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# Changing to Organize: A National Assessment of Union Organizing Strategies

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# CHANGING TO ORGANIZE

## A NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF UNION STRATEGIES

**Kate Bronfenbrenner and Robert Hickey**

In 1995 “changing to organize” became the mantra of a newly invigorated labor movement. There was talk of building a national organizing fund, recruiting thousands of new young organizers, and organizing millions of workers in new occupations and industries. In the years that followed, the AFL-CIO and its affiliates engaged in an aggressive effort to increase their organizing capacity and success. Staff and financial resources were shifted into organizing; leaders, members, and central labor bodies were mobilized to support organizing campaigns; and hundreds of new organizers were recruited from college campuses and the rank and file.

By 1999, it appeared that these efforts and initiatives were paying off when the media reported a net gain of 265,000 in union membership—the first such gain in more than twenty years (AFL-CIO 2000). But this would not last. Even leaving aside the tragic and unusual events of September 11, 2001, it is clear that despite all the new initiatives and resources being devoted to organizing and all the talk of “changing to organize,” American unions have been standing still at best. The major victories have been highly concentrated in a few unions (SEIU, HERE, UNITE, CWA, AFSCME, and UAW) and industries (healthcare, building services, hotels, airlines, telecommunications, and higher education), while the majority of unions continue to experience organizing losses and declining membership (BNA PLUS 2001).

In this chapter we seek to answer the following questions: Why has it been so difficult for unions to turn the organizing efforts and initiatives of the last six years into any significant gains in union density? Why have a small number of unions been able to make major gains through organizing? And most importantly, which organizing strategies will be most effective in reversing the tide of the labor movement's organizing decline?

What our findings will show is that while the political, legal, and economic climate for organizing continues to deteriorate, and private sector employers continue to mount aggressive opposition to organizing efforts, some unions are winning. Our findings also show that the unions that are most successful at organizing run fundamentally different campaigns, in both quality and intensity, than those that are less successful, and that those differences hold true across a wide range of organizing environments, company characteristics, bargaining unit demographics, and employer campaign variables.

## **PREVIOUS ORGANIZING RESEARCH**

Industrial relations research has provided important insights regarding the influence of environmental factors, company characteristics, and employer behavior on the outcome of NLRB certification elections (Farber and Western 2001; Kochan, Katz and McKersie 1994; Freeman and Kleiner 1988; Maranto and Fiorito 1987; Rose and Chaison 1990). This research has also deepened our understanding of the factors shaping attitudes toward unions and the individual union voter decision making process (Jarley and Fiorito 1991; Freeman and Rogers 1999; Weikle, Wheeler and McClendon 1998). Another stream of research has focused on the impact that institutional characteristics of unions have on organizing success (Fiorito, Jarley and Delaney 1995; Hurd and Bunge 2002). Yet, with the exception of a handful of studies, most quantitative organizing research has failed to capture the critical role played by union strategies in organizing campaigns (Bronfenbrenner 1997a; Bronfenbrenner and Juravich 1998; and Peterson, Lee, and Finnegan 1992).

A small but growing body of qualitative case study research does explore the role of union strategies in the organizing process, exposing the interactions between environmental factors, employer behavior, and union strategies (Hoerr 1997; Waldinger and Erickson et al. 1998; Sciacchitano 1998; Juravich and Hilgert 1999; Delp and Quan 2002). By capturing the dynamic role of union strategies, this research also provides much needed insight into how the organizing process actually develops. However, this literature suffers from the limitations of case study designs that can capture only a small number of organizing campaigns, representing the most dramatic or interesting cases

(and almost all victories), and as such, are often unrepresentative of union organizing behavior.

Bronfenbrenner's survey of 261 private-sector NLRB certification elections in 1986 and 1987 was the first detailed study of the role of union tactics in organizing and first contract campaigns (Bronfenbrenner 1993; 1997a). The study showed that unions were more likely to win NLRB elections if they used rank-and-file intensive tactics such as person-to-person contact, active representative committees, member volunteer organizers, solidarity days, and building for the first contract before the election. This research also found that union tactics as a group had a more significant impact on election outcomes than other groups of variables that have been the traditional focus of industrial relations research, such as election environment, bargaining unit demographics, and employer characteristics (1993; 1997a). This was an important finding, because some researchers (such as William Dickens 1983) had argued that union tactics were entirely reactive—determined solely by management tactics. Subsequent quantitative studies of both private-sector NLRB elections and public-sector organizing campaigns have reinforced Bronfenbrenner's earlier research (Bronfenbrenner 1997c, 2000, and 2002; Bronfenbrenner and Juravich 1998; Juravich and Bronfenbrenner 1998).

However, in the more than ten years since this research was initiated, a great deal has changed in the economy, employer behavior, and the labor movement itself. Workers in almost every industry face more sophisticated employer opposition to organizing that is coupled with dramatic increases in corporate restructuring, foreign trade and investment, and shifts in work and production to other companies and other countries (Bronfenbrenner 2000, 2001). As Bronfenbrenner and Juravich found in their study of 1994 NLRB campaigns, traditional organizing approaches and the isolated use of innovative tactics have decreased in effectiveness (1998). Although some individual tactics, such as representative committees, workplace job actions, and media campaigns have a statistically significant positive impact on election outcomes, other tactics, such as house-calling the majority of the unit, holding solidarity days, staging rallies, or running a community campaign, did not have a significant impact. Yet, when these variables were combined into a single union tactics variable, adding one unit for each additional tactic, the probability of the union winning the election increased by as much as 9 percent for each additional tactic used. This suggests that the effectiveness of union tactics is strategically significant when unions combine tactics in a more comprehensive campaign.

In the years following the 1994 study, research by Bronfenbrenner and others has continued to show that comprehensive union tactics still hold the key to successful organizing efforts. Unions that use a broad range of union tactics as part of a multifaceted comprehensive strategy display greater organ-

izing success across all industries, bargaining unit demographics, and employer characteristics and behaviors (Bronfenbrenner 1997c, 2002; Sherman and Voss 2000).

Sherman and Voss (2000), in their study of local union organizing in Northern California, argue that the implementation of innovative tactics, such as rank-and-file intensive organizing and strategic targeting, requires far-reaching organizational transformation. Without such organizational transformation, unions may use some innovative tactics, but are unlikely to integrate a comprehensive union-building strategy. Indeed, Sherman and Voss found that the locals using a comprehensive union-building strategy are also the most innovative organizationally. This challenge to transform organizationally in order to fully implement innovative tactics suggests one reason why the dispersion of comprehensive union-building strategies has been so limited.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The data analyzed in this chapter were collected as part of a larger study commissioned in May 2000 by the United States Trade Deficit Review Commission to update Bronfenbrenner's previous research on the impact of capital mobility on union organizing and first contract campaigns in the U.S. private sector (Bronfenbrenner 1997b, 2000). Using surveys, personal interviews, documentary evidence, and electronic databases, we compiled detailed data on election background, organizing environment, bargaining unit demographics, company characteristics and tactics, labor board charges and determinations, union characteristics and tactics, and election and first contract outcomes for 412 NLRB certification election campaigns held in 1998 and 1999.

Our original random sample of 600 elections was derived from data compiled by the Bureau of National Affairs (BNA) of all NLRB single-union certification election campaigns in units with fifty or more eligible voters that took place in 1998–1999 (BNA PLUS 2000).<sup>1</sup> For each case in the sample we conducted in-depth surveys of the lead organizer for the campaign by mail and phone. We also searched computerized corporate, media, legal, and union databases, and reviewed Security and Exchange Commission filings, IRS 990 forms, and NLRB documents to collect data on company ownership, structure, operations, employment, financial condition, unionization, and employer characteristics and practices.

We were able to complete surveys for 412 of the 600 cases in the sample, for a response rate of 69 percent. Further, we were able to collect corporate ownership, structure, and financial information for 99 percent of the 412 cases. NLRB data were compiled from the FAST database for 65 percent of the

136 cases where NLRB charges were filed, while NLRB documents were collected for 46 percent. Summary statistics for the sample reveal that it is representative of the population of all NLRB certification elections in units over fifty that took place in 1998–1999 in terms of both industry and outcomes (BNA Plus 2000).

Descriptive statistics were calculated for a wide range of variables in order to capture the nature and extent of union and employer organizing activity and the broader context in which they operate. In addition, binary logistic regression was used to determine whether the number of comprehensive union-building strategies has a statistically significant impact on certification election outcome when controlling for the influence of election background, company characteristics, bargaining unit demographics, and employer opposition.

### **THEORETICAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES**

This research builds on the theoretical model developed by Bronfenbrenner (1993), and Bronfenbrenner and Juravich (1997) in previous organizing studies. According to this model, environmental factors plus union and employer characteristics and strategies combine to affect the election outcome both indirectly as they moderate the effect of other factors and directly as they influence worker propensity to vote for the union.<sup>2</sup> Under this model, union organizing tactics are an extremely important element of the organizing process. They play just as much—if not even a greater—role in determining election outcome than environmental factors and company characteristics and tactics.

This study tests two hypotheses. The first is that union success in certification elections depends on a comprehensive union-building strategy that incorporates the following ten elements, each of which is a cluster of key union tactics, that we argue are critical to union organizing success in the current environment: (1) adequate and appropriate staff and financial resources, (2) strategic targeting, (3) active and representative rank-and-file organizing committees, (4) active participation of member volunteer organizers, (5) person-to-person contact inside and outside the workplace, (6) benchmarks and assessments to monitor union support and set thresholds for moving ahead with the campaign, (7) issues which resonate in the workplace and in the community, (8) creative, escalating internal pressure tactics involving members in the workplace, (9) creative, escalating external pressure tactics involving members outside the workplace, locally, nationally, and/or internationally, (10) building for the first contract during the organizing campaign.<sup>3</sup>

This model expands upon Bronfenbrenner and Juravich's 1998 study by arguing that in the current organizing environment it is not enough to use as many union tactics as possible; rather, certain strategic elements, each comprised of clusters of key tactics, are essential ingredients for union organizing success. These strategic elements, which we will call comprehensive organizing tactics, may each be associated with higher win rates and/or have statistically significant positive effects on election outcomes. However, given the hostile climate in which unions must operate, we hypothesize that the use of these individual comprehensive organizing tactics will not be enough. Instead, union gains will depend on a multifaceted campaign utilizing as many of the ten comprehensive organizing tactics as possible. We hypothesize that the likelihood a union will win an election significantly increases for each additional comprehensive organizing tactic used by the union.

Our second hypothesis is that differences in the quality and intensity of the campaigns between unions are a better predictor of differences in election outcomes for those unions than employer opposition, bargaining unit demographics, or company or industry characteristics. We do not suggest that industry, corporate structure, unit type, worker demographics, or employer opposition do not matter. As our previous research has shown, all of these factors have a very powerful and significant impact on union win rates (Bronfenbrenner 1997a, 1997c, 2001; Bronfenbrenner and Juravich 1998). Indeed, it is more difficult to organize mobile industries, such as metal production and fabrication, garment and textile, food processing, and call centers, in the current global trade and investment climate. It is also more difficult to organize subsidiaries of large multinational corporations that have the resources to launch a full-scale counterattack against the union campaign. Furthermore, higher paid, primarily white male, blue collar, white collar, and professional and technical occupations are more difficult to organize in the current climate, because they tend to be more invested in the internal labor markets and more affected by threats of job loss or blacklisting that are typical in employer campaigns today (Bronfenbrenner 1997a; 2001). Although industry, unit type, worker demographics, and employer characteristics and tactics matter, union tactics matter more, because unions have so far to go before they live up to their full potential. While the majority of unions today run very weak campaigns with no underlying strategy, the majority of employers run very strategic campaigns, taking full advantage of the range of effective anti-union tactics available to them, and adapting and tailoring those tactics, depending on the organizing environment and the union's campaign.

If all unions were running aggressive comprehensive campaigns, and win rates continued to vary across the organizing environments in which individual unions operate, then these differences in organizing environment would play the primary role in explaining the variance in organizing success



between unions. Instead, we hypothesize that the more successful unions owe their organizing victories to the nature, quality, intensity, and comprehensiveness of their campaigns, across a diversity of industries, companies, bargaining units, and employer campaigns. Similarly, unions with lower win rates lose more elections because of the lack of intensity, quality, and comprehensiveness of the campaigns they run, rather than the organizing environment in which they operate.

We first test the hypotheses by comparing means, frequencies, and win rates for each of the comprehensive organizing tactics that make up our model, both individually and as part of the additive comprehensive organizing tactics variable. This will allow us to see whether, in accordance with our first hypothesis, win rates improve as the number of comprehensive organizing tactics increases. We will also test different combinations of comprehensive organizing tactics in order to ensure that all of the elements of our model contribute to union organizing success when added together with the other elements of the model. Next, we will compare means, frequencies, and win rates for company characteristics, bargaining unit demographics, and employer behavior in campaigns where unions used a comprehensive union-building strategy, including more than five of the comprehensive organizing tactics listed above, as compared to campaigns where unions used five or fewer comprehensive organizing tactics.<sup>4</sup> This will allow us to see both the nature of the environment in which unions are organizing today and whether, in accordance with our second hypothesis, union win rates increase across different industry, company, unit, and employer characteristics when the union runs more comprehensive campaigns.

We then will use binary logistic regression to test the hypothesis that the odds of winning the election will significantly increase for each additional comprehensive organizing tactic used, when we control for election background, employer characteristics, bargaining unit demographics, and employer tactics. We will also standardize the logistic regression coefficient in order to further test the relative effects of each of the statistically significant variables. We will use two models. Model A will include each of the individual elements of the comprehensive strategy, while model B will substitute a number of union tactics adding one point for each additional comprehensive tactic used. As described in appendix 1.2, the following control variables (with their predicted impact) will be included in both models: number of eligible voters (+/-);<sup>5</sup> manufacturing sector (-); subsidiary of a larger parent company (-); ownership change before the election (+);<sup>6</sup> good to excellent financial condition (+);<sup>7</sup> board determined unit (-); other organized units (+); professional, technical, or white collar unit (-); unit at least 60 percent women (+); unit at least 60 percent workers of color (+);<sup>8</sup> and number of employer tactics used (-).

We will further test the second hypothesis by examining frequencies, means, and win rates across unions. This will allow us to evaluate the relative intensity and quality of union campaigns for each union and assess which unions are most likely to use each of the comprehensive organizing tactics in our model. It will also allow us to compare win rates across unions, depending on the number of comprehensive organizing tactics used, to see whether differences in union win rates are associated with the number of comprehensive organizing tactics they use.

### **ELEMENTS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE UNION-BUILDING STRATEGY**

According to our hypotheses, each of the ten tactical clusters, or comprehensive organizing tactics in our model enhances the union's organizing power in a unique way. Unions that allocate adequate and appropriate staff and financial resources,<sup>9</sup> for example, make an institutional commitment to be more intensely engaged in the campaign, recruit staff who are demographically representative of the workers they organize, and run more campaigns. Unions that engage in strategic targeting have approached organizing as a means to build bargaining power within certain sectors and industries, in contrast to the non-strategic "hot shop" organizing approach. Perhaps the single most important component of a comprehensive campaign is an active representative committee that gives bargaining unit members ownership of the campaign and allows the workers to start acting like a union inside the workplace, building trust and confidence among the workforce and counteracting the most negative aspects of the employer campaign.

The use of member volunteers to assist in organizing campaigns reflects a combination of greater institutional integration of current and potential new members and an emphasis on a worker-to-worker approach to organizing. Person-to-person contacts made inside and outside the workplace enhance the union's organizing power by providing the intensive one-on-one contacts necessary to build and sustain worker commitment to unionization both at home and in the increasingly hostile election environment at work. The combination of benchmarks and assessments allows unions to evaluate worker support for the union at different stages of the campaign in order to better adjust their strategy to the unit they are trying to organize and to set thresholds to determine when, and whether, they are ready to move on to the next stage of the campaign.

A focus on issues that resonate with the workers and the community, such as respect, dignity, fairness, service quality, and union power and voice, is essential both to build worker commitment to withstand the employer campaign and to gain community support. Internal pressure tactics allow the

union to start acting like a union before the election takes place, building solidarity and commitment among the workers being organized and restraining employer opposition. External pressure tactics, which exert leverage on the employer both in the local community and in their national or international operations, are essential to organizing in the increasingly global corporate environment. Finally, building for the first contract before the election helps build confidence in the workers being organized, showing them what the union is all about and signaling to the employer that the union is there for the long haul.

### **RESULTS: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

Table 1.1 provides summary statistics on the election background and outcome for the 412 elections in our sample. In an improvement over past years, these data suggest that today's unions are beginning to target and win in slightly larger units. With an election win rate of 44 percent, first contract rate of 66 percent, and average unit size of 192 eligible voters, the percentage of eligible voters who gain coverage under a contract has increased to 37 percent, compared to less than 25 percent in the early 1990s (Bronfenbrenner 2001, 2002).

Still, this progress must be put in perspective. At a time when union density in the private sector has dropped below 10 percent and total private sector employment continues to increase by an average of 2.1 million workers each year (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2002), a 9 percent increase in the unit size of elections won is simply not enough. If unions are going to reverse the tide of union density decline, they will need to target units of 5,000, or 10,000 or more; significantly increase the number of organizing campaigns; and dramatically increase the percentage of eligible voters who gain coverage under a union contract.

The overall drop between the percentage of the unit who signed cards before the petition was filed and the percentage of the unit who actually ended up voting for the unit remains quite high (17 percentage points). However, in winning units, where the percentage of card signers averages as high as 71 percent, the percent union vote is only five percentage points lower (66 percent).<sup>10</sup>

### **COMPREHENSIVE ORGANIZING TACTICS**

Table 1.1 also lists the frequencies and win rates associated with the ten comprehensive organizing tactics included in our strategic model. As predicted,

TABLE 1.1  
Comprehensive organizing tactics and election outcome

	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Proportion or mean of elections lost	Win rate*
<b>Election background</b>				
All elections	1.00	1.00	1.00	.45
1998	.49	.54	.51	.42
1999	.51	.46	.49	.47
Elections lost by union	.56	.00	1.00	.00
Elections won by union	.44	1.00	.00	1.00
<i>First contract achieved</i>	.30	.66	.02	—
Average number of eligible voters	192	201	185	—
Total number of eligible voters	79,167	36,706	42,461	—
<i>50–99 eligible voters</i>	.41	.39	.42	.43
<i>100–249 eligible voters</i>	.42	.43	.42	.45
<i>250–499 eligible voters</i>	.12	.12	.12	.45
<i>500 or more eligible voters</i>	.05	.06	.05	.50
Percent union vote	.49	.66	.35	—
Percent signed cards before petition filed	.66	.71	.62	—
<b>Comprehensive organizing tactics</b>				
Adequate and appropriate staff and financial resources	.14	.21	.09	.64 (.41)
Strategic targeting	.39	.45	.34	.51 (.40)
Active representative rank-and-file committee	.26	.33	.21	.56 (.41)
Effectively utilized member volunteer organizers	.27	.31	.23	.52 (.42)
Person-to-person contact inside and outside the workplace	.19	.23	.16	.53 (.43)
Benchmarks and assessments	.24	.35	.14	.66 (.38)
Issues which resonate in the workplace and community	.23	.25	.21	.49 (.43)
Escalating pressure tactics in the workplace	.37	.42	.33	.50 (.41)
Escalating pressure tactics outside the workplace	.17	.18	.16	.48 (.44)
Building for the first contract before the election	.35	.39	.31	.50 (.42)

TABLE 1.1—cont.

	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Proportion or mean of elections lost	Win rate*
<b>Number of comprehensive organizing tactics used</b>	2.60	3.11	2.19	—
<i>Zero</i>	.14	.10	.17	.32
<i>One</i>	.19	.12	.25	.28
<i>Two</i>	.21	.22	.20	.47
<i>Three</i>	.16	.15	.16	.43
<i>Four</i>	.15	.18	.13	.53
<i>Five</i>	.06	.08	.04	.63
<i>Six</i>	.06	.09	.04	.62
<i>Seven</i>	.02	.03	.01	.67
<i>Eight</i>	.01	.03	.00	1.00
Union used no comprehensive organizing tactics	.14	.10	.17	.32 (.47)
Union used one to five comprehensive organizing tactics	.77	.75	.77	.44 (.46)
Union used more than five comprehensive organizing tactics	.10	.15	.06	.68 (.42)

\* Number in parenthesis equals win rate when characteristic or action is not present.

each of the individual elements in the model are associated with win rates that average between 4 to 28 percentage points higher than in campaigns where they are not used. Most dramatic are the win rates associated with adequate and appropriate resources (64 percent when present, 41 percent when not present), active representative committee (56 percent when present, 41 percent when not present), and benchmarks and assessments (66 percent when present, 38 percent when not present). The smallest differences are associated with issues that resonate in the workplace and community (49 percent when present, 43 percent when not present) and external pressure tactics (48 percent when present, 44 percent when not present). This is to be expected, given that escalating external pressure tactics tend to be only used in campaigns with aggressive employer opposition, while the effectiveness of issues is highly dependent on the tactics unions use to get their message across.

Although organizer training programs and materials have been emphasizing the importance of these tactics for more than a decade (CWA 1985; Diamond 1992), these data suggest that even today only a small number of unions are actually using them, and those that do so tend to use them in isolation, not as part of a comprehensive multifaceted campaign. Most significantly, in light of labor's much touted effort at "changing to organize," there has been only a minimal increase in the use of these tactics, both individually and in combination since 1995.

As shown in table 1.1, only 14 percent of all the union campaigns in our sample devoted adequate and appropriate resources to the campaign, only 19 percent engaged in person-to-person contact inside and outside the workplace, and only 17 percent engaged in escalating pressure tactics outside the workplace. Fewer than 30 percent had active representative committees or effectively used member volunteer organizers, while fewer than 25 percent used benchmarks and assessments or focused on issues that resonate in the workplace and broader community. The highest percentages were found for strategic targeting (39 percent), escalating pressure tactics inside the workplace (37 percent), and building for the first contract before the election is held (35 percent).

All of the comprehensive organizing tactics in our model were much more likely to be used in winning campaigns than in losing ones. For example, only 9 percent of losing campaigns devoted adequate and appropriate resources, compared to 21 percent of winning campaigns, while 33 percent of winning campaigns had active representative committees, compared to only 21 percent of losing campaigns.

Consistent with earlier research (Bronfenbrenner and Juravich 1998), the results for number of comprehensive organizing tactics used suggest that the overwhelming majority of unions continue to pick and choose individual tactics, in most cases without any coherent plan or strategy, rather than pulling

them together into a more comprehensive, multifaceted strategy. Fourteen percent of all campaigns and 17 percent of losing campaigns used no comprehensive organizing tactics, while only 10 percent of all campaigns, and 6 percent of losing campaigns, used more than five tactics. This occurred despite the fact that, in accordance with our hypothesis, union win rates increase dramatically as the number of comprehensive organizing tactics increase, ranging from 32 percent for no comprehensive organizing tactics, to 44 percent for one to five tactics, to 68 percent for more than five tactics, and 100 percent for the 1 percent of the campaigns where unions used eight tactics.

We also tested a series of different combinations of six comprehensive organizing tactics from the ten elements of our model, making sure to include all of the different elements in an equal number of combinations so that, out of a total of 51 different combinations, each element was included in 31 combinations. As described in appendix 1.4, we found that for almost every different combination of six tactics, win rates increased for each additional comprehensive organizing tactic used.<sup>11</sup> The average win rates for all the combinations start at 32 percent, increasing to 38 percent for one tactic, 48 percent for two, 55 percent for three, 60 percent for four, 78 percent for five, and 93 percent for six tactics. Similarly, win rates range from a minimum 29 percent and a maximum of 38 percent for elections where no tactics in the combination were used, to a minimum of 67 percent and a maximum of 100 percent for six tactics. While some tactics, such as representative committee, have a greater impact on win rates than others, these data suggest that each of the ten comprehensive organizing tactics play a key role in improving union organizing success when used in combination with other comprehensive organizing tactics in the model. These findings also show that resources alone cannot be used as a proxy for comprehensive campaigns, because win rates increase as the number of comprehensive organizing tactics increase even for those combinations that do not include the resource variable.<sup>12</sup>

## **CORPORATE STRUCTURE AND COMPANY CHARACTERISTICS**

Table 1.2 provides an overview of the characteristics of companies involved in certification election campaigns. The findings suggest that unions organizing today are operating in a much more global, mobile, and rapidly changing corporate environment. The majority of union private-sector organizing campaigns continue to be concentrated in relatively small units in U.S.-owned-for-profit companies. However, in the last five years there have been significant shifts in the industrial sector and ownership structure of private sector companies where organizing is taking place, reflecting both changes in union tar-

TABLE 1.2

Company characteristics, union tactics, and election outcome

	All elections			Elections with more than five union tactics			Elections with five or fewer union tactics		
	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Win rate*	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Win rate*	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Win rate*
<b>Industrial sector</b>									
Manufacturing	.33	.22	.30	.20	.19	.63	.34	.22	.28
Service sector	.43	.55	.57	.70	.70	.68	.40	.52	.55
Other sectors**	.25	.24	.42	.10	.11	.75	.26	.26	.41
<b>Mobile industry</b>									
Mobile	.47	.36	.34	.23	.19	.56	.50	.39	.33
Immobile	.53	.64	.54	.78	.82	.71	.50	.61	.51
<b>Ownership structure</b>									
Subsidiary of larger parent	.84	.77	.41 (.63)	.83	.78	.64 (.86)	.84	.76	.38 (.61)
Non-profit	.23	.30	.58	.40	.33	.56	.21	.30	.58
For profit	.77	.70	.40	.60	.67	.75	.79	.70	.37
<i>Publicly held</i>	.40	.30	.33	.35	.33	.64	.41	.30	.31
<i>Privately held</i>	.37	.39	.48	.25	.33	.90	.48	.40	.45



TABLE 1.2—cont.

	All elections			Elections with more than five union tactics			Elections with five or fewer union tactics		
	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Win rate*	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Win rate*	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Win rate*
<b>Global structure</b>									
U.S.-based, all sites U.S.	.33	.34	.45 (.44)	.20	.26	.88 (.63)	.35	.35	.43 (.42)
U.S.-based multinational	.31	.28	.39 (.47)	.33	.37	.77 (.63)	.31	.26	.35 (.45)
Foreign-based multinational	.12	.08	.29 (.46)	.08	.04	.33 (.70)	.13	.09	.29 (.44)
Any foreign sites, operations, suppliers or customers	.55	.56	.45 (.44)	.70	.67	.64 (.75)	.54	.54	.42 (.42)
<b>Financial condition</b>									
Good to excellent	.65	.63	.43	.53	.56	.71	.68	.64	.41
Fair to poor	.35	.37	.47	.48	.44	.63	.34	.36	.44
<b>Unionization</b>									
Other organized units as same site	.15	.22	.65 (.41)	.35	.33	.64 (.69)	.13	.21	.65 (.38)
Other organized units at other locations	.60	.63	.47 (.41)	.73	.67	.62 (.82)	.59	.63	.45 (.38)
Unit is located in AFL-CIO union city	.12	.16	.59 (.42)	.28	.33	.82 (.62)	.11	.14	.53 (.41)
Previous attempt to organize this unit	.46	.44	.43 (.46)	.53	.56	.71 (.63)	.45	.42	.39 (.44)
<b>Pre-campaign company practices</b>									
Threat of full or partial plant closing	.21	.17	.35 (.47)	.33	.33	.69 (.67)	.20	.14	.29 (.45)
Employee involvement program before election	.31	.28	.40 (.47)	.30	.29	.58 (.71)	.32	.28	.38 (.44)
Ownership change in two years before the election	.18	.22	.55 (.42)	.25	.30	.80 (.63)	.18	.21	.51 (.40)

\* Number in parenthesis equals win rate when characteristic or action is not present.

\*\* Other sectors include communications, retail and wholesale trade, transportation, construction, utilities, and sanitation.

getting strategies and changes in corporate ownership and corporate structure worldwide (Bronfenbrenner 2001).

These data confirm that unions are shifting their focus from organizing targets in manufacturing sector industries with high levels of capital mobility, such as garment and textiles, electronics, and auto parts, toward less mobile service sector industries such as health care, social services, education, and laundries. UNITE, for example, which in past years concentrated most of its organizing in textile and apparel manufacturing, where plant closing threats during organizing campaigns are universal and the number of plants closed and jobs lost has increased steadily each year, has shifted its focus to laundries and distribution warehouses where the ability of employers to move work out of the country is much more restricted (Bronfenbrenner 2001).

As shown in table 1.2, this shift by UNITE and other unions is also reflected in the frequency of elections in mobile (47 percent) versus immobile (53 percent) industries. The overwhelming majority of campaigns using more than five comprehensive organizing tactics are concentrated in immobile industries (78 percent). This suggests that unions are failing to utilize comprehensive organizing tactics in the especially difficult environment of mobile industries where these tactics are needed most.

Compared to five years ago, companies targeted for organizing campaigns are 50 percent more likely to be subsidiaries of large multinational parent companies. They are also much more likely to have foreign sites and locations, foreign suppliers and customers, and less likely to have all sites and operations based in the U.S. Today only one-third of all campaigns occur in for-profit companies with all sites and operations based in the U.S., while 23 percent take place in non-profit companies such as hospitals, social service agencies, or educational institutions, more than double the number of campaigns in non-profits in the early to mid-1990s (Bronfenbrenner 2001). This reflects both the surge in organizing activity among unions who normally dominate the non-profit sector, such as SEIU, and a renewed effort among traditionally public sector unions such as AFT and AFSCME to follow public sector work as it is shifted to the private, non-profit sector. It also reflects a continuing trend among industrial and building trades unions to branch out into the non-profit sector in search of organizing gains they have found difficult to achieve in their own industries.

The attraction of non-profit companies is not surprising given that organizing win rates average as high as 58 percent, compared to a 40 percent win rate for for-profit companies. Among for-profit companies, win rates are highest for U.S.-based companies with all sites in the U.S. (45 percent), and lower for foreign-based multinationals (29 percent) and U.S.-based multinationals (39 percent). Win rates are also much higher (63 percent) in the 16 percent of the companies in the sample that are not a subsidiary of a larger

parent company, compared to a 41 percent win rate for companies that are subsidiaries.

As difficult as organizing in the for-profit sector has become, the findings described in table 1.2 suggest that, consistent with our second hypothesis, unions are much more likely to overcome the negative impact of capital mobility and corporate restructuring if they run a comprehensive campaign, incorporating more than five of the comprehensive organizing tactics in our model. While the overall win rate is only 30 percent in manufacturing and 34 percent in mobile industries, it increases to 63 percent in manufacturing and 56 percent in mobile industries when the union runs campaigns using more than five comprehensive organizing tactics. Similarly, the win rates increase twenty to thirty percentage points in campaigns in subsidiaries of larger parent companies, for-profit companies, and U.S.-based multinationals in which the union uses more than five comprehensive organizing tactics.

The exception is in foreign-based multinationals where we found just a minimal increase in win rates (from 29 percent to 33 percent) for campaigns where the union used more than five comprehensive organizing tactics. On closer inspection these findings are not surprising. Not only were foreign-based multinationals much more likely to run aggressive anti-union campaigns, but also the very fact that the company is foreign owned, with sites and operations in other countries, serves as an unspoken threat to workers that their employer might quite readily shift operations out of America if they were to try to organize. Neither are foreign-based companies as vulnerable to the community-based pressure tactics that have been found to be effective for U.S.-based companies. Instead, they may require a much more global and extensive campaign that takes the union's cause to the country and community where the company is headquartered. Yet not one of the campaigns in foreign-based multinationals in our sample ran a global campaign and only 10 percent ran any kind of external pressure campaign.

As would be expected, given that all of these elections occurred during the period of high corporate profitability in the late 1990s, 65 percent of companies in our sample were in good or excellent financial condition.<sup>13</sup> Overall, win rates were lower in companies in good to excellent condition than in other units, reflecting the fact that those employers have greater resources to improve conditions for workers and to devote to an aggressive anti-union campaign. However, consistent with our second hypothesis, this effect disappears entirely in units where the union used more than five comprehensive organizing tactics, bringing the win rate up in companies in good to excellent financial condition from 43 percent to 71 percent.

Table 1.2 also provides background information on the union environment in which these campaigns occurred. Only 15 percent of the units in our sample had other organized units at the same location as the unit being organized.

Consistent with previous research (Bronfenbrenner 1997a, 1997b), union win rates are much higher in such units (65 percent) both because of the greater access and information available to the union and because the unorganized workers have a ready-made example of what a union can accomplish in their workplace. A much larger percentage of companies in our sample (60 percent) had other organized units at other sites and locations of the company, either in the United States or abroad. Win rates were only slightly higher in these units. However, when the union used more than five comprehensive organizing tactics the win rate increased from 47 percent to 62 percent.

Twelve percent of the campaigns in our sample were located in one of the fourteen communities where the Central Labor Council (CLC) had met the criteria to be designated a Union City by the AFL-CIO.<sup>14</sup> Not surprisingly, given the higher level of successful organizing activity and labor-movement support for organizing activity in Union Cities, win rates go up to 59 percent in campaigns in Union Cities, and to a more impressive 82 percent in campaigns with more than five union tactics. This suggests that Union Cities create a climate that serves to support and reinforce the effectiveness of most of the tactics in our model—including more union resources available to organizing, more training opportunities for organizers, and more community and union support and leverage to embolden workers to vote for the union and discourage the employer from running an aggressive anti-union campaign.<sup>15</sup>

For nearly half of the campaigns in our sample (46 percent), there had been a previous (unsuccessful) attempt to organize the unit. Overall, win rates are slightly lower in these units (43 percent) than in units where there was no previous attempt to organize the unit (46 percent). However, win rates in campaigns with previous organizing attempts increase to 71 percent if the union ran a comprehensive campaign using more than five of the tactics in our model.

Table 1.2 also presents findings on company practices before the organizing campaign took place. Nearly a third of the units already had an employee involvement or team system in place before the election, while 21 percent had had threats of full or partial plant closure, and 18 percent reported changes in company ownership. Consistent with earlier research (Bronfenbrenner 1997b; 2000) both pre-campaign employee involvement programs and pre-campaign plant closing threats were associated with win rates 7 to 12 percentage points lower than in units where they were not present. However, when unions ran aggressive campaigns that used more than five comprehensive organizing tactics, win rates increased to 58 percent for pre-campaign employee involvement programs and 69 percent for pre-campaign plant closing threats, as compared to win rates of 38 percent (employee involvement) and 29 percent (plant closing threats) in campaigns where the union used five or fewer tactics.

In contrast, changes in company ownership were associated with win rates 13 percentage points higher than in units where there had been no change in ownership prior to the campaign. This may be because changes in company ownership are more likely to be associated with practices such as job combinations, wage and benefit reductions, and increases in the pace of work which, in combination, may motivate workers to initiate a union campaign and vote for a union (Bronfenbrenner 2000). The positive effect on election outcome is intensified where unions are able to capitalize on worker dissatisfaction by running a comprehensive campaign, increasing from 55 to 80 percent when unions use more than five comprehensive organizing tactics.

### **BARGAINING UNIT CHARACTERISTICS**

Table 1.3 summarizes the characteristics of the bargaining units in our sample, providing important information on the demographics of workers organizing under the NLRB. While today 44 percent of workers involved in NLRB election campaigns are in blue collar production, maintenance, and skilled trades units, 17 percent are in professional, technical, and white collar units, and 19 percent are in service and maintenance or non-professional units.

As expected, win rates are highest in service and maintenance and non-professional units (68 percent), while they average 33 percent in production and maintenance and skilled trades units, 44 percent in professional, technical, and white collar units. Consistent with our second hypothesis, these differences in win rates become much less significant in campaigns where the union used more than five comprehensive organizing tactics, increasing to 60 percent for production and maintenance and skilled trades units, 58 percent in professional, technical, and white collar units, 79 percent in service and maintenance and non-professional units, and 100 percent in drivers units.

While some research has suggested that more aggressive organizing tactics may be less effective among professional, technical, and white collar units than in production and maintenance or service and maintenance units (Cohen and Hurd 1998; Hurd and Bunge 2002; Hoerr 1997), the comprehensive organizing tactics in our model appear to be equally effective in improving win rates across a wide range of bargaining unit types, including clerical, technical, and professional workers. For example, although these studies have suggested that escalating pressure tactics in the workplace may be problematic for professional/technical and white collar workers, pressure tactics are associated with win rates 12 percent higher for professional, technical, and white-collar units relative to campaigns where they were not used. Of course, in any given campaign specific concerns and issues may apply, and tactics must be tailored and

TABLE 1.3

Unit characteristics, union tactics, and election outcome

	All elections			Elections with more than five comprehensive organizing tactics			Elections with five or fewer comprehensive organizing tactics		
	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Win rate*	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Win rate*	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Win rate*
<b>Unit type</b>									
Drivers	.10	.10	.46	.01	.07	1.00	.10	.10	.43
Production/maintenance/skilled trades	.44	.32	.33	.25	.22	.60	.47	.35	.31
Professional/technical/white collar	.17	.17	.44	.30	.26	.58	.16	.15	.41
Service/maintenance/non-professional	.19	.28	.68	.35	.41	.79	.17	.26	.65
Wall to wall	.10	.10	.49	.05	.04	.50	.10	.12	.49
Board determined unit different than petitioned for	.08	.06	.33 (.45)	.08	.07	.67 (.68)	.08	.06	.30 (.43)
<b>Average wage</b>	\$10.94	\$10.60	—	\$10.27	\$9.37	—	\$11.01	\$10.82	—
Average wage less than \$8/hour	.22	.26	.53 (.42)	.30	.33	.75 (.64)	.21	.24	.49 (.40)
Average wage \$8–\$11/hour	.46	.47	.47 (.45)	.41	.46	.75 (.61)	.47	.31	.44 (.43)
Average wage more than \$12/hour	.30	.26	.39 (.49)	.28	.19	.46 (.75)	.31	.27	.38 (.46)
<b>Gender</b>									
Percent women in unit	.46	.55	—	.69	.70	—	.44	.52	—
<i>No women in unit</i>	.10	.10	.45 (.45)	.05	.07	1.00 (.66)	.10	.10	.42 (.43)
<i>1–49 percent women in unit</i>	.40	.28	.31 (.54)	.10	.07	.50 (.69)	.43	.07	.31 (.51)
<i>50–74 percent women in unit</i>	.20	.20	.46 (.45)	.25	.22	.60 (.70)	.19	.21	.44 (.42)
<i>75 percent or more women</i>	.30	.42	.62 (.37)	.60	.63	.71 (.63)	.27	.38	.60 (.35)
<b>Race and ethnic background</b>									
Percent workers of color in unit	.39	.44	—	.56	.63	—	.37	.41	—
<i>No workers of color in unit</i>	.10	.09	.43 (.45)	.00	.00	—	.11	.11	.43 (.43)
<i>1–49 percent workers of color</i>	.51	.46	.40 (.50)	.40	.30	.50 (.79)	.53	.49	.40 (.46)
<i>50–74 percent workers of color</i>	.14	.14	.46 (.45)	.15	.19	.83 (.65)	.13	.13	.41 (.43)
<i>75 percent or more workers of color</i>	.25	.31	.56 (.41)	.45	.52	.78 (.59)	.23	.27	.51 (.39)
Percent women of color	.19	.26	—	.38	.47	—	.17	.23	—
<i>No women workers of color</i>	.19	.19	.43 (.45)	.05	.08	1.00 (.65)	.21	.21	.42 (.42)
<i>1–49 percent women workers of color</i>	.60	.51	.38 (.55)	.46	.31	.44 (.86)	.62	.55	.37 (.50)
<i>50–74 percent women workers of color</i>	.10	.14	.60 (.43)	.23	.23	.67 (.67)	.09	.12	.58 (.41)
<i>75 percent or more women workers of color</i>	.07	.13	.82 (.42)	.21	.31	1.00 (.58)	.06	.10	.75 (.40)
Percent undocumented workers	.02	.02	—	.04	.04	—	.02	.01	—
Percent recent immigrants	.05	.05	—	.12	.14	—	.04	.04	—
Percent non-English speaking	.15	.16	—	.27	.31	—	.14	.14	—

\* Number in parenthesis equals win rate when characteristic or action is not present.

adapted accordingly. However, our data suggest that, when we look generally across the diversity of workers and occupations who make up the professional/technical workforce—from nurses, to engineers, to basketball players—win rates increase, rather than decrease, when unions run more comprehensive campaigns.

Our findings in table 1.3 also confirm that organizing is increasingly concentrated in units with a majority of women and people of color. Only 10 percent of the units are all male or all white, while women make up the majority in half the units and workers of color make up the majority in 39 percent of the units.

Consistent with earlier research, win rates increase substantially as the proportion of women and people of color increases. The highest win rates are 82 percent for units with 75 percent or more women workers of color, while win rates are lowest in units where women (31 percent) or workers of color (40 percent) constituted a minority of the unit. Once again, win rates increase dramatically across race and gender groupings when the union uses more than five comprehensive organizing tactics in the campaign, suggesting that our model is equally appropriate across a diversity of demographic groups.

The higher win rates in these units mean that not only are women and workers of color (in particular, women of color) participating in union elections in ever increasing numbers, but because win rates are so much higher in these units, the vast majority of new workers coming into the labor movement today are women and people of color.

Win rates are also higher (53 percent) in the 22 percent of the units where the average wage was less than \$8.00 per hour, while win rates are lowest (39 percent) in units with an average wage of more than \$12.00 an hour. These higher wage units tend to include more white, male, blue collar, white collar, and professional and technical employees, all groups less predisposed to unions than their non-white, female counterparts in non-professional, largely service, occupations (Bronfenbrenner 1993; Freeman and Rogers 1999). As mentioned earlier, these highly paid workers are also more vulnerable to employer threats of job loss and blacklisting. While win rates increase from 39 to 46 percent, in the 24 percent of the campaigns in these units where the union uses more than five comprehensive union tactics, they might increase even further if more of the campaigns in these units utilized a more comprehensive organizing strategy.

Like the data on company characteristics, the descriptive statistics for unit characteristics support our hypothesis that the use of a comprehensive organizing strategy can greatly reduce differences in win rates across unit type, average wage, gender, race, and ethnic background.

## EMPLOYER BEHAVIOR

As described in table 1.4, consistent with earlier research, the overwhelming majority of employers in our sample aggressively opposed the union's organizing efforts through a combination of threats, discharges, promises of improvements, unscheduled unilateral changes in wages and benefits, bribes, and surveillance. Individually and in combination, these tactics are extremely effective in reducing union election win rates. Fifty-two percent of all employers in our sample and 68 percent of those in mobile industries made threats of full or partial plant closure during the organizing drive. Approximately one in every four employers (26 percent) discharged workers for union activity, while 48 percent made promises of improvement, 20 percent gave unscheduled wage increases, and 17 percent made unilateral changes in benefits and working conditions. Sixty-seven percent of the employers held supervisor one-on-ones with employees at least weekly, 34 percent gave bribes or special favors to those who opposed the union, 31 percent assisted the anti-union committee, and 10 percent used electronic surveillance of union activists during the organizing campaign. Employers threatened to refer undocumented workers to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in 7 percent of all campaigns and in 52 percent of cases where undocumented workers were present.

Only 27 percent of the employers in our sample ran weak campaigns using fewer than five tactics. Forty-eight percent of the employers ran moderately aggressive anti-union campaigns using five to nine tactics, and 26 percent of the employers ran extremely aggressive campaigns using at least ten tactics. Employers ran no campaign whatsoever against the union in only 3 percent of the cases in our sample, 93 percent of which were won by the union.

Although most of the findings regarding employer behavior are consistent with earlier research, the percentages for some of the most egregious employer actions, such as discharges for union activity, have slightly declined (Bronfenbrenner 2001). However, rather than suggesting any reduction in employer opposition to union organizing efforts, these findings on employer behavior are primarily a function of the shift in union organizing activity toward non-profit companies. Although some non-profit employers, particularly hospitals and universities, have long been known for their opposition to unions and the substantial resources they spend on anti-union campaigns, the nature of their anti-union campaigns are quite different than those in for-profit companies, because non-profits are much more accountable and accessible to the clients they serve. Thus, while non-profit employers are more likely to use extensive unit challenges and public media campaigns, they are less likely to engage in more clearly identifiable illegal tactics such as discharges for union activity, bribes, or illegal unilateral changes in wages than their



**TABLE 1.4**  
Employer campaign, union tactics, and election outcome

	All elections			Elections with more than five comprehensive organizing tactics			Elections with five or fewer comprehensive organizing tactics		
	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of election won	Win rate*	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Win rate*	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Win rate*
Hired management consultant	.76	.69	.41 (.55)	.80	.82	.69 (.63)	.75	.67	.38 (.55)
Held more than five captive audience meetings	.46	.38	.37 (.51)	.53	.48	.62 (.74)	.46	.37	.34 (.49)
Mailed more than five letters	.17	.14	.38 (.46)	.30	.22	.50 (.75)	.15	.13	.36 (.43)
Distributed more than five anti-union leaflets	.42	.35	.37 (.50)	.65	.63	.65 (.71)	.40	.30	.32 (.48)
Held supervisor one-on-ones at least weekly	.67	.60	.40 (.54)	.85	.78	.62 (1.00)	.65	.56	.37 (.52)
Established employee involvement program	.17	.13	.33 (.47)	.18	.11	.43 (.73)	.17	.13	.32 (.44)
Made positive personnel changes	.34	.30	.39 (.47)	.50	.48	.65 (.70)	.32	.27	.35 (.45)
Made promises of improvement	.48	.37	.35 (.54)	.63	.59	.64 (.73)	.46	.33	.30 (.52)
Granted unscheduled raises	.20	.18	.40 (.46)	.35	.33	.64 (.69)	.18	.15	.34 (.44)
Made unilateral changes	.17	.16	.41 (.45)	.28	.26	.64 (.69)	.16	.14	.37 (.43)
Discharged union activists	.26	.24	.41 (.46)	.35	.30	.57 (.73)	.25	.22	.39 (.43)
Used bribes and special favors	.34	.29	.38 (.48)	.43	.48	.77 (.61)	.33	.26	.33 (.46)
Used electronic surveillance	.10	.10	.44 (.45)	.28	.26	.64 (.69)	.08	.07	.40 (.42)
Held company social events	.21	.18	.38 (.46)	.38	.37	.67 (.68)	.19	.14	.31 (.44)
Assisted anti-union committee	.31	.25	.36 (.48)	.38	.30	.53 (.76)	.30	.24	.34 (.45)
Used paid or free media	.07	.08	.56 (.44)	.20	.22	.75 (.66)	.05	.06	.47 (.42)
Laid off or contracted out workers in unit	.08	.14	.58 (.43)	.13	.15	.80 (.66)	.10	.14	.55 (.40)
Threatened to report workers to the INS	.07	.07	.43 (.45)	.13	.07	.40 (.71)	.07	.07	.44 (.42)
Involved community leaders/politicians	.06	.06	.42 (.45)	.13	.15	.80 (.66)	.05	.04	.32 (.43)
Filed ULP charges against the union	.02	.02	.50 (.44)	.05	.04	.50 (.68)	.02	.02	.50 (.42)
Threatened to close the plant	.52	.44	.38 (.51)	.63	.63	.68 (.67)	.50	.41	.34 (.50)
Number of tactics used by employer	7.21	6.27	—	10.18	9.59	—	6.88	5.70	—
Employer used 0–4 tactics	.27	.38	.64	.13	.11	.60	.28	.43	.64
Employer used 5–9 tactics	.48	.42	.39	.35	.48	.93	.49	.41	.35
Employer used at least 10 tactics	.26	.20	.34	.53	.41	.52	.23	.16	.29

\* Number in parenthesis equals win rate when characteristic or action is not present.

counterparts in the for-profit sector. At the same time, for-profit employers have maintained their aggressive opposition to union organizing efforts. For example, employers discharged workers for union activity in only 14 percent of campaigns in non-profits compared to a 29 percent discharge rate in campaigns in for-profit companies. Nine percent of employers in non-profits used no anti-union tactics at all compared to less than 1 percent of employers in for-profit companies. Similarly, only 15 percent of non-profits used more than ten anti-union tactics compared to 21 percent of for-profit companies.

Overall, the win rate drops to 39 percent for units where employers used five to nine tactics and 34 percent where they used more than ten, compared to 64 percent where they used fewer than five tactics. At a time when unions are running more aggressive and sophisticated campaigns, and workers' trust in corporations is declining, in some units the aggressive anti-union behavior of employers may reach a point of diminishing returns. This is particularly evident in elections where the union uses more than five comprehensive organizing tactics. Win rates for most of the individual employer tactic variables increase between 10 and 40 percent when unions used more than five comprehensive organizing tactics, while unions won 100 percent of the campaigns with no employer opposition, 60 percent of the campaigns with weak employer opposition, 93 percent with moderate opposition, and 52 percent of the campaigns with aggressive employer opposition. This occurs despite the fact that employers are much more likely to run aggressive campaigns when they think the union is going to win, than in campaigns where the union campaign is weak, and there is little chance of union victory.

These data confirm that while the majority of employers run aggressive campaigns taking full strategic advantage of a broad range of anti-union tactics, the majority of unions continue to run fairly weak campaigns, even when faced with aggressive employer opposition. Indeed, there were only two campaigns in our sample, where, when faced with aggressive employer opposition, unions used more than six comprehensive organizing tactics. Both of those elections were won. Thus, consistent with our hypotheses, although employer anti-union campaigns can and often do have a devastating impact on union organizing success, unions can increase their win rates, even in the face of the most aggressive employer opposition, if they run comprehensive campaigns.<sup>16</sup>

## **UNIONS AND COMPREHENSIVE ORGANIZING STRATEGIES**

According to our hypotheses, unions that run comprehensive organizing campaigns, combining a large number of the tactics in our model, will achieve higher wins across a wide range of employer tactics and industry, company,

and unit characteristics. Therefore, we would expect to see higher win rates for those unions that consistently employ comprehensive campaigns, relative to those unions that use only a few tactics in isolation.

Nevertheless, there are certain kinds of workers, in certain kinds of companies and industries, faced with different levels of employer opposition, who can be especially difficult to organize. Whether CWA in high tech and telecommunications, the UAW in auto-transplants and auto-parts, the USWA in metal production and fabrication, UNITE in garment and textile, IATSE in cable television, the IBT in national trucking companies, or the UFCW in food processing, some unions face much greater challenges when organizing in their primary jurisdictions, because they are confronted with more mobile, more global, and more powerful and hence effective employer opposition, and/or a workforce less predisposed to unionization (Bronfenbrenner 2001). Yet, our second hypothesis is that unions can improve their organizing success, even in the toughest industries, companies, and bargaining units, when they use a comprehensive union-building strategy.

Table 1.5 provides summary statistics for the most active unions organizing under the NLRB. The unions that dominate NLRB election activity continue to be IBT, SEIU, USWA, UAW, and UFCW. Among these unions, there are substantial differences in win rates.<sup>17</sup> Yet, as predicted, these differences fade, when unions use more than five comprehensive organizing tactics. For almost all the unions in our sample, across a diversity of industries and bargaining unit characteristics the win rates average above 67 percent or higher when the union uses more than five comprehensive tactics.<sup>18</sup>

What is perhaps most striking about these results is how few unions are actually running comprehensive campaigns. As shown in table 1.6, the unions tend to fall into three groups. The first group, which includes HERE, SEIU, and UNITE, averages four or more tactics in all of their elections. The second group, which includes AFSCME, CWA/IUE, UBC, LIUNA, UAW, and UFCW, averages three tactics per campaign. The third group, which includes IAM, IBEW, IBT, IUOE, PACE, and USWA, averages two or fewer tactics in each campaign. It is striking that even the most successful unions in our sample are still making only limited use of the comprehensive campaign model, while the majority of U.S. unions continue to run fairly weak, ineffectual campaigns.

Only the unions in the first group consistently run organizing campaigns that combine at least four strategic tactics. The overall win rate for this group is 63 percent, the highest for any group, increasing to 74 percent when they use more than five comprehensive tactics. These unions, SEIU, HERE, and UNITE have gained national reputations for effective organizing. And yet only 30 percent of their campaigns average more than five comprehensive organizing tactics. This suggests that these unions may be capable of winning

TABLE 1.5

Union, union tactics, and election outcome

Union	All elections			Elections with more than five union tactics			Elections with five or fewer union tactics		
	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Win rate	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Win rate	Proportion or mean of elections	Proportion or mean of elections won	Win rate
AFSCME	.04	.06	.59	.05	.04	.50	.04	.06	.60
CWA/IUE	.04	.02	.20	.03	.00	.00	.04	.02	.21
HERE	.02	.03	.50	.10	.11	.75	.02	.01	.33
IAM	.02	.02	.33	.03	.00	.00	.02	.02	.38
IBEW	.02	.03	.56	.00	—	—	.02	.03	.56
IBT	.20	.17	.37	.03	.04	1.00	.22	.19	.37
IUOE	.02	.02	.44	.00	—	—	.02	.03	.44
LIUNA	.02	.02	.30	.00	—	—	.03	.02	.30
PACE	.03	.02	.31	.00	—	—	.04	.03	.31
SEIU	.14	.20	.63	.40	.41	.69	.11	.16	.61
UAW	.06	.09	.64	.00	—	—	.07	.10	.64
UBC	.02	.01	.25	0	—	—	.02	.01	.25
UFCW	.07	.06	.33	.10	.04	.25	.07	.06	.35
UNITE	.02	.03	.67	.08	.11	1.00	.02	.02	.50
USWA	.09	.09	.43	.08	.11	1.00	.09	.08	.38
Other AFL-CIO building trades unions*	.03	.01	.18	.00	—	—	.03	.01	.18
Other AFL-CIO industrial unions*	.05	.02	.20	.03	.00	.00	.05	.03	.21
Other AFL-CIO service sector unions*	.02	.03	.56	.00	—	—	.02	.03	.56
Other AFL-CIO transportation unions*	.02	.03	.60	.03	.04	1.00	.02	.03	.56
Local and national independent unions*	.07	.08	.48	.08	.11	1.00	.07	.07	.42
<b>Unions that average four or more comprehensive organizing tactics</b>	.18	.26	.63	.58	.63	.74	.14	.19	.57
<b>Unions that average three comprehensive organizing tactics</b>	.36	.35	.44	.28	.22	.55	.37	.37	.43
<b>Unions that average two or fewer comprehensive organizing tactics</b>	.46	.39	.38	.15	.15	.67	.49	.44	.37

\* Other AFL-CIO transportation unions include ATU, ILWU, MEBA, SIUNA, and TWU. Other AFL-CIO building trades unions include BTCT, OPCM, and PPF. Other AFL-CIO service sector unions include AFT, IATSE, and OPEIU. Other AFL-CIO industrial unions include AFGW, BBF, BCTWU, GCIU, GMMPAW, NPW, SMW, and UMW. The national independent unions include ANA, IWW, NEA, NBPA, UE, UGSOA, and UTU. The remaining independent unions are designated by the NLRB as local independents.

TABLE 1.6

Comprehensive organizing tactics by union

Unions	Number of tactics	Percent of campaigns									
		Resources	Targeting	Rank & file committee	Member volunteers	1-on-1 contact	Benchmarks	Issues	Workplace pressure tactics	External pressure tactics	Building for first contract
Unions that average four or more comprehensive organizing tactics	4.07	.34	.71	.37	.30	.32	.41	.34	.46	.39	.42
UNITE	4.22	.44	.44	.56	.33	.44	.67	.22	.33	.33	.44
HERE	4.20	.90	.60	.10	.20	.50	.40	.00	.40	.40	.70
SEIU	4.02	.23	.77	.39	.32	.26	.37	.42	.49	.40	.37
Unions that average three comprehensive organizing tactics	2.93	.18	.44	.27	.27	.23	.27	.28	.44	.17	.40
AFSCME	3.24	.35	.53	.47	.29	.24	.29	.35	.41	.05	.24
Other AFL-CIO transportation unions*	3.20	.20	.40	.30	.20	.10	.50	.30	.40	.20	.60
LIUNA	3.10	.10	.50	.20	.10	.40	.20	.30	.40	.20	.70
UFCW	3.10	.30	.40	.27	.13	.43	.37	.17	.33	.13	.57
Other AFL-CIO building trades unions*	3.00	.00	.55	.09	.46	.27	.18	.09	.36	.09	.64
UAW	2.92	.08	.44	.32	.44	.08	.24	.32	.76	.16	.08
CWA/IUE	2.73	.07	.60	.13	.27	.20	.20	.20	.33	.40	.33
UBC	2.63	.00	.63	.00	.38	.25	.25	.13	.25	.13	.63
Local and national independent unions*	2.62	.17	.28	.24	.28	.14	.17	.41	.38	.17	.38

TABLE 1.6—cont.

Unions	Number of tactics	Percent of campaigns									
		Resources	Targeting	Rank & file committee	Member volunteers	1-on-1 contact	Benchmarks	Issues	Workplace pressure tactics	External pressure tactics	Building for first contract
Unions that average two or fewer comprehensive organizing tactics	1.75	.04	.22	.22	.25	.11	.14	.14	.28	.07	.27
USWA	2.38	.03	.32	.43	.38	.16	.19	.22	.38	.08	.19
Other AFL-CIO service sector unions*	2.33	.00	.44	.11	.11	.22	.22	.22	.22	.22	.57
PACE	2.08	.08	.61	.46	.00	.15	.08	.15	.31	.08	.15
Other AFL-CIO industrial unions*	1.95	.05	.25	.20	.30	.10	.25	.20	.20	.00	.40
IAM	1.56	.11	.11	.22	.11	.22	.11	.00	.33	.11	.22
IBT	1.41	.04	.13	.12	.27	.05	.12	.12	.24	.06	.27
IBEW	1.33	.00	.11	.11	.33	.22	.00	.00	.11	.11	.33
IUOE	1.33	.00	.00	.11	.00	.11	.11	.11	.56	.11	.22
All unions combined	2.60	1.4	3.9	.26	.27	.19	.24	.23	.37	.17	.35

\* Other AFL-CIO transportation unions include ATU, ILWU, MEBA, SIUNA, and TWU. Other AFL-CIO building trades unions include BTCT, OPCM, and PPF. Other AFL-CIO service sector unions include AFT, IATSE, and OPEIU. Other AFL-CIO industrial unions include AFGW, BBF, BCTWU, GCIU, GMMPAW, NPW, SMW, and UMW. The national independent unions include ANA, IWW, NEA, NBPA, UE, UGSOA, and UTU. The remaining independent unions are designated by the NLRB as local independents, some of them based solely in the target company.

even more elections, if they used comprehensive organizing tactics more consistently.

The second group of unions, on average, uses fewer tactics and is less likely to combine them into a comprehensive campaign. Unions in this group average three comprehensive tactics per campaign, and have an overall win rate of 44 percent. Only 8 percent of campaigns run by unions in this middle group used more than five comprehensive organizing tactics. However, the win rate for those campaigns was 55 percent.

The third group of unions uses comprehensive campaigns even more seldom. Unions in this group average two or fewer comprehensive organizing tactics per campaign, and, not surprisingly, have the lowest average win rate (38 percent) for all three groups. Half of the unions in this group, including IBEW, IUOE, PACE, and other AFL-CIO service unions, did not conduct *any* comprehensive campaigns. Again, the win rate is much higher (67 percent), for the 3 percent of elections involving this third group in which unions used more than five comprehensive organizing tactics.

These data highlight three important trends. First, higher win rates are associated with campaigns that use five or more comprehensive organizing tactics for all three groups of unions. Second, higher win rates are associated with unions that consistently combine comprehensive organizing tactics in their campaigns. Third, there is a real mix of industries, companies, and unit types among the three union groups, yet comprehensive organizing tactics are consistently effective across the different union groupings.

It is important to note that for several of the unions in our sample—most notably CWA, HERE, and some of the building-trades unions—NLRB certification elections increasingly represent only a small portion of their recent private sector organizing efforts. Instead, their focus has been on bargaining to organize, voluntary recognition, and card-check neutrality. As the growing body of case studies of non-Board campaigns have shown, the utilization of a comprehensive union building campaign incorporating most, if not all, of the elements of our model has been critical to the success of many of the most significant non-Board victories (Juravich and Hilgert 1999; Waldinger and Erickson et al. 1998; Kieffer and Ness 1999; Rechenbach and Cohen 2000). Our organizer interviews suggest that, for these unions, NLRB campaigns are secondary and thus tend to be more locally based and that they involve smaller units with less strategic and less comprehensive campaigns. Thus, if we were able to include non-NLRB campaigns in our sample, unions such as CWA, HERE, and IBEW would likely display a higher average use of comprehensive organizing tactics.

Table 1.6 provides more detailed data confirming that the most successful unions are those that consistently combine comprehensive organizing tactics. The unions in the first group average at least 30 percent for all the tactics in

the model and range as high as 41 percent (benchmarks), 42 percent (building for the first contract), 46 percent (workplace pressure tactics), and, most notably, 71 percent (targeting). The high targeting percentage for this group is particularly revealing, because it suggests that these are the unions that are most committed to a strategic organizing plan (organizing within their primary jurisdiction) and fully knowledgeable about their individual company's ownership structure, operations, finances, and vulnerabilities. At the same time, these data also reveal that, with the exception of targeting, even the most successful unions are using these tactics in fewer than half of their campaigns. Not only could an increase in frequency (and quality) of the use of all these tactics further increase win rates for these unions, but it also might facilitate getting more campaigns off the ground and winning them in larger units.

The results for the second group are much more uneven, ranging from 17 percent for external pressure tactics, and 18 percent for resources, to 44 percent for workplace pressure tactics and targeting. Overall, this group averaged lower than 30 percent for most of the tactics in the model. It is particularly striking that this second group rates low on resources (17 percent), one-on-one contact (23 percent), representative committee (27 percent), and benchmarks and assessments (27 percent), since these are fundamental elements of a comprehensive campaign. If unions do not devote adequate or appropriate resources, fail to build rank-and-file leadership among the workers they are trying to organize, and fail to reach the majority of the members through person-to-person contact in the workplace and the community, their campaigns may never get off the ground far enough to correctly identify issues, build for the first contract, or effectively mobilize workers for internal or external pressure tactics. And, if they do not use benchmarks and assessments, they have no way of evaluating the effectiveness of their strategy, or when and whether to move on to the next phase of the campaign. The findings suggest that while these unions have been taking new initiatives and organizing more aggressively than in the past, they continue to use tactics in isolation, without the interconnected, multifaceted union-building strategy required in the current organizing environment.

The third and largest group of unions average lower than 15 percent for half the tactics in the model (resources, one-on-one contact, benchmarks, issues, and external pressure tactics) and lower than 27 percent for all the remaining tactics. This suggests that nearly half of the unions involved in NLRB certification elections run campaigns not unlike campaigns in the late 1980s when we first started tracking the nature and success of union organizing efforts (Bronfenbrenner 1993, 1997). The findings are less surprising given that, on average, unions in this third group had adequate and appropriate resources in only 4 percent of their campaigns. Without such



resources, it is difficult to pull together many of the other elements of the model.

For each individual tactic, these trends are consistent across the three groups, providing insight into the nature of current organizing efforts. For example, the frequency of targeting and external pressure tactics varies widely among the three groups, while the use of member volunteers shows much less variation. This suggests that while more sophisticated tactics, such as targeting and external pressure tactics, have yet to be embraced by many unions, even the least successful are comfortable with more traditional tactics, such as having members assist with organizing campaigns. Yet, even the most successful unions still do not make consistent use of such key tactics as adequate and appropriate resources, active representative committees, person-to-person contact, benchmarks and assessments, member volunteers, and internal and external pressure tactics.

## **RESULTS: REGRESSION ANALYSIS**

In addition to examining the impact of comprehensive organizing tactics on NLRB certification election outcome through descriptive statistics, we used binary logistic regression analysis to control for the influence of election environment, company characteristics, bargaining unit demographics, and employer tactics.<sup>19</sup> Two models were used to estimate the predicted impact of comprehensive organizing tactics on the odds of the union winning the election. Model A includes each of the ten tactics that constitute a comprehensive union building strategy. Model B combines the individual tactics into a comprehensive union tactic scale variable, adding one unit for each individual comprehensive tactic used.<sup>20</sup>

As shown in table 1.7, while all ten of the comprehensive organizing tactics variables included in model A are associated with higher win rates, these positive effects were not statistically significant for the majority of the individual comprehensive tactic variables when controlling for election background, bargaining unit demographics, company characteristics, and employer opposition. The only exceptions were adequate and appropriate resources, rank-and-file committee, and benchmarks and assessments; these did have a statistically significant positive impact on the odds of the union winning the election, increasing the odds of an election win by 119 percent for resources, 89 percent for rank-and-file committee, and 162 percent for benchmarks and assessments.

The findings confirm that these three variables are fundamental elements of a comprehensive campaign, building blocks that enhance the union's ability to engage in any of the other tactics included in the model. Without adequate

and sufficient resources, unions will be unable to staff and finance the labor-intensive, grassroots tactics that a comprehensive union building campaign requires. Similarly, a representative and active committee is necessary to develop rank-and-file leadership, build the union inside the workplace, and make connections between the workers and the community outside the workplace. Benchmarks and assessments are essential to evaluate when and whether to use each of the other tactics and when and whether to move on to the next phase of the campaign.

While these findings suggest that three comprehensive organizing tactics had an independent positive effect on election outcome, as we will see in the discussion of the findings from model B, their individual effect was not as great as the aggregate effect of using a combination of the comprehensive organizing tactics in the model.<sup>21</sup> Together, the descriptive and regression findings indicate that while resources, committees, and benchmarks and assessments are fundamental elements of a comprehensive campaign, they are not sufficient, in that they are most effective in combination with other comprehensive organizing tactics.<sup>22</sup>

In accordance with our first hypothesis, the findings in table 1.7 confirm that most of the comprehensive organizing tactics that make up our model do not have a statistically significant effect when used in isolation of the other tactics. However, as shown in table 1.8, when these individual tactics are combined into a single variable, adding one unit for each additional tactic used, they have a strong positive impact on election outcome, statistically significant at .001 or better. After controlling for election environment and employer opposition, each additional comprehensive union tactic used by the union increases the odds of a union win by 34 percent. Thus, the unions in our sample who used at least six comprehensive organizing tactics increased their odds of winning the election by 204 percent (6 times 34 percent). The same logic demonstrates that unions averaging four or more tactics increased their odds of winning the election by at least 136 percent, while those averaging three tactics increased their odds by 102 percent, and those averaging two or fewer tactics increased their odds no more than 68 percent.

The findings from the election environment variables are also consistent with our hypotheses. In both models, manufacturing sector, subsidiary, and employer behavior had a strong, statistically significant negative impact on election outcome. The results for both model A and model B suggest that for each additional anti-union tactic used by the employer the odds of winning the election decline by 13 percent when we control for the influence of election environment and union tactic variables.<sup>23</sup> This finding confirms that employer behavior can have a devastating impact on union success. These results also confirm that the manufacturing sector is a particularly challenging environment, decreasing the odds of a union win by 52 percent in model

TABLE 1.7

The impact of comprehensive organizing tactics on election outcome: Model A—Individual union tactic variables

Independent variable	Predicted sign	Mean or proportion of sample	Percent union win rate	Model A				Predicted impact on odds of union win
				Unstandardized logistic regression coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Estimated standardized coefficient	Standard error	Odds ratio $\exp^{(\beta)}$	
<b>Election background control variables</b>								
Number of eligible voters	None	192.15	—	.000	.000	.000	1.001	
Manufacturing sector	—	.32	.29	-.732**	-.343	.296	.481	-52% if unit is in manufacturing sector
Subsidiary of larger parent company	—	.84	.41	-.648**	-.240	.327	.523	-48% if company is a subsidiary
Ownership change	+	.18	.55	.720**	.281	.308	2.054	+105% if ownership change before election
Good to excellent financial condition	+	.65	.43	.367	.176	.253	1.443	
Board determined unit	—	.08	.33	-.747	-.203	.463	.474	
Other organized units	+	.15	.65	.580*	.209	.350	1.785	
Professional, technical, or white-collar unit	—	.14	.48	-.458	-.172	.346	.632	
60 percent or more women	+	.43	.59	.534*	.264	.279	1.706	
60 percent or more workers of color	+	.32	.55	.443	.207	.286	1.558	
Number of employer tactics used	—	7.21	—	-.134***	-.559	.032	.874	-13% for each additional tactic used

TABLE 1.7—cont.

Independent variable	Predicted sign	Mean or proportion of sample	Percent union win rate	Model A				Predicted impact on odds of union win
				Unstandardized logistic regression coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Estimated standardized coefficient	Standard error	Odds ratio exp <sup>(b)</sup>	
<b>Comprehensive organizing tactics</b>								
Adequate and appropriate resources	+	.14	.64	.799**	.277	.391	2.198	+119% if adequate and appropriate resources
Strategic targeting	+	.39	.51	.011	.005	.262	1.011	
Active representative committee	+	.26	.56	.638**	.282	.279	1.893	+89% if active representative committee
Effectively utilized member volunteer organizers	+	.27	.52	.345	.155	.269	1.412	
Person-to-person contact inside and outside the workplace	+	.19	.53	-.033	-.012	.334	.967	
Benchmarks and assessments	+	.24	.66	.963***	.412	.287	2.621	+162% if used benchmarks and assessments
Issues which resonate in the workplace and community	+	.23	.49	.028	.013	.284	1.028	
Escalating pressure tactics in the workplace	+	.37	.50	.407	.198	.264	1.502	
Escalating pressure tactics outside the workplace	+	.17	.48	-.179	.140	.346	.836	
Building for the first contract before the election	+	.35	.50	.229	.109	.260	1.257	
Total number of observations				412				
Nagelkerke R square				.312				
-2 (log-likelihood)				457.038				
<i>Significance Levels: * = .10 ** = .05 *** = .01 (one-tailed tests)</i>								

TABLE 1.8

The impact of comprehensive organizing tactics on election outcome: Model B—Individual union tactic variables

Independent variable	Predicted sign	Mean or proportion of sample	Percent union win rate	Model B				Predicted impact on odds of union win
				Unstandardized logistic regression coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Estimated standardized coefficient	Standard error	Odds ratio $\exp^{(\beta)}$	
<b>Election background control variables</b>								
Number of eligible voters	None	192.15	—	.000	.000	.000	1.000	
Manufacturing sector	—	.32	.29	-.649**	-.304	.287	.523	-48% if unit in manufacturing sector
Subsidiary of larger parent company	—	-.84	.41	-.633**	-.233	.320	.531	-47% if company is a subsidiary
Ownership change	+	.18	.55	.669**	.261	.296	1.952	+95% if ownership change before election
Good to excellent financial condition	+	.65	.43	.317	.148	.246	1.373	
Board determined unit	—	.08	.33	-.691	-.188	.448	.501	
Other organized units	+	.15	.65	.587*	.212	.337	1.799	
Professional, technical or white collar unit	—	.14	.48	-.575*	-.218	.331	.563	
60 percent or more women	+	.43	.59	.535**	.267	.273	1.708	+70% if at least 60% women in the unit
60 percent or more workers of color	+	.32	.55	.553**	.257	.258	1.739	+73% if at least 60% women in the unit
Number of employer tactics used	—	7.21	—	-.137***	-.584	.031	.872	-13% for each additional tactic used
<b>Comprehensive organizing tactics</b>								
Number of comprehensive organizing tactics	+	2.60	—	.290***	.555	.070	1.337	+34% for each additional tactic used
Total number of observations				412				
Nagelkerke R square				.277				
-2 (log-likelihood)				470.723				
Significance Levels: * = .10 ** = .05 *** = .01 (one-tailed tests)								

A and 48 percent in model B. Similar negative effects shown for subsidiaries of larger parent companies, where the odds of winning the election decreases by 48 percent in model A and 47 percent in model B.

Ownership change in the two years before the election, as predicted, has a strong statistically significant positive impact on election outcome, increasing the odds of winning the election by 105 percent in model A and 95 percent in model B. Also as predicted, the number of eligible voters has no discernable (or statistically significant) impact on election outcome.

Good to excellent financial condition (positive), board determined unit (negative), other organized units (positive), and professional/technical or white collar unit (negative), all have their predicted sign, though with weak or statistically insignificant effects when we control for other variables, including the union campaign.

In model B both of the demographic variables (60 percent or more women and 60 percent or more workers of color) exhibit strong, statistically significant, positive effects. Sixty percent or more women in the unit increases the odds of a union win by 70 percent, while having 60 percent or more workers of color increases the odds by 73 percent.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to assessing the probable impact of the number of comprehensive organizing tactics on the odds of a union win, we also sought to examine the relative effects of the number of union tactics compared to the election environment and employer opposition variables in our model.<sup>25</sup> In model A the employer campaign variable, with a standardized ranking of  $-.559$ , appears to have a much greater effect on election outcome than any individual union tactic or environmental factor. The three comprehensive organizing tactics that were statistically significant in model A—benchmarks and assessments, active representative committee, and adequate and appropriate resources—also have a greater relative effect on election outcome than all of the environmental factors except manufacturing sector, which ranked third after benchmarks and employer tactics. The relative importance of manufacturing in model A suggests that union tactics used in isolation will not overcome the difficult challenges unions face in organizing in manufacturing.

However, in model B, where we substituted the number of comprehensive tactics for the ten individual comprehensive tactics, the number of employer tactics and the number of union tactics have a relatively equal rank (.555 for union tactics and .584 for employer tactics) followed by manufacturing (.303), at least 60 percent women (.267), ownership change (.261), at least 60 percent workers of color (.261), and subsidiary of a larger parent company.

Our results confirm the widespread view that manufacturing industries and subsidiaries of large parent companies are much more difficult to organize and that employer opposition continues to have a devastating effect on

union organizing success in NLRB campaigns. The regression findings provide some new insights as well, suggesting that unions are much more likely to win in companies which have had a recent ownership change, despite all the negative changes in wages and working conditions that often accompany such changes. The findings also suggest that union success continues to be greatest in units with a significant majority of women or workers of color.

In brief, we found that the use of multifaceted, comprehensive union campaigns plays a much greater role in determining election outcome than individual union tactics. Our analysis also confirms that the more comprehensive organizing tactics used during the campaign, the greater the odds that the union will win the election, even when we control for industry, corporate structure, bargaining unit demographics, and employer opposition. Lastly, we found that although employer opposition and election environment all have a significant impact on election outcome, the number of comprehensive organizing tactics has as much impact as employer opposition and more impact than election environment. Given the consistency and strength of employer campaigns and the great potential for improvement in the quality and intensity of union campaigns, these results support our hypothesis that it is the nature and intensity of union campaigns, rather than the specific industry, company, and unit type in which they operate that plays the most critical role in determining differences in win rates among unions.

## **CONCLUSION**

The coming years will be a period of enormous risks and challenges for the American labor movement. Almost all unions, locally and nationally, understand that both their political power and their bargaining power will be severely undermined unless they organize on a massive scale across every sector of the economy. Yet, as we have shown, this is also a time of great possibility for American unions. While unions face enormous difficulties in terms of changing themselves within the political, legal, and economic environments of organizing, their own organizing strategy is the one area they do control and has great potential for helping unions recapture power and leverage at both the bargaining table and the political arena.

Realizing this potential, however, will not be easy. Even as labor has struggled to regroup, the economic, political, and legal climate has only grown more hostile. Unions today are also much more likely to face a subsidiary of a large multinational parent company with the resources and structure to aggressively resist unionization. This is particularly true in manufacturing,

where almost every union campaign must operate under the shadow of globalization and the attendant fear of plant closings, outsourcing, or major downsizing.

But it is too easy to simply blame employer opposition and the organizing environment. American unions themselves must shoulder a good portion of the responsibility for their organizing failures. Although our results demonstrate that even in the most difficult contexts, unions can dramatically increase their organizing success when they run more multifaceted strategic campaigns, the majority of unions organizing today still run weak, ineffectual campaigns that fail to build their strength for the long haul. They simply are not doing what is necessary to succeed in the current climate of mobile capital, aggressive employer opposition, and weak and poorly enforced labor laws. The most pressing question, therefore, is why the majority of unions, despite low win rates, are not choosing to run more comprehensive campaigns?

Part of the answer is rooted in the differences in history, culture, organizational structure, and leadership that influence whether, when, and how each union builds capacity for organizing and moves toward a comprehensive organizing strategy. For example, some of the most successful unions organizing today began building organizing capacity in the 1970's and 1980's starting with the recruitment of a new generation of talented young organizers who had come of age during the civil rights, anti-war, and women's movements. Many of the new recruits received their training as community organizers, welfare rights organizers, or working on the United Farm Workers' boycott, under an organizing model not unlike the comprehensive organizing model presented in this chapter.<sup>26</sup>

This contrasts sharply with more established industrial unions and building trades unions, who felt no pressure to organize until they faced massive membership losses in the 1980s, and, by that time, felt unable or unwilling to invest in the staff and member recruitment and training to organize on any scale. Several unions did not even have an organizing department or an organizing director until the 1990s. Only in the last few years have many of these unions recognized the critical importance of organizing and started the difficult process of shifting more resources into organizing, recruiting, and training more organizers.

This model of organizing is also extremely staff and resource intensive. Unions in the United States suffer from a critical shortage of trained and experienced organizers, as well as union and university labor educators with the knowledge and experience to train organizers in the comprehensive organizing model. But lack of resources cannot explain the failure of the majority of unions to organize more aggressively and effectively. For the costs of not



organizing, to their current membership and to the survival of their union, are far greater than the resources and effort involved in utilizing a comprehensive organizing strategy.

Even the country's most successful unions cannot rest on their laurels. Despite notable victories, they too have yet to organize on the scale necessary for labor's revival and to fully utilize the comprehensive strategies that will allow them to expand their gains. At a time when unions need to be organizing hundreds of thousands of workers in order to simply maintain union density at current levels, they will, in addition, need to organize millions across every industry if they are going to make any significant gains in union density.

Nor can unions write off industries and bargaining units where employer opposition is more intense or workers are more hesitant to undertake the risks and challenges that organizing entails. For if unions fail to commit to the strategies necessary to win in manufacturing or other mobile sectors of our economy, they will lose their single most important hedge against the most negative effects of globalization that are fueling the race to the bottom in wages, benefits, and workplace rights and conditions for workers in every other industry. Similarly, if unions fail to more effectively meet the challenge of organizing among higher paid, production workers and professional and technical employees, they will find themselves isolated from a significant portion of the American workforce.

Even among those workers with the greatest propensity to organize—women and workers of color—higher win rates depend on the use of more comprehensive union campaigns, in particular, campaigns that include staff and rank-and-file leadership reflective of the unit being organized. Although women of color and immigrant workers are ready and willing to do what it takes to organize a union in their workplace, they will not endure the stresses and risks of an organizing campaign only to discover that they, and others like them, do not have a seat at the table, or a voice in the union, when the campaign is won.

Unions cannot wait—for labor law reform, for a more favorable economic climate, or more favorable political environment—before they begin to utilize this more comprehensive, multifaceted, and intensive strategy in all their organizing efforts, inside and outside the NLRB process. Regardless of sector or industry, the challenge facing unions today is to move beyond a simple tactical effort to increase numbers and to engage in the self-reflection and organizational change necessary to reverse the larger pattern of decline. Only then will “changing to organize” really bear fruit, and only then will American unions be able to regain their power at the bargaining table, in the voting booth, and in the larger community.

# APPENDIX 1.1

## VARIABLE DEFINITION FOR COMPREHENSIVE ORGANIZING TACTICS

Comprehensive Union-Building Tactics	Variable Definition
1. Adequate and appropriate staff and financial resources	Equals 1 if there is at least one organizer for every 100 eligible voters in the unit; one woman organizer for units with 25 percent or more women; and one organizer of color for units with 25 percent or more workers of color.
2. Strategic targeting	Equals 1 if the union researched the company before the start of the campaign or the company was part of a union targeting plan and the union represented other workers at the same employer or in the same industry.
3. Active and representative rank-and file organizing-committee	Equals 1 if at least 10 percent of the unit is represented on the committee; there is at least one woman on the committee if the unit is 10 percent or more women; at least one person of color on the committee if the unit is 10 percent or more workers of color; and committee members met with workers one-on-one in the workplace and engaged in two or more of the following actions during the campaign: spoke at house meetings, spoke out at captive audience meetings, spoke at community forums, conducted assessments, assisted with preparing board charges, or helped organize job actions.
4. Active participation of member volunteer organizers	Equals 1 if the union used at least five member volunteers from other organized units and they engaged in one or more of the following: meetings outside the workplace, one-on-one in the workplace, leafleting outside the workplace, speaking at community forums, or assessments.
5. Person-to-person contact inside and outside the workplace	Equals 1 if the union house-called the majority of the unit or surveyed workers one-on-one about what they wanted in the contract and conducted at least ten small group meetings or house meetings.

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Comprehensive Union-  
Building Tactics

Variable Definition

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| 6. Benchmarks and assessments to monitor union support and set thresholds for moving ahead with the campaign.                          | Equals 1 if the union used written assessments to evaluate membership support for the union and waited to file the petition until at least 60 percent of the unit signed cards or petitions.  |
| 7. Issues which resonate in the workplace and community  | Equals 1 if the union focused on two or more of the following issues during the campaign: dignity, fairness, quality of service, power, voice, or collective representation.  |
| 8. Creative, escalating internal pressure tactics involving members in the workplace   | Equals 1 if the union used two or more of the following workplace tactics: five or more solidarity days, job actions, rallies, march on the boss for recognition, petitions rather than cards, and union supporters joined employee involvement committees.     |
| 9. Creative, escalating external pressure tactics involving members outside the workplace, locally, ationally, nand/or internationally | Equals 1 if the union involved one or more community groups during the campaign and also did at least one more of the following: corporate campaign, cross-border solidarity, involving other unions, using either paid or free media.                          |
| 10. Building for the first contract before the election  | Equals 1 if the union did one or more of the following before the election: chose the bargaining committee, involved workers in developing bargaining proposals, or surveyed at least 70 percent of the unit one-on-one about what they wanted in the contract. |
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## APPENDIX 1.2

### DEFINITION AND PREDICTED IMPACT OF CONTROL VARIABLES

Control Variables	Predicted Impact	Variable Definition
Number of eligible voters	No significant impact	Continuous variable measuring the number of eligible voters in the unit when the petition was filed
Manufacturing sector	Negative	Equals 1 if the unit is in the manufacturing sector.
Subsidiary of larger parent company	Negative	Equals 1 if the unit is a subsidiary.
Ownership change	Positive	Equals 1 if there was a change in ownership in the two years before the election.
Good to excellent financial condition	Positive	Equals 1 if the company was in good to excellent financial condition at the time of the election.
Board-determined unit	Negative	Equals 1 if the NLRB determined a different unit than the one the union petitioned for.
Other organized units	Positive	Equals 1 if there were other organized units at the same location as the unit being organized.
Professional, technical or white collar unit	Negative	Equals 1 if the election was in a professional, technical, or white-collar unit.
Unit at least 60 percent women	Positive	Equals 1 if there were 60 percent or more women in the unit.
Unit at least 60 percent workers of color	Positive	Equals 1 if there were 60 percent or more workers of color in the unit.
Number of employer tactics used <sup>27</sup>	Negative	Additive variable adding 1 unit for each additional employer tactic used.

# APPENDIX 1.3

## PERCENT WIN RATES ACROSS COMBINATIONS OF SIX COMPREHENSIVE ORGANIZING TACTICS

Combinations of comprehensive organizing tactics	Percent win rate						
	Number of tactics used from each combination						
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six
Resources + targeting + committee + volunteers + lonl + benchmarks	.33	.35	.48	.62	.80	.75	1.00
Resources + targeting + committee + volunteers + lonl + issues	.36	.35	.50	.59	.61	.80	1.00
Resources + targeting + committee + volunteers + lonl + internal	.35	.35	.49	.54	.65	.70	1.00
Resources + targeting + committee + volunteers + lonl + external	.37	.36	.49	.61	.57	.83	1.00
Resources + targeting + committee + volunteers + lonl + contract	.32	.40	.47	.54	.64	.79	—
Resources + committee + lonl + issues + external + targeting	.38	.36	.53	.53	.65	.60	1.00
Targeting + committee + volunteers + lonl + benchmarks + issues	.36	.33	.48	.60	.63	.86	1.00
Targeting + committee + volunteers + lonl + benchmarks + internal	.35	.32	.49	.53	.67	.80	.80
Targeting + committee + volunteers + lonl + benchmarks + external	.35	.37	.45	.63	.62	.80	1.00
Targeting + committee + volunteers + lonl + benchmarks + contract	.30	.40	.41	.56	.71	.82	.67
Targeting + volunteers + benchmarks + internal + contract + committee	.34	.30	.46	.54	.64	.82	.67
Committee + volunteers + lonl + benchmarks + issues + internal	.34	.34	.56	.47	.68	.86	1.00

APPENDIX 1.3—cont.

Combinations of comprehensive organizing tactics	Percent win rate						
	Number of tactics used from each combination						
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six
Committee + volunteers + lonl + benchmarks + issues + external	.35	.38	.49	.61	.65	1.00	—
Committee + volunteers + lonl + benchmarks + issues + contract	.32	.40	.46	.53	.73	.86	—
Committee + volunteers + lonl + benchmarks + issues + resources	.33	.38	.52	.60	.77	1.00	1.00
Committee + lonl + issues + external + resources + volunteers	.37	.38	.50	.64	.53	1.00	1.00
Volunteers + lonl + benchmarks + issues + internal + external	.32	.42	.48	.55	.67	.60	—
Volunteers + lonl + benchmarks + issues + internal + contract	.29	.43	.48	.48	.76	.70	—
Volunteers + lonl + benchmarks + issues + internal + resources	.31	.40	.51	.57	.65	1.00	1.00
Volunteers + lonl + benchmarks + issues + internal + targeting	.34	.35	.48	.53	.70	.69	1.00
Volunteers + benchmarks + internal + contract + targeting + lonl	.32	.35	.47	.57	.55	.79	.67
lonl + benchmarks + issues + internal + external + contract	.31	.46	.44	.57	.61	.71	—
lonl + benchmarks + issues + internal + external + resources	.33	.43	.48	.61	.62	.86	—
lonl + benchmarks + issues + internal + external + targeting	.36	.36	.50	.51	.72	.64	—
lonl + benchmarks + issues + internal + external + committee	.34	.40	.48	.55	.66	.83	—
lonl + issues + external + resources + committee + benchmarks	.34	.42	.46	.65	.79	.83	—
Benchmarks + issues + internal + external + contract + resources	.30	.42	.50	.51	.60	1.00	1.00
Benchmarks + issues + internal + external + contract + targeting	.33	.37	.49	.54	.50	.82	1.00
Benchmarks + issues + internal + external + contract + committee	.31	.43	.45	.52	.61	1.00	—
Benchmarks + issues + internal + external + contract + volunteers	.29	.44	.46	.56	.59	.75	1.00
Benchmarks + internal + contract + targeting + volunteers + issues	.32	.36	.44	.57	.60	.70	1.00
Issues + internal + external + contract + resources + targeting	.33	.40	.50	.55	.44	.75	1.00
Issues + internal + external + contract + resources + committee	.31	.43	.50	.54	.52	1.00	1.00
Issues + internal + external + contract + resources + volunteers	.31	.44	.46	.58	.52	.75	1.00
Issues + internal + external + contract + resources + lonl	.33	.45	.49	.49	.60	.63	1.00
Issues + external + resources + committee + lonl + internal	.35	.41	.49	.61	.50	.80	1.00

APPENDIX 1.3—cont.

Combinations of comprehensive organizing tactics	Percent win rate						
	Number of tactics used from each combination						
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six
Internal + external + contract + resources + targeting + committee	.30	.40	.51	.53	.53	.60	1.00
Internal + external + contract + resources + targeting + volunteers	.34	.35	.55	.52	.45	.77	1.00
Internal + external + contract + resources + targeting + lonl	.34	.39	.56	.48	.52	.57	1.00
Internal + external + contract + resources + targeting + benchmarks	.31	.35	.57	.52	.46	.80	1.00
Internal + contract + targeting + volunteers + benchmarks + external	.32	.35	.52	.53	.55	.71	1.00
External + contract + resources + targeting + committee + volunteers	.34	.37	.50	.57	.57	.78	1.00
External + contract + resources + targeting + committee + lonl	.32	.44	.46	.54	.59	.75	.67
External+ contract + resources + targeting + committee + benchmarks	.29	.42	.45	.57	.68	1.00	.67
External + contract + resources + targeting + committee + issues	.34	.39	.48	.59	.48	.86	1.00
External + resources + committee + lonl + issues + contract	.35	.43	.45	.60	.62	.67	1.00
Contract + resources + targeting + committee + volunteers + lonl	.32	.40	.47	.54	.64	.79	—
Contract + resources + targeting + committee + volunteers + benchmarks	.30	.35	.47	.59	.78	.78	1.00
Contract + resources + targeting + committee + volunteers + issues	.33	.36	.47	.60	.59	.86	—
Contract + resources + targeting + committee + volunteers + internal	.33	.33	.50	.53	.61	.73	—
Contract + targeting + volunteers + benchmarks + internal + resources	.31	.32	.48	.65	.48	.83	1.00
<b>Average percentages for all combinations</b>	.32	.38	.48	.55	.60	.78	.93
<b>Minimum percentages for all combinations</b>	.29	.30	.41	.47	.44	.57	.67
<b>Maximum percentages for all combinations</b>	.38	.44	.57	.67	.80	1.00	1.00