Professional Report

New York City Externship at the New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE)

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Introduction

<u>Problem</u>

New Immigrant Community Empower (NICE) is a multifaceted organization. On one hand, NICE works on pushing and supporting legislation that benefit immigrant workers. On the other, NICE not only provides direct services to members, but also organizes members as pillars of support for legislative campaigns. While these two functions are meant to function, and have functioned, simultaneously and in sync, NICE staff and member leadership have noticed there has been a lack of legislative support on behalf of committees. Instead, member committee spaces have transformed into areas of social gathering. While the staff at NICE recognize these spaces are also meant to promote comfort and unity among the general membership, they want the committees to still function as pillars of support for legislative campaigns. Therefore, this professional report is focused on providing insight into the structure of the Women's Committee, in order to offer programming recommendations. These recommendations are meant to refocus NICE's Women's Committee and aid the development and outreach of legislative campaigns, particularly the Justice for Job Seekers Campaign. Therefore, some questions that will be explored in this report are the following:

1. What is the current structure of the Women's Committee and how does it fit in into larger legislative campaign goals?

2. How can NICE gauge current participation and perspectives of the Women's Committee?

3. How can NICE effectively improve Women's Committee space in order for the committee to be more productive and effective?

To explore these questions, the report will be an exploratory research project, answering the question of integration of grassroots organizing and campaign legislation. I conducted

observational research on the Women's Committee, surveyed participants of the Women's Committee, and interviewed members.

Some limitations to this report can be attributed to time constraints and the survey pool. While I was working on creating this analytical report for NICE, my duties also included office and programming support for the organization. Thus, my time was split between research and intern responsibilities. As a result, I was not able to interview many NICE members or staff in order to capture wide-range perspectives. Additionally, surveying Women's Committee participants also proved challenging since members varied from meeting to meeting. Thus, this survey only captures a limited, and narrow, perspective of the participants. Nevertheless, both the interviews and the surveys, provide some insight into the Women's Committee processes and internal structures. It is my hope that future studies may be conducted to compliments these findings.

Literature Review

In the last three decades, the United States has experienced a shift in demographics, due in large part to immigration trends. According to the Pew Research Center, immigrants, and children of immigrants, are "driving workforce growth" in the United States (Cilluffo and Cohn 2017). In fact, according to the same source, without immigrant employment, the United States would face a deficit of 18 million working-age adults, making immigrant work highly valued in this country (Cilluffo and Cohn 2017). However, despite the value and necessary work that immigrants bring, they are often poorly treated and abused in the workplace. For example, according to a report conducted by the United States Department of Labor (DOL), immigrants living in New York are three times more likely to be cheated out of their wages (U.S. DOL,

2018.). This fact is even more startling since New Yorkers, in total, lose between $10 million to $20 million in unpaid wages on a weekly basis (U.S. DOL, 2018).

While there are current governmental structures in place to tackle instances of abuse and mistreatment of immigrant workers, the majority of the work that goes into organizing and representing workers, on an individual level, is conducted by nonprofit organizations. Increasingly, intergovernmental relations has become dependent on both services and support provided by nonprofit organizations. In fact, the United States is currently experiencing a "fourth wave" of federalism, where this new brand of intergovernmental relations is defined by a network of both public and private organizations working together to solve the nation's most pressing issues (Agranoff and Radin 2014, p. 142). In the case of New York City, local government has been increasingly invested in the nonprofit sector as a means of delivering services on a larger scale. According to a 2016 report published by the Independent Sector, a national membership organization of nonprofits, New York City nonprofits make up more than 35,000 organizations, which collectively generate more than $260.26 billion in annual revenue ("Nonprofits in New York", 2016).

Despite the overwhelming presence of nonprofits in New York City, nonprofits have been known to face both external and internal challenges, which have the potential to impede outcomes in performance. Some external challenges that these organizations face are financial obligations from donors and grant contractors, while internal challenges stem from a lack of employee accountability (Ebrahim 2010, p. 628). However, some nonprofits also face policy challenges, where leadership faces challenges connecting legislative advocacy to day-to-day operations (Ebrahim 2010, p. 628). In fact, a majority of smaller nonprofit organizations often approach policy change and implementation as a "necessary evil" of their work (Ebrahim 2010,

p. 628). Despite this notion, some states have attempted to make the policy arena more accessible to smaller institutions of change. For example, the state of Minnesota has encouraged, and developed, "policy fields," that are made for the input and feedback of nonprofit organizations, specifically (Ebrahim 2010, p. 629). These policy fields encourage the participation of nonprofit organizations in the decision-making process, alongside policy makers and private sector, in order to address systemic problems. However, nonprofits often lack the capacity, knowledge, or structure to pursue these avenues of change.

Nonetheless, one way in which nonprofits have attempted to create political pressure is through community organizing. The term "community organizing" denotes the process in which people, organizations, and communities engage with each other and political structures in order to "increase individual and community control, garner political efficacy, improve quality life, and obtain social justice" (Orr, 2007, p. 7). Community organizing efforts are often the main strategic tactics employed by nonprofit and community organizations in order to increase their political clout. In an era of dwindling civic and public engagement, community organizing tactics are one of the few ways organizations can politically engage their target populations (Orr, 2007, p.7). Moreover, in urban and metropolitan areas with higher concentrations of disadvantaged and low-income residents, community organizing is critical for ensuring the voices of vulnerable peoples are heard (Orr, 2007, p.7). Typically, an organization's Community Organizer is tasked with identifying and training leaders within target populations, in order for those leaders to coordinate their own strategic tactics (Orr, 2006, p.7).

While community organizing has proven to be immensely effective in increasing political engagement, it is also one of the most difficult engagement processes to achieve. For one, community organizing takes an incredible amount of time in forming trusting and productive

relationships between the organization and the community. A second challenge is identifying the limitations and needs of target populations. For example, in the case of the Watts Century Latino Organization (WCLO), a community organization based in Los Angeles, organizers found it incredibly difficult to engage immigrant Latino parents in political activism. It was not until it was discovered that children of these parents were being denied quality education that the parents decided to join the community organizing efforts (Ochs and Payes, 2003, p. 20). Even with initial interest, Latino immigrant communities, specifically undocumented immigrants, are difficult to organize due to their fear of authority and social structures (Ochs and Payes, 2003, p. 20). According to organizers at WCLO, "those affected by issues can and must define the problems and shape and fight for solutions" (Ochs and Payes, 2003, p. 25).

New York City is experiencing a shift in immigration reform that encompasses policy needed to protect immigrant workers from abuse and mistreatment. In the same light, while nonprofit organizations offer invaluable services, such as wage theft clinics and legal representation, more could be done on their end to inform policy and make impactful change. For many nonprofits, the desire to change policy is present, yet the structure to do so is lacking. In the case of New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE), this sentiment holds true. NICE delivers services to hundreds of members on a weekly basis, yet the impact of these services are not felt in the long-term.

New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE)

New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE) is a nonprofit and non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Queens, New York. Specifically, NICE is a "community-based organization that works to ensure that new immigrants can build social, political, and economic power in their communities and beyond" ("NICE", 2018). In order to achieve these goals, NICE

provides two sets of services: (1) professional development training and empowerment services to their membership and (2) organization of political and communal campaigns in order to reform current New York City wage and construction policy.

NICE's professional development services encompasses a number of workshops and training programs to aid in the professional development and empowerment of their membership. Some of the services include a Community Job Center, Workforce Development Training Program, Wage Theft Clinic, and Empowerment at Day Labor Stops "Paradas" ("NICE", 2018). Some activities that are conducted through these services are job searches, resume-building workshops, and English conversational classes. However, the most popular workshops provided to members are safety-certification trainings, which are often required by employers in the construction and cleaning industries. Aside from these services, NICE also encourages member-run committees, which serve as a space for members to meet on a continuous basis and deliberate on issues facing the immigrant community and the organization.

Among many of their initiatives, NICE has also worked on, and continues to work on, a number of legislative campaigns. As of now, efforts have focused on the implementation of Local Law 196, also known as the Site Safety Law, which was passed in 2017. The new law raises minimum safety training requirements for construction workers who are employed on specific jobs sites around the city. Another campaign spearheaded by NICE is Justice for Job Seekers (J4JS), which is aimed at "protecting low-wage workers from predatory employment agencies" ("J4JS", 2018). The J4JS campaign resulted in the passing of the Justice for Job Seekers bill in 2016; however, implementation of the bill remains to completed. A third campaign, which has not yet been released to the public, is the Responsible Contractor Licensing (RCL) Campaign, which aims to introduce legislation that prohibits the "licensing of contractors

who endanger the safety and welfare of employees or other laborer, and/or who fail to pay judgments against them for wage theft violations" ("Memo", 2017). The fourth, and final campaign, that NICE actively supports is the Day Laborer Worker Initiative (DLWI), a New York City budget campaign, headed by a coalition of city-wide worker's center, that advocates for the continued funding and expansion of non-profit worker centers around the city ("NICE", 2018).

Jackson Heights

NICE is strategically located in a neighborhood of immigrants, Jackson Heights, Queens .Jackson Heights is known to be one of the most diverse areas of New York City. A little more than half of its residents identify as Latinos, primarily from Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru (Hughes, 2015). The other twenty percent of the total residents identify as Southeast Asian, predominantly from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (Hughes, 2015). Jackson Heights is also known for its plethora of restaurants, food stands, and bars, as well as retail stores that sell many imported goods from various Latino and Southeast Asian countries. As a result, to many Queens residents and visitors, Jackson Heights is the gateway to cultural exploration without having to leave New York City.

However, there is another reality to Jackson Heights that many New Yorkers often do not realize exists or seldom discuss. On the corner of Roosevelt Avenue and 69th street, men carrying backpacks and wearing construction boots will be seen standing together, often from early morning to midafternoon. These men, mainly undocumented Latino immigrants, are day laborers who are waiting for contractors to pick them up for a day of work. Sometimes, a handful of men that are waiting will work for the day, other times, the rest of the group will have spent the day waiting around, only to come the next day to try again. As an alternative to *La Parada*,

NICE offers their Community Job Center, as a space for day laborers to stop in during the morning in order to wait for jobs in a warm and secure area.

In addition to providing services to day laborers, NICE also provides extensive services to residents in Jackson Heights and neighboring communities. According to the New York City Community Health Profile (2015), 63% of Jackson Heights residents are foreign born and 43% have limited proficiency in the English language ("Community Health Profile", 2015). Furthermore, one in five Jackson Heights residents live below the Federal Poverty Level while 59% are severely rent burdened ("Community Health Profile", 2015). While NICE does not provide direct income relief, the organization does provide poverty alleviation via job hunting, professional development, and wage theft clinics.

Member Demographics

As a predominantly Latinx organization, located in a largely Latino community, NICE mainly serves immigrants from Latin American countries. In order to become a NICE member, one must submit a basic intake from, which asks for biographical information, such as name, country of origin, and phone number. While NICE is aware that many members are undocumented immigrants, the organization does not ask for immigration status. There are no eligibility requirements to become a NICE member, and once one becomes a member, they are eligible to receive all NICE services. Additionally, there are no costs associated with becoming a member since applications are free.

Before November 2017, data collection on member demographics, as well as job dispatch numbers, were non-existent. Therefore, the most up-to-date information has been collected after November 2017 after NICE hired Assistant Director of Administrative Services. According to recent data, since November 2017 to March 2018, there are have been an average of 460

members per month in attendance of NICE's Community Job Center. While the exact percentage of countries of origin is unknown, members are mainly from Mexico, Ecuador and Colombia. During this same time frame, an average of 92 jobs were dispatched to the centers, meaning that about 92 members were sent on a job per month. Finally, there was an average of 105 new members per month, meaning that 105 individuals submitted membership form in order to be eligible to receive some type of NICE service.

Committees

A principal function of NICE is to push, or support, legislation on the state and local levels, and one way in which NICE supports legislative campaigns is through advocacy and grassroots community organizing. This type of community organizing occurs through committees, a group of NICE members that focus on different types of issues. Currently, there are four committees, which are:

Figure 1: NICE's Committee Structure

Women's Committee, Workers Rights Committee, Workers Center Committee, and the Art and Popular Education Committee. Each committee is responsible for supporting and organizing a campaign in which NICE is involved. In terms of the Women's Committee, two campaigns are the most relevant, which are Justice for Job Seekers and Justice for Women in Construction.

Currently, the Women's Committee has been focused mainly on supporting the Justice for Job Seekers Campaign.

Women's Committee

The Women's Committee is one of four member-based committees in the organization. The committee was meant to act a supporting pillar to NICE's legislative campaigns, aiding in activities such as outreach, general education, and organizing members to attend legislation-related events. However, in recent years, the Women's Committee space has converted into an area of social gathering and personal development. While this new focus is not a bad thing, NICE administration wants to re-introduce policy organizing to the committee's priorities.

<u>The Beginnings of Women's Committee</u>

NICE has existed since 1995 and has gone through multiple transitions in both internal structure and programming. While the Women's Committee had existed informally during this time, it was officially inaugurated about two years ago in January, 2016. The Women's Committee had been set up in a particular manner; before my arrival, NICE's OSHA Instructor/Community Organizer was the sole person responsible for the planning and facilitating of the committee space. The OSHA Instructor was hired to give OSHA-certification classes to NICE members, as well as plan and facilitate programming for the Women's Committee. According to an interview with NICE's former Community Organizing Coordinator, there had been previous attempts to involve other staff members in co-facilitating the space with the OSHA-Instructor, although collaborative attempts always ended in conflict. Therefore, for the next two years, responsibility for programming for the Women's Committee had fallen to one person.

In the summer of 2016, the Women's Committee had hosted a number of informative workshops and presentations on finances, sexual health, and workforce development. During this time, the Women's Committee saw an increase of attendance, as participants were attracted by the instructional content. According to an interview with one of the Women's Committee leaders, who will be referred to as Barbara, the reason she attended the Women's Committee meeting in the first place was for the educational content (A. Palacios, personal communication, April 5, 2018). Barbara explains,

> "I heard about the Women's Committee about two years ago, which is about the same I time I became involved with the organization [NICE). Back then, they [NICE] were hosting weekly meetings, where they invited speakers and programmed fun and insightful activities. To me, the Women's Committee was a space where I can learn how to be entrepreneur and become financial intendent"

She recalls that many female participants were excited about attending the weekly meetings and becoming involved with the organization as large (A. Palacios, personal communication, April 5, 2018). This drive was also leveraged to play a big role in the organizing for the Justice for Job Seekers (J4JS) campaign, which resulted in the collection of crucial information by the Women's Committee participants. According to Barbara, for about a year and a half, the Women's Committee space was flourishing and had been focusing on both women development and campaign implementation. My interview with the previous Community Organizer Coordinator corroborates this story; as he notes:

> "For a while, especially during the summer of 2016, there were a lot of women showing up for the [Women's] committee meetings. An old staff member programmed two months' worth of activities and presentations, all of them geared to the development of

immigrant women. There was a lot of interest among women, and the meetings were always full." (A. Palacios, personal communication, April 15, 2018).

However, after the staff member who programmed these activities left NICE a couple of months later, things started to change for the Women's Committee.

Turning Point For the Women's Committee

It was not until fall 2017 where the Women's Committee had begun to transform into something different. According to Barbara, "things started to change when men were allowed inside the group's meetings " (A. Palacios, personal communication, April 5, 2018). By this, Barbara is referring to the introduction of male NICE members into the Women's Committee. Overall, NICE's policies do not discriminate members from attending member-related meetings, therefore, if the group allows it, men can also participate in Women's Committee meetings. Speaking with Barbara and the past Community Organizing Coordinator, it is not clear how male members were included in the meetings in the first place. According to Barbara, the men simply started showing up, without an invitation, despite internal protests among women. On the other hand, the Community Organizing Coordinator mentioned that men were invited in by the women since they all ran in similar social circles. While there are different stories surrounding the arrival of male NICE members, both parties agree that the involvement of men in the space had become quite bothersome. According to Barbara,

> "The men are often disruptive in the meetings and talk over us [women]. This space was meant solely for women, but the men feel inclined to interject with their opinions and remarks, often times high jacking the decision-making process."

The past Community Organizing Coordinator also mentioned a similar observation, having been involved with previous meetings, he said:

"The men have started to feel ownership of the space and arrive dutiful on Tuesdays without having to be reminded. While they recognize this space is called the 'Women's Committee,'' they still want to come and be part of the social circle, especially since they have become friends with all of the women outside of NICE".

Both Barbara and the Community Organizing Coordinator echoed the same sentiments I noted during my observations of the Women's Committee space. Prior to these interviews, I had observed, and facilitated, a number of Women's Committee meetings. I noticed the same patterns of behavior from both male and female members that were involved with the Women's Committee. In all meetings, there was a mix of both men and women participants, and, on a number of occasions, men actually outnumbered women. In many of meetings, where the group had to come to a consensus, men often pitched their opinions over the women's feedback, discouraging women from raising their perspectives. Furthermore, the space had turned into a social gathering, where both men and women spent committee time conversing and having dinner.

The Women's Committee Today

In order to get a better sense of how members of the Women's Committee feel about the space, I surveyed participants during one of the weekly sessions. See appendix 1 for survey questions. The participants of this survey were regular attendees of the Women's Committee meeting. After observing several committee meetings, I noticed the number of attendees averaged around 10 to 15 members, where the participants were recurring. On the night I decided to interview participants of the Women's Committee, there were a total of 11 attendees, which included a mix of both women and men. Before administering the survey, I notified the 11 participants that their answers would be anonymous and that they may choose to refrain from

answering any questions they did not want to answer. The answers were meant to be open-ended, and after receiving the responses, I classified their answers under similar categories in order to better quantify the responses.

Some limitations with this survey collection are the number of participants, the manner of collecting data, and timeframe for data collection. For one, participants of the Women's Committee vary every session, therefore, it is impossible to collect the feedback of all members of the committee, since participation is optional and voluntary. Second, the manner of administering the survey also has some limitations. For one, the survey was administered physically, and participants had to write their responses in the space provided. The surveys could not have been delivered electronically since many member do not have access to a computer, nor do they have e-mail addresses. The issue with this form of recording answers is the fact that participants, rarely if at all, write their thoughts down from pen to paper. That is to say, many participants in the Women's Committee, as well as NICE's general membership, are not used to reading or writing on a daily level. Finally, time constraints also placed significant limitations to data collection. Since my role in NICE is two-fold, both acting as a consultant and working for the organization, I had to be conscious of dedicating appropriate committee time to programming and activities at hand.

Survey Results

Keeping in mind these limitations, the responses from the surveys were enlightening, and shed some insight on what members thought about the Women's Committee in general. The first question attempted to gauge participant's knowledge about the purpose and usefulness of the Women's Committee. The results are as follows:
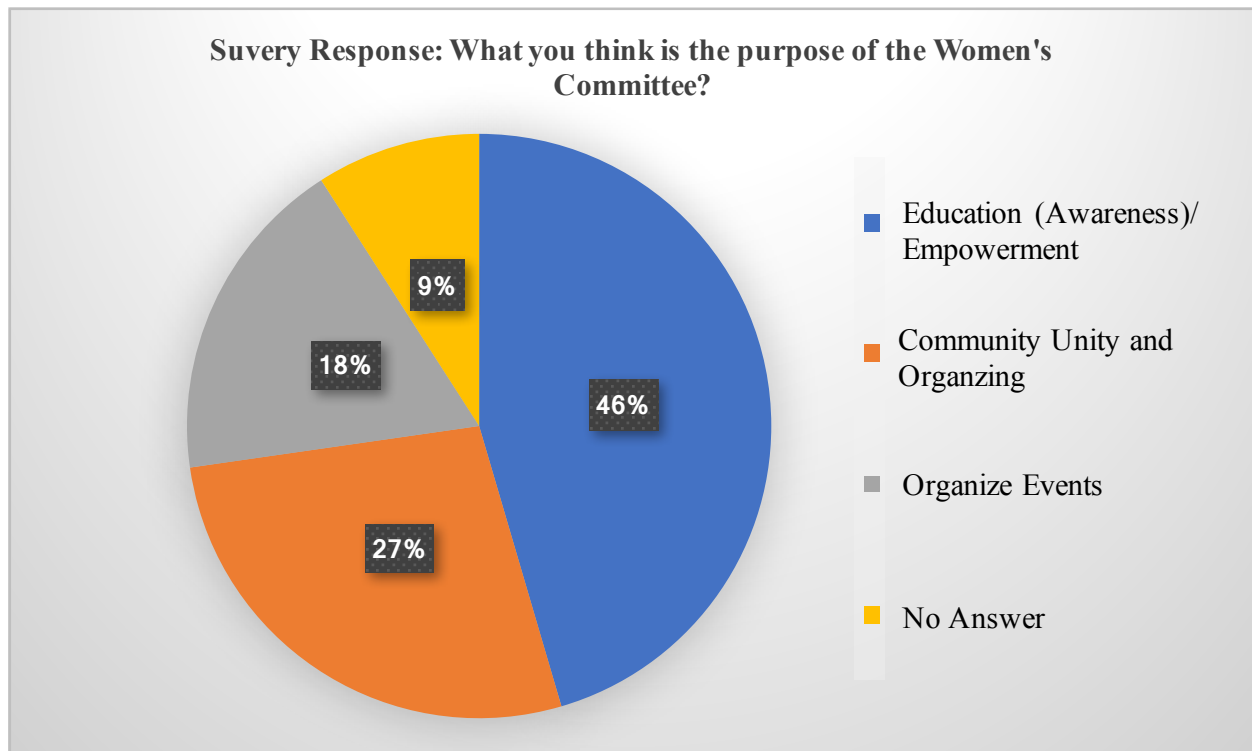
Figure 2: Survey Question 1 Results: What do you think is the purpose of the Women's Committee?

46% of survey participants said the purpose of the Women's Community was to educate and empower women, 27% of participants said the Women's Committee was meant to promote community unity and organizing, and the remaining 18% of participants said the purpose of the Women's Committee was to organize fun events. The remaining 9% did not answer the question. For this question, not one of the responses mentioned supporting policy or legislative campaigns.

The second question attempted to survey respondents about why they continue to keep coming to the Women's Committee. The results are as follows:
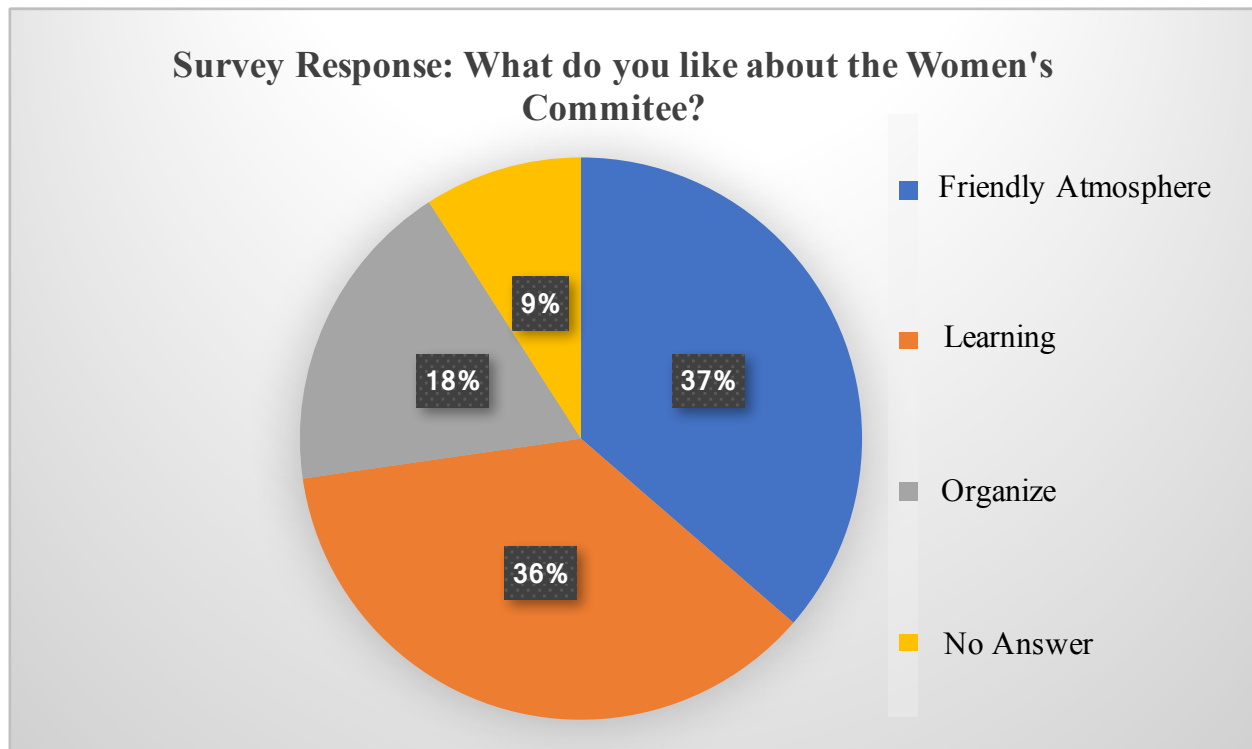
Figure 3: Survey Question 2 Results: What do you like about the Women's Committee?

37% of survey participants said that they like the Women's Committee friendly atmosphere, in which they feel comfortable engaging with others, 36% of respondents said they liked the committee because they learn a lot through the activities and workshops, 18% cited community organizing as the reason why they enjoy about the Women' Committees, and the remaining 9% did not answer the question.

The third question was intended to survey participants about what they dislike about the Women's Committee. The results are as follows:
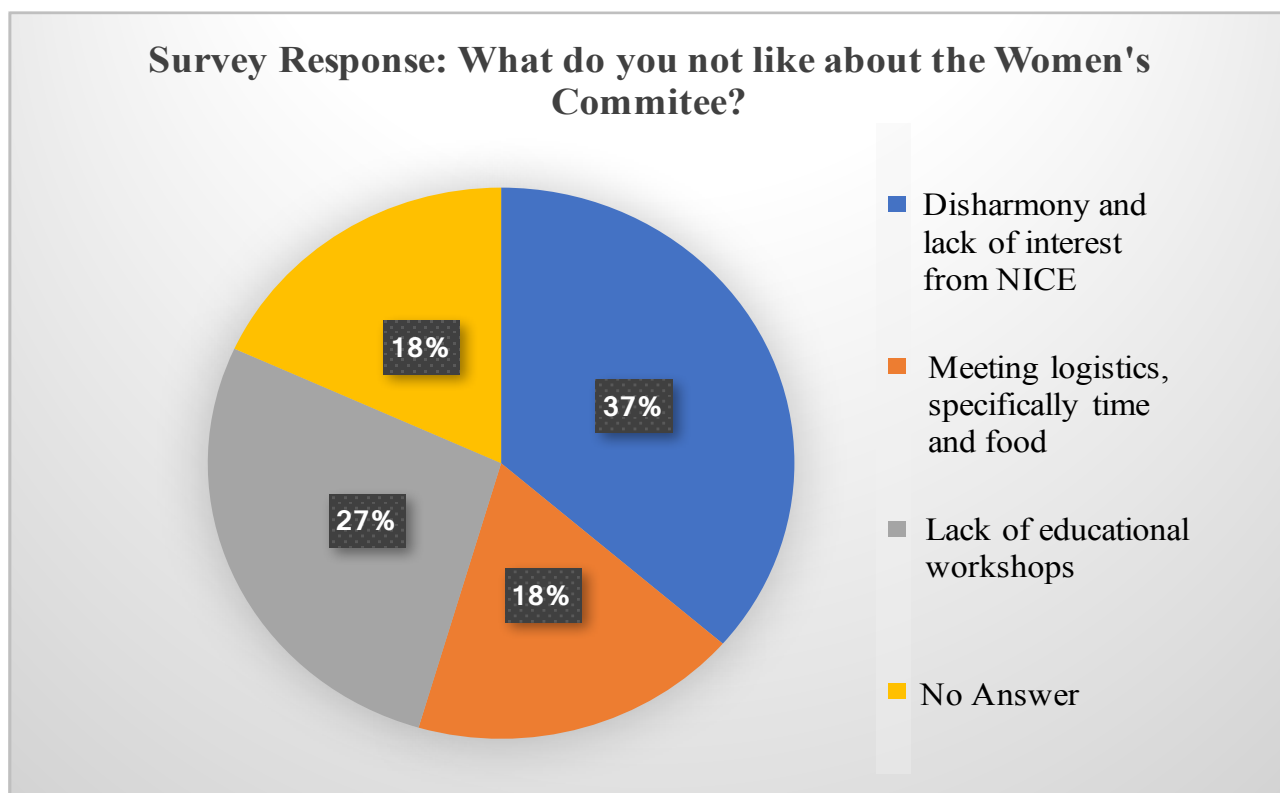
Survey Response: What do you not like about the Women's Commitee?

- ■ Disharmony and lack of interest from NICE — 37%
- ■ Meeting logistics, specifically time and food — 18%
- ■ Lack of educational workshops — 27%
- ■ No Answer — 18%

Figure 4: Survey Questions 4 Results: What do you not like about the Women's Committee?

37% of participants cited disharmony and lack of interest form members as something they do like about the Women's Committee. 18% of participants cited meeting logistics, such as time and lack of food, as something they dislike about the committee. Thirdly, 27% of participants cite the lack of educational workshops as something they do not like about the Women's Committee. Finally, 18% of participants left the question blank.

The fourth question, "Are you familiar with the legislative campaigns in which the Women's Committee participates in?" was intended to gauge participants knowledge about Women's Committee knowledge in legislative campaigns. The results are as follows:
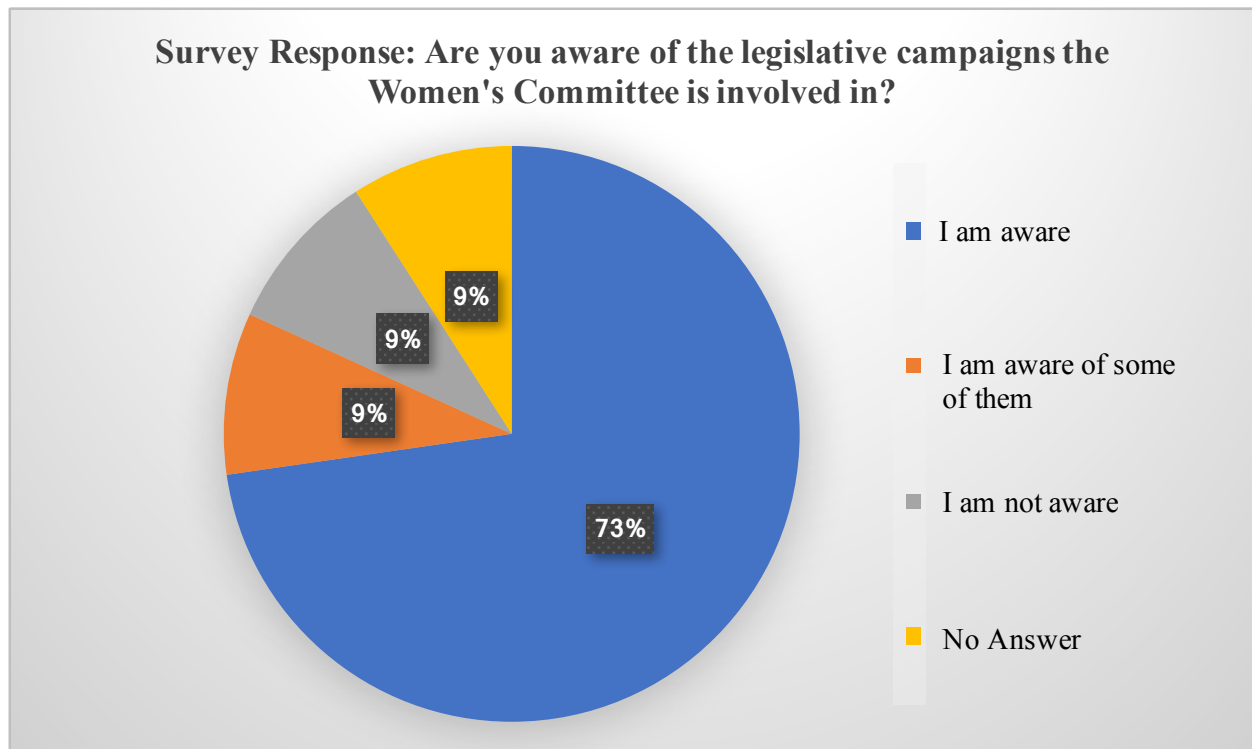
Figure 5: Survey Question 5 Results: Are you aware of the legislative campaigns the Women's Committee is involved in?

73% of Women's Committee participants are aware of the legislative campaigns that the committee is involved with. Only, 9% of participants are not aware, 9% are aware of some of the campaigns, and the remaining 9% did not answer the question.

Finally, the fifth question, "What type of role would you like to participate in as part of the campaigns?" was meant to ask participants what activities they would most likely be involved in. The results are as follows:
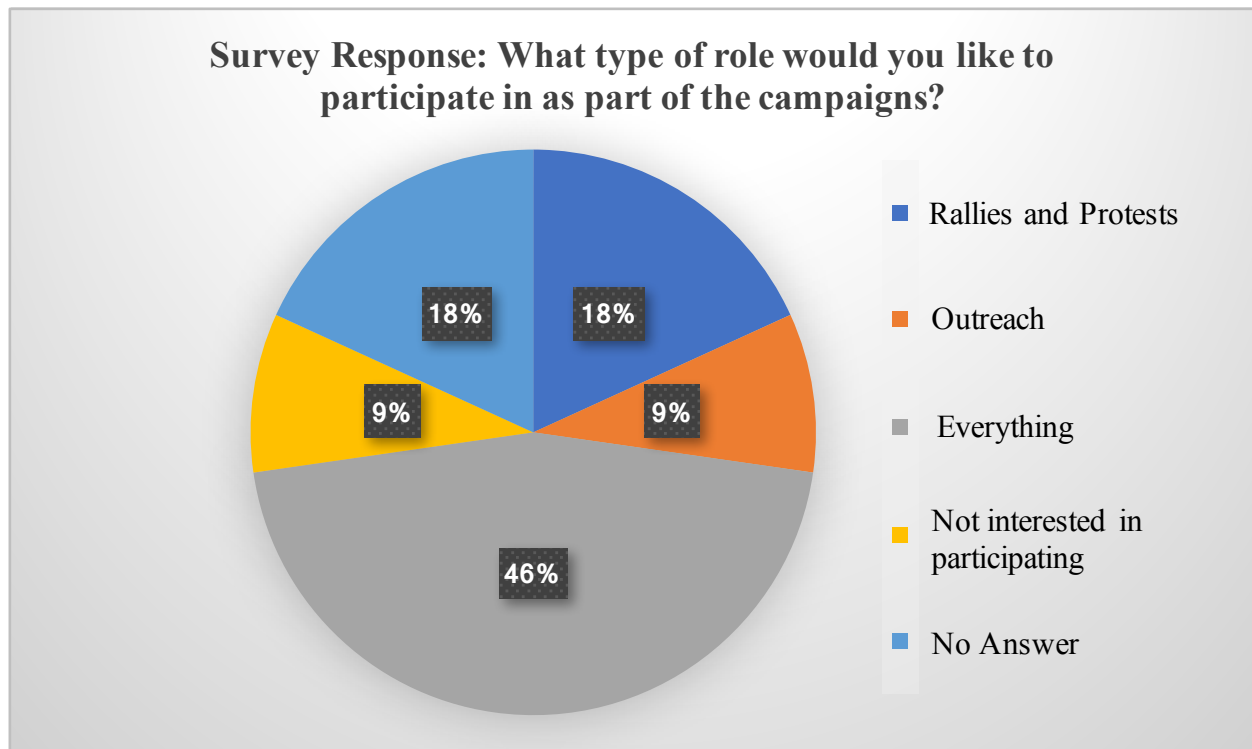
Survey Response: What type of role would you like to participate in as part of the campaigns?

- ■ Rallies and Protests
- ■ Outreach
- ■ Everything
- ■ Not interested in participating
- ■ No Answer

18% | 18%
9% | 9%
46%

Figure 6: Survey Question 6 Results: What type of role would you like to participate in as part of the campaigns?

In terms of majority, 46% of respondents said they would be interested in becoming involved in "everything," meaning any type of activities concerning legislative campaigns. 18% said they would be interested in rallies and protests and another 18% did not answer the question. Finally, 9% of participants said they would be interested in doing only outreach activities and the remaining 9% said they would rather not be involved with legislative campaign activities.

Survey Analysis

Per the survey, the results corroborate the general patterns that have been emerging among the Women's Committee as noted through interviews and personal observations. Survey question number one attempted to gauge the participants' perspectives on the Women's Committee goals. Per the question, half of the participants cited education and empowerment as the purpose of the Women's Committee, while 30% cited community unity and organizing and the last 20% said the purpose of the committee is to organize fun events. These responses mirror

the current situation of the Women's Committee. To many of the participants, they were first attracted to the space due to informational speakers, and while there are still speakers at the committee meetings from time to time, according to NICE's mission, the purpose of these spaces, as well as the organizing as a whole, is to address systemic problems of inequality in the community via community organizing. Therefore, for one, there is a discrepancy in what the committee members think the Women's Committee is meant for compared to the actual purpose of the space.

The second question attempted to evaluate member perspectives on why they keep coming back to the committee, probing what they liked about the committee space. According to the results, the majority of the responses signaled that participants have become increasingly involved with the committee since it gives them a sense of community and support, as well as an opportunity to learn new things. The "friendly atmosphere" component of the Women's Committee is essential since the committee is providing outlets for members that would otherwise go without social interactions. According to literature surrounding the mental health of Latino immigrants in the United States, the pressure of assimilating to a new country, as well as being bombarded with anti-immigration rhetoric, makes the transition not only difficult, but potentially hazardous (Sandoval, et al. 2012, 25). Per one group of scholars from Saint Louis University, who worked to create a mental health accessibility program for Latino immigrants in Saint Lousing, Missouri, the most impactful stressors immigrants face are "health, money, transportation, enjoyment of life, perception of safety, leisure, work, and sex (Sandoval, et al. 2012, 38). While this study cannot speak for all Latino immigrants across the U.S., it gives us a glimpse into some of the categorical stressors NICE members face on a day-to-day basis.

The third question attempted to identify negative feelings, if there were any, among the participants in the Women's Committee. The results of the survey stated that "disharmony and lack of interest among other NICE members" was the highest cited reason their dislike of the Women's Committee among the participants of the survey, followed by meeting logistics, such as time and food. The responses to this question were the most surprising, as I was expecting participants to comment on programming content, not programming logistics. According to the survey, participants are unsatisfied by the lack of attendance in the Women's Committee, as well as the disunity among current members in the committee. With regard to the "disunity" component, through my observations of past meetings, it is evident that "personal" and "professional" relationships often mix among the committee members. As mentioned before, NICE members have formed social circles outside organizational activities, thus social problems, along with strained social relationships, often interfere with committee programming. Additionally, "lack of interest among NICE members" refers to the small, and varied, amount of NICE members, especially women that go to committee meetings. For one, most members in the committee have been involved with the group for at least a year or more. While the average number of committee members often average 10 to 15 members, NICE members total in the hundreds. Committee members recognize the space is underused, and there is a feeling of expanding the space.

Finally, meeting logistics, particularly time and food, was the next highest dislike for the participants of the Women's Committee members. Women's Committee meetings are held Tuesday evenings, from 6-8PM. Tuesdays are the only dates that NICE can hold programming events for members. On Monday evenings, NICE hosts conversational English classed, and on Wednesday through Fridays, NICE holds OSHA training classes from 5-10PM at night. As a

result, Tuesdays are the only days programming can occur. The meetings are held during the evenings since the majority of our members work during the mornings and afternoons, leaving them leisure time for the evening. However, there are members that either work later in the evening or live in other boroughs, making the commute to the meetings difficult. In terms of food and snacks, the Women's Committee had been informally bringing food to the meetings since they believed that the administration was refusing to sponsor dinners for the Tuesday meetings. As a result, members were donating bags of cookies or other small goods to the group of 10-15 people. The provision of food is highly important to members, as many of them come straight from work to attend meetings, missing dinner time.

Lastly, the remaining two questions attempted to ask participants about the legislative campaigns the committee is involved in and how they would like to participate in the campaigns. Unsurprisingly, more than half of the participants were aware of the legislative campaigns the committee has been involved in. This is result was unsurprising to me since the previous sessions were solely focused on developing marketing materials for the campaigns, particularly for the Justice for Jobs Seekers (J4JS) campaign (see appendix 2). Additionally, the past sessions were focused on bringing a focus back to the campaigns. However, while committee activities were restructured to address legislative campaigns for the past four weeks prior to surveying participants, committee members still believed the purpose of the committee was meant to educate and empower members of the committee. Therefore, this can imply that members either receive some knowledge through legislative work or they are disregarding legislative work all together and solely value educational talks and workshops. More research should be done in whether or not members value campaign work all together.

Finally, the last question attempted to gauge whether or not there was interest among committee members to participate in campaign work and what they envision their role to be. Overwhelmingly, participants are interested in being involved with campaign work in some capacity, whether it be through rallies, protests, outreach, or the combination of all three. Of the responses, 9% said they were not interested in being involved with campaign work, and the remaining 9% did not answer the question. These results imply there is an interest in being involved in programming outside of NICE, where members can disseminate information they have learned to the surrounding community.

Campaigns

Justice for Job Seekers (J4JS)

The Justice for Job Seekers (J4JS) campaign was first started in 2010 when NICE discovered there was a need to investigate, and identify, fraudulent employments agencies that targeted predominantly low-income and immigrant communities. The New York City Department of Business, defines employment agencies as "any business, that for a fee, will procure or attempt to procure employment for individuals, or will assist employers in procuring employees" ("About Employment Agencies", n.d.). In 2012, NICE and Urban Justice Center (UJC), a community-based organization that provides legal assistance to vulnerable New York City residents, co-authored an investigative research report that exposed the predatory activity of employment agencies around the Borough of Queens area.

The data gathered for the report, titled *Dreams and Schemes*, was a result of the organizing of NICE members and staff. Specifically, from June to August of 2011, ten NICE members, predominantly of Mexican and Ecuadorian origins, posed as undercover jobs seekers, and visited "21 employment agencies, 13 Immigration Service Providers (ISPs), and 17

immigration attorney offices along Roosevelt Avenue and adjacent streets in Jackson Heights, Corona, Elmhurst, Queens" ("Dreams and Schemes, 2012, p. iii). NICE members were given scripts and aliases, and were tasked in asking specific questions to employees of these business, particularly inquiring about the jobs that were offered, costs of services, potential wages or salaries, and age limits. After NICE members finished visiting a facility, they noted the responses on a questionnaire form, which served at the data collection for this project.

Recommendations and Implications for the Women's Committee

Recent update on the Women's Committee

Via executive decision by NICE's Executive Director, the Women's Committee was recently replaced by a new committee space called, *Reuniones de Trabajo*, also known in English as work meetings. In the Latino culture, "reuniones de trabajo" implies a productive business meeting where people gather to strategize. According to the Executive Director, the primary decision to replace the committee was to address the lack of staff, primarily the community organizer position. The new structures is meant to promote productivity, mediate internal committee disputes, leverage the mix of male and female members, and refocus the member's energy promoting legislative campaigns. Like the Women's Committee, the work meetings will be held during the same date and time and NICE's administration will provide dinners to the members. To the members, the Women's Committee simply had a name change, since the membership and programming will carry over from previous committee sessions. Therefore, keeping in mind lessons learned from interviewing the same participants in the Women's Committee, the structure for the work meetings should encapsulates some of that feedback.

The Importance of a Community Organizer

All things considering, this particular time in NICE's tenure is extraordinarily unique, thus providing an explanation for the disarray in the Women's Committee. As a community organization, NICE employs a community organizer as the front person between the organization and the members. Community organizers, and community organizing, in general, is defined as a people, or system, that amplifies the voices of a wider community group to instigate progressive change (Stoecker, 2009, p. 24). Ideally, the role of the community organizer is to "propel" the voices of the people, not lead them (Stoecker, 2009, p. 24). Some examples of how a community organizer may achieve their goals is by encouraging community members to attend meetings, develop productive strategies, and train members to become leaders. After that, the community members must then "choose an issue, develop a stance on the issue, and design a strategy, and lead the community effort" (Stoecker, 2009, p. 24). While the responsibilities often vary depending on the organization, community organizers at NICE are specifically tasked to give direction to the members in order to create productive change.

Considering the importance of the community organizer in NICE, it is crucial to analyze the impacts of both the presence, and the absence, of the organizer in member committee spaces. According to interviews with the Women's Committee member and the previous Community Organizing Coordinator, the reason why the committee failed to function productively was due to the persistent arrival of male members. While the presence of the men was disruptive, it is interesting that neither Barbara, nor the previous Community Organizer Coordinator, mentioned the absence of the community organizer in this specific space. As stated previously, the sole programming authority of the Women's Committee space was NICE's OSHA Instructor and then-Community Organizer.

This staff member, who shall be referred to as "M.O.", took ownership of the space for the last two years. As a community member, previous domestic worker, and in the same age group as most NICE members, M.O. was the perfect candidate to operate as an organizer for the organization. M.O. arrived to NICE in 2016 when the organization was experiencing changes in administration and leadership, including moving to a new office location and hiring a new Executive Director. To many members, this pivotal time in NICE's history was seen as the new beginnings for the organization and thus, M.O., along with other members who joined during this time, saw this period as the golden age of NICE. This new change inspired the sense of ownership that is evident among many members and even staff, such as M.O.

For a long time, NICE administration depended on M.O. to run the Women's Committee space. As a result, M.O. programmed activities the best way she knew how, and that was by making it a space for informative speakers, dinners, and group discussion. Furthermore, M.O. was instrumental in gathering, and encouraging, the participation of NICE members in the Women's Committee space. However, as time passed, the lines that distinguished between NICE staff and NICE members began to blur. M.O. positioned herself as a member of the Women's Committee, and not as a community organizer. During the meetings I observed, M.O. was contributing to the meetings as a member, rather than facilitating as staff. At many meetings, M.O. insisted on potluck dinners, member excursions to the park, and fun parties for Cinco de Mayo. These incidents were further perpetuated after the resignation of NICE's Community Organizing Coordinator in February 2018. While I was tasked to steer this committee towards more productive planning after his departure, I was met with resistance from both the committee and M.O. For three months, NICE was left without an organizer, and the impacts of that missing role was felt greatly.

Recommendation #1: Programming

It is without a doubt that members of the former Women's Committee see the meetings as a way to become more educated and empowered. The members value activities that increase their educational capacity and awareness of available resources. From previous Women Committee meetings, the members were most engaged with guest speakers and activities that provided direction. However, activities that required circle discussions and asking for direct feedback from members often required an exceptional amount of time to facilitate, with little to no pay offs. However, direct engagement is important as it increases members feelings of being influential and included in a work space. In fact, according to one scholar that gauges quality participation, "exposure to high-quality participation" and "exposure to comfortable and convenient meetings" make participants more eager to participate with an organization and have positive experiences (Halverson, 2003, p. 541). Therefore, future meetings should encompass both a learning and training aspect, in addition to a time where members are permitted to provide feedback on the decision-making process as part of the overall committee. Some recommended learning and training activities are leadership development, public speaking workshops, and outreach trainings. These activities will not only increase member's educational capacity, but will also train new community leaders and advocates for the NICE. In terms scheduling below is a sample agenda for a future meeting:

Time	Activity
6 – 6:30 PM	Introduction and Dinner
6:30 – 7:00 PM	Educational Presentation
7:00 – 7:30 PM	Direction Activity
7:30 – 8:00 PM	Feedback from Members

Recommendation #2: Leveraging Member Leaders

       Part of the success that occurred in the Women's Committee was leveraging committee member leaders. During past meetings, I met with member leaders to establish an agenda and programming content. Incorporating feedback from member leaders helped in two ways: (1) this helped cultivate and develop leadership abilities among the leaders and (2) this allowed members to take ownership of the committee space. With regard to the first benefit, engaging with members in a leadership capacity allowed members to cultivate their leadership capacity via strategic planning during the decision-making process. This engagement allows members a space to grow into their leadership capabilities and reach other community members directly. This direct engagement between community members is especially critical among NICE members, who work in hazardous working environments. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), "occupational safety and health (OSH) organizations often find that the approaches and networks they successfully use to promote OSH among U.S.-born workers are ineffective at reaching Latino immigrants" (Flynn et al., 2013, p. 33). As a result, NIOSH concluded that effective outreach and education are done via institutional Latino organization and community organizations (Flynn et al., 2013, p. 33).

       The second benefit to involving member leaders in the planning of weekly meetings is that they start to develop ownership of the space and activities. Developing ownership and responsibility for a space allows members to work more productively and efficiently. During my observations and involvement with the Women's Committee, meetings that were planned in conjunction with members beforehand ran more smoothly compared to the first meetings I programmed on my own. During collaborative meetings, member leaders took extra precautions to engage more directly with activities, honored allocation of time for each activity, and ensured

that all committee members had an opportunity to speak during crucial decisions making conversations.

Recommendation #3: Re-introducing the Women's Committee

While introducing the work meetings in place of the Women's Committee meetings addresses current needs in productivity and efficiency, it is highly recommended to re-start the Women's Committee in the near future. The Women's Committee has a rich history in NICE, being one of the longest running committees in the organization's history that meets on a consistent basis. Though the committee's productivity and efficiency had been decreasing in recent months, the space still provided crucial social spaces to participants. Furthermore, the female members of this committee have historically worked on countless campaigns on the local level, volunteering for many roles in promoting legislative campaigns. For example, the female members of the committee conducted the mystery shopping investigations for the Justice for Job Seekers (J4JS) campaigns. Additionally, female members of the committee also volunteered to create, and promote, NICE marketing materials during outreach events. Finally, women of the committee also organized to provide food and snacks during every Women's Committee meetings.

These patterns of volunteerism are not specific to NICE, but in fact, echo work done by women in civil rights movements globally. In terms of achieving civil rights for immigrants, women have been at the forefront of the movement and should continue to have a space among leadership. The current immigration movement is different from many other civil rights movements since there is an "ample supply of female leaders, the movement is relatively new, and feminist consciousness among immigrant women have increased" (Milkman and Terriquez, 2012, p. 726). Furthermore, immigrant Latina women, unlike immigrant Latino men, require

spaces that amplify their voice Immigrant Latino men find their community and social support through male-dominated jobs, such as construction, which reinforces their "ranchero masculinity" (Milkman and Terriquez, 2012, p. 726). In contrast, Latina immigrants work predominately in "interactive service jobs" where they are exposed to ideas of equality and freedom, but cannot practice them (Milkman and Terriquez, 2012, p. 726).

Organizing spaces such as the Women's Committee, offers women an opportunity to engage with one another and larger institutional and social systems. Additionally, work by the Women's Committee can focus on problems that have affected, and continue to affect, women in the Latino community. Problems such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, wage theft, and employment discrimination, continue to marginalize Latina immigrants. While NICE is strategically placed around informal day laborer stops, those stops are disproportionally frequented by men, not women. Ignoring female construction workers further perpetuates their invisibility and does a disservice to construction industry reform as a whole. Thus, outreach by the Women's Committee is essential in identifying, and targeting, informal spaces in which women congregate, in order to provide equal and fair services to all immigrants.

However, in order for the Women's Committee to function in the manner it was meant to, re-structuring of the space will require several systems of accountability and administrative intervention. During my observations of the Women's Committee meetings, it was clear that the women felt the administration was not invested in activities, thus they took ownership of programming of activities. To many of the members, as determined by the survey, they felt the space was meant to provide social outlets and a space of educational awareness. Thus, their programming led to recruiting guest speakers and potluck dinners. However, when either staff or myself, became involved with the meetings, there was a sense of collaborations and productivity.

Therefore, the new Community Organizer will be integral in introducing administration involvement. Furthermore, internal systems of accountability will be essential in keeping members accountable and responsible for committee work. Leveraging member leaders will allow members to take ownership of the new space, and ensure that goals will be met in an efficient manner.

Conclusion

New Immigrant Community Empowerment is an organization that works to address both immediate and long-term needs of their members. NICE prioritizes both legislation and community work, believing greatly in the power of amplifying the voices of their members. In a time where anti-immigrant rhetoric and xenophobic attitudes are at an all-time high, organizations like NICE are paramount in protecting the human and civil rights of immigrants. Internal, member-organized bodies, such as the Women's Committee, are especially important in advocating change and initiating outreach to community members.

As such, administrative staff and organization members must work cohesively in order to make impactful change in the community. Some ways in which staff and members can work together are by creating productive programming and leveraging members leaders. Creating programs and activities that are both engaging and educative will not only encourage more participation from NICE members, but will also simultaneously train them to become leaders. Secondly, leveraging member can lead to an increase in member participation and productivity. Community leaders can encourage other community members to become involved with NICE by making them comfortable and empowered. Furthermore, involving member leaders in the decision-making process will allow for NICE members to take ownership of the committee spaces, contribution to the overall productivity and harmony of the spaces. Finally, with the

arrival of the new community organizer, NICE should considered re-introducing the Women's Committee as it existed before. In the current immigrant rights movement, women have been leading the charge in defending, and fighting, for their rights. It is only appropriate that this space continues to amplify the voices of female members in NICE.

While challenges will always arise, in both administrative management and community organizing, these recommendations can potentially aid in the future implementation of programming and community organizing of NICE members. New Immigrant Community Empowerment has worked to become flexible and proactive in ensuring members are always their first priority.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

1. What do you think is the purpose of the Women's Committee?

2. What do you like about the Women's Committee?

3. What do you not like about the Women's Committee?

4. Are you familiar with the legislative campaigns in which the Women's Committee participates in?

5. What type of role would you like to participate in as part of the campaigns?

Appendix 2: Women's Committee Marketing Materials for J4JS