on the theories of Karl Marx and Pierre Bourdieu to describe hierarchies of economic and cultural capital within a framework of social change. A key theoretical concept is my adaptation of Bourdieu’s habitus to propose a theory of transformative education for ‘social justice.’ I urge Haverford’s administration to support staff-student interactions. These relationships are the key to strengthen the campus community and to build a ‘social justice’ habitus to meet the college’s Quaker ideals.
Acknowledgements

In appreciation for Roy Donaldson, Ms. Eva Wilson, Ms. Repha McGhee, Willie Smith, Mike Millison, Jim Baldwin, Mike Moran, Floyd Butler, Bob Harper, Steve Ammon, Eric Peterson, Pat Hastings, Schubert Sweat, Ed Holloway, Henry Frasier, Carol Wagner, Eric Larson and the rest of the Haverford staff. Thank you for all the teaching you do.

A tremendous thank you to Maris Gillette for your support and encouragement throughout the year, and to Zolani Noonan-Ngwane, Martin Hebert, Laurie Hart, and Wyatt MacGaffey.

In gratitude for your intellectual and personal support: Helene Pollock, Marilou Allen, Linda Sarro, Deb Frazer, Alan Crosman, Dick Wynn, Emma Lapsansky, Betsy Holmberg, Bill Hohenstein, Chris Pavsek, Diane Anderson, Karen Pittelman, Billy Wimsatt, and Nicole Levine. Much thanks and love to my Lizes and Redheads, Mom, Gaba, Pete, and Dad for keeping me strong.
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INTRODUCTION

Haverford College derives much of its identity from its uniquely “Quaker ethos.” The school is the oldest North American college with roots in the Religious Society of Friends. The college emphasizes this history as the foundation of its social justice values, yet Haverford’s moral principles often conflict with the institution’s money-making and cultural capital producing functions. These tensions are especially evident in the college’s treatment of uniformed staff—its blue-collar workers who are the lowest paid and farthest from the school’s educational mission. On paper, Haverford’s anti-hierarchical, Quaker “social justice” values challenge the cultural and economic hierarchies inherent in its status as an elite academic institution. But as my fieldwork will show, these hierarchies significantly shape staff members’ daily experiences. The negative effects of these hierarchies have prompted a group of physical plant employees to organize a campaign to unionize. The union promised to provide a “level playing field,” to grant employees the “power to go talk in an office” and “respect on the job” – rights staff already possess in principle as correlates of the college’s Quaker practice of respecting all individual voices. Although the union was voted down by an employee vote on April 11th 2003, the movement clearly indicates that many employees feel these rights are not being delivered. Does the staff movement to unionize mean that the college has failed to act on its principles? Is the Quaker emphasis on equal respect for all voices a flawed model under the asymmetrical power relations of the institution’s structure?

This project examines the application of Quaker values in institutional employment practices. It also addresses the effects of this process on a “social justice” education. I argue that the exclusion of uniformed employees from the college’s
“education” and “social justice” practices hurts all members of the community. Not only has Haverford fallen short of its “social justice” ideals in its treatment of staff, the gap between the college’s ideals and practices undermines the “social justice” emphasis of its educational mission. I call for an “education for social justice” that includes staff treatment within its concept of social justice and values staff experience in its education. This paper is a push for change, not merely observation; yet only by observing and describing hierarchies in our community can we educate against them.

In chapter one, I introduce the conflicts I will address, outline my personal commitment to social justice education and describe my fieldwork experiences.

Chapter two provides a theoretical framework for thinking about ‘class’ based on the work of Karl Marx and Pierre Bourdieu. Marx and Bourdieu provide rhetorical and conceptual ‘tools’ legitimated in elite academia—ironically, the very field that structures the hierarchies whose social effects education for social justice strives to weaken. By applying academic (and therefore “elite”) class theories to the experiences of disempowerment and condescension workers described to me during my fieldwork, I seek to legitimate staff members’ voices within an academic framework and to provide a model for social justice education which links academic theory and community practice.

In chapter three, I analyze Haverford’s self-presentation of its strong Quaker ideals, which, on paper, mitigate the negative effects of cultural and economic hierarchies. The next four chapters are based on my fieldwork which shows that these hierarchies are still very prominent in practice.

Chapter four is an ethnographic account of my observations at two staff association meetings. These meetings reveal issues concerning staff in the months before
the union movement went public that are free from my influence as an interviewer. These observations provide raw data for analysis in the following three sections.

Chapters five through seven explore the intertwined cultural and economic hierarchies in staff-student, staff-administration, and internal staff conflicts. These close analyses are based on accounts of informal conversations with physical plant employees during their morning breaks in the Coop, in the buildings and on the grounds they maintain. By challenging the gap between social justice rhetoric, spoken within the classroom and college’s statements of ideals, and the application of these values in the treatment of college employees, my aim once again is to work for a unity of theory and practice in education for social justice.

In chapter eight, I return to my argument that the persistence of these cultural and economic hierarchies and the school’s failure to challenge them while proclaiming its emphasis on a social justice education hurt all members of the college. Complex cultural and economic hierarchies undermine even sincere attempts to address inequalities and build community. The negative effects of these stratifications prevent the attainment of community and Quaker educational goals. What appears to be the college’s hypocrisy threatens to subvert individuals’ faith in Quaker social justice values. Efforts to mitigate the negative effects of economic and cultural hierarchies on campus are complicated by the realities of social stratification outside the college community. But ignoring the gaps between institutional ideals and practices reinforces these hierarchies and further weakens the college’s effectiveness in educating for social justice. I advocate an education for social justice that begins with an awareness of the effects of economic and cultural hierarchies within our own community and works for their elimination.
**Personal Statement**

In my four years as a student in the Haverford community, I’ve grown increasingly critical of the relationship between the college’s Quaker moral principles and elite status—two branches of the college’s identity that seem at odds. When I step out of the classroom into the larger campus community, I see many of the inequalities analyzed in the social science classroom mirrored in the social stratification on our campus. One of the clearest divisions is the split between manual and intellectual labor, or between uniformed and non-uniformed workers. I see teachers who aren’t acknowledged in the college’s official publications: employees who aren’t valued on an institutional level for what they think or say. Their institutional purpose is to support the college’s educational mission through physical maintenance of the campus and community members. By casting this labor as ‘support’ and therefore outside the college’s educational mission, the institution erects boundaries around educationally valuable experiences and spaces on campus. I believe that these boundaries stand in opposition to the college’s community-fostering goals and that the status hierarchies enforced by these divisions undermine the college’s guiding principles. If we agree, as I do, with philosopher John Dewey that education “is a process of living and not a preparation for future living” (Dewey 1959:22), class-based status divisions within our own community should be addressed within the college’s social justice curriculum.

Conducting “fieldwork” in my own college community binds me in the privileged role of a “student.” I am continually conscious of the power and access granted to me through this position. I have been reminded that my role, in the broadest sense, is the
reason the institution is here. Attracting and maintaining students is the financial life-blood of the school. I am allowed to be inquisitive, granted access by my tuition and educational motives to conversations with virtually anyone. I have repeatedly struggled to define and reflect on my role in this work to avoid the condescension inherent in objectification of staff members by both the insensitive and overly-concerned (the dehumanizing “plight of the worker” syndrome). It is unavoidably difficult to walk up to someone without a college degree and explain that I am studying them in order to attain mine.

How I am perceived by my informants is equally tricky to define: I am young and impressionable, curious, inquisitive, sometimes naïve. In the course of this fieldwork I’ve been referred to as “the traveling scribe,” “a journalist,” “a pretty girl.” I’ve been thanked for being a willing ear for personal problems. Employees who exhibited the most stability and contentment in their work and personal lives took on the role of a teacher sharing the wisdom of experience and life advice. Sometimes I felt conscripted as a much-needed listener for employees who expressed less personal empowerment. The role I feel most comfortable in is that of a student challenging institutional norms by expanding the network of teachers available to me.

Although I have tried to frame my fieldwork in terms of economic and academic “privilege” and the staff experience at Haverford, to a large extent, conversation topics and dynamics depended upon staff members’ own agendas. Staff Association meetings and complementary work by several new campus groups support my claim that the staff’s place in Haverford’s community is not merely my concern. A staff member advised me early on in the process: “If you begin with elitism, you’re off to a good start.”
This project has received support from many groups. Faculty, non-informant administrators, and students have responded to this project as “really important work.” Staff members who are subjects in the project regularly check in about my progress, asking less what I’ve learned, but how it’s coming, and if I’m surprised by high levels of staff dissatisfaction. Many have offered general support and encouragement for my ability to write such a long paper. Sometimes I have felt that our situations are parallel: a more powerful evaluative force—in my case, the faculty, in theirs’, management—determines our success or failure within this institution.

It would have been much more difficult to embark on this fieldwork without the access granted through relationships of trust with staff members built up in four consecutive years as a student on this campus, through participation in Winter Tri-Co (a four day intensive diversity workshop) with several staff members, and through working interactions during two months of summer employment on the Haverford grounds crew. I had no intention of basing my senior thesis fieldwork on the staff experience when I was employed on the grounds crew in 2002. However, issues of “privilege” have been at the forefront of my mind as a necessary area of life study.

More than anything, I feel that this project has granted me apprenticeship to a valuable network of teachers -- people who will sit down across class and race and often gender divides to share wisdom and a part of their lives. These conversations are difficult but grounding and real when academia sometimes feels off in the clouds. I hope this project will provide a fraction of the value to the Haverford community that it has to my personal growth and class consciousness.
This paper presents a relational analysis of status positions at Haverford College. In this chapter I introduce some foundational class theory that provides the tools for discussing social stratification within an academic framework and for analyzing status hierarchies at Haverford College.

Social stratification, although a historical constant, didn’t take on a humanist moral component until the emergence of a critical “rhetoric of equality” during the Enlightenment in 18th Century Europe (Grusky 2001:5). With the advent of moral interpretations of social stratification, a link between social class and social justice could be developed. Temple Sociologist David Croteau argues that this shift in frameworks is important on a practical level beyond its semantic value. “A gradational view of class is not likely to engender a mobilizing framework,” Croteau writes. “However, when the meaning of “class” goes beyond mere differentiation and suggests a hierarchical, value-laden system based on inequality, notions of injustice and collective grievances may be fostered. These notions may form the basis for social-movement mobilization” (Croteau 1995:222). The belief that most individuals are “ultimately morally equal” carried over into the critical egalitarian theories of the 19th Century (Grusky 2001:5).

At the forefront of egalitarian economic theory, and the foundation for all subsequent class discourse, is Karl Marx. Marx’s view of society, and indeed of all of history, is based on a theory of class struggle (1848:57). He believed that the introduction of private property under the capitalist system of production was both the result and cause of increased social alienation and class stratification (1844a:331-2). Although he
recognized internal gradations, Marx described a society split into two inherently antagonistic opposing social classes: the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat (1848). The Bourgeoisie, or owning class, are the owners of capital who command the labor of the Proletariat, the class of exploited workers who have nothing to sell but their own labor. Marx blamed the capitalist system’s unceasing drive for a surplus profit for the inhuman existence of the working class who have become completely alienated from the objects of their labor, from their labor, from themselves, and from other men (1844a:324-330).

Marx’s critique is action-based. He calls for a revolution by the Proletariat to overthrow the capitalist system, simultaneously eliminating private property and the entire class system to create a classless communist society (1848). This philosophy for action supports David Croteau’s earlier cited argument about the importance of hierarchical class theory as a foundation for social movement mobilization. Marx presents a “hierarchical, value-laden system based on inequality,” yet this analysis falls short of my theoretical needs in three ways. Marx’s structuralist analysis lacks the emphasis on individual agency that my analysis requires. He leaves no room for respect for the morality of Quaker values, and his class analysis is limited to a purely economic interpretation. Although I affirm the economic foundation of class inequalities, as an anthropologist-in-training, I am most interested in the cultural effects of social structural stratification.

The prominent Marxist scholar, Erik Olin Wright, explains the Marxist critique not “at least in the first instance” as “an appeal to principles of social justice.” He writes:

While it may also be the case—as many egalitarian liberals would argue—that the existence of eliminable suffering and obstacles to the realization of human potentials are indicators of unjust institutions, the Marxist critique of capitalism is meant to be primarily a causal one about how
capitalism works, its effects on the lives of people, and the real possibilities of an alternative (Wright 2003:5).

Marx’s philosophy is grounded in the material conditions of the world, not in abstract moral concepts of social justice. A Marxist analysis would cast Quaker values as ruling ideology which is “nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships” --egalitarian rhetoric masking the true state of exploitation (1967:64). Marx explains religion and all other ideologies as ‘devious intermediaries’ between man and his true state, which result in his alienated vision of himself and of the world. His famous definition of religion as “the opium of the people” captures both the illusionary and comforting natures of its distortion (1844b:244). He does not view religion as entirely false, for-- like an image reflected in a spoon-- it contains inverted and distorted reflections of real conditions. Marx doesn’t advocate the elimination of religion, but the abolition of the social world which created it. Since he believes that radical change is only possible by affecting the root, the goal of his criticism is to seek out the material determination of the immaterial: to unmask ideology. A Marxist critique of ideology leaves no room for my faith in the integrity behind Quaker social justice principles.

Marx’s lack of emphasis on moral principles driving social change is also explainable through the system-wide focus of his critique and belief that the communist revolution was inevitable. Marxism finds fault with the entire system of capitalism; the virtue of individuals has no place in its discourse, and the historical inevitability of the communist revolution leaves little room for individual agency. Canadian Professor of Social and Political Theory, G.A. Cohen argues that reliance on economic analysis gave Marx’s theory a scientific rather than purely utopian foundation and therefore a certain
level of prestige. Additionally, he writes that questions of moral principle are brushed aside in Marxist thought because society’s conditions were predicted to create no alternative to revolution. The historical inevitability of equality left no need to think about why it was morally right (Cohen 2000:102-103).

Cohen’s structuralist interpretation is curious, because although Marx views the evils of capitalism as a dehumanizing system beyond individual control, the purpose of his action-based critique is to stir individuals to join collectively to overthrow the capitalist economic system. Marx sees a communist revolution as inevitable (it wasn’t), but also requiring human effort. He believed that the agency of individual workers joining together as a class was required, to borrow a metaphor, like a midwife to guide and assist the inevitable result (Cohen 2000:54). Failing to anticipate the safety nets society would create to counteract the insufficiencies suffered by workers, Marx envisioned a working class driven into such grim circumstances that revolution remained their only tactic for survival. Because his critique is of the entire structure of the capitalist economy, any tactic short of full-scale revolution (such as wage increases or unionization) still operates within the chains of the capitalist system and is not a solution.

Unlike Marx, I advocate a slower transformation—a class awakening shaped by educational institutions—education for social change and for social justice. Marx’s bottom-up theory of radical change casts the higher education system as a brainwashing indoctrination of ruling class ideology. In his view, education systems enable the ruling economic powers to spread ruling ideas to maintain their privilege and power. The famously exiled Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, described this ideological coercion in his concept of “hegemony.” Gramsci defines the term as “the “spontaneous” consent given
by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group” (Gramsci 1971:12). Our society’s unquestioning submission to the academic curriculum laid out by elites is a hegemonic relationship.

Another Marxist philosopher, Louis Althusser, elaborates on education’s role in securing the domination of the ruling class, arguing that “the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order” (Althusser 1971:133). Althusser identifies a system of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), religious, educational, family, or cultural institutions, which recreate conditions of production according to the ideology of the ruling class (1971:146). He argues that the “educational ideological apparatus” has become the dominant ideological state apparatus in contemporary capitalist societies (1971:152). It is here that workers learn to submit to the ruling ideology and the “agents of exploitation and repression” learn to manipulate its powers (1971:133). Although this framework supports my own observations of economic and cultural hierarchies in college, I am looking for a more optimistic interpretation in which higher education is a site of transformative class awareness leading not only to an objective analysis but to action.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu presents the most comprehensive class theory that I have found. Bourdieu is useful (even brilliant) because he presents a structuralist analysis which simultaneously leaves room for individual agency, morality and the cultural and social effects of economic stratification. Bourdieu is sometimes criticized because, unlike Marx, his class analysis is not based on a framework of change but focuses on the reproduction of cultural class divisions. However, sociologist Scott Lash
supports my view that Bourdieu’s work can be adopted to fit a framework of social
change that is in many ways more useful than Marx’s. Instead of an “abstract invocation
of capitalist class and proletarian practices,” Bourdieu’s theory addresses the “day-to-day
practices of professionals… and of concrete collective struggles” and is useful to my
micro analysis of macro structural struggles (Lash 1993:208). Lash additionally praises
Bourdieu’s work as a “structuralism that simultaneously allows space for and accounts
for agency” (1993:208). Bourdieu himself writes that the power of his theory of “habitus”
is that it allowed a “break away from the structuralist paradigm without falling back into
the old philosophy of the subject or of consciousness… of methodological individualism”
(Bourdieu 1985a:13). Bourdieu explains his methodology in a later work as a link
between structuralist and constructivist approaches to sociology:

While it is no doubt true that agents construct social reality and enter into
struggles and transactions aimed at imposing their vision, they always do
so with points of view, interests, and principles of vision determined by
the position they occupy in the very world they intend to transform or
preserve (1996:2).

Bourdieu’s most famous theories of “habitus” and “cultural economies and
social spaces” are complex, but worth understanding as an alternative to a more popularly
discussed Marxist class analysis.

Bourdieu defines the *habitus* as an experience, but also a possession (1985a:13). It
is an internalized disposition, shaped by earlier life-conditions and past experiences that
orders and governs our perceptions and current experiences of the world. The habitus
generates “meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions” (1984:170) and is
classically defined as simultaneously a “structuring structure” and a “structured structure”
determined by the interaction of different forms of capital within social space (1984:503).
For example, Bourdieu examines “high brow” art. In studies of class-based preferences for different forms of art, he found that middle class, less educated individuals preferred paintings of landscapes over abstract modern art because these scenes fit within their ordered perceptions. More class-privileged individuals who had received the education to recognize and identify abstract styles of art carried a framework with which to appreciate these styles, thus their “more cultivated art habitus” produced a different preference (Bourdieu 1984).

Habitus operates within the larger framework of Bourdieu’s class theory. His relational, structural class theory identifies the ‘real’ with relationships, not with substances. Bourdieu writes that these relational concepts are too often misinterpreted and classes are seen as real, objectively constituted groups. This is a mistake Bourdieu attributes to Karl Marx who failed to see that the link between theoretical classes and real classes is never guaranteed since social divisions compete in reality with many other factors such as ethnicity, nationality, and occupation (1987:7). Objective economic and cultural differences are expressed in the symbolic space of visible distinctions in self-presentation. These differences grow “fuzziest” in the middle positions of social space where it is most difficult to distinguish social class. Individuals of all classes often dress and live as if they’re members of the middle class (1987:12). In contrast to Marx’s strict class divisions, Bourdieu compares the boundaries between theoretical classes to the blurry, oscillating edges of a flame (1987:13). This framework will be especially helpful in my analysis of status hierarchies at Haverford College whose structures similarly lack clear boundaries.
Bourdieu writes not of ‘social classes’ but of ‘social spaces’ where individuals can be located according to the volume and distribution of different types of capital (Bourdieu 1987:3,4). In addition to economic capital as discussed by Marx, Bourdieu analyzes cultural capital, which takes the form of information, and social capital, based on connections and group membership which are often symbolically displayed.

The influence of the earlier social theorist, Max Weber is striking in Bourdieu’s identification of forms of capital beyond the economic. Many academics classify Bourdieu more within the Weberian than Marxist tradition (Croteau 1995:230), however, his work is clearly influenced by both theorists. Max Weber was one of the first to extend Marx’s purely economic-based analysis to a theory of status and cultural power distinguishing between economic-based “classes” and “status groups” determined by “social estimations of honor” (1946a:136). “With some over-simplification,” he writes, “one might thus say that ‘classes’ are stratified according to their relations to the production and acquisition of goods; whereas ‘status groups’ are stratified according to the principles of their consumption of goods as represented by specific ‘styles of life.’” (Weber 1946a:140). “Status honor” is expressed through specific “styles of life” (1946a:137). Weber writes that the social and economic orders are closely linked since a “monopolization of ideal and material goods or opportunities” is usually tied to an accumulation of economic capital (Weber 1946a:138). His early classification of privileges conferred by a high place in the status order include access to certain modes of dress and types of food, inclusion in restricted elite social circles, the ability to pursue non-professional, often “dilettante artistic” practices, and a general disqualification for performing common physical labor (Weber 1946a:138). While Marx grounds power in
the material as control over the economic systems of production which lead to control
over the dominant social ideology, Weber recognizes power in the abstract, identifying
the cultural value of “status honor” as the driving force of the social order which exists in
an external, but overlapping relationship with the economic order.

Like Marx, Althusser, and Bourdieu, Weber also writes about education as an
elite-dominated force to preserve cultural power and status. He casts the university
diploma as the key component of a social system designed to preserve exclusivity and
privilege in the workplace. In his 1946 essay, “The Rationalization of Education and
Training,” he writes, “Today the certificate of education becomes what the test for
ancestors has been in the past, at least where the nobility has remained powerful: a
prerequisite for equality of birth, a qualification for canonship, and for state office.” And
“The universal clamor for the creation of educational certificates in all fields makes for
the formation of a privileged stratification in bureaus and offices” (Weber 1946b:151).

I find it curious that Bourdieu, although emphasizing the importance of a
“habitus” in part shaped by the educational system, followed the tradition before him and
analyzed schools as agents of class reproduction instead of focusing on their
transformative potential. His dense study of elite French schools framed the “educational
institution in the true light of its social uses” as “one of the foundations of domination
and of the legitimation of domination” through its “critical role in the reproduction of
distribution of cultural capital and thus in the reproduction of the structure of social
space” (1996:5). He writes that the education system supports a “hierarchy of cultural
legitimacy” (1985b:34) which privileges elite “fields of restricted production” over
“fields of large-scale cultural production” (1985b:17) by reproducing agents with
“cultivated dispositions” capable of appreciating elite fields of knowledge and restricted goods (1985b:23). My question is how Bourdieu’s view of higher education might change if we study a college that emphasizes social justice values like the Quaker ideals of Haverford’s “ethos.” In this case, we can speculate about the transformative power of education in shaping students’ habitus. Considered in this light, Bourdieu’s work can address education’s potential to promote positive social change.

Lash paraphrases Bourdieu’s classification of the education system’s role in cultivating and art habitus. “Unlike the institutions of art, which help produce cultural objects, the education system produces not cultural objects, but consumers of art to match the cultural products. That is, the education system produces a “habitus,” in this case an “art habitus” (Lash 1993:196). If the education system is capable of developing an “art habitus” what prevents such institutions from shaping a “social justice” habitus?

Although individuals can’t choose their habitus, and are frequently unaware of the extent to which it affects their daily lives, they do make choices within it. A choice to attend a college which professes Quaker social justice values has the potential to significantly shape a student’s worldview and change her habitus.

Bourdieu provides a useful framework for talking about class and status at Haverford College since hierarchies on campus are stratified by cultural as well as economic capital. His theories of “social spaces” fit the reality observed in my fieldwork more closely than do Marxist oppositional categories. Bourdieu theorizes a system of hierarchies of “cultural legitimacy” supported by the education system. This same system shapes his concept of habitus, which structures preferences and perceptions. I argue that
the education system has a potential to shape a “social justice” habitus. This structure is the key to weakening the hierarchical effects of capitalism and academic elitism.
CHAPTER 4: Building a “Social Justice” Habitus: Haverford’s Anti-Hierarchical Quaker Principles

“It’s a Quaker thing, taking everybody’s opinion and things”
--a uniformed Haverford employee

Founded in 1833 by members of the Religious Society of Friends, Haverford College is the oldest higher education institution in North America with Quaker origins--a history heralded by the college as the root of its social justice ideals. Although the college is no longer officially chartered to the Religious Society of Friends, Haverford’s Quaker origins and accompanying moral and ethical values are still prominent in the college’s self-presentation and educational mission over a century and a half later. In this chapter, I will examine this set of values and reported practices using Bourdieu’s theory of habitus, thinking about Quaker social justice values as both “structuring structures” and “structured structures.”

On paper at least, the college strongly emphasizes the many ways Quaker values shape its policies and community life. “Reflection on Haverford’s Quaker Character” in the institution’s 1999 Middle States Self Study, an intensive self-evaluation for accreditation from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, describes “an institutional culture that is uniquely Haverford.”

This culture is expressed through a particular constellation of values that conveys Haverford’s ethos. As would be expected, there is a significant degree of convergence between this set of values that is lived out at Haverford and the living heritage of the Society of Friends (Haverford College  1999).

Emphasizing that none of these principles are exclusive to Quakers, the Middle States Self Study defines Haverford’s core values as ‘community, inclusiveness, equality, justice, and nonviolence.’ In Bourdieu’s language, these ideals compose a social justice
habitus, a “structuring structure” which shapes individuals’ perceptions and a “structured structure” whose values are arranged in an identifiable form.

The Middle States Self Study describes a “general recognition that even though not all ideals have been achieved, the College is adept at both stating the importance of the values that underlie its ideals and striving to act on them” (Haverford College 1999). It is precisely this gap between ideals and practice that is most problematic about the staff experience at the college. Haverford’s emphasis on values based on religious principles of integrity and social justice heighten its obligation to work towards these ideals. These explicitly stated morals create the challenge of high institutional standards. They also provide a powerful opportunity for Haverford to model for other communities the implementation of social justice values in a true social justice education.

Haverford’s own values demand that the college either meet its ideals or recognize the areas where unequal power dynamics prevent their attainment and work to modify them. The college benefits from its emphasis on its Quaker identity by attracting students who are already committed to social justice values. This pattern supports Bourdieu’s theory that the education system reproduces social positions. However, students whose own social justice values draw them to Haverford are most likely to be disillusioned by the gap between the college’s ideals and practice. The current gaps between the college’s values and treatment of staff look like hypocrisy. They are weakening many community members’ faith in the integrity of its Quaker principles, and they inhibit the development of a social justice habitus to challenge inequalities.

The College’s “Statement of Purpose” published in the course catalog and admissions literature emphasizes the “spiritual, moral, and ethical dimensions” of a
Haverford education which deepen the “excellence of [the college’s] academic program.”

The document describes the practical, daily effects of these moral values as:

Show[ing] most clearly in the close relationships among members of the campus community, in the emphasis on integrity, in the interaction of the individual and the community, and in the College’s concern for the uses to which its students put their expanding knowledge” (2002a).

This emphasis on the integrity and close interactions of all members of the campus community demonstrates the college’s goal of educating the “whole” person outside of the classroom as well as during class. A May 1976 statement from the Board of Managers to the “Haverford College Community” cites the Latin inscription on the college’s seal “Non doctior sed meliore doctrina imbutus” (not better learned, but with a better spirit imbued) and states that Haverford’s purpose is:

“Not primarily to increase the sum of knowledge its students possess, but to imbue the life of each with a higher pattern of effective values” (Haverford Board 1976).

In Bourdieu’s language, the college’s self-stated goal is to imbue students with a social justice habitus—a structured and structuring pattern of values to carry into their lives after college. The power of the social justice habitus is that it enables students to challenge hierarchies of economic and cultural capital. This is explicitly written in Haverford’s statement of the principles behind its social justice graduation requirement:

Haverford College, in keeping with its Quaker traditions, sees education in part as a means for understanding the historical conditions and cultural mechanisms of social injustice, and for questioning the hierarchies and relationships of power which shape society (2002a).

In its public self-representation, the college clearly recognizes the practical value of applying social justice values to real social conditions. This reported application is not
limited to student life at the college. Mirroring the college’s goal of educating the “whole” person, Haverford reports an extension of its Quaker values throughout the whole institution. Quaker values in nonacademic branches of the college are intended to minimize the negative effects of hierarchies. However, as my fieldwork shows, staff members report that the negative effects of these hierarchies are still present in practice.

Haverford’s Middle States Self Study is the only college evaluation I have found which alludes to staff’s place in the college in relation to its Quaker social justice ideals. Concern for the reduction of cultural and social hierarchies is framed in the language of respect for all individuals:

The climate of trust, respect and concern for others that is central to the Haverford ethos reflects Friends’ affirmation of the uniqueness, dignity, and sacredness of each human life. The minimizing of titles and rank that is characteristic at Haverford is based on the Quaker tradition against hierarchies. In wrestling with issues of diversity, the College is guided by the Quaker emphasis on listening respectfully and with deep openness to each individual (Haverford College 1999).

While social equality is accepted as a Quaker principle, applying egalitarian values to economic hierarchies is qualified by the competing demands of the capitalist market-driven economy. The college’s self-study addresses the ‘challenge’ of applying Quaker values in a capitalist economy and outlines areas where egalitarian ideals override market-driven inequalities:

The principles of equality and justice present an ongoing challenge in a community like Haverford where people assume different levels of responsibility and carry out different kinds of roles. Efforts that work toward the equalizing of opportunities or benefits among different members of the community, and those which lessen the negative effects of hierarchical relationships, are in tune with the Quaker testimony of equality (Haverford College 1999).
Although the Haverford’s Middle States Self Study presents Quaker values as the driving force behind the college’s effort to equalize benefits for all employees, the Board of Managers’ actually places more emphasis on the market when making policy decisions. Principles outlined in the Board of Managers October 1996 statement of its “Benefit Program Principles” lay out the goal of maintaining a difficult balance between the market forces governing “efficiency” and the college’s ideals of “fairness.” The Board labels “flexibility” as the key to achieving these goals. Market forces are the primary determinant of benefit policies. “In obtaining the services that Haverford needs to carry out its mission, the College should meet the market, not necessarily lead it,” the statement reads. “Market forces are an important indicator of appropriate benefit policies.” The Board encourages “the equitable treatment of all groups of employees wherever possible” according to the college’s ideals of fairness. However, it allows that “Differences in benefits between groups of employees which are grounded in [sic] educational mission (such as the faculty housing benefit) are reasonable.” Equitable employee treatment is apparently not “possible” when it conflicts with market forces, nor is it “reasonable” when it interferes with academic hierarchies. “Because there are numerous conflicting views of fairness, there may be occasions when some employees are dissatisfied with some aspects of the benefit program,” the Board explains. “In this difficult situation, Haverford seeks to apply the most appropriate definition of fairness for each individual benefit.” The statement concludes with a list of three “Competing Principles of Fairness:” 1)“To each person according to the market value of what he or she produces,” 2)“Treat everyone equal, 3)“To each according to need.” Haverford maintains that it strives for an equitable balance of these conflicting principles. This
paper will show that the college’s practices are weighted most towards the market’s demands. This imbalance does not ‘treat all employees equal,” nor does it provide “to each according to need” (2002b).

A final dimension of Haverford’s Quaker values is the college’s emphasis on open communication during conflicts about the application of its principles. The college’s self-evaluation of these policies is reprinted below from its 1999 Middle States Self Study:

Evidence of the College’s Quaker character is shown when the administration is accessible to diverse segments of the community. Haverford’s open-door policy reflects the Quaker tradition against hierarchies. As information and opinions flow back and forth among students, faculty, administration, and staff, varied perspectives enrich the discussion. A goal is to openly express differences of opinion with candor, utilizing Quakerly processes that minimize factionalism in the development of collective agreements.

The process of listening carefully to all voices in the community and having faith that a unified “sense of community” will be found is a manifestation of the Quaker principle of seeking after truth, which is a corollary to the Quaker belief in continuing revelation.

When conflicts arise, the emphasis is on searching for unity and being open to modifying one’s own position, rather than on building power blocs to win majorities… (1) every person will have an opportunity to say his or her piece; (2) all will be listened to with understanding; and (3) the community will struggle for agreement, rather than particular factions seeking to gain influence (Haverford College 1999).

These policies will be important in my analysis of staff-administration conflicts in Chapter Seven.

Many members of the Haverford community have expressed skepticism about the college’s ability to put its principles into practice. In 1971, then Vice President for Development, Steve Cary, addressed the Corporation of Haverford College with a speech
reprinted in *Haverford College Horizons*, “Is Haverford Still A Quaker College?” Cary listed his reasons for returning to the college, stating, “I knew from my own experience as a student, as an alumnus, and as a member of the board of managers, that Haverford did care about both academic excellence and moral values, about both mind and spirit, about both intellectual capacity and spiritual commitment.” However, after his return Cary assessed these convictions with mixed feeling. “In its primary role as a college professing academic excellence, there is no question [that Haverford achieves its goals]” he wrote, but described the Quaker “value side” as “a mixed bag,” expressing concern over the increased secularization of the college and over its “decline in what might be called the communal influences at the college” (Cary 1971).

Five years later the Board of Managers issued a statement to the “Haverford College Community” entitled “The Invisible College”: Its Quaker Mission” to share concern for the weakened foundations of the college and suggest a revitalization of its Quaker roots in challenging times of change. “The College should seek to build more effective bridges for its students that can link the academic life with practical experience in the surrounding community,” the Board advised. Since the “whole” person “is in large part composed of relationships with others,” perhaps “a larger number of community-wide events might be planned that can bring all elements of the College together in settings that facilitate informal interactions.” “Would it be feasible, for example,” it was suggested, “to set aside one [Quaker] Meeting per month which faculty, administration and staff would agree to make a serious effort to attend?” (Haverford Board 1976).

The most recent report on the college’s Quaker practices in April 2001, “The Vitality of Haverford’s Quaker Character: An Update,” paints a much rosier portrait of
the college’s abilities to live these principles. The paper documents “a significant increase in Quaker-related activities on campus” “during the presidency of Tom Tritton” and credits “Various Quaker-related activities” with increasing “the sense of community among Quakers [sic] students, faculty, and staff” (Pollock 2001). The update records “discussions of diversity and other ethical issues at meetings of professional employees and hourly workers” that “have been carried out with increasing openness and candor, in a spirit of inclusion and fairness” (Pollock 2001).

Haverford college’s self-presentation lays out an optimistic portrait of its emphasis on Quaker social justice values. Its goal is to instill students with a social justice *habitus*, shaped by these values, with which to perceive hierarchies of inequality, and to extend these principles into the nonacademic and financial areas of the college’s practices. Some doubts are raised about the scope and ability of the community to live up to these values, but recent documents express few concerns about the college’s actions. Nowhere do these evaluations address the striking gap between ideals and practice as reported by the college’s uniformed staff.
CHAPTER 5: Ethnographic Descriptions of Two Staff Association Meetings

“What looks good on paper isn’t always carried out in practice...”
-a uniformed Haverford employee

The President of the Haverford Staff Association called the December 2002 Haverford general Staff Association Meeting to order with a welcome and request for a moment of silence, a long standing Quaker tradition. He sat behind a table parallel to the blackboard at the head of the Bryn Mawr room in the Haverford Dining Center flanked by three other members of the Staff Association’s Executive Committee. Two rows of tables were arranged horizontally forming the sides of an upside-down “U” around which the general assembly of Staff Association members selected seats. A table at the foot of the room, to the right of the entrance had been laid out with holiday decorations, hot drinks, and snacks: popcorn, a large plate of cookies, and a basket of candy canes.

Disunity was striking even in the structural lay out of the room and segregation by employment tier was pronounced. Administrative Assistants-- staff who work in offices and do not wear uniforms-- congregated on the right side of the room. Housekeeping, grounds crew, and maintenance employees sat on the left side tables, and a row of grounds and maintenance men slouched in chairs against the left wall of the room. Library staff were an exception to the seating pattern at the December meeting. Several non-uniformed employees joined physical plant workers at the left table, although their allegiance during the ensuing discussion was more clearly with the right half of the room. Three other students attended the meeting as representatives from student Living Wage group which was not asked to speak. Security and Dining Center employees were
noticeably under represented at the meeting which was held at 1:30 on a Tuesday afternoon.

The Haverford College Staff Association was formed in 1971 to “provide an opportunity for the staff to share information and ideas pertaining to campus business and social life” and to “provide a means for communicating with the College’s administration.” It is open to all employees except faculty members and administrators. Formal by-laws written up in 1982 outline an election procedure and include the following objectives:

To share a concern for the community life of the College… to develop effective channels of communication to afford staff fuller participation in the life of the College… to develop an effective mechanism through which staff members may participate in decisions that affect them… to develop procedures through which staff may voice concerns and seek action on specific problems as needs may dictate (Haverford College 2002c).

The December meeting commenced with an executive committee update on an attempted Tri-College Wage Comparison which remained incomplete. This was vaguely explained as a failure of Bryn Mawr and Swarthmore to cooperate, but no one who had been directly working on the project spoke to clarify the scope of the project and steps that had been taken. Similarly inconclusive information was presented about shoe reimbursement for dining center employees and an attempt to acquire public transportation reimbursement.

Many voices participated in a discussion of the problem of a lack of parking spaces, a concern for employees who work in offices on the north end of campus. The main complaint was that students take up extra spaces along Carter Rd, sometimes leaving cars unused for weeks at a time, while employees are facing a parking space
shortage. One suggestion to make these spots available for staff members was to enforce eight hour parking limits during the day, but nobody seemed to believe that students would cooperate since “they don’t even leave their cars out of Lloyd Lot,” an area reserved for employees during the day. A concern was raised that eight hour parking limits would require additional payment for staff enforcement. Most employees had not realized that students were charged a fee for parking for the year and reacted unenthusiastically to the possibility of making similar payments. The safety concerns of female students were also raised as a justification for allowing women who live in Lloyd to park in Lloyd lot so their cars will be nearby if they’re going out at night. The suggestion of painting lines closer together in Lloyd lot to create more spaces was deemed impossible by grounds crew. The discussion ended without a clear solution but with a request that fellow employees park at the south end of campus. General resignation to the belief that “students won’t move,” was turned into a joke met by laughter throughout the room: “we’re more likely to get motorcycles.”

The agenda shifted from conflicts between staff and student interests to concerns about staff—administration disagreements, a heated discussion which illuminated much internal division within the staff. Members of the Executive Committee read the fourth objective of the Staff Association’s by laws --“to develop procedures through which staff may voice concerns and seek action on specific problems as needs may dictate”-- and asked the following series of questions about its meaning and the organization’s purpose and status within the college community. “What is it you want from the Staff Association? Why do some people think the Staff Association’s a joke, that it isn’t listened to and has no clout? What does the fourth objective mean?” Members disbanded
in frustration after a conversation rife with division which skirted the specifics of a confrontation between a member of the Staff Association’s Executive Council and the College’s Senior Management which was described as “entering a knife fight without a knife.” There was much opposition from those who did not know the details of the incident to even spending time discussing the issue, which was deemed ‘personal,’ unless the senior manager involved were invited to present his point of view as well.

A faction of the staff who seemed to know details of the ‘personal’ incident alluded to insisted that it was important to discuss in relation to the larger issue that “a group of people feel [they] don’t belong in the same group here as other people.” Whether it was because of their uniforms or their jobs here, this group of employees felt that they wouldn’t belong at a party at the College President’s house and that they probably wouldn’t even be invited.

Members of the staff association who work in offices, most of whom are not required to wear uniforms, provided general counter examples to these feelings of exclusion. “I know people on staff who have been to Tom [Tritton]’s dinner” a non-uniformed employee insisted. He raised the issue of personal responsibility for respectfully raising grievances to superiors. A non-uniformed employee’s call to focus on “establishing structure, not one particular agenda” and concerns that protocols of note-taking during meetings were not being followed was met with hostility from a uniformed member of the staff. He expressed frustration that a concern about employee treatment by management, which affects peoples’ families, could be reduced to a discussion about note-taking. Criticism was directed at members who wanted the staff concern dropped as a ‘personal concern’ because it didn’t apply to them.
A library employee suggested appointing an “ombudsman” to handle staff complaints and others, again mostly employees without uniforms, agreed. Nobody defined the word, although I am fairly certain I was not the only person in the room who didn’t know what it meant.

The following Staff Association meeting in early February felt even more tense than the first. Attendance had noticeably dropped. The spatial gap had visibly grown between the executive committee’s position at the head of the room and increasingly segregated clusters of uniformed (on the left) and non-uniformed (on the right) employees at the base of the room. Many physical plant employees muttered resentment that there were no hot drinks although the day was cold. The spread of cold soda, cheese puffs, and small plate of cookies was obviously sparser than the holiday spread at the previous meeting.

First on the agenda, a member of the executive committee raised concerns that the Executive Committee of the Staff Association lacked office space. It was clear from murmured reactions from the rest of the room that nobody else felt this was a legitimate concern. “What do you need it for?” a woman on the right side of the room inquired, “I’ve only been here two years and I don’t even know what you do,” she admitted. The executive committee member who had raised the concern launched into a vague speech about “lots of records to keep together,” the difficulties of “working on the run out of folders” which are often misplaced. “The Staff Association is an integral part of the Haverford community,” he concluded, “We could at least have a small office with a
desk.” None of the meeting's attenders appeared to be in agreement with this portrait of the Staff Association and its importance. The disconnect between the Executive Committee and general members was further enforced by a request from the right side of the room that the Executive Committee share a list of proposals for sick day compensation improvement with the rest of the Staff Association before presenting them before the college’s Vice President of Finance, Dick Wynn. The non-uniformed employees raising this concern did not seem to trust that the uniformed heads of the executive committee would accurately represent their perspective to the administration.

Next, the representative to the college’s finance committee shared a “grim” report on the college’s financial state and potentially severe implications for staff compensation. “Everybody’s been attacked in terms of the stock market, and the school’s no different... I know a three percent wage increase is not the best. I can’t even tell you what it will be next year. The students are really getting hurt [financially.]” Employees were reminded of the college’s need to “stay competitive” in the local market and of the importance of looking at their total benefit package. ‘Nothing’s being taken away this year, but hiring’s basically non-existent right now.”

A similarly grim report was presented by the representative to the faculty and staff policies committee on the board of managers who discussed the state of college employee’s medical and dental plans and explained that the college’s capital campaign has ground to a halt $75 million short of where it wanted to be. “We’re beginning to scramble with only two more years left in the campaign.” College finances were described as a “balancing act between student charges and our pockets.”
A report from the Ad Hoc Committee on the Quaker Character of the College shared a clear sense “at least on the Board level,” that “this college is special because of its Quaker background.” “I obviously don’t have the same voice that the chairman of the board does,” the representative reported, “but I can speak up. If you have something to bring up, you need to do it and it will be listened to. It doesn’t do any good to squabble in this room, we need to bring our concerns out to someone who can do something about them.” An Executive Committee member responded: “If we’re afraid to do it here [raise concerns], how are we ever going to get to the Board?”

A push by non-uniformed employees to be referred to as “professional” staff was next raised on the agenda and was immediately dismissed by uniformed members of the executive committee as “demeaning to others” since the distinction would make other employees, plumbers and arboretum workers seem “not professional.”

“Anyone have anything else to add to the mix?” the President addressed the other end of the room, and joked, “Quiet bunch” before adding a last minute concern of his own about the exclusion of cousins from the list of family members for whom employees are allowed funeral days. “You grew up with your cousins, you know,” he explained, “they should be considered immediate family.” On the surface, reactions seemed split between non-uniformed employees who rolled their eyes and passed loaded looks between each other, and uniformed workers who broke out in agreement talking about close relationships with their own cousins. In the midst of the outburst, a uniformed employee turned to me in disgust at the proceedings and explained (but not to the whole room) “you’ve got to take care of your own finances, don’t blame the college. Take one
of your sick days for your cousin’s funeral, don’t abuse them. I really resent people who
are paid more than me who don’t work.”

The meeting concluded with a short speech from the president of the Staff
Association: “I know most of us like the college, we all work here, it’s our second home.
But you know, you’ve got problems at home. Happy employees help the college… I’m
sure the college is losing money somehow if we’re all grumbling.”
CHAPTER 6: Staff-Student Conflicts

The outcome of the staff association’s discussion of the parking space shortage is emblematic of larger trends in staff-student relations: when interests conflict, staff members report that students almost always win out. The prioritizing of student concerns (even when they cause considerable inconvenience for staff) results from and reinforces hierarchies of cultural and economic capital on campus. Hierarchies of academic elitism at the college privilege students’ closer position to the “life of the mind,” while capitalism’s demands on the institution override its social justice concerns. Student interests come first because our fees are the life-blood of the institution, but institutional privileging of student interests does nothing to challenge (and even supports) the feelings of entitlement or classist and racist stereotypes many students bring to campus from privileged backgrounds. Efforts to teach social justice while reproducing privileged social positions on campus only reinforce cultural hierarchies which drive much of the condescending, dehumanizing, and socially alienating behavior staff members describe.

My analysis in the following chapter is based on staff testimonies about practices that my position as a student prevents me from observing since my presence alters those interactions. This focus on staff testimony allows me to privilege the staff perspective, a view that is rarely held up as an authority in this institution.

Haverford’s selective admission’s process restricts access to the fields of elite academia studied here. A Haverford education is “elite” because it reproduces cultural hierarchies as described by Althusser, Weber, and Bourdieu in chapter two. Only certain students are allowed to learn on this campus. Admittance fosters pride and a sense of entitlement that leads many students to act in ways that appear condescending to staff.
“There’s an attitude that “hmmph. My parents paid x amount of dollars for me to come here so I can do whatever I want to do,” a physical plant employee described, imitating his perception of students’ feelings of power, privilege, and superiority. Students’ access to restricted academic concepts and conversations elevates them above staff in the hierarchy of practices most valued in a college community. Bourdieu describes this cultural stratification as a “hierarchy of cultural legitimacy” (1985b:34) governed by the cultivation of “dispositions” capable of appreciating elite fields of knowledge and restricted goods (1985b:23). Access to “restricted” goods and fields of knowledge excuses students (and all other community members closer to the ‘life of the mind’) from performing menial labor. These divisions between manual and intellectual labor support Weber’s classification of high social status as a disqualification for performing common physical labor (Weber 1946a:138).

Manual labor is ‘impure’ because it stands in opposition to the highly valued ‘eliteness’ of academia. Sociologist, Louis Dumont elaborates on Celestin Bougle’s assertion that the opposition between the ‘pure’ and the ‘impure’ is at the base of hierarchies of social caste (Dumont 1970:43). Although he writes specifically about Indian society, these oppositions are enforced in the division of labor on Haverford’s campus as well. A cultural boundary protects the metaphorically ‘pure’ ‘life of the mind’ from contamination by the ‘impure’ tasks reserved for custodial and other physical plant employees. Custodial workers in particular describe the degrading nature of their work cleaning up after students who “don’t flush the toilet on purpose” and “leave things on the floor because they know we’re coming in.” Staff members framed incidents like this as ‘disrespectful’ rather than malicious. They described these actions as evidence of
being taken for granted, not as directed personal insults. A lack of appreciation and 
acknowledgement from students and other members of the college compound the 
humiliation of the ‘impurity’ of this work.

Staff often reported feeling “invisible” or not respected as people outside their 
‘impure’ maintenance or custodial roles. “As long as I’m in their building, [students] 
recognize me, but I don’t think they’d know me if they saw me [anywhere else]. They 
don’t know me by name, but by face” a custodian explained during break. “Some people 
don’t understand, it’s just my job, it’s not who I am,” another employee stated, sharing a 
perception articulated by many staff members. Many employees expressed concern to me 
that students see them in purely functional, dehumanized terms. These degrading 
misconceptions of staff members’ identities shape the condescension many employees 
perceive in interactions with students. “So many students I speak to look away as if their 
mind got a second thought,” another employee described his perception of students’ 
responses to his greetings. “To me, it’s a small matter just to say hello,” he explained, 
“I’m not trying to get involved, or to meet new people. I’m not a pedophile.”

Racist and classist stereotypes fuel student attitudes of condescension and 
entitlement. Employees shared their awareness that many students come to Haverford 
with perceptions (a ‘habitus’) shaped by sheltered, often all-white, privileged 
communities. “So many students are from affluent families where they may have servants 
or housekeepers. They look at people who work here in the same way,” a uniformed staff 
member explained. Another elaborated:

People from all white backgrounds [often] don’t acknowledge me. A lot of 
it has to do with because I’m black. They stereotype, he’s a custodian, he’s 
not educated. They assume I have like a thousand children. But lots of
people have degrees and have done other things. People end up here for their own reasons.

This perception of the wider social forces shaping student condescension leads many employees, especially African American workers, to express dislike, but not surprise for demeaning treatment. “I expect inequality,” one African American employee explained, “People want to think it doesn’t happen at Haverford, but it does.” This acceptance reflects a larger trend among the staff: as long as tensions don’t detract from their pay, most employees don’t describe conflicts with students as their most pressing problem. The joking nature of the conclusion of the parking conflict update at the December Staff Association meeting suggests that the college’s prioritizing of student interests is not the staff’s primary concern and is in fact expected. Staff members even expressed concern for students’ needs at both meetings. Employee’s worried for the safety of female students walking to their cars at night. Noting the “balancing act between student charges and [staff] pockets,” employees lamented the degree to which students are “really getting hurt” financially in the strained economy.

Haverford’s Quaker values emphasize that staff and students participate in the same community. Yet each group comes to the college for very different reasons. “Why do we come here? For the money,” a custodian explained. “Nobody wants to clean other people’s stuff. When I was growing up, you couldn’t get me to clean my own room.” “I’m here for a job, you’re here for an education,” another worker explained, summarizing his policy for students who ignore him: “let me do my job, you don’t have to talk to me.” The staff member who expressed this view felt strongly disempowered by his position at the college. He could not resolve a personal conflict with a student because
he feared the student’s power over his job. “They could say any little thing and get me in trouble,” he explained. “They could be lying and still be right. This country’s built on making money, it’s a shame.” This employee was convinced that the administration would privilege the student’s account of the conflict over his own. He believed that this was because Haverford valued the student’s tuition over his position in the college. The staff member, an African American custodian, told me he had received a violently racist note from a student. The note was taped to the door of the closet where he kept his cleaning supplies on the student’s hall. I did not see the note because the employee said he had been so angry that he threw it away. Although another employee claimed to have seen the note and confirmed its racist message, they chose not to approach the administration without evidence. The staff member’s fear of the student’s power over his job prevented resolution of the conflict. The insult and humiliation of this attack was compounded by the degradation of the employee’s job requirement to continue cleaning the student’s hall. His angry declaration: “let me do my job, you don’t have to talk to me” was a response to the humiliation of his disempowerment in this conflict.

Most staff members say that they do want students to talk to them. Many expressed confidence that they are especially suited to teach students about diversity and how to combat racist and classist stereotypes. “You never know what’s inside a book unless you open it, unless you talk to a person,” an employee told me. He believed that staff and students need to converse to humanize their interactions. In chapter eight I will expand on the benefits of staff-student interactions beyond their power to combat stereotypes.
The structure of an “elite” education encourages student condescension towards staff. Hierarchies of academic elitism and economic power undermine Haverford’s social justice values. Hierarchies on campus stem from larger patterns of stratifications in society as students often bring racist or classist stereotypes from their experiences before college. Haverford fails to educate against these stereotypes by enforcing a strict division between staff and student roles in the college. The college constructs barriers between the “purity” of academia and the “impurity” manual labor by emphasizing the value of intellectual labor over other forms of work. These hierarchies contribute to students’ stereotyping and condescending treatment of staff and conflict with the college’s Quaker community values.
CHAPTER 7: Staff-Administration Conflicts

Unlike staff-student conflicts that are primarily fueled by cultural hierarchies, tensions between the staff and administration are grounded in economic conflicts. These cultural and economic hierarchies have similarly dehumanizing and socially alienating effects. In general, staff members take conflicts with the administration more seriously than conflicts with students. This is because workers fear that conflicts with the administration carry a greater economic threat. Employees’ pay scale at Haverford is based on merit. This system makes their compensation especially vulnerable to favoritism. In this chapter I analyze contradictions between the college’s ‘Quaker’ respect for all community voices and what a Marxist analysis frames as the capitalist’s efforts to control the worker’s labor power and time while the worker struggles to retain these resources for him or herself.

I regularly observed tensions between management and workers during my fieldwork. For example, one morning a supervisor interrupted my conversation with employees at the end of their break accusing “You got off early didn’t you?” “No,” my informant responded, gesturing towards a tool with a straight face. “See, we have a hammer because we were working.” “Did you see that?” they asked when their supervisor had moved on, “the perception is that we’re stealing time.”

Support from several academic theorists will allow me to use employees’ accounts of individual humiliations and frustrations to make a systems’-wide analysis of staff-administrative conflicts. In doing so, however, I hope to retain an awareness of individual agency. “Studies that conceptualize hegemonic relations in totalized, deterministic ways, over-simplify the complexity of power relations,” writes sociologist
Katherine O’Donnell. “By deleting human agency, these studies underestimate the ability of people to challenge and or survive in a multiplicity of ways” (O’Donnell 1993:20).

Although Haverford’s administration carries far greater cultural and economic power, employees exhibit limited agency in conflicts with their superiors. Sociologist James C. Scott argues that “outright, overt struggles,” are not the place to look for defiance by oppressed groups, whose rebellions most often take place in everyday acts of “footdragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, or slander” (Scott 1985:xvi). These “weapons of the weak” generally “avoid direct confrontation with authority,” require “little or no coordination and planning” and are therefore “best suited to a group lacking formal organization” (1985:xvii). My informant’s sarcastic gesturing towards a hammer is an example of such an act.

The view that ‘time’ is a commodity to be bought and sold or stolen is the foundation for the most dramatic tension between workers and capitalists in a Marxist analysis of the capitalist system’s oppression. “Those who are employed experience a distinction between their employer’s time and their ‘own’ time,” writes historian J.P. Thompson. “And the employer must use the time of his labour, and see it is not wasted: not the task but the value of time when reduced to money is dominant. Time is now currency: it is not passed but spent” (Thompson 1967:61). Marx similarly portrays the commodification of time during the capitalist work day. “The time during which the worker works is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has bought from him,” he explains. “If the worker consumes this disposable time for himself, he robs the capitalist” (Marx 1867:342).
Although college policies assure employees that their voices are respected and that they are trusted, staff members report that their daily schedules are governed by systems of condescending distrust and regular surveillance. “Eyes and ears can’t be everywhere, so what do you do? You network,” an employee said to me, outlining the administration’s system of control that turns employees against each other to report to superiors. This practice leaves staff members uncertain of whom to trust and rarely sure they aren’t under surveillance. While higher ranked supervisors and administrators more often had the liberty to schedule time for longer conversations with me in private spaces, lower tier employees were cautious of being caught in too long of a conversation on the job. “We’ve gotta get moving, we’re under tight surveillance. You know me, I’ve got a shadow,” was a not-uncommon expression.

Employees described the most negative effects of these surveillance practices on their job satisfaction and self-empowerment. “If a person comes to work and enjoys what he’s doing, it doesn’t feel like work. Work is doing something you don’t want to do,” an employee explained. “As long as they don’t bother you, you do what you have to do. As long as somebody’s not just hanging on your behind you, you can enjoy what you’re doing.” Staff members express difficulty enjoying what they’re doing when they feel mistrusted. “It’s all stupid stuff. I feel like I’m in kindergarten,” an employee complained. “I took a break for coffee only once this week and it was longer than usual. The boss came by and tapped his watch in front of everybody.” However tight surveillance also carries the threat of accumulating reports of misbehavior to support future disciplinary action. One employee described, “Anything seen that’s perceived to
be out of place is reported, recorded, and documented. And at some given point, when you least expect it, out of the closet comes the dirty laundry.”

Disciplinary punishments include suspension for a day without pay. Depending on the severity of the offense, pay suspension may be followed by periods of probation when additional offenses are grounds for permanent dismissal. Direct economic demerits are reported to be fairly infrequent. “You gotta really be pushing it to get suspended,” a supervisor explained. He noted that staff members are most often disciplined for abusing sick time, tardiness and taking longer or extra breaks. “Some people think they can do whatever they want,” he elaborated. “Some people get paid Friday and call in sick Monday. People think they can go walk down to get tea before break. There are people we report to too. They think they don’t see them.”

The college’s employee conflict resolution procedures are based on the Quaker principle of respect for all individual voices. “You know, it’s a Quaker place, it’s all about talking,” a uniformed Haverford employee explained. This practice is striking because it greatly conflicts with the lack of respect staff members experience under daily surveillance. The importance of speaking up was reiterated in an employee’s report at the February Staff Association Meeting:

If you have something to bring up, you need to do it and it will be listened to. It doesn’t do any good to squabble in this room. We need to bring our concerns out to someone who can do something about them.

“Senior administrators’ doors are open” a college official insisted. He seemed perplexed when I challenged him about staff member’s discomfort approaching the administration with concerns. “Employees are afraid for their jobs if they raise an issue?” the
administrator responded. “That’s so far from reality, I don’t know where that’s coming from. Employees have a formal mechanism to talk to the administration.”

This “formal mechanism to talk to the administration” is the college’s Grievance Procedures laid out in the Staff Handbook to preserve order and control during inter-employee conflict. Although informal conflict resolution between employees and supervisors is encouraged, a staff member seeking external assistance in resolving a conflict with a supervisor or other employee may file a grievance by submitting a formal letter of request to the Director of Human Resources, Alan Crosman. Each party involved in the conflict nominates an employee to represent him or her, and the representatives together select a third employee to join them on an Appeal Committee before the Vice President for Finance and Administration, Dick Wynn. The Appeal Committee is a fact-finding and advisory panel for the Vice President, who meets with the committee, with each employee involved in the conflict, and with any individuals presenting other relevant information. Within ten working days of receiving the grievance, the Appeal Committee must present its recommendation in writing to the Vice President, who has the ultimate power to “accept, reject, or modify” these proposals in his final decision, delivered in writing to the plaintiff.

Although the administration emphasizes the importance of “dialogue,” many employees feel college policies are enforced under a “dictatorship.” Most of the staff members I spoke with described their acute awareness of the Vice President’s judicial power. “Dick Wynn is God,” an employee explained, depicting the scope of his power. The Vice President’s control of institutional finances makes him the link between the college’s economic capital and cultural capital production. Like other members of the
administration, he carries personal power from his elevated position in hierarchies of both economic and cultural capital. The Vice President’s cultural status, marked by an advanced degree, coupled with his disciplinary powers invoke fear and frustration in many employees.

Staff members are hesitant to voice concerns because they fear that they lack the cultural capital to dialogue effectively, that their concerns will be ignored if they do speak up, or worse, that their job will be threatened.

“It’s all about “elitism” and “educationalism” –“degrees upon degrees upon degrees,” one employee explained describing the institution’s power structure. “Do I survive here because I have a degree and know the word games? What about other employees who are afraid to converse, afraid to interact?” The main reason employees have invited a union to campus is to realign this cultural capital imbalance in bargaining for economic benefits. Currently, many employees feel that “There’s nobody here that has the education, intelligence, and expertise that can sit down with the [Vice President] on his level and negotiate.” “That’s why we have the union. Smarter minds than us (for lack of a better phrase) to negotiate for us,” explained a union representative at an off-campus meeting. “Now it’s ‘dad talking to his children,’” he described, “with the union, it’s ‘dad talking to his co-worker.’”

Many employees invoked this parent/child metaphor in conversations with me about their feelings of disempowerment and disrespect. “I thought maybe we could do something [with the Staff Association] but there’s absolutely no power,” a member of the executive committee confessed. He said they felt like kids at a grownups party aware that the administration “put us in this room to play these games” but isn’t really listening. “I
was treated like a man at my old job, not like a kid,” another employee criticized. “They
don’t trust anybody here.”

Employee frustrations about powerlessness, disrespect, and distrust are
compounded by fear of economic punishment. Heated confrontations with the
administration carry the threat of serious economic consequence. An example of a
confrontation with the administration in which the employee’s fears were actualized is
the “personal issue” never fully addressed at the December Staff Association meeting.
The issue involved a conflict between the College’s Senior Management and a member
of the Staff Association’s Executive Council who compared his experience to “entering a
knife fight without a knife.” The employee voiced a concern on behalf of a group of staff
members, believing his status as a member of the Staff Association’s Executive Council
would protect him from individual repercussion. However, when the confrontation
escalated, he was disciplined with one day’s pay suspension and a six-month probation
period.

“He feels he’s being demonized for speaking up and standing up for his men,”
another employee explained in a private conversation after the meeting, but insisted: “If
he’d done it differently, [the administration] might have been behind him.” This
statement illustrates the deep contradiction between the college’s encouragement for
employees to raise concerns and the unspoken rules dictating the “correct” way to do it.
“If you speak up and it’s not what they want to hear, you’re a problem,” an employee
stated. The safest approach is not to speak up at all. Most staff members are strongly
aware that the ideal employee is “not a trouble maker,” and gives “No lip” and “No
feedback.”
Those who do speak up and have lost in confrontations with management report
disempowering repercussions. “I’m not comfortable anymore around
management anymore,” an employee explained after a grievance panel. “When I see
management look at me, through their eyes, I see I’m a trouble maker. People in high
positions here, they just judge you,” he described. “They make you feel unwanted and
might not speak to you, or put you to the side and single you out. They don’t talk to you
like a man.”

These patterns of disempowerment cause submissive obedience or disgruntled
counter attacks that perpetuate the cycle of staff-administrative conflicts until employees
finally submit to the institution’s order or leave. Although the administration frames
employee Grievance Procedures as a practice grounded in its Quaker principles of
respecting all individual voices, the system more strongly supports the college’s capitalist
principles by enforcing employee compliance in a competitive market-economy. “In the
past, an employee would move on when they wouldn’t get along with supervisors. That’s
not happening here, and we’re not sure why,” an administrator explained addressing a
recent increase in grievances filed by employees. “Up until this last year it was unusual
that a grievance was filed [except] about every other year,” he reported. “One or two
individuals have filed multiple grievances,” are “unable to accept other judgements than
their own,” and don’t seem to “want to see the issue resolved.” “We’re not clear what’s
motivating that. It’s frustrating,” he confessed.

Marx describes the capitalist-worker struggle in richly dramatic terms. He
characterizes the capitalist as “capital personified and endowed with consciousness and a
will” (1867:254) and defines capital as “dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by
sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks” (1867:342). The unceasing quest for capital occurs in a market outside the concerns of morality and humanity:

> Capital asks no questions about the length of the life of labour-power. What interests it is purely and simply the maximum of labour-power that can be set in motion in a working day. It attains this objective by shortening the life of labour-power, in the same way as a greedy farmer snatches more produce from the soil by robbing it of its fertility (1867:376).

The severity of Marx’s descriptions of brutal exploitation is lessened by his systems-level focus. Marx is clear that individual capitalists are not entirely to blame for a system of exploitation that operates beyond their control. In a fictional conversation, Marx’s worker addresses the capitalist: “You may be a model citizen… and you may be the odour of sanctity as well; but the thing you represent when you come face to face with me has no heart in its breast. What seems to throb there is my own heartbeat.” (1867:343). Capital “takes no account of the health and the length of life of the worker, unless society forces it to do so,” Marx writes. However, his conclusion releases the capitalist from individual blame:

> Looking at these things as a whole, it is evident that this does not depend on the will, either good or bad, of the individual capitalist. Under free competition, the immanent laws of capitalist production confront the individual capitalist as a coercive force external to him” (1867:381).

Like Marx, I am not blaming Haverford College for the existence of economic and cultural hierarchies beyond its control. Perhaps these hierarchies’ foundation in external social stratifications explains the institution’s current failure to address their internal effects on our campus. My point is that economic and cultural hierarchies outside the college’s governance weaken the practice of its social justice ideals in employment
practices it does control. Staff members experience the negative effects of these
hierarchies and repeatedly raise concerns. Yet their voices have not been acknowledged.
Employees’ push for unionization is an attempt to make this conflict and their voices
heard. It is time for the college to listen in accordance with own Quaker principles. I do
criticize the institution for failing address the tremendous tensions between its Quaker
principles and Capitalist practices. The conflict between the college’s encouragement for
employees to raise concerns and staff members’ beliefs that they’re not heard, respected
or safe if they do increases worker-administrator tensions and employees’ feelings of
alienation. The college’s current lack of consideration for the unequal power dynamics
that undermine its social justice principles can only create policies that contribute to staff-
administration disagreements.
CHAPTER 8: Internal Staff Disunity

The economic tensions surrounding worker-administrator conflicts and cultural status hierarchies also cause deep divisions among the staff. In this chapter I will explore the internal disunity at the Staff Association Meeting and employees’ explanations of staff divisions.

The physical and procedural disunity at the December and February Staff Association meetings showed a lack of staff solidarity in the seating arrangement, where non-uniformed employees congregated on the right side of the room, and uniformed physical plant members sat on the left. The split between uniformed and non-uniformed workers roughly coincides with the division between manual and intellectual labor. The clerical labor of non-uniformed office staff places them closer to the “life of the mind” than manual workers and thus higher on the college’s ladder of culturally-valued positions. The hierarchy associated with this division is evident in the administrative assistant’s push to incorporate the word “professional” into their titles and uniformed employees’ rebuttal that this word is demeaning to skilled manual workers. “The ‘administrative professionals’ are trying to disassociate themselves from the ‘staff,’” a uniformed employee explained. Although the staff association is open to all except faculty, senior administration and students, “professional administrators—‘white collar workers’—don’t want to be seen as staff. To them it seems like a demotion.”

The procedure of the December Staff Association meeting also demonstrated staff disunity. The conflict during the meeting over uniformed and non-uniformed employees’ willingness to discuss the details of a “personal” staff-administration confrontation, and in staff members’ later explanations of the event, showed a staff divided over the Staff
Association’s agenda and function. Non-uniformed employees, who work in offices, rallied behind procedural concerns like clarifying the organization’s structure and following protocols of note-taking. Their structural emphasis mirrors these employees’ more “professional” office administration practices. However, a frustrated uniformed worker accused non-uniformed employees of labeling important staff issues “personal” because the issues didn’t apply to them. He suggested that office employees could focus on the meeting’s procedure over the discussion’s content because their higher status within the college gave them fewer concerns. Uniformed employees tended to emphasize interpersonal concerns that they felt were more pressing than arguments about procedure. Uniformed employees who seemed to know the details of the ‘personal’ incident “insisted that it was important to discuss in relation to the larger issue that “a group of people feel [they] don’t belong in the same group here as other people.” Whether it was because of their “uniforms or their jobs here,” they felt that they wouldn’t belong at a party at the College President’s house and that they “probably wouldn’t even be invited.”

Conflicts at the Staff Association Meeting illustrate a split between uniformed and non-uniformed employees based on cultural status and its economic consequences. However, interpretations of the “personal” conflict between a staff member and administrator don’t map neatly onto differences in clothing or occupational roles. In private conversations after the meeting, several non-uniformed and uniformed employees complained to me that the Staff Association itself is responsible for “pulling people apart.” One uniformed employee insisted that the entire physical plant staff had been invited to President Tritton’s house. “[The executive committee]’s just using people’s fear and sense of alienation” to support their “personal agendas,” he argued,
responding to their statement at the meeting that a group of employees felt they wouldn’t belong and wouldn’t even be invited to a party at the College President’s house.

Contradictory interpretations of the conflicts at the Staff Association Meeting point to a deeper disunity among the staff based on individual success within the institution. Employee’s “success” is determined by their ability to “fit the college’s needs.” An administrator explained to me in a private conversation that Haverford has designed its employee compensation to attract those workers who “best fit the college’s needs.” Since “the institution benefits from the stability of a strong, positive workforce,” the college’s compensation package offers generous benefits at the expense of a high cash salary to encourage long term stable employment.

Although staff members’ “success” within the institution isn’t solely determined by age, characteristics common among older employees best match the college’s hiring preferences. The administration attributes the high number of staff in the “older, long tenure employee group” (aged fifty and up) to general hiring success and employee satisfaction at the college. “It’s not a matter of not attracting younger folk,” an administrator explained. “It may be a bias, but the college looks for experience…we value the experience, knowledge, and wisdom that comes with [age] not the energy of youth.” Older employees are more likely to have secured a place within the campus community, if only because they have spent more time in it. They carry the cultural capital of unique knowledge of the college’s history. The college believes that this stability “knowledge” and “wisdom” best fits its hiring needs. Yet this interpretation is not uniformly accepted among the staff. An older employee, recognizing the physical weakness caused by age, criticized the college’s lack of younger workers as a serious
flaw in its employment practices. He described a need for “young trained people,” but argued that Haverford “can’t get young people here” because “people don’t feel they’re paid what they’re worth, and the college doesn’t care.”

Tensions between long term and newer employees are emblematic of larger tensions between “successful” and less successful employees. Longer term or more successful employees were more likely to echo the pragmatic rules of obedience outlined by supervisors: “It’s like anywhere, you get out what you put in… it’s basic, you know what you have to do, and you do it.” Younger employees are more likely to criticize this obedience as giving in to an oppressive system. “You’ve got to kiss ass to stay in good. They have ways of making you quit,” a younger employee warned. New employees who are most critical of the institution see themselves as victims fighting hard to make the system work for them and complain that their co-workers are complacently “living in a bubble.” “Some people have been here for many years but what have they done in that time?” a new employee challenged. “What have they changed, or are they just going through the motions waiting for their pensions?” While an older employee complained: “New people come here and think they’re gonna change things. Really I don’t have problems, I get along with everybody.” A younger employee explained that this age factor in staff members’ willingness to push for change makes sense. On a practical level, older employees are closer to retirement. Younger workers see the effort of a fight as outweighing the cost of complacency under a working life of unsatisfactory conditions.

Variations in individual compensation divide employees’ relative degrees of success within the institution shape their interpretations of wider staff disunity. Economic pressures to meet the college’s demands for high productivity and efficiency turn many
employees against each other in divisive social factions of “snitches” or “ass-kissers” and “lazy people.” Staff divisions are based on a hierarchy of success within the institution. However, these positions are not static. The pressures of economic advancement maintain internal staff disunity. Employees who complain of favoritism, describing factions of ‘ass-kissers’ and ‘snitches,’ are more likely to describe themselves as victims of systemic institutional unfairness, while self-described ‘self-motivated’ employees condemn ‘lazy’ co-workers for their lack of individual responsibility. These patterns support the widely cited sociological trend that well-off individuals tend to subscribe to the dominant American ideology of individualism—achievement due to individual efforts-- while less successful employees are more likely to interpret their shortcomings as the result of structural unfairness (Kluegel and Smith 1986).

Staff members who focus on their lack of agency within the system provide a structural interpretation of their experiences. Employees who see themselves as victims of a system of institutional unfairness were my primary informants describing the oppressive nature of the college’s system of surveillance outlined in the previous chapter. In their view, the most devastating effects of surveillance mandated by the capitalist drive for productive efficiency is that it turns the staff against itself. “This place operates on a kiss ass basis. It’s all about who can snitch on the other guy. If you snitch on your partner you get rewarded. It’s just ridiculous,” a worker expressed angrily. A possible “reward” for ‘snitching’ is favoritism in overtime, a perceived systematic unfairness with direct economic consequences. “I could use that money too. I’ve got bills to pay,” another staff member complained. “The things in the [staff] handbook aren’t for everyone equally. There’s no harmony in physical plant no more.”
More ‘successful’ workers also focused on the college’s larger structure but interpreted their positions relatively favorably. Self-motivated and relatively successful employees criticize their co-workers who repeatedly blame the institution for their discontent for their lack of awareness of “bigger” economic and community factors. These employees emphasized the importance of looking at the ‘bigger picture’ of total compensation benefits, the college’s higher economic priorities, and their own lack of better employment alternatives. “People who complain about their wages are “biting the hand that feeds them.” They’re just concentrating on the money, not on benefits,” one employee explained. Another emphasized keeping staff demands in perspective by focusing on the “bigger picture” of the college’s economic priorities. “The college’s mission is to put funds in other areas. What these people are griping about is probably third or fourth on the list. If you weigh the total package it’s not that bad.” Many shared feelings of luck and privilege for obtaining a Haverford job. Frequently these workers had experienced, or were close to people in jobs that they considered much worse. “The pressure here is like nothing,” one successful employee described. “If you can’t work here, you can’t work anywhere. You come and do your job.” Another explained: “You need to keep your head down, mouth shut and survive. Are there things that should be different here? Sure, but there’s a lot more aggravation on the outside.”

“Successful” employees emphasized individual agency within the system by stressing individual responsibility for economic stability and for overall job satisfaction. These ‘self-motivated’ employees condemn the chronic complainers who enlist the institution’s formal grievance procedures most frequently to assert their concerns. Such employees interpret this use as a “lack of individual responsibility.” “There are a lot of
zeros in [my department] like anywhere else. I have zero tolerance for laziness. Everybody’s afraid they’re gonna do more than the other person. Lots of people don’t deserve to be here” a self-described “self-motivated” employee criticized. “Before you came, you applied for the job and knew what the salary was,” another ‘self-motivated’ employee explained. “If you need more money, it’s up to you to hustle to contract off campus on your days off.” “Invest your money well,” another advised, suggesting how to get by on a low salary. “Do a job you don’t like for a couple of years and invest and live simply.” “People want to be given things. It’s all about me me me, when in reality, it’s a give and take,” an employee explained. These staff members emphasized the importance of a “give and take” and encouraged their co-workers to take the initiative to give back to the college by getting involved in the community. “It’s up to you to get involved with the community,” one involved staff member explained, “you have to read Founder’s Bell, not just look at the front page.” Said another: “You have to want to be here, you need to want to be part of the community."

The net result of divisions among the staff is overwhelmingly negative. Internal staff divisions turn employees against each other, excuse the college from fully addressing staff concerns, and undermine the college’s practice of its “social justice” principles. I will address these divisions’ destructive effects on the campus ‘community’ in the following chapter. Perhaps the most devastating effect of hierarchies of cultural and economic capital among the staff is that they destroy the unity of the group, preventing collective action to address concerns that aren’t shared by everyone. These divisions prevent the Staff Association from attaining its fourth objective: “to develop
procedures through which staff may voice concerns and seek action on specific problems as needs may dictate.”

Staff disunity shapes and is shaped by unequal treatment from superiors which strengthens less-favored employees’ perceptions that the administration is a ‘dictatorship.’ The “success” of some employees delegitimizes the concerns of others who are personally condemned for their individual lack of responsibility. Employee disunity allows the college to selectively address some staff concerns while ignoring others. The institution excuses its failure to address certain employee concerns by emphasizing the experiences of employees who don’t share them. Yet these divisions are based on the same cultural and economic hierarchies that the college’s stated social justice ideals compel it to combat.

Ultimately, staff disunity allows the college to overlook the gaps in its “social justice” practices by focusing on the apparent contentment of employees who’ve made the system work for them by obediently ‘keeping their heads down’ or who have been around long enough to become a strong element of the community and carry historical cultural capital. The success of ‘obedient’ employees takes attention away from the college’s unequal application of its Quaker principles of valuing all individual voices. The voices of workers who are dissatisfied are not given the same weight as those who don’t raise concerns but play along and get promoted. Education for social justice must address the larger social systems underlying individual successes, hardships, senses of oppression and injustice. The college needs to base its policies on these larger social forces that override the force of policies based Quaker moral principles.
CHAPTER 9: Quaker ‘Community’ and Education for Social Justice

In this chapter, I argue that the persistence of cultural and economic hierarchies on Haverford’s campus and the college’s failure to challenge them while emphasizing the “social justice” values of its educational mission hurt all members of the college. The cultural and economic hierarchies of academic elitism and capitalism pull people apart, drawing the community farther from its Quaker ideal of unity and of valuing every voice. My fieldwork reveals cultural and economic barriers to community involvement despite recent student and administrative pushes for staff inclusion in the campus “community.”

Research about the history of the staff’s role and involvement in the community is difficult to conduct without in depth interviews of former and long term employees and alumni. I have not been able to find any documents in the college archives specifically addressing the staff’s place in status hierarchies in the community, perhaps because these issues have never before been directly addressed. In recent years, as a correlate of an increased emphasis on ‘diversity’ and political correctness, the college has undergone what one administrator described as a growing “minor awareness of employees as human beings.” This administrator believed that the recent increased push by students, faculty, and the administration to include staff members in the college “community” was a trend unprecedented in the college’s history of ‘privilege.’

Increased movements for awareness of the staff’s position in cultural hierarchies at Haverford have been mostly student-led. The largest public student effort to recognize the staff’s role in the community is Staff Appreciation Day, a festive reception for all college staff held in Great Founder’s Hall that is organized by the Student’s Council. Director of Dining Services, John Francone recalls that the event began as “just cookies
and coffee” and has evolved into a decorated, catered party. Before 1998, Francone remembers, “there were many attempts to show staff the students appreciation however they weren't well organized and were very sporadic.” Staff Appreciation Day is an example of a student-initiated effort to acknowledge staff that has grown with the recent push for staff inclusion in the community.

Student advocacy for staff benefits, respect and inclusion has risen noticeably within the past year. This activity is a largely a response to the recent success of the Living Wage Campaign at Swarthmore College. Staff and student efforts to start a Living Wage Campaign at Haverford have so far been unsuccessful. However, a group of students, concerned that the staff and employee concerns are invisible on campus, are compiling a book of staff testimonies called “The People Behind the Faces” that will be published this spring. Students have also been active in the Union movement attending meetings with union organizers and staff, educating other students about the union, and organizing a pro-union rally the week before the vote. Increased conversations about diversity and community have encouraged staff-student connections in a four-day intensive diversity workshop over winter break. The Tri-College Multicultural Winter Institute (“Winter Trico”) began in January of 2000 and is open to staff, students and faculty of Bryn Mawr, Haverford, and Swarthmore colleges. Three physical plant employees have participated in the workshop with students in the past two years. This spring, student and staff participants of the 2002 winter institute have come together to organize the “Haverford Alliance for Diversity and Unity (HADU), a weekly diversity discussion and support group open to all members of the community.
A growing sensitivity to staff’s place on the college campus is also evident in the recent re-wording of several school policies. In the spring of 2000, the student-body voted for revisions to the Honor Code that recognized staff’s valuable position in the college. Earlier versions of the document spoke of “community” implicitly referring only to students. The spring 2000 changes included a clear and inclusive definition of ‘community’ within the body of the Honor Code. “When we speak of ‘community,’ we imply the student body, faculty, staff, and administration, each of which contributes to the collective conception of community standards,” the new statement read.

The administration initiated a parallel document revision soon after the student changes to the Honor Code. The 1997 Staff Handbook opens with the following description of the Haverford college “community”:

Though non-sectarian, Haverford still manifests its Quaker roots in the close relationship of faculty and students… a strong sense of community between students and faculty is reinforced by the fact that 96% of the 1100 students and 2/3 of the 100 faculty live on campus.

The 2002 edition reads strikingly similarly, although the wording has been changed to include “staff.”

Though non-sectarian, Haverford still manifests its Quaker roots in the close relationship of faculty, and staff, and students… a strong sense of community between students and faculty, and staff is reinforced by the fact that 97% of the 1100 students and 60% of the 125 faculty live on campus.

Administrative efforts to include staff in the campus community include the Staff Handbook’s open invitation to staff members to take advantage of a number of “campus services and facilities” such as the Academic Computing Center, Athletic Facilities, Bookstore, Career Development, Faculty Dining Room in the Dining Center, and
Library, however, I have rarely observed physical plant employees use these spaces during my four years at the college.

Increased efforts for staff inclusion make it easier to explain continued separation from the community as staff members’ choice or lack of interest. But statements such as: “Staff either remove themselves from the community or feel they’re not a part of the community. There are only a certain number of staff members who want to be involved” overlook key factors in the situation. Although individual choices influence staff involvement in the community, hierarchies of cultural and economic capital also shape the staff’s ability to participate. Cultural and economic barriers that too often go unacknowledged complicate efforts at inclusion by students, faculty and administrators.

Hierarchies of cultural capital, dominant in staff-student conflicts, separate some staff members from central positions in Haverford’s community. Deeply underlying status and class divisions are transparent even in genuinely polite attempts at inclusion. Describing a hypothetical party at the college president’s house, one uniformed employee confessed, “I wouldn’t feel comfortable. They’d play that game where they’d smile and all, but I wouldn’t feel comfortable because I have nothing in common with faculty members.” Bourdieu would argue that staff and faculty members’ unequal distribution of cultural and economic capital makes interaction uncomfortable within the same social space. In his view, staff members’ less-cultivated “academic” habitus inhibits their ease in an academic social space. The same characteristics that legitimate faculty’s status at a party at the president’s house might hinder their ability to fit in with the staff. However, this analysis of Bourdieu’s habitus is troubling to me because it supports the
reproduction, not the transformation of cultural hierarchies and strengthens barriers to staff inclusion.

Many staff members would be unable to attend a party at the president’s house even if they felt comfortable since economic tensions inhibit many employees’ abilities to participate in community activities after their work day. Some employees complained that most “community” events are scheduled at night once staff members have gone home to the ‘rest of their lives.’ Staff members who shared interests in attending sports, cultural, and other community events were restricted by an inability or unwillingness to return to campus for an evening-scheduled event due to exhaustion at the end of the day, or the financial necessity to hold a second job.

During the work day authoritarian demands and condescending treatment from supervisors and the administration reinforces many staff members’ perceptions of their inferior status in the college. Conflicts between the staff and administration risk undermining students’ and the administration’s own attempts to include staff members in the campus “community.” “I’ve never been to a place where they talk down to you all the time [as much as they do here]” a physical plant employee described, reciting orders from the administration in commanding tones: “Make sure your men aren’t hanging around the ceremony or in the sunken lounge during commencement… Go down in the basement.” “I don’t even know if they know that they’re doing it,” he concluded, but “We’re not marines. I want to be part of the community just like everybody else.” This employee emphasized that the authoritarian tone of administrators’ announcements to the staff felt demeaning. Because the college did not address him like other members of the community, he felt he was not part of it. The community-weakening results of staff-
administration conflicts are also evident in the accounts of both Staff Association Meetings. The executive committee member’s call for office space framed the administration’s lack of support for the Staff Association’s work as evidence of the college’s disrespect for its staff. At the December meeting, this staff member listed perceptions among staff and administrators that “the Staff Association’s a joke, that it isn’t listened to and has no clout.” In February, he described the Staff Association as “an integral part of the Haverford community.” It was clear that this portrait represented the role he believed the organization should play. It did not portray the reality he observed.

Barriers to staff involvement in the community are most striking in economic-driven pressures for labor productivity at the expense of human interaction. This was a dominant tension explored in my analysis of staff-administration conflicts. The administration’s efforts to control workers’ time to assure maximum productivity have increased social alienation on this campus. In a conversation about employee’s distance from the “life of the mind,” a uniformed staff member pointed out that “the opportunity to engage in [meaningful] conversation is tied up in productivity. A really engaging conversation is hard to do during work hours and feel comfortable.” The tensions between “community-building” activities and economic pressures are significant. Supervisors and co-workers often look down on community involvement beyond an employee’s job description as an underhanded tactic to get out of work. “People are just trying to get out of work with all these meetings. You students need to complain when things aren’t getting cleaned. Work comes first. Something isn’t getting done with all these meetings,” a longtime employee complained. Older “obedient” workers are not the only employees who worry that productivity suffers when campus involvement increases.
Even staff members who do participate in community events expressed concerns that “people can’t get away from their work to go around and talk.”

However ‘involved’ staff members stressed the value of human interactions over labor productivity. A member of the Staff Association’s executive committee described time to “go around and talk” as fundamental to staff’s integration into the community and necessary for the effective functioning of the Staff Association. “All we’re asking for is for one guy to be able to go around and talk to people,” explained a member of the Staff Association’s executive committee. “It’s not hurting anyone. It’s not a production line where we lose ten fenders if someone slacks.” A recent management-led boost in production pressure has left some employees questioning future potentials for staff-community interaction. “Everybody’s expected to do more now,” one worker reported. “More work has been created. Will it come down to a situation where employees can’t take the time to talk to students for fifteen minutes?”

This concern mirrors Karl Marx’s concept of “alienation,” the ultimate state of capitalist exploitation in which “each man is estranged from the others” and “all are estranged from man’s essence” (1844a:330). Marx described “the social relations between individuals in the performance of their labour” as “social relations between things between the products of labour” (1867:170). Although individuals believe they interact in personal relationships, he wrote: “we relate to each other merely as exchange-values” (1867:177). Marx believed that capitalist exploitation destroys genuinely human connections. The noticeable degree to which staff-student interactions are inhibited by increased production pressure is a troubling warning of the truth of Marx’s words.
Economic disincentives to staff-student interactions significantly detract from the college’s educational mission and ideals of Quaker community. Excessive interactions are discouraged from an economic perspective because they decrease workers’ efficiency. However, another source hypothesized that the administration doesn’t encourage staff-student relationships because they are difficult to control. College rules explicitly discourage employees from engaging in sexual relationships with students, perhaps additional social discouragement is a tactic to be sure these rules are enforced.

**Why Staff-student relationships are important:**

This rigid control from the administration, based on economic production and social pressures, contrasts strikingly with the educational value of informal community-building interactions between staff and students. “The college loses so much by not having these students and staff interact” a community-oriented employee insisted. Positive staff-student interactions support the college’s Quaker community ideals and educate for social justice.

Staff members can provide students with a sense of “community” on the campus by offering both practical advice and emotional support. “Most of the college’s employees are older and carry tremendous knowledge of the college’s and this country’s history,” one staff member explained. “Think how much you can learn from people by asking about their lives. We’re an intelligent group of people. A lot of us have degrees and commonality with students in our lives.” “The staff is a tremendous resource for students. A lot of staff members are in a place students will be in a few years,” a staff member explained. This employee portrayed faculty as leading a “more sheltered life
style living on campus with a college-provided house.” In contrast, he believed that staff are “part of the real world here. I know what it’s like to pay a mortgage. I think in some ways I could help students by sharing life stories and giving advice,” he summarized.

Staff can offer valuable personal support to students that sometimes faculty can’t provide. “Students deal with depression, alcohol and drugs here because they feel alone away from their families. They need more resources since faculty can’t get too close to students since they’re grading their work,” an employee argued. This support for students beyond staff members’ employment roles is common on Haverford’s campus. A popular housekeeper gives motherly advice to students working late in a public space. “You need to leave,” she encourages, “go take a nap.” Another staff member, a custodian in a freshman dorm, makes a point of introducing himself during the first weeks of school with a clear rule “this is our house, we’re gonna keep it clean.” “I tell students they’re doing a good job and leave notes on the bathroom door because lots of people don’t get told they’re doing a good job.” “I know it’s scary being here your first year with all these [new] people,” he explains, and “I talk to them about drinking in moderation…When they start talking [back to me], they open up like a flower about everything.” An employee found a student crying alone and went to comfort her. It happened to be Valentine’s day. The next year, she remembered and brought the student a card. This same employee has a weekly lunch date with a coworker and a student who asked these staff members to teach her to make a quilt. These relationships can be so meaningful to students that a recent alumna who came back to Haverford told me she didn’t feel at home until she had found the staff members she’d worked with on a campus job.
In turn, relationships with students increase staff members’ sense of community belonging. One employee told me that students’ friendliness is the “pinnacle” of his experience at the college. He shared accounts of times when a student had stopped to hold a ladder for him or had gone out of her way to walk with him when he asked for directions to a building. Another employee who interacts daily with student workers described the pride he gets from showing students how to use tools. “It’s like a second education,” he explained. Other staff members remembered the names of students who had graduated with whom they had been close, described gifts they had exchanged or meals shared. These friendships provide a strong counter-example to the social alienation enforced by cultural and economic hierarchies.

“Student-staff interactions could explode in so many ways where there would be more of a community,” a staff member explained. “The more people you get to know, the more you feel like you’re at home.” The community-building effects of positive staff-student interactions are illustrated by the success of a unique staff-student mentoring program piloted at Swarthmore College in the spring of 1999. “Learning for Life” pairs students and staff members in one-on-one “learning partnerships.” Although these teams were initially designed to focus on the staff member’s educational desires, in practice, both partners have shaped learning. Initiatives stated in a summer 2000 grant application overlap with my own questions about the inclusion of staff in the educational life of the community. These objectives include “establishing staff as integrated members of the College community” (Ansell 2000). “Although there have always been warm relations between particular students and staff, or faculty and staff, staff has generally felt like
second-class citizens on campus,” the program’s faculty director, Diane Anderson describes.

Distinctly unconnected to the learning/teaching fund of the college, staff has been traditionally peripheral to the college’s main purpose. Yet, on the whole, especially among long-term employees, they have maintained a deep commitment to the institution, even while feeling marginalized and invisible (Anderson 2002:14).

Anderson’s description mirrors my own analysis of the staff position at Haverford College. Student-staff relationships developed through the Learning for Life program would surely benefit Haverford’s campus in the same way.

Learning for Life’s impact on Swarthmore’s community life has been highly visible. “One important change within the community is the way in which participants in positions of student and staff… draw one another more closely to the center of being Swarthmore College community members, i.e., learners and teachers,” Anderson explains (2002:2). Learning partnerships have allowed staff members access to the cultural capital most valued in the institution. Increased staff-student interactions have created “Campus relationships” that are “palpably different” (Anderson 2002:14). Relationships developed through learning partnerships have encouraged student-staff communication beyond the scope of the program. Staff and student participants report a new awareness of the value of reaching out to all members of the community. They observe their peers interacting where they previously wouldn’t.

In addition to strengthening the campus community, staff-student relationships have heightened both parties’ awareness of “Community inequities (social justice disparities, access to campus resources) across boundaries of race, age, gender, class, and positions of privilege” (Anderson 2002: 2). Close student-staff relationships encourage
awareness and discussion of social inequalities in society and on campus. In other words, they educate for social justice.

Discussions with staff members about inequalities on Haverford’s campus were the foundation for this paper. I can testify with the participants of Learning for Life that my education from conversations with staff members has been more valuable than much of the knowledge transcribed in the classroom. As one staff member and friend is fond of saying: “I’m like a book to you, you’re like a book to me.” Sharing stories about differences in our lives and experiences on this campus have grounded “social inequalities” and the power of “diversity” and “humanity” for me in ways no classroom discussion could. These dialogues are the most powerful resource for expanding the boundaries of social justice education on this campus.
Conclusion: A Restatement of the “Social Justice” Habitus

Quaker “social justice” values significantly shape Haverford College’s educational mission and institutional policies on paper. However staff members’ experiences of unbearable condescension and disempowerment—the products of cultural and economic hierarchies—motivated the organization of a union campaign to gain rights they are already promised. On April 11, twenty-four physical plant employees voted in favor of unionizing. Thirty-four staff members voted against the movement. Nearly all eligible staff members returned ballots. The outcome of the union vote does not imply that most staff members have no criticisms for the college. Many do not believe a union is the best way to address their concerns. Anti-union employees I spoke with before the vote advocated internal solutions to problems between the staff and administration. Internal solutions are an appeal to the social justice values upon which Haverford was founded.

Quaker principles don’t translate into practice unless the effects of larger social and economic stratifications are observed and are accounted for. Similarly, education for “social justice” is not fulfilled unless the economic and cultural hierarchies within our own community are addressed. By failing to recognize the gap between its stated ideals and real practices, Haverford fails to implement “social justice” and fails to “educate for social justice.”

These shortcomings violate the college’s self-stated belief in its moral imperative to act on principle against society’s norms. They undermine the development of a “social justice” habitus. Haverford’s 1999 Middle States Self Study recorded the college’s belief in “a commitment to honor the moral force and sense of justice that comes from deep
within the individual, which may be different than the standard agreed upon by society” (Haverford College 1999). The economic and cultural hierarchies of capitalism and academic elitism powerfully influence social stratification, but they directly conflict with the egalitarianism of Quaker values. Haverford’s self-stated commitment to moral values obligates its fullest application of these principles in every branch of the institution. The college’s self-evaluation concludes: “The corollary which cannot be emphasized strongly enough is the importance of living out these values in every day life, so that one’s belief system comes to permeate one’s actions and way of being (Haverford College 1999). In other words, as an institution, Haverford commits itself to creating a social justice habitus.

The creation of a social justice habitus is possible with an education that teaches awareness of the larger social forces that undermine institutional intentions. A social justice habitus is not restricted to the college’s social science curriculum, it applies to every area of the institution. Although Haverford has not lived up to its Quaker ideals, I do not advocate their abandonment since a moral foundation is necessary to inspire action. I urge the administration to create staff policies that address the economic and cultural hierarchies that undermine the college’s ideals, and I call for an education that builds the social justice habitus the college’s mission describes.

The foundation for a social justice habitus already exists at Haverford. The college’s Quaker values provide the framework for the habitus’ “structured structure.” Education for awareness of larger social systems completes this form. Cultural and economic hierarchies that undermine the realization of egalitarian ideals can only be combated if they are understood. The habitus becomes practice as a “structuring
structure” when its values are applied to the Haverford community. This ‘social justice’ habitus -- not just shaped in the classroom, but fueled by action in the community-- is our best hope to live the college’s ideals.


**Works Cited**


Haverford College. 1999. *Middle States Self Study*.


Haverford College. 2002c. *Haverford College Staff Handbook*.

Haverford College. 2002d. *Haverford College Administrative/Professional Handbook*.


Additional Class Resources

Books + Articles:


Gerber, Lynne and Tracy Hewat, ed. 1997. *Money Talks. So Can We. Resources for People in their 20’s*. Cambridge. [contact Resource Generation (see below) for the latest version].


Campus Resources:

The People Behind the Faces:

A new Haverford student group that is interviewing staff and compiling a book with their photos and life stories. (contact: jhanlons@haverford.edu).
Haverford Alliance for Diversity and Unity (HADU):

Started by students and staff in the spring of 2003, HADU seeks to build alliances between students, staff, and faculty from diverse backgrounds. The group’s goal is to “foster trust within these alliances in order to create open and honest dialogue that aims at making change.” (contact: dcoriywat@haverford.edu)

Learning for Life (http://www.swarthmore.edu/Admin/learningforlife)

Learning for life is a campus based community service program that pairs Swarthmore College students with members of the college staff to work together in “learning partnerships.” (contact: danders1@swarthmore.edu).

Swarthmore Living Wage and Democracy Campaign (www.swatlivingwage.org)

A coalition of Swarthmore staff, faculty, and students working to improve staff wages, transparency of staff-related decisions, and staff inclusion at the college. (contact: Swatlivingwage@yahoo.com)

Off-Campus Groups:

United For a Fair Economy (www.ufenet.org)

A national nonprofit focusing public attention and action on growing economic inequality in the United States. (contact: 617.423.2148 or info@ufenet.org)

Resource Generation (www.resourcegeneration.org)

Resource Generation is an alliance of young people supporting and challenging each other to effect social change through the creative, responsible, and strategic use of financial and other resources. The group is expanding its college outreach and ran a well-received workshop on classism on Haverford’s campus in February of 2003. (contact: 617.225.3939 or karen@resourcegeneration.org)

Training For Change (www.trainingforchange.org)

A Philadelphia group that provides trainings for activists including ones addressing classism. (contact: 215.241.7035 or peacelearn@igc.org)
Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWRU) (www.kwru.org)

Led by poor and homeless families, KWRU is a Philadelphia-based membership organization dedicated to the organizing of welfare recipients, the homeless, the working poor, and all people concerned about economic justice. (contact: 215.203.1945)

Jobs and Living Wage Campaign

The Jobs and Living Wage Campaign is a grassroots coalition dedicated to seeking passage of a city ordinance that require the City of Philadelphia to use its subsidies and contracts to foster livable wage jobs for poor families. (contact: 215.765.0042)

Jobs with Justice (www.jwj.org)

Philadelphia Area Jobs with Justice is a coalition of labor unions, community organizations, and people of faith who have united in the struggle for economic justice. (contact: 215.735.3615)