

ORGANIZING WOMEN:
The Nature and Process of Union Organizing Efforts among US Women
Workers since the mid-1990s

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The relationship between American working women and the US labor movement can neither be easily described nor categorized. In part this is because women's participation and experience in the labor movement differ so greatly across industry, region, union, occupation, and ethnic background. But mostly it is a consequence of the inevitable contradictions that arise when the proportion of women in the labor movement continues to grow at an escalating pace, while, for most unions and labor federations, the proportion of women in top leadership and staff positions has increased incrementally at best, even in many of the unions where women predominate.

Nowhere are these contradictions more evident than in organizing. While the majority of private sector union organizing campaigns continue to take place in industries and occupations where women are in the minority, organizing victories—through both certification elections and voluntary recognition campaigns—continue to be disproportionately concentrated in bargaining units where women predominate. Public sector organizing victories also tend to be concentrated among women workers. Win rates have been especially high in units with high percentages of women of color, particularly in health care, hotels, food service, building services, home care, and light manufacturing. As a result of these trends, women have accounted for the majority of new workers organized each year since at least the mid-1980s, and African-American women represent the only demographic group where union density has been increasing. At the same time, membership losses in unionized manufacturing industries, where male workers predominate, continue to escalate each year.

These disproportionate victories among women workers suggest that the face of the US labor movement is rapidly changing. Although, the proportion of union members who are women still lags behind women's participation in the workforce, that gap is rapidly closing. If

women continue to outpace men in new organizing efforts, whether by accident or design, in the very near future, the overwhelmingly male leadership of the American labor movement will face a membership that is majority female.

This paper examines the role played by gender in union organizing activity and success in the US across a wide range of organizing environments and company, bargaining unit, and union characteristics. Specifically, it examines the impact of corporate structure, company characteristics, bargaining unit demographics, employer and union tactics, and organizer background on election outcomes across bargaining units where women predominate, in mixed units, and in units where men. Most important it looks at the intersection of gender, race, and union strategies and how that has played out in labor's continued efforts at revitalization through organizing.

Our discussion is divided into four parts. In the first section we use national employment, union membership, union density, and workforce demographic data to examine changing patterns in employment, union membership, and union density for women workers across major industries starting in the mid-1980s that set the context for organizing efforts and outcomes in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Second, we present summary data for all NLRB elections from 1997-2002¹, comparing changes in certification election activity and outcomes in industries where women and women of color are concentrated versus those where they are not. We supplement this information with summary data on non-NLRB victories in both public and private sector organizing campaigns compiled by the AFL-CIO *Work in Progress* reports (AFL-CIO 2003).

¹ We focus on the period from 1997-2002 both because it is the period after new organizing initiatives were launched under the new leadership of the AFL-CIO and, because, thanks to the *Work in Progress* reports, it is the only period for which we have any national level data on the growing number of major organizing victories outside of the NLRB, including public sector elections and voluntary recognitions in both the public and private sectors.

In the third section, we present a more micro analysis, using survey data to examine differences in organizing campaign characteristics and outcomes across gender groups, reflecting back on comparable data from earlier research to track differences and similarities in our findings over time, since we first started conducting research on organizing in the mid-1980s. Finally, in the conclusion, we pull together the implications of all our findings for the future of the relationship between women and the labor movement.

Background on women and organizing in the US

Women are in the workforce today in numbers nearly equal to men. Still, a combination of outright discrimination and gender-based occupational segregation has left the majority of women trapped in low-paying jobs with little or no benefits or opportunity for advancement (Hirsch and MacPherson 2003; Kim 2002; Spalter-Roth, Hartmann, and Collins 1994; Gibelman 2003). Today, the median wage for women continues to lag at 77 percent of male weekly earnings (Hartmann 2003). There continues to be a glass ceiling preventing women from gaining access to leadership positions in both corporate or government jobs. Even more damaging is the pervasiveness of the ‘sticky floor,’ the combination of forces that confine the majority of women to low wage occupations. Although there are certainly structural and cultural factors that contribute to the wage gap, as much as a third of pay disparities between men and women are directly attributable to sex discrimination (Hartmann 2003).

While many women had great hopes that the anti-discrimination legislation enacted in the 1970s and 1980s would result in major gains for women in all sectors of the economy, it has become increasingly clear that labor unions are the only major US institution equipped to help women overcome these barriers in the workplace. According to the most recent data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, unionized women earn an average of 31 percent more than non-

union women (2003b), and, these gains remain significant even in studies where researchers have controlled for differences in education, training, and occupation (Spalter-Roth, Hartmann, and Collins 1994).

Despite the growing number of women in the workplace, women continue to be underrepresented in the labor movement. Although the percentage of union members who are women has more than doubled from 20 percent in 1960 to 42 percent in 2002, it still lags behind women's actual participation in the workplace (BLS 2003). Traditionally, this was seen by many, both inside and outside the labor movement, as evidence of women's disinterest in unions, with women being viewed by many as extremely difficult, if not impossible, to organize.

Yet, for more than two decades, research has consistently found that the lower unionization rate for women is less reflective of their attitudes towards unions than a confluence of economic and historical factors. Rather, these studies have found women to have more positive attitudes towards unions and more likely to vote for unions than their male counterparts (Kochan 1979; Schur and Kruse 1992; Bronfenbrenner 1997a; Freeman and Rogers 1999, Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2004). By 1994, in her summary of research on gender and organizing, Marion Crain argued convincingly "The once prevalent view that women are 'unorganizable' has fallen into disrepute" (1994:227).

In fact, as shown by labor historians such as Ruth Milkman (1985) and Alice Kessler-Harris (1982), women have never been less interested in organizing than men, whether "cotton mill girls" in the early 1900s or waitresses and department store clerks in the 1930s. They simply have had less opportunity because they have been concentrated in industries in the finance, service, retail, and agricultural sector, which have been historically neglected by the labor movement. At the same time women have been underrepresented in industries such as

construction, heavy industry, and transportation where unions have traditionally concentrated their efforts. Similarly, women workers are much more concentrated in temporary and contract employment ill-suited to the traditional NLRB certification election process. Still, as our previous research has shown, women have made up the majority of new workers organized at least since the mid-1980s (Bronfenbrenner 1997a; Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2004).

It was not until very recently that industrial relations research took much interest in the subject of women and union organizing. In the 1980s that all changed. In a labor climate dominated by plant closings in steel and broken strikes at PATCO and Phelps Dodge, a new wave of union organizing activity was taking place among university clerical workers, hospital and nursing home workers, textile and garment workers in the south, and state and local government workers across the country.

The majority of these workers were women, and their victories not only inspired “Norma Rae” and “9 to 5,” they also became the focus of a new wave of studies on women and organizing, particularly focused on organizing among white collar workers. There was an increasing talk of “a women’s way of organizing,” suggesting that the unions most successful at organizing clerical workers had achieved their gains through slow, person-to-person contact, with less of an emphasis on aggressive, confrontational tactics and more of an emphasis on personal relationships (Hurd and McElvaine 1988, Hoerr 1997).

Many at that time looked to the millions of unorganized clerical workers as the source for labor’s revitalization, believing, in the words of the 9 to 5’s founder, Karen Nussbaum, that

It wouldn’t be long . . . before women workers, led by secretaries, file clerks, and bank tellers, would expand the women’s movement out of the middle class and into the workplace. The voice of working women would transform the labor movement. A great wave of organizing would sweep the country, bringing women into unions by the millions (Nussbaum 1999: 55).

Although clerical organizing, particularly in universities and the public sector, was an important element in organizing gains in the 1980s, as Nussbaum readily admits her prophecy was only partially correct. Although several hundred thousand women organize each year, it is among women in health care, hotels, food service, home care, and light manufacturing, not clerical workers, that labor's resurgence in organizing has been concentrated. In fact, in all the debate over sectoral organizing and jurisdictional disputes, today, no union is currently making clerical workers a primary focus of their organizing activities.

While it took some time for the industrial relations community to catch up with the changing patterns of organizing women workers, today research on women and organizing has shifted its focus to organizing among immigrant women particularly in industries such as health care, hotels, building services, food service, and laundries. These studies emphasize the important role of community based organizing and building on already established ethnic and community organizations for organizing immigrant workers. And, because of the contingent nature of the employment structures in which these workers must organize, the research also stresses the need to go beyond traditional NLRB structures to run company- or industry-wide recognition campaigns (Waldinger et al 1998; Needleman 1998; Milkman 2000).

Yet in the end, what is most striking, is that, despite how important women and women of color, have been to labor's recent organizing gains, how little research is being done on women and organizing and how much more we need to learn.

Method and sources

This study is based on data collected from a combination of sources. The primary source for national employment, union density, and demographic data is the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) on-line data from the monthly establishment survey (BLS 2003a). Additional union

density and demographic information were derived from Current Population Survey (CPS) data compiled from the BLS “Current Population Survey: Merged Outgoing Rotation Groups with Earnings Data” (BLS 2003b).

The national NLRB data are compiled from specialized databases prepared by BNA Plus covering all NLRB certification elections that took place from January 1, 1997 through December 31, 2002. These databases include election information on company name, petitioning union, number of eligible voters, election type, vote count, outcome, and certification date (BNA Plus 2002; 2003). For the elections in which the bargaining unit’s industrial classification was not recorded, we used on-line data sources, such as Lexis-Nexis and Hoovers, to identify the proper industrial classification for the company and bargaining unit listed in the BNA database. These data are supplemented by information on non-NLRB campaigns compiled from the AFL-CIO *Work in Progress* reports from 1997-2002 (AFL-CIO 2003) and interviews and discussions with organizing directors and lead organizers from those unions most actively organizing outside the NLRB process, including SEIU, HERE, UNITE, CWA, and AFSCME.

More micro-level data on NLRB campaign characteristics are based on findings from a study commissioned in May 2000 by the United States Trade Deficit Review Commission to update Bronfenbrenner’s previous research on the impact of capital mobility on union organizing and first contract campaigns in the US private sector (Bronfenbrenner 2002; Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2002; 2003a; 2003b). Using surveys, personal interviews, documentary evidence, and electronic databases, we compiled detailed data on election background, organizing environment, bargaining unit demographics, company characteristics and tactics, labor board charges and determinations, union characteristics and tactics, and election and first contract outcomes for a random sample of 412 NLRB certification election campaigns held in 1998 and 1999.

Employment, union membership and union density patterns for women workers

For more than a decade we have witnessed a well established pattern in the US of slow job growth coupled with declining employment in the manufacturing sector, where male workers predominate, and expanding employment in the service and public sector, where there are higher concentrations of female workers and workers of color. For the most part, changes in union membership paralleled employment trends, declining in manufacturing and generally increasing in the service and public sectors. Yet these overall trends fail to capture significant race and gender variation, within and across economic sectors (BLS 2003; Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2002).

Table 1: Women and women of color as a proportion of the workforce and union membership, 1980-2002

	1985		1990		2002	
	Workforce	Union members	Workforce	Union members	Workforce	Union Members
All women	47%	37%	48%	39%	48%	42%
White women	40%	29%	40%	30%	39%	33%
Women of color	7%	8%	8%	9%	9%	10%
African American women	6%	6%	6%	7%	6%	7%
Hispanic women	3%	2%	4%	3%	5%	4%

As described in Table 1, women's representation in the workforce has remained fairly stable since the mid-1980s, averaging between 47 percent (1985) to 48 percent (1990 to 2002). However, during this same time period, the proportion of union members who are women has steadily increased from 37 percent in 1985 to 42 percent by the end of 2002. These changes are even more significant for women of color. While the proportion of union members who are white women increased from 29 percent to 33 percent, an increase of 14 percent, the proportion of union members who are women of color increased by as much as 38 percent during the same period, from 7 percent to 10 percent. Much of that increase came from Hispanic workers, who went from 2 percent of all union members in 1985 to 4 percent today. Yet, it is African

American women who are the only demographic group to account for a larger percentage of union membership (7 percent) than they do the workforce as a whole (6 percent).

The increasingly important role played by women and women of color in the labor movement is even more striking when we look at changing patterns in the number of employed workers versus union members. Since 1985 the overall number in the workforce has increased from 94.5 million to 122.0 million, while the labor movement lost nearly a million members, dropping from 17 million in 1985 to 16.1 million in 2002. However, because so much of the membership losses were in industries where men predominate, the number of male union members dropped from 11.3 million to 9.3 million between 1985 and 2002, while the number of female members increased from 5.7 million to 6.8 million. Thirty percent (300,000) of the increase in female members between 1985 and 2002 were women of color.

Table 2: Changes in the number of workers and union members by race and gender, 1985-2002 (in millions)

	1985		1990		1995		2000		2002	
	Workers	Members	Workers	Members	Workers	Members	Workers	Members	Workers	Members
All workers	94.5	17.0	103.9	16.7	110.0	16.4	120.8	16.6	122.0	16.1
Men	51.0	11.3	54.8	10.6	57.7	9.9	62.9	9.6	63.4	9.3
Women	43.5	5.7	49.1	6.2	52.4	6.4	57.9	6.7	58.6	6.8
White women	37.2	4.5	41.6	4.9	43.6	5.0	47.4	5.2	47.8	5.2
Women of color	6.3	1.2	7.5	1.3	8.8	1.5	10.6	1.5	10.8	1.5

As these data show, while overall membership numbers remained relatively stable for most of the last decade and a half, membership growth failed to keep up with employment growth, resulting in a continuation of the steady decline in union density levels that began a half a century ago. However, because these changes were not experienced equally across sectors, they had differential effects on union density levels for male and female workers. For example, during the six-year period between 1997 and 2002, the proportion of union members in manufacturing who were women declined only slightly from 32 percent to 31 percent (BLS

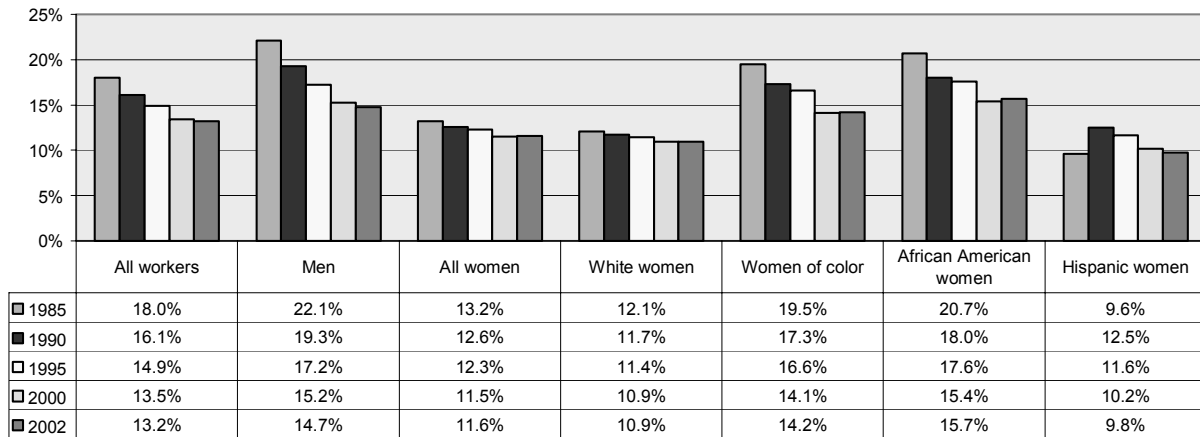
2003b). Yet, as described in Table 3 below, during this same time period, manufacturing employment dropped nearly 2 million and union membership in manufacturing decreased by 814,000 resulting in a 12.3 percent decline in union density.

Table 3: Changes in employment and union membership by industrial sector, 1997-2002 (in thousands)

	Construction	Manufacturing	Transportation	Communication, utilities, and sanitation	Retail and wholesale trade	Finance, insurance, real estate	Services	Government
Total employment	865	-1,990	194	171	1,364	651	5145	1703
Union membership	117	-814	-40	-52	-181	-4	364	604
Unorganized workers	748	-1,176	234	223	1,545	655	4781	1099
Union density	-7.5%	-12.3%	-10.2%	-13.1%	-19.6%	-13.6%	5.6%	0.8%

In contrast, in the service sector, where the proportion of female union members remained steady at 62 percent (BLS 2003b), double that in manufacturing, the combination of a 5.2 million increase in service sector employment, and a 364 thousand increase in union membership, resulted in an increase in union density in the service of 5.6 percent from 1997 to 2002. In the public sector, where women continue to account for slightly less than half of all union members, employment increased by 1.7 million and union membership increased by 604,000 for a net increase in union density of just under 1 percent.

Figure 1: Union density by race and gender, 1985-2002

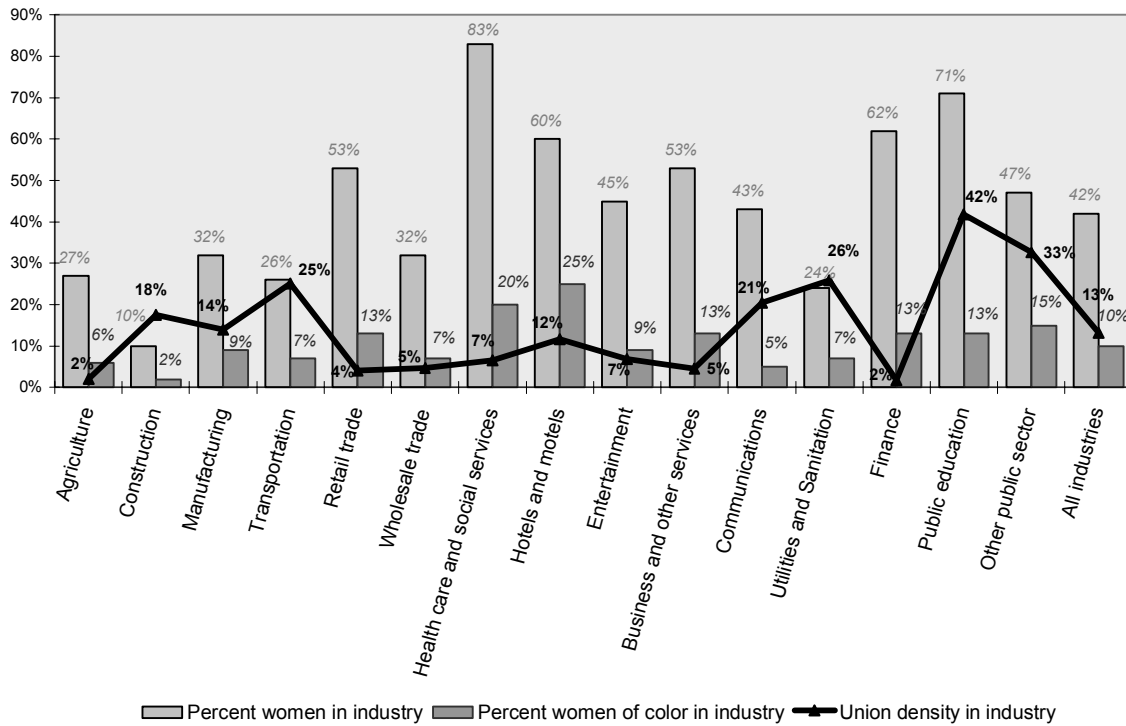


These countervailing trends have resulted in very different density patterns across gender groups. As described in Figure 1, overall union density for all workers combined declined steadily from 1985 (18.0 percent) to 2002 (13.2 percent). However the drop was much more dramatic among male workers (22.1 percent to 14.7 percent), than among women workers (13.2 percent to 11.6 percent). In fact, between 2000 and 2002 union density for women workers actually increased by .10 percentage points, thanks largely to the growth in union density among African-American women, which after declining sharply from 20.7 percent in 1985 to 15.4 percent in 2000, increased to 15.7 percent by 2002. In contrast, union density among Hispanic women grew in the late 1980s only to decline in the 1990s, while union density among white women stabilized at 10.9 percent starting in 2000.

There is also great variation in the participation of women and women of color in the workforce across individual industries (Figure 2). As would be expected, the highest concentration of women is in health care and social services (83 percent); public education (71 percent), finance, insurance and real estate (62 percent), hotels and motels (60 percent), retail trade and business and other services (both 53 percent), and other public sector, including state, county, and city employees (47 percent). These are also the industries with the highest concentration of women of color in the workforce ranging from health care and social services (20 percent) and hotels and motels (25 percent) to other public sector (15 percent) and retail trade, business and other services, and public education (all 13 percent). While both public education and other public sector are also the industries with the highest union density (32 percent and 43 percent respectively), most of the industries with the highest percentage of women and/or women of color have very low union density including finance (2 percent), retail

trade (4 percent), business and other services (7 percent), health care and social service (7 percent) and hotels and motels (12 percent).

Figure 2: Percent women and percent women of color in the workforce and union density by industry, 2002



In contrast, the private sector industries with the highest union density (18 percent or more), such as transportation, utilities and sanitation, and construction, have relatively low concentrations of women and women of color. This reflects both the historical lack of union activity in industries where women predominate and, as we will discuss later in the paper, the fact that current organizing activity has failed to keep pace with the rapid employment expansion in the service, financial, and retail sectors. Yet, these data also suggest the great organizing potential offered in these industries, since women, especially women of color, are much more likely to vote for unions than men, and these industries are less vulnerable to global capital

mobility than more heavily unionized manufacturing industries. The financial sector, in particular, with 62 percent women in the workforce but union density of only 2 percent, has remained largely untouched by the US labor movement.

Organizing women under the NLRB

As the data from the previous section make clear, the last seven years have been an extremely frustrating period for US unions. Despite the clarion cry to “change to organize” and the enormous effort put forth by unions in shifting more resources into organizing, recruiting new organizers, and developing and utilizing new organizing strategies, the labor movement has, at best, stood still, holding union density just above 13 percent. Some unions, such as HERE, SEIU, UNITE, and CWA are increasingly focusing their efforts on organizing outside the NLRB. Public sector unions, such as AFSCME and AFT, have also stepped up their organizing efforts, most notably in Maryland and Puerto Rico, which only recently gained collective bargaining protection for public sector employees.

Because of the scale of these efforts, in recent years the net number of new workers organized through NLRB elections represents has been entirely overshadowed by the much larger number of workers organized in a series of major non-Board victories in homecare, building service, wireless communications, laundry services, health care, hotels, and the public sector. Still, the overwhelming majority of US unions continue to concentrate their organizing resources and efforts in traditional NLRB campaigns, albeit with limited success.

Even with new organizing initiatives, the number of elections held has hovered around 3000 per year for more than a decade, declining to 2,540 by 2002 (Table 4). Although NLRB election win rates increased from 51 percent in 1997 to 56 percent in 2002, it would be premature to see this as an indicator of organizing success and membership growth. For, while

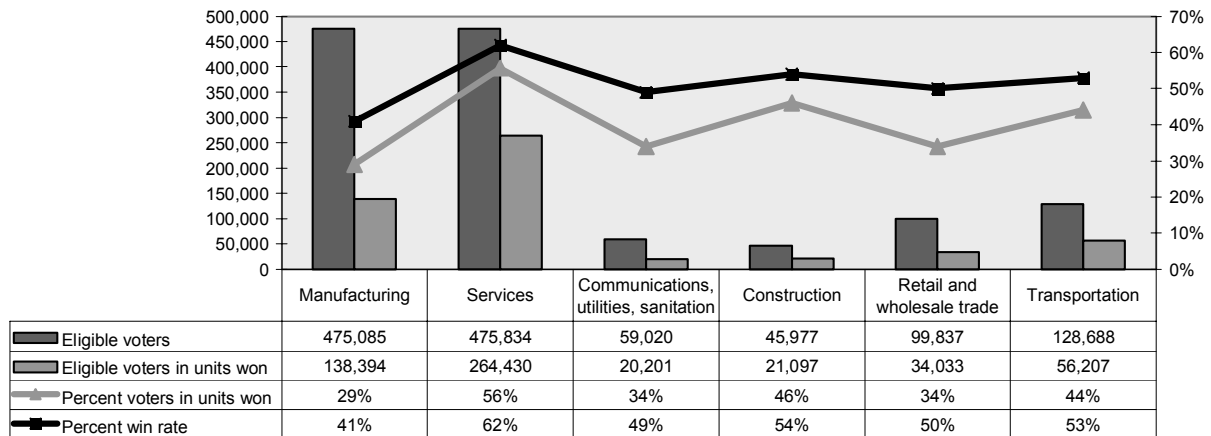
win rates have increased, the percent of eligible voters in units where the union won the election declined from 46 percent of eligible voters in 1998 to 40 percent in 2002. The combination of fewer elections involving fewer eligible voters has led to a significant decline in the number of workers joining unions through NLRB certification elections. When we factor in an average first contract rate of less than 70 percent, this means that less than a third of workers who endeavor to organize under the NLRB are able to gain representation under a collective bargaining agreement (Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2004).

	Number of elections	Number of elections won	Win rate	Number of eligible voters	Number of voters in elections won	Percent voters in elections won
1997	3,268	1,657	51%	220,138	86,057	39%
1998	3,297	1,702	52%	232,977	106,354	46%
1999	3,108	1,304	52%	243,720	106,699	44%
2000	2,826	1,511	53%	212,680	93,346	44%
2001	2,361	1,265	54%	193,321	68,718	36%
2002	2,540	1,414	56%	180,820	72,908	40%

As described in Figure 3, there is also a great deal of variation in NLRB election activity and success across different industries and sectors, which has important implications for gender differences in organizing activity and success. While organizing activity continues to be concentrated in both services and manufacturing, unions have been much more successful in service sector units, achieving an average win rate of 62 percent compared to a win rate of only 41 percent in manufacturing. Although more than 475,000 workers have participated in NLRB elections in both manufacturing and the service sector in the last six years, the total number of new workers organized is only 138,394 (29 percent of eligible voters) in manufacturing compared to 264,430 (56 percent of eligible voters) in the service sector. Because of the higher concentration of women in service sector industries, the fact that more workers are being

successfully organized in the service sector than any other sector is part of the reason women make up the majority of new workers being organized.

Figure 3: Eligible voters, win rates, and percent of eligible voters won, by industrial sector, 1997-2002



Unions have had less success in retail, where women also predominate, yet only 34 percent of workers voting in NLRB elections were in units where the election was won. Unions were even less successful in the financial sector, where the overwhelming majority of workers are women. Less than 1 percent of all NLRB elections take place in the finance, insurance, or real estate industry, and most of those are in credit unions affiliated with unionized companies (BNA 2002). Thus when it comes to both organizing targeting and organizing success, gender has very mixed effects.

We also find variation in terms of the role gender plays within sectors. In the 1980s and 1990s a significant portion of the organizing activity among women workers occurred in light manufacturing industries such as textile, apparel, electronics, auto parts, and food processing (Bronfenbrenner 1997a; Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2002). These are also the jobs in the manufacturing sector where women predominate. However, because these are the industries most vulnerable to global competition, time and time again unions such as UNITE, UFCW, UAW, and the UE have watched as their dramatic organizing victories have turned into bitter

losses as the result of production shifts across borders and overseas. Thus in the last six years there has been a conscious shift away from the most mobile industries toward sectors of the economy less vulnerable to capital flight and global competition. This has had a dramatic effect on women workers in these more vulnerable industries. Not only are they being forced out of higher paying manufacturing jobs into low wage service sector occupations, but also those women workers still working light manufacturing are now less likely to be targeted by union organizing campaigns. In effect, the capital mobility and job loss in these industries has led unions to shift their focus to women workers concentrated in less mobile industries such as laundries, hotels, hospitals, and food service.

Organizing outside the NLRB

As mentioned earlier, NLRB certification elections are one of several mechanisms under which new workers are organized in the US each year. Workers in the railway and airline industry organize in elections supervised by the National Mediation Board. Public sector workers employed in state and local government entities organize through certification elections supervised by more than forty different labor relation's agencies in the thirty-seven states that have collective bargaining legislation covering at least some public workers in the state. In several states, including, Washington, New York, Minnesota, and Ohio, there are also state supervised card check certifications. Although they have limited collective bargaining rights, federal workers organize through government supervised certification elections. In recent years there has also been a wave of public sector organizing in Puerto Rico following the passage of public employee collective bargaining legislation in 1998. Unfortunately, because there is no

centralized database tracking organizing activity and outcomes in state and local elections, we have no systemized national data on public sector organizing activity and outcomes.²

In the last decade, as the environment for organizing in the private sector became increasingly challenging due to a combination of employer opposition and more diffuse ownership and employment structures, more and more unions focused their efforts on organizing outside the traditional NLRB process through card check recognition, and to a lesser extent, community supervised elections. Because there is no government mandated reporting requirement for private sector organizing that occurs outside of the NLRB, data on the nature and extent of these campaigns is also very limited.

Table 5: Non-NLRB elections and recognition campaigns reported in AFL-CIO's *Work in Progress*, 1997-2002

	Private sector					Public sector					Combined
	Elections		Recognition		All private Total gained	Elections		Recognition		All public Total gained	All sectors Total gained
	Number of elections	Number in unit	Number of campaigns	Number in unit		Number of elections	Number in unit	Number of campaigns	Number in unit		
1997	12	7,632	30	5,987	13,619	57	76,674	3	195	76,869	90,488
1998	14	20,809	50	16,381	37,190	84	84,089	11	5,573	89,662	126,852
1999	8	10,920	88	36,839	47,759	117	179,857	14	4,545	184,402	232,161
2000	9	3,047	103	18,883	22,231	115	53,146	19	4,183	57,493	79,724
2001	8	1,924	78	21,158	23,720	95	70,284	14	3,839	74,123	97,843
2002	4	1,411	65	20,569	21,980	114	119,437	14	9,124	129,161	151,141
1997-2002	55	45,743	414	119,817	166,499	582	583,487	75	27,459	611,710	778,209

In fact, for both public sector elections and private sector non-board campaigns the only readily available data come from weekly organizing numbers reported in the AFL-CIO's *Work in Progress* (WIP) reports (2003). As described in Table 5, while incomplete, since they do not

² The only comprehensive public sector organizing data was collected by Juravich and Bronfenbrenner on all state and local certification elections and voluntary recognitions that took place in 1991-1992 in states that had collective bargaining legislation (1998). They found that on average 45,000 new workers were organized each year through elections in state and local units with win rates averaging above 80 percent across a wide range of bargaining unit type, regions, and public entities. But, because there has been no subsequent research we do not know whether there has been any change in public sector organizing activity and outcomes since 1992.

cover any organizing activity by independent unions not affiliated with the AFL-CIO³ and depend on self-reporting by affiliates, these reports do capture the major organizing victories that occurred outside the NLRB since 1997 and in doing so provide important insights into the increasing significance of non-NLRB campaigns.

Table 6: Number of workers organized in non-NLRB campaigns, by sector and industry, 1997-2002

	Private sector	Public Sector	All sectors	Percent of total
Agriculture	2,805	NA	2,805	0%
Manufacturing	17,321	NA	17,321	2%
Construction	1,584	NA	1,584	0%
Transportation	45,658	NA	45,658	6%
Communication	11,056	NA	11,056	1%
Retail	18,288	NA	18,288	2%
Finance	129	NA	129	0%
Building and business services	11,209	NA	11,209	1%
Laundries	1,556	NA	1,556	0%
Entertainment	14,164	NA	14,164	2%
Hospitality	21,627	NA	21,627	3%
Health care	13,969	15,761	29,730	4%
Homecare	3,888	198,385	202,273	26%
Primary and secondary education	2,841	184,237	187,078	24%
Higher education	404	38,937	39,341	5%
Federal government	NA	23,553	23,553	3%
State government	NA	68,247	68,247	9%
Local government	NA	82,590	82,590	11%
All industries	166,499	611,710	778,209	100%

What these data reveal is that the NLRB is no longer the primary vehicle through which workers organize in the US today. In the same six year period where approximately a half a

³ The lack of independent union data in the public sector is particularly significant, since the largest union in the US, NEA, organizes almost entirely among teachers and nonprofessionals in public schools. There are also many independent unions organizing in small city and government units. Thus, the total number of workers organized in school district and local public sector units is probably significantly higher than what is reported here. However, with the exception of the UBC and UTU, there are no large independents engaging organizing through non-Board campaigns in the private sector, so the estimates for private sector organizing, albeit incomplete, are more reflective the non-board organizing process in the private sector. Based on our previous research, the WIP data also underreport the total number of public sector workers organized in school districts and city and county units during this period because so many of these victories are concentrated in extremely small units, unlikely to be counted in the WIP reports (Juravich and Bronfenbrenner 1998). A similar problem is found in construction organizing in the private sector, since the majority of construction organizing is in small units in non-Board campaigns.

million workers organized under the NLRB, according to WIP reports, more than 600,000 workers were organized by AFL-CIO affiliates in the public sector⁴ and another 166,000 were organized affiliates in the private sector through voluntary recognitions and in NMB supervised elections.

As described in Table 6, this activity was highly concentrated in just a few industries. For the public sector, the overwhelming majority of organizing activity occurred among two groups, homecare workers (of which 75,000 came from one unit in Los Angeles county organized in 1999) and public schools, primarily in non-professional units, both groups that are almost entirely female, including many women of color. Other industries with significant activity include state and local government employees, airline workers, and graduate students and adjunct faculty organizing in public sector higher education. Once again these are all industries with high concentrations of women workers.

For several unions, including HERE, CWA, and SEIU, the number of workers organized outside the NLRB process far outweighs those organized through NLRB elections, even in their primary industries (Table 7). Thus, according to WIP, CWA organized 35,452 workers, mostly in wireless, through non-board campaigns between 1997 and 2002, compared to the 10,838 workers they organized through NLRB elections. Similarly, WIP data suggest that between 1997 and 2002, HERE gained at least 30,700 workers, mostly in hotels, through non-NLRB campaigns but they only organized in 6281 in NLRB campaigns during the same period.

⁴ It is important to note that approximately a quarter of the workers organized in the public sector were in public school and territory government units in Puerto Rico. In fact, more than 120,000 of those gains were among public school employees. Given the relatively high density among school district employees in states that already have collective bargaining rights this means that in future years it is unlikely that organizing gains among school district employees will be of a similar scale unless unions are able to gain collective bargaining rights for public school employees in states where there is no collective bargaining legislation covering public sector workers.

According to WIP reports, SEIU, which organized more workers (87,937), than any other union under the NLRB between 1997 and 2002, primarily in hospital and nursing home units, more than tripled that effort in non-board campaigns in building services, large health care chains, and homecare (280,404). These data also reveal the large organizing gains sustained by two primarily public sector unions—AFT, through certification elections and card check recognition in school districts and higher education, and AFSCME, in state and local units. Although a significant portion of AFT’s gains in public schools were concentrated in Puerto Rico, together, SEIU, AFT, and AFSCME account for more than half of workers organized through a combination of NLRB elections and non-board campaigns reported in WIP.

Notably, the workers being organized by SEIU, AFT, and AFSCME, in homecare, school districts, or state and local government offices, are primarily women, including many women of color. CWA, HERE, and UNITE are also running card check campaigns in industries that are primarily female. Thus, when taken together, these data suggest that many of the unions that have made the most organizing gains, both inside and outside the NLRB process, are targeting industries where women predominate. In combination, the data from NLRB and non-board campaigns also suggest that women are fast becoming not just the majority, but perhaps as much as 60 percent of new workers organizing each year.

Table 7: Primary AFL-CIO affiliates organizing inside and outside the NLRB, 1997-2002

Union	Number of workers organized under the NLRB	Number of workers organized in non-NLRB campaigns reported in WIP	Total number of workers gained from NLRB and non-NLRB campaigns	Percent of total workers gained in all campaigns
SEIU	87,937	280,404	368,341	28%
AFT	8,249	169,535	177,784	14%
AFSCME	25,054	97,684	122,738	9%
IBT	79,327	20,527	99,854	8%
UAW	38,126	31,892	70,018	5%
UFCW	36,447	20,795	57,242	4%
HERE	6,281	30,700	36,981	3%
IAM	14,810	21,162	35,972	3%
CWA	10,838	24,614	35,452	3%
USWA	24,984	4,945	29,929	2%
UNITE	18,069	10,250	28,319	2%
IBEW	17,051	2,369	19,420	1%
LIUNA	9,229	8,222	17,451	1%
IUOE	11,672	461	12,133	1%
PACE	7,820	0	7,820	1%
ANA	7,350	276	7,626	1%
IFPTE	4,644	2,813	7,457	1%
AFGE	0	6,822	6,822	1%
OPEIU	5,710	971	6,681	1%
ATU	5,213	325	5,538	0%
ILWU	3,615	132	3,747	0%
SMW	3,498	68	3,566	0%
GCIU	3,500	0	3,500	0%
NATCA	0	3,443	3,443	0%
IATSE	3,228	34	3,262	0%
IUPA	0	3,139	3,139	0%
BCTGM	2,134	317	2,451	0%
UFW	243	1,719	1,962	0%
PAT	1,664	209	1,873	0%
ALPA	0	1,723	1,723	0%
PPF	1,672	0	1,672	0%
AFA	0	1,485	1,485	0%
All AFL-CIO	534,082	778,209	1,312,291	100%

Women and organizing today, results from survey data on organizing environment

To gain a better understanding of the role played by gender in organizing today it is essential that we move beyond national level data on employment, membership, and election activity to more micro-level data on the nature and process of current organizing campaigns collected as part of our survey of 1998-1999 NLRB campaigns (Bronfenbrenner 2001). In order to capture differences in the nature and process of union organizing campaigns in units where women were more or less concentrated we break the data down into four gender groupings, less than 25 percent women, 25-49 percent women, 50 to 74 percent women, and 75 percent or more women in the unit.⁵

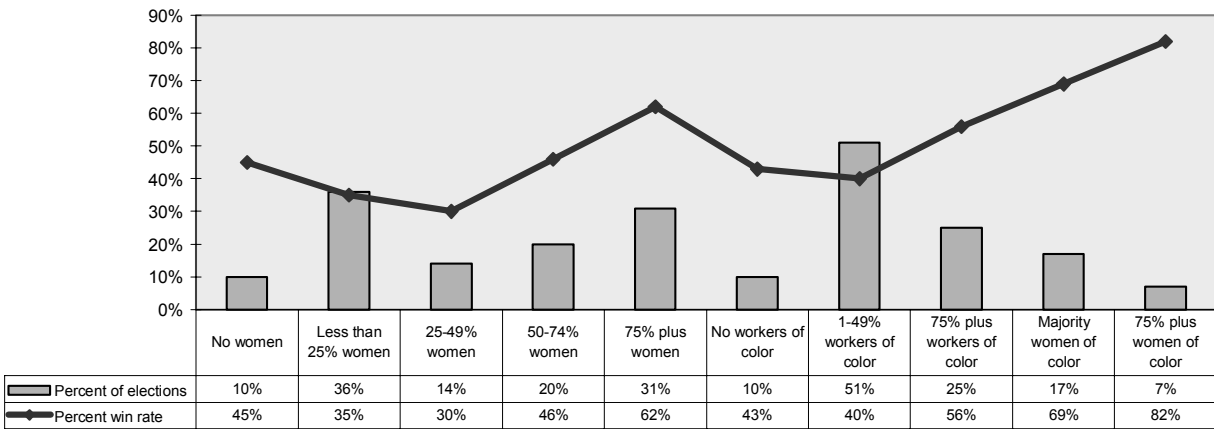
Table 8: Percent women in unit and election activity and outcome				
	Less than 25 percent women	25-49 percent women	50-74 percent women	75 percent or more women
Election background				
Percent of all elections	36%	14%	20%	31%
Percent of elections won	28%	9%	20%	42%
Percent of elections lost	42%	18%	19%	21%
Percent win rate	35%	30%	46%	62%
Percent of cards signed at the time of petition	66%	65%	64%	67%
Percent of votes received by the union	46%	43%	48%	55%

Table 8 provides summary statistics on election and first contract outcomes for the campaigns in our sample. Consistent with the findings from the national NLRB data, we find that while overall union activity is fairly evenly divided between units where women are in the majority and those where they are in the minority, elections won by unions tend to be highly concentrated in units with a majority of women. Win rates and the percent of votes received by

⁵ To simplify the text we use the term “predominantly female units” for units with 75 percent or more women and “predominantly male units” for units with less than 25 percent women. Mixed units are those units where women represent between 25 and 49 percent of the unit.

the union also are highest in units with 75 percent or more women, despite the fact that the proportion of workers who sign cards before the petition is filed averages around two-thirds for all four gender groups.

Figure 4: Gender and race homogeneity and election outcome



Yet, as shown in Figure 4, when we examine the data more carefully we find a much more complex relationship between organizing outcomes and gender than might be readily apparent. Not only is the intersection of race and gender important, with the highest win rates associated with units where women of color predominate, but also race and gender homogeneity play an important role as well.

While women and workers of color individually and as a group have been found to be more likely to vote for unions, consistent with our previous research we find that union organizing success is weaker in mixed units, than it is in all male or all white units or in units where women or workers of color are in the majority, and win rates increase even higher in units with 75 percent or more women or workers of color in the unit (Bronfenbrenner 1997a; Bronfenbrenner Hickey 2004). The highest win rates by far (82 percent) are in units with 75 percent or more women of color. As Milkman argued in her 1994 work on gender and

organizing, the lower win rates in mixed units appear to be a consequence of the employers' ability to capitalize on racial or gender divisions in the unit to undermine the union campaign.

We also find differences in the kinds of companies and bargaining units where organizing campaigns among women workers are concentrated (Table 9). Predominantly female units are much more likely than predominantly male units to be in nonprofit companies, and in service and maintenance and low wage units, while they are much less likely to be in privately-held companies, and multinationals, production and maintenance units, and higher wage units. This reflects the fact that men are more concentrated in higher wage, production and maintenance units in large, more global, manufacturing companies and women are more concentrated in lower wage jobs in the service sector where companies are much more likely to be entirely US based and either nonprofits or publicly-held for profits. Still, a significant portion of units with 50 percent to 74 percent women remains in multinationals (43 percent), for-profit companies (74 percent) and in production and maintenance units (35 percent).

Table 9: Company and unit characteristics, gender, and election outcome										
	0 to 24% women in unit		25 - 49% women in unit		50 - 74% women in unit		75% or more women in unit		All elections	
	Percent of elections	Win rate	Percent of elections	Win rate	Percent of elections	Win rate	Percent of elections	Win rate	Percent of elections	Win rate
Company characteristics										
For-profit company	99%	36%	95%	30%	74%	42%	46%	61%	77%	41%
Publicly held	54%	30%	57%	23%	51%	33%	45%	60%	52%	33%
Privately held	45%	43%	40%	39%	36%	52%	25%	61%	48%	48%
Nonprofit company	1%	0%	5%	33%	26%	57%	54%	63%	23%	58%
All sites U.S	37%	34%	32%	44%	31%	52%	31%	58%	33%	45%
Multinationals	62%	37%	63%	32%	43%	35%	15%	67%	31%	39%
Unit characteristics										
Production and maintenance unit	69%	35%	72%	32%	35%	21%	7%	56%	43%	33%
Service, maintenance, and non-professional	0%	--	5%	67%	25%	70%	40%	70%	17%	44%
Professional, technical, white collar	7%	30%	9%	0%	16%	46%	33%	54%	19%	68%
Average wage less than \$8/hr	8%	42%	23%	39%	31%	48%	32%	64%	22%	53%
Average wage \$12/hr or more	39%	35%	20%	18%	22%	31%	30%	54%	30%	39%

Male workers are much less represented in professional, technical, and white-collar units being organized under the NLRB than they are in the general workforce (BLS 2003b). This reflects the fact that, with the exception of aerospace, most of the NLRB election activity among professional and technical workers has been concentrated in health care, where these workers are overwhelmingly female, while very little organizing activity has taken place in the high tech sector, where professional and technical positions are more dominated by men. Thus we find nearly a third of elections in predominantly female units but fewer than ten percent of elections in predominantly male or mixed units were in professional, technical, and white-collar units.

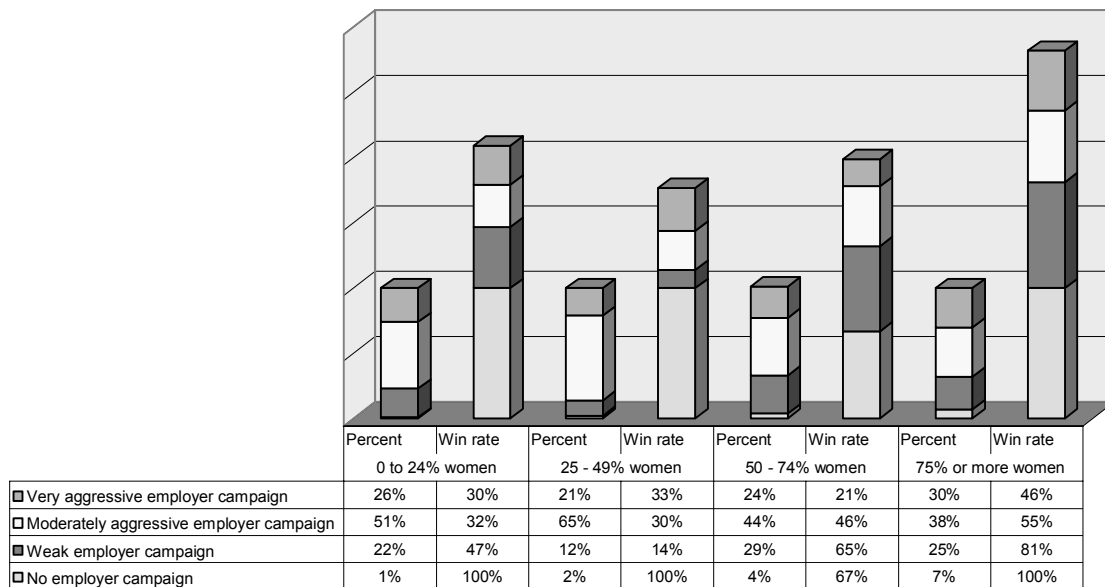
Win rates across all the gender groups are lower in for-profit companies and multinationals than in non-profits and companies with all sites and operations in the US. Still, across all company types we find that win rates average highest in predominantly female units than in more mixed units or in predominantly male units. In nonprofits unions were unable to win any of the elections in the handful of nonprofits with predominantly male units and the win rates averaged only 33 percent in non-profits with 25 percent to 49 percent women. However win rates increased to 57 percent in nonprofit units with 50 to 74 percent women and 63 percent in predominantly female units. Win rates in predominantly female units are even higher in multinationals, averaging 67 percent compared to an overall win rate of only 39 percent overall.

A similar pattern is found when we examine bargaining unit characteristics. In predominantly female units, win rates averaged 56 percent in production and maintenance workers, 70 percent in service and maintenance units, and 54 percent in professional, technical and white collar units, while unions won only 30 percent of professional, technical and white collar elections and 35 percent of production and maintenance elections in predominantly male units. Win rates also averaged much higher in predominantly female units for both low-wage

workers earning less than \$8 an hour (64 percent) and higher-wage workers averaging \$12 or more dollars an hour (54 percent).

As described in Figure 5, these higher win rates among units where women predominate cannot be explained by differences in employer opposition across gender groupings. In fact, employer opposition to union organizing activity appears to be no less intense in campaigns with a majority of women in the unit than it is in campaigns where they are the minority. For example, employer tactics such as discharges for union activity, unilateral changes in wages and/or benefits, harassment of union activists, bribes, and electronic surveillance are just as prevalent in units where women predominate as they are in predominantly male units (Bronfenbrenner 2001).

Figure 5: Percent women in the unit, employer behavior, and election outcome



Thus we find in that 30 percent of employers in predominantly female units run very aggressive anti-union campaigns using more than ten aggressive tactics such as discharges for union activity, unilateral changes in wages and/or benefits, mandatory captive audience meetings

during work hours, supervisor one-on-one meetings, bribes, anti-union videos, electronic surveillance, promises of improvement, promoting activists out of the unit, assisting anti-union committees, establishing employee involvement committees, campaigning in the media, plant closing threats, or threatening to refer undocumented workers to INS. This compares to 26 percent in predominantly male units, 21 percent in units with 25 percent to 49 women and 24 percent in units with 50 to 74 percent women in the unit.

Organizer background

A central component to labor's renewed commitment to organizing has been an effort to recruit and train a cadre of new organizers to staff and lead campaigns. Part of this effort has included an emphasis on developing a younger and more diverse pool of organizers who are a better match to the workers most actively organizing today. For many unions, this has not been an easy process, since their organizing departments tend to be neither young nor diverse.

Table 10 provides some insight into the progress unions have made in both recruiting enough organizers to staff campaigns and developing a pool of organizers who better reflect the changing US workforce. If we compare these findings with our earlier research, we find that unions have not just been increasing the number of organizers assigned to campaigns; they have also been recruiting a more diverse organizing staff. In the late 1980s only 12 percent of lead organizers were women and 15 percent were people of color (Bronfenbrenner 1997a). By 1995 the proportion of lead organizers who were women had increased to 16 percent while the proportion of lead organizers who were people of color had dropped to 9 percent (Bronfenbrenner 1997b). Today, 21 percent of lead organizers are women, 22 percent are workers of color (primarily African-American and Hispanic), and 7 percent are women of color.

Table 10: Characteristics of organizing staff in NLRB certification election campaigns

	Percent or mean of elections	Percent win rate when present	Percent win rate when not present
Staff resources			
Organizer ratio at least 1 to 100 workers	79%	44 %	46%
Women			
Lead organizer female	21%	53%	42%
In units with 75% or more women	42%	62%	63%
In units with 50-74% women	20%	63%	
<i>In units with 25-49% women</i>	12%	14%	32%
<i>In units with less than 25% women</i>	8%	36%	35%
One or more female organizers lead or staff	44%	49%	41%
In units with 75% or more women	65%	61%	65%
<i>In units with 50-74% women</i>	55%	50%	42%
<i>In units with 25-49% women</i>	39%	46%	20%
<i>In units with less than 25% women</i>	21%	23%	39%
Percent women organizers lead or staff	24%	--	--
People of Color			
Lead organizer person of color	22%	58%	41%
One or more organizers of color, lead or staff	45%	50%	40%
Percent organizers of color lead or staff	28%	--	--
<i>Percent African-American organizers</i>	13%	--	--
<i>Percent Hispanic organizers</i>	11%	--	--
<i>Percent Asian/Pacific Islander organizers</i>	2%	--	--
<i>Percent Native American organizers</i>	1%	--	--
<i>Percent organizers of other races</i>	1%	--	--
Women of color			
Lead organizer woman of color	7%	69%	43%
<i>In units with 75% or more women of color</i>	32%	89%	79%
<i>In units with 50-74% women of color</i>	8%	67%	60%
<i>In units with 25-49% women of color</i>	9%	75%	46%
<i>In units with less than 25% women of color</i>	3%	44%	38%
One or more women of color, lead or staff	23%	59%	41%
<i>In units with 75% or more women of color</i>	64%	89%	70%
<i>In units with 50-74% women of color</i>	50%	65%	55%
<i>In units with 25-49% women of color</i>	36%	50%	48%
<i>In units with less than 25% women of color</i>	12%	35%	39%
Percent women organizers of color lead or staff	11%	--	--

In predominantly female units 42 percent of the campaigns have a female lead organizer and 65 percent have at least one female organizer working as a lead or staff organizer for the campaign. Still, more than a third (35 percent) of the campaigns in predominantly female units have no female organizers on staff. Only 8 percent of the campaigns in predominantly male

units and 12 percent in mixed units have a female lead organizer. In units with 75 percent or more women of color, 64 percent have at least one woman of color working on the campaign but only 32 percent have a women of color as lead organizer. The percentage of campaigns with women of color as lead organizers drops below 10 percent for all units with less than 75 percent women of color in the unit.

While the win rate for women organizers averages 55 percent, the average win rate for male organizers is only 42 percent. However, in units with 75 percent or more women in the unit the in rate averages more than 60 percent regardless of the gender of the lead organizer or staff. The highest win rates, 89 percent, are found in units where women of color predominate and where there is at least one woman of color as lead or staff. But the win rate drops to 70 percent in units where women of color predominate if there are no female organizers of color.

Table 11 provides a more detailed picture of the differences in background between female and male lead organizers. Female lead organizers are much more diverse than their male counterparts. A third of female organizers are women of color, including 20 percent African American, 9 percent Hispanic, 1 percent Asian and Pacific Islander, and 2 percent Native American. In contrast only 18 percent of male lead organizers are people of color.

Women lead organizers also tend to be younger, better educated, and have much less union and organizing experience than their male counterparts. While a third of women lead organizers are under forty years old, only 18 percent of male lead organizers are under forty. Similarly, while 32 percent of the women lead organizers have a four-year college degree and 16 percent have a professional or graduate degree, only 24 percent of the male lead organizers have a four-year degree and 8 percent have a professional or graduate degree. Women are much more

likely to be single with no dependent children (37 percent) compared to male lead organizers (15 percent).

Table 11: Lead organizer background by gender			
	All lead organizers	Female lead organizers	Male lead organizers
Race and ethnic background			
White non-Hispanic	79%	67%	82%
Black non-Hispanic	9%	20%	6%
Hispanic	10%	9%	10%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1%	1%	1%
Native American	1%	2%	0%
Other	1%	0%	1%
Average age		43.4	46.3
Less than 30	5%	5%	5%
30-39	17%	28%	13%
40-50	47%	38%	49%
More than 50	30%	25%	31%
Union experience			
Years rank and file experience	16.0	9.9	17.7
Years staff experience	8.1	6.8	8.5
Years officer experience	5.9	3.4	6.6
Number of campaigns lead organizer	15.9	9.4	17.6
Number of campaigns staff or volunteer organizer	15.5	21.0	14.0
Marital status			
Single no dependents	19%	37%	15%
Married no dependents	41%	34%	43%
Single with dependents	9%	9%	9%
Married with dependents	31%	20%	34%
Highest level of education completed			
Less than high school	1%	0%	1%
High School/GED	37%	24%	41%
2-year college	27%	28%	27%
4-year college	26%	32%	24%
Prof/grad degree	10%	16%	8%

Union strategies

In combination, the data we have presented so far suggests that increasing union organizing activity and success is extremely difficult in a climate where workers in almost every industry face more sophisticated employer opposition coupled with more global and diffuse

corporate ownership structures. Still it is too easy to blame employer opposition alone for the labor movement's failure to organize. Clearly, some unions are succeeding in making significant organizing gains in some of the most hostile climates for organizing, and, in particular, those gains appear to be increasingly concentrated in bargaining units where women are in the majority.

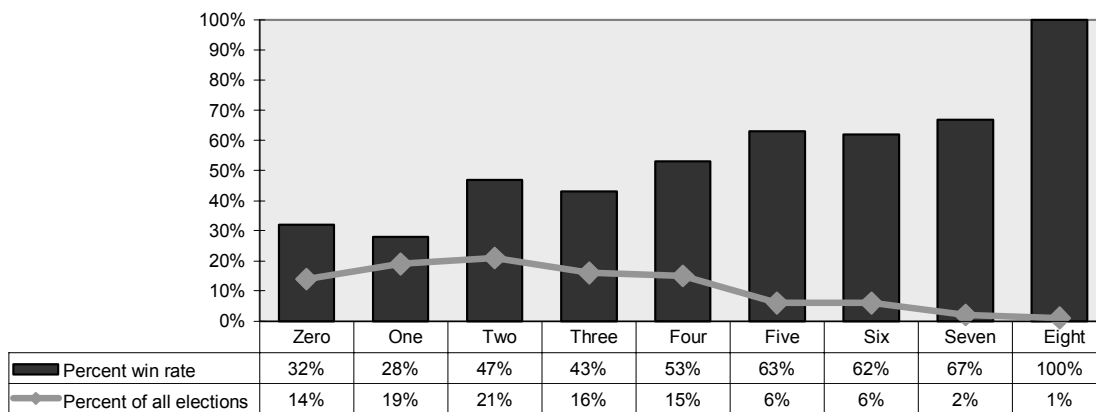
As our research has consistently shown, the difficulty lies in the fact that the majority of unions today continue to run relatively weak, non-strategic campaigns (Bronfenbrenner 1997a; Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2004). They have invested some money in organizing, recruited a few more organizers, and added one or two new tactics to their arsenal. But they have not made the wholesale strategic, structural, and cultural changes required to take on the diffuse, globally connected and extremely mobile corporate structures that dominate the American landscape today.

Based on Bronfenbrenner and Hickey's analysis of the evolution of successful union organizing over time, a new model of comprehensive union strategies emerges (Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2004)—namely union success in certification elections depends on a comprehensive union-building strategy that incorporates the following ten elements, each of which is a cluster of key union tactics that are critical to union organizing success: 1) adequate and appropriate staff and financial resources, 2) strategic targeting and research, 3) active and representative rank-and-file organizing committees, 4) active participation of member volunteer organizers, 5) person to person contact inside and outside the workplace, 6) benchmarks and assessments to monitor union support and set thresholds for moving ahead with the campaign, 7) issues that resonate in the workplace and in the community, 8) creative, escalating internal pressure tactics involving members in the workplace, 9) creative, escalating external pressure tactics involving members

outside the workplace, locally, nationally, and/or internationally, and 10) building for the first contract during the organizing campaign.

Bronfenbrenner and Hickey found that each of the elements of the model were associated with win rates 4 percent to 28 percent higher than in elections where they were not used. Yet, as described in Figure 6, it is in combination that these comprehensive tactics are most effective. Win rates start at 32 percent for no comprehensive organizing tactics, and then increase to 47 percent for two tactics, 63 percent for five tactics, and 100 percent for the 1 percent of the campaigns where unions use eight tactics.

Figure 6: Percent of elections and election win rate by number of comprehensive tactics used

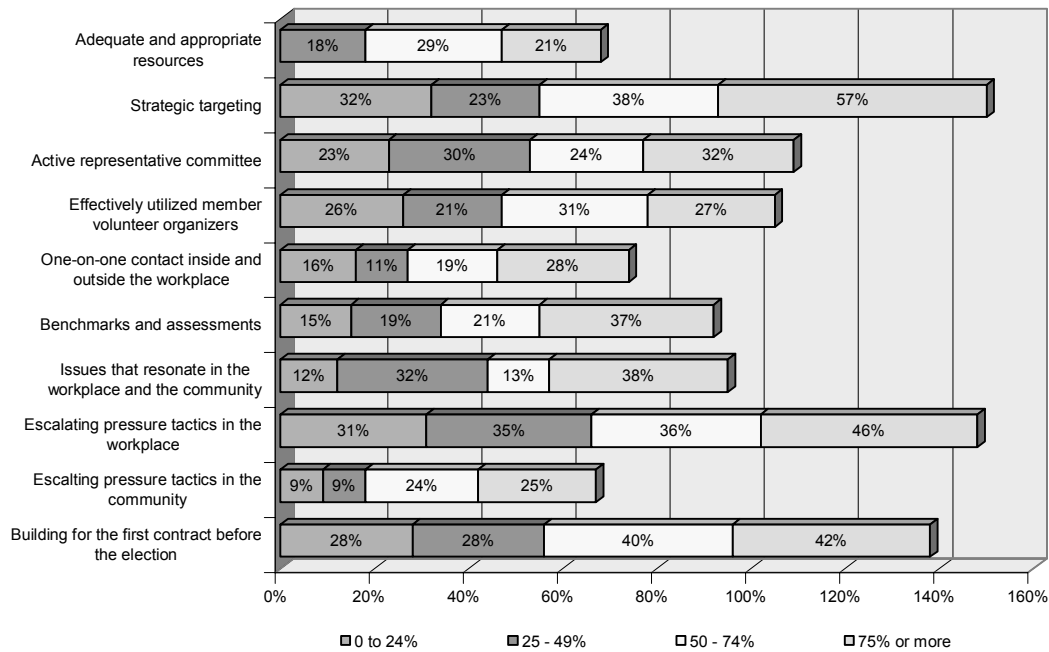


Unfortunately, only a very small number of unions are using more than one or two of these tactics. Fourteen percent of all campaigns use no comprehensive organizing tactics, 54 percent use fewer than three tactics, while only 9 percent of all campaigns use more than five tactics and none use more than eight. This occurs despite the fact that comprehensive campaigns, using six or more elements of the model were found to be associated with higher win

rates regardless of industry, company and unit characteristics, and the intensity of employer opposition to the union campaign (Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2004).⁶

Figure 7 describes the frequency in which comprehensive tactics are used across the different gender groupings. What these data suggest is that unions organizing in predominantly female units are much more likely to utilize comprehensive union tactics than unions organizing in units where women are in the minority.

Figure 7: Percent women in the unit and the use of comprehensive union tactics



⁶ In order to make sure that all of the elements of the model were a critical component of organizing success, we also tested a series of different combinations of six comprehensive organizing tactics from the ten elements of our model, making sure to include all of the different elements in an equal number of combinations. We found that for almost every different combination of six tactics, win rates increased for each additional comprehensive organizing tactic used. The average win rates for all the combinations start at 32 percent, increasing to 38 percent for one tactic, 48 percent for two, 55 percent for three, 60 percent for four, 78 percent for five, and 93 percent for six tactics. Similarly, win rates range from a minimum of 29 percent and a maximum of 38 percent for elections where no tactics in the combination were used to a minimum of 67 percent and a maximum of 100 percent where the union used all six tactics.

As described in Figure 8, as the percent of women in the bargaining unit increases the percent of unions running comprehensive campaigns using six or more tactics also increases, starting at 4 percent for units with less than 25 percent women, dropping to 2 percent for mixed units with 25 percent to 49 percent, and then increasing to 13 percent for units with 50 to 74 percent women, and 19 percent for units with 75 percent or more women. This is consistent with Bronfenbrenner and Hickey’s findings that the unions who utilize a comprehensive organizing strategy on a consistent basis, SEIU, HERE, and UNITE, are also unions that concentrate their organizing efforts in industries where women predominate (2004).

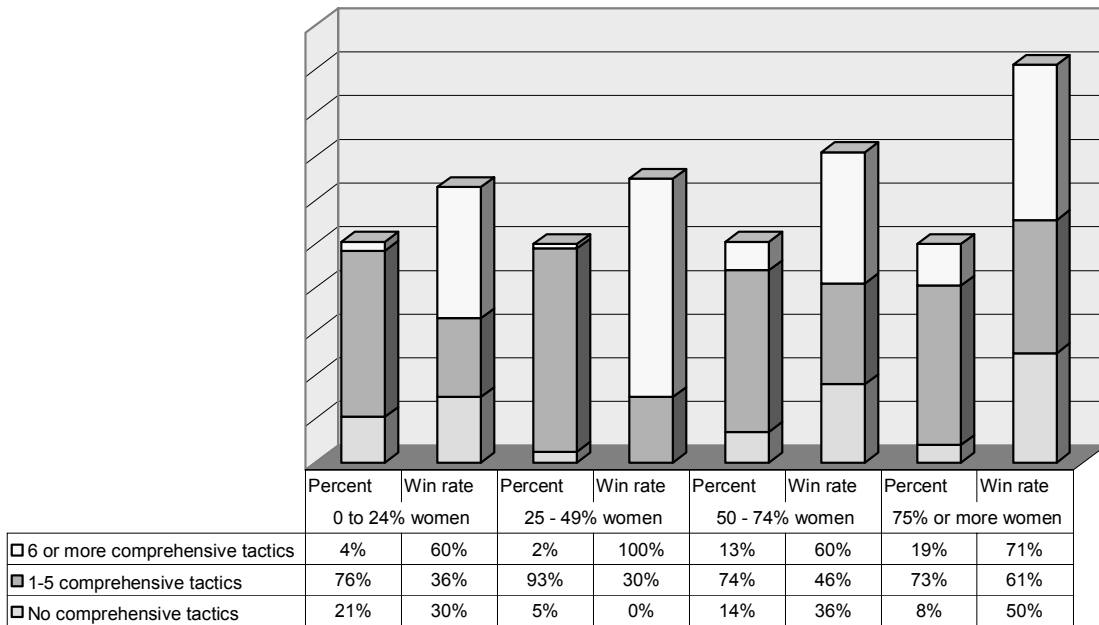


Figure 8: Percent women in the unit, number of comprehensive organizing tactics, and election outcome

For all gender groups, win rates increase dramatically in units where comprehensive organizing strategies are used. Thus, in predominantly male units, win rates increase from 30 percent where no comprehensive tactics are used to 36 percent for one to five tactics and 60

percent for more than five tactics. Similarly, in mixed units, unions won none of the elections where no comprehensive tactics were used, 30 percent of the campaigns with one to five tactics, and 100 percent of the campaigns with more than five tactics. In units with 50 to 74 percent women, win rates ranged from 36 percent for no comprehensive tactics to 60 percent for more than five tactics. In predominantly female units, win rates ranged from 50 percent with no tactics to 71 percent with more than five comprehensive tactics.

In order to better determine the relative significance of comprehensive campaign strategies, company characteristics, employer opposition, and bargaining unit demographics in determining election outcome, Bronfenbrenner and Hickey (2004) used binary logistic regression to test for the additive effect of elements of the comprehensive organizing model while controlling for the organizing environment. As predicted, the number of comprehensive organizing tactics was found to have a statistically significant impact on election outcome at .01 or better, increasing the odds of the union winning the election by 34 percent for each additional tactic used even when controlling for employer behavior and the broader organizing environment. Thus, unions that used at least six comprehensive organizing tactics increased their odds of winning the election by 204 percent (six times 34 percent).

At the same time having at least 60 percent women in the unit was also found to have a statistically significant impact (.05 or better), increasing the odds of winning the election by 70 percent. Similar findings were found for the 60 percent or more workers of color variable. This suggests that regardless of industry, company characteristics, or even the employer or union campaign, unions have their greatest success in units where women and/or workers of color predominate. Yet, even in sectors where women are in the majority, the quality,

comprehensiveness, and intensity of the union campaign remains critical to union organizing success.

Conclusion

It is clear from our research that women workers are central to union organizing efforts. We have provided further evidence that women are organizing in greater numbers than men, but it is also true that union organizing among women does not take place across all types of employers and occupations. In the private sector organizing activity among women workers is highly concentrated in health care, hotels and motels, home care, building services, laundries, retail, and light manufacturing; but almost entirely absent among white collar office workers, outside of academic settings. In the public sector women are organizing primarily in among home care workers, support staff in school districts, and graduate students and adjunct faculty in higher education.

We have also shown that employers do not act in fundamentally different ways in predominantly female units than in predominantly male or more mixed units. Similarly, most unions do not use fundamentally different tactics based on the gender make-up of bargaining units, but the unions that consistently use a more comprehensive organizing strategy are also those unions who concentrate their organizing efforts in industries where women predominate. These more comprehensive and effective union campaigns, coupled with the greater interest in unionization among women workers, allow unions to overcome employer opposition and win against the odds. But the effectiveness of these campaign strategies is not limited to units with a majority of women workers.

While we found that unions had their greatest success in predominantly female units, greater use of a comprehensive organizing strategy would also make units containing a

concentration of men more successful. Thus we find that recent gains among primarily male workers by IFPTE in aerospace, SEIU in building security, and the UAW in auto parts all depended on the use of a more comprehensive multifaceted strategy combining grassroots union building and leadership development with escalating external pressure tactics involving customers, suppliers, investors, and other outside stakeholders in the company.

This is not to say that unions should ignore gender when choosing issues and tactics in organizing campaigns. But clearly a myriad of other factors, such as race, age, occupation, industry, corporate ownership structure, and the larger community where the campaign is taking place, must be taken into account as well. A university clerical worker in a college town in the Midwest operates in a very different work environment and culture than a hospital dietary worker in a large urban area on the East Coast, a Wal-Mart sales worker at a suburban mall, a call center worker for a high tech firm in the Northwest, or a worker in a food processing plant in the rural South, despite the fact that they are all women working in low wage jobs in primarily female occupations. Although our findings make clear that all of these units operate in a climate of intense employer opposition, and all require comprehensive, multifaceted union strategy to overcome that opposition, the specific issues and tactics for each campaign must be tailored and adapted to deal with the confluence of social and demographic characteristics of the workers and the community they live in and the changing nature and structure of the company and industry in which they work.

In particular, unions must adapt their strategies to the changing corporate and occupational structures where both male and female workers find themselves. Traditional hot shop, site-by-site NLRB election campaigns are no match against large multi-site corporations such as Wal-Mart, Cintas, Sprint, or Sodexo-Marriott. Instead these companies will only be

organized through national, multi-site, and in many cases multi-union campaigns, using a combination of bottom up organizing among workers, their families, and their communities and top down pressure to gain neutrality and card-check recognition. It will also require the integration of the labor movement's core activities of organizing, bargaining, and political action. Unions will need to use their density in the industry, company, community, and production and supply chains to bargain for employer neutrality and recognition and they will need to use their political leverage to create an environment less hostile to organizing.

We also cannot ignore the role played by gender within the labor movement. While it is true that unions are organizing disproportionate numbers of women, we also find that significant barriers continue to exist for women in the labor movement. Too few women are involved as organizers, even in units that are predominantly female. Also, too few unions utilize organizing committees that are representative of the gender and racial make-up of the bargaining unit. Perhaps most significant of all, women, particularly women of color, continue to be locked out of top leadership positions at every level of the labor movement, even in those unions where women make up the overwhelming majority of the membership. At a time when more and more unions are shifting resources from education and leadership development programs into organizing and political action, it is essential to remember that membership education, organizing committee training, and leadership development are core elements of the kinds of changes that are necessary for unions to organize more successfully and develop leadership more representative of the rank-and-file.

It is also important to remember that the tactics that are successfully being used in organizing today are part of a very different model of unionism—one that has a number of implications for women. Unions cannot expect to empower workers using these tactics during

organizing campaigns and then abandon them once the drive has been won and dues are being collected. Although women workers and women of color are ready and willing to do what it takes to organize a union in their workplace, they will not endure the stresses and risks of an organizing campaign only to discover that they, and others like them, do not have a seat at the table, or a voice in the union, when the campaign is won.

Unions will fail if they see new women workers as pressure groups that need to be politically accommodated into the already existing structure and practices. While changing demographics in the workforce may pose a difficult challenge to some unions, these new workers from diverse ethnic, racial, and gender backgrounds can also offer an opportunity to jump start a more inspired, committed, and effective grass roots movement to organize workers in all industries, just as they did in earlier union organizing struggles among textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts in the early 1900s or during the rise of the industrial union movement in the 1930s. With these newly organized women workers comes an opportunity to broaden labor's agenda to include issues of discrimination, comparable worth, job advancement, hours of work and a host of other social and family concerns. They also provide an opportunity to rethink union structure and practice, much of which was established in a very different social and political climate, to become more responsive to what is an increasingly diverse labor movement in an world economy where democratic, progressive, inclusive, and powerful unions are more essential than they have ever been before.

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