

# Assessing Top Issues Design + Log

*April 2018*

**Accountable:** Each lab member



How might we sustain JwJ given shifts in the 21st Century Labor Movement?

# How Might We align our strategies with the issues working people really care about?

**If** we clarify that the top concerns of everyday people we know is that if one thing goes wrong (missed bus, lose job, medical bill, etc...) their entire economic security will be disrupted and that they think it's their fault, **then** we will be able to design experiments that test our ability to relate to people based on this issue(s).

Hypothesis 1: Many people hold idea that if one thing goes wrong, their economic security falls apart.

Hypothesis 2: Many people think that if something goes wrong, it is their own fault rather than the system's fault.

## Experiment Design

<b>Participants</b> <i>Who is involved in the implementation of this experiment?</i>	CURRENT: Smiley, Joe, Mackenzie, Stephanie, Natalie, Mina, Dominique, Brenden, Sam
<b>How will you test your hypothesis?</b>  <i>What is the action or activities that you'll undertake to complete this experiment?</i>  <i>Include date benchmarks for each steps and document the people responsible.</i>	Each of us will have 1-on-1s with one person that we know to assess not only their values but what they are concerned about.
How will you <b>measure the outcomes</b> of this	GOAL   MEASURE

experiment?

*What would success look like?*

*What are the minimum standards of success?*

*What would failure look like?*

*How will you collect the data or complete the analysis?*

Goals:

Clarity around how non-activist people/organic leaders frame their top concerns in their own words

Measures:

- Number of times specific issue frames came up

Failure would be indicated by a complete lack of clarity around how people frame the issues they care about. (Fairly low threshold.)

## Data

*Enter and store your data and observations from your test here. We don't need a transcript of your one-on-ones, just highlights.*

*Sample:*

*Smiley- My person just wanted to feel respected, at home and at work.*

Dominique - My person ([Rolanda](#)) is a black woman in her early 20s and college graduate. She is a PT Activities Specialist for Sheltering Arms in the Bronx, NY and a PT Contributor Writer for a Blog. Has been in and out of jobs since she graduated from undergrad in 2016 but she can't find a decent job in her field. Some days when she thinks she has enough money to pay for groceries and phone bill and other necessities, she feels overwhelmed because if something happens to pop up unexpectedly like a medical bill, she never has enough money saved for those things. Even if she was getting a salary job, she feels like she would still want more. She feels she should have a savings, an emergency account, more income god forbid if something happens shell be ok. What Rolanda feels like is limiting her from being financially stable is: one she doesn't have a FT job and two she doesn't get paid enough hourly. She gets paid 15 an hour now. Wants FT salary job eventually. Feels like people (jobs) don't give people fair chances. Jobs don't look at all options. They don't give opportunities. Jobs want you to have a million years of experience at such a young age. The government and companies have the money to pay people more but they focus on the wrong things. Rolanda believes that they don't put money towards things they are supposed to. Rolanda said at one point she doesn't even know what they do with the money. Rolanda hasn't taken any action but is open to it. She wants to take action but haven't received an opportunity to do so. She said no one ever approached her about it

Mack - Person #1 is approaching 60 and works as a non-union roofer, which is seasonal so collects unemployment in off months. Worries about getting injured or just not being healthy enough to keep working another 5 years until he can retire. Also worries that after he retires SS won't be enough and

he'll have to move to public housing. No savings because he uses it up in off months to supplement unemployment and make ends meet. He has some anger at the boss of his small company, who he feels like knows he needs the job so disrespects him. He also has a healthy general anger at bosses and politicians in general who he feels like don't care about people like him. But he still mostly blames himself for not finishing college or figuring out a better job when he was younger and had more options. Excited by stories of working people standing up together, but doesn't feel like it could happen where he is. Assumes apathy from his coworkers.

Mack - Person # 2 just turned 30, has been working mostly retail and service jobs since college. Identity is as a dancer/drag performer, not through paid work, so just wants something steady and about 30 hours per week. Instability of retail and service jobs has been really hard - lots of short shifts, changing schedules, etc made it a struggle to stay afloat and keep up dance commitments. Also health issues have caused her to lose jobs when she missed shifts. She's tried for some more stable jobs but laid off both times. She worries that she'll never find something stable enough for her to be able to both take care of her health and stay active as a dancer. Also worries that people think she's a loser for being 30 and still bouncing around PT service and retail jobs. Has a general sense that corporations don't care about people, but goes into each job actually pretty excited about who she's working for and then feels like it's her fault when it doesn't work out. Addendum after reading Brenden's: currently working at Trader Joe's in DC. They promised 30 hours per week through full 8 hour shifts and schedules 3 weeks in advance, start at \$15 in DC.

Smiley- My person turns 50 this year. He is a Black man with a full time job. It's not union, but it sustains them. He's a paralegal, and his wife works at a local elementary school. He spoke less about his work and more about the economic and mental burden of taking care of his mother (who just had surgery and is in rehabilitation), his wife (who has chronic, debilitating back problems), and his two kids--one of whom suffers anxiety. His wife is an Irish immigrant without citizenship, and since the election of Trump he has been worried about leaving the country and not being able to get back in. So they are forgoing returning this year even though it's her father's 90th (?) birthday. He hasn't been able to get out much to visit family, friends and is pretty isolated. And he's also really angry about being limited in this way. He no longer talks about his own dreams for the future.

Natalie: My person is in his mid-thirties with some college and is a [graphic designer](#) for a company that does market research for major consumer good corporations (Nestle, Pepsi, Phyiser). His salary is low and the job is very precarious with recent furloughs and threats of layoffs for years. Although he wants a better job, he worries that if he left he would be able to find anything better. Feeling that he should be grateful for what he has because at least he has health insurance (which he pays mostly for). Feels like getting a good job is based on knowing the right person or people, and says he doesn't have time to do the networking type events because he has kids. He knows that corporations his company works for make money off of them for keeping their margins razor thin, but he thought that his company sales staff should do a better job negotiating the bids (blames other individuals in his company not the system). When asked if there was anything that could be done to change the system so that his company do better, he thought taking action against the system is too big - and so he feels like the sacrifice is living with the status quo and feeling lucky for what he does have.

Adam: My person is a crossing guard at my children's school. The DC Department of Transportation oversees the crossing guard program, but he works for an agency that supplies crossing guards through a contract with DDOT. After his morning crossing guard duties are done, he works as a DDOT traffic officer, directing traffic as needed. He then returns to the crossing guard duties in the afternoon at school dismissal time. His shifts as a crossing guard are dependable, every school day for an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon. But his other work for DDOT is variable, and he can't really be sure when he works. When special work comes up, like the cherry blossom parade, his agency asks for volunteers to work overtime, but if they don't receive enough volunteers, they assign overtime. He has been at the job since January and feels as if he has security for his crossing guard work because DCPS likes to keep the same crossing guard on the job in order to ensure kids' safety. But he is very worried about (a) getting enough work to make ends meet the rest of the time and (b) whether there will be enough work over the summer. He also says that he has a hard time planning his life because of the variable shifts and the possibility of mandatory weekend work. He says that some of the crossing guards are union, and that he thinks they have a better deal, but he's not sure about that. He'd like to be part of that deal, but doesn't know if it's possible.

Sam: white woman in her mid-forties. Single parent. Works as a special education teacher but wants to transition to counseling for better stability (work wise and pay wise). Very family-oriented both in aspirations and worries. Wants to become a counselor near where her third-oldest daughter will go to high school this year so she can become fully independent from her ex-husband. Does what help she can on the weekends, things like donate blood or help make bag lunches for the needy, but otherwise doesn't pay attention to the news or the wider world because it's too depressing and it would over stress her. Is worried how the world is compared to when she was a child and how it has steadily gotten worse through her oldest daughter growing up and now her youngest child. There isn't any other direct family where she lives so she often relies on a few very close friends to help as well, and also that has meant her children taking on responsibilities very quickly since there's 4 of them.

Steph: My person is an unmarried mother of two who lives in the most expensive part of Maui, an expensive island in Hawaii. Her live-in partner has a full-time job, and provides most of the household income; she functions as the primary caregiver of their children. However, they both recognize that his income alone isn't enough to cover the family's basic needs, and when not preoccupied with family issues, she frequently works. Over the past 6 years I have known her, she has had to quit many jobs to tend to family emergencies.

She's 24, and very optimistic about life and the world. She just got a part-time job delivering bottled water, and another part-time waitressing gig at a restaurant a friend manages. Both of her children are in school, which will make managing her schedule much easier than it used to be, and her partner's mother is always available to help with childcare.

I ask her what she worries about most right now. She says she worries about having leave work again in order to take care of her kids, or other family members. Her mother has serious health problems, and her sister is having problems with her marriage.

When we talk about the past, she expresses regret about quitting jobs, but acknowledges that she had no other choice in most of the situations. She's aware that the jobs most readily available to her right now don't offer benefits, or much of an opportunity to "move up." She expresses a desire to feel respected in her work, and thinks that there is a relationship between the absence of respect, and constantly-shifting schedules and lack of benefits.

She's torn between trying to find a "good" job at a hotel, and finding the right restaurant job where she can bring home a lot of cash, that offers a flexible, less demanding schedule, so she can spend time with her kids. When I ask her if she has any concerns about the former, she says that there are two: a) she has an uneven work history and only has a GED, so she would need an inside reference, i.e. ask a relative/family friend who works there to vouch for her, and b) the assistance she receives (subsidized housing---maybe more) may be in jeopardy.

When we talk about the future, she can seem wary. Her relationship with her partner is complicated, and she worries that if she doesn't contribute financially, she'll never be able to decide how their money is spent. On the other hand, she is deeply concerned that she won't be able to make it financially as a single mother. We discuss how people make themselves more "employable"---continuing education, volunteer work, etc. She is interested; however, with everything that she has to consider, the idea itself seems overwhelming.

Brenden: Talked to a longtime acquaintance (30 y/o white male) who has worked on and off in different retail and grocery stores in RVA. He is currently working at Trader Joe's and is considering a switch to a grocery store that is closer but pays \$3/less per hour. Weighing the benefits of not having to drive to work vs. making less, while still pondering the implications of trying to get more education in the longrun. He has suffered from on and off depression, which he cites as sometimes compounded by not being able to get a better job or career. He hadn't thought much about how much he's being paid but thought that his current employer seemed fair at \$13/hr. Says he doesn't pay attention trends too much but if someone mentioned a campaign that would result directly in him making more money, he'd pay attention and play a role. He also thought a group that talked about job opportunities at other places, weighed the pros and cons of each, would be beneficial.

Mina: Talked to a friend in her late 20s who currently works a full time job, but the long term funding for her position is not guaranteed and she is trying to save up for a grad school program in hopes of being able to get a more stable and better paying job. Her plan is to take grad school classes at the same time as continuing her full time job. Even though this will be difficult and she won't have much time for anything else, she cannot afford to just go to grad school without a full time job in order to be able to cover her own living expenses, pay back her student loans from college and also offer financial support to her family.

## Analysis

*Enter and store insights/opinions about what you heard here.*

*Sample:*

*Smiley- All 3 of the people I spoke with seemed to just want to feel valued, to have dignity. So I think respect/dignity are the top frames that move people.*

Dominique - My person ([Rolanda](#)) wants to feel valued with all work she does by employers offering a living wage and benefits. Does Not blame herself for being for her socioeconomic status. Rolanda

wants to make sure she is able to pay all of her bills and still have savings for rainy days or leisure activities. She also believes that all people should have a fair shot at employment.

Mack - Both people feel vulnerable because of instability of work, are embarrassed about how vulnerable and close to the margins they are and blame themselves. Stability/security could be the motivating frames, as well as something that communicates it's not just them and it's not all their fault.

Smiley- Security and Mobility seem to be the top concerns of my person. He wants to be able to travel and give his kids a good shot without having to worry about the care of his mother and/or immigration status of his wife.

Sam-independence and stability are two major themes. Independence from people who she knows do not have her best interest in mind and independence from stressful money situations. She feels she's finally near a point where things can be really stable for the first time ever in her life but she's well aware there is no guarantee with that.

Steph - Stability and independence are top concerns that my person articulated. She also has a desire to be respected and valued as an employee.

Brenden- Person seems to put it all on himself more than anybody, says things like it took him a long time to get "his shit together" and is still trying to.

Mina- The person that I talked to deeply values family, and is wanting to be able to gain financial stability in order to be able to offer more financial support for them. She wants to be able to find a career path where she will be able to have more permanent employment and a path to be able to move up, instead of being unsure of her future at her job.

Adam-My person didn't blame himself for situation, but is unsure how to make life more stable. He thinks the people in unions who have his job have better security but doesn't have any idea how to go about becoming part of a union.

Natalie: General sense of instability both in his own job and that other jobs wouldn't be any better. My person's narrative is largely about individuals needing to pull themselves up - being able to do it for yourself or knowing the right person that has more power/more connections

## Debrief, Reflection, Learnings

*We will complete this as a group at the next meeting.*

*What were the most impactful 3-5 lessons learned from this test?*

(Here)  
Starting with listening brought insights to us.

*Be concise!*

Stability, independence and family values were some of the themes.

Record any **decisions made** during or upon finishing this test. For example, "We will now keep meeting notes for all of our internal and external meetings."

What **questions** do you have as a result of your experiment?

Did your test disprove your hypothesis?

Will you do another iteration of this experiment? (Yes/No)