

Mobilizing Union Members:
The Gap Between Membership in Unions and Identification
with the Labor Movement

A Case Study of the Personal Care Attendants at SEIU 1199 Boston

An Honors Thesis for the Tufts University Department of American Studies

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Spring 2018

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ABSTRACT

This undergraduate honors thesis is a case study of personal care attendants who are members of the healthcare union SEIU 1199 in Boston. Six homecare workers and one organizer were interviewed using grounded research methodology to build theory about the gap between membership in a union and participation in a labor movement. Through listening to workers speak about their jobs and relationship with the union, the researcher found that PCAs have outstandingly positive feedback of the union's performance, but that they are not taking ownership of it. While unions are tasked with many contradictory yet interdependent goals, including building membership and bargaining contracts, this paper highlights the importance of mobilizing that membership into a broad, community driven, sustainable, and offensive working class movement. We set a high standard in our definition of success: a union's ability to engender its membership with a strong understanding of the union's long-term goals; participation in a range of union activities; a higher level of political efficacy and civic engagement than when they joined the union; drawing connections between their experiences under capitalism and other related struggles, and solidarity with these causes; participating in community or political activity without the prompting of the union; and having and voicing opinions about union activity. Despite positive reviews from their membership and an organizational director with a strong vision and strategy, 1199 has been unable to overcome the pervasive external factors of capitalism and the site-specific external factors of an atomized industry due to insufficient organizational relationships with more than one union organizer, other PCAs, and workplace leaders; failure to select and train delegates as leaders and delegate actual power; insufficient politically educational contacts with membership; limited democratic participation by membership; and lack of urgency among members.

Dedication

To the workers - who bravely fought the battles that came before us, sacrificing everything to secure us the right to organize and many of the freedoms we enjoy today.

To the teachers - who show us that another world is possible, and giving us the tools to build it.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Unions play a vital role in American society. They have historically been the most significant mechanism working people have for self-determination and defending their rights in a capitalist society. That said, they are far from perfect: on a theoretical level, any institution claiming to speak for a mass of people poses threats of oligarchic misrepresentation, and unions have a long history of racism, sexism, and bureaucratic institutionalization. Today's unions are characterized by extreme declines in membership rates, but a vigilant effort across many locals to revitalize the social movement organizing of their heyday. In light of all of these contradictions, how do current union members feel about the job their union is doing in representing them?

This project began as an effort to center and amplify the voices of those who are spoken for by an institution I believe in. I used grounded research methodology to tell the stories of today's working class, reflecting what they wanted out of their union, what they needed it to do better, and whether or not they felt heard, represented, and empowered by their membership in the organization. What emerged in the course of six in-depth interviews with personal care attendants represented by SEIU 1199 in Boston was an outstandingly positive opinion of the union but a serious disconnect from the labor movement. I found that the members of the SEIU 1199 PCA department had a limited understanding of the union's long-term goals; a lack of engaged participation, ownership, and leadership in union activities; an indifference toward union politics and planning; an underdeveloped political and strategic lens; insufficient solidarity across related movements; and ultimately did not see themselves as part of a movement. This raised a more interesting question that became the focus of my study: why has a union which on

the surface appears extremely successful, with a recent contract victory and such love from its union members, failed to bring these members into a labor movement?

Capitalism is hegemonic, meaning it dominates American culture with an intentional pervasiveness and normalcy that overrides individual will to question or challenge its oppressive structure. In light of this, it takes creative, evolving, and persuasive counter-dominant cultural production to even begin to organize a movement. The question, then, is not a matter of why have individuals failed to identify with a movement, but why have institutions built to challenge the most oppressive manifestations of the system (if not the entire system itself) failed to organize more of the people they are meant to empower into their movement?

My theoretical framework and analysis are divided into two parts: the external and the internal barriers to unions' building of a strong labor movement. In addition to hegemonic anti-union ideologies, there are explicit structural and legal obstacles which limit the potential of unions. These include a legal structure which organizes unions by work site rather than industry or nation, laws forbidding solidarity strikes with other worksites, slow and bureaucratic regulatory agencies, subsumption by the Democratic Party, and state-sanctioned anti-union intimidation by employers, to name a few. In the case of personal care attendants, many of the union's failures are exacerbated by the fact that employees work alone at individual homes, making organizational communication, consensus, courage, and strategy extremely difficult. These all constitute factors which I name as external, not because they do not also permeate the internal organization, but because they are outside of the control of the union.

I refuse the notion, however, that there is no hope of successful organizing even in the most limiting structural conditions. Unions as institutions, their organizers, and their members,

do have meaningful strategic choice despite the external barriers listed. They are, then, partially responsible for their own strategic and organizational failures to organize and mobilize workers to defend worker power. There are many internal critiques of this school of thought, the most prominent and relevant to my research being that during the 1970s and 80s they became institutions themselves, shifting their efforts from movement organizing to service provision. While I continue to see some of the alleged consequences of this shift echoed in my research, this explanation fails to answer what new factors and contextual developments allow these symptoms to persist after decades of reform.

This thesis begins with brief historical context on the labor movement, the union 1199 SEIU in particular, and homecare workers, which are necessary for understanding the case study I present. I then outline how my questions differ from past proxies of union success, and how prior theoretical lenses can be of use. In Chapter 4, I explain the methodology of grounded research theory, and explain some of the limitations of my very narrow case study, which was originally conducted with a different set of questions in mind. I then present my results and analysis together in an in-depth presentation of each of the themes that arose in my interviews. In my discussion and conclusion, I attempt to explain what factors, within the control of the union, explain 1199's ultimate failure to build a labor movement among its PCAs.

The positive reviews from its membership, the strong vision, strategy, and commitment of the organizer, and the increase of political activation and education in terms of both emotional investment and movement framework in members who have interacted more with the organizer and the union's political activities are all strong testaments to the union's success and potential in its principal bargaining goals. Regarding the high standards we set for the secondary goal of

movement building, however, 1199 has been unable to overcome the external barriers to organizing the PCA field. I argue that, of the strategies available to the union, this is because there are not enough organizers dedicated to relational organizing, leadership development, and the bottom-up model. As a result, there is not enough political education of union members, referring to emotional meaning making and urgency in organizing, political framework, and strategic and leadership skills. This is necessary to achieve the worker ownership and bottom-up momentum that produces sustained and widespread worker power.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Investigating this question cannot be separated from its situation in the larger context of the labor movement. In this section, I will lay a very brief groundwork for the pro-union point of departure this paper starts with by examining why unions are important for the welfare of American society and for the workers they represent. I will then present a brief summary of the American labor movement, as my case study is part of the larger pattern of state response to unions and unions' reactions to the state. This is followed by a section on the specific history of SEIU 1199, the union which represents the personal care attendants I interviewed, as this provides insight to the organization beyond the scope of my original research. This chapter concludes with a section on the history of organizing homecare workers, including personal care attendants, as the unique qualities of this field present significant challenges to unionization. Each of these sections will provide important context to the questions I explore and the answers I attempt to provide.

WHY UNIONS MATTER:

Labor scholar David Cogswell defines the labor movement as the historical progression of working people joining together to bargain with their employer for better working conditions, which may be seen as part of the larger human struggle for liberty and justice. He defines unions as people banding together, combining forces to levy their collective power to force employers to share their profits with the workers. Collective bargaining is the essential principle behind unions, and the tool by which working people, without the power of ownership, fight for justice against those who hold the capital and power in society (Cogswell, 2012, pp. 17-21).

Unions are essential for democracy as well as for capitalism. We live in a society in which capital and politics are deeply intertwined. Without unions, working Americans would have no vehicle through which to fight for themselves against the forces of businesses which control money and politics. Without economic democracy, there is no political democracy. Unions preserve our political system by checking the power of corporations which has grown beyond that which the authors of our constitution anticipated (Cogswell, 2012, pp. 17-21). They fight to change the dynamic of dignity and respect for workers not only in their relationship with management, but with all of politics. Though demanding this representation is contra to the evolution of absolute capitalism, Cogswell argues that capitalism as an economic, political, and social system could not survive without being regulated by unions. Unions have set important standards which are considered basic to today's society, such as the weekend and minimum wage. Though unions' influence is not great enough to tip the scales of justice, it is sufficient to prevent depravity of resources and basic dignity on such a massive scale that Cogswell claims capitalism would self-destruct and revolution kin to that which Marx predicted would be inevitable (Cogswell, 2012, pp. 17-21).

There are many studies proving the direct advantages unionized workers have over non-unionized workers. Yates found that in 2005, the difference in hourly earnings between union and non-union wage workers was \$5.29 (28.1%) in wages, \$2.09 (135.7%) in insurance, \$1.67 (231.9%) in pension, and \$10.08 (43.7%) in compensation through additional fringe benefits. Excluding benefits, union wage advantage (controlling for education, experience, region, industry, occupation, and marital status) among different demographic groups was: 17.1% for all men, 10.7% for all women, 12.4% for Whites, 18.3% for Blacks, 21.9% for

Hispanics, 17.4% for Asians, and 16.4% for immigrants. This shows that they are especially important for racial minorities who are systematically more vulnerable to labor abuse, and have lessened, though not eradicated, wage gaps (Yates, 2009, pp. 31-46).

The decline of labor over the past half-century has also proven the importance of unions via the role they no longer play. Jake Rosenfeld argues that unions were *the* core equalizing institution in American, and their decline is largely responsible for the soaring economic and social inequalities we see today. While unions still forestall wage declines, stagnations, and gaps among unionized workers, they represent such a relatively small portion of the labor market that they no longer have the clout to tip the standards, benefiting both unionized and nonunionized workers. He also argues that the disappearance of private-sector unions has made it more difficult for low-skilled immigrants to assimilate or move upward (Rosenfeld, 2014, pp. 6). Unions are also weakened in their prior role of supporting Americans without college educations, by winning higher pay for “unskilled labor” but also politically, by providing them with resources and trainings to engage in politics and translating their political activity into contending, pro-labor policies and candidates. As a result, there is a widening gap in civic participation (Rosenfeld, 2014, pp. 1-30).

Many welfare state scholars such as Korpi, Rueschemeyer, and Stephens attribute high levels of inequality and poverty in the United States to the lack of a labor party (Eidlin, 2016, pp. 488). Their decline has been correlated with deep increases in inequality and poverty in the United States. A recent report by Oxfam International showed that 82% of the wealth created in 2017 went to the top 1%, with no increase going to the bottom 50% (Kottasová, 2018). When state right to work laws are passed, the average worker’s pay drops 3.1%. These states also have

higher poverty rates than non-right to work states (15.3% and 12.8% respectively) and have worse pay gaps between men and women (AFL-CIO, 2018). Since 1983, nonunion workers have consistently earned 79% of that which union members earn, with a median weekly income for full-time wage and salary workers of \$776 and \$980 respectively in 2015 (Dunn and Walker, 2016). It is clear that the lack of unity and power for the labor movement has been detrimental to workers ability to own and improve their lives.

In summary, unions play an essential role in improving the immediate quality of life of their members and in increasing the standard quality of life, wages, benefits, conditions, and self-determination of workers across the country, of equalizing such treatment of workers across race and gender. They also play a significant role in the education and political participation of working class Americans. They organize contra to the hegemonic power of late-stage capitalism by redistributing some of the economic, political, and social power of the owning class back to the hands of the producers. The rest of this thesis departs from this point that regardless of their success or failure, unions as an institution are vital to American society.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT:

Any conversation regarding the failures or limitations of the union movement must include the fact that the United States has structurally opposed unions since its founding. Under English common law in colonial America, the conspiracy to raise wages, also known as collective bargaining, was illegal (“Labor history of the United States,” 2018). Following emancipation, the employment relations system was rewritten to preserve only the rights of individuals to negotiate the terms and conditions of their employment, solidifying the nation’s

identity as an anti-labor democracy (de Leon, 2014, pp. 2). Over the first half of the 19th century, there are twenty-three known cases of indictment and prosecution for criminal conspiracy regarding whether workers in combination were permitted to use their collective bargaining power to obtain benefits beyond their ability as individuals, such as increased wages, decreased hours, or improved conditions. *Commonwealth v Hunt* in 1842 was the first case to rule that labor combinations were legal in explicit and clear terms (“Labor history of the United States,” 2018). For over a century, companies called on local, state, and military police, as well as private union busting agencies to threaten unionizing or striking workers with various forms of violence including murder, assault, threats of violence against them, loved ones, and community members, arrest, incarceration, arsen, deprivation of resources, intimidation, psychological violence, evictions, and failure to take safety measures resulting in death and injury on the job (Cogswell, 2012; pp. 43-73; C. de Leon, personal communication, March 28, 2018). Cases like the Harlan County Coal Strike of 1931 have been used to (somewhat successfully) flip this narrative, depicting workers and union leaders as violent communist thugs, but a closer analysis of these situations reveal that the corporations, local and state police forces, and sometimes even the National Guard have historically exercised undue and disproportionate violence against workers (Bubka, 1970). Though threats to physical safety are less common today, psychological intimidation and fear are still common practice in companies trying to prevent unions.

The labor movement declined significantly in terms of membership, activities, power, and influence in the 1920s due to general prosperity, lack of leadership, anti-union campaigns by both the state and employers, and legislative oppression of unions (“Labor history of the United States,” 2018). Employers forced employees to sign “yellow-dog” contracts stating they would

not join a union via threat of termination, and ran the “American Plan” campaign emphasized values of individualism and meritocracy to portray unions as “un-American.” Corporations used twice as many court injunctions against strikes that decade than any other comparable period (“Labor history of the United States,” 2018). Yellow-dog contracts and court injunctions during labor disputes were finally protected against by the first pro-labor bill of the 30s, the Norris-La Guardia Act.

Despite such repression from the state and employers, workers across the country joined national strike waves when pushed to critical junctures of desperation, such as in 1877, 1886, 1934, and most recently 1946. These are usually met with state violence, sometimes destroying the goals or even existence of the union, though the successful strikes are responsible for establishing today’s labor standards (C. de Leon, personal communication, January 29, 2018).

In 1933, the National Industrial Recovery Act was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 and guaranteed, for the first time, that "employees shall have the right to organize and bargain collectively through representative of their own choosing, and shall be free from the interference, restraint, or coercion of employers (“Labor history of the United States,” 2018). Though this was the first time labor unions and their right to collective bargaining were legalized, they had no mechanism for enforcement, initiating the national labor strike wave of 1934 that pressured Congress to finally pass the Wagner Act, also known as the National Labor Relations Act, in 1935 (C. de Leon, personal communication, April 18, 2018). This created the National Labor Relations Board, which oversees the legitimation and recognition of employee’s election to join a union, and prosecutes violations of labor law. Though it made it illegal for employers to interfere with these rights, these violations occur regularly to this day, and

prosecution is often slow and underwhelming. This workplace election system meant unions had to organize each new factory or firm rather than industry, unlike many European countries (“Labor history of the United States,” 2018). Furthermore, Frymer argues that this divide was further institutionalized and exacerbated by a political system which bifurcated race and class into two separate spheres of government with distinct regulatory agencies, visions, and strategies via the Wagner Act of 1935 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Frymer 2008, p. 1-3). The Act does not apply to railway, agricultural, or domestic employees, to state, federal, or local government workers, to independent contractors, or to supervisors or close relatives of individual employers (“Labor history of the United States,” 2018).

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy signed Executive Order 10988 which finally recognized the right of federal employees to collectively bargain. This was a huge victory for the public sector workers, but forestalled the Rhodes-Johnson Union Recognition bill, which would have given more power to federal employee unions and possibly created a union shop arrangement. It was effectively replaced by President Richard Nixon’s Executive Order 11491 in 1969, which established a federal institutional framework to govern labor-management relations (“Labor history of the United States,” 2018).

The upsurge in unionization following World War II led to the Labor Management Relations Act of 1947, more commonly known as the Taft-Hartley Act, which famously restricted the activities and power of labor unions and is still effective today. It prohibited jurisdictional strikes (which demand the particular tasks assigned to the striking employees); wildcat strikes (taken by unionized workers without the union leadership’s authorization or approval); solidarity or political strikes; secondary boycotts (taken in solidarity with a separate

union striking against a separate corporation with which the secondary strikers have no primary dispute but is often connected to the same enterprise as their management); secondary and mass picketing; closed shops (contractual obligations that the employer only hire union labor); and monetary donations by unions to federal political campaigns. It gave the executive branch power to legally break a strike if it imperiled national security and permitted right to work laws. It furthermore required union officers to sign non-communist affidavits with the government (“Labor history of the United States,” 2018). These regulations were, and still are, devastating to the labor movement. The illegalization of solidarity strikes, in particular, are a serious barrier to the type of unity between social movements that is central to my imagination of a strong labor movement.

“Right to work” refers to laws prohibiting unionized employees from negotiating contracts that require all employees benefiting from the union contract to pay towards the cost of union representation. For over one hundred and fifty years, the Republican party has employed the rhetoric of liberty to delegitimize working people’s most effective strategy for fighting for their working conditions and wages (de Leon, 2014, pp. 2). The argument that workers have the right to organize, but not to compel workers to join them positions collective power against individual freedom. In effect, right to work weakens unions by creating the free-rider problem, in which all employees at a unionized work site receive the contractual benefits that the union has negotiated on their behalf without having to pay a due or service fee to support the daily operations of unions. In 1977, the Supreme Court case *Abood v Detroit Board of Education* made the precedent-setting ruling that union security agreements were legal, but distinguished between two kinds of compelled payments: once the majority of workers in a bargaining unit

voted to unionize, all members of that unit are required to pay for the union's collective bargaining efforts, but they do not need to pay for the political activities of the union, such as campaign spending, or support towards candidates and legislation, as that would violate the First Amendment. Nonetheless, 28 states have passed right-to-work laws, and the federal precedent is expected to be reversed in the June 2018 Supreme Court hearing of *Janus v. AFSCME*. Such a ruling would be devastating for organized labor, slashing unions' membership, involvement, and budgets.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SEIU 1199:

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) is one of the largest unions in the United States today, founded in 1921 and now representing 2 million service workers throughout the country and Canada. It is famous for its long-time president John Sweeny's famous break from decentralization, doubling union dues in the 80s to increase the staff of aggressive and innovative activist-organizers (C. de Leon, personal communication, March 28, 2018). It is one of the few unions that grew in the 90s, due to an aggressive merger strategy, expanding its original base, and actively organizing the expanded public sector (Fantasia and Voss, 2004).

1199 in particular is its branch of the National Health Care Workers' Union. It was founded in 1932 but took its current name in 1958 after the precedent-setting Montefiore strike, in which 900 service and maintenance workers became the first hospital workers ever to choose 1199 in a 628-31 vote (1199SEIU, 2008). The strike was precursed by a changing for-profit healthcare model, hypocritical liberal branding by the administration, and the involvement of municipal and state authorities as third parties in hospital labor relations. It came in a moment of

changing social content and consciousness of the labor force marked by the inclusion of community and empowerment in labor organizing principles, and completely changed the precedent of healthcare organizing by centering the mostly minority staff and service workers rather than the professional class (Fink and Greenberg, 2009; C. de Leon, personal communication, April 2, 2018). The historic campaign led to a strike wave in hospitals across New York City and a sixfold increase in membership within a decade, along with tripling unionized hospital wages. 1199 became the country's leading healthcare union (1199SEIU, 2008).

From these origins, 1199 has been held up through today as an example of social movement unionism. Its organizers have a reputation of agitating situations to a confrontation with the employer, in which it becomes clearer than it might have been before how little they think of their workers, and of pushing its members to until they see the urgency and desperation of their situation with contemporary spins on their old slogan “you organize or you die” (C. de Leon, personal communication, March 28, 2018; Fink and Greenberg, 2009). At the same time, my conversations with individual organizers today reveal that 1199, at least in Boston, might be too institutionalized, with a huge, multi-industry membership, a lot of internal bureaucracy, top-down decision making, insufficient use of resources, and organizers who lack urgency.

Reviewing 1199's website reveals that the union considers many themes central in its origins to still be the crux of their fights today, such as black-white-Hispanic unity, widespread member participation, rank-and-file leadership, political alliances and education of the public on vital healthcare reform issues. Their online platform displays clear social movement unionism principles. One of the website's principle pages, “Take Action,” is dedicated to mobilizing

membership on a broad range of political campaigns and justice issues including affordable housing, environmental justice, good jobs and economic justice, Fight for \$15, healthcare for all, immigration reform, LGBTQ rights, peace and international cooperation, racial justice, rights and democracy, and women's rights. Accessible links to infographics, news articles, and flyers explain how each of these issues relates back to healthcare and healthcare workers. For example, the Fight for Fifteen page of their website explains that many members make less than \$15 an hour which causes them to struggle to afford basic essentials such as food and housing, sets a low bar for the earnings of all healthcare workers, deters qualified professionals from pursuing these careers, and impacts the quality of care they are able to provide to patients ("Healthcare Workers Fight for \$15", 2017). They don't shy away from politicized language: in the disaster relief fund which they created in solidarity with healthcare workers and first responders in regions affected by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, they explicitly name "the Trump administration's climate denial and callous policies" as a contributing factor to the unnatural disasters ("Disaster Relief Fund," 2017). They claim that no union did more than it to elect President Obama in 2008 (1199SEIU, 2008, pp. 3). This isn't the end of their philanthropic action: 1199 sponsorship enabled indigenous people from Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Sioux to attend the march, part of their larger partnership with Indigenous Environmental Network ("Environmental Justice," 2017). Coalition building is a huge part of 1199's efforts. They have taken a leading role in the strength of popular protest that has led to the formation of other social movement groups like the United States Climate Alliance ("Environmental Justice," 2017).

One way 1199 advances its coalition building and political agendas is through the Political Action Contributions (PAC, not to be confused with the Permanent Administrative Committees from the union's founding). Per the process legally dictated in *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education*, and contrary to the Right to Work platform, the union is clear that union dues are never used for electoral activity, but it is a separate Political Action Fund that is used to support pro-labor leaders. The union argues that electing working-family-friendly candidates and supporting worker-friendly legislation and policy helps the union do its job and working class people everywhere, including 1199's members, live better lives ("Current Campaigns," 2018).

This broad coalition of movements displays a sincere and expansive definition of solidarity and a successful effort to politically educate and activate members. The image the union cultivates, the members it highlights, and the actions it describes indicate a high level of success in my criteria of building a social movement.

ORGANIZING HOMECARE:

Homecare workers provide personal assistance and health care support to older adults and people with disabilities in their homes or communities. Types of homecare workers include personal care aides (also called Personal Care Attendants, Home Care Workers, Personal Assistants, and Direct Support Professionals), which make up roughly half of all homecare workers. They perform tasks such as assisting consumers with eating, dressing, bathing, housekeeping, basic exercise, transportation, and remaining socially active in their communities (PHI, 2014, pp. 4 and 9). They may manage medication, but with only a health aide certification, they are typically restricted from administering medical treatment (Voorlas, 2017, pg 1).

Independent providers resemble personal care aides and are a consumer-directed service employed through a Medicaid program. Home health aides (also called home hospice aides and home health attendants) have additional specialized training and perform some clinical tasks under the supervision of a licensed professional. Nursing assistants primarily work in institutional settings, but in some states are automatically certified for home care (PHI, 2014, pp. 9).

Homecare work has long struggled for recognition, because of the invisibility of labor in the home and the gendered and racialized locations of the field, both of which in turn have shaped its location in welfare state policy. The occupation has historically been a predominantly Latina, Black, immigrant, female, minimum-wage job (Boris and Klein, 2006, pp. 81). Until 1951, Social Security refused to recognize the home as a workplace, so in-home care workers and nurse-companions were classified as domestic servants. New Deal policy in the 1930s and again in the 1960s assigned household chore and personal assistance jobs to women on welfare and black and immigrant women of color. The 1962 Public Welfare Amendments, the Older Americans Act, and founding of Medicaid in 1965 together established a foundation for state-funded social services labor market within the welfare nexus of disability, old age, and welfare policies. Still, it was classified under “homemaker services” and has consistently been conflated with cleaning-ladies and babysitting, making the demand for “respect, dignity, and wages” an innovative battle fought by the labor, civil rights, and feminist movements.

Though private employment agencies and medicare-certified home health agencies which manage homecare workers have grown, most homecare workers are hired directly by clients or their families, often paid for through public health insurance programs. This means that their

working conditions and wages are set by governmental social policies and reimbursement rates, complicating the question of who do workers bargain with and how? In the 80s, SEIU began to organize these independently contracted homecare workers (also known as Personal Care Attendants), starting the long, uphill battle of creating state agencies to recognize and bargain with the union for standardized contracts for homecare workers. This process has looked different in every state, but in Massachusetts resulted in the creation of the Workforce Council (Boris and Klein, 2006). Today, many home care jobs are government-funded, with 72% of the industry paid for by public programs, primarily Medicare and Medicaid. 16% are funded by private insurance, and 7% are paid for out of pocket (PHI, 2014, pg 4).

Despite some union victories which have radically changed the precedent of union organizing in health and beyond, such as the 74,000 homecare workers who joined SEIU in 1999, homecare workers still struggle with recognition and compensation. In 2000, they were the lowest paid job in healthcare except for janitors, receiving 30-60 percent the pay for identical labor of staff in nursing homes, and 70 percent of that in hospitals. They were rarely full time, so lacked health insurance, paid sick leave, paid vacations, fair compensation, and much of them were below the poverty line. (Boris and Klein, 2006).

A 2015 PHI analysis of the American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau reveals that 24% of homecare workers live below the poverty line (relative to 9% of all U.S. Workers), over half rely on public assistance, and 26% do not have health insurance. This stems from the fact that the median hourly wage was \$10.11 in 2015, a 10 cent decrease since 2005 when adjusted for inflation. Because of the erratic nature of client needs, two-thirds of homecare workers work part time or for part of the year, producing a median annual income of only

\$13,300. Employer provided benefits are rare. These conditions are unsurprisingly and undeniably a partial consequence of the racialized and gendered dynamics of the field. More than half of homecare workers are people of Color (relative to one fourth in the total U.S. Workforce), with 28% Black and 21% Hispanic. 9 out of 10 homecare workers are women, with a median age 45. Over one fourth were born outside of the U.S. More than half have completed no formal education beyond high school (PHI, 2014).

The National Employment Law Project conducted a comprehensive survey in 2016 which found that worker's schedules are short, irregular, and undercompensated: 61% work less than 40 hours a week, 30% work part of the year, 81% said they want to work more hours, almost 1/3 work a second job, and 53% are seeking another job. A majority of respondents said they sometimes or always work off the clock before or after their shifts without pay. Only 18% said their employer paid for on-the-job costs such as transportation. 40% said they never receive time-and-a-half pay for their time over 40 hours. Less than half reported getting employer-provided safety equipment, like gloves. 57% of the respondents who were injured on the job do not have employer-provided health insurance, and 78% of them did not receive sick days. Of the whole workforce, 79.5% do not have employer-provided retirement benefits. Statistics on these conditions in Massachusetts are not available, but even though the wage and condition standards are considered higher here than many states, these studies paint a broad but accurate picture of the industry of my case study. The women I interviewed reflected experience with many of these challenges.

The National Employment Law Project also found several trends that speak to the positive difference unionization makes: homecare workers with a union were more likely to

expect to still be in the profession a year later; less likely to be looking for a job in a different profession; more likely to say they would benefit from training; less likely to say they are never paid for overtime work; more likely to receive employer benefits; more likely to have higher wages. These results fit the narrative of my own study results as well (National Employment Law Project, 2017).

Homecare is a rapidly growing industry, as the population ages and the culture shifts away from institutional settings like nursing homes and towards private homes and communities (PHI, 2014, pg 2). Between 2014 and 2024, homecare occupations are projected to add 633,100 new jobs, growing faster than any other single occupation (PHI, 2014, pg 7). The homecare workforce has doubled in the past ten years, but there are large workforce shortages due to the poor quality of homecare jobs. This adds a level of urgency to the task of organizing homecare and raising the industry standards. It does not seem that unions are able to shift the industry standards fast enough to keep up with the field's growth, which begs the question of whether these structural barriers are entirely to blame or if internal union strategy is also an impediment. In my case study of the Personal Care Attendants represented by SEIU 1199, I will explore how the union has shaped the lives of its members, and how each of these barriers to organization has impeded the union's goal of bringing them into the labor movement.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

How do we define success?

Defining union's success is predicated on defining the union's goal. This is complicated, because unions are tasked with a difficult, counter-hegemonic, and multi-tiered agenda, full of short and long-term goals that both contradict each other and are each other's vital prerequisites. A union's success can validly be defined by its ability to 1) survive 2) win better contracts for today's workers 3) grow worker leadership through political education 4) involve the broader community in its process and outcome or 5) make structural changes to capitalism. For the purpose of the inquiries of this paper, however, I am defining success by a high gold standard which combines all of these points: unions' ability to form a strong labor movement.

By the "labor movement," I mean a coalition of working people and their communities organizing across economic sectors to take back power and capital from the ruling class in order to care for themselves and fight for the collective good. I am narrowing my exploration of the labor movement to the role unions play in forming and defining it, as they have traditionally been the vehicle through which workers can defend their rights in the United States. I am narrowing my assessment of union's role in the labor movement to their ability to mobilize their members into it.

My vision of a successful incorporation of union members into the labor movement involves a membership with: a strong understanding of the union's long-term goals; participation in a range of union activities; a higher level of political efficacy and civic engagement than when they joined the union; drawing connections between their experiences under capitalism and other related struggles, and solidarity with these causes; participating in community or political

activity without the prompting of the union; and having and voicing opinions about union activity.

How do we measure success?

None of the existing proxies for assessing the success of unions measure precisely the information we need to assess unions' activation of their members into a labor movement. Nonetheless, by looking at our question through these various frameworks, we can round out our understanding of the many interlocking components of successful movement building.

Unionization rates:

Unionization rates have traditionally been used as the primary proxy by which the health or success of the labor movement is measured, but do little to answer questions regarding the engagement of already unionized members.

Unionization rates peaked at 35% in the mid-1950s, after surges in unionization during the Great Depression and after World War II. Since then, it has been in dramatic decline (Greenhouse, 2011), with membership shrinking at an accelerating rate throughout the 1970s and 80s (Rosenfeld, 2016). When the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics began collecting data in 1983, the unionization rate was 20.1%. In 2011, it reached its lowest rate in over 70 years, at 11.9% of waged and salaried workers. The private sector rate, at 6.9%, was the lowest it had been in a century (Greenhouse, 2011). Most of this decline has occurred in the private sector, with public sector union rates remaining relatively steady. Within the private sector, this decline is consistent across industries (Dunn and Walker, 2015). Now it is less than

half of its 1983 rate, though the rate of decline may finally have come to a pause: the percentage of wage and salary workers belonging to unions in the United States in 2017 was 10.7 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016).

This severe decline has been the focus of most recent literature on participation the labor movement. The percentage of working people involved in a union undeniably has a huge impact on who and how unions organize, and what that movement looks like. It shapes the size, clout and influence of existing unions, the narrative around them, and thus how members might relate to them. Ultimately, though, the vast literature on workers' participation in unions asks very different questions from what drives or hinders participation within union members.

Approval of unions:

Approval ratings of unions also fail to show us anything about the level of participation of union members. We can hypothesize that individuals who have been incorporated into the labor movement believe in the importance and vision of labor unions, and thus that politically activated union members are more likely to rate unions highly. This is, however, a loose indication that lacks legitimate and significant statistical analysis. Furthermore, we cannot assume that members with high approval ratings are more likely to be involved in the labor movement - it is, in fact, this precise gap that my case study examines.

There is limited data representing public approval of unions, and even less recording the approval of unions by union members. The Gallup Poll is the most prominent collection of survey data on public approval of unions dating back to 1973. In 2017, labor unions reached their highest public approval rating since 2003, at 61%. Though its approval is still not as high as it

was in the 1930s through 1960s, a new high of 39% of Americans say unions should have greater influence (compared to 28% who want them to have less influence). When asked to rate their confidence in the institution of organized labor, 13% said a great deal, 15% said quite a lot, 41% said some, 27% said very little, 2% said none, and 3% said no opinion. Pessimistically, 46% of Americans believe unions will be weaker in the future (Gallup, 2017). 2017 data should be considered in light of the shifting political climate following the election of Donald Trump, however much of the data shows consistent patterns. Until the past decade, there has been a consistent gap between approval and disapproval rates, the former of which has always been higher and never dropped below 50% until 2009. According to 2016 survey data, 70% of the American public believes that unions mostly help (as opposed to hurt) workers who are members of unions, 52% believes they help the U.S. economy in general, 38% believes they help workers who are not members of unions, and 55% believe they help companies where workers are unionized. These surprisingly supportive results are within a few percentage points of the trends across all of the years this survey data was collected, going back to 1997.

Several arguments, including Rosenberg and the 2007 policy brief “Do workers still want unions? More than ever” by the Economic Policy Institute rely on one statistic named in the 1990s Worker Representation and Participation Survey report which found that 90% of nonunion workers would vote for their union in a new election. Beyond this, there are few studies that looked at approval rates among just union members.

These data bring up two questions: why are these approval rates so much higher than the dominant narrative would lead us to believe? Given the union-busting political climate in the age of right to work, and the heavy decline of unions, these approval ratings are higher than we

would expect them to be. Rosenberg writes about how the consistent gap between union approval rates and unionization rates dispels the myth that unions are in decline due to low demand and shows that there are structural barriers to unionization that oppose the will of the workers. But does this mean that this is something to celebrate? Even if 53% of contracted workers had unions, as they would if all workers who wanted a union had one, we still would not have achieved the ideal-type labor union I envision. Regardless, the crux of this paper is that medium to high approval rates do not meet the definition of success.

How organizers rate success:

How do the leaders of the labor movement rate its effectiveness, and what do they see as the critical determinants of its success? In 1984, Heshizer and Graham found a perceived weakening of unions in the survey results of national union officials between 1963 and 1983: more than half agreed there was a crisis in the labor movement, with most attributing it to external forces such as government policies, employer hostility, and market forces, 47% attributing it to union structure and administrative policies, and 11% attributing it to union leadership (Fiorito, 1997). In 1992, LeRoy found that union officials gave the labor movement a mediocre assessment, with an average rating of 3.59 to 3.68 on a 7 point scale, signifying between “somewhat poor” and “fair”. When asked to rank order 25 factors affecting the labor movement, respondents also emphasized external factors such as bargaining rights, the Supreme Court, and the National Labor Relations Board, but also ranked membership solidarity and union leadership among the five most important influences on union performance (Fiorito, 1997). Fiorito, et al. 1993 outlined organizing, service to members, bargaining for members, politics and

legislation, and advancing all workers' interests as the five dimensions encompassing union performance as a whole, and asked union leaders to assess each of them individually. Drawing on organizational science and the industrial relations disciplines, they theorized that the determinants of union effectiveness include the degree of innovation, the bureaucratic structuring and centralization of decision making, union democracy, union strategies, and environmental influences.

As predicted, leaders saw union effectiveness to be enhanced by innovation, rationalization, and the addressing of a broad scope of issues, and hindered by centralization of control and employer opposition. They did not find statistically significant evidence for their theory that using a broad scope of methods in providing services, democratic structure, or employment change enhance union effectiveness, suggesting that in 1997, the majority of union leadership did not see a particular importance in emphasizing politics, direct service, and non-bargaining mechanisms. Instead, bargaining effectiveness had the greatest effect on overall union effectiveness (Fiorito, 1997).

Leaders also stressed internal factors, as opposed to mere context, as critical to effectiveness; Fiorito calls for implementation of more structured and rational models of organizing, inspired by business techniques, to increase efficiency and effectiveness without contradicting decentralization efforts or innovation (Fiorito, 1997).

There are limits to how much union leader's evaluations can answer our specific question. They are weighing multiple tiers of short and long-term union objectives in their evaluations, not simply the gold-standard of labor movement mobilization. This very study demonstrated that such breadth of organizing is not the single most important outcome in their

evaluations. However, despite the bias that leaders in this study showed towards their own unions, organizer's evaluations of their own union would serve as a powerful source of information and analysis in a differently designed experiment.

Civic engagement:

Another proxy for measuring the mobilization of union members is the impact on their overall civic engagement. While classical literature views political participation as dependent upon individual characteristics, such as education, income, class, education, race, and gender (Kerrissey and Schofer, 2013), later waves have emphasized the influence of organizations like political parties and churches in mobilizing and inspiring individuals to act while giving them the skills and opportunities to do so (again Kerrissey and Schofer, 2013; see also (Verba, Scholzman and Brady 1995; Peterson 1992; Norris 2002; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Meyer 2007). Kerrissey and Schofer argue that unions then intentionally cultivate civic skills and pro-union political identities through exposure and education, and urge members to engage in politics and collective action to achieve both organizational and political goals. Most of the studies measuring union impact on political participation have centered on electoral outcomes, and indeed union members are not only more likely to vote but more likely to vote democratic (Kerrissey and Schofer, 2013). But what about the ways union members interact with outside political institutions and organizations as a result of their involvement with the union?

In their 2013 study "Union Membership and Political Participation in the United States," Jasmine Kerrissey and Evan Schofer use two large-scale, independent, survey-based datasets to test hypotheses of three activities in which union members are more likely to participate in than

non-members: 1) broadly defined political and civic life (including yard signs, petition signing, phone banking, donations, and voting); 2) activities central to unions' agendas; 3) volunteering for political campaigns, engaging in political communication (such as writing a legislator), and joining political organizations. Their fourth hypothesis is that union membership will have a larger effect on the political participation of low-education and low-income members compared to others. They found that, indeed, union members are more politically active than non-members and that the effect of union membership is broad, varied, and substantive, spanning most types of civic involvement. Union members are: 13 to 20 percent more likely to associate with another organization, particularly political and traditional community associations; to identify farther to the left politically (on average, $\frac{1}{4}$ of a point on an 8 point scale); 73 to 95 percent more likely to participate in a protest. Because individuals with higher education are already more likely to be politically active, unions made a greater difference on the participation of populations with low levels of education. Contrary to their hypothesis, union membership did not have as significant an impact on politicizing populations of lower socioeconomic status relative to wealthier populations.

This is a useful framework insofar as it suggests that, on average, unions do increase the politicization of their membership. While this is not the same as asking whether unions cause their members to see themselves as part of a labor movement, it is interesting that they measured whether the political participation of union members was related to the goals and agenda of the union, and it was. Further extrapolation on what they mean by union-related agendas, and how that relates to the goals we have outlined for the labor movement, would have added a lot.

In “Political Activism as Part of a Broader Civic Engagement” (2009), Bruce Nissen uses SEIU Florida Healthcare Union as an example of spectacular achievement in increasing the civic engagement of its members, as measured by increased likelihood of voting, engaging with elected officials, paying attention to the news, and getting involved with a community organization. It attributes this success to the fact that 1) the union uses a grassroots approach to policy, having the membership participate heavily in its political activities, and 2) that it focuses its political activities on interests that extend beyond the workplace and the institution. These two strategies are already agreed upon as having a positive relationship with the success of a union. This article does not, however, explain how the union is able to achieve these two systems, i.e., how they are able to educate and activate membership or sustain such a wide spread of resources.

Nissen also found that while it was successful in both influencing the silent majority and building internal leaders, it had a distinctly greater impact on the lives and engagement of those who stepped forward to become volunteer leaders or activists.

In her 2011 study, “Schools for Democracy: Labor Union Participation and Latino Immigrant Parents’ School-Based Civic Engagement,” Terriquez found evidence that union members do, independently and without being prompted by the union, use their union-acquired skills to engage critically and affect change in non-union settings. Their case study examined the engagement of Latino immigrant members of a Los Angeles janitors’ labor union in the independent civic arena of their children’s schools, and found that active union members became more involved in decision-making and improvement activities in the schools, drawing upon the civic problem-solving, advocacy, and organizing skills they adopted in their union participation.

The study does not examine the content of the opinions union members voice in the schools, nor does it shed light on what connections the members do or do not see between their union and school engagement; we thus cannot use it to draw conclusions about the political ideologies or goals of the individuals. It did, however, find that the nature of the union members' engagement in the schools was not plug-in activities but rather those involving decision making and leadership (Terriquez 2011; 581-601), which may indicate that they are developing some kind of political opinion, vision, and efficacy. Although the researcher's original question of investigation centered around how civic skills transfer across distinct and separate civic contexts, I read into the findings room for the possibility that participation in distinct civic contexts indicates not only the transfer of skills but a broader politicization that calls them to be critical of power, advocate for themselves, and hold institutions accountable.

These questions are understudied and different from those that we are asking, but they would suggest that the level of engagement of union members in politics and social movements has a positive relationship with union membership, which is one of our criteria.

Union Democracy:

☐ In traditional academia and union strategy, scholars have used union democracy as the primary proxy by which to assess the success of unions in representing their workers' interests. In the foundational text *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (1911), Robert Michels posits that democracy is incompatible with all large, complex social systems, and that contrary to and despite of egalitarian principles, individual organizations will inevitably tend toward oligarchy due to bureaucratic organizational structures

(Michels, 1911). Seymour Martin Lipset et al countered this argument with their 1956 case study of the International Typographical Union. They argued that though bureaucratic institutions do tend toward oligarchy, this is not an iron law, and that organizations can indeed achieve democracy in the presence of a particular set of conditions: the existence of autonomous subgroups, a heterogeneous population, and most importantly, the existence of factions, holding each other accountable and competing for power through democratic elections (Lipset, 1956). Most scholars to this day have emphasized democratic participation and leadership in unions as essential to short and long-term effectiveness in achieving workers' interests. Strauss (1991) argued that democracy enhances union effectiveness and that formal structures must be provided for member influence, because democracy fosters a sense of commitment to the union and helps overcome the "free-rider instinct" among workers, and ensures that leadership know the interests and desires of their members (Fiorito, 1997).

There are severe limits to using democracy as a proxy for union effectiveness. We will discuss in the "Social Movement Unionism" section that there is tension between top-down and bottom-up leadership, both of which pose problems and opportunities. The complexity of executing this theory in praxis will be discussed further in the analysis chapter. When it comes to the effectiveness of building a social movement, the union cannot only react to the immediate demands of union members, but must also ensure that its decision making reflects its broader and more long-term vision of a just world. Democratic structure is productive but certainly not the only way to achieve or measure worker participation and union effectiveness.

Social movement unionism:

The social movement unionization model is extremely helpful for outlining positive union strategies and systems that might bring us closer to our ideal type of labor movement mobilization. This model of union organizing has emerged over the past 30 years as a response to critiques of existing models and fear for the future of the labor movement (Fairbrother, 2009), and is defined by Webster as dealing with labor as a social and political force, not simply as a commodity to be bargained over (Fairbrother, 2009). Fairbrother draws on Lopez's 2004 summary of other scholars including Bezuidenhout, Turner, Lambert, Voss, Sherman, Johnston, Grindin, Scipes, and Waterman, to identify four key aspects to social movement unionism: it is locally focused, built from a bottom-up mobilization of the rank and file; it engages creative collective action that experiments beyond workplace activities such as a strike; it is grounded in community (and sometimes global) coalitions; and it embraces "emancipatory politics, framing demands politically, and formulating transformative visions." It takes a step back from the traditions of the labor movement to ask what changes we need to see in the world and how we can work together to achieve them. Grindin, speaking of the Canadian Autoworker Union, says that this "...means making the union into a vehicle through which its members can not only address their bargaining demands but actively lead the fight for everything that affects working people in their communities and the country. Movement unionism includes the shape of bargaining demands, the scope of union activities, the approach to issues of change, and above all, that sense of commitment to a larger movement that might suffer defeats, but can't be destroyed (Gindin 1995, 268)."

One of the greatest challenges is that neither completely top-down nor bottom-up organization works. When elite theory is taught to workers in a traditionally conceptualized

passage of knowledge from the “all knowing” to the “student,” it is unlikely to make an impression. The big picture is hard to relate to. Workers are unlikely to see their day-to-day lived experiences reflected in the macro conceptualizations of old, white, male scholars. When this knowledge is being presented as the solution to their problems by organizers with whom they have little in common, this will not be enough to persuade workers of its truth, nevermind to actively involve themselves in a fight against capitalism. Even when the organizers are workers themselves, vision and strategy need to be collaborated upon efforts. This is why the labor movement has emphasized developing strong one on one relationships between organizers and their members.

However, due to the issues outlined in the above sections, workers today are less likely to run a bottom-up successful campaign. This absolutely does still happen - we can take as an example the West Virginia Teachers Strike of 2018. But these cases are not enough to forge the progress of the entire labor movement. Political education, strong leaders, experience, and a shared vision are necessary to sustain a successful grassroots campaign.

What prevents success?

What obstacles prevent unions from achieving success, as we have defined it? It is most certainly a combination of factors internal and external to the movement organization. In the analysis of my results, I will talk about how in this particular case I see the external factors, namely the capitalist hegemony, as the largest barrier to successful labor movement organizing, but that this argument is an insufficient explanation because all unions are faced with the same challenges and others have been more successful.

THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS:

There is a long history of a variety of theoretical models articulating the tension between internal and external barriers to successful unionism. Volker K. Frank emphasizes the structural, arguing that labor movement strategies are understood as choices and responses of labor leaders at various levels of the labor movement to a set of circumstances, including historical influence, industrial relations system and legislative context, and labor leaders sentiments toward the legislation and governments support of their demands (Frank, pp. 4). Durán-Palma, on the other hand, argues that trade unions are not simply reactive organisations, and changes in the opportunity space do not explain all redirection (Durán-Palma, pp. 315). Frege and Kelly's 2003 social movement model of union strategic choice argues that union strategy is a combination of structural determinants such as socioeconomic change, institutional context, and differences in employer and state strategies, and purposeful agency (Durán-Palma, pp. i). Frank adds that the range of other movement characteristics that also impact union strategy include the rate of affiliation, generally and by economic sector, sectoral unity, economic position of the business, how well the leaders represent union members, and personal tenancies of leaders toward accommodation or confrontation (Frank, pp. 4). He goes on to argue that structural limitations such as labor laws do inform labor movement strategies but have limited influence on what the union's response will be to events that arise within that context (Frank, pp. 16). He argues that in this sense, the divisive structure imposed upon unions has forced more innovation and revitalization in plant-level organizing. Durán-Palma elaborates on this multi-dimensional model, claiming meaningful union strategic choice is possible even in the most powerless

situations, and highlights the importance of different strategic paths to union effectiveness. This final argument is the most relevant to this case, as my conclusion will discuss the extremely difficult but untapped opportunities the union has to organize in spite of the severe structural barriers.

Contrary to the institutional model, Leiva argues that the root cause of labor's weakened political state is due to variables internal to the movement itself more so than to structural factors resulting from the neoliberal restructuring of society. These factors include a lack of autonomy from government and political parties, the lack of transparency, democracy, and political independence inside of leading organizations, and outdated organizational strategy.

Heery et al (2004) outline four models of union revitalization imperative for the survival of the labor movement: the institutional model, in which union activity adjusts to the structure of opportunity provided by industrial relations institutions, responding to external and structural challenges; the societal model, in which a "new unionism" must be established which adapts to changes in society and economy and matches the interests of a changing workforce, responding to external and strategic challenges; the organisational model, in which revitalisation is an internal process, dependent upon changes in union government to allow more effective management, greater democratic participation, or expression of diverse interests, responding to internal and structural challenges; and the actor-centered model which responds to internal and strategic challenges, focusing on the need to renew the population of leaders and activists in union positions, presuming that unions can exercise strategic choice and that different individuals would make different choices. These four models are not contradictory or

paradoxical but, in fact, must work together for the union system to succeed, emphasizing the codependency of internal and external factors in determining union choice.

EXTERNAL FACTORS:

Hegemony

I argue that capitalist hegemony is the most pervasive and ultimately influential factor of labor movement organizing. While it is internalized within each of us, it operates beyond the boundaries and jurisdiction of the union and is thus classified as external. The marxist interpretation of hegemony articulates the ways in which the ideology of the ruling class dominates society so that the cultural, political, and economic systems which support their authority seem normal, natural, inevitable, and beneficial for everyone (Williams, 1977).

Gramsci argued that culture, institutions, practices, and beliefs must be recognized as socially constructed tools of social-class domination. This hegemonic culture exists as a complex of stratified social structures, in which each social and economic class has a purpose. Gramsci posits that this complex secures consent, control, and supreme authority of civil society through saturating all of social reality to the extent that individual actors within it are unaware that there is an option of opting out of that system (Gramsci, 1971).

By this theory, living in a capitalist system, we see no option other than capitalism. Every aspect of our lives from where we source our food to our careers to what we value are constructed by and help to construct this system, so that it appears entirely natural and impossible to change. Via its inevitability, and the capitalist ideological doctrine which permeates academic and cultural education, we are persuaded that we benefit from it. This is

how large groups of people come to rationalize wealth as earned, poverty as motivating, and incarceration as just. It is also why it is so difficult to make connections across the different tools which keep power in place. White supremacy, war, masculinity, xenophobia, elitism in education system, unaffordability of housing, medical care, education, and anti-unionism are all arms of this machine. Though social conflicts do arise, often among groups served the least by the state, the hegemonic narrative coopts these movements and either de-legitimizes them, like Black Lives Matter, or retroactively reveres and incorporates them into the narrative of liberal utopia, like the post-Martin Luther King myth of post-racialism.

Key to United States capitalist hegemony is meritocracy, and the dream that anyone who works hard enough can and will be able to move up the social ladder. This belief that our economic system is rational and just, and our competitive hope that we will be the ones to make it, are tools which make us believe that we have a stake in preserving the existing system. White collar workers are told that they have succeeded, and despite the long hours and high stress they should be grateful and proud to have made it so far up the ladder. White supremacy is designed so that white people accept their economic position via the bribe of their racial superiority and the relative power and access it grants them (Du Bois, 1935). Similarly, other non-black racial groups are triangulated against anti-blackness, being granted relative valorization to invest them in the current political structure, which is then taken away in other ways (such as the “perpetual foreignness” placed upon Asian Americans) (Kim, 1999). The Red Scare virtually won the fight against communism, which is still relegated to corners of universities and activist groups while being feared and shunned in the mainstream. All in all, the vast majority of Americans believe they have a stake in preserving the capitalist system, and it is intentionally difficult to make

connections between the different power structures which allow the capitalist class to exploit people of color, immigrants, women, queer people, and all working people.

Marx, then, was wrong that the working class consciousness and solidarity was an inevitable outcome of the material base, that revolution was unavoidable, and that eutopia could be achieved by the mere proletariat seizure of the means of production. In “The Making of the English Working Class,” E.P. Thompson argues that even if the working class experience is determined, the consciousness is not. Class is a relationship, not a thing, and cannot be distinguished from the time and place that produces it. The working class must constantly make itself through the active process of countering all of the economic, institutional, and internal forces which seek to destroy it (Thompson, 1966, pp. 9-14). He argued that this consciousness comes out of solidarity in the face of conflicting interests, saying “a class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs.” He then defines class consciousness as “the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms.” In “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd” he argues that the long standing tradition of social protest, formerly known exclusively as the “riot,” always has a legitimizing notion: the individuals who make up the crowd act in defense of traditional rights or customs known as the moral economy of the poor. When the dominant understanding of social norms and obligations of each group within the economy and society is violated, the people take grievance and are supported by a consensus so wide that it outranks their fear. In other words, the people will act when they are convinced that a social promise has been broken (Thompson,

1971). In the ever evolving technology of power in today's U.S. economy, the owning class is skilled at persuading workers that the injustice they face is an isolated instance and does not actually breach the moral economy by.

There are several key and relevant points in my interpretation of this. Firstly, class is, at its core, formed by an opposition of interests, but this opposition might not be clear without a constantly reproducing counter-hegemonic cultural narrative of working class identity. The forces that oppress the working class also tend to work to prevent the formation of a cohesive identity or consciousness, though the specific tools they use to do so will change with society. In neoliberal America, as I have already argued, this takes the form of pitting oppressions against one another, all the while instilling in its populous a gratitude and pride for the economic, political, and social freedom we experience in this alleged utopia. Fewer workers experience the deprivation and struggle that some interpretations of Thompson call necessary, but I argue that does not make them unorganizable. Those who see through the veil must constantly recreate and innovate a class identity that reflects and validates the experiences of working people. Class identity is then formed when the legitimizing notion of the capitalist system is broken. This can happen through struggle, through education, through organizing, or through some combination thereof.

None of the workers I interviewed presented a thorough breaking of this legitimizing notion. I will discuss the extent to which they did in certain moments, but overall, they still believe in the justice of the system. This is, of course, due mostly to capitalist hegemony. But it can be, and has not been, combated through effective organizing and political education.

Institutional

In the “history of the labor movement” section, we discussed the countless structural barriers there are to unionization. Anti-labor management and public opinion, subsumption into the Democratic Party, bureaucratized regulatory agencies, illegality of solidarity strikes and legality of management anti-union campaigns are just a few of the legal and institutional barriers which limit the labor movement’s opportunity space. I agree with Durán-Palma and Heery et al that this is not a death sentence to unions and they do still have valuable strategic choice. They do, however, present very real challenges to building a movement.

There are additional structural limitations placed by specific industry and workplace conditions. Homecare is particularly challenging for many reasons. One, there is no centralized workplace, so workers do not know one another. This makes relationship formation, communication channels, solidarity, consensus, and organizing extremely difficult, as it tasks the union with building these relationships before tackling its proximate goals. This particular challenge is increasingly common among industries with the growth of the gig economy, the independent contracting of short-term positions that purports individuals as their own boss but fails to give them any of the protections or benefits of having an employer. Second, as we discussed in the organizing homecare section, there are organizational complications to the unique power dynamic between individual PCAs and their individual consumers, and to the role of government funding in regulating the industry.

INTERNAL FACTORS:

Race and Gender:

Unions have often been criticized for their own downfall, namely for being too “male, pale, and stale.” In other words, their long history of racism, sexism, and uninventive bureaucracy are why they have failed to organize a labor movement. Less than 1% of the American labor movement was Black in 1935 when President Roosevelt signed the Wagner Act, which aimed to promote racial equality within labor unions but also enabled them to exclude and discriminate against non-white workers through lesser pay, security, benefits, and representation (Frymer 2008, pp. 1-2). By the 1970s, though Black workers made up 20% of the labor movement, black radical caucuses formed to critique unions, their ties to capitalism, and their failure to create any substantial change for black workers. Such groups, like RUM at Dodge, ran campaigns to take over the United Automobile Workers union and eventually the entire means of production (Bird et al, 2003). To address the pervasive and systemic hostile exclusion and harassment of women from the construction work field, President Jimmy Carter signed executive order 1126 in 1978, but failure to enforce this policy on the part of unions and businesses meant that 33 years later only 2.7% of people working in the industry were women (less than half of the meager federal target of 6.9%) (Moir, Thomson, and Kelleher, 2011). During this extended period, unions represented the antithesis of the movement of solidarity which we are aiming to form.

Today’s unions have succeeded by many measures in creating a more inclusive organizing model and fighting for the rights of all workers, but in many ways this has been the result of top down initiatives. Fletcher, Herrera, Johnson, and Sheets describe in “Out at Work: Building a Gay-Labor Alliance” union organizers push for inclusive measures and anti-discrimination training contrary to their memberships wishes.

SEIU 1199 has been an outlier since its founding in organizing primarily women of color through membership-driven campaigns. Nonetheless, the entire context of the American labor movement cannot shed the consequences of so many decades in which the “membership” it fought for excluded a significant portion of the working class.

Bureaucracy:

Centralization of unions into a handful of massive organizations with millions of members during the 1970s and 80s turned unions into institutions themselves. While they spent less energy on organizing new membership, their collective bargaining became routinized and scripted, losing its grassroots militancy and rank-and-file ownership. Union leaders criticized the AFL-CIO for being complacent and unresponsive to the urgent needs of the movement during the 90s, and the failure of two insurgencies to revitalize organizing over the ten years that followed. In total, unions became more about providing a service than organizing a movement or evolving to structural changes (Rosenfeld, 2016, pp. 10-15).

These critiques are highly related to my study, as these consequences described here are mirrored quite precisely in my results. But are the same causes still at play? Does the standard narrative really explain how we arrived at the current predicament, and does moving beyond this phase require an entirely different set of factors, questions, and actions? The majority of labor scholars argue that this bureaucratization, coupled with union’s unpreparedness of unanticipated transformations in the economy and growing employer backlash, explain the current state of the labor movement. The disappearance of “social movement unionism” from union's strategy during this period, and a handful of successful case studies which have reincorporated these

blueprints since, support this argument. Rosenberg, though, claims that this argument is insufficient, proven at least partially false by the fact that many other campaigns to reintegrate these strategies have failed to reverse the membership decline, as well as the fact that all other major industrialized nations have also experienced declines in unionization.

SUMMARY:

Each of these theoretical frameworks has informed the way I approach my questions in this study. I have synthesized their metrics to establish my own criteria for defining a successful mobilization of the labor movement as members with a strong understanding of the union's long-term goals; participation in a range of union activities; a higher level of political efficacy and civic engagement than when they joined the union; drawing connections between their experiences under capitalism and other related struggles, and solidarity with these causes; participating in community or political activity without the prompting of the union; and having and voicing opinions about union activity. In my analysis, I will further explore how external and internal barriers have prevented SEIU 1199's success.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

I am approaching this thesis from a standpoint of grounded research methods, which constructs theories (often counter-dominant) from patterns that emerge through the methodic gathering and analysis of data. This practice begins with a question rather than a hypothesis, and builds outwards from what is found rather than existing theoretical frameworks. While rejecting fundamentalist and structuralist theories of sociology, it emerges most closely from the constructivist paradigm, which recognizes that truth is subjective, relative to, and dependent upon one's perspective.

I began my investigation with a question: what do union members think of their union? Do they feel represented, supported, and listened to? What would they like to be done differently? I wanted to center workers' voices in both the question that I investigated and the methodology with which I investigated it, because of the precise role unions play in speaking for workers. As such, my data and the primary material I worked with were in-depth, qualitative, semi-structured interviews with union members.

I chose personal care attendants in Boston represented by SEIU 1199 as my case study because of some unique challenges their field faces. As privately contracted workers, they share some barriers to organizing with the emerging gig economy. Following the *Harris v. Quinn* right-to-work ruling in 2016, they are a test run of many of the challenges unions will face in a post-Janus America.

I got permission to do this study from the Vice President of the PCA branch of SEIU 1199, Becca Gutman, who then put me in touch with other organizers to introduce me to union members. I made it clear to the union that I would share my results with them in order for my

work to make a contribution to the knowledge base on best-practices and to amplify workers' voices to their representative. I made it clear, however, that I might not share them in the same form as my final paper in order to protect the privacy of participants. I also made it clear to participants that I was not working with the union, but rather hoping to highlight their opinions of what the union was doing well and should be doing better.

Individuals social locations and lived experiences are likely to impact the way they are treated inside of institutions like unions, and thus how they interact with and feel about it. Place of national origin, language, political affiliation, education level, age, gender, and level of participation in the union are the identities I outlined as most likely to impact my results. I then asked the union organizer to give me a list of 20 names - more than I needed to provide room for anonymity - which covered each of these identity categories, so that I could select a representative, stratified sample. When the organizer did not include the identifying characteristics of the individuals, however, I had to proceed with cold calling the contacts he gave me and snowballing my sample from there. After the interviews began, I asked interview participants and other informal contacts to introduce me to members with specific identities that I felt were important and missing. Despite these efforts, I was unable to interview: male PCAs, nonmembers, non-English speakers, and members of the Asian American or Haitian Creole PCA populations. My sample ended up including 6 women, all between 30 and 65; three Latina women, two Black women, and one White woman; at least two distinct religions; college and non-college educated members; two people who spoke English as a second language; a variety of levels of participation in and opinion of the union and activism in general. I also interviewed one organizer, after realizing that perspective could shed a lot of light on the questions that emerged

throughout the research. Informal conversations with other personal and professional contacts I have in the union were used to support impressions that formed over time, but not as original data.

The small size of this case study is one of my thesis's many limitations. First of all, in order to draw as significant of results as possible, I narrowed the focus of my study to a particular industry of a particular union in a particular city. I have no evidence as to whether or not this case reflects larger, nation-wide trends. Second, working with only eight months and one researcher, the case was narrowed to only six interviews, which is not enough to draw statistically significant or representative conclusions of even the sample population. Because of this, I tried to make my sample as representative as possible by stratifying it.

In line with my goal of uplifting worker voice and grounded research methods, I came to the interviews to listen. I felt I was able to develop a rapport with every interviewee except for one, Carol, who I realized after we started was not all that interested in being interviewed. Though I brought a list of 20 in-depth questions (see appendix) and usually got through all of them, I started with broad prompts and asked participants to steer the interview in whichever direction they wished, and to talk for as long as they wanted. My participation in the conversation was to affirm and make them comfortable, to ask follow-up questions encouraging them to dig deeper into the stories that emerged, and occasionally to reframe and redirect the conversation back to the topic. The theory behind this was to let the participant's stories emerge, in a method similar to oral histories, controlling their own narratives without interference. This is different from a more conversational approach, in which case I could have shared more of my own ideas, pushed back on places of confusion or contradiction, and we would have built theory

together. This is important because the contradictions, confusions, and gaps that arise organically are an important part of the data in grounded research methods. That said, there are points where, while writing my analysis, I wished I had pushed-back to initiate more clarity and ensure that what I hear from the interviews actually represents what the participants think. After the interviews, I transcribed recordings of each of the interviews and coded them by the themes that I found emerged. I also changed the names of all of the union members, as stated in the consent forms they signed, to protect their anonymity.

Contradictions and gaps are both a strength and a limitation of interviews as a form of data collection. Blackburn and Mann argue that “no image other than a contradictory one is possible in an industrial society that generates contradictions between ‘normal affluence,’ ‘sensible’ industrial relations, ‘intermittent redundancy,’ and ‘authoritarianism’” (Fantasia 1988). In other words, in societies which promote contradictions in their ideologies or who’s cultural narrative is at odds with its central purpose, “there’s no use asking people what they think; they’ll tell you something different.” It is true that the paradoxes found within each interview make it more difficult to tell a consistent and accurate truth, however there still is quite a lot of use in asking these questions, as these gaps can reveal a lot about the experiences and consequences of existing in a society that was not built for you.

The silences and gaps I found in my data fundamentally shifted my inquiry. I was surprised to find that most of the interviewees did not have all that much to say about the union: though they had outstandingly positive feedback, this did not come from a strong sense of purpose or passion. Instead, it took several prompts, further inquiries, and re-framings from new angles to get this data. The new focus and theory of my paper shifted to explore this gap: why

would members of an apparently successful union appear to feel so detached from its larger purpose and goals?

Writing about what is not found is an important part of grounded theory production - and also makes the other tenants of this practice, such as clarifying the author's perspective and using the speaker's voice as much as possible, all the more important. For this reason, I used more quotations than traditional sociological method would in my results and analysis, and reflected everything I heard in the interviews rather than just what would build an argument. This was important to me in making a space to reflect the voices and experiences of the people I got to know through my project in their own words, in undermining my own presumed authority and objectivity as the author by letting readers draw their own conclusions, and in reflecting as unambiguously as possible the precise gaps I found in the big picture.

The truth that I am trying to create is intrinsically linked to my identities and experiences: I am a middle class, elitely educated, twenty-two year old, white woman. The people I am interviewing have had very different lived experiences than me. This felt the most noteworthy when it came to comparing these women's stories to a theoretical ideal, even if it was my own theory. I have done my best not to build my argument in a way that judges members for an obtainence of a particular academic knowledge of social movements and labor history. The purpose if this paper is not label ignorance, or value certain types of knowledge over others. I hope that this reads instead as an unfolding analysis of the dynamics between society as a capitalist hegemony and labor unions as the predominant organizing movement contra to that, and of union members stories of their interactions with both of these forces as a measure of the tensions between these two.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION:

This section will walk through each of the categorical questions that arose in the process of coding and analysing the interviews, including working conditions, feelings towards the union, understanding of the purpose of the union, level of participation, barriers to involvement, relationships between PCAs, relationships with union leadership, efficacy and trust in political institutions, political activation, identification with the labor movement, breadth of issues bargained for, democracy, and the organizers perspective. I have broken each of these themes into subthemes and analysis.

Summary

There is no single PCA experience. In general, the work is demanding, but rewarding, and attracts people with incredible empathy. Some care for family members, others have tense relationships with their consumers. Even when they have a friendly relationship with their client, the employee/employer and one-on-one dynamics mean that every second they are on the clock they are providing service. The number of hours worked per week vary greatly, but none of them can leave it behind when they are off the clock: one PCA expressed “the thing about being a PCA is that it doesn’t go away.” Some people expressed that they love their job, while others hate it. PCAs experience a range of serious issues in their working conditions, including job insecurity, undercompensation for overtime, lack of personal or vacation days, sexual harassment

by employers, and more. Despite all of these problems, most interviewees could not think of anything they want to change about their place of work, suggesting that the union has not been successful teaching members to identify issues at work as unjust, systemic, and fightable. Members participate in a wide range of union activities, including weekly conference calls, trainings, protests, lobbying, signature gathering, phone banking, contract bargaining, meet-and-greets, and special events. They did not attend these events regularly, though, and described their participation there as passive and observational. They said that the main barriers to involvement are lack of political opinion or motivation and inaccessibility in terms of location, time, or language. All of the participants had outstandingly positive reviews of the union, loving it because it is hardworking, close, communicative, has great benefits, or helps their personal development. While most of the respondents said they had no criticisms at all, some negative feedback did come up regarding clarity of information, language accessibility, and insufficient sexual assault prevention. One of the PCAs works in a different part of the state, with different organizers, and she has more criticisms of the union, especially union leadership. She does not trust or relate to the organizers because they do not have the same personal experience or high stakes at risk as the PCAs, and treat organizing as a job. The rest of the PCAs all expressed a lot of trust and respect for the general union leadership, and had a strong, personal connection with one organizer in particular, named Allen. They did not, however, have close relationships with any other organizers. All of the interviewees said they felt comfortable offering criticism or concerns to the union, and that there is opportunity to do so. Members' involvement in determining the direction of the union, however, does not seem to extend beyond this voluntary feedback. Since the membership has so little feedback, this results in top-down leadership.

Though the structure is democratic in theory, it is not in practice. Only one of the interviewees, one who works part time as a phone canvasser in the union, connected to language of a labor “movement.” In fact, members by and large were confused about the purpose and long-term goals of the union. The goals they listed largely fell under servicing or conflated unions with employers and corporations. That said, some members also noted feeling validated by being part of a legitimized collective bargaining unit. Members had a high level of trust in political institutions and politicians, in at least one case even higher than in the union. Some PCAs already displayed some political efficacy before joining the union, though most had little interest in politics. Engaging in union-organized political activities, in particular meeting politicians, seemed to increase member’s perception of the power of their own voice and excitement to get more involved in politics. Exposure to actions like this and political education, mostly conveyed through contact with the organizer, increased members’ civic engagement, though most participants did not engage in either activity enough to be considered activated or to take their new skills outside of the union. On paper, the union supports a wide array of other social movements. Some of the interviewees say that this is true and express sincere appreciation for this fact, though the interviewees themselves did not provide any evidence as to what this support looks like or how it is directed. The union has succeeded in fostering a sense of community among PCAs to some degree, in spite of, and relative to, the lack of community in their place of employment.

Introducing the interviewees

Isabella is a Latina woman, approximately in her 30s, who immigrated from Puerto Rico as an adult. Before coming to the United States she pursued a Sociology degree. She now works twice a week with the same consumer, and also works part time as a nanny. Her consumer is elderly, bed-bound, and lives in a group home. Before she moved there, Isabella worked with her every day. She and another PCA became her legal surrogates. She is extremely attuned to her consumer's needs and moves, and displays a lot of care. She looks forward to working with her and really loves the work, even though it can be hard. She joined the union after hearing about it at a mandatory orientation about a year ago, almost a year after she started working as a PCA. We spoke for about an hour, during which she perched cheerfully on a stool and sucked on a lollipop.

Darleen has worked with a young woman with Cerebral Palsy twice a week since 2015. She takes her consumer to doctor appointments, prepares meals, does the grocery shopping, and helps with other day-to-day activities. When she cares for her there are usually other caregivers present, sometimes with other qualifications, such as the administering of medication. Before that she worked as a nursing assistant, cared for her parents, then worked at a variety of agencies including Boston Center for Independent Living with mostly middle-aged consumers. She is approximately in her 30s, caucasian, and was born and raised in the Boston area. She joined the union when she became a PCA in about 2015 because it "made sense." She is talkative and assertive and laughs often. Her interview lasted 1 hour and 45 minutes.

Maria is a young mother who has worked as a caregiver taking care of family her whole life, but only joined the PCA system in February of 2017. She joined the union right after the

mandatory orientation, and a few months later began working part time at the union as a phone banker. Her interview lasted 1 hour and 35 minutes.

Carol worked in the nursing field for 15 years before becoming a PCA 5 years ago. She is a single mother but all four of her children are grown. She said she gets in trouble sometimes for being loud but her previous employers know she is a good worker and refer her to jobs. She is still interested in being a nurse or a nurse's assistant. She wasn't a member of a union in those positions because to her knowledge there wasn't one. She identifies as African American and a "working lady." She currently works with a middle-aged white man, and hopes to stay working with him because they get along pretty well. She works nights four nights a week. Her interview lasted 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Paula is a middle-aged, Black woman from Boston who has worked as a PCA for a few years but only joined the union about a year ago. Her interview was significantly shorter than all of the others and we did not develop the same rapport as the place she requested to meet was louder, she seemed hurried to go, and didn't want to sign permission to record. She has never been a member of a union before, and joined because Isabella suggested that she do.

I spoke with Gabrielle, a 30 something, single, Latina woman, for 1 hour and 35 minutes. She was the only interviewee to talk about her racial and immigrant identity as shaping her opportunities in the United States. She is also a part time student at university. She began working as a PCA in 2016 but has done other types of homecare through agencies since 2008. In her prior position she was a member of a different union and also worked in their office. She works in a different part of the state than all of the other interviewees. Though the union and the contract operate statewide, she works with different organizers, different PCAs, and has had very

different experiences in the union. This is a flaw in the methodology of the case study, as it made it more difficult to draw generalized conclusions about the union, and explaining her results without more data required a lot of guesswork and open-ended conclusions.

Allen is the lead organizer for the Boston team. His mother was a union organizer in the south, and he has been moved around the country to work on campaigns in his adult life. He has been pioneering the organization of personal care attendants for about fifteen years, and was brought to Boston specifically for this purpose. He is intensely committed to a broad vision of the labor movement and to his members, who he aims to activate through inspirational one-on-one conversations.

WORKING CONDITIONS

When initially asked what problems they experience being employed as a personal care attendant, two of the respondents had a long list of issues ready, while the rest expressed an apathetic complacency, not having any criticisms ready in mind. Though a long list of serious employment issues finally emerged throughout the rest of the interview, the absence of this critical lense in the ways PCAs think about their job speaks volumes. Identifying issues at work as a) injustices b) systemic and c) fightable is a large part of the political education work unions do, so this gap suggests that 1199 has not been fully successful in this.

Job security

The lack of job security was one of the top issues, with four of the interviewees bringing it up in some form. While they do have forty hours of paid sick leave a year, if, after two weeks,

they are unable to return to their normal number of hours, then they lose their job with that consumer. This happened to Darleen's coworker after some dental issues, which she thinks is "not acceptable" because "we are also human beings... we get sick, too!" Maria also discussed the flexibility consumers have with firing PCAs "because if the consumer don't want you no more, you're gone and that's it. Now you gotta start again from scratch."

This is written into the contract to protect consumers from elder abuse: in this rare, private, one-on-one employer-employee relationship, it is important that both parties are comfortable with each other. Maria thinks this part of the contract should be changed because it gives certain consumers the power to take advantage of PCAs and "treat [them] the way they want and just, like, okay, you gotta do this or I'm going to fire you." She drew emphasis to how difficult it is to find work again afterward. She has "seen PCAs who lost their job and haven't found a new consumer since then." Allen does not think this part of the contract is ever going to change, because the homecare worker movement grew out of and still depends upon an alliance with the disabled rights movement. He does not think that this is unjust, because without consumer's support, 1199 personal care attendants never could have won all of the trainings, benefits, and wages of which they are proud. Thus, the union walks "a very thin line" wherein it "does not interfere with the PCA/consumer relationship." He is certain that abuse occurs, but when it does "we always recommend whatever legal and sometimes criminal actions that they need to take to get that matter solved. But that is purely based on what the law says." Maria appeared conflicted at the union's limited capacity to fix this, admitting that "we can't guarantee for you that... your job will be secure" and "the most we can do is just give you information"

and host meet-and-greets between PCAs and consumers (which currently occur once every two months or so).

Lack of work and regular income is also an issue when consumers go on vacation or have to go to the hospital. Carol is looking for another job because her consumer decided to extend his vacation. Gabrielle is most passionate about the cycle of care that is broken for both PCAs and consumers when they are hospitalized. These issues present bureaucratic challenges that involve actors other than the union, the employer, and the workforce council, making them difficult to bargain around.

Time off

PCAs and the union are worried about their lack of vacation or personal days. Carol said that “everybody’s family has problems” and everyone has legitimate reasons to need time off, but instead they have to use their sick time, which only accumulates one hour per 30 hours of work, according to Gabrielle. She describes working without time off as “a struggle, struggle, struggle. You just work, work, work, work.” Carol has already used her 40 hours of sick leave and has no more for the next 5 months. It is a higher priority for her than wages. The union is working on this issue, and has brought it to negotiations before, according to Carol. Many of the PCAs mentioned that the union had gathered members to collect signatures for the statewide ballot initiative for “paid family medical leave,” though none of the interviewees explicitly said that they participated.

In spite of the union’s work on the issue, most PCAs complained of being overworked in tones of exasperation and resignation rather than arguing why it should be changed (except for

Gabrielle, who's argument seemed more directed at the union, as we will discuss later). They did not seem to connect the ballot initiative to their own struggles, and none of them had actually worked on the campaign. Very few of the PCAs spoke about more time off as something they could change.

Wages

Wages have been the forefront issue for many years, with PCAs making less than every other healthcare profession. The union ran a rigorous campaign to win \$15 an hour in the PCA's contract last year, and is now dedicating resources and organizing members to work on a statewide ballot initiative alongside the political organization "Fight for \$15." As a result of the contract win, the interviewees feel mostly positively toward their wages now, especially since they earn more than PCAs in most states and more than the minimum wage in Massachusetts today. Still, many hope to see an increase in the coming years. The work of PCAs can be grueling, and requires constant engagement and responsibility over the life of another individual. \$15 is not a living wage in Boston and many PCAs still face poverty. Gabrielle describes how for women like her, who support themselves and are trying to go back to school to better their lives, "it's very hard to survive, even with 15 dollars an hour... and working 7 days a week". She started working more hours until she finally climbed over the poverty line, but then lost her food stamps and health insurance and now says "I'm in poverty. I'm facing poverty... It's a shame, it's embarrassing... It's a struggle, struggle, struggle." In this case, union members were passionate and reflected consistent campaign messaging and background knowledge about the rising costs of living and how all workers deserve a living wage as a basic human right.

Wage Theft

Though not quite meeting the definition of “wage theft,” PCAs often put in extra time to their work that is not compensated. Due to the dependency consumers have on their caregivers, often not being able to safely be left alone, if another PCA calls out at the last minute, is late for their shift, or needs assistance, PCAs feel obligated to be there. Darleen, as her consumer’s favorite attendant, has taken on an unofficial leadership role among the other PCAs who work with her consumer. Though she gets paid for being on call and working overtime, this is not always the case for all PCAs, and recent bureaucratization by Masshealth makes it even more difficult to get these hours approved. This impacts PCAs daily life, as Darlene “always tell[s] [her] friends, just so you know, just a heads up, my consumer’s gonna probably call me and say ‘I’m sorry, one of the PCAs needs help’,” because “even when [she’s] not working, like today, [she] thought [she] was going to have to be again needing to work.” They are also expected to pay out of pocket for parts of their transportation, including driving consumers to appointments or outings during their shift. Gabrielle has had surrogates expect her to take their child on expensive outings and pay her own way.

It is not clear from the interviews what the union is or has done about this: though one PCA said she was grateful for overtime pay, none of the interviewees talked about what the process of securing that benefit was like, and no one suggested what the next steps for improvement might be.

The bureaucratization of Masshealth has also made it more difficult to get paid for regularly scheduled hours. Staff often make mistakes in the payroll, so workers like Darleen and

Carol need to check the accuracy weekly and often spend time on the phone correcting mistakes. Every extra hour of work beyond 50 hours a week has to be approved, as do regularly scheduled shifts on holidays. When PCAs go over these limits without pre-approval, they get a warning letter. Carol has gotten three. Speakers were somewhat more passionate about this issue because it is something they experience personally and regularly.

Provision and use of supplies

In the last contract, medical supplies, in particular gloves and masks, were a major issue that the union finally won. Presumably, workers themselves identified this safety hazard as an organizable offense, though none of the interviewed PCAs had much to say about it: some didn't even know if it had been settled, and one still prefers to buy her own.

Gabrielle has had issues with the families or legal guardians of patients, called surrogates, refusing to let her use the provided equipment, and was dismissed after a disagreement about using a chair for showering and shaving a patient with a wheelchair so that he wouldn't have to lie on the floor. This speaks to a general lack of authority PCAs have in their relationships with surrogates, including when it comes to implementing standard procedure. It is unclear if the union filed a grievance in this case, so no specific conclusion can be drawn.

Health insurance

PCAs are not guaranteed health insurance as part of their employment contract, even though they work for Masshealth. Gabrielle lost her health insurance after an increase in income and it took her one month to see a doctor after injuring herself on the job by catching a falling

patient. Not knowing that she could use worker's compensation, she continued to work during this time, worsening her back injury. Though this seems like an organizable issue to me, Gabrielle was the only one to mention it, suggesting the other PCAs are either content with their insurance plans or don't see this benefit as something they can demand and win.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment and assault by consumers is a systemic issue that many PCAs have endured. One of the interviewees said that the worst part of being a PCA is dealing with "grown men that could be your grandfather, and since they feel that they're your boss, they feel that you have to do for them what they want and you have to get for them what they need" and they think they can get away with it. Her perception has been changed by such an experience with her first consumer, and she relates to other PCAs on this. Other interviewees did not convey personal experiences, but had heard of it happening to other PCAs.

Healthcare policies

PCAs are also impacted by government decisions which impact the lives of the people they care for, such as funding for Medicaid, and accessible housing for low-income people with disabilities. The union dedicates resources to defending consumers as well, because of this unique triangulation and the fact that the homecare movement grew out of and relies on the disability and independent living movements. Only Darleen spoke in detail about being concerned for consumer rights, but this is something the union dedicates resources to as well.

Relative respect and compensation

As discussed in the history of homecare section, PCAs have historically been treated the worst of all of the healthcare professions. Some of them noted that they had fewer benefits than other caregivers: not receiving the same paid leave as hospital and nursing home staff makes Darleen feel like “that is like telling you ‘you're just a PCA you don't matter to us.’ That's basically what they are saying.” Isabella has also experienced blatant disrespect from potential employers regarding her profession.

PCA Positionalities

It goes without saying that PCAs, particularly as a majority immigrant and female workforce, experience numerous challenges in their daily lives that impact their lives as workers. Darleen describes how many of her coworkers “have legal problems to live here and work” and are deeply affected by the threat of deportation. Many have families and property in Puerto Rico that were damaged by the hurricane and are more concerned about that than the benefits or training a union can provide, according to Darleen and Maria. The union is also concerned about the mental health of PCAs, according to Darleen, but none of the interviewees seemed concerned about this.

Analysis

The interviews revealed that these problems are not something most PCAs think about every day, and are not central to how most workers feel about their jobs or lives. Some, like Darleen, seem to care about each issue, but feel “it is overwhelming to try to tackle everything at

once.” Others, like Gabrielle, are trying to address these issues but don’t feel supported by the union. The majority of the sample and of the wider union membership, however, express disinterest, uninvolvedness, and complacency. Carol said that aside from a few issues mentioned above, “everything else is okay. I don't think nothing else really matters to most of the PCAs. I really don't.”

This complacency with what is, in reality, a long list of grievances, indicates that the union has done a relatively poor job of instilling a critical lens of power in its members that helps them see their struggles as systemic and fightable injustices. When PCAs experience problems on the job but do not think to list them as work-related issues, or speak of them with a tone of resignation, this suggests that they don’t see them as demandable or winnable. This indicates that the union either has not fully cultivated a critical or empowered lens, or that the union has taken on too much of a servicing role, setting an expectation that it will change this for the PCAs without their taking ownership of the fight. Additionally, it could be that the union does not have a strategy or platform on some issues, or that if they do, the messaging has not reached or made an impression on most of the PCAs. At times, PCAs raised an issue without any suggestion of if something should be done, nevermind what, by whom, how, or their role in it. That’s a high bar, but a complete education on strategic analysis by the union might have clarified this.

On some of the issues they raised, though, members did indicate a subtle but significant shift in how they think about the commodification of their labor. Though it is not a specific issue that can be brought to the bargaining table, “being as respected as other types of medical service providers” loosely fits into labor movement rhetoric of rehumanizing manual and service labor,

and treating all working people with basic dignity and respect. This direct comparison between their conditions and those of their near-peers violated their sense of justice and made them question the system that valued their work differently, nearing Thompson's notion of the class code. Though this narrative could be internalized even more ferociously, it reflects some of the same rhetoric learned from the union's most successful organizing mission so far: the Fight for \$15 campaign. This showed that the union can and has politicized and mobilized its members on the issue it makes first priority. In the ongoing statewide campaign, some members show that this has fundamentally shifted their acceptance of the assumed authority which declares what is fair compensation for the commodification of labor. This is the type of political activation we are looking for. Even so, this campaign does not reach our ideal type, because interviewees speak of it more as something the union did for them rather than as something they did together, indicating an incomplete strategic analysis and personal investment and ownership over collective action.

Darleen, Gabrielle, and Maria suggested that they and other PCAs are most passionate about the material conditions of their day to day life, in and outside of the workplace, particularly in relation to immigration and poverty. This shows the importance of building a social movement model of unionism that fights across the intersections of working people's lives, and the necessity of servicing member's immediate needs to draw them into a larger movement.

In all, the union has done a relatively poor job of political education and leadership building that would allow members to empower themselves, criticize power, identify winnable issues, strategize collective power, and take ownership of demanding justice.

FEELINGS TOWARD THE UNION

The majority of participants had an overwhelmingly positive impression of the union, though one participant had a large number of fervently held critiques which contradicted comments made by other members of the union. Despite her many criticisms, she still says that the union is fantastic, and she is grateful for the improvements it has fought for. The reasons the PCAs love their union varies by the personal priorities and experiences of the individuals, but include that the union is hardworking, close, communicative, has great benefits, and helps their personal development. All of the participants appeared genuine and not to be giving biased reviews out of intimidation by the union or me.

Positive feedback:

When asked directly how they feel about the union and what they think it could do better, almost all of the interviewees gave outstandingly positive reviews. When asked what a perfect union would look like, Maria laughed, “like us! And I’m not saying it because I work here. I’m very honest.” Darleen said that “I cannot actually think about anything that I do not like about them, honestly,” and that she doesn’t know how to answer what a perfect union would look like because she “actually appreciate[s] what the union I am a part of does right now.” Given that she considers herself critical of leadership in most other settings, it is significant that she has so few criticisms. Paula and Carol, on the other hand, did list some criticisms at later parts of the interview, but do not hold these issues in the same frame as how they feel about the union overall. Carol said “it’s been a pretty good union, as far as I know. I haven’t had any problems [or ever felt unsupported]” and “I ain’t going to sit here and tell you no lie. No criticisms at all.”

Assessing the feedback of other union members she talks to through her role as a phone banker, Maria said that they don't get any complaints, or at least she hasn't heard any. She said "if anything negative was to be said, it would have to be some issue with the consumer," adding that though many PCAs are not engaged with the union, it's not because of anything "bad." She mostly hears that "they love it." Some members also displayed high trust in the union and that it is working hard to help them. Isabella says that she sees the union staff as being "very involved, and working." Prefacing some of the insurmountable issues the union is still fighting, Darleen says "I know the union is doing the best they can."

Unity

More than half of the respondents said that the union was "like a family" for those that are more involved, including PCAs, delegates, organizers, consumers, and leadership. Maria says that the reason 1199 is such a great union is that it's

"a family. A unity. Not just to take money out of people's pockets. You have to build your relationships with the union members. You can't just sign a member and get that they don't ever hear from you again. And I think that's why I like it here. I know that's why I like it here. Because we're just more than a union."

Carol, Paula, and Isabella all said that the community is one of the best parts of being in the union. Maria, who has had greater involvement with union programming because she is employed there part time as a phone canvasser, said that the union helps her grow, and teaches her and everyone else. "I have more understanding, like I said, not just the political part, but the more... the more... the unity." This could be referring to the type of community and collective that forms out of rank-and-file activism.

Benefits

Most workers also emphasized that the benefits are a strong reason for why they like the union. Paula's reasons for liking the union were mostly the things that she gained personally: "helping us with pay, medicaid, school, training, being qualified for yourself, support taking risks [in advancing your career]." Among these benefits are not only the often-cited wage increases the union successfully bargained for last year, but sponsored trainings like ESL classes and CNA certification that can help advance careers in medical care provision. Paula and Maria consider this a great return on their investment through union dues, saying that it's not a lot, especially relative to some other unions, at only 2% of their wages adding up to a couple of dollars a week. Paula also considers the insurance elements of the union to be a benefit. This is one of the reasons she and other PCAs told a man on the powercall who was complaining about dues that "you gotta pay your union dues. I mean this is why you get the training. If you get fired from your job or have any problems you can always go to the union for backup and then let them handle it. There's somebody behind you." She and Isabella both feel so strongly about the union that they tell other PCAs to sign up too.

Criticisms of the union:

Lack of information

Isabella's only real complaint was that there was not enough information provided by the union about what benefits and resources she has as a union member, nor what steps she can take when faced with different issues. While the union makes a lot of effort to communicate with PCAs, and some of the others actually praised their level of communication through phone calls,

she said she would like more organized written material. It is unclear if she has read her contract, but she said that she reads everything the union sends out and still is “never gonna know” the social and legal things stating “specifically where I am covered, what is taking care of me” unless she “does her homework,” because “us as PCAs, we are lacking in knowledge.” Gabrielle is also frustrated by not knowing about all of the union benefits she could make use of, and worked with an injured back for a full month before one of her surrogates told her that she had access to worker’s compensation.

Use of resources and attention to language justice

Workers also identified that the union does not have enough resources, and perhaps is not using the resources they do have most effectively. Isabella notes that many organizers are overwhelmed with work. Gabrielle thinks they need to hire more staff, open up, be more flexible, and take cues from government and corporate agencies like the United Nations on how to work better with other unions. One arena that could use more resources is language justice. Though statistics are not available on the percentages, many PCAs in the largely immigrant PCA population speak Spanish, Haitian Creole, Mandarin, and other languages. Though none of the interviewees initially identified this as a criticism of the union, Paula and Carol both noted that mostly English speakers come to the meetings, and that while that may be the reason there aren’t always interpreters, the lack of language accessibility may be part of why others don’t come. The Powercalls still happen only in English. Sometimes there are separate meetings or materials printed for non-English speakers, but even then that only includes Spanish and Creole speakers. Though progress is slow, Maria thinks the union is doing a good job and working to get better.

Part of why she was hired was to call the Spanish speakers, and to organize a stronger community and participation among the Spanish PCA population in Boston, taking inspiration from similar efforts in other parts of the state. She's glad to be a part of this effort and to form positive relationships with Latinx PCAs by opening up and sharing her story with them. She thinks this is an important part of bringing more PCAs into the union. She doesn't think that this creates a divide in the community, and believes that Spanish speakers are active in the union and all language speakers want to come together. At important events, like orientations or speaking with Senators, they have adequate resources such as headsets or translators.

Exclusion

While several PCAs acknowledged that the more and longer you are involved in the union, the better it is for you, but only Gabrielle expressed feelings of exclusion attached to this. She feels that both in and outside of the union "maybe because I have a broken English?" people think she is stupid, don't give her credit for her ideas, and don't "see that I have the potential to do something else, to be someone else." She is under the impression that she has to become a delegate for the union in order to get the insider benefits, but that even though she has been recommended for the position, "someone" doesn't want her to be a delegate. Though she doesn't want to think too much about why that might be, she thinks it might be because the issues and ideas she brings up aren't on the union's agenda. She is frustrated that the union dedicates its energies to solidarity for other social movements and coalition building instead of towards her suggestions, specifically changing PCA and hospital policy so that personal care attendants can continue to care for their consumers when they have to go to the hospital. The way she describes

this reflects patterns of top-down leadership offending the rank and file, saying “the unions might have their agenda” and “sometimes I think people don’t want me to talk about those issues because they have another agenda.” She is possessive of her ideas and doesn't want people to take them without giving her credit, but also wants to be seen as an advocate of the union, not its enemy, because her ideas are about making it better.

Unsupportive

She conflates the union with her employer, and perceives a large gap between organizers and workers. She says that “sometimes PCAs, they are a bit intimidated by the organizers, and I think that is not good because then the PCAs, how are they going to want to be part of a union if they cannot talk openly? The union needs to be more approachable. That’s something very important.” She says that PCAs feel like they are being checked on at work by the organizers and like they cannot talk to them about issues they have, including sexual harassment: “They are scared to work, and sometimes to bring it up because maybe the organizer might not be too open to talk. And sometimes they get too overwhelmed because they have no one to talk about those things.” This is the only time an interviewee indicated being unable to talk to an organizer, but not the only time they indicated the union is not doing enough about sexual assault prevention. In a very different tone, Isabella offhandedly mentioned that in light of the current political moment of the “Me Too” movement, union should do a better job of “highlight[ing] more what are our expectations as consumer and PCA.”

Analysis

It is a strong indication of the union's success in bargaining and servicing that the members have such high reviews of it. This is different than member's understanding of the union's purpose, or the union's success in building a movement, as we will discuss in later sections. That the PCAs (even Gabrielle) had such a positive impression of the union in spite of criticisms that arose might say that they value what the union stands for above the individual issues they had with it. This makes the question of "what do they think the union stands for?" even more interesting.

The wide gap between Gabrielle's experiences and those of the other interviewees may be partially explained by the fact that she lives in a different part of the state, and is working with different organizers. Nonetheless, her critiques offer valuable insight into structural problems within 1199 and SEIU on whole. It also has to do with her relationship with authority and her positionality as an immigrant and a woman of color. Though many of the interviewees were people of color, she was the only one to describe experiences of discrimination and prejudice. These experiences may be a causal factor in the general distrust she seems to have for people, authority figures, and institutions across the board, including religion and education in addition to unions.

Her critique that leadership is top-down and the union leaders don't want her to talk because her ideas do not line up with their agenda is a serious issue. It is possible that this is a consistent and pervasive problem, that this is a specific, isolated incident, or some combination of the two. I raise that doubt only because the particular agenda item she raised again and again throughout the interview did not sound to me like a solution the union could win: she wants PCAs to get paid for caring for their patients in hospitals as well as at home. This would require

every PCA to be trained and certified in the procedure, layout, and requisites at every hospital a consumer could visit, and for hospitals to adjust their staffing when consumers with PCAs check in. It sounds like people have ignored Gabrielle's ideas rather than explaining that this is outside of the union's jurisdiction as they do not negotiate with hospitals, or offering an alternative solution. Regardless, her feeling of not being listened to or taken seriously surpasses this experience, and deserves to be taken seriously.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE PURPOSE OF THE UNION

Members display a range of confused and contradictory understandings of the short and long-term goals of the union, from reflecting movement language to conflating the union with their employer.

Insurance

Many workers think of the union as insurance if something bad happens. Isabella said "now I'm in the union, so anything could happen and I'm in the union". She talked about it as "where you go" when you need something. Darleen said "when anybody needs it, they're there." Carol said "if you get fired from your job or you have any problems with your job you can always go to the union for backup. And then let them handle it. There's always somebody behind you. If a resident say you hit him and you didn't, you can always go to the union. They investigate it."

Benefits

Most participants brought up both the benefits the union provides and those which they negotiate from the employer as a primary reason to join. Carol, Paula, and others brought up the trainings as a major service that the union provides, in addition to “helping us with pay, medicaid, school, being qualified...” Paula concluded that “the union’s only goal is to raise our pay more, and maybe more training.” Isabella wistfully wished that the union would provide more luxurious benefits, like tickets to *The Nutcracker* or social nights. Darleen indicated that the union’s work stops there, saying it would have less work to do if PCAs had more benefits.

Community

Other’s saw its largest purpose as providing community for the PCAs. Paula said that “having somebody to talk to sometimes” was the best part of being a member, and Carol also saw this as the biggest benefit. She thinks that “to try to get all of the PCAs to interact with each other” is the union’s goal - as opposed to a prerequisite for their other goals. Carol introduced more purpose and vigor to this assessment later, when she said the union tries “to get us to fight for what we stand for, which is more money, more benefits if possible.” This still does not link the fight to larger working class struggles. Maria also said “the goal is, we fight for what's right. What we as people deserve, not just us but them as well.” As the only interviewee who works at the union, she was the only one to connect this to movement language, saying “we’re just working together here for one goal. And that goal is to just get as many people together, not just to join but to be a part of the movement. Because, we call this a movement, you know, we plan to just, you know, keep going forward with it.”

To grow

Some did not see this relationship between signing up members and recruiting to a larger movement. Gabrielle thinks that “the union’s goal is to have more members. I think that’s number one,” because this makes more money for the union and the organizers. Others, however, did recognize that the more people in the union, the more powerful is their ability to bargain collectively. Isabella said “when I wasn’t in the union, I was nobody. I was just a PCA. Now I’m in the union.” Darleen echoed this: “Like if I went there just because I saw someone in the street and say ‘this is not fair’ they are going to say ‘hey, there are a lot of things in this world that are not fair.’” She concluded that she feels like the union is legitimizing her experiences, “they are validating exactly what I’m talking about, so this is not just me talking, we have an issue here. These are people who are actually experiencing this.”

Confusion and conflation with employer

Others seem confused in their analysis of who the union is fighting against and what the interests of both groups are. This varied from wanting the union to protect their consumer, to conflating the union with their boss. A lot of PCAs are invested in the union protecting their consumer, in sharp contrast with the traditional employer-employee dynamic, due to the non-traditional nature of this employment and bargaining structure. Many of the PCAs have consumers who are active in the union and even come to their meetings. Isabella says one of the union’s jobs is to make things easier for the consumer and bring everyone on the same page. Darleen is very passionate about the rights of the elderly and disabled to stay in their homes and

not be moved to a facility, bringing this up many times throughout the interview. She describes quarterly meetings in which PCAs, consumers, and union staff can all share their experiences and concerns. Darleen explicitly lists “fighting for the rights of consumers” as one of the union’s objectives. She says the union is working hard to preserve Medicaid and health insurance because without it PCAs won’t have jobs, and describes going to actions in Boston and D.C. with the union to protest healthcare. She says the union is also working with Boston Housing to help consumers get accessible and affordable housing. She also works on this issue independently, as she has been involved in disability advocacy longer than the labor movement.

Gabrielle consistently conflates the union with her employer in more general terms. When I asked her if the criticisms she had listed about the union such as the broken cycle, and the lack of insurance and medical leave were actually about being in 1199 or just about working as a PCA, she said “when you talk about the PCA, I am talking about the 1199... it’s like one,” because there is no agency, the union helps PCAs find work, and they run the website of resources. She uses language that compares the union to a CEO and authority figure: “the only way a CEO can know his employees are doing is if he goes and observes or do the job... the only way for the union, for the big people over there to know what is going there.” She expresses feeling like a productive force of capital for the union’s benefit, saying “the big membership, they are the ones making the big money to the organizers, to the people over there from the office,” and “they come and say we need you to put in priority our individuals. But if the PCAs overtire, is not taken care of, how they going to attract PCAs to the union?” She is trying to protest the very exploitation the union is fighting against, within the union: “I’ve been trying to more and more to tell the union that pcas are human beings” and “you [the organizer] might be

an authority, but at the same time you have to be sensible and open to listen to other PCAs.”

From her perspective, the unhealthy power dynamic between organizers and PCAs is pervasive, with many PCAs feeling uncomfortable when organizers come to their workplace because “now they feel woahhh I had someone from the union coming to check on my work.”

Darleen, though having no complaints about her union, expressed similar conflation between unions in general and employers. She switches between the term agency and union without seeming to change subjects: “I think that it's mostly about the agencies interests actually, so that's what my most impression is. Most union they say it's all about fairness but I cannot agree anymore with that. Most unions there it's mostly about the big bosses of so to speak.” Though she consistently framed her union as better than the others, she still considers it her employer, at least subconsciously: “I know the union that I'm working for they actually want us to have a day off.” When asked why other unions aren't working harder to protect the quality of life of their members, she says “I don't think they really care about their employees, honestly.” She talks about the reason her union cares about the well-being and quality of life of their members as being motivated by wanting to make them more productive. Like Gabrielle, she thinks most unions have a goal of increasing capitalistic productivity: “but unions nowadays, not many unions, they seem more focused on ‘oh how about making them like work 24/7’ ... How you going to be a productive employee? If you don't have a break you might as well die at work.”

Feelings toward unions in general

The other members had varying perspectives on unions in general. Despite the corruption that Gabrielle sees in unions, she recognized that “they are taking good care of their people.” She has also, however, had a negative experience at her prior union, where they didn’t want to recognize her rights and she was put on leave, so she also says “sometimes I’m not really crazy about unions sometimes I think it’s more about who is favored and who is not to be a leader.” Carol says she really didn’t think about unions before joining 1199, but also that she “always thought the union would be a good thing for people to have” in case they had an issue. Maria “knew unions had a goal and [were] more for the people.” Some were susceptible to the stereotype of greedy, institutionalized unions, like Isabella, who said “sometime the union just wants the money and they don’t wanna do anything.”

Analysis

Union members depict a medium understanding of the long-term goals of the union. On several accounts, members explicitly deny that the union has any long-term, larger goals outside of servicing benefits, which in turn suggests that the union has failed to bring them into the movement.

While unions do provide insurance and benefits, viewing it as existing for this purpose is explicitly contrary to the goals of building a labor movement. This relies on a servicing model of unionism, instead of an organizing model: by seeing the union as working for them, members erase their own agency, leadership, and essentiality in fighting for better conditions for themselves and for all working people. Furthermore, an insurance model makes the entire union

reactionary and defensive rather than offensive, further crippling the advancement of a social movement.

Forming relationships between PCAs is a huge part of the union's job - perhaps one that they are not doing enough of, as we will discuss later - but this purpose goes beyond community and emotional support. Only Maria reflects that building trust and consensus are part of building a movement. Darleen's experiences with collective bargaining amplifying and validating her voice strongly meet our criteria for movement building: her comments indicate the realization that her struggles are systemic and should be changed, and that the only way to do this as a working person is to form a legitimized collective bargaining unit.

At the same time, her and Gabrielle's conflation of the union with the employer is deeply troubling. It suggests that they not only do not see themselves as part of the labor movement, but that they do not see the structural opposition between labor and capital that is the foundation and purpose of that movement.

There are several valid reasons why PCAs might be invested in protecting their consumer. One is that the homecare movement was born out of and relies upon the independent living movement. Relatedly, the working conditions of PCAs are tied to the living and health care provisions granted to consumers by the state. Another is that many, though certainly not all, PCAs form close, personal, and sometimes family-like relationships with their consumers, and in some cases care for their biological family members. Fourthly, though consumers or their surrogates do independently hire the PCAs, the union does not actually bargain with them but instead with the Workforce Council, which represents Medicaid as much or more so than the consumers. On the one hand, this is an incredible opportunity for social movement organizing,

taking various interest groups that expand the traditional jurisdiction of unions but share common interests, and together bargaining for the common good. This has been relatively successful, given the teamwork displayed between many of the consumer-PCA pairings and the solidarity between the leadership and direction of both movements.

On the other hand, it obscures the opposition force, making it more difficult to organize against. No PCAs specifically mentioned the Workforce Council, and as we will show in another section, Darleen said she didn't know why "the one who came from the opposite side was not very negotiable [or reasonable]." It is difficult to build urgency or specific demands when you don't understand who or what you are fighting against. This fits into a larger trend of the institutionalization of capitalism in which the individual CEOs and human resource managers and financiers that pull the strings and determine workers conditions hide behind liberal corporate slogans which seduce and subdue the public.

This obscuring of a definable opponent clearly disrupts not only how workers see capitalism and their employer but also how they see the union. This might be part of why Gabrielle assigns blame to the union - because they are the agents she knows. Darleen is identifying some of the ways in which capitalism abuses people, repeating a noteworthy analysis about corporations putting profit over people to an unjust and irrational extent, but she believes unions in general are the same as these corporations, positioning them as capitalist and not anti-capitalist. This confusion in part comes from the fact that the union does indeed provide some of the services an agency normally would, were PCAs privately contracted by one, like helping PCAs find jobs and training. This does not, however, account for the implied consequence that she might not know that there is any agent performing the traditional role of

unions. This speaks to the size of the knowledge gap on labor organizing and pro-union histories in American culture, educational systems, and unions themselves.

Gabrielle's confusion about the union is almost certainly in part related to her distrust of most authority figures and institutions, which is likely a consequence of the institutionalized discrimination she indicates she has experienced; this does not explain, however, the uncomfortable and authoritative extent to which she feels the union regulates her and the other PCAs. One piece is that she feels they exploit her labor. Most unions do not pay members for volunteering at their events, paying them instead in experiences of "empowerment," and the promise of a better future. Underfunded and resourced by state-backed anti-union rampages since their existence, most unions, like all social movements, simply cannot afford to pay members, and doing so would further complicate their positionality as an employer. This does speak, though, to the necessity of creating tangible, short-term benefits to union membership. This could take the form of community centers, childcare, English classes, or trainings, some of which the union is already doing. Other factors probably relate to her relationship with union organizers, which we will discuss in the "Relationship with Organizers" section.

These misunderstandings are indicative of a large number of structural barriers to labor movement building, most notably the negative, stereotyped, and incomplete picture that exists of unions in the American cultural imagination. The education system should provide working people with a baseline point of departure that outlines at least the basic and short term goals of unions. Ultimately, however, it is the union's job to convey its purpose and its goals to its members. In this, it is clear that 1199 has done a relatively poor job.

LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN THE UNION

There was a broad range in the level of participation of each interview subject. Darleen always goes to everything she can. Carol says that before the union moved to a less accessible location for her, she used to go to “all the ones they had,” although she was always more likely to attend the large, central meetings than the neighborhood ones. Gabrielle also says she goes to meetings when she can, sometimes even in other regions. Others, like Paula, hardly ever engage with the union. Isabella considers herself not that involved, because she doesn’t participate in the political activities because of her religion, but pays a lot of attention to everything the union does.

Types of events

Most of the PCAs interviewed listen to the Power Call, a weekly conference call led by their lead organizer, Allen, who uses the time to communicate information about upcoming events, for political education, to create space for PCAs to ask any questions or raise concerns, and to bring in guest speakers like PCAs from other states or politicians. In total, approximately less than 20 PCAs participate each week. Those who do participate in it talk about it as an important and consistent part of their relationship with the union. Other ways the union stays in contact with members is a monthly magazine issue, and regular emails from Rebecca, which only Isabella mentioned reading. The union also has staff and volunteer phone bankers, who call not only non-union members to sign them up but also members to keep them in the loop and engaged. Maria does this as a part time job in addition to PCA work. Isabella did this in the past

for 2 to 6 months, because it was “an opportunity” and “a nice experience.” Carol volunteered to do this one time at a library session with other PCAs, and Gabrielle has also done it.

Most of the interviewees have attended, but are not regular participants in, events such as feedback and delegate meetings, potluck social events that used to happen once a month, meet and greets in which PCAs and consumers can get to know each other, with the hope of finding a good employment match, weekday meetings by district, special program events like the celebration of MLK day or Labor Day, training programs offered by the union, and some protests. Most of the PCAs are less engaged in the political action work, with foggy memories of where the protests they have attended took place, or what the purpose was. None of the interviewees went canvassing for ballot questions or elected officials, but are aware that the union did recruit members to do this. Darleen on the other hand recognizes the use of protests in being heard but thinks that “screaming” in the streets is less productive than dialogue and negotiations with politicians. She loves meeting with legislators, with or without the union. She is the only one of those interviewed who traveled out of state for a protest.

Only about 20 PCAs, from all over the state, attended the last contract negotiation, and though Isabella, Carol, and Darleen attended it, they didn’t have clear recollections of it and seemed to have been present as more than an observer than participant, using language about what they saw rather than what they did. When I asked Darleen about the negotiation, she simply replied “refresh my memory,” and, after some prompting, remembered “that’s when they put in the higher wages, right. I don’t remember exactly the details.” Maria was not a union member during the last negotiation, but even as a current employee of the union said “the last contract

meaning the fight for 15?” It took Isabella a while to remember what the problem was, finally remembering that it might have been “something about the gloves?” and “people were concerned about overtime” but she doesn’t know if either has been resolved. This didn’t seem to be mere forgetfulness, but also a lack of passion and interest. Carol remembered more about the approval of these issues, though said “if something else got approved, I didn’t go.”

When asked what went well about this negotiation, Maria, the employee, had a really clear analysis including movement language: “everybody coming out. Every body supporting PCAs, organizers, consumers, so everybody. Everybody was in the movement. Everybody was up for it. Everybody had that same vision. So I think that went great.” Darleen, though, despite her involvement in politics, couldn’t remember, saying,

“I can’t really tell. I don't really remember what went well. I just remember that I was at that meeting and the one who came from the opposite side, he was not very negotiable... I don't even know what was his personal problem but I remember that all the PCAs were talking about their concerns and, I don't remember but I just remember listening and I thought okay is he going to be reasonable now? And I don't know what everybody was saying, you'd probably have to talk to other guys. I was just waiting for him to say something that I could relate to is all I remember.”

Carol remembered that it was open to all members, and “everybody got a chance to speak that wanted to talk”.

Leadership

Members can go through a training to become a delegate. Isabella was recommended to attend this leadership program, but chose not too because it was more political than her religion allows. Gabrielle used to be a steward for another union, and wants to be a delegate at 1199, but

feels like the leaders don't want her to be one because the issues she cares about conflict with their agenda.

Regardless of official leadership or involvement in the union, several members do seem to feel a degree of responsibility for making the union better. Gabrielle talks about setting an example for other workers to share their stories and speak up to power, that shows a deep care for her coworkers.

“When they have the meetings, I am able to share my experience. And because I've been doing that, other pcas have been sharing information as well. About work, about how they are doing at work. They are bringing up more issues as well... Women are human beings who need to be strong but we get tired somehow, we get hurt somehow, sometimes we are sad, sometimes we are upset... We are human beings. We need to discuss those issues in order to be strong.”

She sees her criticisms of the union as ultimately helping to make it stronger. She cares about the general strength of the union, expressing that she will hold her tongue around new members because she doesn't want to scare them away from being a PCA.

Analysis

Members do meet our criteria of participating in a range of union activities, though with less consistency and ownership than is ideal. The six interviewees combined had attended every type of meeting and activity the union hosts. This is a good indication of the union's ability to get the word out and turn out individuals to events, and can be attributed to strong use of phone canvassing. However, they did not have much to say about the majority of events, and do not attend most of them regularly. In addition to the several barriers to participation outlined in the following section, this can be attributed to the passivity of the role many members seem to play

in most meetings, which in turn may come from a lack of ownership or responsibility they feel they have for the agenda.

This is particularly apparent in the way most PCAs interacted with the last contract negotiation. These meetings are the most direct opportunity PCAs have for bettering their conditions by negotiating with the workforce council, and yet most did not seem to feel they are significant. Only about 20 PCAs attended from across the state, and though Isabella, Carol, and Darleen were among the attendees, they described their participation in passive, observational terms, and did not have clear recollections of the event.

This indicates, firstly, bad political education and strategic development. But it also indicates that members do not feel that they control what happens in meetings. This could be mitigated by asking members to facilitate, co-create the agenda, take notes, present updates, or give reflections (I do not have data on whether or not these things are happening). It is clear that Allen asks for consistent feedback from his members, but this is not enough to ensure a bottom-up structure - that requires leadership, responsibility, and power. Though some members, like Gabrielle and Darleen, do seem to feel a degree of responsibility over the other PCAs, it does not seem to be sufficient to ensure the kind of engagement needed for true and sustained participation.

BARRIERS TO INVOLVEMENT

The interviewees listed a variety of reasons for why they or others don't get involved, many of which had to do with accessibility, but also burnout, religion, politics, and self-interest.

Some indicated that this is a problem, because it is often the same faces that show up at meetings.

The main reason that PCAs don't come to union activities is that people are busy: they have work, sometimes second and third jobs, and families to take care of. Darleen said "I was not able to go with the union because unfortunately my consumer had other issues." They don't get compensated for missing work for union activities, and many of them cannot afford that. Carol said "I mean I got a lot of friends that want to come to the meetings. Just like me, they work and we don't want to take off work because we don't get vacation time, if we take off we have to use our sick time. That's a problem." It is also difficult for workers to dedicate significant amounts of their valuable time to volunteer work, even for the union: "I wish I could be one of the organizers, like for Dorchester, but like I said, I work, I don't want to start working voluntarily thinking that I might get paid. I don't have small kids but I still have bills," said Carol. Gabrielle says that she would like to get paid for the time she spends at union activities, and that "a good organization" like some unions she has heard of would do this.

The location is another issue: they do have localized meetings in community libraries, but the primary events are in Quincy, which is far for PCAs who live in other parts and don't have cars. Carol said she used to go a lot more before the union changed locations, but now it's a lot more inconvenient for her.

Language accessibility is another issue. Though most people did not identify it as a problem, after talking about it a bit, Maria and Carol both acknowledged that the inconsistent provision of interpreters at meetings and translation of materials might cause fewer non-English speakers to attend.

Some of them described feelings of burnout as deterring their participation. Darleen said that she doesn't want to go to protests, because "I've been doing a lot of protesting before and I know I'm so young, but I think I'm losing my energy or something." Carol describes how she and some others sometimes feel that if they didn't win an issue at the bargaining table last year or the year before, they are never going to get it and "if they bring it up, it ain't going to do no good."

Paula and Gabrielle both expressed looking out for themselves first. They think about whether something is going to benefit themselves first before supporting it, even if the union is endorsing or organizing it.

None of the PCAs indicated that differences in political opinions were reasons for them to not get involved, and Paula didn't think that was an issue for anyone, but Maria said that that is why some people choose to stay out of it. It seems to be a trend that lack of political opinion and general deprioritization are the largest reason why people who were not interviewed choose not to become more involved in the union. Maria says that she respects these people's decision and that "we don't try to push it onto them," that "you don't have to. We're here to support you regardless."

Though Maria doesn't know anyone who has decided to leave the union for reasons other than changing careers, she speaks to a lot of PCAs who choose not to join the union in her role as a phone banker. The main cause is misinformation and a negative impression of unions as institutionalized, lazy, and selfish. She hopes that "one day you might do your research and know that we're not just fighting for us, we're fighting for everybody." Some people don't join because they consider PCA work a short term job, and would rather maximize their paycheck than fight for long-term job quality. She also points to the freeloader problem, in light of the era of Right to

Work and Harris v. Quinn, saying that a lot of people think “I really don't need to join the union, I'm still going to qualify to get those same benefits as a person that's paying for them.”

Analysis

These barriers are serious issues. Some of them are external, structural challenges, specific to the non-traditional organizing space of the home, and present the union with a very difficult task. Others are external, social problems, such as the lack of political opinion which seems to be the largest deterrent to participation within the larger union population. This apathy speaks to larger trends in American society, but also reaches within the union. While it is inevitable that some people will not have the time, energy, or political lense to care about union politics, it is the union's job to cultivate a culture of democracy.

Some of the internal barriers, like language accessibility, are immediately and concretely solvable. While it seems the union is taking good steps by hiring latinx staff to build the Hispanic communities of Boston, there is no excuse for how long this has taken.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PCAS

To what extent has being in the union changed the ways in which workers relate to each other? It has, according to all subjects, helped foster a sense of community among PCAs to some degree, both in spite of and relative too the lack of community their place of employment provides. Working in fairly isolated shifts, a lot of PCAs would only know a handful of coworkers were it not for the union. This sets a low bar for a relative increase in community, but

also presents challenges to organizing. It seems that the union fills the members social needs to the degree that they want it to, and is moderately successful in uniting various social stratas.

Social relations

The degree of community PCAs perceive within the union, and the degree to which they have integrated into it, depends on the individual. Isabella agreed fervently that the union fosters community, though conceded this is mostly for people who participate in the union. She seems very socially involved with other PCAs and has persuaded a many friends to join the union, including Paula. To the degree it is a part of her life, she said “it’s not something that we need to talk every day, but when there’s a need, it’s there.” Darleen and Maria consistently referred to the union as a family. Darleen said “I can't really put it in one word. We're a family. We listen to each other's stories. It's just everything. We can offer each other advice.” She explained that she moderates a website for PCAs where they ask and give advice for each other, and where people speak openly and without embarrassment. In her experience, the lack of boundaries, cliques, and drama is really rare. Despite this comfort level, Darleen spends most of her time in her social groups outside of the union. Paula sounds regretful about not feeling more connected to the community, but says that this is in part because she hasn’t tried to and just does the bare minimum of union activity. Gabrielle is the only one to display distrust towards the other PCAs, saying that they “want your shift, they might try everything to get rid of you.” This contradicts the feeling of responsibility she feels towards her coworkers, discussed above, and contradicts Carol’s experience, in which PCAs on other shifts stood up for her when her consumer’s roommate tried to get her fired.

Mixed trust

Gabrielle is the only one to display distrust towards the other PCAs; a longer conversation would have to be had to get to the root of why this is. It seems partially due to a sense of competition which may be connected to broader pressures of the labor market, as she said that other PCAs might “want your shift, they might try everything to get rid of you.” This contradicts the feeling of responsibility she feels towards her coworkers, discussed above, and contradicts Carol’s experience, in which PCAs on other shifts stood up for her when her consumer’s roommate tried to get her fired.

Power dynamics

When it comes to institutionalized power dynamics within the union, only one of the PCAs expressed having ever felt personally discriminated against or treated differently in any way for their identities. While this is likely not representative due to the pervasiveness of discrimination and the ways in which it can be made invisible by normalcy and privilege, this does speak well to the efforts of organizers and members to combat sexism, racism, xenophobia, ableism, and homophobia. Many of the members effused over the diversity of the union, to a degree that could be classified as well-intentioned ignorance and tokenization, with statements like “yes, actually I have seen a couple of Muslim PCAs there. It’s all types! Christians, baptists... All types.” Darleen, a self-described “citizen of the world,” believes that there is no overt racism in the union because she does not see any. Despite this disjuncture in the conversation of inclusion and diversity, all of the participants who spoke on the topic agreed that

the union is well integrated, and there was no evidence in the data to suggest systemic issues of race-based exclusion in the union.

Analysis

We have already established that community within the union is an important short term goal and step towards larger movement building. This insight to the level of friendship and comfort some members have found there lays potential for solidarity and responsibility.

Consciously and consistently unpacking institutionalized oppression on interpersonal and structural levels within the union is essential for a building a truly intersectional or solidarity movement. Though interviewees' assessments of institutionalized oppression within the union is almost certainly not a reflection of every member's experience and indicates a potentially problematic level of inattentiveness, it is, overall, a positive indication of the union's preparedness to fight structural oppression in the broader society. Nonetheless, union leadership needs to continue to have conversations about race, gender, orientation, citizenship, and religion.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEADERSHIP

The majority of respondents expressed a high level of trust and respect in their organizers, and a strong personal connection with at least one organizer. However, most lacked strong relationships with other organizers, there is a strong barrier between members who work in the office and upper level staff, and a PCA from a different region has had a very different experience.

General leadership:

Most respondents spoke of the general leadership with high regard. Isabella expressed understanding of the many challenges leadership face:

“My hat’s off. My hat is off for president because I imagine it must be really overwhelming. And even though you would want to develop system or enhance the one you are already working as a president you will still need to be approve any changes, you know. Because maybe they have a model and its working and they want to keep it that way. So it involves a lot of things as a president.”

She also dispelled the narrative of greedy or lazy unions, saying that even though she isn’t in the office and doesn’t always see it with her own eyes, “I know they’re working for me. My pocket has experienced their hard work because I got a raise... So I’m conscious of their hard work and how they have taken care of us, and how they have fought, and how well they have managed to get where we are at this moment.” Maria showed clear respect for her coworkers, and Darleen indicated that they are patient and receptive when talking with PCAs, and that she has no concerns about the leadership. She became emotional when describing the attentiveness they bring to asking PCAs about their families and lives, saying “they really care. I mean, I love it. It’s beautiful.”

Specific organizers

Only two organizers were spoken of by name more than once during the interviews. Rebecca Gutman, the Massachusetts Region PCA Vice President, was spoken of positively and mostly in relation to large meetings and publications of which she is the figurehead and the email updates she sends anytime anything happens. No one can remember how long she has been president or if there was an election.

Allen Goodman is the head organizer, and was spoken of with outstanding respect and trust. Carol says “he’s very good. I have to say, he does his job. I like the way he does his job. I like the way he communicates with his PCAs.” Maria also says that “it’s how he works. And I love it. I look to him as my mentor.” With her and the other phone canvassers, he takes on a mentor like role that exceeds his job description, and is the only one in the office to consistently share with them what’s going on in the upper levels. Isabella said that he was “always there taking care of the ladies.” Isabella has a casual, consistent, and comfortable relationship with him, calling once every few weeks to touch base, and sharing jokes, criticism, advice, and favors. Darleen also appears to feel comfortable being herself around him. In a story about a disagreement over whether or not to implement a new clock-in system, she describes giving him advice and joking the way equals would, and represents both herself and him as rational, well-intentioned, willing to compromise when possible, and willing to acknowledge that some things are impossible. In another story she shared, he seems to always listen and respond to PCAs with sincerity, tranquility, and lack of judgement, even when they are joking, disagreeing, or asking questions which Darleen considers stupid. She implies the same level of peer-like comfort around all organizers, though she doesn’t remember their names, which is probably a reflection of her personality and the rapport she is accustomed to developing with lawyers and legislators. Paula does not express the same degree of closeness with her organizer, but also says that she particularly keeps in touch with Allen, and he keeps her up to date. It is clear that regular communication is a huge part of the success of this organizer’s relationship with his members, but that he is also able to develop a level of rapport with many of his members that strengthens their relationship not only with him but with the union. There is also a level of respect that can

only be accomplished through a consistently strong display of integrity, values, and work ethic on his part.

No relationship

The lack of relationship between union members and the rest of the organizing staff, however, seems to be an issue, even for members who would not name it as such. Carol says that Allen is ‘the only person anybody knows, I swear,’ which she attributes to the power calls. She could not even remember Becca’s name, though she says she likes her and remembers her from the negotiations. Isabella doesn’t know the rest of the staff or who she gets calls and emails from (likely often a rotation of phonebankers), and says she wouldn’t know who to call other than Allen. In her estimation, “we need to be more in contact with those leaders.” Darleen thinks that there are three or four organizers/delegates (which one?) and that she’s met them once or twice, but she doesn’t know who they are. It can be inferred that this must, at least to a degree, reflect a lack of personal concern about knowing her leaders. She later states this more directly, saying “I wasn't paying attention because I guess the leader of the union was not that important to me as those who lead the entire organization,” and compares this inattention to that towards local elected officials in government because of the difficulty in renewing interest in the near-constant turnover (smoother). It is not clear which organization she is referring to that is larger than the union. This reflects a degree of willingness to relinquish democratic control of the union, which in turn reflects trust in the union leadership.

Internal office dynamics

Maria, as someone who works in the office, experiences a different dynamic with the union leadership, and though she characterizes it as highly positive, her story reveals some noteworthy criticisms. She implies that one of the organizers from a different sector made sexual advances on her during her training, which she filed against. She describes her job as a phone canvasser as more like an internship, which people do with the hope of working their way up to an organizing position if they do their job well and there is an opening. Most of the other phone canvassers had only worked there a few months, though there is one that had worked there two years. Despite spending a lot of time in the office, she experiences a strong barrier between the phone canvassers and the top organizers, saying that it is typical that there will be tension among the leadership but that they “try to keep us [the canvassers] away from the things that are going on,” telling them nothing. This most recently happened when the Vice President of the union was accused of sexual assault, and the canvassers were only told about it after it was printed in the press, and believe they might never have been told if it wasn’t public. At the time of the interview, they still didn’t know what was going to happen, only that they had not seen their VP [since the Christmas party] (confirm this with quote but I think they were even asked to sign a card for him).

As a newcomer and developing leader in the union, she says this “makes you feel like uneasy, because you don't know, like... People that been here longer you hear, and stuff like that, and the most you can do is just fall back because I've only been here a short amount of time. So it's like you're still trying to study and see everybody and see how they move and... So it's just sad,” and that “even though we're united and we're a family and everything, when something's wrong, everybody feels it. you pick up that vibe. Something's not sitting right. Other than that it's

good. But it does have its ups and downs.” She followed up that they should be kept in the loop because “we're the ones reaching out, we're the ones who go to meetings, who are building these relationships, we should be able to know what's going on.” Despite these negative experiences, she still says she is proud to work at the union, and centers her love for her coworkers throughout the interview.

Negative experiences

Gabrielle, on the other hand, has had an extremely different experience with her organizers in a different part of the state, characterized by distrust and a lack of relationship stemming from the organizer’s disproportionate compensation for their job, lack of shared histories with their members, lack of urgency in the fight, and general bureaucratization. Much of her distrust seemed to come from a lack of relatability to the organizers, feeling that as people who have never worked as PCAs, they cannot understand or represent them.

“The only way, the only way for someone to understand about the PCA work is if this person decided to fold their sleeve and go and work with the PCA as a PCA. Because nobody understand. [Organizers] they never worked as a PCA, they will never understand what a PCA needs. If they have families, if they have children, and their children depend on their job, only going into the field do you understand what the PCA goes through.”

This point fits into a broader rhetoric of identity politics and privilege, though Gabrielle doesn’t use that terminology. She feels a distinct resentment towards organizers - and authority figures in all parts of society - who speak for her while discrediting her own ability to do the work. She recognizes that they have more opportunities than her, and feels that they don’t respect her potential to achieve the same things, frequently bringing up not being given “credit’.

Furthermore, this lack of common ground and shared experience means to her that they do not feel the urgency: “If the president, the vice president doesn’t go to the work site to know what’s going on, how they going to feel that need, how they going to feel that hurt, and that necessary to fight for that, if they don’t know! They don’t know the situation.” She articulates some of these inequalities and bureaucratization saying that organizers and union leadership make good money and have many vacations, good retirement plans, good health insurance, and other things that most PCAs don’t realize and that she would like to have. This makes her feel like they should do more for the members and fight harder.

Analysis:

I am very impressed with Allen’s vision, and his analysis of the process of political education and activation. It is clear that his leadership tactics are working, as almost every PCA cited him as having personally activated them to some degree. But one strong organizer is objectively not enough to mobilize a movement of thousands of people. It is unsustainable, and it will inevitably be top-down no matter how much feedback he requests.

A limitation of this study is that it did not develop further methodology of understanding or assessing the performance of other organizers. But it speaks volumes that the PCAs could not shed any light on this performance. That they did not identify specific actions of or interactions with other organizers in their narratives, were mostly unable to remember the names of other organizers, and that several PCAs said most of their contact was with Allen (to the extent that one said she doesn’t know who else to contact) suggests that the distribution of work and level of communication, relationship, trust, and education in the organizational structure is lacking.

The top-down structure and stunted leadership development that comes from having only one noteworthy organizer lends itself to the servicing model. This can be seen in the language members use, even when praising him, saying “I know they’re working for me.” This does not build a movement.

Without additional data, I cannot make judgements that reconcile the direct contradictions of experience between Gabrielle and the other interviewees, but it is undeniably the union’s responsibility to train its leaders to relate to and respect all PCAs so that no one feels like they do not know or trust their organizer, that their organizer cannot possibly understand them, or that their organizer does not care about them. This is, unfortunately, a problem in some unions, and may be in 1199. It is inevitable that some organizers will have more privilege than the majority of people in the communities they work in, but a good organizer is cognizant of their identities and positions, and works to uplift and not speak over the voices of the people they organize.

Gabrielle’s commentary speaks to a larger trend of the institutionalization and bureaucracy of business unionism, in which union staff see their work as a job rather than a movement, while reaping benefits from their positions disproportionate to the workers they fight for. 1199 has a reputation in Boston for being extremely institutionalized, with staff treating their positions as jobs rather than urgent movements. Though most of the respondents directly denied this, Gabrielle’s experiences speak to the truth of these reputations. Allen himself also suggested that the resources within the entire organization could be better allocated. This discrepancy could be explained by institutionalization being a larger, structural problem in 1199 than Allen combats as an organizer.

EFFICACY AND TRUST IN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

The level of political efficacy each interviewee displayed varied greatly depending on their personality, but did seem to increase after meeting politicians through union-organized activities. Several of the participants expressed a high level of trust in politicians (or, at least, the politicians they have met through the union). The implied and sometimes explicit trust in government brings up unanswered questions about their analysis of the government as the opposition force in their contract negotiations with the state, in the Fight for \$15 campaign, and in the Right to Work battle.

Darleen expressed a high degree of trust in the legislators of Massachusetts, but drew a distinction between them and “what’s happening in Washington,” saying “I know the legislators are doing the best they can, but sometimes the State House is not enough.” She compares the union to politicians in their responsiveness to the people, saying “actually, that’s what I love in politicians: they don't just come up with ideas, they want to know what their constituents or people of the city want.” She was extremely excited to visit D.C. and to meet the politicians: “we were talking to someone who was working for Madeline Albright, and I thought, ‘Oh my goodness, I’m really here!’ It was just amazing, I mean, seeing these people was amazing and talking to these people who are like, ‘yeah, this is what we’re working on, this is what we’re fighting for.’”

Maria and Isabella expressed a similar excitement and trust. For Maria, this did serve as a tool of activation: “I got to meet the first Puerto Rican woman in the U.S. Senate. It was an honor just to meet her. I felt like a starstruck fan. So I’m more involved. I told my boss if I can go to

D.C. again I would. I loved meeting them and hearing them and learning that they're just regular people like you and me... They're on our side." Describing the one time she went to the state house with the union, Isabella displayed a similar effect of humanizing politicians: "[we were] just talking in a calm, pacific way with the Senators, letting them know how we feel. They've been very welcoming, they listen, they take your sign.... They are concerned about what we are sharing with them."

While Isabella's emphasis on the lack of antagonism may be a reflection of this event and of her religious beliefs, Darleen expressed an explicit preference for the negotiable actions over protest: "activists... you go to protests and go on the street and start yelling and that's not *really* what I want. I'd rather go to the legislators, have a meeting with them, talk about the issues, and then ask them... I prefer to educate: explain what the situation is so they can get a better idea of what the issue is, what I am concerned about so they can say, 'okay, I can relate to that.'"

For all three of these women, this experience seemed to increase their political efficacy by showing them that they have access to power and can make their voices heard. At the same time, their relationship with political change makers is still marked by a power differential, as shown by their fan-like level of excitement. Both Maria and Isabella reflected feeling stronger united. Darleen on the other hand has been meeting with legislators since before her time in the union, through her work with disability advocacy, and says that she's done it so many times that it doesn't matter if she is calling or writing legislators with a group or by herself - they remember her, and she builds on this rapport with them.

Gabrielle displays more trust in the government than in unions. As a result, she does not trust most institutions: "I'm very independent and sometimes I'm in trouble for that. I am going

to balance what's good for myself and what is not good. It's the same thing with the union, its the same thing with the government, it's the same thing with churches." At the same time, she seems to revere politicians and lawyers, with her biggest dream to be one: "I wanted to learn how politicians make those huge laws. That's where I really want to be. Right now I'm in a paralegal class because I want to be around lawyers, to learn how the system work. But actually, I want to be around the big, big guys, the politicians, and learn how they do it, because I don't know." It is unclear if the same suspicion she holds towards most authority figures translates to politicians, but at least sometimes, they seem immune.

Despite the heavy barriers she sees between herself and becoming an authority figure herself or even being taken seriously by those in power, she displays high efficacy in terms of being able to advocate for herself. She speaks up to union organizers on behalf of herself and PCAs. She has spoken to a few politicians about the issues she feels no one is addressing, and they told her that more people need to be talking about them because not everyone knows about these problems. While she expressed frustration at union organizers for not advancing these agendas, she did not explicitly direct this frustration at these politicians.

She sees government power not only as legitimate but as an intelligent and moral force whose role it is to regulate and correct other institutions, including unions: "And it looks like right now the government is trying to break the unions... They might know as well that unions might not be fighting for the right things as well... [I know that] unions when they have thousands of thousands of members they make good money. Okay? So the government's not stupid. And when they do things like they are doing that to break the unions, I think they do that

to shake the union. To open their eyes and their ears, and fight for the right things maybe? I don't know.”

Analysis

Both Darleen and Gabrielle, the most politically involved PCAs, have high trust that the government and the actors within it do the right thing. My own trust in the government is low, and I will do my best to separate that from the analysis, but it inherently informs my perspective. The United States has a long history of state-sponsored union repression, dating from its persecution of organizers at its founding to the Right to Work battle currently being heard in the Supreme Court, as well as harming working people in other ways through accepting lobbying and corruption from capital and corporate interests, institutionalized anti-blackness and anti-immigrant, insufficient social services, inaccessible social mobility through unlivable minimum wages and unaffordable education and healthcare, and so much more. Given this, union members and working people with a strong analysis of power and strategy and/or who are invested in advancing a labor movement, have reason to be at least suspicious of the government.

The extent to which members trust in the justice of government speaks to its hegemony: government is normalized and institutionalized as the most legitimized and irrefutable authority. Gabrielle proves this in that politicians seem immune to her general distrust of authority, even though (or because) she feels she doesn't know how it works. Like the Wizard of Oz, government's power is entirely dependent on the unquestioning loyalty of its people, and the illusion that it is larger and more knowledgeable than any one person could comprehend.

The positive effect that meeting with politicians has had on members' efficacy and politicization, though, benefit all actors involved. Some of the politicians they have met were presumably progressive trailblazers with more pro-labor platforms than the traditional government. For most members, even those who already displayed efficacy, this experience made them more comfortable advocating for themselves and gave them avenues to do so. It motivated them to continue their political education and civic engagement. This is a win for the labor movement.

POLITICAL ACTIVATION

Most of the participants described being more involved in politics and community as a result of being a member of the union, though none to the level of our gold standard. This increased activation seems to come through political education and exposure to experiences. All of them repeated some level of terminology from campaigns they were exposed to through the union. The degree to which these political messages were translated to them was somewhat correlated with their degree of contact with Allen or the union. Maria is the strongest example of this: she didn't start actively participating in the union until she was employed by it part time, 5 months after she joined the union. This could be interpreted as a failure to activate new members, but it is probably more accurate to characterize it as a relatively fast political transformation initiated by a high level of contact with the union. Her transformation was drastic. She describes her political involvement before joining in 1999 as "zero," saying she basically only knew that Obama was the president, but now she is more involved and finds it interesting and rewarding, and is happy to be a part of a movement that will change things for her children. In addition to

citing meeting the politicians as a really exciting moment for her, she also references the importance of education in her process, saying that the union helps her because “it teaches me. Helps me grow, have more understanding. Like I said, not just the political part, but the unity.”

Darleen does not consider herself more involved as a result of being in the union because she saw herself as already very involved, but she has become more involved in labor issues specifically. She spent years working as a disability activist before joining 1199 and is highly independent, so the union has “not really” brought her into any political groups or movements. That said, “labor justice actually just started to really ring a bell by me, since over a year... Labor law I was not really that familiar with until I found out what the wages are... So just now, actually, I’m starting to be part of the labor discussion.” The union has put minimum wage, paid family medical leave, and other labor issues on her radar. Despite all of her work, she does not consider herself an activist: “I prefer to call myself an educator... talk about the issues.” Gabrielle also does not credit the union with her interest or growth in politics, and although she has grown in her time in the union, she does not feel supported by the union in her own political development.

Isabella does not consider herself more involved in politics as a result of the union because of the limitations her religion place on the ways in which she can engage, but she has developed politically. She talks about watching all of the political activities and says “even though I’m not out there, I’m concerned and believe me I’m very aware. I have my own way of letting people know that it could be better.”

Paula and Carol do not consider themselves involved in politics at all, even after their participation in the union. This is particularly interesting for Carol, because she is more involved

in the union. Comparing her interest before and after joining the union, she says “well, to be honest, I never was into politics before I got into the union. So to me it's the same. I ain't into it then and I ain't into it really now. I listen. Just like then. But as far as me goin, no.” She listens to Allen talk about endorsing candidates, and accepted his recommendation of Hillary Clinton (though she forgot her name) as she wasn't going to vote for Trump anyway, because she doesn't like his “style” and he “downgrades blacks.” She tries to get out to vote but sometimes doesn't because she's tired.

According to Maria, a lot of the membership doesn't follow politics, and as a result, don't know or care what the union is doing. As the apolitical membership is less likely to have high contact with Allen or attend political events, this aligns with my theory that these actions can serve as politicizing agents.

Analysis

I argue each of these members has become more involved in politics and their community, though only one of them would say so themselves. This gap is fascinating. Perhaps the process has not made deep enough of an impression to be perceivable yet. Or maybe they do not consider the activities they are engaging in to be political, such as attending union meetings and protests, and collecting signatures. Alternatively, they could be judging themselves relative to other people they consider more involved.

Regardless, they are not as involved as would qualify for building a movement, particularly because they have not translated the political skills they have developed at the union into other community organizations or civics, according to themselves. (could say more)

The fact that a sustained relationship with one dedicated organizer can influence their political perspective and engagement, however, is an inspiring testament to this form of organizing, and reinforces the necessity of a larger and more dedicated organizing team.

IDENTIFICATION WITH THE LABOR MOVEMENT

Most of the interview subjects were confused by the terminology of the “labor movement.” Relation to this terminology is not one of the measurements we outlined in our ideal type, nor should it be; while ideally a movement would be united by not only a shared vision, but a shared way of speaking about it, there are countless barriers to matching vocabulary across cultural, regional, industrial, class, and age groups. It is not my purpose or place to attempt to assess the education or comprehension level of the interviewees. However, the extent to which members are able to tap into the analysis of the union and reflect the campaign language and messaging is an indication of their level of incorporation into the union and broader movement.

Paula expressed ambivalence stemming from confusion over what I meant by a “movement” and whether or not it was in her best interests. In the end, she said she is not really in the movement “because no one is telling me what to do.” When I first asked Gabrielle about the labor movement, she thought I meant a movement to increase union membership. When I asked her “Do you think the union is building a movement outside of itself like a labor movement? Working with other unions or organizations? Is that important to you?” she replied “I am not sure if they are doing that. I am not sure.” Further in the conversation, after more prompting, she indicated that yes, she would like for unions to be forming in other workplaces

and fighting for rights beyond just the workplace. I think that Carol does consider herself to be part of the labor movement, but she doesn't recognize that terminology. She asked "ain't [the labor movement] the same as the union? I mean, labor's trying to get more money." She connected this to a Labor Day event she went to with workers from all different sectors protesting together, but when asked if that was "politics" said "I don't think I would call it poli...tics... I think I would call it... um... We're just union members, trying to get higher wages. It wasn't politics. It was union members trying to get higher wages. So I would call it unionizing, I guess." I did not ask Darleen if she identified with the labor movement, but we can infer from her relationships with politics and activism that she would not identify with it as I would define it.

Maria was the only one with a strong incorporation of movement language into her analysis, and she explicitly credits this to Allen. She said that what went well about the last negotiation was that everybody came out together and "everybody was in the movement. Everybody was up for it. Everybody had that same vision." She said that the union's goal is "to just get as many people together, not just to join but to be a part of the movement." She also says that Allen instills in the canvassers that in order to build this movement they need to form relationships with people.

Analysis

The language that Maria uses in this section of the interview reflect our ideal-type of movement-building vision. It seems that the extent to which members reflect this vision is dependent in part on how many conversations they have had with Allen, though not entirely. She

also shows that organizers are using this terminology in their political education work. Thus, even though terminology is not an indication of actual philosophical location, this suggests a poor level of incorporation of other members into the movement.

BREADTH OF ISSUES

The speakers indicated that the union supports a wide breadth of issues, in line with the model of social movement unionism. For the most part, they indicated neutral to positive feelings towards this, and only one participant expressed frustration at the prioritization of other issues over her immediate needs. It is unclear from the interviews alone the degree to which this has shaped how participants relate to other movements.

Maria says that the platform of issues the union addresses is very broad: “it’s everything.” She thinks that it’s really rare to find a union that steps up so much for its members; she was personally touched by the fund the union had for Puerto Rico and the personal support she was shown by staff members following the hurricane. In her opinion, this strengthens the union. She got emotional when another member told her “I love the fact that the union, our union, is always there. It’s not just for healthcare workers, and it’s not just focused on everything that has to do political, it’s just everything in general.” In terms of how this platform affects the union’s efficiency, she does not think that the union goes through cycles of strength and focus: “We always manage to get back. I don’t think it’s even a problem here. We juggle a lot of things at a time... We’re always multitasking to make sure that everybody is satisfied. We’re more like givers... So it’s overwhelming but you know at the end of the day we’re like, okay, we did that, let’s give ourselves a pat on the back.” She attributes the union’s ability to maintain momentum

in so many different directions to “us here. We’re not just employees. We’re a family. We help each other. We manage to pick each other up. You don’t see that a lot... The way we look out for each other is different.” She says that they do, however, get a lot of members who don’t support having such a wide platform and “just want to pay their dues and don’t want to have nothing to do with the political part,” often because of religious reasons. She says it’s a relatively small and passive group that actually actively disagree with the union platforms, but she explained that sometimes staying firm on these issues is an important part of coalition building and strategy. For example, some members ask why the union supports Mayor Marty Walsh, but she says “he’s part of us and we don’t go against that. Whoever’s on our side, that’s who’s side we’re on. That’s who we’ll rally for.” As for most of the membership, “they don’t care. They don’t come to meetings, so they’re completely unaware of what we’re doing behind closed doors.”

Gabrielle is one of those members that doesn’t like the broad platform of the union: “the union might have their agenda that they need to fight for. But if the unions are fighting for PCAs... they need to fight for the issues of PCAs.” She was hesitant and apologetic to name gender neutral bathrooms in schools as one of the kinds of issues she feels are superfluous or don’t represent her. It is clear that social movement issues feel to her like they are in conflict with her immediate needs and the issues she feels are not being addressed.

Analysis

The appreciation that members have for the breadth of issues the union is concerned with is a positive indication of the union’s incorporation of other movements. Gabrielle’s concerns about the prioritization of immediate needs is actually quite expected, and it is impressive that no

other members indicated this concern. This appreciation could stem from solidarity, from the fact that members have intersectional needs that overlap with other issues, or from members not having more pressing concerns. With the data we have, it seems the union is doing a relatively good job of incorporating a broad platform into their agenda. But it is the level of investment of members themselves into sustaining and growing other social issues, and the degree of solidarity that they display, that we are most interested in, and this could be stronger, as argued in the political engagement sections.

DEMOCRACY IN THE UNION

The voice and ownership union members feel they have in decision making is highly related to their relationship with union leadership. While Gabrielle doesn't know how decisions are made in the union and said she would like to find out, Darleen feels that the union "listens to its PCAs" and does a good job picking what issues are important to them. She says there is ample opportunity to give feedback, and "they want to know what the PCAs are worried about. They don't just come up with ideas and say 'okay, guys, this is what we think we are doing and that's the end of it.' No. They come up with ideas but they ask what do you want? What do you think about this." She added that "we basically have the same concerns and they want to hear from us." All of the interviewees except for Gabrielle reflected a strong number of opportunities to give feedback, and high comfort in doing so. Their organizer indicated that member feedback is an important part of their decision making. The greater problem seems to be a lack of strong opinions or desire to participate in leadership and decision making.

Maria indicated a troubling lack of democracy within the union, without realizing it. She says that the majority of the membership are not very political, and that “since they aren't so politically involved. They don't have a say-so anyway. They don't care. They don't come to meetings, so they're completely unaware of what we're doing behind closed doors. The ones that do know come out and they're fully involved.” This says that despite efforts by the union to implement strong membership participation and democracy, the majority of the membership chooses not to be involved.

Analysis

It is a serious issue that members do not have stronger opinions about the leadership of the union. Bottom-up organizing requires more than feedback. It means engaging members in ways that stir their thoughts about the direction and leadership, training them to become leaders, introducing them to a greater number of civic actions that grow their efficacy, like Maria has experienced. As is, this does not fit the definition of a democratic union. Though on paper decisions are made by members, there is no indication that they are actually driving the direction.

THE ORGANIZER’S PERSPECTIVE

I also interviewed Allen, the lead organizer of the Boston PCA team. This shed important light on the organizer’s perspective on the labor movement and members participation in it.

Breadth of the movement

He has a broad view of the labor movement: “the struggle for justice is not narrow. It’s wide. But it is a highly ethical, a highly moral, a highly sacrificial road.” He agrees with many leaders of the labor movement that it will cease to exist if it does not partner with community based organizations and that all social movements need to work together to overcome shared barriers. At the same time, he talks about the importance of organizing with “wisdom,” by which he means a pragmatically broad vision, because you can’t win every fight, and some fights are “suicidal.” He picks his battles because “the goal is not really about trying to win battles, it’s about trying to make a [inaudible], winnable difference,” and “if I can’t win, it doesn’t mean that I don’t want to do it. It just means that we don’t have the resources or the ability.” He believes the future of the movement holds more non-traditional unions like for homeless populations because “we need as many organized entities that bargain for power and are willing to take audacious and unified actions for power everywhere.”

His version of the movement connects not only to other social movements today but to a long scholarship of revolutionary change. He cited Fredrick Douglas, Rosa Parks, Gandi, Jesus, and Karl Marx. Also a motivational speaker, a theologian, and a democratic socialist, he reveres these figures and believes “it only takes talking to one person, one very wise, ethically and morally consistent person, to break down an empire... but you have to consistently and morally be willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice. And you can bring down an empire. Empires fall. They always fall. All it takes is for people to conquer the fear that lies within them.” He sees himself as an activator rather than an activist because he doesn’t just do things but he brings people into the movement. He believes firmly that “if we’re going to talk about the movement, we’ve got to be willing to build it,” and said “anybody can theorize but very few people can put it into what

we call praxis. Or even more so what we call orthopraxis, where you embody the struggle.”

When asked to rank movement building among the various goals of the union, he says “that has to be thought of at the beginning, and that has to be the result. From conception to mass realization. That’s what it’s all about is building the movement.”

Assessment of the present political moment

He believes workers in contemporary America are dissatisfied because “their country isn’t where they want it to be,” and that low wages, low political participation, and the gig economy growing jobs without pensions or benefits juxtaposed with Trump’s transition of wealth to the top give them “no choice but to resist.” He sees Right to Work as a great opportunity, because “people are upset. With that type of anger, or that type of dissatisfaction, the question becomes do we give up, or do we do something about it. So when you are able to tap into that frustration, that anger, those are prime times for organizing. Especially in the labor movement.” He says organizers represent hope to the people because they are taking action.

Strategy

He thinks that the majority of PCAs do not consider themselves part of the movement, at least until this political activation takes place: “I think they do [consider themselves part of a movement] once we talk to them but outside of that they don’t. They recognize that the union is there but the movement language is not the language you hear every day. The language you hear is take care of your consumer. Get paid. They’re thinking of basic stuff, paying rent, all of that. But in terms of movement language, many of them are not aware of that. We have to teach that

to them. Movements are not just something that spring up. People have to be told what a movement is because people are not aware of that. Schools don't teach that. So we've got to take responsibility for teaching that to our PCAs. Because once you understand what a movement is you have to decide if you are going to be a part of it or sit back and let it take you over because it's coming."

His model of organizing is called "relational organizing," which starts with "continuous engagement and conversation, that gets into what people's deep seeded roots and passions are." His model uses the "ICC," which gages individual's interest, commitment, and capacity. He says that he can't answer what the distribution of those categories is among his members, but that there is a core group of 40-50 activists in the Boston area and that they always need more. He stresses the importance of bottom-up organizing, because it's easier to relate to people, and even if something sounds good conceptually "it's gotta translate out into people being willing to do it because if not, they aren't going to do it no matter how much you want them to." In light of this, he says "I try to make sure that workers are valued much more than I am... I'm just an organizer supporting them. They are the ones that make things happen. Not me."

1199 chooses the issues it fights through a survey which is sent to every member to document "whatever members feel is the greatest issue, that's what we focus on. We let them choose that. We don't do that for them." However, when asked "have there been instances in which there was an issue you thought was important that wasn't getting traction that you pushed for?" he replied somewhat jokingly but forthcomingly "there have been a number of them, but I'm not going to tell you what they are, because I will not reveal those types of inconsistencies which a student is looking for."

Assessment of 1199

He says that his union has the “greatest model out here in the country.” It is “proactive, not reactive,” innovative, implementing new technology, and has language and preparations in place to fight against things that are being proposed at the Supreme Court level. He also says that 1199 has a lot of resources, more than most unions due to its size, but said more than once “are we using the resources that we have? I don’t think so.” He wouldn’t expand on what he meant beyond that, other than that “managerial caution” was one of the barriers to full use of resources.

He considers the biggest barrier to unionism nationally that people in America just don’t know enough about unions. For the PCAs specifically, the hardest part is getting in touch with them, because they are spread out and turnover is high. Their contract is also very unique in that the PCA program is a consumer driven program. He does not think this is unjust because the personal care program “grew out of a movement for people with disabilities, who would not in other states have the empowerment that they have here” and that without that support they could not have accomplished all of the trainings, wages, and benefits that they are proud of winning. Because of this, the union walks “a very thin line” wherein it “does not interfere with the PCA/consumer relationship.” He is certain that abuse occurs, but when it does “we always recommend whatever legal and sometimes criminal actions that they need to take to get that matter solved. But that is purely based on what the law says.”

Analysis

It is affirming to hear that the lead organizer highly values social movement unionism, bottom-up organizing, empowerment of and leadership by members. He is a rational and comprehensive thinker with more insight to the unions inner workings than I, which may give the reader pause in trusting the findings of this limited study. However, based on the evidence found in the interviews, the unfortunate reality seems to be that the union is failing at achieving his vision despite his dedication to a model that aligns with ours.

I agree strongly with Allen's incorporation of social movement unionism and community organizations into his organizing model, as I think that is vital for organizing a movement and a just future for unions. I would like to hear more from him about what organizations he does pair with, what he considers to be members involvement with those organizations, and how he believes those relationships can be strengthened, as we have already established in this paper that they are not strong enough.

It is an unfortunate reality that most organizers have to face that not all battles are winnable and must be chosen carefully. For example, we have discussed why Gabrielle's solution to the broken cycle is untenable, and that perhaps an organizer could have explained why that is the case and tried to collaborate on an alternative solution or direct her energy elsewhere. We also have discussed that social movement organizing sometimes requires organizational leaders to ask members to prioritize social justice over their immediate needs, but in a way which benefits them in the long-term through a stronger movement and collective bargaining power. However, I would like more information on how he assesses what is winnable, who is involved in this decision making, how it is conveyed to members who might disagree, and how he reconciles this with his bottom-up vision. This is particularly interesting in

relation to the inconsistencies he suggests might exist between theory and praxis in the decision making process. That moment clearly indicates a serious lack of democracy with in the union, but could mean many different things. It could refer to the Fight for \$15 campaign, which, as a separate organization, is deeply intertwined with the national leadership of SEIU and which all chapters are directed to work on, but which is also a priority for the membership and serves them immediately. It could also mean directing resources towards LGBTQ rights or hurricane relief without the consent of the membership. Without further data, we cannot know.

His model of organizing seems very solid. I agree wholeheartedly with his relational organizing model, and we have established that it seems to be working to the extent that his relationship with PCAs does seem to involve and develop them politically to a degree.

I am not sure that I see the same ripeness for revolution among majority of working people as Allen does, though he does make a good point that the election of Trump and his actions so far in office have violated the moral economy of a lot of Americans, with many realizing for the first time that the system is not built for them. He knows more about this than I do, as someone who speaks to workers every day and believes he has a precise formula for activating them. I, however, have to ground my analysis in what I heard from the PCAs I spoke with, which did not involve the level of activation he is describing.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There is no single explanation for why 1199, or any union for that matter, has failed to activate its membership into a labor movement. The capitalist hegemony seems to be the primary barrier to successful union organization, but as this is pervasive and has been a factor of every successful union campaign, it is not an explanation. The decentralized workplace of the PCAs makes the burden of relationship building fall on the union and creates severe structural barriers to the sustenance of information channels, morale, solidarity, and education. 1199 seems to have been largely successful in overcoming these barriers to organize personal care attendants into a union and bargaining a strong contract, but has been unable to achieve its secondary goal of developing this membership into a movement. This is due to insufficient organizational relationships with more than one union organizer, other PCAs, and workplace leaders, and failure to select and train delegates as leaders and delegate actual power. Strengthening both of these aspects of the union's strategic efforts would raise the number of politically educational contacts with membership, member's urgency to change their own lives, and democratic ownership of the union.

There are many strong testaments to the union's success and potential. Phone banking does appear to be a somewhat successful way of getting member's attention and attendance.

Civic engagement in activities with the union tangibly politicized members in some instances. These experiences, particularly those that introduced members to political change makers, made them more comfortable advocating for themselves and gave them avenues to do so. It motivated them to continue their political education and involvement. It is also clear that a sustained relationship with one dedicated organizer can influence their political perspective and engagement, as almost every PCA cited Allen as having personally activated them to some degree. Members made sporadic comments suggesting a shifting political lens that their experiences were systemic, which began to erode their legitimizing notion of the justice of capitalism.

In total, however, the union has not yet met our high criteria of mobilizing members into a movement. Members showed a medium to poor understanding of the union's long-term goals; medium attendance at union activities but low participation in them; an inadequate critical lens of power; incomplete empowerment to change their own circumstances; minimal drawing of connections between their experiences under capitalism and other related struggles; minimal participatory solidarity for these related causes; little participation in community or political activity without the prompting of the union; little sense of urgency; and little leadership in union decision-making.

One reason for their lack of involvement is that their legitimizing notion of capitalism has not been broken. This is proven by the trust they invest in the government and the lack of urgency they feel in fighting the system. The consequence is that they have not formed the class identity that would identify them with the movement. As their moral economy has not been violated through a direct conflict or struggle with their employer, the task of revealing hidden

inconsistencies between the liberal narratives capitalist America purports and the way it treats its workers falls to good organizing. This takes many forms, but first and foremost political education.

The majority of issues I found with 1990s organizing model were exacerbated or caused by an insufficient exercising of political education. Under hegemonic societies, it is not an individual's responsibility but the responsibility of anti-oppressive institutions such as unions to actively and continuously propagate the knowledge that the system is changeable and justice is possible. A stronger performance of these tasks by the union would have contributed to a shifting framework of institutionalized power, greater strategic analysis and personal empowerment, stronger solidarity across movements, greater political activation, democratic participation, and leadership.

We have established that the most effective medium of political education efforts is relational organizing and conversations. Persuading someone to vote a particular way, to vote at all, to join a union, or that they have a voice and it is worth their time to express it through political and organizational institutions, requires many conversations, an accessible presentation of evidence, and a personal conversation. This is why most unionization campaigns begin with one-on-one conversations, and why phone-banking and canvassing are widely regarded as effective political tools. This understanding is central to Allen's strategy: he speaks explicitly about needing to contact individuals many times in order to be activated. The primary explanatory factor for why this union has failed in sufficient political education is that there is only one organizer in Boston assigned to engage hundreds of members in consistent, passionate, and visionary one-on-one educational efforts. A clear next step in maximizing

mobilization is having a lower ratio of internal organizers engaging in these conversations with the same ferocity.

Other organizational tactics could be taken as well. While the mandatory orientation is one of the sites where members learn the most about the union and the most members join the union, it is the only organized place where everyone is forced to or naturally comes together. In most industries, this hole would be partially filled by the workplace, which is a structural limitation homecare and other privately contracted industries face in organizing. This hole can also be mitigated by establishing comfortable and accessible community spaces for workers to gather. It is unclear the degree of comfort PCAs feel in the union office in Quincy, but it is a place they only go for organized activities even if we are to overlook its inconvenience in location. Because PCAs are so spread out, it would be impossible to create a single location that is accessible for everyone, and having a consistently available community space in every region would exceed the resources of even the most powerful and well organized unions. Renting community spaces is a smart alternative, and seems to be what the union does, with its library meetings. These meetings still only reach a fraction of the PCAs. More workers might feel compelled to come if a more bottom-up, relationship based leadership structure.

Bottom-up means more than feedback. Though the union gives ample opportunity for reflection, the union members do not seem to have strong opinions the majority of the time. This reflects and exacerbates the lack of ownership they feel over the future of the union and the lack of investment they feel in its long-term goals. In this case, it is the union's job to not only create space for feedback but to start conversations about it and to ask its members critical questions

about their hopes for the future. This ties directly into the political education question above, and the building leadership question below.

In this light, perhaps the most important piece missing from the union's practical model is selecting, training, and delegating actual power to more union members. A limitation of this study is that we did not collect data on who the delegates are, the precise training they receive, or speak with them. That said, most union strategists agree that the most effective way to ensure active communication channels, democratic participation, and high-levels of investment in union campaigns is to identify leaders of each of the sub-group to be the ones who relay information from the union to the workers and vice-versa, and to rally a sense of purpose and unity among them. This serves to codify a bottom-up structure, to develop ownership and leadership within the workers, and build mobilization upon existing strong relationships and community.

I do not see this reflected in the interviews of the PCAs that I spoke to. Though none of them are delegates themselves, they should know who the delegates are, be regularly in touch with them, have someone they can speak to other than Allen, and ideally feel they have a choice over who represents them. While it seems that members can nominate delegates, it is unclear how they are finally chosen, and it is not a good sign that none of the interviewed PCAs were aware if and when there are elections. While delegates do go through a formal training which culminates in a celebratory event, it is unclear precisely what leadership training they get. My results do not definitively prove that the delegates are doing a poor job, nor are they sufficient to assign blame to the individual delegates versus the union. However, were the union adequately overcoming the structural limitations, they would be able to train delegates in relationship

building, leadership building, and political consensus, and these leaders would then initiate contact that would have reached at least one of the 6 PCAs I interviewed.

The union should work to overcome the structural barriers of an isolated work environment and lack of natural social circles to build upon and the high turnover rates of the profession to create a formalized structure in which all PCAs have another PCA transmitting communication between them and the union. This would make members feel more heard and supported; have greater understanding of the union strategy; have greater say over and interest in the agendas of meetings; feel more personal ownership over and accountability to union initiatives; enjoy union organizing; develop firmer opinions about the future of the union. They would attend more events, and in turn, become even more politically activated, take on more leadership, and begin a positive cycle.

With greater innovation, incorporation of relational leadership development, number of dedicated organizers, and political education, 1199 has potential to overcome the tremendous structural barriers to organizing PCAs, and begin to counteract the hegemonic principles of capitalism and build a labor movement.

Appendix

Interview Guide

I'd like to begin by hearing about what you do on an average day...

Could you tell me a little bit about your job?

I'd love to know what a day is like. Would you walk me through what you did yesterday?

Describe the best/worst part of your job?

Who do you work for?

How long have you worked for them?

Okay, great. Now, I would like to talk about your relationship with the union.

What is it like being a member of 1199?

In what ways do you participate in the union? (what is your membership/leadership status?)

What types of actions/events/meetings does your union have and how often?

How often do you attend?

Why do you (not) go?

Can you please tell me about your last interaction with your union?

What is the best part of being in 1199?

What is the worst part?

Do you feel comfortable voicing these criticisms?

What do you think would be the union's response if you did?

Why did you join the union?

What was your impression of/ relationship with unions before you got involved with 1199?

What did 1199 do that persuaded you to join?

What types of actions or activities did they hold?

Now that you have been a member for a while, how do you feel thinking back on the recruitment process?

Have you noticed any changes in your union since you joined? How do you feel about that?

How does your union help you?

Can you tell me a bit about your last contract negotiation campaign?

What do you think well about that campaign? What do you think could have gone better?

If you had an issue with your employer, how do you think your union would respond?

Do you have a real-life example of this?

Has there been a time you did not feel supported by your union?

What have you gained by being in the union (tangible labor wins but also personal development, relationships, confidence, leadership skills, etc)

What is your relationship like with the leadership of your union?

Who are they?

Do you feel like they represent you?

Do you participate in union elections? Why or why not? What is that process like?

What is your relationship like with your representatives?

Who do you communicate with most from the union?

What is your relationship like with other union members?

Is there a community among PCA's?

Who is not a part of this community?

What are some of the different racial or national or political groups in the union?

Are some more involved in the union than others?

Why do you think that is?

Have you gotten involved in any other political movements as a result of being in 1199?

Why? (Such as labor movement groups, activist groups, political candidates, or campaigns for other political issues.)

What do you think a perfect union would look like?

If you were the president of 1199, what are some specific changes you would make?

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