Labor Organizing and the Current State of NDLON

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Abstract

Despite the trend over the last few decades towards stronger, deeper labor organizing in the US, there are still major hurdles that grassroots organizations must overcome. Be it inadequate organizing strategies and models, hierarchical unionism, or conservative and neoliberalist external forces, the push towards progressive labor policies and practices has been floundering. Yet even with the difficulties that lay ahead, the historical arc tells us that homegrown leadership, community engagement, and democratic distributions of power are the most effective catalysts of positive change. With that in mind, we use a standard quasi-qualitative approach in this paper to answer the core debate in contemporary labor: should we be organizing? As opposed to advocacy and mobilization, what are the strategic and tactical benefits that arise from organizing? Based on our interviews with constituent members of NDLON's Pasadena Job Center, we conclude that deep-rooted organizing in 21st-century labor, although old-fashioned, is both relevant to, and invaluable for, accomplishing equity goals, civil rights, and authentic movement-building. Because the Los Angeles area is the epicenter of the workers' rights crusade with NDLON at the helm, tracking the trajectory of this particular organization will be important in gauging the larger national movement in the near and long-term future.

Key terms: National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON), organizing, advocacy, mobilization, New Labor

INTRODUCTION

In the last forty years, racial and gender equality have become institutionalized in both the employment code of conduct and the workplace. Yet at that same time, the rights of workers and their autonomy to form unions have faded into the shadows. The dwindling force of unions is very understandable: the history of American labor beginning in the 1930s and continuing into the present reveals a downward trend in the power of laborers, the quality of their lives, and the democratization of the workplace. The weakness of unions is especially concerning given the massive economic disparities in America and the importance of unions as protectors of the working class. Organized labor, as Nelson Lichtenstein articulates in *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor***, is "unique and transcendent" because unlike other organizations—the church, the National Rifle Association, feminist groups, or political parties—the union is multifaceted.[1] It is the most multiracial of any institution, and this gives it the potential to act as much more than a religious or interest group.[2] One hundred years of labor history speaks to the unparalleled significance of the union as a safe haven for the worker and an institution for social justice. In recent times, as evidenced by the growth of NDLON, IDEPSCA, or UNITE HERE, we indeed see that there is a rekindled interest in promoting organized labor that meets these ends. Yet the current political and economic climate—the "New Gilded Age"[3]—has meant that these groups are now at an existential crossroads and an uncertain future, with their proliferation and outreach tenuous at best. Thus, recent developments in the labor movement beg the question: is organizing the best approach? In the contemporary moment, there is clearly much at stake for ordinary workers, which unfortunately means that the procurement of fair conditions, contracts, and autonomy is almost entirely contingent on the efficacy of labor organizations' various approaches. Our research centers around trying to answer the tactical and strategic concerns that preoccupy modern-day labor groups, with the intent that our findings help direct future organizational efforts nationwide.**

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[1] Lichtenstein, 18.

[2] Ibid. For a detailed overview of the history of labor unions in America beginning in the early 20th century, Nelson Lichtenstein's book *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* is a helpful resource for further reading.

[3] The "New Gilded Age" is a term coined by Jane McAlevey in her book *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age*.

In this paper, we specifically focus on the jornaler@s[4] of the Pasadena Community Job Center (PCJC), one of the fastest-growing forces in post-New Labor organizing.[5] Based on a quasi-qualitative statistical assessment of coded interviews we conducted at the Center, we interpolated a strong intraorganizational desire for expanding organizing efforts. We therefore argue that NDLON must realign its strategy from one centered around shallow advocacy to one focused on deep-rooted organizing in order to regain its strength as an institution with substantial social influence. We believe that if NDLON were to adopt a new organizing model—identifying organic leaders, earning the long-term commitment of union members in both the workplace and community, holding open board meetings, and electing worker representatives—then, while it is certainly the most difficult strategy for achieving powerful social change and meeting organizational goals, doing so could give rise to an emergent national precedent.

UNIONISM: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

GROWTH OF MASS UNIONISM (1920 - 1960)

Our analysis of the history of union movements begins with the fragile state of America on the brink of the Great Depression. As income inequality grew even more dramatic during the progression of the 1920s, arguments for worker rights were already beginning to gain a nationwide audience. The Progressive Era in which this growing economic polarization was situated saw a rise in unionist advocacy, whose central demand revolved around what is termed the "labor question." The "labor question" consisted of two parts: attaining a living wage "sufficient to sustain a working-class family in dignity and comfort" and developing an industrial democracy, in which workers have actual governance in the firms for which they work.[6] As the Great Depression spread throughout America, the "labor question" became an issue central to the national political environment. Furthermore, the social upheaval that followed in the wake of WWI produced a massive number of unionists, managers, and governmental experts, all of whom would propose solutions to the "labor question." Thus, the perfect conditions for a powerful union movement had been established.

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[4] Day laborers.
[5] New Labor refers to the movement beginning in the 2000s away from deep-rooted labor organizing to more shallow advocacy and mobilizing strategies. For a more detailed explanation of New Labor, refer to the section entitled "New Labor, New Rules."
[6] Ibid., 5.

Two main aspects of the 1930s New Deal Era explain the development of an environment conducive to mass unionism. First, massive corporations held a monopoly over financial power during the 1930s, and coupled with the Great Depression, this economic inequality greatly diminished the purchasing power of consumers. This resulted in a phenomenon called underconsumption, in which industries produced goods at a much higher rate than did consumers.[7] In a time when wealth was almost exclusively held by corporate giants and consumers had little ability to purchase common items, it was clear that American capitalism was failing. Thus, the union movement's goal at this time was exactly the same as the goal of the entire nation: increase the purchasing power of the working class, since that would solve the problem of underconsumption and rectify the social misery that plagued everyone but the corporate giants. This goal would become institutionalized by the National Recovery Administration, founded by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt as part of the New Deal. The second reason for the growth of mass unionism was that for minority groups at the time—African-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and other European immigrants—unions were much more than a wage-fixing institution. They were "a social, psychological fortress from which to challenge illegitimate power."[8] For them, the union represented both a higher standard of living *and* an outlet by which to achieve the democratic promise of America.

These New Deal developments—including routine strikes—provided effective and satisfying answers to the labor question; indeed, industry was beginning to become democratized. The culmination of the efforts of strikers and unionists manifested itself in the Wagner Act of 1935, which recognized the legal right of workers to organize and join a union and bargain collectively with their employers.[9] This was perhaps the single most important piece of labor legislation in the history of America. Two years later, labor won another landmark victory with the "Sit-Down" Strike at the General Motors Corporation in Michigan. This United Auto Workers (UAW) strike was successful for two reasons: first because the sit-down tactic, where workers physically occupied the factories, effectively stopped production, and second because Frank Murphy, the newly elected governor of Michigan, and President FDR, both of whom were Democrats and supported the labor

[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., 30.
[9] "Wagner Act," 2015.

movement, never deployed the national guard or army to evict the strikers.[10] The Supreme Court would later declare the sit-down tactic a violation of corporate property, but at the time it forced General Motors to settle with the UAW-CIO. This established a precedent for unions to be able to fight management without fear of retribution that only grew stronger in the era after WWII: the Era of the Labor-Management Accord.[11]

The Era of the Labor-Management Accord, dated from the end of WWII to 1973, saw the greatest improvements in the lives of workers in all of labor history. Working-class living standards doubled and unemployment greatly declined from its rates in the first half of the century.[12] Big corporations had "their own private version of the public welfare state, if only to avoid unionism, or just retain the productive loyalty of their workers."[13] This time period defined the ultimate vision of the New Deal Era union leaders; it represented the efforts of countless workers, leaders, and activists. But it was short-lived: inflation and conservative reaction beginning in the 1970s and 80s would devastate the power of American unions.

Decline of Labor Power (1960 - 2000)

During the 1960s, labor unions' vision of solidarity and social progress that characterized the 1930s was replaced by bureaucracy and self-interest, a trend that historians would later term "big labor."[14] Mild inflation in the 1950s was blamed on irresponsible labor power that forced employers to pay impossibly high wages to their workers, and the recession of 1957-58 allowed big industrial firms to launch an aggressive campaign to curtail labor power in the workplace.[15] US Steel, for example, significantly cut labor costs, arguing that doing so was necessary to increase its profits and modernize its mills. At this time, labor unions were unable to defend against this external pressure from corporations because of their own internal lethargy. Individual trade unions were now internal oligarchies, run by a select few labor professionals rather than by workers. This resulted in unions focusing on short-term gains and backdoor deals with employers rather than on long-term goals of mitigating economic inequality, ultimately detracting from the overall power of the union.

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[10] Lichtenstein, 24.
[11] The term "Era of the Labor-Management Accord" was used in Lichtenstein's book to describe the time period from WWII to 1973.
[12] Lichtenstein, 2002.
[13] Ibid., 13.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 54.

Furthermore, because these trade unions were now run by an internal bureaucracy, many workers became disillusioned with the idea of unions as bodies representative of the laborers. Rather, they began to view unions in the same light that they viewed corporations: corrupt and inactive because power was monopolized by a few rather than equitably distributed amongst the entire body of workers.

Ronald Reagan and the conservative reaction that followed the fiscal crisis of the 1970s dealt a crippling and lasting blow to labor power, a blow from which labor unions have never fully recovered. In the 1970s, American support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War caused OPEC, many of whose members were against Israel, to place an oil embargo on the US. The Western economy was founded on oil as an energy source for the movement of goods—both the trucking and transportation industry were dependent on oil—and as gasoline prices increased, so too did the price of consumer goods. The inflation that had grown sharply under Jimmy Carter led the American public to turn towards conservative leadership—the Reagan administration—for economic recovery. Reagan's election as US president in 1981 marked the beginning of a war on labor that challenged labor's firm legal standing as established by FDR in a way that no president had ever before attempted. In one case, Reagan fired 11,000 air traffic controllers who had gone on strike and destroyed their union, a symbol to employers that they had little to no obligation to their workers.[16] Even after Reagan's terms as president, however, massive corporations sustained their dominance over employees. The long economic recovery that characterized the 1990s saw growth in the overall US economy but wage stagnation for individual workers,[17] and the transition from the 20th to 21st century only extended the growing dominance of massive corporations over their employees as "big labor" evolved into its 21st century counterpart: New Labor. The following section analyzes the New Labor movement and provides insight into why it has failed as a progressive institution.

New Labor, New Rules (2000 - Present)

Unions in their current state are no longer the socially transformative institutions of the New Deal Era; rather, they are weakened shadows of their former power, focused not on raising living standards but on maintaining them as they are. Today, Americans work more hours than any other

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[16] Glass, 2008.
[17] Lichtenstein, 26.

large industrial country in the world, and inequalities in wealth have returned to a pre-New Deal Era level.[18] The disheartening collapse both of union power and of workers' living standards is evident in the numbers. In the 1990s, California's Silicon Valley—the epicenter and crowning achievement of capitalism at the time—saw real wages drop to the bottom third of all wage workers,[19] and in the first years of the new century, median wages and family incomes were still below their 1989 level.[20] A CEO in 1965 made 44 times more than a factory worker, yet in the beginning of the 21st century, that same CEO makes 400 times more than the worker.[21] And there is not one American industry in which even half of the employees are a part of a union.[22]

The eclipse of the labor movement can primarily be attributed to the weakness of American trade unions. From the New Deal to Corporate era, unions have seen an alarming diminution in their power that has inhibited them from effecting significant change in favor of workers. At the beginning of the 21st century, the 16 million organized workers represented 13.5% of the entire workforce—one-third of the size of organized labor 40 years ago.[23] Furthermore, because of their weakness, unions have lost an invaluable weapon: the strike. In 1999, 35 strikes took place with more than 1000 workers; twenty-five years ago, there were ten times as many strikes.[24] In the last decade, the energy of unionism has gained some strength, but unions now are focused on defending the status quo. Rather than fighting to raise living standards, unions now struggle to even maintain them in their current condition. Many unions, for example, *react* to company efforts to cut health-care costs rather than proactively attempting to increase these benefits. This is especially problematic because this course of action fails to establish lasting structural changes. The two most successful movements in US history—New Deal Era labor and civil rights—retained victories despite reactionary political and economic trends because they implemented structural changes that came to be accepted in the status quo.[25] People who are against unions are also in favor of bans on child labor, regulations on safety, and an eight-hour work day—all three of which were achieved by

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[18] Ibid., 6.
[19] Johnston, 1999.
[20] Bernstein, 14.
[21] Greenhouse, 1999.
[22] Lichtenstein, 6.
[23] Ibid., 20.
[24] Greenhouse.
[25] Lichtenstein.

unions. And those who find the #blacklivesmatter movement overly confrontational would never argue in favor of disenfranchising African-Americans. It is easy to take structural changes embedded in our culture for granted, but they represent the pinnacle of the triumphs and toils of past movements. It is thus undeniably important to understand how these movements institutionalized change, and how new movements may do the same.

In *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age***, Jane McAlevey categorizes labor unions into three different groups: advocacy, mobilizing, and organizing.[26] Advocacy is best described as an elite theory of power focused on one-time wins; it does not achieve lasting and structural change nor does it focus on the masses because it is led by a small group of professionals.[27] Mobilizing brings large numbers of people to the fight, but these people are the same activists over and over again; they have enough numbers to post on social media but do not have the deeply-rooted connections within the community and workplace necessary to effect lasting change.[28] Organizing, by contrast, is massive, inclusive, and collective.[29] Mass negotiations with large numbers are used to achieve meaningful structural change, and the workers themselves lead the organization rather than being led by a small group of professionals.[30] The organizing (and incidentally most effective) approach to labor is becoming a lost art as the 21st century New Labor movement increasingly favors advocacy and mobilizing.[31]**

Insight into the nature of the New Labor movement explains the current weakness of unions and their inability to establish lasting improvements in workers' lives. McAlevey views the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) as the greatest example of effective and successful organizing; it was founded on the principle that all workers, regardless of skill level, ought to be joined in one union.[32] In fact, one case study of two male dockworkers' unions, one on the East Coast and one on the West Coast, provides insight into the many differences between a CIO-type

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[26] **McAlevey, 2016. Jane McAlevey's** *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age* **provides innovative insight into the various strategies of labor unions by synthesizing empirical examples with her own personal experience as an organizer. McAlevey asserts that of the three strategies, organizing creates the most effective and lasting social change—our paper builds on this argument by demonstrating the desirability of organizing for NDLON and possible ways to integrate organizing strategies into the NDLON model.**

[27] **Ibid., 9.**

[28] **Ibid.**

[29] **Ibid.**

[30] **Ibid.**

[31] **Ibid.**

[32] **Ibid., 19.**

union over a New Labor union; both of these unions developed during the New Deal era, meaning the larger political environment exerted similar influence on both unions.[33] The East Coast dockworker union fought chiefly for money and material gains, and official corruption eventually became widespread within the bureaucracy of labor professionals.[34] Bribes bought off this Eastern union for decades, since leaders were content with accepting short-term infusions of cash in exchange for cooperation with the company.[35] By contrast, the West Coast union, which fought for control of production—the right to negotiate rules governing safety, hours, and wages—won "high-quality contracts that cemented a high level of participation, active membership, and a strong relationship between the rank and file and the union leaders."[36] The difference between the standards of the East Coast union, whose goals aligned with those of New Labor, and the West Coast union, whose vision mirrored that of the CIO, points us toward a much larger trend: the long-term shift away from deep organizing toward shallow mobilizing, and the resulting failure of progressive movements to create significant social change.

There are two factors that explain New Labor's failure to recruit more people to unions, the second one an effect of the first. With the New Labor model increasingly focusing on politics, such as backroom deals between employers and professional elites, unions can take shortcuts to strikes and unionization, which means that "workers are no longer essential to their own liberation."[37] In the New Labor Model, labor bureaucracies focus on short-term gains from employers, and their strategy to achieve such gains involves a dozen different leverage points.[38] This is incredibly problematic because rather than being the primary focus of the union professionals, workers are only one of twelve methods used to get the employer to agree to the union's terms.[39] New Labor's peripheral understanding of the workers means that in every deal made between the union and the employer, workers' considerations are only given a twelfth of the weight that they should be

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[33] Ibid., 32.
[34] Ibid., 32-33.
[35] Ibid., 33.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 17.
[38] Ibid., 51.
[39] Ibid., 52. On page 52, McAlevey provides a typical corporate campaign research schematic, produced by Andy Banks and Teresa Conrow, that maps the twelve different leverage points through which union leaders seek to negotiate with employers. The twelve leverage points are supplies & vendors, other employers (same industry), customers/service users, executives/owners/shareholders, public/civic society, media, workers & unions, parents/subsidiaries/siblings, middle management, financial institutions, government & regulations, and politicians.

receiving. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that workers are almost never present when the small army of college-educated staff makes the final negotiations with the employer in a New Labor-type union.[40] In the West Coast CIO model, by contrast, it is impossible to sideline the majority of the workforce since its approach to class struggle requires a majority of workers to strike. CIO-type models focus on the ability of workers to win life-changing contracts for themselves; in these conversations, "a pay raise—too often the chief goal of the New Labor model—is a limited win" compared to life-changing contract standards such as "control of working hours and schedules, the right to a quick response to workplace health and safety issues, the right to increased staffing and decreased workload, and the right to meaningful paid sick leave and vacation time."[41] The second reason for New Labor's ineffectiveness is the loss of the production-crippling strike. Because the war between labor professionals and business elites does not require nor even welcome regular workers, New Labor does not have the necessary base of dedicated followers for a serious, paradigm-shattering strike. Yet the New Labor movement gives no indication that it will remodel its power structure. It is much more immediately and outwardly successful for labor professionals to agree to a minimal raise in wages than for them to organize a mass strike. It is less burdensome for them to take a shortcut to achieve the appearance of real and lasting social change, even if the change is just that—an appearance. Of course, this is not to say that labor professionals and union directors are complacent in their fight for workers; rather, they are accustomed to a system that perpetuates the advocacy and mobilizing techniques, and changing their primary strategy would begin a larger shift towards a union centered around deep-level, grassroots organizing.

NDLON: Labor Going Back to the Roots

Reversing the ever-progressing trend in New Labor's approach to social justice is certainly no simple feat in any union. For the purposes of this paper, we will focus on the National Day Labor Organizing Network as a prime example of a union that could greatly expand its power base by implementing thorough organizing strategies. NDLON is headquartered in Los Angeles, reflecting the history of LA as the epicenter of day labor groups.[42] The labor history of LA also explains the many pre-existing immigrant rights advocates and organizers who were present in the

[40] Ibid., 58.
[41] Ibid., 56.
[42] Milkman, 17.

area when NDLON was first formed. In 2006, NDLON and the AFL-CIO (the nation's largest union) signed a "historic agreement to work together to improve wages and working conditions" for immigrants and laborers, an important symbolic triumph after the many immigrant rights demonstrations in Los Angeles that had preceded this agreement.[43] The many contributions of NDLON to forwarding social justice in this area, including the 2006 agreement with the AFL-CIO, are indicative of the necessity not only of developing concrete goals for the labor community, but also of acting upon those goals in a worker-centric manner. NDLON's board of directors consists of many trained labor professionals with Pablo Alvarado as the director of the union, and the organization itself has hundreds of member workers. Understandably, the chief objectives of the day laborers at NDLON are often disparate from those of the board of directors—but NDLON's leadership has a veritable relationship with its workers in that the separation between the two groups is not as distinct as many New Labor-type unions.

NDLON is currently at a crossroads: with the Trump Administration, job acquisition, and changes in NDLON's board of directors looming in the larger framework of the union, we are seeking to understand and act upon the optimal course of action for NDLON in the future. Moving forward, the strategy that NDLON chooses—advocacy, mobilizing, or organizing—will bear heavy consequences for the union itself, its member constituents, and the larger community in which it is situated. While, in the case of the two dockworkers' unions, we did not have the necessary tools and methods to evaluate how the differing approaches implicated the unions' end goals and results, we believe that our subsequent research helps us to ascertain the effectiveness of various strategies, and points us toward organizing as the best strategy to be integrated into the forward trajectory of NDLON.

Methods

In order to best assess the current state of organizing at NDLON, we turned to quasi-qualitative methodology assessments that could better elucidate general and statistically significant trends within the organization. We chose to collect the data in the form of semi-standardized interviews conducted specifically with members of the Pasadena Community Job Center (PCJC). Over the course of several weeks, we confidentially collected different *jornaler@*

[43] Ibid., 141.

narratives and converted them to transcribed typefiles to be processed by the computer program Dedoose. Our representative balanced sample (n=10) consists of 5 men and 5 women (gender) and 9 Latinos and an African-American (race, with the same ratio of interviews conducted in Spanish vs. English, respectively). This represents 25% (significant) of the roughly 40 *jornaler@s* currently enrolled at the PCJC. Ethical issues of research design and inclusion were not addressed by an IRB, but rather by the PCJC's oversight and individual subjects' consent agreements. To our knowledge, both Lee and Amitay conducted safe academic practice and have no conflicts of interest apparent from the research design or implementation (aside from casual involvement, hopes, and vision for the organizing efforts of NDLON).

From Dedoose, we derived 63 codes, of which 45 are functional subcodes.[44] Those codes categorized over 392 data inputs and were analyzed through tool functions such as code application and code co-occurrence. In our specific case, code co-occurrence proved to be the most useful analysis instrument because it quantifies the strength of the relation between two codes (ideas, concepts, descriptions) throughout our sample. Thus, to determine which code co-occurrences were statistically significant for further extrapolation and discussion, we conducted an independence chi-squared (χ^2) test with a rejection of the null hypothesis when $p<0.05$ and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (co-occurrence) when $p<0.01$:

$$\chi^2 = n\{\sum_{i=1}^{r}\sum_{j=1}^{c}\frac{F_{ij}^2}{r_i c_j} - 1\}$$

where F_{ij} is the number of observations in the ij^{th} cell; r_i is the total of the i^{th} row; $i=1,2,\ldots,r$; and c_j is the total of the j^{th} column, $j=1,2,\ldots,c$, with r=c=63 (remember that certain cells are void). In order to eliminate the probability that the null hypothesis is correct at values $0.01<p<0.05$, we conducted more advanced nullity tests for independence:

$$H_0 : \pi_{ij} = [\pi_{ij}]^2$$

where π_{ij} denotes the probability that an observation falls in row i and column j in the code matrix for any two occurrences defined as "D" and "F":

[44] See Appendices A and B for reference.

$$\pi_{ij} = P(D = i, F = j)$$

As a rule of thumb, those with code co-occurrence above 5 (i.e., half of the largest magnitude, 10) were included in the next results section. It is these code co-occurrences that best demonstrated the larger trends, per the interviews, that currently pervade the organizing status quo at NDLON. In the section below, we study the emergent patterns from multiple perspectives.

RESULTS

Each co-occurrence trend was categorized into different focus data groups that might yield better points of consideration and deliberation. The categories, and their data points herein, are in decreasing order of importance (lower indices of correlation).

The Center: Coordination, Services, and Policies

Current coordination and positive reception = 10
Positive reception and classes = 10
Equipment and negative perception = 6
Slow/little work and negative perception = 5
Classes and positive change = 5
Positive change and current coordination = 5

From the sample of the interviews that we gathered, the most important trend that emerged was that the current coordination or "administration"—Luís Valentan and Gerardo Santos—is very well received at the Center. Almost half of that good reception can be attributed to positive changes that the workers have noticed, which can be extrapolated from the other categories below; namely, more classes and better outreach/campaigning. More specifically, the classes offered have been one of the key popular services at the Center, with many of the interviewees seeking further educational enrichment in the long run.

While an influx in pedagogical services have been embraced and welcomed according to the *jornaler@s*, other changes have seen wide criticism (though not as large as the popularity of classes). These include less and less work available per *jornaler@*, as well as an unpopular blanket equipment (boot) policy. Anecdotal information from the interviews pins the former on the newly introduced lottery system, the economy, and increased membership (as well as other more minor factors). The latter was not shared among most interviewees, but was heavily emphasized in a few (i.e., men

working in moving and construction). These trends should indicate both good news as well as more pointed critique that could help improve the Center's approach and services. Further discussion ought to follow to facilitate consensus and compromise among the *jornaler@s* and coordinators.

Looking Towards the Future

Outside Pasadena and organizing/outreach/campaigning = 8
Slow/little work and outreach/organizing/campaigning = 8
Outreach/campaigning/organizing and positive change = 7
Positive reception and organizing/outreach/campaigning = 6

The future is clearly important to the *jornaler@s*. This category had the largest mean (average) correlation index of <7.25>. All trends listed under this group have organizing/outreach/campaigning as a strong key towards developing the organization in the future. Rather than focusing on developing services, stronger mandates, or reinforced coordination, the *jornaler@s* emphasized self-reliance and community engagement to tackle some of the main issues at the Center, as well as promote current strongsuits. This includes working with other NDLON Centers outside Pasadena and further outreach/networking with potential employers. Those should be the organization's prime goals going forward, to better facilitate and enable our members to seek out campaigns and solutions *themselves* to their ongoing hardships and obstacles. This is borne out by the correlative data.

Employers

Deviation and cleaning = 7
Deviation (from job description) and wage theft = 6
Wage theft and cleaning = 6
Positive reception and fair treatment= 6
Deviation and babysitting = 5
Cleaning and babysitting = 5

While less unanimous in their agreement than the broader support for the current modus operandi and organizing strategies, interviewees still expressed certain causative claims about employers. The main trends that can be observed in the concurrent data are that cleaning/babysitting and women *jornaleras* have been comparatively neglected (remember that

women at the PCJC are all nearly universally in those professions), with stronger correlative deviation (multitasking) than in "male" occupations and stronger prone to wage theft. Wage theft, in and of itself, was strongly correlated to deviation, and should therefore be considered jointly. Deviation was slightly stronger in cleaning than in babysitting, and the two professions were often coupled (exhibiting strong deviation). Going forward, NDLON should think of ways to reduce instances of job deviation and wage theft, as well as how to better include the *jornaleras* at the Center.

The *Jornaler@s*: Dynamics and Internal Relationships

Negative reception and disunity = 6 *Disrespect and disunity= 5*

The correlation isn't as strong in this category, and there are relatively fewer trends and a lower mean index of <5.5>, *nevertheless* that does not mean that these data points are less significant. Compared to a mean correlation index of <4> for positive reception/fair treatment and unity, our *jornaler@s* widely feel greater internal conflict than harmony. Beyond that, even the code application chart exhibits 17 applications of disunity compared to 11 applications of unity throughout the ten interviews.[45] Anecdotal information in our sample reveals that these feelings are less ubiquitous but are nonetheless strong. Disrespect and internal conflict among the *jornaler@s* must be surprassed in order to promote the goals of the Center and organization.

Discussion: Implications and Moving Forward

Based on the results that we gathered, we believe that there is impetus, within and outside the Center, for NDLON's day laborers to get involved in deep-rooted organizing. Without prompt, many of the jornaler@s first agreed that organizing, as an activity, is intrinsically positive and will lead to progress. Likewise, many of our subjects mentioned that organizing ought to happen outside of Pasadena for it to be an effective means of realizing such positive change, which stands in contrast to the current disunity (both internal and among other Centers) that NDLON members feel. Lastly, there was strong consensus that specific issues—such as wage theft, job description deviation, slow/little employment, and gender inequities—would best be tackled through organizing tactics rather alternative methods. As Interviewee G says about previous Job Center coordinator

[45] **See Appendix A.**

Ángel Olvera, "we ought to organize more. That's our strength; we have strength in numbers and passion. Ever since [he] came in, though, focus shifted away from that." Aragón observed a similar trend when she stated that whereas Ángel was much more focused on connecting laborers with work, Gerardo and Luís place a much greater emphasis on organizing and on long-term structural achievements.[46] All of this is to say that, at least in our representative sample at the Pasadena Job Center, laborers stated it was time to consciously change course from a service-oriented and passive labor model to one that involves greater grassroots participation and inclusivity.

There are several ways in which NDLON may go about committing to permanent structural changes. In order to strengthen its power base, the first requisite is to bridge the gap between the visions of the leaders and the aims of the laborers. Fortunately, this task is not as difficult as in many other unions—NDLON's board of directors meets in the same room in which the day laborers wait for employers. Furthermore, the members of the board have very friendly and informal relationships with the laborers as opposed to the strained and distant behavior characteristic of many employer-employee relationships. Still, a possible adjustment to NDLON's leadership strategy would be introducing open board meetings, in which all laborers are invited to attend forums held by the NDLON leaders. Open board meetings would lessen the disparity between NDLON's leadership and general body by encouraging the mass of workers to participate in discussions pertaining to NDLON's mission statement: to "foster safer, more humane environments for day laborers, both men and women, to earn a living, contribute to society, and integrate into the community."[47] People transition from unthinking masses to "serious and highly invested actors" when they see their own knowledge in practice and exercise their own agency by becoming leaders themselves.[48] Involving ordinary people in a power-structure helps them understand their own power, since "people participate to the degree they understand—but they also understand to the degree they participate."[49] Seriously engaging the mass workforce in discussions that would otherwise be exclusive to the director encourages their long-term investment in the union. Of course, open board meetings require that the leaders be strategic in their choice of the topics to be discussed, since members need to feel included and engaged in the meetings. Lizbeth Mateo, an

[46] Aragón.
[47] "NDLON Mission and Vision," 2017.
[48] McAlevey, 5.
[49] Ibid., 6.

organizer from Pasadenans Organizing for Progress (POP), observes from her experience that a meeting held on immigration rights would not function smoothly if the meeting were held in English, since this instantly alienates Spanish-speaking workers and discourages them from attending or investing in future meetings.[50] Similarly, discussions regarding a union's politics—a few examples being policy questions, data on expenditures, and questions about funding—are generally uninteresting for many workers. To this end, NDLON would benefit from announcing the specific topics of discussion to workers before holding an open board meeting. Doing so is effective on two levels: it sends a message to workers that the board wants to include them in high-level discussions, and it encourages them to decide for themselves the issues in which they are most invested. But open board meetings alone will not solve the disconnect between the administration and workers of NDLON.

The very different realities between the lives of laborers and those of union directors means that bridging the organizer-worker gap requires more than just open board meetings. For laborers, keeping their job or jobs is their priority, since it is often their only source of income. Therefore, while they acknowledge the goals of NDLON (i.e. the minimum wage ordinance in Pasadena), they are unlikely to fight for an extra dollar if it means losing their jobs. Union staff do not face the same dilemma, since their source of income comes from challenging business owners—the exact action that deters many workers from joining a union. Furthermore, many workers perceive their union as weak, creating a cycle in which workers do not invest their full effort into the union, and the union is rendered ineffective because workers do not fully invest in it. From her ten years of experience as an organizer, Mateo suggests two ways to break this cycle: employing innovative strategies to excite workers and avoiding complications with the politics of the union. Unions need to be creative and effective in the work they do; this shows workers that their union does indeed have leverage, which encourages them to invest much more into it. Such creativity, as proven with the example of the West Coast dockworker union, requires a CIO-type model, since this structure engages the most amount of workers at the deepest level. The second method that Mateo cites involves an issue that she encountered while working at ROC (the Restaurant Opportunity Center) located in New York. There, ROC had formed a coalition with three other large unions on a campaign for greater

[50] Mateo.

solidarity amongst restaurant employees. However, to move forward with the campaign, ROC constantly needed permission from the unions, who did not understand the restaurant workers as well as ROC did. This invariably impeded the progress of the campaign, which was completed in two years—double the time of the original goal because the first year was spent on getting the "go-ahead" from its union partners. Of course, this example is not meant to discourage the formation of coalitions; on the contrary, coalitions are an incredibly useful tool for aggregating a massive base of support capable of effecting lasting and meaningful change. Rather, the example is meant to demonstrate the necessity of careful and deliberate strategizing amongst the leaders and workers of a union in order to avoid frivolous quarrels over policy.

Additionally, while most workers may not be interested in attending every board meeting, NDLON could adopt a model in which a group of elected workers acts as representatives at board meetings; the representatives would attend every conference held by the board to ensure that the voice of the workers is consistently heard. The number of workers should always be equal to, if not more than, the amount of directors, since this speaks to the amount of power that workers wield in the union. New representatives would be elected in a one to two year cycle by the workers themselves, and both Mateo and McAlevey find that these representatives are almost always what are called "organic leaders." Having worked in the organizing business for over ten years, Mateo finds that workers are very socially perceptive in that they "know the ones who 'talk the talk' versus the ones with genuine dedication and leadership."[51] This means that during elections for new representatives, workers will consistently pick the one who best represents their interests—an "organic leader" on whom the masses rely and trust.

Organic leadership identification enables the union to tap into an enormous amount of social networks, greatly expanding the union's base of followers to include both workers and their social connections. The process of organic leadership identification, as McAlevey describes, requires organizers to analyze the worker's pre-existing social groups, converse with workers, and observe the interactions between different members as well as members' work ethics.[52] Identifying an effective leader from within the workforce therefore mandates that pre-existing leaders commit a large amount of time to the process. However, the results of correctly identifying an organic leader are

[51] Ibid.
[52] McAlevey, 17.

incredibly rewarding. In any union, the members' loyalty can be traced most directly to the organic leader as opposed to a director on the union's board, since the workers have pre-established relationships with the organic leader. This means that if the union is able to accurately identify and draw the organic leader to its cause, then it also gains secure access to the workers, who are much more likely to support the union once they see that their own personal leader is also a supporter of it. In order to determine if an organic leader has been correctly identified, labor organizers need to perform different structure tests. For example, the organizers should require organic leaders to ask their own unit or shift in a factory for their support of the union. If the worker-leader is able to get a supermajority within one or two shifts, then the organizer has correctly identified an organic leader.

Structure tests are especially important to NDLON's most recent campaign: the Minimum Wage Ordinance (MWO), which seeks to raise awareness about legislation passed in the City of Pasadena that increased the minimum wage in small businesses from $10 to $10.50 an hour, and from $10.50 to $12 an hour in larger businesses.[53] By July of 2018, the MWO's goal is to raise Pasadena's minimum wage to $12 in small businesses and to $13.25 in larger businesses. Julieta Aragón, the head director of the campaign and a long-standing board member for NDLON, says that the biggest difficulty she has with the minimum wage ordinance is engaging workers with whom she meets—often from the restaurant industry, these workers know they can instantly be replaced and therefore want nothing to do with an ordinance that could threaten their jobs.[54] This complication is extremely common to any union, and addressing it requires a deeper-level relationship with the workers since trust is a prerequisite to any action asked of them. Therefore, the MWO campaign could benefit greatly from identifying organic leadership. By carefully observing the worker-leader within a restaurant or other business, then specifically targeting that individual for his or her support of the wage ordinance, the campaign would effectively spread awareness to a vast array of workers. The organic leader's endorsement of the MWO would trigger responses from his or her social groups both within the workplace and the community, meaning that the message of the campaign would reach workers, family members, and friends. The same is true of any worker—each has access to a wide social network—but it is most effective with an organic leader since it is he or she who can most quickly and effectively reach other workers. We have spoken with Aragón about

[53] Aragón.
[54] Ibid.

organic leadership identification, and she has already begun implementing the process in her campaign, training different staff members to direct their efforts towards these perceived worker-leaders. Luís Valentan, one of the two head administrators at the PCJC, integrated the same organic leadership identification strategy at an *asamblea*[55] on October 25, 2017, when he chose five jornaler@s to be "leaders" for further meeting and strategizing.

While preliminary signs point to a labor group that is seeking to reclaim its organizing heritage and expand its grassroots capabilities, the organization is teetering on a threshold. Because of NDLON's great influence on labor and civil rights politics, its ongoing existential identity crisis and decisions on where to proceed over the next couple of years will ultimately predict the viability of the entire workers' movement. Indeed, if NDLON works with allied organizations to tap into deep-rooted desire for change—surpassing internal conflicts and amassing a dedicated base for higher wages, injury compensation, wage theft protections, immigration status amnesty, and political representation—then it might allow for the whole of unionism to earn the national spotlight once again. On the other hand, the Trump Administration has the upper hand in the current moment, and one wrong move could lead to the fragmentation and demise of NDLON. The decline of such a prominent labor group as NDLON would send signal across the nation that the health of the movement is at stake. We hope that our research and recommendations in this paper will act as a wake-up call and catalyst for paradigmal change in the near future at the organization, as it is our sincere hope that deep labor organizing will be more widely streamlined, consolidated, and adopted.

[55] **Workers' assembly.**

Conclusion

In less than a century, labor unions have undergone numerous shifts, from dramatic increases in their sociopolitical leverage in the 1930s to a gradual decline that began in the 1970s and continues into the modern era. And despite its many admirable accomplishments, NDLON could greatly benefit from a series of changes within its leadership system and body of members. Through holding open board meetings, avoiding bureaucratic conflicts, utilizing innovative organizing strategies, implementing a system of regularly elected worker representatives, and identifying organic leadership, we strongly believe that NDLON will act as a leader in the movement from shallow advocacy to deep organizing—a movement reminiscent of the incredible power wielded by New Deal Era unions, and a movement capable of effecting lasting social justice for Pasadena, the larger labor epicenter of Los Angeles, and the United States as a whole.

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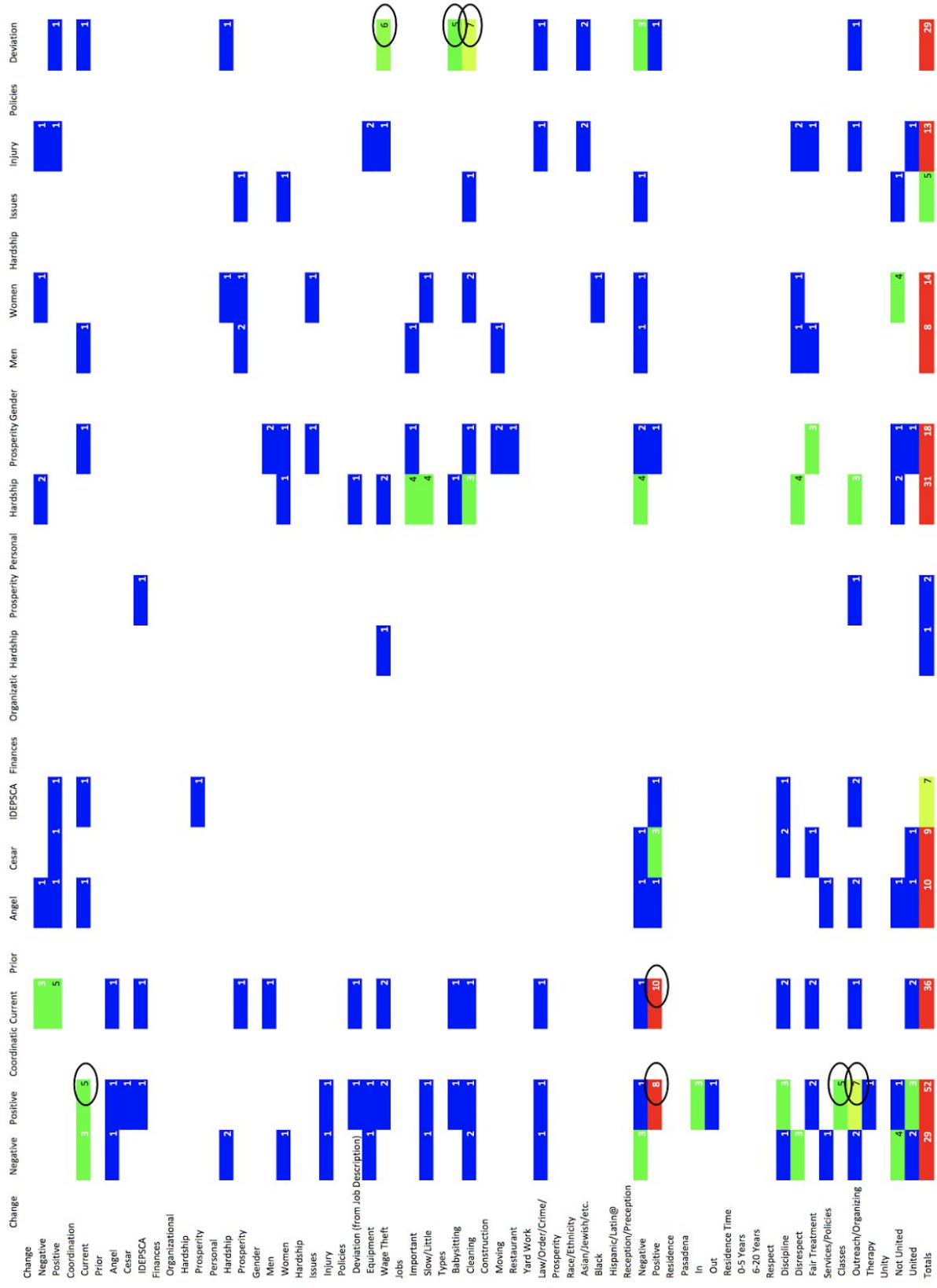
Appendix A

Totals	Interview A.docx	Interview B.docx	Interview C.docx	Interview D.docx	Interview E.docx	Interview F.doc	Interview G.docx	Interview H.docx	Interview I.docx	Interview J.docx	Codes
											Change
11				1			7		2	1	Negative
20	1	2		2	5	1	5	2		2	Positive
											Coordination
18	3	2		2	3		4	2		2	Current
											Prior
6	1	1					1			3	Angel
4		1			1		2				Cesar
5		1					2			2	IDEPSCA
											Finances
											Organizational
1								1			Hardship
1										1	Prosperity
											Personal
11		1			1		4	3	2		Hardship
6		1				3	1			1	Prosperity
											Gender
3						1	2				Men
6	1				2	1	2				Women
											Hardship
1						1					Issues
7						2			4	1	Injury
											Policies
5					3				2		Deviation (from
8				2		5			1		Equipment
10					2			4	3	1	Wage Theft
											Jobs
14		1		1		3	1	2	3	3	Important
12	1	1		1	2	1	2	2	1	1	Slow/Little
											Types
2					2						Babysitting
12	1				5	1	3		1	1	Cleaning
4		1		1		1		1			Construction
5	1			2		2					Moving
4	1	2		1							Restaurant
3		1				1				1	Yard Work
9	2		1	1				1	4		Law/Order/Crime/
1	1										Prosperity
											Race/Ethnicity
6	1								4	1	Asian/Jewish/etc.
4	4										Black
6	4				1				1		Hispanic/Latin@
											Reception/Preception
32	2	2		4	4	5	6	3	5	1	Negative
34	1	5	1	4	9		4	3	2	5	Positive
											Residence
											Pasadena
5		2		1	1			1			In
10	1	1		1	1		1	2	1	2	Out
											Residence Time
4	1				1	1				1	0-5 Years
2		1					1				6-20 Years
											Respect
8		1		3			4				Discipline
13	1				1		4	2	5		Disrespect
11	1	1	1	2			2	1	2	1	Fair Treatment
3										3	Services/Policies
11		1		1	6			2		1	Classes
24		4		2	3	1	5	3	1	5	Outreach/Organizing
2	1	1									Therapy
											Unity
17	1	2		2	2	1	4	1	1	3	Not United
11	1		1	2	1		2	2	1	1	United
32	36	4	36	59	31	69	38	46	44	Totals	

Appendix B


Change
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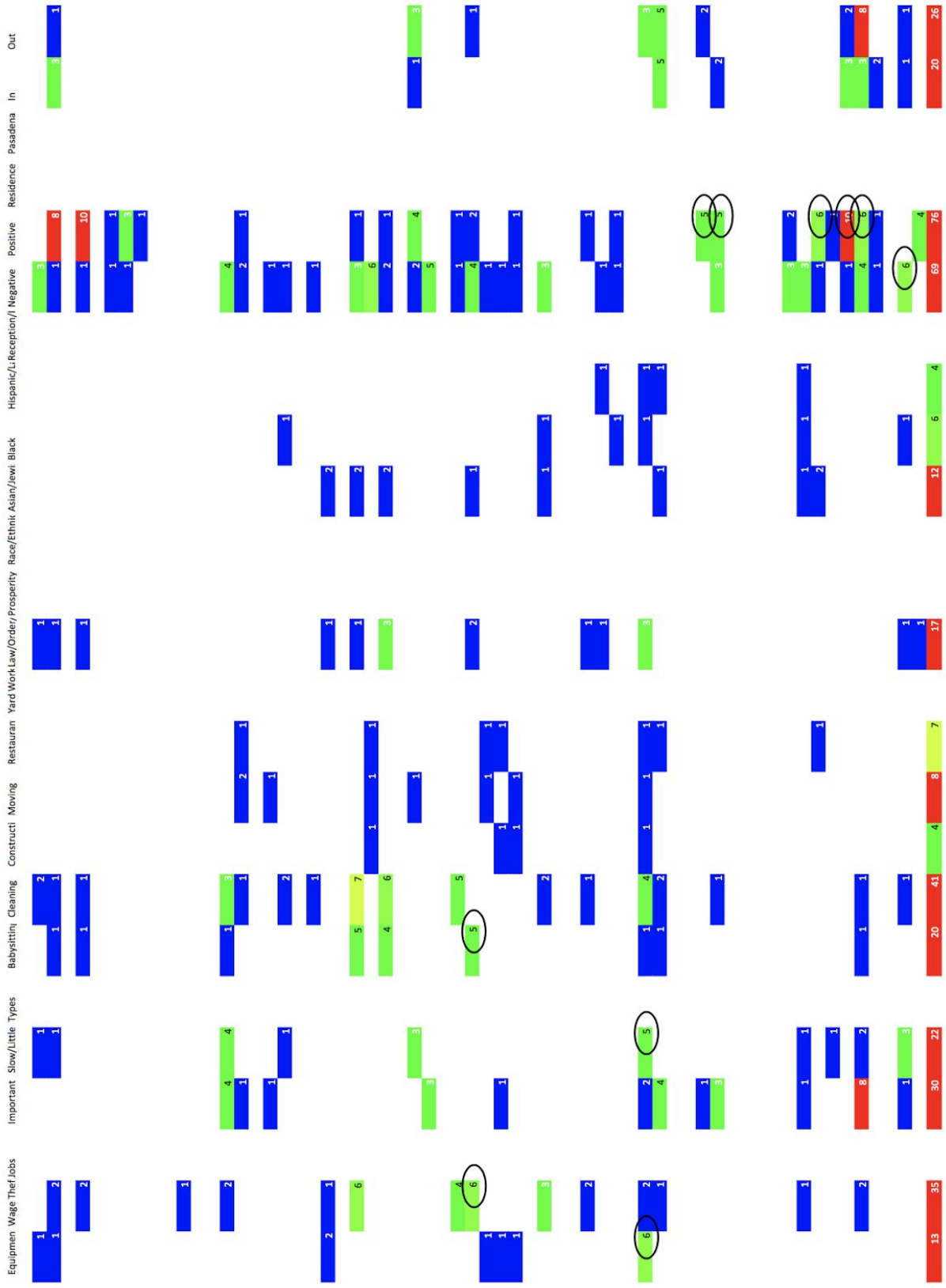
Positive
Coordination
Current
Prior
Angel
Cesar
IDEPSCA
Finances
Organizational
Hardship
Prosperity
Personal
Hardship
Prosperity
Gender
Men
Women
Hardship
Issues
Injury
Policies
Deviation (from Job Description)
Equipment
Wage Theft
Jobs
Important
Slow/Little
Types
Babysitting
Cleaning
Construction
Moving
Restaurant
Yard Work
Law/Order/Crime/
Prosperity
Race/Ethnicity
Asian/Jewish/etc.
Black
Hispanic/Latin@
Reception/Preception
Negative
Positive
Residence
Pasadena
In
Out
Residence Time
0-5 Years
6-20 Years
Respect
Discipline
Disrespect
Fair Treatment
Services/Policies
Classes
Outreach/Organizing
Therapy
Unity
Not United
United
Totals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Negative
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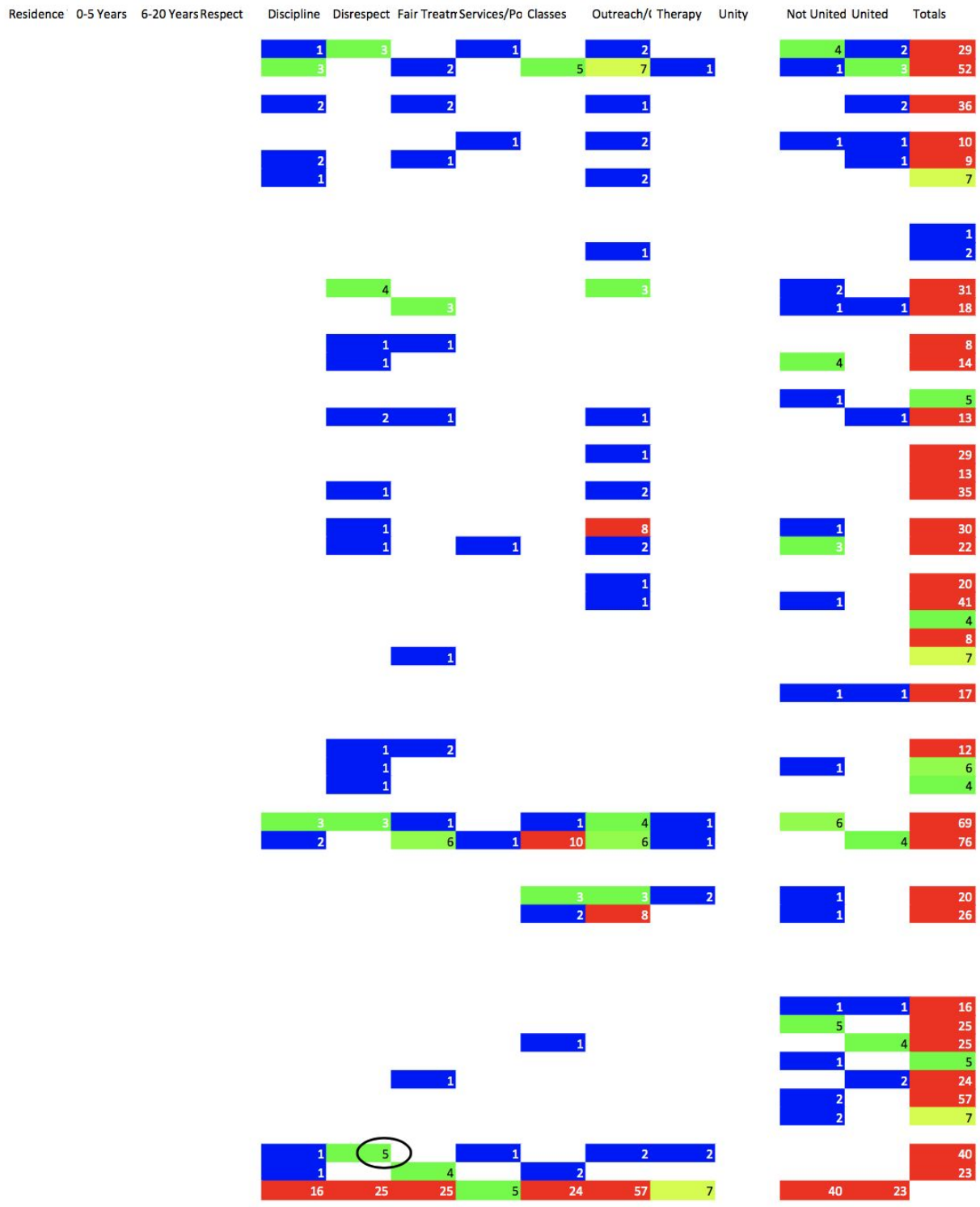
Residence
0-5 Years
6-20 Years
Respect
Discipline
Disrespect
Fair Treatm
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Classes
Outreach/(
Therapy
Unity
Not United
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Totals