Changing to Win? Threat, Resistance, and the Role of Unions in Strikes, 1984–2002[1]

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Much of what we know about strikes is grounded in the context of postwar Fordism, a unique historical moment of relatively institutionalized labor-management relations. Yet the resurgence of corporate resistance over the past quarter century, coupled with an increasingly hostile political and economic climate, has fundamentally transformed the American industrial landscape. Drawing from this research and insights on social movements and formal organizations, we expect unions will vary considerably in their response to threats. Our analysis, based on a comprehensive data set of U.S. strikes from 1984 to 2002, reveals the importance of such intramovement cleavages for strike activity and for the prospects of organized labor in the contemporary United States. We conclude by discussing the implications of our findings for scholarship on threat and social movement challenges more generally.

CHANGING TO WIN?

Strikes have long played a central role in working-class struggles in the United States (Brecher 1972; Franzosi 1995). Employees strike to win economic benefits (Wallace, Leicht, and Raffalovich 1999), contest management rights on the shop floor (Gouldner 1954), and pressure state actors (Jenkins and Brents 1989). Given their importance, interest in strikes has spanned the social sciences, including economics, sociology, and political

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science (Ashenfelter and Johnson 1969; Shorter and Tilly 1974; Hibbs 1976; for a review of this research, see Edwards [1981] and Franzosi [1989]). Much of this rich theoretical and empirical work is firmly rooted in the context of postwar Fordist production relations, when collective bargaining was largely institutionalized, especially in core manufacturing industries (Kaufman 1981; Rubin 1986).

Yet the past quarter century has witnessed a dramatic change of course as labor-management relations have become increasingly fractured and contentious (Kochan, Katz, and McKersie 1986; Harrison and Bluestone 1988). Notable events include President Reagan's swift response to the federal air traffic controllers' strike in 1981, which signaled to many firms a new era of union busting and highlighted the increased risks of striking for labor (Rachleff 1992; Rosenfeld 2006*b*). Recent economic changes, such as the rise of globalization, have only weakened unions further (Brady and Wallace 2000). While much of the postwar strike research treats the labor movement as a more or less unified whole, analyses of strikes under similarly unfavorable conditions historically find that the varied organizational capacities of unions themselves are crucial, tempering broader structural effects (Shorter and Tilly 1974; Snyder 1975; Cohn and Eaton 1989). Consistent with such claims, there is strong evidence that unions' response to recent challenges has been uneven; some have pressed for a renewed commitment to aggressive forms of social movement unionism, yet this is by no means widespread (Mantsios 1998; Martin 2008). The recent and momentous split of the AFL-CIO centered on this debate, with the departing "Change to Win" faction citing the federation's failure to adapt to this new industrial landscape.

Despite an increasingly splintered labor movement and renewed scholarly interest in unions (Clawson 2003; Fantasia and Voss 2004; Milkman 2006), there has been virtually no effort to systematically assess the role of these organizations in strikes today (however, see Beckwith 2000). Drawing upon emerging work on threat and social movement mobilization (Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Almeida 2003), we hypothesize that recent challenges, particularly firm resistance but also an increasingly unfavorable political and economic climate, will reduce strike proneness among unions that benefited from institutionalized collective bargaining, notably manufacturing unions, while it will provoke militancy among the growing number of "social movement unions," especially those in the service sector, that have been more successful responding to external threats.

Results from a comprehensive data set of strikes from 1984 to 2002 demonstrate the utility of a disaggregated, union-centered analysis over one that lumps all strikes together. Our findings provide new insight into what remains a central, if fundamentally altered, weapon in labor's ar-

senal and the implications for the future of the movement as a whole. More broadly, this research speaks to the role of threat in social movement mobilization, particularly that from corporate actors, who occupy an increasingly important place in today's neoliberal political climate (Sklair 2002).

STRIKE RESEARCH AND INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT AT THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Most research on strike activity in the United States was conducted during a relatively rare period of labor peace following World War II. Prior to this, strikes were often contentious and sometimes violent disputes between unions (or unorganized workers) and firms, shaped by broader economic and political dynamics, as well as the organizational capacity of both parties (Yellen 1936; Snyder 1975; Griffin et al. 1986). Efforts to reduce labor conflict (Brecher 1972; Goldfield 1989) eventually led to an uneasy postwar labor-management accord that allowed unions to advance the economic interests of their constituency while limiting their ability to contest management rights on the shop floor (Davis 1986; Fantasia 1988; Nissen 1990). This was especially true for workers in core manufacturing industries such as auto and steel, who were able to win meaningful concessions in wages and benefits through collective bargaining and striking (Rubin 1986).[2]

As labor-management relations and, by extension, strikes themselves became increasingly routinized, scholars began to explore why these events continued to occur at all. Institutional economists in particular were able to gain considerable empirical leverage by focusing on the calculations made by unions and firms regarding the costs and benefits of striking (Hicks 1932; Kaufman 1981; Cousineau and Lacroix 1986; Card 1990). Labor disputes in the United States and other industrialized nations were therefore conceptualized as "accidents" requiring fairly minor revisions in the demands made by the two parties, rather than as the contentious battles they had once been. This trend toward institutionalization was reinforced by the state's regulation of all aspects of industrial relations, from collective bargaining to organizing (McCammon 1993).

Such cooperation between unions and firms, incomplete though it may have been, proved to be short lived. The past 30 years or so have witnessed another fundamental shift in the American industrial landscape, with far-reaching implications for how we analyze strikes (see, esp., Kochan et al.

[2] It is important to note that labor relations were never completely institutionalized in the United States, even in the manufacturing sector (see Rubin 1992).

1986). Notable events, including President Reagan's firing of more than 10,000 air traffic controllers and the breaking of strikes by Phelps-Dodge, Hormel, Caterpillar, and other large unionized firms have served notice that this tactic may no longer be an effective weapon in the arsenal of unions (Rachleff 1992; Rosenblum 1995; Franklin 2001). There is mounting evidence that firms have begun "baiting" unions into strikes in the hopes of replacing their workforce with strikebreakers or at least extracting meaningful concessions from the union (Bandzak 1992; Juravich and Bronfenbrenner 1999).

Not coincidently, firms' willingness to directly challenge the legitimacy of unions comes at a time when the state has also become increasingly indifferent or hostile to collective bargaining as an institution.[3] Although workers have the right to strike, management has the legal right to permanently replace striking workers (Norwood 2002; Lambert 2005). The proliferation of neoliberal policies (Campbell and Pedersen 2001) and an increasingly politicized and probusiness National Labor Relations Board (NLRB; Gould 2001) have further emboldened corporate resistance (Fantasia 1988; McCammon 2001*b*). The emergence of this new political paradigm reinforces Edward's (1981) claim that strikes in America, far from being institutionalized by the state, represent struggles between unions and firms over control of the shop floor. It is evident that firms have taken advantage of labor's crumbling legal protection to erode gains made by workers at the bargaining table.

To compound matters even further, a number of industries, particularly those once regarded as union strongholds, such as steel and auto manufacturing, have been devastated by overseas competition (Hoerr 1988; Tilly 1995*a*; Baldwin 2003; Lee 2005). The mobility of capital has always posed a challenge for unions (Cowie 1999), but the growth of free trade has only served to hasten this process. Indeed, a number of scholars have pointed to broader structural changes, such as foreign investment in U.S. industries and the growth of the service sector, as accounting for much of the waning fortunes of organized labor (Brady and Wallace 2000; Farber and Western 2001).

Figure 1 provides stark evidence of unions' weakened position in America; both strike activity and union membership currently stand at near-

[3] While the labor movement in America has primarily won new gains at the point of production, not the ballot box (Kimeldorf 1999), politics are important for most unions (Marks 1989; Form 1995), and strikes have figured prominently in some labor policy battles (Jenkins and Brents 1989; Cornfield 1991).

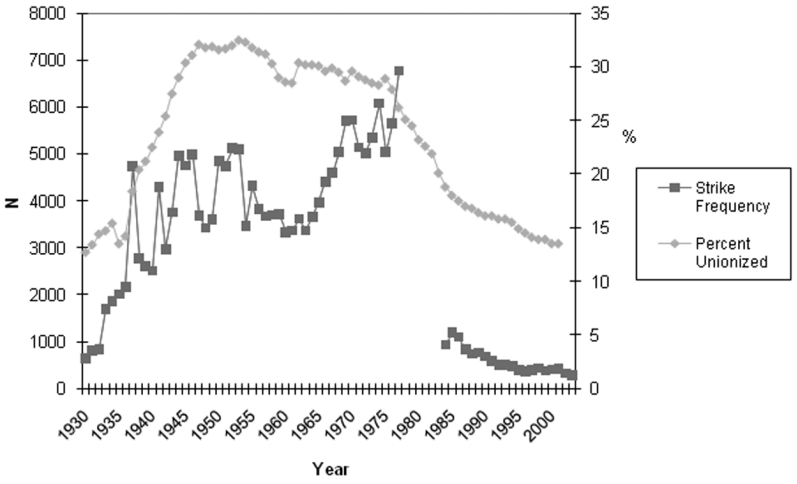

FIG. 1.—Strike activity and unionization rate in the United States, 1930–2003. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

historic lows.[4] The simple reality is that strikes today involve substantial risk on the part of unions (Bandzak 1992) and are often defensive, a last resort to stem off demands for concessions (Wallace 1989; Rosenfeld 2006*b*). But union approaches to such a costly endeavor are unlikely to be monolithic. There exists a large body of evidence on historical strike trends that suggests that, under similarly adverse conditions, the organizational capacity of unions themselves become central for understanding how broader structural factors drive strike activity (Brecher 1972; Shorter and Tilly 1974; Snyder 1975).[5] We draw on these insights, as well as more recent social movement scholarship on threat, to identify important cleavages in the labor movement today. By systematically categorizing major unions, we are able to generate a series of predictions regarding how these actors will vary in their response to the challenges outlined above.

[4] Unfortunately, the gap in the data during the early 1980s is a critical period in strike activity. The Bureau of Labor Statistics stopped collecting work stoppage data in the late 1970s (it now collects information only on those that idle more 1,000 workers, which we estimate are only about 5% of all strikes). The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services's (FMCS's) series began in the mid-1980s and will be described in greater detail below.

[5] Beth Rubin and colleagues (Rubin et al. 1983; Rubin 1992) find evidence that even when collective bargaining is routinized union strength still matters in strike-related outcomes.

THREAT AND UNION RESPONSE

Building on the political process model (McAdam 1982), a number of social movement scholars maintain that threat, typically measured by the state's repression of social movements specifically and citizens' political participation generally, is critical for understanding the timing and form of protest (Olivier 1991; Khawaja 1993; Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Van Dyke and Soule 2002). Perhaps the most compelling empirical support for this assertion comes from Almeida's (2003) analysis of protest waves, including strikes, in El Salvador. He finds that, during the period of democratic reforms, mainstream groups engaging in conventional political activism flourished. When the state became increasingly repressive, however, more radical groups emerged, drawing resources from their established predecessors and employing more confrontational tactics.

While we recognize the fundamental differences between contemporary U.S. industrial relations and authoritarian states such as the one described by Almeida, this framework has considerable utility for understanding strikes today. Specifically, the growth of firm resistance, as well as an increasingly unfavorable economic and political environment, can be fruitfully conceptualized as a clear threat to the legitimacy of organized labor in America. Building upon Almeida and his distinction among movement actors, we suspect that unions' response will vary depending upon on their ability to mount an effective counterchallenge. Such capacity for resistance is determined by a range of union-related factors, including a union's industry, resources, and willingness to explore new repertoires of action (Ganz 2000; Martin 2008).

There has been growing interest in the way unions have reacted to the recent transformation of industrial relations. Particular attention has been paid to new and aggressive approaches to organizing; some unions are relying upon social movement tactics, broad coalitions, and appeals for worker dignity to stem nearly 50 years of membership decline (Bronfenbrenner 1997; Turner and Cornfield 2007; Martin 2008). Voss and Sherman's (2000) research on renewed organizing efforts identifies the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) as perhaps the most aggressive of the revitalized union movement. UNITE-HERE and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) have also been relatively quick to adopt these innovative methods of recruitment (see Crump 1991; Fiorito et al. 1995; Fantasia and Voss 2004). Yet not all unions have embraced this new organizing agenda; the Change to Win faction of unions that left the AFL-CIO, including SEIU and UNITE-HERE, cited the AFL-CIO's failure to develop and follow through on a comprehensive organizing program as a major reason for the split.

While these developments are quite recent, many important distinctions

among unions are rooted in their unique organizational histories. For example, Milkman (2006) traces the divergent fate of labor unions in present-day Los Angeles in part to their origins in the AFL and CIO, arguing that 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), AFL unions such as SEIU came of age prior to the NLRB and broader New Deal regulatory framework, which gives them "an edge in the context of ascendant neoliberalism" (p. 23). By contrast, the industrial unions have had "enormous difficulty transcending the New Deal framework on which the CIO's initial growth was so heavily predicated" (p. 24). Milkman's analysis suggests that distinguishing between old-order CIO manufacturing unions and more aggressive service sector ones can provide an important window into the current prospects of organized labor.

In a similar vein, Cornfield (2007) sees contemporary labor relations as marked by an important division between the industrial unions that emerged as a strategic response to mass production, but who find themselves ill equipped to deal with the new challenges, and the mostly former AFL unions that are targeting marginalized workers in service industries. Evidence of the importance of a craft/industrial division can also be found in analyses of the particular approaches unions take to politics (Marks 1989; Form 1995). Unfortunately, while this research has been sensitive to the considerable diversity of unions within the labor movement, it has largely ignored the implications for understanding strike behavior, instead focusing on organizing and, to a lesser degree, political activity.[6]

Differentiating among unions to gain insight into the labor movement as a whole is not new. Historical analyses indicate considerable variation in the political, organizing, and strike activities of particular types of unions (Morris 1958; Galenson 1960; Dubofsky 1969; Kimeldorf 1988; Voss 1993; Isaac and Christiansen 2002). These past distinctions, coupled with contemporary developments within organized labor, suggest that the consequences of an increasingly hostile environment will play out differently depending upon the particular union in question. Indeed, Cornfield (1991, p. 35) posited some time ago that considering strike variation among different types of unions would help "broaden and refine" theorizing on strike activity and labor activism. Yet, to date, no research has systematically examined this possibility.

Scholarship on formal organizations and social movements more broadly

[6] There has been some limited analysis of the role of strikes in organizing (Martin 2008). For example, the SEIU's Justice for Janitors campaigns in major U.S. cities combined short strikes with other tactics, including civil disobedience, to organize thousands of low-wage and immigrant workers (Waldinger et al. 1998; Kennet 2006).

also supports a more disaggregated, actor-centered approach to the study of collective action. Theories of organizations in particular have at their core an interest in explaining diversity within organizational populations. Stinchcombe (1965), in his analysis of organizational inertia, contends that environmental demands at the time of the organization's founding continue to affect internal organizational dynamics long after those particular pressures subside, which is consistent with Milkman's (2006) claims regarding unions today. Population ecologists (Hannan and Freeman 1987, 1989) examine how environmental changes increase the mortality rate of some types of organizations while creating new opportunities for others. Even neoinstitutionalists, who seek to explain why organizations often come to resemble one another, recognize that the strength of institutional norms often vary dramatically within and across organizational fields (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Lounsbury 2007).

Movement scholars have also explored how strategic choices made by social movement organizations (SMOs) are determined by broader structural factors and internal considerations. Perhaps the most comprehensive work on this topic is Minkoff's (1999) analysis of the changing goals and strategies of women and ethnic organizations in the second half of the 20th century, changes that were driven by a combination of specific organizational dynamics and environmental considerations. Despite the modularity of protest repertoires (Tilly 1995*b*), the tactical considerations of these actors are often quite limited; Van Dyke, Soule, and McCarthy (2001) find that the use of contentious tactics by SMOs in New York depended heavily on their particular membership base and goals.

Insights from these various substantive areas suggest that a mix of industry constraints and somewhat unique organizational legacies and orientations toward collective action shape how unions react to external threats. Specifically, some unions are well positioned to respond to threats by striking, while others may have no other choice but to acquiesce. In what follows, we outline a categorization scheme of unions that takes important organizational differences into account, and we offer a set of theoretically driven expectations regarding how the effects of important strike predictors, especially firm hostility but also the political climate and economic changes, may vary across distinct types of unions. This approach advances prior strike explanations and the literature on union revitalization by accounting for considerable intramovement diversity, and it represents an extension of recent social movement literature that seeks to clarify the ways in which environmental conditions differentially affect distinct types of movement actors (Meyer and Minkoff 2004).

We first consider those unions that still engage in strikes and are not

legally precluded from such activity.[7] We then identify a variety of dimensions that may condition union reactions to the threats outlined above. These include industrial sector, organizing activity,[8] and craft versus industrial faction. Given that these dimensions are highly correlated with one another and to the historical legacy of particular organizations, we identify four major categories of unions with distinct orientations to striking and collective action generally. These categories capture important segments of the contemporary labor movement (the specific unions included in each category are discussed in the data section). It is important to recognize that this categorization scheme draws from prior conceptualizations and insights into unions, many of which have not been systematically assessed within the context of today's shifting industrial climate. As such, the empirical results below provide an opportunity to update and refine conventional wisdom regarding specific types of unions. We begin by describing what we and other scholars (Milkman 2006; Cornfield 2007) see as the most important distinction in the labor movement today, that between manufacturing and service sector unions.

The first category includes the *original CIO unions*. Despite the contentious birth of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (Zeigler 1995), the growth of these unions was predicated in large part on a favorable regulatory framework (Dubofsky 1994; Milkman 2006). They represent the essence of Fordist production arrangements, and, consequently, they have been the hardest hit by the recent breakdown of such relations (Hoerr 1988; Cornfield 2007). As such, their strike activity should be particularly sensitive to the antiunion political and economic environment. Although institutional scholars have paid little attention to the process of deinstitutionalization (see Oliver 1992), as Milkman (2006) has argued, these unions' investment in what are now outmoded collective bargaining strategies should severely limit their ability to respond to the recent growth of firm hostilities. Therefore, *we expect countermobilization by corporate actors to significantly reduce the rate of strike activity for the original CIO unions*. Indeed, a number of qualitative accounts of strikes by these unions suggest that their labor militancy today is a last resort and when undertaken is a defensive maneuver to protect gains won during earlier

[7] Some unions, based on their constituency, are automatically prohibited from striking (e.g., the National Letter Carriers Association). While this necessarily limits the diversity of the sample, we are interested in explaining variation among unions for which striking is still a part of their collective action repertoire.

[8] Martin's (2008) account of organizing today analyzes the activity of local affiliates of many unions included here, with the notable exception of AFL craft unions. As there is generally little current research on these organizations, it is difficult to assess how aggressively they are recruiting new members.

periods of institutionalized labor relations (Juravich and Bronfenbrenner 1999; Franklin 2001).

Moreover, the state's shift toward neoliberal policies has made the original CIO unions particularly vulnerable both in terms of enforcement of labor law and protection from the globalization of trade, which has eroded their manufacturing base. As such, *the decision to strike by the original CIO unions should be negatively affected both by the decline of the manufacturing sector and the growth of foreign direct investment*. Given their members' lack of occupational clout, these unions have long used their membership size to exercise political clout (Marks 1989). Thus, we hypothesize that *the presence of antiunion political actors should also reduce the willingness of these original CIO unions to strike.*

The second category includes the aggressive or revitalized organizations that make up the core of the new *social movement unions*—those unions that have received the bulk of attention from scholars interested in labor revitalization (Clawson 2003; Milkman 2006). These actors have explored innovative approaches to organizing that directly confront firm resistance and other challenges to unionization (Voss and Sherman 2000; Lopez 2004). Many are part of the Change to Win faction and were among the most vociferous in the unusually public debate on labor revitalization prior to the AFL-CIO split. Given their reputation for militancy (Fantasia and Voss 2004), we *expect that threats, especially from firms, will increase strike activity among these social movement unions*. And while these unions have focused on organizing, they have also been politically active and have often relied on political allies during the course of strikes and organizing drives (Waldinger et al. 1998; Manheim 2001). Thus, *the social movement unions may be less prone to strike when political allies are few and far between*. Finally, numerous studies document these unions' commitment to organizing low-wage service workers, the workforce of the "new" global economy (Milkman 2000, 2006). It follows then that, *for these social movement unions, globalization measures may actually increase their propensity to strike*.

While the manufacturing/service split receives the lion's share of scholarly attention (Milkman 2006), we identify two additional categories that have important implications for union militancy in the current era. The first of these is the original *AFL craft unions*. While such organizations have a reputation of acting conservatively (Galenson 1960; Form 1995), their skilled membership base allows them to wield considerable influence on the shop floor. Therefore, they are distinct from both industrial and revitalized unions, which represent mostly low-wage service workers. Of course, these unions came of age before institutionalized collective bargaining and thus, like the service sector unions described above, they are less wedded to highly routinized labor-management relations. This po-

sitional power (Wallace et al. 1989) leads us *to expect that craft unions will respond to firm hostility by striking*.

Moreover, the political activism of the craft unions never reached the same levels as that of the manufacturing unions (Marks 1989), so we hypothesize that *the rate of strike activity of the original craft unions will largely be unaffected by antiunion political actors*. We are less certain about the effects of economic changes in America on these unions' striking behavior. While the fates of some craft workers are directly tied to the fortunes of the manufacturing sector (e.g., electricians at auto manufacturing plants), others are employed in sectors, such as construction, that are relatively protected from the influences of globalization. As such, we hypothesize that *manufacturing decline and foreign investment will have little effect on strikes by the craft unions*.

The fourth and final category is composed of just one union, the *Teamsters*. Labor movement historiography highlights the unique and sometimes contradictory stances of the Teamsters relative to other labor organizations (Dobbs 1972; Friedman 1982; Russell 2001). Not only does this union not fit neatly into any of the other three categories (not a CIO union, not a craft union, and generally not regarded as the new face of organized labor even though it has joined the Change to Win faction), it is also by far the most strike prone, accounting for nearly 20% of all work stoppages during the period analyzed. This comparatively high rate of militancy is one reason why we consider the Teamsters separately. While often viewed as relatively conservative (the Teamsters endorsed Reagan's presidential bid), this union's record of aggressive behavior leads to the hypothesis that, *for the Teamsters, environmental threats, especially firm resistance, will be positively related to strike propensity*.

In sum, our theoretical framework for understanding the labor movement today allows us to differentiate among four distinct types of unions: those in the core manufacturing sector that have become increasingly vulnerable and defensive in recent years, the growing number of unions that identify as social movement actors, craft unions that have long relied upon their own members for bargaining leverage, and the Teamsters. The unique features of each category allow us to develop a series of expectations regarding how their strike behavior should be affected by broader environment within which they are embedded. Again, moving beyond prior theories of strike activity, we recognize that the growing threat of firm resistance, political hostility, and economic restructuring has fundamentally altered the playing field upon which unions confront corporate power. While strike activity by some unions, especially those in the manufacturing sector, should wane as these forces become increasingly powerful, other unions have shown a willingness to confront these challenges head on in the hopes of revitalizing the labor movement.

DATA AND ANALYSIS

Our research considers how environmental threats drive strike activity across four distinct types of unions from 1984 to 2002, a period marked by substantial industrial and political reorganization. While characteristics of the nation-state clearly influence labor disputes, the decentralized nature of U.S. industrial relations benefits from a more localized analysis (Jenkins et al. 2006); here we analyze strike activity at the state level. Examining variation in contentious activity across states has been growing among social movement scholars interested in topics from mobilization (McCammon 2001*a*; Van Dyke and Soule 2002) to movement success (McCammon et al. 2001). We first discuss the major theoretical explanations of strikes, listed in table 1, and then describe our specific categorization of unions that will be used to assess variation in strike predictors. Because we employ a pooled time-series design (described in greater detail below), we also note how time is incorporated into each measure of interest.

Strike activity.—Prior to 1980, most research on strikes in the United States employed the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) work stoppages file. This database was discontinued in 1981 (the BLS continues to collect data on "major" work stoppages idling 1,000 or more employees), and, not surprisingly, this reduced scholarly interest in strikes. In 1984 the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services (FMCS) began collecting data on strikes. This more comprehensive data set, despite its utility, has rarely been analyzed (but see Martin 2005; Rosenfeld 2006*b*).[9]

[9] While a vast improvement over the current BLS database, which captures an estimated 5% of all work stoppages, there are some challenges when using the FMCS database. First, the FMCS differentiates among strikes by bargaining unit, not union or firm. Therefore, a strike at a firm by two unions is counted twice, and a strike by a single union at a firm with multiple branches is counted for each branch. While these types of events are not common, accounting for about 12% of all strikes, we excluded them from our analysis (the results did not differ significantly when they were included). Second, the database does not differentiate between strikes and lockouts, employer-initiated work stoppages that may be increasingly important today. In their analysis of collective bargaining, Cramton and Tracy (1992) estimate that 10% of such events led to strikes, whereas only 0.4% resulted in lockouts. If a similar ratio holds for our data, then more than 95% of the events analyzed are strikes. Also, this database does not include strikes associated with new organizing efforts. Although organizing is regulated by the National Labor Relations Board certification election process, there is evidence (Martin 2008) that some aggressive unions have integrated strikes into their organizing strategy. However, this is quite rare; in Martin's (2008) study, only 24 such strikes were carried out by a sample of 70 large unions from 1990 to 2001. Finally, the FMCS does not differentiate between offensive strikes, those intended to win new gains, and defensive strikes, those intended to protect existing gains. Because we expect the latter to be particularly common among CIO unions, our discussion of the coefficients of strikes by these actors incorporates the possibility that the strikes may be either defensive or offensive in nature.

Previous research on strikes has attended to various dimensions of work stoppages, from the number of firms that experience such an event to the length of time that workers are willing to strike. Here the dependent variable is the *strike frequency* for each state in a given year.[10] Earlier research on strikes has tended to examine the strike rate (usually the number of strikes in a given year standardized by the total size of the employed population). Instead, we follow recent social movement and labor scholars (e.g., Isaac and Christiansen 2002) and model strike counts. Because we disaggregate strikes to the state level and to specific union categories, they are relatively rare events (some states have no strikes in a given year); thus, a more traditional strike rate measure would fluctuate widely across states.

Firm threat.—A major premise of the current research is that firms' growing resistance to unionization has substantially increased the risk of striking and that individual unions will respond very differently to this threat. Here we include two indicators of firm hostility, both from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which regulates much of labor-management relations in the private sector. The first is the number of *decertification elections*, NLRB-sponsored elections that allow the firm's employees to vote to remove an existing union as their collective bargaining representative.[11]

While decertification elections represent a rather dramatic way of resisting unionization, firms also employ other tactics, such as firing prounion employees (Dickens 1983; Kleiner 2001). As McCammon (2001*b*) argues, these actions often spur unions to file an "unfair labor practice" charge (ULP) against the firm. While ULPs are often common in the buildup of a strike, the bivariate correlation between strike activity and ULPs is only .35, indicating that this measure is capturing a broader set of hostile firm behaviors (the correlation between decertification elections and strikes is also modest at .32). Because we expect their impact to be

[10] Research has also examined total strike volume, which is calculated by summing the total person-days lost (size × length) for all strikes in a particular year (Shorter and Tilly 1974). However, the underlying determinants of this outcome are driven by different processes (Vroman 1989), and this variable is also prone to bias due to the effect of large outliers.

[11] Importantly, replacement workers can vote in decertification elections, which could affect the causal ordering (strikes drive decertification elections). However, under section 9 (c)(3) of the National Labor Relations Act, striking employees are not permitted to vote in the decertification election until one year after the strike has begun. Because such workers are presumably strongly prounion, firms typically wait until after the one-year anniversary to file a decertification election petition with the NLRB (LeRoy 1997). This does not apply to unfair labor practice strikes, a label used by the NLRB to designate strikes instigated by some employer wrongdoing. In these events, the striking employees cannot be replaced.

TABLE 1
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE ANALYSIS

Variable	Mean	SD	Data Source
Outcomes:			
Strike frequency	11.24	17.44	FMCS
Original CIO strike frequency	2.04	3.98	FMCS
Social movement union strike frequency	1.03	2.11	FMCS
Original AFL craft strike frequency	.60	1.19	FMCS
Teamsters strike frequency	2.13	3.56	FMCS
Firm threat:			
Decertification elections per 1,000 enterprises	.18	.15	NLRB
Unfair labor practices per 1,000 enterprises	3.48	2.15	NLRB
Economic predictors:			
% employed in manufacturing	15.66	6.22	*Statistical Abstract of the United States*
% employed in foreign-owned firms	3.85	1.71	Survey of Current Business (various years)
Unemployment rate	5.59	1.80	Bureau of Labor Statistics
Inflation (% change in Consumer Price Index)	3.25	1.04	Bureau of Labor Statistics
Political predictors:			
Government ideology score	49.73	24.30	Berry et al. (1998)
Citizen ideology score	48.43	14.82	Berry et al. (1998)
Presidential election year (1 = yes)	.26		*Statistical Abstract of the United States*
Right–to–work law (1 = yes)	.42	.49	U.S. Department of Labor

Union strength:			
Unionization rate	14.37	6.22	*Statistical Abstract of the United States*
NLRB certification elections per 1,000 enterprises	.75	.56	NLRB
No. unions in the state (1999)	448	421	OLMS
Controls:			
No. enterprises (in thousands)	128.30	136.94	*County Business Patterns*
% employees that are female	45.89	1.55	*Statistical Abstract of the United States*
% African-American	9.87	9.35	*Statistical Abstract of the United States*
1984–92 (period referent)	.49		
1993–95 period dummy	.16		
Post-1995 period dummy	.37		
Census-defined subregions (West South Central is the referent)			U.S. Census Bureau

NOTE.—FMCS = Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services; NLRB = National Labor Relations Board; OLMS = U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Labor-Management Standards.

felt relatively immediately, neither measure is lagged and both are standardized per 1,000 enterprises.

Economic predictors.—Again, there is evidence that recent economic trends, such as the globalization of trade, have also harmed unions, particularly those in the manufacturing sector. We include the *percentage of workforce employed in manufacturing* to capture the decline of this traditional union stronghold. Related to this, a number of industries, though especially manufacturing, have been hard hit by the globalization of trade. While much has been made of the movement of industry offshore (Cowie 1999), Brady and Wallace (2000) offer compelling evidence that foreign investment in American industries has significantly weakened organized labor. Therefore, the models control for the *percentage of workforce employed in foreign-owned firms*.

Earlier economic analyses of strikes postulated that these events should trend closely to the business cycle as workers' bargaining position is greatest when the labor market is tight (Rees 1952; Ashenfelter and Johnson 1969; McConnell 1981). To capture this explanation, we measure the state's *unemployment rate*. Labor economists have also traced strike activity to inflation (Kaufman 1981), so our models include an indicator of *percentage change in the Consumer Price Index*, which we lag by one year.[12]

Political predictors.—Like economic shifts, the political structure has also become less favorable to unions in recent years (these measures are also not lagged). We use two measures developed by political scientist William Berry and colleagues (1998) to assess the receptivity of a state's political climate to labor unions (each of which is available from the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research [ICPSR]). The first is *government ideology*. This annual measure uses interest group rankings of the ideological positions of state representatives to generate an aggregate government ideology score on a liberal-conservative continuum. The scale assigns the highest scores to the most liberal states and is useful for capturing ideological variation that is not perceptible when looking solely at partisan composition of state government.

Second, we use a *citizen ideology score*, which also relies on interest group rankings but which uses an incumbent's ideology score as well as their challenger's in the preceding election after weighting them by within-district vote margins to gauge citizen sentiment (see Soule and Olzak [2004] for a useful application of these measures to social movement ac-

[12] Unfortunately, the BLS only collects these indicators at the regional level, Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, and West (selected cities in each region are used to compute inflation). Thus, each state is assigned an inflation score based on the region in which it is located.

tivity). This is particularly important today as unions have come to rely upon the public for support during labor disputes (Manheim 2001; Fine 2005). Moreover, there is growing evidence that social movement unions have begun forming coalitions with community and ethnic allies (Waldinger et al. 1998); thus it follows that a sympathetic voting public should increase collective action, including strikes, by these organizations.

In addition, labor unions are often heavily involved in election campaigns (Form 1995; Asher et al. 2001), which may divert resources from strikes. Thus, the models include a dummy variable for *presidential election year*. Finally, we include whether the state has a *right-to-work law*. This statute outlaws the union shop, increasing unions' difficulty in organizing and maintaining members. Historically right-to-work has proven to be a formidable impediment to labor mobilization, and we expect it to dampen strike activity (Ellwood and Fine 1987; Jacobs and Dixon 2006).

Union strength.—While primarily concerned with threat, we recognize that organizational infrastructure plays an important role in collective action (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Therefore, we control for the overall strength/activity of the labor movement in the state. The first indicator is the state's *unionization rate*, or percentage of nonagricultural workers who belong to a union. Because we expect a diminishing return on the union density measure, a quadratic term is included in the models. Given the growing importance of organizing and the historically close links between organizing and strikes, we measure the number of *NLRB certification elections* per 1,000 enterprises, the primary means by which unions organize new workers.[13] Although this captures the vitality of the labor movement in the state, organizing may also drain resources available for strikes, so the direction of the effect is in question. Both of these indicators are measured using two-year moving averages to examine more gradual shifts in union strength. Finally, as unions are the primary initiator of strikes, it follows that more of these organizations in a state should be positively associated with strike activity, so our models control for *number of unions in the state*.[14]

Controls.—In addition to the theoretically relevant variables described above, we also account for other state characteristics that may affect strike activity. As strikes depend on the availability of targets, the models include

[13] Although there is a shift among labor unions today, especially aggressive ones, away from the NLRB organizing model, Martin (2008) finds that the NLRB remains the dominant form of organizing, even among the largest and most militant unions.

[14] Unfortunately, the number of unions in the state, which was garnered from data provided by the Department of Labor, is only available for 1999. Nevertheless, we believe it is a reasonable approximation of the size of the union population in the state. In the union-specific models, we adjust this measure to include the number of unions in that particular category.

a control for the *number of enterprises*. There is some evidence that the movement of women into the labor force has reduced union membership rates, and this may have a negative effect on militancy (Farber 1985). Our analysis includes the *percentage of employees that are female*. Racial composition has also been linked to strike activity (Dixon and Roscigno 2003), and recently some unions have been reaching out to minorities in the hopes of expanding their membership base. Therefore, the models include *percentage African-American* in the state.

Because our analysis examines nearly 20 years of labor strikes, we include three time periods in the model. The first, 1984–92 (the reference category in the models), captures the Reagan/Bush years, a period market by considerabe hostility toward unions by the federal government. The second period, 1993–95, saw the inauguration of Democrat Bill Clinton and a greater optimism among unions for a political solution to labor problems. By 1994, however, efforts to reshape labor laws in a more prounion direction had stalled. Compromises suggested by the Dunlop Commission were disregarded by the new Republican-controlled congress the following year. Not surprisingly, many unions looked to a new, more militant, direction. In 1995, in the organization's first contested election, former SEIU and social movement proponent John Sweeney was elected to the presidency of the AFL-CIO. Thus, our third period, 1996–2002, captures this new leadership direction. We expect that this will be associated with greater labor militancy, especially by social movement unions—a possibility we explore in the analyses that follow. Finally, we also control for the nine *census regions* (West South Central is the reference category).

Categorization of unions.—Our analysis of strikes rests on the claim that there are distinct cleavages in the labor movement and that unions will vary in their responses to threats in their environment. Table 2 includes the unions that we believe exemplify each category described above and that continue to engage in significant levels of strike activity.

Original CIO unions include the United Autoworkers, the United Steelworkers, and the United Mineworkers.[15] The second category is the *social*

[15] While John Lewis and his United Mineworkers were the driving force behind the creation of the CIO, this was originally an AFL union and had an on-and-off relationship with the CIO after its founding. Yet it is clearly on the defensive (and in a declining industry) in contemporary labor relations and shares more with our CIO category than it does with any other union type. We nevertheless reran the industrial unions model excluding the United Mineworkers; the results did not change significantly.

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTION OF UNION CATEGORIZATION

	Union(s) Included	Total Strike Activity, 1984–2002	All Strikes (%)	Origin	Primary Industrial Sector/Occupation	Total Workers Represented, 1999*	Aggressive Organizing
Original CIO	UAW, USW, UMW	1,946	18.1	CIO	Manufacturing	1,396,491	No
Social movement	SEIU, HERE, UFCW, UNITE	988	9.2	AFL	Service sector, mixed	2,667,995	Yes
Original AFL craft ...	CJU, IBEW	570	5.3	AFL	Craft	1,037,882	Varied
Teamsters	IBT	2,045	19.0	AFL	Mixed (transportation, warehouse)	1,402,000	Yes

* Data provided by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Labor-Management Standards.

movement unions; it includes the SEIU, HERE, UFCW, and UNITE.[16] Third is the *original AFL craft unions*, including the Carpenters and Joiners Union and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. The fourth and final category includes only the *Teamsters*.

The categories thus include some of the most prominent and indeed most militant unions in American today. As a whole, they encompass 34% of the strikes conducted by organized labor during this period and represent nearly half of all union members.[17] Importantly, this scheme differentiates those unions in declining industries that are clearly on the defensive in the new era of industrial relations (category 1) and the more aggressive, mostly service sector unions (categories 2 and 4).[18] The original AFL craft unions (category 3) arguably fall somewhere in between. As described extensively above, we expect that these differences will shape the responses of the four groups to the threat posed by firm challenges

[16] Unlike the other social movement unions, which are primarily located in service sector industries, UNITE (which was created in 1995 by a merger of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, both of which are included in the social movement union model) represents textile and apparel workers as well as those in services such as industrial laundries. However, its use of aggressive social movement tactics and efforts to organize immigrant workers strongly parallels other revitalized unions (Bonacich 2000). Moreover, UNITE merged with HERE in 2004, indicating a similar orientation to unionism. Nevertheless, we reran the social movement union models excluding UNITE (and its predecessors); the results were similar to the inclusive model.

[17] There are a number of reasons for limiting our analysis to a subset of all strikes. First, our two objectives were to develop clear categories of unions that were internally similar and represented enough strikes for standard data analysis purposes. By including only a few exemplar unions, we minimize the diversity within each category. Second, nearly 400 different unions struck during this period. Developing a categorization scheme to capture all strikes would lead to a larger number of less meaningful categories of unions. One possible strategy would be to lump the remaining unions into a single category. However, we believe the level of heterogeneity would render any empirical findings meaningless. We prefer to limit our analysis to the unions that continue to strike frequently and that represent the majority of union members in America today. A comparison of strikes by unions in our four categories to those not analyzed here reveals little difference in geographic disbursement. Temporally, however, there is a slight divergence; while 28% of all labor disputes in the FMCS database occurred after Sweeney's election in 1995, 33% of the strikes analyzed here are in the post-Sweeney era, another indication that we are generally focusing on larger and more militant unions.

[18] While the recent changes in the industrial composition of the economy has spurred unions to search for workers outside their traditional industries (e.g., the UAW represents some graduate students), the industry composition for the union categories remains quite homogeneous. For example, 88% of the strikes in the CIO industry category were in mining or (nonfood) manufacturing. In fact, the only union to exhibit any diversity was the Teamsters, which has long represented a range of different occupations.

to unionization, a rapidly changing economy, and an increasingly hostile and disengaged state.

Analytical strategy.—We employ a pooled cross-sectional, time-series design to analyze strike counts across states and over time. Because linear regression with count-dependent variables can result in inefficient and biased estimates, researchers typically use special count estimators such as Poisson and negative binomial (Long and Freese 2003). Negative binomial is preferred in this case, and it is used for all of the analyses, as there is evidence of overdispersion. We use Stata's population-averaged estimator for the negative binomial models, which captures both cross-section and over-time covariation and which allows us to correct for both serial correlation and heteroscedasticity (StataCorp 2005).[19] In the models that follow, the betas represent a log change in the number of strikes initiated by unions in a given state in a given year.

RESULTS

The current research seeks to gain new insight into the recent challenges faced by the labor movement by analyzing strikes across distinct types of unions. But we begin by briefly assessing the effects of important predictors described above on all strikes across U.S. states from 1984 to 2002, which highlights the utility of our disaggregated approach. Table 3 presents a model for each of the four major sets of predictors (firm resistance, economic restructuring, political process, and union strength) along with controls before combining them into a full model.

Beginning first (model 1) with firms' efforts to rid the workplace of unions, it appears that these renewed attacks on organized labor have not been meet with capitulation; both decertification elections and ULPs significantly increase strike activity in the movement as a whole. Again, as noted above, an increasing number of strikes, especially by manufacturing unions, are driven by management demands for concessions, which may explain this relationship. The second model includes the four economic indicators measured at the state level. Not surprisingly, strikes are more common when the proportion of workers employed in organized

[19] An alternative strategy is to employ a fixed effect (FE) model, which controls for any time-invariant state attributes by (in effect), including dummy variables for each state. The FE models necessarily eliminate any solely cross-sectional variables, and they are less precise when using variables that are mostly cross sectional (Kennedy 2003). Because many of our theoretically informed variables vary mostly or entirely across states, we prefer our populations-averaged approach here. Nevertheless, the results from fixed effects models (not shown) are consistent with the findings presented below, particularly for the important distinctions between CIO and social movement union categories.

TABLE 3

NEGATIVE BINOMIAL MODELS OF FIRM THREAT, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND UNION STRENGTH INDICATORS ON STATE STRIKE ACTIVITY, 1984–2002

	Firm Threat (1)	Economic (2)	Political (3)	Union Strength (4)	Full Model (5)
Firm threat:					
Decertification elections	1.034*				1.018***
	(.303)				(.285)
Unfair labor practices	.072***				.062*
	(.018)				(.019)
Economic predictors:					
% employed in manufacturing		.051***			.075***
		(.014)			(.012)
% employed in foreign-owned firms		−.018			−.050
		(.036)			(.033)
Unemployment rate		−.017			−.064*
		(.022)			(.022)
Inflation		.035			.001
		(.020)			(.002)
Political predictors:					
Government ideology			.005*		.004*
			(.001)		(.001)
Citizen ideology			.005		.004
			(.004)		(.004)
Presidential election year			−.105*		−.153*
			(.047)		(.050)
Right-to-work			−.590*		−.169
			(.189)		(.200)
Union strength:					
% union				.246***	.228***
				(.046)	(.046)
(% union)^2				−.005***	−.005***
				(.001)	(.001)
NLRB elections				.075	.021
				(.066)	(.060)
No. of unions	.002***	.002***	.002***	.001***	.001***
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)
1993–95	−.207*	−.133$^+$	−.323***	−.217*	−.229*
	(.070)	(.078)	(.061)	(.071)	(.075)
Post-1995	.467***	−.346***	−.518***	.461***	−.213*
	(.073)	(.085)	(.074)	(.081)	(.092)
Constant	3.861*	3.440*	5.835***	2.018$^+$	−.336
	(1.212)	(1.629)	(1.016)	(1.253)	(1.593)

NOTE.—$N = 950$ state-years. Models include controls for total enterprises, race, % female labor force, and census region. SEs (in parentheses) are corrected for heteroscedasticity and serial correlation.

$^+$ $P < .10$.

* $P < .05$.

** $P < .01$.

*** $P < .001$.

labor's traditional base, manufacturing, is high. In contrast, foreign direct investments, the unemployment rate, and inflation are not significant. The political indicators introduced in model 3 suggest that unions will engage in striking when they have political allies; the government ideology score is positive and significant. In contrast, the presence of a right-to-work law has a significant negative effect, which is consistent with the intent of this law. It is also evident that political contests such as presidential elections reduce strike activity. The fourth and final partial model specifies the relationship between the strength of the labor movement in the state as a whole and strikes. While union membership is positively related to strikes, the negative quadratic indicates a diminishing effect as the unionization rate increases.[20]

We combine all of the predictors in a single model (5) to assess their effects when other important variables are held constant. First, firm resistance measures continue to have a positive effect on striking. Here we see the expected negative effect of unemployment. While the right-to-work dummy variable no longer has an effect, both the government ideology and presidential election year dummy remain significant. These initial models update and extend strike explanations by taking into consideration current environmental conditions, especially the role of firm resistance. As we reveal next, however, this practice of conflating strikes by all unions into a single outcome ignores considerable intramovement variation.

Variation across distinct types of labor organizations.—Previous accounts of strikes have largely been content with models similar to those presented in table 3, analyzing the collective strike propensity of the labor movement as a whole. The claim we advance here, however, is that unions will respond very differently to external threats brought about by recent changes in the industrial environment. Specifically, those organizations embedded in the now obsolete postwar Fordist production relations may be ill equipped to address these new challenges, which should reduce their rate of strike activity. In contrast, more aggressive unions, especially those that have adopted a "social movement" model, have demonstrated a willingness to respond aggressively when organizing, and we expect this will extend to striking. Table 4 presents the effects of predictors on strikes across the four union categories outlined above. Rather than examining

[20] Graphing the effects of unionization reveals that strikes begin to decline at about 25%, which is a quite high rate of unionization considering the period analyzed (only 5% of the state-years lie above this threshold). One possible reason for this declining effect is that unions do not necessarily have to strike to win new benefits for their constituents in heavily unionized areas; rather they can use the threat of disrupting production to leverage concessions from employers (Wallace et al. 1989).

TABLE 4

NEGATIVE BINOMIAL MODELS OF FIRM THREAT, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND UNION STRENGTH INDICATORS ON STATE STRIKE ACTIVITY BY UNION CATEGORIES, 1984–2002

	CIO (1)	Social Movement (2)	Craft (3)	Teamsters (4)
Firm threat:				
Decertification elections	.094	1.517*	.794	.756*
	(.485)	(.553)	(.567)	(.370)
Unfair labor practices	.041	.081**	.082*	.127*
	(.050)	(.040)	(.034)	(.025)
ULPs × Post-1995	−.034	.074+	−.006	−.063+
	(.034)	(.040)	(.059)	(.035)
Economic predictors:				
% employed in manufacturing	.107***	.098***	.041*	.064***
	(.016)	(.023)	(.019)	(.016)
% employed in foreign-owned firms	−.064*	.005	−.110	−.052
	(.030)	(.064)	(.070)	(.045)
Unemployment rate	−.036	−.006	−.112*	−.071*
	(.039)	(.040)	(.045)	(.035)
Inflation	−.013	−.027	−.055	.053
	(.043)	(.055)	(.053)	(.040)
Political predictors:				
Government ideology	.002	.006*	.004	.002
	(.002)	(.003)	(.003)	(.002)
Citizen ideology	.009+	.011	−.002	.009
	(.005)	(.008)	(.007)	(.008)
Presidential election year	−.312***	−.146	−.063	−.092
	(.072)	(.110)	(.100)	(.075)
Right-to-work	−.119	.003	−.799*	−.195
	(.318)	(.320)	(.320)	(.250)
Union strength:				
% union	.356***	.241*	.048	.273***
	(.065)	(.080)	(.087)	(.065)
(% union)^2	−.009***	−.004*	−.001	−.006***
	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)
NLRB elections	.212	−.112	−.007	.095
	(.168)	(.148)	(.124)	(.085)
No. of unions	.005***	.004*	.013*	.031*
	(.001)	(.002)	(.005)	(.012)
1993–95	−.184	−.256	−.678*	−.185
	(.148)	(.216)	(.215)	(.151)
Post-1995	.041	−.126	−.905*	.090
	(.206)	(.283)	(.305)	(.227)
Constant	−2.388	−6.051+	.505	−4.741+
	(2.305)	(2.978)	(2.001)	(2.616)

NOTE.—$N = 950$ state-years. Models include controls for total enterprises, race, % female labor force, and census region. SEs (in parentheses) are corrected for heteroscedasticity and serial correlation.

+ $P < .10$.

* $P < .05$.

** $P < .01$.

*** $P < .001$.

each union category individually, we explore how important sets of predictors vary across the four types of unions.

We begin with firm resistance. As evidence suggests, these actors represent perhaps the most significant threat to union strength and the institution of collective bargaining (Fantasia 1988; Kleiner 2001). The models in table 4 allow us to assess whether unions acquiesce to such hostilities or respond by striking. First, there is no evidence that CIO unions are significantly less likely to strike when firm hostility in the state is high; both indicators are actually positive, although they do not reach statistical significance. This suggests that these unions may be less susceptible to firm threat than we hypothesized, and there is some evidence that these unions do turn to strikes as a last resort when firms press for concessions (Wallace 1989). Again, these strikes may be primarily defensive in nature, and more disaggregated data that take issue into account would allow for a richer analysis of strikes by these unions.

As expected, efforts by firms to undermine unions significantly increase strike activity among those designated social movement unions, which provides further evidence of the growing gulf between manufacturing unions and service sector organizations. Case studies indicate that these unions have responded aggressively to firm resistance when organizing (Waldinger et al. 1998; Fantasia and Voss 2004), and it appears that this holds true for striking as well. There has been much made of the election of a social movement unionism advocate, former SEIU head John Sweeney, to the presidency of the AFL-CIO in 1995 and his call for more aggressive unionism in response to employer hostilities. To test the effect, we include an interaction between unfair labor practices and a post-1995 dummy.[21] The coefficient, which is positive and significant only for these unions, suggests that they have become more willing to directly respond to antiunion firm actions in recent years. While our data prevent an in-depth analysis of these events, we suspect that strikes sponsored by these unions will include various forms of social protest designed to pressure the firm on multiple fronts and mobilize external support (Manheim 2001).

Again, the first two models clearly illustrate the divergent paths that manufacturing and service unions have taken in recent years, yet the positive link between strikes and firm threat extends to craft unions and the Teamsters as well. Craft unions have jealously guarded their influence on the shop floor (Marks 1989), so it should be no surprise that they resist management encroachment on their autonomy. The Teamsters also have a long history of aggressive strike behavior (Dobbs 1972), and it appears that firm resistance only increases this tendency, although less so in years

[21] The interaction between decertification elections and the post-1995 dummy is not significant for any unions.

after 1995. While the effects of firm opposition to unionization are strongest for social movement unions (especially the decertification election coefficient), these findings suggest that both craft unions and the Teamsters, two sets of organizations that have not figured prominently in recent discussions of union revitalization, may also have an important role to play in the labor movement today.

The next set of predictors assess the consequences of economic changes that have buffeted unions over the past quarter century. Most prior discussion of industrial restructuring, including the shift of employment from manufacturing to service sector industries and the rise of global trade, has postulated that these trends are most harmful for industrial unions, and the models provide support for this assumption. First, as hypothesized, the percentage of workers employed in manufacturing is positively associated with strikes by CIO unions. Considering that we include a control for the total number of CIO unions (albeit time invariant), this suggests that the declining industrial base of these unions indeed has a negative effect on their strike propensity. By way of example, had percentage manufacturing remained at its average level in 1984 (holding all other variables constant), the expected strike count for these unions would be three times greater than current levels; for unions as a whole, the difference would be much smaller, only about 60% higher.

Perhaps even more telling is the effect of direct foreign investment, which also conforms to our basic expectation regarding globalization and labor militancy among industrial unions. Every 1% increase in this indicator reduces strike activity for CIO unions by approximately 6%. As Brady and Wallace (2000) have argued, such investments create significant challenges for unions; not only do these firms tend to be vociferously antiunion, they also place competitive pressures on more established, domestically owned firms where unions are strongest. These results, taken together with the lack of effect for indicators of firm resistance discussed above, suggest that CIO unions are indeed vulnerable to threat but that it is economic restructuring and not firm resistance that is responsible for much of their declining strike propensity. As our dependent variable captures both offensive and defensive strikes, it is apparent that globalization has reduced even reactionary labor militancy intended to protect existing gains.

Surprisingly, when we examine the effects of economic predictors across the other union categories, we see one clear trend: percentage employed in manufacturing has a consistently positive effect regardless of the type of union in question, though the effect is largest for CIO unions. While the Teamsters and the craft unions represent workers in a variety of industries, this effect is somewhat unexpected for social movement

unions.[22] One possible explanation is that the labor movement has historically been strongest in states with a large manufacturing base, and this may have created a stronger union infrastructure (including cross-union organizations) that continues to support striking.

The effects of the other economic indicators are more variable. While Brady and Wallace (2000) have linked foreign direct investment to the overall health of organized labor in the state, our analysis suggests that these effects are disproportionately felt by industrial unions. Although not significant, this coefficient is positive for social movement unions that have begun to aggressively organize workers in the low-wage service sector. The unemployment rate, which has long been an important predictor of strikes, is significant for craft unions and the Teamsters. Craft unions in particular have historically focused on winning benefits at the point of production and thus may be most sensitive to trends that weaken their members' position in the labor market. Finally, labor economists have long linked inflation to strike activity (Kaufman 1981), but this coefficient is not significant in any of the models.

Taking the economic predictors as a whole, then, the findings are consistent with our expectations that CIO unions are particularly vulnerable to the threat of foreign investment. Interestingly, however, the percentage of workers employed in manufacturing is important for all unions, even those whose constituents are employed outside of this industry. Moreover, earlier economic predictors of strike activity such as the unemployment rate and inflation appear to have waned in their explanatory power, suggesting that strikes today are fundamentally different from those analyzed during the period of institutionalized collective bargaining following World War II (Rosenfeld 2006*a*).

One of the reasons why the United States has historically had much higher levels of strike activity than other industrialized nations is labor's lack of political institutionalization (Hibbs 1976; Edwards 1981). Collective bargaining at the point of production, not the ballot box, has been the primary mechanism by which unions win new gains for their members (Kimeldorf 1999). Yet unions have long relied on political means to help achieve their economic ends, and even craft unions have always maintained some political presence (Form 1995; Greene 1998). Our models, however, suggest that the effects of the political structure vary considerably across unions.

First, only social movement unions have higher rates of strike activity with more liberal elected officials. These unions have been effective at garnering political support (Waldinger et al. 1998), and it appears that a

[22] When UNITE, which represents some textile workers, is removed from this model, the effect of manufacturing remains statistically significant.

favorable political climate is conducive to strikes by these unions. Unions have also turned to bystander publics for support during conflicts (Manheim 2001), and we hypothesized that a more liberal citizenship should spur greater militancy among unions, especially those willing to mobilize widespread support through social movement actions. The results indicate that it is actually manufacturing unions that are most sensitive to the political leanings of the general public. One explanation is that these unions in particular have long relied on the ballot box as a means of influence, and when they are embedded in a more labor-friendly climate this may embolden them. The fact that it is a liberal electorate and not prounion elected officials that spurs strikes by manufacturing unions suggests that these unions may be more willing to seek out external allies than previously thought.[23] The importance of politics for CIO unions is buttressed by the fact that only industrial unions have a lower propensity to strike during presidential election years, suggesting either a reallocation of resources from collective bargaining to political concerns or the recognition that potentially unpopular strikes could damage prolabor candidates (De Boer 1977).

While other unions (including social movement unions) are no doubt engaged in the political process, it is apparent that their propensity to strike is not diminished significantly during important national elections. Finally, the presence of a right-to-work law, long seen as an impediment to labor mobilization, is consequential only for craft unions. These actors are often organized on an apprenticeship basis and were (at least initially) the intended targets of laws banning the closed shop (Dixon 2007).

Providing further evidence of the utility of a more disaggregated approach to strikes, even basic indicators of organized labor's strength in the state vary across unions. Both unionization rate and organizing activity have the greatest effect on the strike activity of CIO unions, although the latter is not significant. This suggests that, as the industrial base of these unions continues to decline, they are increasingly dependent upon support from the labor movement as a whole for winning new gains and protecting existing ones. Percentage unionized also has a strong effect for social movement unions and the Teamsters; this union has been immersed in many labor conflicts by other unions given its representation of workers in strategic industries like transportation. In contrast, craft unions' strike

[23] The correlation between the citizen ideology and government ideology measures is .6. Although, as expected, this is a sizable positive correlation, it does indicate that these two measures are capturing distinct environmental political dynamics. Thus, we suggest that scholars be more sensitive to the array of potential allies available to unions and how they may affect labor disputes.

activity is unaffected by the overall union density in the state, a finding that is consistent with the independent nature of these unions.

Finally, there appears to be very little significant change in actual strike behavior by these unions over time once other variables are controlled for in the model. Craft unions have become increasingly less strike prone, and, as discussed earlier, social movement unions are increasingly responding to firm resistance by striking after the election of John Sweeney in 1995.

CONCLUSIONS

Our study begins with the recognition that strikes today share little resemblance to those that occurred during the period of relative labor peace following World War II. The restructuring of American industrial relations, from the rise of firm resistance to the globalization of trade, has clearly changed how unions engage in strikes. Drawing upon research on threat and movement mobilization, as well as insights into social movements and organizations more generally, we propose that specific types of unions will react very differently to these new challenges. Some have remained mired in the old methods of collective bargaining, even as these institutions crumble, while others have advocated for a more aggressive approach to unionization. The debate within organized labor over the best way to pursue this strategy, which has split the AFL-CIO, underscores the importance of a more disaggregated approach to analyzing strikes, one that takes into consideration the diverse types of organizations that make up this movement. And, while the manufacturing/service split is perhaps the most important, there is evidence that strike predictors vary across other types of labor organizations as well.

The findings clearly indicate that how we think about the factors that drive strike activity cannot be separated from the nuances of the movement itself. Labor unions are not interchangeable organizations; their particular membership base, history, and tactical playlist all shape how they react to broad shifts in the industrial climate. Here we see that the threat of firm resistance actually increases strike activity by new social movement unions in particular, but also by craft unions and the Teamsters, while it has no effect on CIO unions. In contrast, the latter have proven vulnerable to the growth of foreign investment in American industries. Moreover, traditional predictors of striking, such as the unemployment rate, are significant for only a small subset of unions, AFL craft organizations and the Teamsters, providing further evidence that we have entered a new era of industrial relations.

Considering that strikes have long occupied a central place in most

unions' arsenal, these findings provide a number of important insights into the future of organized labor in America. First, there has been a growing sense of optimism among scholars that at least an important segment of labor unions has begun to construct innovative tactics to confront their declining membership base (Clawson 2003; Fantasia and Voss 2004). Yet if unions' ability to strike has dwindled in recent years, then the prospects of workers' economic progress are reduced. More telling, as Rosenfeld (2006*b*) finds, strikes on their own do little to advance the interests of organized labor. Thus, it is no coincidence that the most successful set of unions, those that have been able to recruit new members, are more apt to respond to firm resistance by striking.

Case studies of recent organizing successes have shown that some unions are exploring less institutionalized tactics, such as civil disobedience and the formation of coalitions with nonlabor allies, to overcome obstacles to unionization. Strikes, too, must be reinvented and the tactical playlist broadened to counter firm tactics, which range from seeking injunctions to hiring replacement workers (see Manheim 2001). Our findings suggest that the same unions engaging in more aggressive organizing strategies may also strike in response to firm resistance. Admittedly, our data are limited in this regard; we hope that future research begins to seriously consider the ways that unions construct successful strikes. If unions are able to effectively counter employer hostility and a less favorable political and economic climate, then it is possible that we may actually see a resurgence in strike activity, at least among certain segments of the movement. Moreover, given the vulnerable position of some unions, particularly industrial ones that often strike defensively, a more disaggregated analysis of strike issues would provide greater insight into labor disputes today.

Importantly, the similarities between craft unions and Teamsters, on the one hand, and social movement unions, on the other hand, especially in their response to firm resistance, suggest that these seemingly very different unions overlap in important ways. In light of these findings, traditional stereotypes regarding such unions (conservative and invested in old methods of unionism) may no longer be applicable in all cases. Indeed, scholars interested in the changing face of organized labor should give closer examination to these organizations, along with the standard-bearers of union revitalization, such as SEIU and UNITE-HERE (see Milkman and Wong 2000).

Of course, we recognize that there are forces beyond organized labor's control that pose significant obstacles to striking. Most notable in the results was the negative effect of foreign direct investment on CIO union strike activity. Moreover, industrial unions represent workers in sectors that are not tied to a fixed locale (Cowie 1999), and the specter of relocation

often looms over strikes by these unions. This is less of a concern for either new social movement unions (janitors, hotel workers, health care workers) or the Teamsters (truckers, warehouse workers). Our results provide compelling evidence that the epicenter of the labor movement today reflects this shift toward a service-based economy and the advantages of targeting immobile firms. Unless industrial unions can develop new strategies (organize foreign-owned firms, forge coalitions with labor unions in developing nations), they are unlikely to rebound.

Given the growth of contentious industrial relations, the findings also have implications for understanding social movement challenges more generally. First, while many SMOs target the state to win benefits for their constituency (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001), the growth of neoliberal policies, the globalization of trade, and deregulation all have increased the power of corporate actors in the public sphere. Firms, in contrast to the state, are not democratic institutions, and, as outsiders, social movement groups do not automatically have a voice in the decision-making process of these actors (Walker, Martin, and McCarthy 2008). Given this challenge, we expect that, just as organized labor has learned from social movement groups, SMOs may in turn borrow from unions' tactical playlist and their considerable experience dealing with firms.

Additionally, our analysis also refines the threat model of collective action. While still in its infancy, much of this research tends to privilege political repression (however, see Van Dyke and Soule 2002). The findings reveal that other developments, here economic restructuring, may also be perceived as threatening by movement actors. Moreover, it is evident that SMOs, even those within the same social movement "industry," respond very differently to the same set of challenges depending upon their unique organizational circumstances. In our analysis, the most institutionalized set of actors, CIO unions, tend to acquiesce, while those less mired in traditional industrial landscape, unions like the SEIU, are quite aggressive in their reaction to external threats from actors such as firms. Notably, this contrasts with much of the theoretical foundation of social movement research, which makes broad claims about the ways in which changes in the state and the availability of resources affect contentious behavior generally. As some researchers have shown (Minkoff 1999; Meyer and Minkoff 2004), and as our study strongly suggests, such discussions would do well to consider how important predictors are expected to interact with distinct sets of movement actors.

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