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We Can't Win This on Our Own: Unions, Firms, and Mobilization of External Allies in Labor Disputes

Marc Dixon[a] and Andrew W. Martin[b]

Abstract

To cope with steep losses in membership and eroding legal protections, some unions have begun to look outward for help. Scholars likewise point to broad-based coalitions as a potential route to labor's revitalization. Yet surprisingly little is known about union coalition work, from when and why it occurs to what union allies typically bring to the table. We take up these issues with a unique dataset on strike events from the 1990s and 2000s, contributing to labor and social movement research. First, we show that despite considerable academic interest in union outreach to other social movements, this phenomenon remains fairly rare. Second, our findings demonstrate how the immediate threat to unions posed by employer intransigence matters not just for the mobilization of external allies, as the social movement literature would expect, but also for the assistance brought to bear by those allies, which has received relatively little attention from scholars. Third, although we find important distinctions in unions' propensity for outreach, results suggest a more nuanced picture of union activity than previously conceived. In various ways during strike events, both social movement unions (typically highlighted in the literature) and declining industrial unions are turning to coalition partners.

Keywords

coalitions, social movements, strikes, unions

Observers of organized labor agree that today's political and economic climate poses significant challenges for labor unions. From lockouts to organizing drives, a consensus is emerging among labor scholars that unions that are able to reach out and mobilize external allies will fare better in this difficult context (Turner and Cornfield 2007). Many scholars point to broad-based coalitions that involve other social movements as a prescription to halt decades of union decline (Clawson 2003; Sullivan 2009). More generally, social movement scholars recognize that coalition partners provide considerable resources, material and symbolic, to activist groups, and can bring significant pressure to bear on collective action targets (Almeida 2008; Staggenborg 1986; Van Dyke and McCammon 2010).

Despite the pressing need for unions to look outward for new sources of strength, there is surprisingly little evidence of cross-movement alliances beyond notable case

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studies (e.g., Luce 2004; Nissen 2004). Indeed, it is not clear how often unions reach out to other parties, why they do so in some contexts but not others, and the types of resources union allies typically bring. Social movement research offers important insight in this regard, suggesting how organizational and environmental factors, and external threats in particular, affect coalition formation (McCammon and Campbell 2002; Van Dyke 2003). Applying these perspectives to the recent labor experience, and taking seriously important organizational distinctions highlighted by labor researchers (Martin and Dixon 2010; Milkman 2006; Voss and Sherman 2000), could provide important and novel insight into union outreach and coalition processes more generally.

In this article, we advance labor and social movement scholarship by analyzing the influence of union organizational capacity, external threats, opportunities, and more proximate firm characteristics on union outreach and contributions of labor allies during strike events.[1] We use an original dataset of U.S. strikes between 1993 and 2003 that improves upon existing sources by allowing us to draw union organizational distinctions as well as consider several event-specific features, notably the types of contributions made by allies across a variegated testing ground (Southworth and Stepan-Norris 2009). Our findings provide a more systematic account of the level of coalition activity by unions, the types of resources secured from partners, and new insights into how threat and opportunities can work for (and against) coalition work among social movements more broadly.

LABOR AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT RESEARCH

Union Capacity

For much of the postwar era, labor turned inward, often spurning various social movement alliances. Recently, however, a number of labor organizations, mostly operating in the service sector, have moved toward an inclusive, social movement framework by making appeals to worker dignity, employing disruptive protest tactics, and forging alliances with religious, civic, and social change groups (Martin 2008). Alongside the use of direct action tactics, coalition work is one of the defining features of this new brand of unionism, what many have termed "social movement unionism" (Almeida 2008). Such labor outreach was a key aim of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations' (AFL-CIO) progressive New Voice leadership during the 1990s (Van Dyke, Dixon, and Carlon 2007).

The exemplary case of labor outreach is the Justice for Janitors (JFJ) campaign carried out by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). In recent decades, JFJ has relied on broad community coalitions and national and international union solidarity actions to organize workers in commercial cleaning services across major U.S. cities. The sight of clergy, civil rights activists, and mostly immigrant janitors marching through the streets of Houston, an improbable context for union success, and ultimately winning a collective bargaining agreement, would have been unthinkable 25 years ago (Lerner 2007). Clawson's (2003) study of innovative labor campaigns likewise reveals the power of broad, labor-based coalitions where unions have aligned with students, community, and civil rights organizations.

Given the sea change in labor's orientation implied by this kind of outreach, it is not surprising that these developments have commanded significant attention. Several studies point to outreach as an important source of union renewal (Clawson 2003; Sullivan 2009), describe the organizational transformation needed to undertake this more activist brand of unionism (Lopez 2004; Voss and Sherman 2000), and identify the particular unions that most clearly fit the social movement billing (Martin 2008; Milkman 2006).[2] Still, beyond important case studies (Krinsky and Reese 2006; Luce 2004; Nissen 2004; Obach 2004; Voss and Sherman 2000), labor mobilizations that actually involve coalition

partners are not well-documented.[3] One of the few recent estimates comes from Martin's (2008) survey of contemporary organizing among 70 large local unions. Here, a slight majority of innovative, non-National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) organizing campaigns—campaigns undertaken mostly by the familiar social movement unions—involve community coalitions.

The rather limited evidence suggests that although this category of social movement unionism may be a useful ideal type for thinking about unions for whom direct action and coalition building are central, it is far from settled as to how well this captures alliance formation on the ground. Moreover, scholars likely miss diversity in the landscape of union allies and the potential for other unions to form coalitions by focusing primarily on a handful of unions operating in the service sector. One might conclude from this literature that unions that remain stodgier, bureaucratic, or wedded to the old system of industrial relations, sometimes termed "business unions," are simply doing nothing.

Other work suggests a more complex picture. Milkman (2006) traces the divergent fate of labor unions in present-day Los Angeles in part to their origins in the AFL or CIO, arguing that the early AFL unions, particularly service sector unions, have a number of distinct advantages over their industrial brethren when organizing low-wage immigrant workers. According to Milkman (2006:23–24), AFL unions like the SEIU came of age prior to the supportive state framework of the New Deal, which gives them an edge in an era when such protections have been severely weakened. The declining industrial unions, by contrast, have had "enormous difficulty transcending the New Deal framework on which the CIO's initial growth was so heavily predicated" (see also Cornfield 2007).

One practical effect is that unions forged during or bolstered by such a supportive state framework are still more likely to focus on electoral politics and work through established union structures, even as their focal industries decline and state support wanes. Milkman's (2006) work pertains to new organizing models in particular, but other research suggests a carryover to strike behavior. Martin and Dixon's (2010) study of U.S. strike activity at the end of the twentieth century finds that the most active of the original CIO unions were less militant in the face of setbacks and more wedded to politics as a solution to union decline than were their social movement counterparts. This suggests that although industrial CIO unions may seek out coalition partners in strike events, their outreach efforts will rely more heavily on actors tied to the state.[4]

Much of the literature points to coalition work as a hallmark of the new social movement unionism. Other work suggests the industrial CIO unions' outreach potential and their greater reliance on actors tied to the state. Yet only a few tests expand beyond case studies of particular unions or locales. It is crucial for labor scholars to assess these differences in union capacity empirically and across a more diverse testing ground. Furthermore, this literature offers little guidance beyond the propensity for coalition formation. As we describe below, the range of potential allies and the types of assistance they provide are quite diverse.

Threat, Political Opportunity, and Targets of Collective Action

Social movement research on coalitions points to the political context of conflict as paramount (McCammon and Campbell 2002; Meyer and Corrigall-Brown 2005). Staggenborg's (1986) influential study of coalitions in the pro-choice movement found that groups turned to coalitions in response to increased political opportunities—such as when several states repealed their early laws prohibiting abortion—and later countermovement threats to overturn *Roe v. Wade.* Much like theories of movement emergence and effectiveness, factors external to movements themselves weigh heavily on the likelihood of coalition work.

In the years following Staggenborg's work, most researchers have honed in on threat as

the crucial impetus for coalition formation (McCammon and Van Dyke 2010). Threat is typically conceived in terms of state repression of social movements and other actions by political elites or opponents that are counter to activist groups' interests (Almeida 2003; Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Van Dyke and Soule 2002). Studies on campus activism (Van Dyke 2003), suffragist campaigns (McCammon and Campbell 2002), and corporate mobilization (Akard 1992) demonstrate how threats encourage coalition formation as groups struggle to overcome new obstacles.

Labor outreach has occurred in various forms throughout U.S. history (Lichtenstein 2002), but threat arguments mesh especially well with unions' recent experiences. Indeed, after great pushback from employers in recent decades, union leaders have made impassioned calls for outreach to other movements and constituencies. Work that specifically considers economic threat (Almeida 2003, 2008; Van Dyke and Soule 2002) provides more precision on the particular challenges that might push unions to break away from past routines and look to coalitions as a solution. For example, Almeida's (2008) comparative analysis of labor mobilizations in Central America found that immediate challenges to unions' legal status and union members' job security brought on by privatization pushed labor to break away from traditional bargaining strategies.

In the U.S. case, Martin and Dixon (2010) found that threats posed by firms to the legitimacy and existence of unions often spurred renewed militancy. The most pressing challenge for labor today involves countermobilization by firms; many firms have taken the offensive in labor disputes in hopes of shedding unions altogether (Juravich and Bronfenbrenner 1999). Unlike the presence of political antagonists or unfavorable policies, this particular type of threat is likely felt more immediately in union members' lives, certainly in terms of their job security, and often poses a direct challenge to union survival. This suggests that *immediate challenges posed by firms will provide the greatest incentive for unions to engage in outreach.*

Unions or any other social movement organization must still be able to locate sympathetic actors in their immediate environments. And, some dimensions of the political opportunity structure more clearly relate to the availability of allies than do others (McAdam 1996). The presence of elite allies, for example, may directly provide political actors that labor can draw on. A political system's relative openness to labor also speaks to the legitimacy of unions as a political actor and potential coalition partner. If not the powerful push factor of threat, *such opportunities still may favor or constrain coalition formation once unions are forced to act*. Recent literature on coalitions supports such a possibility, noting the potential interplay of threat and opportunity on coalition formation (McCammon and Van Dyke 2010)—a point we explore empirically below. In general, we expect social movement unions to be more aggressive in response to threat, and industrial CIO unions should be more sensitive to political opportunities (Martin and Dixon 2010).

Research on targets of collective action identifies more proximate corporate opportunities, or target vulnerabilities, that may affect activism in a manner similar to political opportunities (Luders 2010; Soule 2009; Walker, Martin, and McCarthy 2008). Manheim's (2001) analysis of corporate campaigns—wide-ranging union efforts to pressure firms from multiple angles—explicitly recognizes that firms vary in their pressure points. Sympathetic actors in corporate governance, organizational restructuring, a firm's reputation and visibility, and potential intervention from the state all may encourage activism by increasing prospects for success (King 2008).

We suspect that some of these more proximate firm characteristics are also influential for outreach by providing potential allies to draw on and additional openings to pursue, although the literature on coalitions has been slow to incorporate these insights. We build on this work to identify a number of salient target characteristics that should affect union

outreach. First, publicly traded firms have more points of access than do privately held firms. Comprehensive union bargaining campaigns often begin by mapping out firm relations and points of access, including corporate governance, shareholder relations, and government oversight (Juravich 2007). Considering the range of targets in labor disputes, public employers also have multiple stakeholders and points of access (e.g., politicians and voters) when compared to privately held firms. This access should encourage unions to seek out various sources of leverage and allies to exploit them.

A target firm's visibility is also meaningful for challengers. Although a public face may provide a target for activists to rally around (Ratcliff and Jaffe 1981), other scholars note that visibility and a strong reputation may buffer companies from challenges (King 2008). Also important today is the distinction between mobile and immobile employers, or their geographic vulnerability (Luders 2010; Martin 2008). Martin (2008) finds that unions employing innovative organizing methods (e.g., formation of coalitions) tend to target firms that are wedded to a particular locale. Firms for whom relocation is difficult or impossible arguably present greater opportunities for union activism and should encourage activation of allies. Below we assess the usefulness of each of these more proximate firm characteristics for explaining outreach.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALLIES IN STRIKE EVENTS

Most research assumes the benefits of coalitions. Yet allies clearly vary in their willingness to contribute. A better grasp of just what allies bring to the table is therefore central to understanding coalition effectiveness. Building on key insights from the social movement literature, we specify different types of support that allies provide and the conditions under which unions are likely to secure them. Because mobilization of allies beyond traditional union confines offers new means of influence but is also a more difficult undertaking, we focus on contexts in which unions are able to activate non-labor allies and secure tangible support.

We first distinguish types of support by allies in labor conflict: material and symbolic. Most scholars agree that social movements must have certain material resources (e.g., money, labor, and meeting space) and be able to marshal them effectively to succeed (Cress and Snow 2000; Ganz 2000). Drawing on the resource mobilization tradition, we identify material support as money, labor, other material resources such as office space, and direct action brought to bear in protest. Importantly, much of what movements do is symbolic, such as consciousness raising and forging collective identity (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Taylor and Whittier 1992). Symbolic support in labor disputes typically involves endorsements in-person or from afar, written or verbal statements in support of the union, and other showings of solidarity. Discussions of movement effectiveness often hint at these multiple aims by drawing broad distinctions between movements' persuasive strategies, which involve mostly symbolic manipulation, and mobilization of people and resources in direct protest actions (McCammon et al. 2001).

We acknowledge that such distinctions are never so firm on the ground, but they provide a useful entryway for assessing what allies bring to strikes. Unions that not only reach out beyond the labor movement but also secure material support in the process arguably push the envelope the farthest when it comes to coalition work. If labor research is correct, a handful of *social movement unions have been moving in precisely this direction and should stand out*.

At the same time, social movement research finds that threats, direct challenges to movement aims, and even previous failures may foster innovation (and outreach) by activist groups. In recent decades, firms have successfully adapted to the traditional labor strike by contracting with anti-union consultants and returning to well-worn tactics including the use of private security forces and

strikebreakers to maintain production and take the offensive during conflicts. The threat posed by employer ascendance should provide a powerful incentive for union outreach, but these processes do not occur in a vacuum. For example, Almeida (2008) found that broad labor-based coalitions often emerged on the heels of less successful organizing templates and failures, but only when bolstered by favorable environmental factors. Opportunities that increase the availability of union allies, such as the presence of elite allies or openness of the political system to labor, may not only simultaneously affect coalition processes alongside direct threats, as recent work suggests (McCammon and Van Dyke 2010), but may actually *condition* the effect of threat.

Extending this work, we argue that threats felt in union members' immediate lives, such as firm countermobilization in strikes, should be most influential in pushing unions to form diverse and far-reaching coalitions. Because unions must be able to locate sympathetic actors in their environment, *the powerful motivation of threat should have less of an impact where unions have few allies from which to draw, but a greater impact where allies abound*. Below we construct empirical tests of these propositions by examining the interplay of unions, firms, and the broader environment within which labor disputes are embedded across several coalition outcomes.

DATA AND METHODS

Strike Selection

One of our goals is to extend recent interest in coalition building to strike events, which have become incredibly risky in recent years. Historically, scholars have relied on government statistics to analyze strikes. Termination of the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) work stoppages data collection program in 1981 temporarily halted information on strikes, but beginning in 1984 the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services (FMCS) has collected data on most work stoppages. Unfortunately, like the BLS data, the FMCS strike records provide only the most basic event features: company and union name, size, industry, location, and length. These data alone cannot provide any insight into union outreach. To address this, we supplemented the FMCS data with media accounts of strikes to capture our outcomes of interest. We used the FMCS data as the population of interest and then relied on newspaper archives to assemble in-depth accounts of strikes that were the basis of a detailed coding process, described in greater detail below.

Social movement scholars have long relied on media sources to examine protest (McAdam 1982). Not surprisingly, significant methodological concerns are associated with the use of media sources to study collective action (for a review, see Earl et al. 2004). The first concern is selection bias, which simply recognizes that not all events receive media attention. Pertinent event features, including location, size, and level of contention, influence whether the media cover a protest (McCarthy, McPhail, and Smith 1996). Even if protest events do receive coverage, the press may not present an event's details accurately, leading to description bias. Although description bias is often described as a distortion of facts, it most often occurs simply through missing information (Smith et al. 2001).

In addition to events' generic newsworthy features that may increase their likelihood of being covered, coverage patterns may also differ by news organizations' political orientations and their proximity to a conflict (Davenport 2010; Franzosi 1987; Oliver and Myers 1999), and by political cycles, when more resources are directed toward covering campaigns and institutional politics (Oliver and Maney 2000). Given these methodological concerns, we developed a systematic strategy for analyzing the widest and most representative set of strikes using newspaper data. We used LexisNexis Academic's (LNA) U.S. Newspapers and Wires archives, which allows for keyword searching across more than 300 national and local newspapers and

newswires and provides greater reach than traditional sources. LNA includes major national newspapers like the *Washington Post* and *USA Today*, as well as many local papers, state and local wire services (e.g., the Associated Press, which has a bureau in every state capital), and some business publications. Most LNA sources are small, mainstream commercial newspapers (Davenport 2010).

After extensive pretesting, we found the most efficient (i.e., greatest proportion of hits without missing any events) Boolean keyword search string was "strike" and "company name" or "union name." For each strike included in the FMCS database, we searched LNA beginning two weeks before the event began and ending two weeks after the strike's conclusion. If we found stories related to the labor dispute at the beginning or end of our search period, we extended the search for up to a year backward and forward until no new stories were uncovered. Additionally, because most newspapers are not archived before the early 1990s, we limited our analysis to strikes beginning in the mid-1990s.[5]

The expanded coverage of online news archives reduces the potential of selection bias, but it still does not ensure that all strikes are covered, nor does it eliminate the possibility of missing data, which is a relevant concern given our goal of examining unions' and other actors' behaviors during the course of conflicts. To assess the extensiveness of both types of bias, we performed a search on two distinct sets of strikes: all strikes of more than 1,000 workers from 1993 to 2003 and a random sample of 400 strikes with fewer than 1,000 workers from 1998 to 2003. Results indicate that strike coverage is heavily contingent upon size; 80 percent of the large strikes received coverage, compared to only about a third of the small sample. Our final dataset included 321 coded events (134 involving fewer than 1,000 workers and 187 with more than 1,000 workers).[6]

Although not without limits, our multiple-source approach through LNA is a significant improvement over known alternatives. First, one of the most common approaches in social movement research involves use of a single or a few national papers such as the *New York Times* or *Washington Post.* However, this approach is clearly inadequate for our case. Martin (2005) found that the *New York Times* covered only about 5.5 percent of all strikes recorded by the FMCS (on these publications' limited coverage of civil unrest, see Myers and Caniglia 2004). We also experimented with other news archives that allow for keyword searching across several publications and found our approach with LNA to be more exhaustive.[7] This suggests the usefulness of our strategy relative to both conventional sources and alternative news archiving services. To further guard against coverage effects and selection bias, we controlled for relevant event and contextual features in our modeling (Oliver and Maney 2000; Winship and Mare 1992).

We developed a codebook to capture various features of the strikes themselves. We trained a group of undergraduate coders, and each undergraduate was closely monitored to ensure accurate coding. Overall, our assessment of coding reliability was quite positive; for example, the intercoder reliability score for the expansion of conflict variable was high, exceeding .9.

Although our data include significant variation in terms of important strike features (e.g., size, location, and industry), it is important to recognize that we are still focusing on the most newsworthy events. We are therefore cautious in generalizing to all strikes, especially smaller events with little conflict.

Measurement

Table 1 includes descriptive statistics and data sources. Our unit of analysis is the strike event and our primary dependent variable is *union outreach*, which we coded from newspaper data and which measures any effort by a union to mobilize external allies to support the union during the strike. These allies include other unions, businesses, government actors,[8] politicians, and social movement, civic, and religious groups. We also separately

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Measures Included in the Analysis

Variables	Mean	SD	Data Source
Outcomes			
Union Outreach (Yes/No)	.255	.437	Newspaper
Number of Unions Mobilized	1.371	7.762	Newspaper
Number of Non-union Allies Mobilized	.794	2.629	Newspaper
Total Symbolic Actions	.875	2.586	Newspaper
Total Material Actions	1.330	7.696	Newspaper
Total Non-union Symbolic Actions	.551	1.774	Newspaper
Total Non-union Material Actions	.249	1.069	Newspaper
Unions			
Social Movement Union (dummy)	.202	.402	FMCS
Original CIO Union (dummy)	.196	.397	FMCS
Unionization Rate	17.416	5.383	Statistical Abstract
Strikes per 1,000 Enterprises	.102	.114	FMCS
Threat, Opportunity, and Economic Context			
Firm Maintains Production	.619	.486	Newspaper
NLRB Decertification Elections	39.697	27.953	NLRB
Right-to-Work Law (1 = yes)	.161	.369	U.S. Dept. of Labor
Citizen Ideology Score	52.517	12.226	ICPSR
Democratic Governor	.330	.471	Statistical Abstract
Unemployment Rate	4.909	1.235	Statistical Abstract
Percent Employed in Foreign-Owned Firms	4.644	1.029	Survey of Current Business
Percent Employed in Manufacturing	15.25	4.52	Statistical Abstract
Firms			
Immobile	.623	.485	Newspaper
Most Respected Company (dummy)	.311	.463	*Fortune* Magazine
Public Employer	.077	.263	FMCS
Publicly Traded Private	.333	.472	Mergent Corp. Manuals
Privately Held Private (reference)	.590	.503	Mergent Corp. Manuals
Controls			
Presidential Election Year	.262	.441	FMCS
Strike Size	3635.483	12880.080	FMCS
Strike Length	61.111	142.105	FMCS
Physical Violence (Yes/No)	.090	.287	Newspaper
Issue (Wages = 1)	.704	.457	Newspaper
Multiple Locations (Yes/No)	.457	.499	FMCS
Federal Mediator	.448	.498	Newspaper
Union Unfair Labor Practice Strike	.155	.363	Newspaper

model the *number of unions/other labor organizations mobilized* and the *number of non-union allies mobilized* in support of the striking union to capture potential differences in factors leading to intra- versus inter-movement alliances.

Securing external support is a critical success for unions, but it is important to identify what allies bring to the conflict. For example, among strikes in our data there were numerous instances of politicians shaking hands on the picket line and vocalizing their support for the union. Contrast such actions to a strike by hospital workers in Massachusetts that was supported by elected officials who promised to veto a merger the hospital had proposed until it would engage in a meaningful dialogue with the union. As described earlier, we distinguish

between *symbolic actions*, typically vocalizing support for the union, and *material actions*, which include providing resources, legal support, and refusal to cross picket lines. Our analyses further tease out the symbolic and material actions brought to bear by actors beyond the confines of the labor movement.

Explanatory Variables

Union capacity. Labor research points to a number of unions that have begun to return to their social movement roots by drawing on protest repertoires to pressure targeted firms and forging coalitions with far-flung allies (Voss and Sherman 2000). We used the FMCS database to identify strikes carried out by *social movement unions*. These unions include the SEIU, Hotel and Restaurant Employees, UNITE (a needletrades union that merged with HERE in 2004), and the United Food and Commercial Workers, all early members of the breakaway Change to Win federation. Prior analyses of strikes suggest that these unions stand out as more aggressive and innovative than the rest of the movement (Martin and Dixon 2010).

We distinguish these events from strikes carried out by core industrial *CIO unions* that were significantly affected by industrial decline and dismantling of the New Deal industrial relations framework. Research notes how some of the initial CIO unions have sought to regain their footing after years of industrial decline (Juravich and Bronfenbrenner 1999; Martin and Dixon 2010; Milkman 2006). Sometimes this has meant forging external allies, although these unions are more wedded to conventional collective bargaining and state machinery. Drawing from prior labor research, we include the United Mine Workers (UMW) (founded as an AFL union, but its leader, John Lewis, was critical in formation of the CIO and cementing its ties to electoral politics; the UMW was a founding member of the CIO), United Steelworkers, and United Auto Workers—the large early CIO unions that remain active in organizing and striking today.[9]

There are, of course, other useful ways to classify unions and to gauge any CIO effect.[10] For this reason, we tried a number of alternative specifications and assessed their effect on a variety of union outreach measures. We present these findings in Table A1 in the Appendix. The measure employed here, which builds on Martin and Dixon's (2010) study, performs well relative to alternatives.[11] We are confident in this measure and its usefulness for understanding coalitions, but it is important to recognize that our analysis represents one theoretically and historically grounded approach to differentiating among unions. As scholarly interest in union variability grows, we hope that researchers will build on and further assess this as well as other instructive union groupings.

We also include union strength in the state in which a strike took place, which should at the least make intra-movement mobilization easier. We employ two separate measures, the state's *unionization rate* and the *strike rate*, that is, the number of strikes in the state per 1,000 enterprises.

Threat and political opportunity. Our focus is on threats that firms pose to unions' viability. Firms have once again turned to replacement workers during strikes, increasingly as a way to permanently shed unions. Because such actions raise the stakes considerably, we suspect that when a *firm maintains production*, a union's motivation to seek external allies will increase considerably. This measure includes use of managers and other non-union personnel to continue operations as well as the introduction of replacement workers. A union's inability to halt production of goods or services through strike activity, and a firm's relative success at continuing normal operations, should be felt immediately by union members and should provide a powerful impetus for unions to innovate by looking outward for leverage. Below we consider how this direct firm threat may combine with the larger political opportunity context to shape coalition processes.

We also include a measure of broader firm hostility toward unions with the number of *decertification elections* in the state in which a strike event took place. Decertification elections are NLRB-sponsored elections that allow a firm's employees to vote to remove an existing union. These elections have

increased in frequency as firms have grown bolder in their resistance to unions.

To assess political opportunities relating to the availability of allies, we first include the presence of a *Democratic governor* in the state in which a strike took place, as this traditionally provides unions with a high profile ally. We use the *citizen ideology* indicator developed by political scientist William Berry and colleagues (1998) to assess the liberalness of the electorate; in a more liberal electorate, more citizens may side with unions. Berry and colleagues assess the degree to which House members' roll-call votes are liberal or conservative using interest group ratings and construct an ideology index linked to voters by combining incumbent roll-call vote scores with estimates of how an incumbent's opponent in the past election would have voted weighted by the incumbent's vote margin. State scores are set equal to mean congressional district scores with liberal states receiving higher scores. We used the updated measure available through ICPSR. We also include whether a state has a *right-to-work* law to capture a state's openness to labor and its legitimacy as a political actor. Right-to-work outlaws union shops and raises the costs of collective action for labor. Importantly, these laws often signal where unions are marginalized and have less political access (Dixon 2008; Rao, Yue, and Ingram 2011). We expect that fewer allies will avail themselves to union causes in such contexts.

Economic considerations such as the unemployment rate have long been linked to various strike outcomes (Ashenfelter and Johnson 1969). We include the *unemployment rate* and the proportion of *foreign direct investment* at the state-level, which has been linked to negative outcomes for unions (Brady and Wallace 2000), and the *percentage of workers employed in manufacturing*.

Firm characteristics. Growing evidence shows that in the face of labor strife, firms are now even more likely to move to new locales with a more docile workforce (Cowie 1999). Still, some firms must provide goods and services at the geographic point of production (e.g., medical services, hospitality, and transportation), which may give unions leverage to up the ante in disputes. Using information from the FMCS on firms' products and industry, we created a dummy variable, *immobile*, that captures the set of firms for whom relocation is not possible or probable.[12] We include a measure of firm visibility by whether a firm appeared on *America's Most Admired Companies* list, a survey conducted annually by *Fortune Magazine* since 1983 (King 2008). This measure is scored 1 if the firm appeared on the list at any point during the period analyzed.

Additionally, firms vary in their ownership structure. Public employees and publicly traded firms offer multiple points of access, and evidence shows that unions have used shareholders as allies against private firms (Schwab and Thomas 1998). For firm ownership, we include the dummy variables *public employer* and *publicly traded private* (*privately held* is the reference).

Controls. We include a dummy for *presidential election year* and strike-specific measures including *size* and *length*. Although strike violence has declined in recent years, the potential for conflict remains high. Our models include a dummy for any acts of *physical violence* to control for such a possibility.[13] We control for issue motivating the strike with inclusion of a *wage* demand dummy variable, to distinguish these strikes from those initiated over other grievances. We also control for whether a strike occurred at *multiple locations*, presence of a *federal mediator* seeking to resolve the dispute, and whether a union sought to have the strike designated as an *unfair labor practice strike* by the NLRB.[14]

Analytic Strategy

Our analysis proceeds in three steps. We first describe the landscape of union coalition activity during strikes in the 1990s and early 2000s, providing an important empirical contribution to labor research. Second, we build on social movement insights by assessing organizational and contextual factors leading

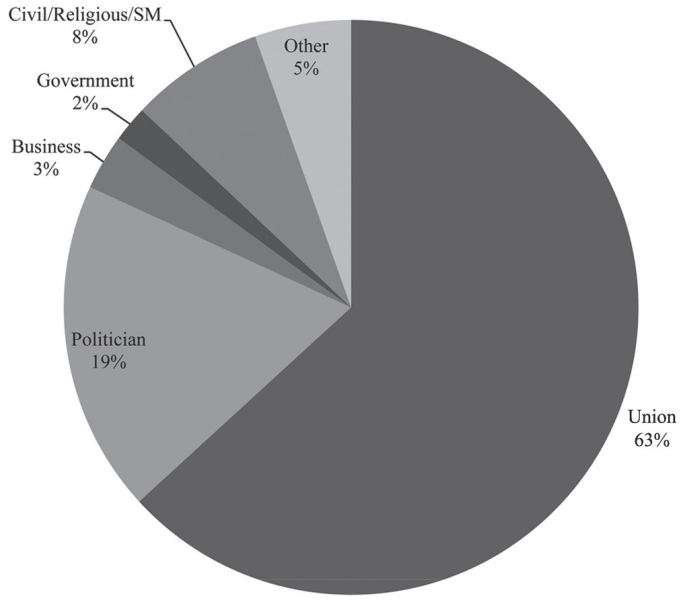

Figure 1. Breakdown of Total Allies Mobilized

to union outreach as indicated by mobilization of external allies. Third, we extend this work by assessing factors that encourage particular forms of assistance (material and symbolic) brought to bear in strikes.

To assess factors affecting union outreach (any outreach: 1 = yes), we employed logistic regression with Stata version 10. We measured specific types of allies and assistance as count variables. We used negative binomial regression because there is evidence of overdispersion (Long and Freese 2003). For all analyses, we used robust standard errors where observations were clustered by state, allowing us to assume that events were independent across but not necessarily within states.[15]

FINDINGS

The Landscape of Union Coalition Activity

Figures 1 and 2 show the range of union allies and the types of assistance typically received. Several notable patterns emerge. First, recall that most strikes remain contained to the union–firm dynamic. Only 26 percent of strikes involved outreach (as shown in Table 1). Second, when this expansion does occur, most union allies come from within the labor movement. Figure 1 illustrates the breakdown of total number of allies mobilized. Although scholarship suggests some unions increasingly look outside of the labor movement for help, our evidence from the 1990s and 2000s indicates that other labor organizations remain the most common sources of support, followed by politicians. By contrast, social movement organizations and other civic groups constitute a fairly small portion of the landscape of union allies (about 8 percent of all allies mobilized in strike events).

Figure 2 reveals what allies brought to the table in strike events in terms of total number of symbolic and material actions contributed. This figure suggests that when non-union allies do help, they prefer to offer symbolic, rather than material, support for the union. Although overlooked in recent calls for coalition building, other unions appear much more willing to take concrete steps (e.g., provide money and refuse to cross picket lines) when providing assistance. Politicians, the second most common ally behind other unions, tend

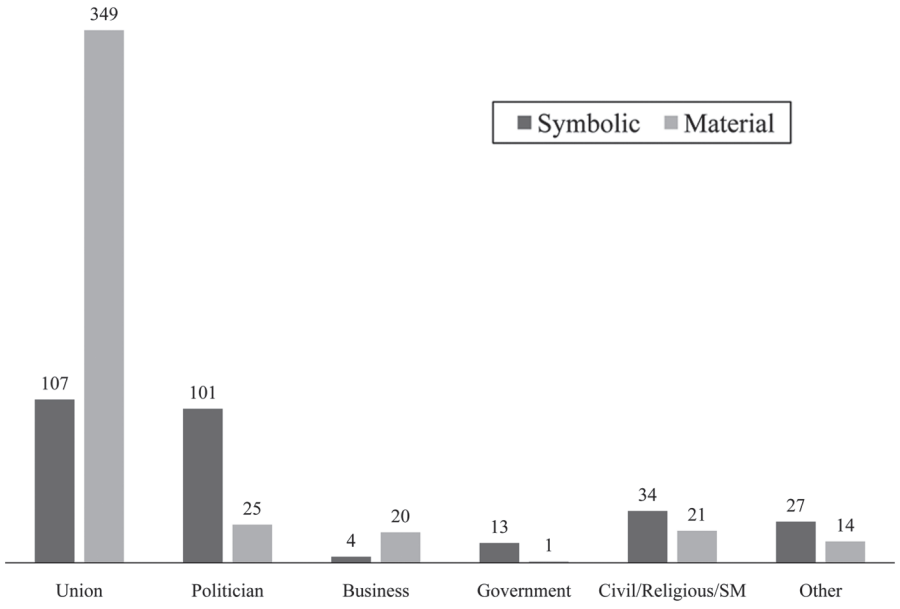

Figure 2. Resources Provided by Allies

to contribute only symbolic support; rarely do words (often picket line speeches) translate into action, which may entail greater costs for politicians. Recall that research suggests that CIO-type unions should be more reliant on politicians (Martin and Dixon 2010).

The descriptive evidence presented here, along with the few estimates of coalition activity in the literature, suggests a more insular movement than recent calls for labor revitalization would expect or hope for, and one that is reliant on traditional sources of support (e.g., other labor movement actors and politicians). At the very least, the evidence suggests caution when using imagery of social movement unionism to impute more far-reaching changes occurring within the labor movement.

Explaining Union Outreach

Given this landscape, we ask which union, firm, and contextual features are most influential for labor coalitions when they do occur. Model 1 of Table 2 displays logistic regression estimates for union outreach most generally. Here union characteristics are influential. Both social movement and CIO unions are more likely to draw on external allies than the rest of the labor movement. As expected, however, the size of the coefficient is greatest for social movement unions.[16] This is consistent with mounting research that identifies this group as more willing and equipped to mount challenges in the neoliberal era (Milkman 2006). There is also evidence that union efforts are bolstered where labor is more active, as indicated by the positive and significant coefficient for the strike rate in a state.

Results for threat and opportunities are mixed. The immediate threat of a firm maintaining production during a strike has a positive and significant effect on coalition work; broader hostilities in the form of decertification elections have no effect. For this outcome at least, it appears that unions are much more likely to respond to immediate, rather than diffuse, threats. Consistent with this immediacy claim, the larger political opportunity context—including right-to-work laws, presence of elite allies, and a favorable citizenry—has no direct impact on union outreach. As expected, public sector strikes are

Table 2. Logistic and Negative Binomial Estimates of Union Outreach

	1. Union Outreach[a]	2. Number of Union Allies[b]	3. Number of Non-union Allies[b]
Unions			
Social Movement Union	2.079*	1.469*	1.038*
	(.441)	(.449)	(.376)
CIO Union	1.312*	1.315†	1.957*
	(.587)	(.820)	(.531)
Unionization Rate	.062	.090	.062
	(.070)	(.081)	(.062)
Strikes per 1,000 Enterprises	7.430*	1.869	6.267*
	(1.137)	(2.078)	(1.141)
Threat, Opportunity, and Economic Context			
Firm Maintains Production	1.328*	1.241*	1.453*
	(.414)	(.449)	(.434)
Decertification Elections	−.009	−.016	−.003
	(.010)	(.011)	(.008)
Right-to-Work	−.783	−1.437	−1.714
	(.969)	(.988)	(1.356)
Citizen Ideology	.007	−.011	.026
	(.029)	(.030)	(.023)
Democratic Governor	.052	−.236	−.204
	(.525)	(.559)	(.374)
Unemployment Rate	.249	.093	.181
	(.186)	(.226)	(.225)
FDI	−.352	−.559†	−.244
	(.245)	(.332)	(.221)
Percent Manufacturing	−.100	−.127*	−.082
	(.062)	(.044)	(.036)
Firms			
Immobile	−.093	−.049	.479
	(.456)	(.576)	(.411)
Most Respected	−.791	−.929†	−.041
	(.526)	(.535)	(.369)
Publicly Traded	.784	.857†	.562
	(.592)	(.440)	(.368)
Public Employer	1.547*	.655	1.211
	(.775)	(.664)	(.589)
Controls			
Presidential Election Year	1.047*	.961†	1.893*
	(.370)	(.487)	(.453)
Unfair Labor Practice Strike	.846*	.599	1.318*
	(.415)	(.506)	(.306)
Strike Size	.030*	.014*	.020*
	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)
Strike Length	.004†	.001	.003*
	(.002)	(.002)	(.001)
Physical Violence	1.353*	1.078*	1.321*
	(.510)	(.512)	(.346)
Wages	.161	.070	.282
	(.556)	(.525)	(.568)
Multiple Locations	−.101	.042	−.138
	(.370)	(.461)	(.472)
Federal Mediator	.839*	1.204*	1.239*
	(.390)	(.432)	(.387)
Constant	−4.382	−.012	−7.065*
	(2.392)	(2.728)	(1.796)
Pseudo *R* squared (for logistic regression only)	.342		

Note: $N = 321$ strike events. Standard errors are in parentheses.
[a]Logistic regression estimates.
[b]Negative binomial regression estimates.
†$p < .10$; * $p < .05$ (two-tailed tests).

more likely to involve external allies than are strikes targeting privately held companies. None of the other firm-level indicators are significant.

Among the controls, strikes that involve a federal mediator are more likely to involve outreach; in some respects, drawing on the regulatory structure governing labor is a well-worn way to expand the scope of conflict. Physical violence also has a positive and significant effect. The consistent positive effects of physical violence and the presence of a federal mediator across other models suggest these may also be proxies for a strike event's contentiousness. Size and length of a strike are also positively related with virtually all of our coalition outcomes, as is a union filing an unfair labor practice charge, and whether a strike occurs during a presidential election year.

Models 2 and 3 of Table 2 consider differences across types of allies mobilized. Negative binomial estimates show mostly consistent effects across the number of union and non-union allies mobilized. Although conflicts involving social movement unions have a stronger association with union or intra-movement allies, CIO unions appear to be slightly more successful at mobilizing non-union support, which suggests these actors may be more adept at reaching out beyond the labor movement than previous scholarship has suggested. Again, we see that immediate threat, indicated by *firm maintains production*, is significant and leads to increased numbers of union and non-union allies. There is less support for the importance of the broader political climate. Firm characteristics are especially important for intra-movement coalitions. As expected, publicly traded firms are more vulnerable, and a firm's reputation appears to dampen other unions' willingness to support a strike.

Because research suggests that unions may differ in their responses to threat and opportunity, we ran a number of additional models testing for interaction effects (not shown here). We found few significant differences across our two union categories when it comes to threat or opportunity.[17] Notably, threat as indicated by a firm maintaining production matters across the board and does not vary in its impact by union capacity.

From these models, and supporting much labor and social movement research, it is evident that both union capacity and the immediate threat posed by firms clearly matter for mobilization of external allies. Various political opportunities related to availability of allies, however, do not provide a powerful incentive for coalition work.[18]

Contribution of Allies in Strike Events

We are also interested in just what allies contribute to labor conflict and how current perspectives can be extended to explain these processes. Results presented in Table 3 assess factors leading to symbolic and material actions brought by allied actors in support of a striking union. Because securing material assistance from non-union allies poses a significant challenge for most unions and is a clear change from past practice, we are especially interested in circumstances allowing for this most far-reaching form of labor coalition activity.

Models 1 and 2 of Table 3 assess determinants of total *symbolic* and *material actions* in support of striking unions. Here union capacity still matters, although there are some notable wrinkles. Strikes waged by CIO unions are more strongly associated with increased symbolic assistance. Common forms of symbolic assistance in our dataset include speeches at rallies and written endorsements. The social movement union effect remains significant for this form of support but is less pronounced. Initially we suspected that material assistance—actions like providing money or refusing to cross picket lines—would be more likely to be secured in strikes waged by social movement unions. Our findings, however, indicate that both types of unions are adept at garnering material support, although the social movement coefficient has a higher level of significance. Once again, we see the importance of immediate threat, as indicated by *firm*

Table 3. Negative Binomial Estimates of Allied Actions in Support of Striking Unions

	1. Symbolic Actions	2. Material Actions	3. Symbolic Actions (non-union allies)	4. Material Actions (non-union allies)	5. Material Actions (non-union allies)	6. Material Actions (non-union allies)
Unions						
Social Movement Union	1.134*	1.301*	.858*	.621	.687	.687
	(.332)	(.481)	(.418)	(.629)	(.618)	(.618)
CIO Union	2.178*	1.142†	2.235*	1.030†	1.244*	1.244*
	(.650)	(.623)	(.702)	(.600)	(.563)	(.564)
Unionization Rate	.069	.103	.060	.129	.128	.128
	(.060)	(.101)	(.055)	(.083)	(.084)	(.084)
Strikes per 1,000 Enterprises	4.485*	7.142*	4.916*	8.379*	8.374*	8.374*
	(1.433)	(1.429)	(1.298)	(1.251)	(1.289)	(1.288)
Threat, Opportunity, and Economic Context						
Firm Maintains Production	1.030*	1.515*	1.788*	.777†	1.012*	1.012*
	(.336)	(.476)	(.500)	(.454)	(.330)	(.330)
Decertification Elections	−.017*	.001	−.004	.005	.006	.006
	(.007)	(.014)	(.010)	(.010)	(.009)	(.009)
Right-to-Work (RTW)	−1.490	−.594	−4.128*	.430	2.528†	2.528
	(1.154)	(.749)	(1.727)	(1.103)	(1.384)	(1.384)
Citizen Ideology	−.003	−.007	.020	.011	.014	−.075
	(.025)	(.036)	(.025)	(.027)	(.026)	(.047)
Democratic Governor	−.360	.170	.028	−.097	−.076	−.144
	(.477)	(.393)	(.366)	(.528)	(.511)	(.493)
Unemployment Rate	.338	−.045	.020	.121	.142	.185
	(.200)	(.212)	(.227)	(.239)	(.201)	(.200)
FDI	−.203	−.525*	−.317	−.103	−.029	−.091
	(.312)	(.257)	(.257)	(.202)	(.220)	(.197)
Percent Manufacturing	−.076	−.187*	−.062†	−.042	−.029	−.059
	(.034)	(.046)	(.038)	(.046)	(.046)	(.043)
Firm Maintains Production x RTW					−3.265*	
					(1.597)	
Firm Maintains Production x Citizen Ideology						.103*
						(.047)

(continued)

Table 3. *(continued)*

	1. Symbolic Actions	2. Material Actions	3. Symbolic Actions (non-union allies)	4. Material Actions (non-union allies)	5. Material Actions (non-union allies)	6. Material Actions (non-union allies)
Firms						
Immobile	.920	−.110	.790	.239	.311	.274
	(.627)	(.612)	(.590)	(.412)	(.416)	(.453)
Most Respected	−.245	−.157	.084	−.183	−.052	−.229
	(.459)	(.450)	(.362)	(.582)	(.542)	(.537)
Publicly Traded	.175	1.114*	−.033	1.201*	1.182*	1.315*
	(.437)	(.400)	(.357)	(.412)	(.431)	(.403)
Public Employer	.970	.613	1.045	.932	1.038†	1.321*
	(.680)	(.536)	(.657)	(.596)	(.542)	(.672)
Controls						
Presidential Election Year	1.461*	1.016*	1.597*	1.486*	1.591*	1.581*
	(.447)	(.468)	(.511)	(.442)	(.481)	(.548)
Unfair Labor Practice Strike	1.063*	1.069	1.140*	1.206*	1.187*	1.228*
	(.304)	(.377)	(.326)	(.404)	(.371)	(.375)
Strike Size	.019*	.019*	.018*	.017*	.018*	.018*
	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.000)	(.001)
Strike Length	.004†	−.001	.003*	.001	.001	.001
	(.002)	(.001)	(.002)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)
Physical Violence	1.026*	1.798*	1.116*	1.827*	1.869*	1.776*
	(.340)	(.573)	(.359)	(.418)	(.432)	(.441)
Wages	.445	−.034	−.486	−.275	−.151	−.004
	(.495)	(.599)	(.704)	(.655)	(.629)	(.650)
Multiple Locations	.204	−.490	−.070	−.563	−.642	−.578
	(.455)	(.563)	(.473)	(.600)	(.616)	(.647)
Federal Mediator	1.356*	.970*	1.120*	1.787*	1.795*	1.742*
	(.396)	(.395)	(.438)	(.504)	(.488)	(.538)
Constant	−5.671*	−.922	−.6.410*	−8.896*	−10.303*	−5.004*
	(2.145)	(2.180)	(2.555)	(2.230)	(2.414)	(2.238)

Note: $N = 321$ strike events. Standard errors are in parentheses.
†$p < .10$; * $p < .05$ (two-tailed tests).

maintains production, in driving unions to seek symbolic and material assistance from allies. More diffuse threats (decertification elections) actually diminish symbolic actions on behalf of unions.

When we unpack the types of assistance brought to bear in labor conflicts, there is evidence that target characteristics matter. Unions striking against publicly traded companies are able to secure greater material support (Model 2 in Table 3). Again, these firms have more points of access than do privately held firms and opportunities for strike support are arguably greater—a finding in line with the growing literature on corporate opportunity structures (Soule 2009). Finally, this model also suggests that increased foreign investment is associated with weakened support for striking unions, consistent with Brady and Wallace (2000).

The remaining models in Table 3 further disentangle types of coalition assistance by considering symbolic and material actions brought by allies outside of the labor movement. Model 3 shows that s*ymbolic support* brought by non-labor allies is more likely to be secured in strikes waged by CIO unions, while the social movement union effect remains significant but is reduced in magnitude. Recall that types of symbolic actions usually marshaled in support of strikes (e.g., politicians giving a speech) are consistent with CIO unions' historical reliance on electoral politics and the state, which may carry over to more current protest repertoires. To test this further, we ran a model predicting the number of symbolic actions by politicians. The model (not shown) provides strong evidence that this is the case; CIO unions were significantly more likely to win such support than was the rest of the labor movement, including social movement unions.[19]

Across all models in Table 3, labor activity in a state as indicated by the strike rate is positively associated with increased levels of support. Political opportunities, by contrast, have little direct role. The presence of a right-to-work law is only meaningful for non-union symbolic assistance, likely capturing where it is more costly for others (and politicians in particular) to support unions.

The most sweeping coalition efforts by unions involve allies outside of the labor movement that bring material assistance. Common material actions by non-union allies include food provisions by area businesses and donations to strike funds by civic or social movement groups. We predicted that differences in union capacity would be most marked in precisely these contexts. Contrary to our expectations, however, only the CIO dummy reaches statistical significance in Model 4 ($p < .10$; two-tailed test). This runs counter to the dominant image of these organizations as staid and bureaucratic. Our findings suggest CIO unions may be more strategic than previously expected and raise important questions regarding contemporary unions' ability to forge inter-movement coalitions and to garner substantial resources in the process, a point we return to below.

The most consistent theoretically driven finding is that the immediate threat of a firm maintaining production positively affects not only the presence of allies outside of the labor movement but also securing material support from these actors. This challenge most clearly pushes unions to forge more diverse and far-reaching coalitions. Earlier, we hypothesized that although such threats posed by firms would provide an intense motivation for unions to form coalitions, reaching out to allies could be hamstrung by an unfavorable political environment. To test this possibility, we reran the model with an interaction between *firm maintains production* and *right-to-work* (Model 5 in Table 3). The negative and significant interaction term ($p < .05$; two-tailed test) demonstrates that unions do indeed find it difficult to secure tangible support from external allies when they are politically marginalized, even when they are intensely motivated to do so. Extending recent social movement scholarship, we find that a core element of labor's political opportunity structure in right-to-work states conditions the impact of threat on coalition processes.

The opposite side of this coin is that while threat and an unfavorable political environment may work together to reduce coalition building, threats to unions in *more favorable*

contexts may be especially fruitful in facilitating outreach once unions are forced to act. In other words, under these circumstances unions have both the motivation and the opportunity to build broad-based coalitions. To test this, we reran the non-union material action outcome with an interaction between *firm maintains production* and *citizen ideology* (how liberal the state's electorate is) (Model 6 in Table 3). The coefficient, which is positive and significant, provides support for this sentiment. Although opportunities related to the availability of allies were rarely significant in their own right, they clearly figure into the linking of immediate threat and the actual building of labor coalitions.

To summarize, these findings extend prior work by honing in on the types of support brought to bear in labor conflict and by demonstrating how the interplay of threat and the larger political opportunity context shapes such outcomes. Across all models, we find consistent evidence that union capacity matters, but not always as previously conceptualized. Social movement unions are strongly associated with outreach, as expected, but the industrial CIO unions are often as good, and in some cases even better, at mobilizing outside support. Finally, the immediate threat posed by firms is paramount in explaining union outreach and is significant across all of our outcomes.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Scholarship on labor and social movements increasingly points to the benefits of mobilizing external allies and identifies a number of important conditions under which coalitions are likely to form. As Schattschneider (1960) observed long ago, less powerful groups may seek to expand the scope of conflict and form coalitions to overcome their structural disadvantages. Labor scholarship is rife with examples of unions turning to community allies to level the playing field in contests with employers, from farm workers organizing (Ganz 2009) to today's more innovative labor campaigns (Martin 2008). Perhaps nowhere are such allies more needed than in strike events, which have become increasingly desperate measures for unions (Rhomberg 2012; Rosenfeld 2006).

Despite the increased interest in coalitions as a common and important feature of many protest mobilizations, we know very little about when and why unions reach out to other parties and what they typically get in return. Indeed, given the scholarly attention to the issue, we were surprised to find that outreach beyond the union–firm dynamic is not more common. Just over a quarter of all strikes in the dataset involved mobilization of external allies. When unions do reach out, it is typically to other labor organizations, followed by politicians, both of which were twentieth-century mainstays of union support. While acknowledging the limits of using media sources to study collective action, our more expansive approach using LexisNexis Academic data suggests that the enormous challenges facing contemporary unions have yet to spur any widespread cultivation of external allies when it comes to striking.

If coalition activity is less frequent than we expected, differences in union capacity certainly matter, although not always in ways that prior research would predict. As expected, social movement unions are strongly associated with outreach. Yet they are often no more likely to look beyond the labor movement for support than are some of the former CIO unions, which actually have greater success garnering material resources from inter-movement allies. Moreover, CIO unions that historically relied on the state are well-equipped to secure symbolic assistance from allies outside of the labor movement, often in the form of endorsements by politicians. This suggests a more diverse landscape of coalition activity than commonly assumed and underscores the need for researchers to assess differences in union capacity and the associated nuances empirically. The literature's focus on social movement unionism is a useful starting point, yet one that by itself provides a limited and in some cases inaccurate picture of union activity.

Our categorization scheme is of course just one way to think about union diversity. It cannot replace rich ethnographic and case-study

insights on varied union forms and tactics (Lopez 2004). Although our study hones in on coalition building across only a few broad historically and theoretically meaningful categories of unions, it raises a number of issues regarding the contemporary labor movement more generally. For example, coalition work is often linked to new organizing models, but we find that both social movement and CIO unions, in various ways, are increasingly turning to coalition partners in striking. This suggests that isomorphic processes may be at play, pushing unions toward common organizational structures and modes of actions (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), albeit in a slow and uneven fashion. This raises the question of how such changes become culturally legitimated across unions with very different histories and collective action repertoires, and just what it would take for a more thorough diffusion of coalitional unionism (see Voss and Sherman 2000). Clearly there are hurdles and opportunities presented by the character of firms and industries that unions target, a point we have barely begun to unpack here, and for which the newer literature on anti-corporate protest and corporate opportunity structures should be instructive (Soule 2009). Future research could advance our understanding of union outreach and the organizational processes that allow for it by expanding the testing ground beyond the handful of unions that command much of the attention in the literature and extending this work to the present day, when different types of solidarity actions, including forging of international ties, are garnering increasing labor interest.

Regarding insights into social movement outcomes more generally, the most consistent findings concern the role of threat. The immediate threat of a firm maintaining production always positively affects the presence of outside allies, regardless of union type and whether allies are inter- or intra-movement actors. Unlike more diffuse threats or broad political opportunities, this type of challenge is felt immediately in union members' lives, in terms of their job security, and provides clear evidence to unions that they cannot win the dispute on their own. Our findings also extend social movement scholarship by probing the types of support allies contribute and the conditions under which unions are likely to secure them. Notably, we find that the impact of the immediate threat posed by firms on labor outreach is lessened where unions are politically marginalized, consistent with recent work that points to the potential interplay of threat and opportunity (McCammon and Van Dyke 2010). In contrast, when allies abound in the immediate environment, threat matters even more for outreach. Future research should further disentangle how organizational capacity, threat, and opportunity features, including more proximate firm characteristics, may combine to shape coalition processes. Here it is important to recognize that labor strikes are typically fleeting affairs compared to more drawn out social movement struggles. We suspect that the type and extent of external partnerships is at least partially predicated on the permanence of the relationship, a possibility that could be assessed more explicitly in future work.

The question we are unable to assess with these data is whether mobilization of external allies is "worth the effort." Unfortunately the FMCS and newspaper data have no reliable measures of strike outcomes. Still, our findings hold more general implications for the effectiveness of labor and other social movement actors. Much research assumes the benefits of organizational collaboration, but more precise accounts of the types of allies drawn on and the support typically received should advance our understanding of these processes. For example, if politicians rarely provide anything more than speeches, as our data suggest, alliances of this type may have less of an impact than would others. This is an open question and one that should be subjected to empirical scrutiny. Indeed, collaboration comes with costs and not all allies are of equal value; reaching out presents a real dilemma for many movements, if not always for the researchers who study them. By taking into account the diverse landscape of allies and forms of support, scholars will be better equipped to explain the dynamics and ultimate effects of social movement coalitions.

APPENDIX

Table A1. Comparison of Alternative CIO Measures and Union Outreach

CIO Union Categories	Union Outreach	Union Allies Mobilized	Non-union Allies Mobilized	Politicians Mobilized
1. CIO Affiliation	.301	.027	1.260*	.827*
	(.385)	(.432)	(.321)	(.401)
2. Early CIO Affiliate	.882†	.867	1.577*	1.104
	(.551)	(.699)	(.626)	(.739)
3. Core Industry CIO Affiliate	1.312*	1.315†	1.957*	1.619*
	(.587)	(.820)	(.531)	(.566)

Note: $N = 321$ strike events. Model 1 is from a logistic regression of union outreach; all others are negative binomial estimates. Models include all controls in Table 2. Standard errors are in parentheses. Measure 1 includes unions central to development of the CIO that remained whole and active during at least part of the sample period. These include the CWA, ILWU, IUE, IWA, MEBA, NG, OCAW, RW, TWU, UAW, UMW, URW, and USWA. Measure 2 excludes the later postwar affiliates IUE and CWA. Measure 3 is Martin and Dixon's (2010) Core Industry CIO measure of UAW, USWA, and UMW.
†$p < .10$; * $p < .05$ (two-tailed tests).

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Notes

1. We use the term "union outreach" interchangeably with "coalitions." Our interest is when unions expand the labor dispute beyond the union–firm dynamic by engaging outside groups.
2. Unions that have adopted a social movement orientation account for the bulk of contemporary organizing. Voss and Sherman's (2000) influential study identifies the SEIU as perhaps the most aggressive union of the revitalized labor movement. UNITE and HERE, which merged in the 2000s and have since separated (Fantasia and Voss 2004), and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) have also been relatively quick to adopt these innovative recruitment methods (Fiorito, Jarley, and Delaney 1995; Martin and Dixon 2010).
3. Bronfenbrenner and Juravich's (1998) sample of 165 NLRB election campaigns from 1994 shows that 30 percent involved union–community coalitions.
4. Individual union histories are diverse and mergers certainly complicate the narrative. Any sweeping historical claims about differences between all AFL and CIO unions are unlikely to have much purchase. What we take from this work, and for which there is empirical support, is that many of the core industrial CIO unions still bear an imprint of the industrial relations framework that was crucial for their growth and stability in the mid-twentieth century.
5. Our period covers the growth of social movement unionism and efforts to engage new constituencies, capturing much of the action in unions' coalition activity. Nevertheless, a longer time period, say beginning in the 1970s, could provide insight into the economic and political upheavals that spurred considerable interest in outreach. We are optimistic that as more newspapers are available electronically for longer periods, such an analysis will be possible in the near future.
6. Coverage in terms of words per story is also significantly higher for larger strikes (large strikes = 538 words; small strikes = 439 words), but there is no significant coverage difference between strikes involving coalitions and those without. Given the skew toward larger events, we performed the bootstrapping technique with Stata version 10 to assess their potential influence on the findings. Results remained consistent with those presented here.
7. ProQuest offers newspaper coverage similar to LNA but has expanded coverage of business and trade publications. We took a random sample of 25 strikes in our dataset and conducted identical searches using ProQuest Newspapers and the expanded business sources through their ABI databases. ProQuest had coverage on only 60 percent of the strikes covered by LNA. When comparing ProQuest results that did receive coverage to our data, agreement over the coding of external allies was

high at .86. In no instance did ProQuest reveal new information on the presence of allies.

8. Government actors refer primarily to governmental organizations, like the Environmental Protection Agency. Because we are interested in the expansion of industrial conflict beyond normal firm–union relations, we do not include government actors that are typically embroiled in labor disputes, such as federal mediators and the National Labor Relations Board. Our models do control for the presence of these actors.
9. This is not an exhaustive list of original CIO unions. Rather, these organizations were vital to its takeoff, benefitted the most from the institutionalized bargaining of the postwar era that began to crumble in the 1970s, and are active today for us to examine. The trajectory of each union and the timing of their declines are not identical. The older UMW, for example, experienced declines in the immediate postwar years followed by some gains in the late 1960s and early 1970s only to experience significant setbacks with the dismantling of industry-wide bargaining at the end of the 1970s (Moody 1988). There is evidence that these particular unions remain distinct in their approach to striking (Martin and Dixon 2010).
10. Our analysis employs historical organizational trajectories to draw meaningful distinctions among unions, but scholars have highlighted other important dimensions along which unions vary, from gender composition (Cobble 2004) to political orientation (Form 1995). One distinction that may be especially relevant is organizational size. To assess this, we examined outreach among the 10 largest unions. Being among the 10 largest unions had no bearing on coalition formation in itself. When parsing out findings across particular large unions, few significant patterns emerged other than the large social movement unions being positively associated with outreach.
11. As Table A1 in the Appendix shows, when adding other early CIO affiliates that were active in the 1990s and 2000s to our measure, the coefficients for the *CIO affiliation* and *early CIO affiliate* variables remain similar in direction, although smaller in magnitude and often are not significant. The Communications Workers of America (CWA) is currently the most active of this more inclusive set of CIO unions. The CWA, which did not affiliate with the CIO until 1949 and did not receive the considerable state support given to the industrial unions, also differs noticeably from the unions we study in that it *grew* substantially during the postwar era and more recent period of labor decline. Adding this union to our CIO dummy variable only serves to weaken its effect.
12. Both authors coded firms independently based on their industry and goods/services produced to determine if the firm would have been able to maintain production in another location, drawing on Clawson's (2003) categorization of employment sectors highly vulnerable to globalization. The intercoder reliability exceeded .9.
13. This measure does not include information on who initiated the violence. We nevertheless see it as an important control for a strike's contentiousness.
14. This measure captures only whether a union sought to have this legal designation applied to a strike, not whether they were successful.
15. This approach provides a more conservative estimate. To verify the robustness of our findings, we reran the models using Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM). Results were consistent with those presented in the tables here, especially results pertaining to threats, opportunities, and allies' contributions.
16. There is some disagreement as to whether the UFCW was a social movement union for this entire sample period. Its removal from the social movement union category reduces the coefficient in size and in some cases statistical significance, suggesting the importance of this particular union relative to outreach. The exclusion of UNITE does not alter the findings. Moreover, bringing UNITE and its more clearly industrial predecessor ACTWU (Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union) into the industrial CIO category does not significantly alter the findings. We also ran models including additional controls for particularly large and influential unions like the IBT (International Brotherhood of Teamsters) and IAM (International Association of Machinists), which were rarely significant and did not alter the findings.
17. In line with our opportunity hypothesis, CIO unions were slightly less likely to turn to outreach in right-to-work states. Our focus is on these theoretically motivated findings, but we also tested for a number of possible interactions between union type and more proximate firm characteristics and found no consistent patterns.
18. Multicollinearity does not appear to affect the models. The Collin test in Stata shows no VIF score above 2.5.
19. Other tests support a linkage between CIO unions and electoral politics. Strikes waged by CIO unions have a positive and significant association with the number of politicians mobilized. Moreover, the coefficient for the CIO variable becomes much more pronounced and, for some outcomes, increasingly significant after controlling for presidential election years when their resources are diverted toward campaigns.

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