

FIGHTING FOR A FAIR ECONOMY? THE RESPONSE OF LABOR UNIONS
TO ECONOMIC CRISIS

by

ANN ELIZABETH SHIRLEY LEYMON

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DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

Student: Ann Elizabeth Shirley Leymon

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This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Sociology by:

Caleb Southworth	Chairperson
James Elliott	Member
Michael Dreiling	Member
Daniel Tichenor	Outside Member

and

Kimberly Andrews Espy	Vice President for Research & Innovation/Dean of the Graduate School
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Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Ann Elizabeth Shirley Leymon

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Title: Fighting for a Fair Economy? The Response of Labor Unions to Economic Crisis

Political opportunity theory suggests that social movement organizations will increase political action efforts during times of opportunity, such as economic crises. On the other hand, business cycle theory predicts that economic crisis will be detrimental to unions, reducing membership and subsequently dues and power. This dissertation involves historical case studies of innovative and conservative labor unions, comparing organizational behavior during the Great Depression and the economic crisis of 2008. The dissertation also includes a QCA analysis of ten labor unions' political, organizing, and bargaining activity during the crisis of 2008. How do labor unions adjust their organizing strategies during an economic crisis? What tactics do unions use to redefine their role in the economy through social policy? What organizational characteristics define unions' varied responses to the crisis?

This research found that characteristics consistent with organizational flexibility were consistent with the ability to identify and respond to the political opportunity present in economic crisis. While some unions decreased bargaining and organizing activity to shift resources towards political activity, this was not always the case. It also contributes a systematic description and analysis of typical labor union political activity. The data suggest that leader-based political action is a primary locus of activity, demanding further

investigation into the varied campaigns and strategies unions take. More research is necessary to understand the interaction between the organizational political activity of labor unions and the political beliefs of union members.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Ann Elizabeth Shirley Leymon

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene, OR
Truman State University, Kirksville, MO

DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Philosophy, Sociology, 2012, University of Oregon
Master of Science, Sociology, 2007, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Arts, Sociology and Music, 2004, Truman State University

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Labor Studies
Organizations
Sociology of Work
Social Stratification
Research Methods

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Instructor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Illinois State University,
2011.

Instructor, Department of Sociology, University of Oregon, 2008-2011

Research Assistant, Department of Sociology, University of Oregon, 2007-2010.

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant, National Science Foundation, 2011-
2012.

Wasby-Johnson Summer Research Award, University of Oregon, 2009.

PUBLICATIONS:

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION, THEORY, AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

How do labor unions respond to economic crisis? Business cycle theory suggests that a poor economic environment is detrimental to unions. High unemployment and low GDP make it difficult for unions to grow or even to retain members (Ashenfelter and Pencavel 1969), cutting union resources. On the other hand, political opportunity theory argues that an economic crisis offers a chance for organizations such as labor unions to influence national policy (Tarrow 1998). The two theories do not technically conflict with each other; it is possible for unions to increase advocacy efforts for political change even while they lose members. But there is a fundamental tension between the two because one indicates economic crisis will be beneficial while the other indicates that economic crisis will be harmful. Neither theory predicts how unions will behave, and this research seeks to remedy that by examining how unions respond to economic crisis in terms of resource allocation. Under the condition of economic crisis, do unions behave like social movements, taking advantage of political opportunity by focusing resources into policy change, or do they remain economic actors, focusing resources on new organizing or on maintaining benefits for current members?

No systematic study of the political behavior of unions could be identified to date, and this project works to fill that gap, using political opportunity theory and business cycle theory to examine the changing behavior of labor unions during economic crisis.

The malfunction of the economy in fall 2008 (with declines in the stock market, bank industry, and housing market, followed by rapidly increasing unemployment) led citizens and policymakers alike to call for economic regulation, particularly of the financial industry (Pierson 2008). This systemic restructuring opens up debate about features of an ideal economic structure, of which labor unions could take advantage by arguing for more social programs, protections of freedoms in union organizing, and restrictions on corporate power. At the same time, the structural damage economic crisis does to labor unions could render them ineffective and obsolete. Comparing political opportunity theory to business cycle theory, this study will examine the range of political behavior unions engage in, from the institutional (lobbying, campaign contributions) to the non-institutional (member mobilization, direct action) along with organizing behavior and financial decisions. Political opportunities are perceived by organizations, so those with better resources and more complaints generally initiate the mobilization cycle. By highlighting the weaknesses of the system, they facilitate attack by additional challengers (Tarrow 1998: 77). As complex, resource-rich organizations capable of adjusting strategy in response to external cues, labor unions are a good site for this examination.

This project uses a combination of case study and small-N configurational analysis to examine the response of labor unions to economic crisis, comparing the efforts of national labor unions during the Great Depression and the financial crisis of 2008. The goal is to describe and explain paths unions take during hard times, developing a thorough assessment of the wide range of political activities in which unions engage (including mobilization, lobbying, and educational activities), organizing efforts, how those activities change when political opportunity is present, and what organizational

characteristics explain differences between unions concerning allocation of resources.

Most studies of political opportunity theory have focused on one type of mobilization, but it is important to know how political opportunity influences different social movement organizations and how they respond in different ways (Meyer 2004). Additionally, business cycle theory has demonstrated certain impacts that economic changes have on unions, but has not addressed how unions respond.

I hypothesize that in order to push government interventions that benefit labor, some labor unions will use the period of opportunity that accompanies an economic crisis to fight for public and government support of pro-labor reforms while other unions continue to focus on traditional goals, specifically organizing. What tactics do unions use in an economic crisis to reestablish and redefine their role in the economy through policy? How do labor unions adjust their organizing strategies in this struggle? What organizational characteristics define unions' varied responses to the crisis? This research studies variations in overall strategy both between union organizations and over time, capturing both differences between unions during each crisis and over time within each crisis. This approach is more systematic than any prior research to date and has the potential to have both theoretical and applied impacts.

Theory

Political opportunity theory suggests that factors external to a social movement may influence its chances for success, or the strength or timing of its mobilization. Specifically, changing elements of the political environment shape an SMO's assessment of the likelihood of victory, encouraging or deterring collective action (Gamson and Meyer 1996 in Tarrow 1998: 76-7). For example, Costain explained that lobbyists for

women's issues in the 1970s were legislatively successful, in spite of poor resources and organization, because of the political opportunity created by a shift in power in the legislature, the increasing prominence of women voters, and feminist grassroots activity (1992). In this research I study SMO's assessment of opportunity by comparing labor union behavior before and after the crisis, rather than their success in achieving goals. The specific elements that researchers include as aspects of political opportunity theory vary, but true to Eisinger's original use of the concept, most scholars include openness of the political structure (Eisinger 1973, Tarrow 1983, Meyer and Minkoff 2004, McAdam 1999); instability of elites (McAdam 1999), specifically political alignments (Costain 1992, Tarrow 1983); and presence of allies, whether those allies are elites (McAdam 1999) or other social movement organizations (Costain 1992, Tarrow 1983). These three indicators of political opportunity structure represent structuring cues that SMOs may interpret as signals that conditions are favorable for advocating for beneficial policy changes (Tarrow 1998).

Both the Great Depression and the crisis of 2008 arguably have each of these three aspects of political opportunity. Both time periods are similar in the openness of the political structure, as the very presence of crisis opens the political structure while elected officials struggle to set policy to alleviate the country's financial and social problems. These problems generate widespread dissatisfaction among citizens, who expect policymakers to find solutions to improve their situation. The nation is generally more willing to accept change and even actively advocate for it when the status quo is no longer beneficial. As further evidence that economic crisis is a time of openness, the number of social movement rose during the Great Depression in Europe and the US,

contrary to expectations that economic crisis with its high unemployment would inhibit contention (Tarrow 1998: 73).

Each crisis began under a Republican president and a Republican-controlled Congress. Then in the election immediately following the crisis' onset, the more labor-friendly Democrats regained control of both congress and of the presidency, putting allies of labor into power. However, in the Great Depression that next election did not occur for almost four years, while in the crisis of 2008 the next election occurred within a matter of months. Opportunities do not automatically yield action, but they reveal allies and expose weaknesses of enemies (Tarrow 1998: 72). This transparency facilitates regime change and though many would argue that the US Democratic party is not an ally of labor, labor advances are more common under Democratic leadership.

Following the argument concerning openness in the political structure, elites divide during economic crisis as well. Conflict between conservatives and liberals seems eternally present, but during crisis elites divide over opposing solutions, struggling to control the policy response to economic crisis. Crisis is a period when “system-creating choices are made” (Gourevitch 1986: 34), with opposing groups supporting different choices. Jenkins and Brents argue that the Social Security Act was passed due to a sustained wave of social protest and a cleavage in the political elites (1989).¹ “Capitalist blocs also have to ‘struggle’ for political power, especially in the midst of political crises in which the formula for economic prosperity and political stability have become problematic” (906). Roosevelt minimized divisions by making substantial compromises

¹ There is substantial debate concerning the factors that lead to the passage of the SSA; see for example Quadagno 1984, Skocpol and Amenta 1985, Amenta and Parikh 1991, Jenkins and Brents 1989.

in the social programs passed during his presidency. Under Obama's administration, the elites are more divided; the terms of Bush's conservative appointees to the Federal Reserve Board have not yet expired, while a Democratic majority occupies the Senate. The differences in the political opportunity structure between the two time periods will allow some comparison of what aspects of political opportunity are more likely to illicit a change in labor union political behavior.

In addition to creating political opportunity, economic crisis is important to study because it is a rare, unexpected, and highly impactful event (Taleb 2007:xvii). Economic models are based on normal business cycle but fail to predict when these crises will occur. Economic crisis clearly has a significant impact; both financial institutions and political institutions continue to reel from the drastic changes in the economy and society as a whole. Substantial unemployment, stagnating inflation, and the decrease in the GDP all illustrate the size of the impact this had. Additionally, crises are interesting to study because they represent a moment when the political and economic system is open, during which leaders make choices that will re-create or reinvent the system. Voters develop or deepen attachments to political parties during crises that persist through stable times (Gourevitch 1986).

After crisis, the economic and political terrain is drastically changed. In the Great Depression, "as the collapsing international economy disrupted older relationships among economic actors, new combinations became possible. Mass discontent created new opportunities for some elites, new constraints for others" (Gourevitch 1986: 25).

Traditional allegiances dissolved over differences of opinion in market interventions. Divisions within the business community enabled labor, agriculture, and mass pressure

generally to influence the economic policy debate. Unions, agricultural groups, and certain industries moved past their usual tensions with each other, ready to receive any form of help. Mass support was the key element to the experimentation that took place; without it, leaders who were open to new solutions would not have found support in business elites who tended to prefer letting the business cycle run its course (*ibid*). Political opportunity theory suggests that social movement organizations will recognize the chance to create a place for themselves in this new terrain. This project seeks to identify how well one type of SMO handles this task, which factors influence their ability to do so, and how political goals are balanced against membership goals.

This project contributes to political opportunity theory in four ways. First, it will connect political opportunity theory to the literature on organizations. The 30-union component of this research allows for the examination of organizational variables and their influence on how different unions are able to respond effectively to the political opportunity created by economic crisis. Most studies of political opportunity theory are case studies, which do not allow for this analysis of internal factors affecting an organizations' ability to respond to external cues (McAdam 1996:29).

Second, this research contributes to political opportunity theory by examining the range of political activity in which it is possible for a social movement organization to engage. Meyer pointed out the tendency to focus on limited types of political behavior rather than the spectrum as a weaknesses of political opportunity theory (2004:136). This is problematic because it obscures the fact that a political opportunity could instigate different actions for different groups. If a study focuses only on protest, it might miss an increase in more conventional types of political action such as lobbying efforts or

campaign contributions. This study seeks to fill this gap in political opportunity theory by looking at several unions, which vary in terms of their institutionalization, and looking at the gamut of political action, from the conventional to the radical.

Third, while much research on political opportunity has studied movements that are created in response to opportunity, these labor unions existed prior to the crisis, allowing this project to compare differences in the political behavior of unions after the opportunity. The time frame of analysis will include two years prior to the onset of each crisis in addition to three years after the onset of the crisis. This will permit examination of how an institutionalized movement responds to political opportunity. Overall, this study will contribute to political opportunity theory by expanding the period of interest to include pre-opportunity, by expanding the political actions to include the entire range of possible activities, and by focusing research on diverse organizations within the same movement which will allow for organizational effects. Combined, these improve on existing political opportunity literature by allowing for a stronger comparative case.

Finally, this research will expand business cycle theory. Though business cycle theory does not address union reactions to changes in economic measures (Western 1997: 104), it is useful for this analysis because it predicts that unions will lose members during low inflation and high unemployment. By gauging union behavior during crisis, this project will establish how union behavior fits into business cycle theory – whether unions increase organizing efforts to offset membership losses, decrease organizing efforts to focus on political action as a way to be effective, or make no changes in how resources are spent. Including union activity during declining economic conditions will be a significant advance for business cycle theory, which analyzes the effect of economic

conditions on union membership. With unemployment high and inflation low, union density should drop during economic crises based on the preceding research. How do unions handle this decline? Do unions continue operating in the same manner as usual while their membership falls, along with it their dues income and the key to their political influence? Or do they take action to minimize the losses and possibly stop or reverse them?

Applying political opportunity theory to these circumstances with the expectation that labor unions will increase activity after the onset of economic crisis directly contradicts conventional wisdom, which suggests that labor unions should do poorly during these two crisis periods. High and growing unemployment is one feature of economic crisis, which should keep wages low and competition for jobs high. These factors have been shown to slow union growth, along with other economic variables such as rate of change of prices, rate of change of employment, and employment in union sectors of the economy (Ashenfelter and Pencavel 1969). Also, treating economic crisis as a tipping point rather than an incremental change could allow for new insights into factors influencing union growth. Economic crisis gives the opportunity to adjudicate between these two competing theories.

Historical Background

This project represents important research because the governmental response to financial crises varies, depending on the political party in power, public opinion, and the lobbying efforts of interest groups. The following section details the conditions that underlaid the Great Depression and the crisis of 2008, the policy response to each crisis, and the impact on economic society.

Great depression

At the start of the time period of interest for this research, Calvin Coolidge was president. He favored limited government intervention, particularly in the economy. While he was in office, the economy appeared strong; per capita disposable income increased 50% from 1922 to 1928, leisure time was increasing, new products were available to consumers, and industrial productivity had nearly doubled (Edsforth 2000: 12). Experts generally agree on the precise reasons for the prosperity of the 1920s but their explanations have slight variations. Many account includes new technology, loose credit and consumerism, and corporate consolidations (Conkin 1992: 24, Edsforth 2000: 16-7). The automobile had a particularly strong impact (Edsforth 2000: 16-7). The increasing reliance on electricity as a primary source of power and energy also gave the economy momentum; 70% of manufacturing power was electric by 1929, more than doubled from 15 years prior (Ferrell 1998: 62).

In spite of these signs of economic strength, the benefits were not shared equally. The top 7% of the population saw their incomes increase almost 200%, but the bottom 93% experienced income increases of only 6%. (Rose 2009: 15). Not quite 30% of families even had incomes that met the american standard of living: enough to cover basic necessities as well as some disposable income. Only 20% of families had savings (Edsforth 2000: 21-2). In addition to growing income inequality, the agricultural sector began to experience severe problems. Supplies of food increased do to increasing international trade after World War I, and new technologies that allowed farmers to cultivate crops on larger plots of land. At the same time, demand dropped due to declining population and wartime diets. The increase in supply and decline in demand

brought prices down so low that farmers could not afford to harvest their crops (Ferrell 1998: 81-2).

Republicans, including Coolidge, struggled with what to do in response to the problems in the agricultural sector. Providing governmental assistance might help the Republicans keep the farmers' votes, but doing so meant compromising their traditional opposition to interfering with the market. Coolidge organized a conference to debate financial assistance to farmers, and the conference concluded that higher tariffs would decrease imports, raising US prices, and that a corporation should be established to loan money to farmers (Ferrell 1998: 84-5). Coolidge disagreed with the conference's conclusions, believing instead that the problem was that crops were marketed through middle men selling to large corporations. He encouraged farmers to cooperate to sell their crops directly to the corporations, so that they could eliminate the cost of the middle man, retaining more of the profits (Ferrell 1998: 86).

In 1927, Congress passed the McNary-Haugen bill, establishing farm co-ops to deal with crop surpluses. By this point Coolidge had determined that farmers were not a unified force, so he vetoed the bill twice, believing that doing so would not damage his political career. He also believe raising prices which would increase supply further, ultimately failing to solve problems in the agricultural sector (Ferrell 1998: 91-3).

Herbert Hoover won the 1928 presidential election in a landslide victory over the Democratic nominee. Then in late 1929, the stock market fell 25% during a two-month period after doubling in value in the late 1920s (Edsforth 2000: 17-8). The stock market crash on October 24, 1929 is generally considered to mark the beginning of the Great Depression. After this crash, the economy slowly continued to deteriorate. Investment

declined quickly (about 35% a year until the low point in 1933) but unemployment, GNP, and prices fell much more slowly. The atmosphere of crisis did not materialize until late 1931 (Edsforth 2000: 35). Most people were optimistic about recovery, partly because the previous depressions had all been short and the economy had rebounded reliably. Panics and depressions were seen as ordinary aspects of a healthy free market economy (Edsforth 2000: 36-7).

Hoover was generally opposed to government regulation and direct relief (Schlesinger 1939: 4), but he supported intervening to help businesses cooperate for the mutual benefit of industry and society. In late 1929, Hoover began holding conferences at the White House to discuss economic issues including inflation, deflation, and unemployment (Edsforth 2000: 38). He convinced business leaders to maintain prices, wages, and employment levels after the stock market crash, and in the middle of 1930 the economy appeared to be functioning normally. In fact, crime was considered to be the biggest problem at the time, even by business leaders and economists (Edsforth 2000: 40). As a way to keep prices high in the US, Smoot-Hawley was passed in June 1930 (under a Republican congress and signed by Hoover) to increase tariffs, a protectionist measure (Edsforth 2000: 29).

The agricultural sector was still struggling, so Hoover worked to pass the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1929 as a solution to the industry's problems. This Act established a board to help establish farm co-ops and agricultural corporations. One of those corporations purchased a large quantity of wheat and kept it out of the market, hoping to increase worldwide farm prices. Once prices rose, it would sell the wheat and repay the loan from the AMA board at a zero net cost to taxpayers. This didn't work as

planned when the corporation couldn't sell the wheat, and it ended up going bankrupt. Since Hoover's plan to solve the agricultural crisis through orderly marketing failed, and many others were now in agreement that the problem was overproduction, new plans to limit production were introduced but never passed under Hoover's administration (Edsforth 2000: 44-5).

Economic problems continued to develop through the end of 1930. Companies reduced employment and farm prices continued to fall, leading to foreclosures and bank failures. Congressmen from farm states wanted to increase cash flow but the federal reserve refused, not wanting to risk inflation. Banks became more cautious, increasing loan rejections (Edsforth 2000: 43). In 1931 individual states began passing relief programs, but needed to borrow money from the federal government. Hoover vetoed any bill that offered relief, supported by business groups (National Association of Manufacturers and Chamber of Commerce). He preferred to encourage private donations to charities rather than provide government assistance (Rose 2009). That September, US Steel and Bethlehem Steel announced 10% wage cuts, breaking their agreement to hold wages steady. Other industries followed their lead. This problem of wage cuts and tightening of credit continued for 18 months (Edsforth 2000: 45).

Hoover employed other strategies to solve economic problems while limiting government intervention. For example, he facilitated the creation of a private corporation, funded by private investors, to loan money to banks to help them survive increasing foreclosures. Unfortunately, they were too cautious – they only loaned out two percent of their 500 million dollar fund (Edsforth 2000: 45-6). After this failure, Hoover asked Congress to establish a federally funded Reconstruction Finance Corporation and a Home

Loan Bank Board, breaking with his desire to not regulate business (Edsforth 2000: 46).

However, the economy continued to decline throughout his presidential term.

A coalition in Congress worked to increase funds for public works projects in late 1931, but Hoover blocked their efforts, prioritizing maintaining a balanced budget.

Despite his ambitions, 1931 ended with a one billion dollar deficit due to an unexpected decline in receipts. The following year Hoover endeavored to prevent another deficit by lecturing Congress and vetoing spending bills, including bills for public workers projects and federal assistance to states for poor relief. Although Congress complied by raising taxes and cutting expenditures, the following year saw an even bigger budget deficit.

Hoover created an agency called the President's Organization on Unemployment Relief (POUR) whose purpose was to advise local relief agencies. It was staffed mostly by businessmen and without funds to distribute, it had little impact on local relief efforts (Edsforth 2000: 49-52).

At this time, charities and local governments were responsible for administering poor relief. They were overwhelmed with demands for help during the Great Depression; several charities closed during this time, and local governments struggled to continue providing support (Edsforth 2000: 46-7). Cities and states were legally required to maintain balanced budgets, posing a barrier to their ability to meet the needs of the poor. Prevented from using deficit spending as a strategy to provide support, many turned to the federal government for help (Edsforth 2000 48). In July of 1932, Hoover saw that his efforts to solve the problem of poor relief by encouraging private donations to charities had failed. He signed the Emergency Relief and Construction Act, which provided for loans for states to use for relief (Rose 2009, Rauchway 2008: 34).

With the rise in unemployment from 3.2% in 1929 to 24.9% in 1933 (Steindl 2008), state revenue suffered from loss of taxes. Thus, although Hoover encouraged them to build roads and pursue other projects as a way to provide work, the state governments were largely unable to spend money to do so (Rauchway 2008: 25-7). When Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in early March 1933, workers, factories, and banks were idle. The next day, Congress passed the Emergency Banking Act which closed all banks. Once the government could verify the soundness of a bank, it was allowed to reopen (Rose 2009). Hoover's administration had drafted the Emergency Banking Act before leaving office (Conkin 1992: 46-7).

The Robinson-Wagner bill created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) later in March 1933. The CCC provided employment for young men entering the labor force. The bill required members of the Corps to share wages with their families, and provided some time for the men's education. The Corps created work camps to protect and preserve national forests (Rose 2009).

The next bill to offer government support was the Agricultural Adjustment Act, which established the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) in May 1933. The bill charged the AAA with increasing agricultural prices by limiting supply, and was the first attempt at crop restriction as a solution to the agricultural depression (Rose 2009). This program was voluntary, and it provided payments to farmers who agreed to produce less than full capacity. It also allowed price setting and provided subsidies for exporting surplus crops. These programs were locally administered by groups of farmers, who determined payments to individual farmers based on previous production. By basing the

payments on previous production, the program hurt sharecroppers and farm laborers. This replicated pre-existing inequalities of class and race (Conkin 1992: 41- 43).

The nation's leadership expected the AAA to help the economy by giving farmers an immediate increase in cash flow, and by increasing the price of crops. The program achieved those goals; crop prices doubled, and farm income rose about 50%. However, consumers complained. Paying more for food meant less disposable income for some, but going hungry for others. In response to these criticisms, the agency that took crops out of the marketplace stopped destroying the excess food. Instead, Roosevelt created the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation to distribute surplus food as a form of direct relief rather than. The Supreme Court ruled the AAA unconstitutional in January 1936, removing its legal power and financial means to restrict crops (Schlesinger 1939: 22-3).

Additional programs focused on reforming the financial system. In May, the Securities Act of 1933 “forced the most fraudulent promoters out of the stock market” by requiring more detailed accounting (Conkin 1992: 47). It also required the Federal Trade Commission to fully inform the public of accurate information on new securities (Schlesinger 1939: 25).

Congress passed the federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) on May 12, 1933. FERA gave money to the states to help them meet demand for relief, allowing the states to distribute the relief as they saw fit (Schlesinger 1939: 5). Generally, the states authorized applicants for enough hours of work to fill their family budget deficit; they were given just enough work to cover what was deemed to be sufficient income. FERA also set a national minimum wage rate. In some areas, this was above the market rate – even three times the prevailing rate for some southern rural areas. FERA did not

set different wage scales for men and women, blacks and whites, but several relief agencies adopted formal policies providing varying wage rates based on race and gender. Businesses resisted the minimum wage rates. Some states chose to shut down the program rather than pay the minimum rate, and in light of these problems, Congress abolished the minimum rates in November 1934. Even with the minimum wage rates, relief work was so low that up to one-quarter of the people on work relief were supplemented with direct relief (Rose 2009).

In June 1933, Congress passed the National Industrial Recovery Act, establishing the National Recovery Administration (NRA). The NRA worked to negotiate codes for prices and wages, agreed upon by workers and businesspeople. They also suspended certain provisions of antitrust laws and provided some protections for workers' right to organize (Conkin 1992: 35, Rose 2009). Its goal was to increase prices, increase consumers' buying power, and protect decent working conditions. Industries joined voluntarily (Schlesinger 1939: 15-6). The NRA was declared unconstitutional in May 1935 (Schlesinger 1939: 18). The NIRA also established the Public Works Administration, intended to create jobs and stimulate the construction industry (Conkin 1992: 33). It focused on heavy construction and was operated through private industry (Schlesinger 1939: 10-11).

The Homeowners Refinancing Act established the Home Owners Loan Corporation in June 1933, to help people who were losing their homes as well as the lending agencies (Conkin 1992: 49, Schlesinger 1939: 11). Along the same lines, the Banking Act of 1933, also known as the Glass-Steagall Act, extended the jurisdiction of the federal reserve system to commercial banks, increased its power to regulate credit,

established the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and disallowed commercial banks from investment (Schlesinger 1939: 24-5). Congress established the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) in October 1933 to loan money to farmers based on their crops, but at higher than prevailing crop prices. This increased agricultural prices (Conkin 1992: 43). At this point, many people could not get the food they needed, which slowed recovery. The Farm Credit Administration refinanced loans at lower interest rates, and lent additional money to get the farms through that winter (Schlesinger 1939: 19-20).

These initial programs in Roosevelt's New Deal led to some increase in economic activity, but before long economic activity was stalling again. Congress created the Civil Works Administration (CWA), which existed from 1933-34, to help people through a particularly hard winter (Conkin 1992: 48). The CWA differed from previous work relief programs because the federal government administered it (Schlesinger 1939: 6), and because it bypassed the relief rolls to allow every unemployed person access to CWA jobs. Also, rather than authorizing work based on budget deficiency, the program gave everyone 40 hours of work per week at higher PWA wage rates (40 cents minimum wage instead of 30 cents minimum wage). The jobs were in high demand, especially in big cities. The CWA set up additional offices to handle the applicants, who outnumbered the available positions (Rose 2009).

In 1934, Congress continued to take action to reform the economy and to aid recovery. They passed the Gold Reserve Act of 1934 in January to stabilize US currency, after devaluing proved ineffective (Conkin 1992: 47). The Securities and Exchange Act of 1934 set up the Securities and Exchange Commission which regulated trade, required

accurate disclosure of information, and allowed regulation of margin requirements on stock purchases (Conkin 1992: 47).

The Frazier-Lemke act, passed in June 1934, restricted evictions on property as long as farmers were making payments that a judge deemed appropriate. This bill targeted farmers as a means of improving access to food. The Supreme Court quickly declared it unconstitutional, but Congress followed by passing a very similar act that the Court accepted (Schlesinger 1939: 19-20). The National Housing Act of 1934 established the Federal Housing Authority, and attempting to solve housing problems by stimulating private construction, helping home buyers, and protecting loan lenders (Conkin 1992: 63-4, Schlesinger 1939: 12).

Very early in 1935, Roosevelt determined that relief programs needed to be overhauled, both because of the vast increases in the numbers of people seeking aid and because of the increasing amounts each family needed. He advocated valuable work relief instead of trivial work relief (Schlesinger 1939: 6-7). Congress passed Emergency Relief Appropriation in April 1935 of 4.88 billion dollars, to be divided up amongst relief agencies. Most went to the WPA and the Resettlement Administration, which sought to attract urban citizens away from the city to garden settlements and farm communities (Conkin 1992: 59-61). Around the same time, the decentralized FERA was replaced by the centrally controlled WPA (Schlesinger 1939: 7).

In July 1935, Congress passed the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), also known as the Wagner Act. This Act guaranteed protection of union rights to workers and outlawed traditional company tactics for preventing union formation. It excluded certain groups of workers, such as agricultural workers and services workers, so it had a limited

impact on working conditions (Conkin 1992: 65-6). Another innovative measure Congress passed that summer was the Social Security Act of 1935, which established retirement insurance, unemployment insurance, and pensions for the elderly and other dependent classes of people. However, a payroll tax funded this measure, which is regressive and tough on economic recovery (Conkin 1992: 62-3).

Roosevelt's next action proposed increasing taxes on large corporations, to reverse the trend of regressive taxes that had been used to pay for relief measures up to that point. Congress passed a weakened version of his proposal and only collected 250 million dollars in additional taxes. The overall tax structure became more regressive during this period, in spite of some other progressive changes that were made (Conkin 1992: 66-7). The overall banking system remained relatively unchanged during this time period also, though new laws increased protections for depositors. The Banking Act of 1935 gave the Federal Reserve more control over credit, which allowed the government to reduce interest rates and devalue currency (Conkin 1992: 69-70).

Crisis of 2008

The actions the US government took in response to the current economic crisis has similarities to the Great Depression. For example, the current crisis also began under conservative leadership that chose to take no direct action to assist workers. In September 2008, the US Congress began debating the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, which authorized 700 billion dollars to purchase assets from failing banks (Herszenhorn 2008). The controversial bill was passed on October 3rd, amidst fierce debate from economists who believed it was not a sound investment (Stiglitz 2008; Wolfers 2008) and working people who were frustrated by the government's willingness to rescue the rich

while so many ordinary citizens were struggling (Bensinger 2008). By the time this bill was under discussion, unemployment had increased substantially, from 4.4% in October 2007 to 7.2% in December 2008 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2009).

In late November 2008, the “Big 3” US automakers – Ford, General Motors (GM), and Chrysler – approached Congress to request emergency loans. Some commentators said refusing to help the auto companies would devastate the national economy, and predicted that 10% of the workforce with jobs connected to the auto industry would end up unemployed. At the same time, they argued, US GDP would drop considerably as consumers purchasing automobiles would only be able to choose foreign-made cars (Isidore 2008). Other experts maintained that the economy runs best without interference. They argue that businesses only fail when their product isn’t needed or their business practices are ineffective (McGarvie 2008). Negotiations over the bailout were hostile, and eventually GM and Chrysler were given 13.4 billion (Ford chose not to take bailout money) and given a deadline to produce a plan to prove their long-term viability (Sanger, Herszenhorn and Vlasic 2008).

These differing responses to economic crisis show that the government responds to economic crises in different ways, depending on who is elected to the presidency and other legislative positions. I expect to find that public opinion and interest groups will also affect the outcomes of negotiation over government response to crisis. Ultimately, the governing body makes the decisions, but I will study the efforts of labor unions to influence those decisions, both directly and through swaying public opinion.

Previous Related Research

In response to the Great Depression, the US government made many socially progressive changes, including the creation of Social Security and protections for union representation with the adoption of the National Labor Relations Act (Rauchway 2008)². Goldfield argues that labor movement activity and left-wing social movements made these policy changes possible, maintaining that elected officials are influenced both directly and indirectly by external factors, including social movements and social unrest (1989). State autonomy theorists argue that increasing Democrat representation and the court's decision to declare the NIRA unconstitutional were the crucial factors leading to the passage of the Wagner Act (Skocpol and Finegold 1990:1300). Experts continue to debate the degree of influence of labor unions in the policy changes that occurred in the mid-1930s (Cornfield 1991). This project does not seek to determine the effectiveness of labor unions in accomplishing their political and legislative agenda. Instead, it focuses on changes in labor union activity. This type of social movement activity is important to examine by itself because without some level of involvement from the public, democracy cannot work. Indeed, in the crisis of 2008 many labor unions actively protested and critiqued the government's decisions (Moore 2009). Focusing on union activity also enables the researcher to compare resources used towards political efforts versus organizing. In this section I review previous research on factors influencing policy outcomes, factors influencing social movement activity, and factors affecting labor union success.

² The specific factors that made passage of these acts possible are contested.

Factors influencing political outcomes

It is the elected officials, appointees, and other agents of the state who make decisions regarding what actions to take in response to an economic crisis. Research has shown that many factors influence their decisions, including public opinion, interest groups and lobbyists, and endorsements (Soule and Olzak 2004; Drope and Hansen 2004; Burstein and Linton 2002; Rapoport, Stone, and Abramowitz 1991). These findings support the need to study the activities of labor unions as they try to influence policy.

Public opinion can affect policy outcomes, specifically the passage or failure of congressional bills (Soule and Olzak 2004). If they want to remain in power, politicians must continue getting re-elected into their positions, and in order to get re-elected they have to maintain the support of their voters. Hofstetter found that politicians are especially responsive to voters during competitive elections, which elicit high levels of voter interest (Hofstetter 1973). Interest groups and lobbyists can also influence policy outcomes, as shown in the significant relationship between donations made by politically active firms and success of those firms' petitions for protection from international companies that are alleged to be unfairly dumping their products on the US market (Drope and Hansen 2004). In a review of articles, Burstein and Linton found that social movement organizations that lobby elected officials can have an effect on the outcome of political legislation, mostly due to the influence of endorsements (2002). While it is not clear if the politicians' responsiveness to voters or organizations is due to a genuine interest in their needs or simply a utilitarian tactic to remain in power, the finding shows that labor unions have the potential to influence politics through their lobbying or through mobilization of their members.

Factors affecting ability of SMOs to influence politics

Endorsements from SMOs are valuable to politicians because in addition to the influence of a public statement of support, endorsements promise a voting bloc of members as well as a commitment of financial and human resources (Rapoport, Stone, and Abramowitz 1991). Because politicians want the continuing support of these groups whose interests are aligned with them, the organizations maintain some degree of influence over an official they helped elect. Support from non-union organizations will likely be welcomed by politicians also; however, the point of this paragraph is to say that SMOs do have some ability to influence political outcomes. While these findings imply that SMOs are able to impact policy when they can deliver votes and campaign support, Burstein and Linton acknowledge that most research looks only at the final stage of policy-making, which is the period after the bill's introduction to Congress for discussion (2002). Looking at bill creation and negotiations in committee may reveal expanded influence of interest groups on policy outcomes. Endorsements can also influence voters outside of the endorsing organization, as was shown in an experiment where non-union, liberal voters were more likely to vote for an AFL-CIO endorsed Democratic candidate than an unendorsed Democratic candidate (McDermott 2006).

Other factors that affect the ability of SMOs to shape policy outcomes include the presence of elites. SMOs have a stronger impact on policy outcomes when they have an elite ally in the policy making process (Soule and Olzak 2004). This could be someone in power who is sympathetic to the mission of the SMO. More likely, when there is a division among elites, an elite may ally themselves with an SMO in order to gain power (Cress and Snow 2000: 1069). Also, when splits occur within the political elite, social

movements are more likely to be victorious. Jenkins and Brents argue that the Social Security Act was passed due to a sustained wave of social protest and a cleavage in the political elites (1989).³ “Capitalist blocs also have to ‘struggle’ for political power, especially in the midst of political crises in which the formula for economic prosperity and political stability have become problematic” (906). This indicates that crisis alone does not generate change in economic policy, but increasing demands from the workers and unrest that threaten the elites’ way of life greatly raises the chance of economic change. Finally, unified elites may drive labor unions to build alliances with other SMOs in order to strengthen their standing. “In the presence of a unified elite, the chances for a successful challenge dwindle. Coalition building will likely be more attractive in those circumstances” (Dreiling 2001:10). Dreiling found this to be true when labor groups and environmental groups, which had previously had an antagonistic relationship, worked together to oppose the North-American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Eisinger found that protest behavior was highest when a political opportunity structure was opening up; in other words, when the structure was least stable. Protest was not tolerated in a closed structure, but although it was tolerated in an open structure, people used other avenues to reach their political goals. When it was moving from closed to open was when protest was most used as a means of political involvement (1973). Although political opportunity generally focuses on opening of opportunities, McAdam points out that the gay rights movement arose when opportunities were contracting, since there was a new conservative leadership (1996:32). Meyer pointed out that several

³ There is substantial debate concerning the factors that lead to the passage of the SSA; see for example Quadagno 1984, Skocpol and Amenta 1985, Amenta and Parikh 1991, Jenkins and Brents 1989.

studies have found that either opening or contracting opportunities tend to experience a high amount of activity, arguing that it needed to be resolved (2004). I argue that both increasing opportunities or decreasing opportunities are examples of instability, which can lead to an increase in political activity – though successful outcomes may be a different story.

Factors affecting ability of labor unions to be politically active

Several factors affect the ability of labor unions to take political action in the interests of their members, such as membership size, internal democracy, the industry in which the union is organized, and political and legal barriers to union activity (Amenta and Halfmann 2000). Examining labor unions as social movement organizations changes the focus from institutions to member mobilization, which is an important aspect of political behavior (Kimeldorf and Stepan-Norris 1992). The varying efforts to influence political outcomes that labor unions perform can be affected by external factors. For example, the activities of competing organizations can impact union political action choices. Delaney, Fiorito, and Masters found that corporate PAC activity was associated with lower union PAC activity, implying that “unions may alter their approaches to politics when faced with interest group competition” (1988:639). In other words, if a union deems that they will not be able to compete with corporate lobbies in political donations, they may focus their resources on something other than politics, such as organizing. Factors such as this could diminish or disguise the union political response to political opportunity.

Union density is an influential factor in policy outcomes when labor has been active in advocating for certain reforms (Amenta and Halfmann 2000:524). In fact, labor

unions have minimal political power without the strength that comes from relatively high union density (Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2004:53). Then again, the ability to organize – the legal right to form a union – is a right that union activists had to fight for and win. In the last thirty years, the political climate towards unions has continued to deteriorate (Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2004, Clawson and Clawson 1999), which produces several barriers to successful organizing. Labor law is weakly enforced and carries extremely minor penalties for violations (Dannin 2006). Union-busting continues to be common practice for corporations faced with organizing drives, and has become exceedingly profitable for the consulting firms that conduct the union avoidance campaigns (Freeman and Kleiner 1990, Fantasia and Voss 2004). The National Labor Relations Board, a government agency charged with overseeing union elections and investigating unfair labor practices, can vary greatly in its responsiveness to unions depending on the current appointees to the board (Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2004).

Influence of union membership on vote turnout

Of studies that examine the impact of unions on politics, the most common research questions involve their influence on voter turnout. Because voter turnout rates are influenced by social class in the United States (Radcliff and Davis 2000), it is important to examine whether an organization that represents working-class interests is successful at getting their members politically involved at this most basic level. Additionally, given the decline in union density that has occurred over the last 40 years, knowing whether unions influence voter turnout among their members will contribute to an understanding of the broad impact of this decline (Sousa 1993). As a matter of fact, the proportion of voters who belong to union households is increasing even while union

density is declining, while the overall working class voter turnout is diminishing (Zullo 2004: 324-5). Union members represent a larger and larger share of the working class vote. This could be because labor union members have better resources to vote compared to other working class voters – access to reliable transportation, jobs that allow the flexibility of time off to vote, and education to understand the issues as well as the importance of political action (2004: 326).

The findings of these studies mostly agree that union membership increases voter turnout, which is especially impressive considering the range of methods used. Zullo conducted a case study of a single politically active labor council during a Get Out The Vote (GOTV) campaign during the 2000 presidential election. Using demographic data from the union, county voting records, a survey of union members, and records of successful contacts from the GOTV campaign, he concluded that receiving contact from a fellow union member increased voter turnout 17-27% (2004: 336). At the same time, the union only reached 10% of their members, meaning that in spite of the impressive results labor unions' impact on election outcomes may be minimal (336).

Others have found not only that evidence supports the idea that unions increase voter turnout among union members, but that union density increases voter turnout in the general population as well (Radcliff and Davis 2000, Radcliff 2001). Using two cross-sectional studies, one comparing 19 industrial democracies and one comparing the 50 US states, Radcliff and Davis found that union density rates are correlated with higher voting rates in general. In the comparison of 19 nations they found that every 1% increase in union density increased the voting rates by .2% (2000:134), and in the comparison of 50 US states they also found that union density had a significant and positive effect on

voting rates (2000:137). In another study using the pooled American National Election Survey from 1950-1994, Radcliff found that increasing union density from 16% to 32% (the highest observed value in the time period) increased voting behavior for non-union households by 14% (2001:409).

Additional research examines the union household effect; instead of looking at individuals, this research focuses on households in which one or more members belong to a union. Sousa examines the effect of household union membership on voter turnout in presidential elections from 1960-1988, to determine the political impact of the decline in union density. He found no significant differences when looking at the general population, but when looking at African-American voters, he found that union members were 12.7 points more likely to vote than non-union members (1993: 751-2). However, his research did not have a way of distinguishing which union voters belonged to, or whether the voters had been contacted by a member of their union encouraging them to vote (1993: 755). Also, by looking at all people who live with a member of a union in addition to actual union members, he may have weakened the chances of significant results. As Delaney, Masters, and Schwochau found, union members are 13% more likely to vote for COPE-endorsed gubernatorial candidates than household members of unionists but the two groups are not statistically different in other political races (1990: 632). They found an average 15-20% difference between union members and non-union household members, with union members more likely to vote for COPE-endorsed candidates (633).

Influence of union membership on vote choice

Another set of research dwells on the influence labor unions have on the vote choice of individuals, whether those individuals are union members, union household members, or non-union household members. Here again, the researchers used a variety of methods yet the results all supported the hypothesis that unions influence the voting decisions of individuals. The most skeptical conclusion comes from Patton and Marrone, who use a survey from Cincinnati to argue that AFL-CIO endorsements have little direct effect because most people do not know who the organization endorsed. But of those that do, 12% of union members and 5% of non-union members report that they were positively influenced by the fact of the endorsement (1984:9). Thus, although the effect may be very small, unions do make an impact on voting decisions. Their survey also asked about respondents' attitudes towards various liberal and conservative issues, and the authors found that respondents' stances on those issues had a stronger relationship with their voting behavior than union membership status (18).

Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee also used self-reported survey data from a single city, but nearly forty years earlier. The goal of the in-depth case study from 1948 was to understand the formation of voting opinions during the election season. One of their major findings relevant to the current study was the discovery of a clear relationship between the amount of interactions with the union and the likelihood of voting Democrat (1954: 49). Which is the cause and which is the effect needs to be parsed out; it could easily be that the more a person is oriented to the Democratic party, the more they get involved with the union. The authors also found that no matter controls they included, union members vote Democrat more often than non-union members (47). Expanding the

population to an entire state, Juravich and Shergold surveyed AFL-CIO members in Pennsylvania through the mail during the Presidential election of 1984. Their respondents reported that their unions' endorsement strongly influenced their voting decision (1988:383).

Delaney, Masters, and Schwochau examined the likelihood of union members and household members of unionists to vote for candidates endorsed by AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education (COPE) using the 1978 American National Election Survey. They found that union members were 15-20 points more likely to vote for a COPE candidate than were non-union members, with household members of unionists in the middle (1990: 633). It is difficult to know if union members are voting for COPE-endorsed candidates simply because they are endorsed by COPE, because the education they received about those candidates influenced their opinion, or if they would have voted for those candidates anyway. However, they point out that in addition to the impact on voting decisions, a COPE endorsement has an indirect impact on election outcomes. COPE-endorsed candidates receive campaign support including volunteers phonebanking and canvassing to encourage votes as well as contact information for sending literature (624).

Finally we turn to Australia, which has also experienced a dramatic decline in union density in the last 30 years, though they began around 50% of the population and are currently around 25%. Leigh examined union votes for the Australian Labor Party from 1966-2004 and found that union membership increased the likelihood that a person would vote for the Labor Party by 23% (2006: 549). Using this information, he predicts what the outcome of the most recent three elections would have been had union density

remained at its' highest level of 50%, and determined that the outcome of the election would have favored the Labor Party instead of the Liberal-National Coalition, who were the actual winners (549). However, he rightfully points out that rather than union membership determining voting behavior, political tendencies may determine union membership (543). If his initial conclusion is correct, the decline of union density in industrialized nations has had a truly substantial result.

Unions' indirect influence on politics

As mentioned previously, by encouraging political participation of disadvantaged segments of society and providing a unified voice for the interests of workers, labor unions effectively level out some of the class inequalities in American democracy (Bok and Dunlop 1970:426). They do so by offering a coordination of political activity and influence of working people which increases involvement of individuals, but also potentially impacts political outcomes. By providing services such as canvassing to inform voter of issues and candidates as well as reminders to vote; an audience to listen to candidates' platforms; voter registration; and means to increase the ability of people to vote such as offering rides to the polls or child care on election day, labor unions have a definite though perhaps subtle impact on politics (1970: 416).

In addition to the role they play in voter turnout and education, labor unions offer opportunities for political participation and activist training to those who are barred from voting, such as for undocumented immigrants. As union members, undocumented immigrants can still participate in politics and influence election outcomes through the endorsement process at their local, and through involvement in Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaigns (Varsanyi 2005). This is significant because the rights of undocumented

immigrants are frequently dependent on elected officials and on measures that are passed. The ability of undocumented immigrants to protect their status through endorsements and turning out the votes of citizens is an important benefit that unions offer.

Labor union typology

This analysis will look at labor unions as SMOs, but it is important to remember that some labor unions have more SMO characteristics than do others. A useful typology for this analysis divides unions according to inclusiveness and presence of social and economic critique (Robinson 2000). Robinson and others made this distinction between social movement unions and business unions in order to allow social movement theories to be applied to unions (Dreiling 2001:21). Unions that are inclusive (conceive of the labor movement broadly rather than limited to a particular set of workers) and critical of economic policy are social movement unions. In these unions, members participate in resolving grievances and bargaining new contracts, freeing the union's professional staff to spend their time on organizing campaigns. Unions that are exclusive (only protect the interests of a select group of workers) and accept conventional political and economic ideas are business unions. In the business union model, members' dues pay for union staff to solve their work-related problems, and new organizing is not a priority.

While the union typology explained in the preceding paragraph is useful for comparisons, no union falls perfectly into one category or another. Some international unions, such as Service Employees International Union (SEIU), UNITE HERE, and United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), are mandating or at least providing support for increasing organizing efforts of locals; this encouragement varies in terms of how much control the national organization has over the local, but either way Voss and

Sherman found that internationals pushing new organizing was an important condition for local union revitalization (Voss and Sherman 2000). Although Voss and Sherman did not include political action as a component of revitalization, their research on service sector union locals in Northern California shows that there is some movement towards social movement unionism. Some labor unions have actively worked to influence politics since the CIO created the Political Action Committee in 1943 (Scoble 1963).

Because I want to see how both types of unions will respond to economic crisis, but little to no systematic information on the political behavior of labor unions over time exists, I rely on two proxies to choose a union that will represent each category for case analysis. Unions challenging the dominant federation tend to be more politically active and innovative than unions in the dominant federation. Unions in declining industries tend to stick to their traditional organizing methods while unions in growing industries often must innovate in order to break the new ground. Choosing unions in this manner allows for high contrast between the two cases and should illustrate part of the spectrum of union response to economic crisis. The growth or decline of the industry in which the union is operating and the federation it belongs to will be important variables in the crisis of 2008 analysis also. These are similar to the two categories used by Anner in his analysis of union strategy in Central American apparel industry: left-oriented and conservative (2009). I prefer the terms innovative and traditional because they focus on strategy, rather than confusing the terms with their use in national politics.

Business cycle

Business cycle theory suggests that economic factors explain variations in union density. The debate over which variables are the strongest predictors and which model is

most conceptually accurate was active throughout the 1970s (Ashenfelter and Pencavel 1969, Mancke 1971, Adams and Krislov 1974, Moore and Pearce 1976, Elksheik and Bain 1978, Fiorito 1982) but the debate tapered off without definitive resolution. In those models, inflation has the most stable and significant predicting power on union density (Ashenfelter and Pencavel 1969, Adams and Krislov 1974, Moore and Pearce 1976, Elksheik and Bain 1978, Fiorito 1982). Change in employment, whether total employment or employment in union sectors, is also typically a significant predictor of union density (Ashenfelter and Pencavel 1969, Adams and Krislov 1974, Elksheik and Bain 1978), as is union density in prior years (Ashenfelter and Pencavel 1969, Adams and Krislov 1974, Elksheik and Bain 1978, and Fiorito 1982).

Later research found the models did not work as well in recent time periods (Moore and Pearce 1976, Fiorito 1982, Brady 2007). Additionally, some researchers found alternative explanations of union growth to have more power than business cycle theory (Western 1997, Brady 2007). Although it is clear that economic factors influence union density, business cycle theory does not address union activity. Working to explain the decline in private sector union density, one paper found that union organizing efforts did not matter for union density when changes in the sector's total employment were included in the model (Farber and Western 2001). However, because the authors chose to isolate the effect of only two out many possible explanations for the decline in private sector union density in this model, the results bear little on this research. Also, their measure examined only NLRB election petitions; an insufficient measure considering that they exclude further organizing at sites where a local already exists.

In sum, comparing these two time periods demonstrates how labor unions respond to economic crisis, amending political opportunity theory and business cycle theory to include organizations' political and organizing efforts. The two historical cases are similar in important ways. First, they are similar in public opinion because the majority of people perceive this crisis to be very serious (Pierson 2008). They are similar politically because both crises began while a conservative, free-market president held office, and lasted through the election of a progressive, populist president. They are similar in terms of the situation of national labor unions because in both time periods, the labor movement was split into two different federations, one traditional and one innovative (Marquart 1975, Voss and Sherman 2000). This is important because splits in the labor federations have a positive effect on union density, largely because the rival federations provide a space to test innovative tactics and strategies (Stepan-Norris and Southworth 2010). Finally, the two time periods are economically similar with rising unemployment and deflation, unlike the economic crisis in 1973-5 where unemployment was accompanied by high inflation. However, they have a key difference in that unions were not politically legitimate organizations during the portion of the Great Depression this research will cover. This comparison allows for examination of the effect of legitimacy.

CHAPTER II

METHODS

This research project employs comparative historical methods and small-N configurational analysis. By comparing the ways labor unions responded to two different US economic crises against their behavior in two years of non-crisis immediately preceding each crisis, we will better understand how organizations mobilize their members and take various forms of action to influence governmental outcomes in times of political opportunity. The primary research component examines two national unions from each crisis being studied. For each time period, I examine the union claiming the largest membership for one industry that is declining and one that is growing. For the Great Depression (research period 1), I look at the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, which represents the declining rail industry, and the Amalgamated Clothings Workers, which represents the growing textile industry. For the crisis of 2008 (research period 2), I look at the United Automobile Workers, representing the declining automobile industry, and the Service Employees International Union, representing the growing service sector⁴. Examining unions from both a growing industry and a declining industry controls for the marketplace power of labor unions, which is heavily dependent on the economic position of the industry in which they operate (Wallace, Griffin, and Rubin 1989). My case selection confounds industry growth with federation (both of the unions from the declining industries represent the dominant, more conservative federation while both

⁴ In particular, health care has been a growing industry and a growing area of unionization in recent years.

unions from the growing industries represent the innovative federation (Kimeldorf and Stepan-Norris 1992; Milkman 2005)); however, this is tolerable because I am studying variation between two broad types of unions rather than attempting to determine the precise degree of influence each factor has on increasing political activity.

The secondary component examines 10 national unions during the crisis of 2008 to determine how configurations of federation, membership growth, and organizational variables influence changes in the political behavior of unions. Studies incorporating political opportunity theory are frequently case studies, such as the first component of this project. In order to better determine what factors are paramount, McAdam recommends a return to comparative analyses, which is more in line with Eisinger's original use of the theory in 1973 (1996:29).

Variables

This project focuses on five categories of the response of labor unions: (1) institutional political action efforts, which includes lobbying in Congress and campaign contributions; (2) activist political action efforts, which includes direct action and member mobilization; (3) leader-based efforts; (4) organizing efforts; and (5) bargaining efforts. For the case study component of this project, I collected data on political activity, bargaining, and organizing, all three of which are measured in terms of resources devoted to each of these goals. I used union newsletters, correspondence, meeting minutes, and convention proceedings to collect data on these measures. Data on ratified contracts was insufficient for analysis. Archives house most of the records of the historical case unions, while union websites and government documents contain the data for the current cases.

Practical constraints prevent study of the entire length of each economic crisis. Instead, this research covers two years prior to the onset of each crisis (pre-crisis) and three years after the onset of each crisis (post-crisis). Although many consider the onset of the Great Depression to be its famously devastating stock market crash on October 24, 1929, I use August 1929, which the National Bureau of Economic Research established as the official start of the recessionary period. This research period will begin August 1927 and end August 1932. The National Bureau of Economic Research determined that the current recession started December 2007 (Business Cycle Dating Committee 2008). Thus, the second research period covers December 2005 through December 2010. These dates informed my data collection efforts. Ultimately, the scarcity of archival materials on political activity demanded that I extend the Great Depression through 1935. For the two crisis of 2008 cases, data prior to November 2006 was erratic, requiring me to change the date range to November 2006-December 2010.

The second component of this research examines 10 national unions in existence during the crisis of 2008. In addition to the data on institutional political activity, grassroots political activity, leader-based actions, organizing, and collective bargaining discussed above, this dataset includes organizational characteristics of the unions. This information came from union websites and governmental records, such as Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) financial forms. The LMRDA requires unions to submit certain types of information, including detailed financial and personnel information, constitutions, and elections of officers. This information is publicly available by request. Unions are not required to submit ratified contracts, but as they may do so voluntarily, many are available through the LMRDA. The goal of this

component is to determine what union characteristics are most likely to influence political behavior, and what configuration of characteristics leads to which types of action.

Hypotheses

This section explains background and rationale for six sets of hypotheses. Those that focus on specific outcome measures are displayed in table format at the end of this section for quick reference. These hypotheses speak to overall findings, synthesizing data from Great Depression case studies, crisis of 2008 case studies, and the QCA analysis of 10 unions in the crisis of 2008. In addition, each of those three sections will have more focused hypotheses, found in the chapter dealing specifically with that section.

Unions participate in politics by supporting labor-friendly candidates during their race and after they are in office, mobilizing voters, giving financial support, and lobbying (Holloway 1979). Little information exists about the involvement of labor unions in national politics⁵, but following the logic of political opportunity theory, the amount of resources devoted to political action should increase during economic crisis. Also, by definition social movement unions put more efforts into member mobilization, so member mobilization should be a larger part of the overall political strategy in innovative unions than traditional unions. The paucity of research on union political behavior adds to the importance of the current research project.

Hypothesis 1a: In times of economic decline, innovative unions will favor political activity while reducing organizing activity.

⁵ A notable exception is Kimeldorf's *Reds and Rackets* (1988), which compares the variation in political ideologies of east coast and west coast dockworkers.

Hypothesis 1b: In times of economic decline, traditional unions will favor organizing activity while reducing political activity.

Institutionalization affects the strength and character of movement mobilizations (Meyer 1993). Prior to the passage of the NLRA, labor unions were not considered legitimate organizations and unionists had no legal protections for their right to organize. This is one of the most important differences between the two time periods; labor unions were institutionalized in the crisis of 2008 and not in the Great Depression. Thus, they should use more institutional political tactics in the crisis of 2008 than in the Great Depression. This includes efforts focused on campaign contributions and lobbying rather than member mobilizations.

Hypothesis 2a: Politically active labor unions will display more institutional political activity in the crisis of 2008 than the Great Depression.

At the same time, I expect that unions in growing industries will depend less on institutionalized politics, because they are generally breaking new ground organizing in an industry that was previously unorganized. The need to innovate in organizing will translate to activist types of political activity. Activist efforts include member mobilizations and political education campaigns.

Hypothesis 3a: Innovative unions will exhibit more activist political activity than traditional unions in both time periods.

Hypothesis 3b: Traditional unions will exhibit more institutional political activity than activist activity in both time periods.

Hypothesis 3c: Innovative unions will increase activist political activity in response to economic crisis in both time periods.

Hypothesis 3d: Traditional unions will reduce institutional political activity in response to economic crisis in both time period.

Political opportunity theory examines the timing and strength of mobilization. Because innovative unions are accustomed to strategic organizing, creating new strategies to circumvent employer resistance, I expect that they will identify the opportunity and respond quickly and intensely.

Hypothesis 4a: Innovative unions will respond more quickly to economic crisis than traditional unions in both time periods.

Hypothesis 4b: In both time periods, innovative unions will increase political activity with more intensity than traditional unions.

Additionally, because innovative unions frequently are organizing in sectors of the economy where working conditions are the most exploitative, they will be most considerate of issues affecting the working class. Thus, they will have a broad scope in their actions, advocating policies that cover workers in general. Traditional unions are organizing in sectors of the economy where unions have maintained decent working conditions for several years, and they will be most interested in conserving those benefits for their members. Thus, they will have a limited scope in their actions, advocating policies that are specific to their industry or workers in their industry.

Hypothesis 5a: Innovative unions will pursue political actions with a broad scope in both time periods.

Hypothesis 5b: Traditional unions will pursue political actions with a limited scope in both time periods.

Organizing is a key activity of unions in general, but organizing is specifically important in this analysis because it is necessary for political action in addition to being a competing goal. High membership is one way that a SMO can maximize their ability to influence political change. Organizing is also important for unions during periods where unemployment is relatively high, since workers who lose their jobs are no longer union members⁶. High unemployment affects unions negatively because it increases the surplus pool of labor, making demand for jobs high and people willing to accept inferior terms of employment for a paycheck. Although research on union organizing has been prolific in recent years, it has not indicated how we should expect unions to change their organizing behavior in the face of economic crisis. Pollard found that during the Great Depression, British labor unions originally preferred to accept job losses as long as wage rates were maintained. After observing the New Deal in the US, they began advocating jobs programs to reduce unemployment instead (1969). Traditional unions should be slower to respond to changing conditions.

Hypothesis 6: Traditional unions will initially maintain representational activity after the onset of economic crisis, but will eventually either reduce or increase their representational efforts.

Analysis

Case study data are analyzed narratively, using a variable-oriented cross-case analysis, working to partially explain some of the overarching reasons for changes (or lack of changes) in union political behavior during economic crisis. Narrative analysis

⁶ Except in cases where unions have control over hiring, where temporarily unemployed workers remain union members in hopes of gaining work in the near future

has the advantage of permitting a focus on the sequence of events within each time periods, which would be obscured using conventional analytical approaches (Abbott 2001:153). The order in which events unfold is central to this analysis; when unions change their activity as economic crisis develops, and what differences exist between unions that change at different times and with different intensities must be dealt with extensively.

The 10 unions from the crisis of 2008 are analyzed using Fuzzy-Sets Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) (Ragin 2000). Ragin's analysis techniques are a middle way between quantitative analysis, the variable-centered approach; and qualitative analysis, the case-centered approach. Generally, fsQCA looks at all logically possible configurations of the qualities of interest with the goal of determining which combinations of conditions are necessary and sufficient for the outcome of interest. Analyzing the 10 cases using fsQCA allows me to determine which configurations of organization characteristics and resources are sufficient for a union to take advantage of the political opportunity that accompanies economic crisis.

One potential issue with this analysis is that the current crisis is ongoing. Although the NBER declared the end of the 2007-2009 recession, the economy has not improved. It remained to be seen how depressed the economy will become, how long the crisis will last, what measures will be taken to improve the situation, or what measures will actually help the situation. A second issue is that unemployment figures are difficult

to interpret due to differences in measurement between the 1920s and today.⁷ All of these factors make for an interesting comparison between the two periods of crisis, each with unique opportunities for labor unions to influence political process and making this analysis an important contribution to the field.

⁷ Prior to 1940, unemployment measurements were compiled using census data, industry records, and assorted state reports (Romer 1986:1). After 1940, it was measured consistently with the Current Population Survey, which surveys households monthly.

CHAPTER III

THE POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF THE ACWA AND BRT, 1929-1935

This chapter is a comparative case study on the political activity of two national labor unions during the Great Depression. As discussed in chapter one, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) represents an innovative union, while the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (BRT) represents a traditional union. I begin by discussing the national political context, then move on to the labor union context through explanation of the AFL approach to politics. Then I talk specifically about the political character of the two labor unions divided up into three time periods: before the onset of the Great Depression, after the onset of the Great Depression during Herbert Hoover's presidency, then during the first years of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidency. Finally I discuss my overall conclusions about the implications of the differences between the two unions' political activity.

National Political Context

Important changes in American politics occurred during the decades right before and after the turn of the 20th century. The distribution of political power was experiencing a fundamental shift, and labor unions were one of the organized groups that played a role in the shift. Around the 1880s, the only motives considered acceptable for political involvement were partisan loyalty or patriotism. Self-interest may have driven political choices for many voters, but it wasn't considered an appropriate motivation; thus, extrapartisan groups did not organize around special interests. "Independents, who might

be presumed to follow a model of individual interest rather than partisan loyalty, were castigated as heretics and hermaphrodites” (Clemens 1997: 28). Interest groups were considered corrupt. Also, accountability of elected officials was not a routine part of politics at this time; voting records were not public. Although business executives had access to elected officials, there were no acceptable channels for voter political action beyond of the ballot box.

This changed between between the 1890s and the 1930s. “Political challengers secured major changes in the form of government (e.g., primary elections, initiative and referendum, the multiplication of government programs and agencies) that greatly altered the parties’ vulnerability to other political challengers and created alternative channels for influencing policy outcomes” (Clemens 1997: 3). Unions, farmers, and women, among others, began to develop a critique of the closed nature of the political system. This primarily included unions, farmers, and women, though others played an important role as well. As these groups worked to gain access to elected officials and to political power, the actions they took served to diminish the stronghold political parties held and actually transformed the system to one dominated by interest groups. This contrasts to the development of politics in Europe, where most countries are politically divided by class or ethnicity (*ibid*).

Labor unions were perhaps one of the most reluctant reformers in this movement. Perhaps this is because their members had more political rights uner the previous model than others. Dominated by white men, most union members had basic access to electoral politics through suffrage, even if they had no way of ensuring that elected officials were following through on their promises. Other political models, such as supporting a third

party, did not clearly offer advantages over the two-party system. Many labor leaders had connections with political leaders that benefitted the unions, and those relationships would be damaged by abandoning the party system. Having developed ties to both main political parties, the unions had less to gain from abandoning the party system or creating a third party challenger than others (Clemens 1997: 104-5). Bornet suggests that another reason labor unions may have had for avoiding third parties was that they hadn't been successful in the past (1964: 30).

AFL Political Policy

The US political system is almost always growing and changing gradually, but the changes specified above had a distinctive impact on the ability of labor unions to pursue their interests. Yet, as a whole, US labor unions took little interest in national political action at the turn of the 19th century. “While labor movements in many West European nations have provided the core constituents for progressive organizations and social movements, American labor has played a more limited role in national politics. Ever since the turn of the century, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) has advocated a distinctive strategy of business unionism that privileged economic interests over political reform” (Hattam 1993: 3). In addition to the failure of third parties, other defeats in electoral politics likely informed AFL's policy of ‘voluntarism’ which kept them out of attempts to control labor markets through political or legislative means. “Political action rarely received the AFL's unqualified support and was prohibited explicitly in many trade union constitutions (*ibid*: 4). There were complex reasons for and consequences of the voluntarism policy, which many scholars and union activists have tried to understand.

As the major federation for labor unions in the US at this time, AFL's policy had a significant influence on whether national and local labor unions took political action, and what type of action they took. However, due to geographic difficulties, AFL leaders had less control over western states. Those areas disapproved of the 'voluntarism' policy and were locations for interesting political challenges (Clemens 1997). This demonstrates that important variations exist between labor unions. Because this analysis only looks at efforts led by national unions ACWA and BRT, these regional variations are obscured from this analysis.

As to why labor unions were disappointed by their results in attempts to win political gains, Hattam explains that "In the United States, however, courts were the principal institution for containing workers' collective action under the common law doctrine of criminal conspiracy.... The unusual power of judicial interpretation and review in the United States repeatedly undermined the rewards of political organization as hard-won legislative victories were continually eroded by the courts. Even successful political mobilization seemed to provide little or no leverage over government policy toward labor in the United States" (1993: 11).

In order to organize into unions, workers first had to deal with criminal conspiracy laws. They successfully got statutes establishing certain types of action, including peaceful workers' protests, as legal. In spite of this, the courts continued to convict workers of conspiracy, using broad definitions of the coercive actions that the statutes prohibited. Labor organizations advocated for additional laws related to working conditions experienced a similar pattern, succeeding in the legislature but failing in the courts (Hattam 1993). "The history of the struggle for state recognition of working-class

organization reveals the limits of electoral and party politics for changing labor law. After a series of electoral victories followed by judicial defeats, workers became disillusioned with political reform and began to bypass the state to negotiate with and protest against their employers directly” (*ibid*: 20-1).

Samuel Gompers, founder and first president of the AFL, believed that unions should not ask the government for anything that they could achieve on their own. Speaking of the end of the 19th century, Brody writes that “The AFL limited its political objectives to such matters as immigration restriction, convict labor, and seamen’s conditions. Even here the Federation restricted its efforts to lobbying within the major parties and explicitly rejected independent or partisan political action” (1993: 27). After the courts shut down an important strike in 1906, siding with the employer, the voluntarism⁸ policy began to unravel. The federation gave a ‘Labor’s Bill of Grievances’ to Democrat and Republican leaders. When Republicans responded unfavorably, the ‘reward your friends, punish your enemies’ policy was born. In 1908, Gompers endorsed the Democratic ticket (Bornet 1964). Still, political action was relatively minimal. In the 1906 and 1908 elections, AFL spent less than \$8000 each year and did little to mobilize the labor vote (Brody 1993)

AFL did not completely avoid politics, but did not advocate for or against work-based policies that would improve economic conditions for their base of skilled men. “In the early twentieth century, for example, whenever labor joined forces with middle-class reformers, they generally did so as Progressives rather than as workers, in an effort to

⁸ The voluntarism policy established labor unions’ domain as economic interests rather than political reform, and avoiding partisanship even when political action was taken (Hattam 1993, Brody 1993). AFL opposed social welfare legislation based on this policy (Zieger 1994).

advance the classless interests of democratic reform. Organized labor willingly joined in progressive cries for more efficient, competitive, and honest government through the introduction of referendum, initiative, and recall” (Hattam 1993: 5-6). AFL did support bills that were meant to protect vulnerable groups, but not those who were likely to be union members, “for fear of weakening their organizational base” (*ibid*: 5). Labor in the US was not always apolitical – before the Civil War, Working Men’s political parties and General Trade Unions advocated for the 10 hour work day, public education, and other reforms. The AFL adopted the voluntarism approach at the end of the 19th century. Thus, the unusual feature of the American labor movement is the separation of political and economic spheres (*ibid*).

Brody argues that AFL’s limited political focus led to a high level of local union involvement in local politics (1993). The reason not all unionists were willing to accept the voluntarism policy was that employers used political power to win fights against labor. “Regardless of how insistently the AFL leadership might call for strict business unionism and craft autonomy, the ability of employers to enlist public agencies and the opportunities for electoral participation repeatedly drew local labor movements toward organizational forms that supported greater politicization and consolidation than a pure trades union or even an activist city central” (Clemens 1997: 111). Unionists had tried cooperating with major parties (who, although their rhetoric was labor-friendly, generally did not deliver the legislation to back it) and they had tried at various times forming a third party (which had not produced long-lasting or large-scale results). “So long as employers could call on the police powers of government, labor’s ability to act in the ‘industrial field’ was politically circumscribed” (*ibid*: 103).

AFL labor unions began to get serious about federal political action in 1906, when the British labor movement had elected 52 members to Parliament in the previous year. This was in the early years of the AFL policy of “reward your friends and punish your enemies” – which meant that labor union members should vote for people who had supported labor’s requests, and run third party candidates in races where no suitable candidate was already running (even if the third party candidate was doomed to fail) (Bornet 1964). From 1908-1924, Democrats accomplished some labor-friendly measures. AFL would send letters to locals encouraging political action but not recommending or endorsing specific candidates (*ibid*). At least for the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor (an example of a highly successful and politically active labor group that Clemens discusses in detail), the reason for not going further into politics was that it’s hard enough to convince workers that joining the union is good for them, and it would be even harder to convince them to change conservative political views (1997).

“In terms of the standard metric of numbers and resources, however approximate, organized labor must be judged one of the most potent groups outside the constellation of contending elites. Boasting a large and largely enfranchised membership mobilized into nationwide organizations integrated through the American Federation of Labor, labor unions nevertheless enjoyed comparatively few successes prior to the New Deal. While European nations were establishing welfare states organized around the needs of working men, labor unions in the United States saw their repertoire of action curtailed by judicial injunctions and their legislative gains limited to the prevention of, and compensation for, injury. The more general threats of unemployment and old age went virtually unremedied.” (Clemens 1997: 5)

During World War I, president Wilson spoke at an AFL convention and pleaded for labor's help in victory. They were asked to fight socialism at home, and in exchange they gained some political legitimacy, with some labor leaders sitting on war labor boards. "The war also encouraged the idea that workingmen should be free to organize and engage in collective bargaining. By the start of 1918, the AFL was openly demanding government protection of these rights. 'No other policy is compatible with the spirit and methods of democracy.' The Wilson administration accepted this view, first in a piecemeal way, then, beginning in March 1918, as a matter of national policy" (Brody 1993: 42). Thus, WWI was a time of labor peace and prosperity, with labor unions making significant gains in membership and breaking into previously unorganized industries.

When the war ended, the return of railroad ownership⁹ to private hands and the communist scare¹⁰ all made conditions worse for labor unions. A largely unsuccessful strike wave ensued, which at the end resulted in a 1.5 million member loss, mostly in the newer open-shop industries. The unions basically lost all of the gains they made during the war, and "The bitter truth was clear: depending on their own economic strength, American workers could not defeat the massed power of open-shop industry. Only public intervention might equalize the battle, and of that there was no hope in the 1920s." So then in 1924 many of the unions supported Robert La Follette, Sr., as did the AFL (Brody 1993: 44-5). La Follette was the Progressive Party's presidential nominee.

⁹ During the war, the government took control of the railroads to ensure smooth and uninterrupted service. When the war ended, the rail brotherhoods fought to keep the railroads in government hands, but failed.

¹⁰ After the war, national fear of communism motivated searches for radicals, often targeted at unions.

ACWA and BRT

During the 1920s, labor unions continued to take different paths in political action. The ACWA, a textile union that had split off from the more conservative AFL-affiliated United Textile Workers in 1914, endorsed Socialist candidate Eugene V. Debs in 1920. While the AFL still did not make a formal endorsement, they supported the Democratic candidate. The railroad brotherhoods focused their efforts opposing the Republican, a senator who had supported returning the railroads to private ownership after World War I. After a short depression from 1920-21, some labor members were motivated to increase political involvement (Bornet 1964). BRT and the other rail brotherhoods were governed by a set of laws, including the Railway Labor Act, giving them a unique context in which to act.

Then in the 1924 presidential election cycle, some labor leaders became involved during the primary. This year, the Democrat's presidential candidate was a wall street lawyer. The labor movement determined that they had nothing to lose by breaking away and forming an independent party (Soule 1939). Alexander F. Whitney, secretary-treasurer of the BRT, supported contender William G. McAdoo, and he along with other railroad workers lobbied for McAdoo's nomination at the Democratic convention. When he did not win, they supported third party candidate LaFollette, who ran on a platform favorable to workers and farmers. Even Gompers of the AFL supported LaFollette, in spite of the fact that a motion to endorse him formally did not pass (Bornet 1964). BRT then-president William G. Lee supported the Republican candidate, while vice president Whitney was on the executive committee for the Illinois State Conference for Progressive Political Action, which endorsed and provided financial support for candidates, including

La Follette (McCaleb 1936). The Republican candidate, Calvin Coolidge, won this election. In subsequent years the Democratic party was more careful to nominate candidates appealing to labor contingent (Soule 1939).

La Follette did very well for a third party candidate, but when he lost the mainstream unions returned to their voluntarism policy. Gompers even wrote an essay interpreting the loss as evidence that a third party would be a waste of effort for labor, and the railroad unions actually adopted a resolution against third parties (Bornet 1964). In 1924 when William Green succeeded Gompers as president of the AFL, he continued this political policy. The subsequent AFL convention in 1927 voted to continue this policy, further institutionalizing the practice (*ibid*). Labor unions retreated somewhat in the 1928 presidential election, although they did take some minor action in the form of small financial donations, publicizing the election in newsletters, and labor leaders' offering statements of support. Most supported democratic candidates, but a few railroad brotherhoods supported Hoover on the basis of temperance, since the railroad brotherhoods were dry (*ibid*). This included Whitney, president of the BRT in 1928 (McCaleb 1936).

Pre-Crisis

ACWA

Even before the depression hit, the ACWA was a progressive union. Politically, although its president Sidney Hillman preferred actual improvements for members of the working class over revolutionary rhetoric, the ACWA supported the Socialist Party through a \$250 donation towards the end of 1928 (Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America Statement of Income and Expenses May 1 to December 31 1928, Financial

records and legal papers, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY). Hillman and the ACWA were more supportive of a third party than other members of organized labor, though the ACWA was not united in their support for any single third party (Bornet 1964). “Although many of its members had long held progressive political opinions, Sidney Hillman always opposed any official connection with the minority parties of the Left. The union as such could not afford to split its membership or risk its prestige on a small-scale political venture in which the labor movement as a whole was not involved.” (Soule 1939: 151) Although the Amalgamated had a radical past, by some accounts it had become more mainstream by the late 1920s (Bae 2001). “It has, in practice, turned its efforts not to fighting capitalism in its industry, but to securing a thorough-going job control.” (Perlman 1966: 278)

Hillman was an organizing strategist. Under his direction, Philadelphia’s clothing industry became 100% organized in 1929. His technique used discreet one-on-one organizing until an entire worksite supported the union. Once that was achieved, the shop would strike for union recognition, catching the employer off guard. While on strike, the workers were instructed to remain cheerful and abide by the law. He started with smaller shops and worked his way up to larger shops (Gould 1952).

In September 1927, secretary-treasurer of the ACWA Joseph Schlossberg gave a speech arguing that strikes were class warfare, excerpts of which were printed in the newsletter “American Appeal”¹¹ “The struggle between the employing class and the

¹¹ American Appeal was one of the Socialist Party of American newsletters from 1926-1927, when it merged with another paper.

working class results from the conflict of material interests between the two class, and we call it, therefore, class struggle.” He identifies the battle in terms of social class. “We always fought on. For what purpose? For the abolition of capitalism? Not one of us would say so. It was all for the purpose of inducing or compelling the individual employer to make peace with us; a collective peace with the trade union instead of a separate peace, with each individual worker.... We may go further and say that every time we make a strike settlement we reaffirm, in effect, our acceptance of the existing social order, of capitalism, of society as it is. We have no choice.” He goes on to make an argument for why a labor political party is a necessary and effective complement to the work that unions do (Schlossberg in “American Appeal,” September 1927, Speeches and writings, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY).

Relations between AFL and ACWA were strained. AFL President William Green once refused a speaking engagement when he found out that Hillman was one of the other speakers (Josephson 1952). The ACWA presented a bit of a threat to the AFL, because it was a strong and innovative union. Beyond typical union activities, ACWA sponsored a cooperative housing project that provided below-market rents for members. They also owned two banks that loaned money to other labor unions. By making a down payment (which could be borrowed from one of ACWA’s banks), the members could be owners of their dwellings, which were created as an alternative to working-class slums. The Amalgamated also erected an “Amalgamated Center” in Chicago in 1927, with bowling alley, gymnasium, library, dental clinic, auditorium, and office space (Bae 2001: 177). Finally, ACWA councils in three cities offered a system of unemployment

insurance for members (Josephson 1952). This would prove to be very useful after the stock market crash.

BRT

The Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen was also politically active, but their involvement took a very different character from that of the ACWA. They lobbied Congress to impose regulations on the railroad companies whenever there was a change they felt was necessary, such as stricter safety measures. Whitney, who finally won the presidency of BRT over Lee¹² in 1928 (McCaleb 1936), reasoned that this was the only way he could win contract battles. Even then, both the railroad executives and bankers argued against his proposals in Congress (*ibid*). Relying on a intermediary to mediate these negotiations rather than bargaining directly with the employer was unique to the rail industry. This was done because the government had an interest in keeping the trains running smoothly, due its vital role in commerce. It likely prevented strikes, helped the BRT develop relationships with members of Congress, but also made them dependent on others for bargaining gains. In addition to rail-specific safety measures, such as shortening the allowable length of trains, Whitney argued for the 6-hour day. In the same convention that he won the presidential election, delegates passed a resolution in favor of the 6 hour day. Even though the bill they fought for would have applied only to rail workers, it possibly could have spread to other industries had it passed (*ibid*).

Hoover was interested in appointing his personal friend William Doak to Secretary of Labor. Support for Doak, legislative representative of the BRT, was not

¹² Lee was president of the BRT from 1909-1928. Whitney challenged him in several elections before winning.

unified among labor leaders. Hoover preferred to appoint someone acceptable to leaders of the labor movement, so Hoover kept the previous Labor Secretary in office an additional year. Then after a meeting with Whitney, Hoover made the decision to appoint William Doak in January 1930. Doak was the fourth Secretary of Labor, and each to this point had been someone with leadership in the AFL but also had experience in national or local politics. It is difficult to know how much weight Whitney's recommendation had on Hoover's decision for this appointment, but the important point here is that it demonstrates connections between the BRT and the Hoover administration. Even before the Great Depression hit, Whitney argued that the 6 hour day was a necessary action to cure mass unemployment. Additionally to support this demand, he argued that per-worker productivity had increased greatly while total employment had gone down. He continued making the same arguments after the crash (McCaleb 1936).

Post-Crisis

After the stock market crash in 1929, as the economy continued to shrink, many AFL unions basically retreated and tried to protect what membership they had. This could be interpreted as a strategy of maintaining the income they received from member dues while limiting non-essential costs, such as new organizing or political action. This response was not inevitable; they could have taken the opportunity to organize the unemployed, or to fight for employment and welfare reform, among other things. However, in the initial years of the depression the AFL actually opposed welfare and relief legislation, arguing that high wages to maintain purchasing power was the only way to get out of the crisis (Zieger 1994). By the 1931 AFL convention some union leaders were beginning to criticize this stance, and finally the 1932 convention passed a

resolution in favor of government unemployment insurance (*ibid*). They also passed a resolution in favor of the 6 hour day at the same convention (McCaleb 1936). Although the unemployment that the depression brought made the years tough for unions, unions were more important to workers than ever during this time. Wage cuts and worsening conditions made the stability and predictability that a union contract might offer more appealing than ever (Zieger 1994).

While the depression was tough for unions, it was also tough for employers. They suffered a loss of profits, and while the decline in manufacturing resulted in higher unemployment, overall “the depression also tended to undermine the will to fight unionization. Antiunion measures were costly.... The resulting labor troubles, in addition, cut deeply into income” (Brody 1993: 104). Thus, the AFL’s reaction to retreat and protect current membership rather than work to organize new employers may have been a strategic error. The assumption that economic depressions inevitably devastate unions should be reexamined.

ACWA

The ACWA, and particularly Hillman, took action after the onset of the Great Depression. In 1930, Hillman gave a speech about the economic crisis, critical of the Hoover administration. He argued that it was caused by policy problems that could be fixed with government oversight and economic programs. Specifically, he maintained that a 5-day week, unemployment insurance, and industry oversight by a committee consisting of labor and capital representatives were solutions to the problem. He was very openly critical of Hoover’s attitude that this was a normal downturn in the economic cycle that should be waited out rather than interfering with the economy (Josephson

1952). In the same year, Hillman criticized prohibition, reasoning that the government should worry more about whether people have enough to eat than worry about what they're drinking (Sidney Hillman speech at Federation of Jewish Charities Dinner, December 4, 1930, Speeches and writings, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY). When 1930 elections swung Congress further to the left, Hillman "saw it as an opportunity" and aggressively pestered members of congress to pass relief bills and unemployment insurance (Josephson 1952: 350).

Hillman also publicly criticized the Hoover administration after the veterans' march¹³ ended in bloodshed, blaming administrative inaction as the direct cause of the unrest and subsequent violence in a wire to a newspaper (Josephson 1952). In both 1931 and 1932, while Hoover was still in office, Hillman testified before congressional roundtables and committees and subcommittees. He continued to argue against the view that the nation should simply wait for conditions to improve, and instead fought for proactive policy solutions to fix the crisis (Sidney Hillman statements and articles, March–December 1931, Speeches and writings, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY). He made an effort to get his views circulated both publicly and through more conventional channels. In 1932, Hillman spoke on a radio program in favor of economic planning, arguing that increasing labor productivity leads to higher unemployment and again making his specific suggestions to fix the economy (Sidney Hillman, radio program on national

¹³ The veterans were due to receive a bonus from the federal government in 1945, but 20,000 marched on Washington to demand the bonus early, as many were unemployed and had families. They were defeated in the Senate, but many stayed and camped because they had no where else to go. After a little more than a month, the U.S. Army attacked with tanks, fire, and tear gas. (Zieger 1994).

economic planning, March 22, 1932, Speeches and writings, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY). Radio programs can encourage political action by creating the perception of political efficacy and a feeling of closeness in geographically separate groups (Roscigno and Danaher 2001).

When Senator Black from Alabama wrote Hillman about his work to pass a bill for a 30-hour week in 1931, Hillman responded favorably but also requested that Black include or fight for a minimum wage. Hillman explained to Black that without a minimum wage, a shorter workweek would create a hardship for some families because their overall income would be lowered. AFL, on the other hand, had opposed a minimum wage because they predicted that instead of raising wages, it would lower wages as corporations would all adopt the minimum wage as their standard wage (Josephson 1952). Upon request from Jane Addams, he offered to support Grace Abbott for Secretary of Labor, and was willing to write a letter to the president on her behalf. This was significant in part because Abbott was not an AFL person (Jane Addams to Sidney Hillman, May 27, 1930, Correspondence, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY).

The clothing industry struggled with increased racketeering after the crash. Sometimes racketeers came at the invitation of companies, asking for help breaking a strike. Other times, racketeers approached companies, offering their protection to companies in abolishing the unions through violence. If companies no longer wanted their help or refused in the first place, the racketeers might attack the company by destroying its property. They also were infiltrating the union locals. Although

racketeering had existed prior to the crisis, the insecurity the crisis brought gave opportunity for racketeering at a much larger scale. Hillman eventually decided that he would not let the industry or the union be run by the racketeers and successfully drove them out¹⁴ (Josephson 1952). Hillman resisted pressure from companies to consider wage reductions, and a share-the-work system that was already in place helped workers who otherwise would have been laid off maintain some income. Eventually the unions agreed to wage cuts, in some cases as much as 40-50% (*ibid*).

In the early 1930s, especially 1932, Hillman corresponds frequently with members of Congress. In some cases they create strategy for accomplishing goals, as in his correspondence with LaGuardia in which LaGuardia is orchestrating a town hall meeting to take action against corrupt politics in New York. In unofficial correspondence dated November 19, 1932, LaGuardia writes to Hillman saying “While everybody is talking about the necessity of a change in our City government, there is nothing really practical, concrete and definite being done. Public opinion must not only be crystallized but must be translated into action through the medium of an actual fighting organization consisting of determined men and women” (Fiorello LaGuardia to Sidney Hillman, November 19, 1932, Correspondence, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY). He also wrote to the officials, recommending people for government positions. While it would be difficult to determine how much credence his recommendations were given, it is clear that Hillman is striving to gain influence in politics. He knew that having friendly people in power

¹⁴ He achieved this through an aggressive strategy, including attempts to get mass opinion on the side of the workers over the racketeers, long strikes in which he could identify corrupt shops by their lack of participants, careful examinations of the account books of locals, and ultimately ousting the leaders of racketeering unions (see Josephson 1952: chapter 14).

circumvents popular votes, and thus the competing lobbies that vied for influence of elected officials. Without access to a sympathetic president, Hillman spent his efforts working with like-minded politicians, but also by working to influence the hearts and minds of the populous.

BRT

Whitney of the BRT took a different approach. He testified in front of subcommittees; for example, in 1932 he argued before the Interstate Commerce Commission that because increasing productivity and technology has decreased total jobs, unemployment could be improved by lowering the number of hours in the workweek (McCaleb 1936). However, he did not make the popular appeals that Hillman made. He also did not openly criticize the Hoover administration's handling of the crisis. This may have been because his legislative representative was appointed to the Secretary of Labor, and Whitney felt like certain loyalty was demanded of him or felt a certain obligation to be supportive of the president. Hoover did invite Whitney, along with 42 other bankers and heads of fraternal bodies, to a conference on the banking crisis in January 1932, but Whitney was so unimpressed with Hoover and his lack of action after the meeting that he decided to support Roosevelt in the upcoming election (*ibid*). Evidently, he was supportive or at least neutral towards Hoover and his reelection until this point.

Doak was a disappointment to labor during his tenure as Secretary of Labor. He actively blocked legislation to shorten the workweek, which many labor unions supported. He always opposed a bill to establish employment agencies. Whitney publicly blamed Hoover for Doak's poor labor record, angering Doak. Whitney explained to Doak

in personal correspondence that he was trying to protect Doak and that he could not believe that Doak would have made the decisions that he did in that office without pressure from Hoover. Members of the BRT were enraged at Doak's failure to take advantage of the opportunity his position allowed, and opposed rehiring him after his term of Secretary of Labor was over. Whitney convinced the brotherhood to rehire him. Whitney also explained that while employment and wages were declining in the railroad industry, the highest dividends ever were being paid to stockholders. He displayed this as evidence that Hoover was unduly influencing Doak's record (McCaleb 1936). This is an important critique of the system. In October 1932, Whitney made a speech on behalf of the Roosevelt Campaign, condemning Hoover's presidency (*ibid*).

Post-Roosevelt

Although Roosevelt is seen as a labor-friendly president and received much support from the labor contingent, he did not campaign on labor issues (he did not even talk about unions in his speeches). Furthermore, "Once in office, neither he nor his secretary of labor, Frances Perkins, showed any interest in establishing labor's rights" (Milton 1982: 26). But soon after he took office, union organizing got a huge boost with section 7a of the National Industrial Recovery Act. The early years of the New Deal saw an increase of union organizing both in their traditional strengths and in new industries and occupations. The traditional leadership had difficulty adjusting to the new interest in their organizations. They did not have the resources to accommodate a sudden influx and in some cases lost potential members because they failed to adjust their operations to the needs of less-skilled workers or more militant unionists (Zieger 1994). To keep up with the high demand for unions, AFL would give charters to unions as locals of a 'federal

labor union' which was essentially run directly by the AFL. Then the union would be split into different locals to fit the existing organizational structure. This meant that sometimes, unions that had organized as a whole plant would later be split up into different skill, often angering the workers (*ibid*). Although these new unionists were excited to take action after voting in a union, they quickly lost their enthusiasm when AFL officials insisted that they act with restraint and patience (*ibid*).

Section 7a of the NRA was ineffective because its Labor Advisory Board could not keep up with violations, and the staff (such as Johnson, the administrator of the agency) had low opinions of union members and did not consider section 7a to be an important part of the program (Zieger 1994). 1934 was a year of high strike activity, likely because people who wanted to join unions and wanted to take advantage of the new legitimacy of union membership found that corporations still resisted (*ibid*). Senator Wagner from NY was disappointed by the weakness of the NRA. He felt the best way to full economic recovery was a strong labor movement and the increased purchasing power for consumers unions could bring and wanted to pass policy to protect unions. In August 1933, Roosevelt tried to fix the problem by creating a National Labor Board to hear complaints about NRA 7a, and to oversee union elections. Still, without the power to enforce their recommendations, neither was very effective (Brody 1993, Zieger 1994).

NRA section 7a was particularly powerless when employers fought the union by firing the most active unionists. Losing the leaders of the movement as well as the fear this created among the remaining workers had a dampening effect on the whole movement, especially considering that there was no recourse for the fired employees (Zieger 1994). Even after a successful union drive, some employers would continue to

fight the unionization of their workforce by bargaining willingly only with the workers who voted against the union. Employers would give those workers small concessions such as wage increases or special privileges, while delaying and resisting negotiations with the union that had won the election. This frustrated workers and wore out the activists, and made the union look ineffective (*ibid*). As workers discovered the limits of the NRA, thousands dropped out of the unions, and 600 of the new federal unions had disbanded by early 1935 (*ibid*). The Supreme Court declared the NIRA unconstitutional in May 1935, deciding on a case where the NRA tried to prevent a poultry company from selling diseased chickens (Gould 1952).

Soon after, Wagner returned to creating a new bill that would correct the inadequacies of section 7a of the NRA. The new bill created a 3-member National Labor Relations Board – although the name was the same as the previous organization, this proposed board had different powers. They had power to investigate and enforce unfair labor practices including ‘financing of company unions, employment of spies, arbitrary firing of activists, and refusal to bargain.’ They also oversaw union elections, after which employers were required to bargain exclusively with the winning union (Zieger 1994). This was a direct reaction to the disappointments and inadequacies of NRA section 7a.

In spite of Wagner’s good intentions, the response of labor unions to the proposed bill was mixed. It is no surprise that business groups opposed the bill intensely, but there was criticism and skepticism from both ends of the spectrum in labor. Traditional labor leaders had a strict ‘voluntarism’ approach to organizing and were worried about acquiring members through government activity. Radical labor activists did not like the fact that dissenting union organizations did not have much of a place and worried that the

bill would continue American unionism along the bureaucratic path. When the NRA was declared unconstitutional in May 1935, leaving unions without the minimal protections that bill had given them, unionists changed their tune. Union leaders as well as Roosevelt (who was originally unsure about the bill) became wholly supportive of the Wagner Act and it passed on July 5 (Zieger 1994).

This bill was important for the growth of the labor movement. “After its enactment – and especially after the United States Supreme Court passed favorably on its constitutionality, as it did in March 1937 – deaths and serious injuries in labor disputes became rare” (Zieger 1994: 40). Although this was a huge success, the skeptical unionists’ expectations were realized. As the NLRB was not under union control, an unfriendly president could appoint anti-unionists to the board¹⁵, potentially undoing previous gains in union organizing rights and freedoms. This meant that the political and legal environment for union operations was unstable. And, as a political body, it could not make decisions free from influence of those in power. It even decided jurisdictional matters – thus, important decisions were made by politicians rather than the representatives of the workers (*ibid*).

These new gains evidently encouraged labor unions to try political activity once again. “As labor’s concerns fell more and more within the orbit of Congress, the AFL stepped up its activity in national politics” (Brody 1993: 199). Having new legal protections that were expected to make union organizing and bargaining easier, and thus demanding less resources, unions reinvested in national politics. This time was different though, partially because of the clarity brought by economic crisis and partly because of

¹⁵ Appointments are five-year terms, expiring at rotating times.

their newly stronger position in society. “Starting in the 1930s, the labor movement began to concern itself with a broader range of social issues.... The sources of this transformation, never wholly articulated, derived partly from the discovery in the Great Depression that labor’s well-being could not be insulated from the healthy functioning of the larger society, partly from the strong identification with the New Deal, partly from the influence of radicals and progressive intellectuals, partly from the very explosion of numbers and resources that obligated organized labor to look beyond its narrow interests” (*ibid*: 200). Thus, the passage of the Wagner Act had far more influence on labor unions than was expected even by its creator.

In addition to the influence of the national policy changes on labor unions, during this time unions were growing and adapting. In 1934, the AFL convention passed a resolution to organize new industries (Zieger 1994). This was a very significant change for the dominant labor federation in the country, because not only did this mean that they would take on the difficult task of working to organize workers in previously unorganized industries – which can be extremely difficult – but it also represented a significant change in strategy, as the workers in the new industries were a different type than those traditionally organized. The workers in the new industries would be less skilled, more likely to be immigrant, non-white, or female. Although the 1934 AFL convention recognized that new types of unions must be organized, the delegates also wanted to protect the jurisdictions of the current craft unions. The Executive Council weighed the second desire more heavily and chose to exclude certain workers. When the 1935 convention ratified their decision, Lewis and the CIO took a different course of action. Gompers knew that he needed to organize less skilled workers, but he thought it

should be done through federal labor unions, which would then be sorted out appropriately (Brody 1993).

Around this time, some unions in the AFL were dissatisfied with the traditional path that the federation was on and were frustrated by the slow pace of change. John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers saw a crisis in unions and advocated industrial organizing in 1935 as the way for unions to stay relevant in the changing US economy (Zieger 1994). At the convention of that same year, Lewis grew tired of trying to change AFL and organized a committee made up of about 8 presidents of unions, including Hillman of the ACWA (who, after being a competitor union to AFL's Textile Workers since it split off in 1914, had rejoined the AFL only a couple of years earlier), called the Committee of Industrial Organization. The AFL board denounced the new organization soon after its first meeting in November 1935 (*ibid*). Once the CIO unions officially split from AFL, forming the Congress of Industrial Organizations, it showed itself to be distinctly different from AFL. For example, members of the CIO joined in the picket lines with striking workers, such as the rubber workers whose militancy AFL had disapproved of. Eventually the rubber workers left AFL and went with CIO. CIO also started the Steelworkers Organizing Committee, a category of workers that AFL had ignored. The UMW donated considerable money to the Democrats, in departure from AFL's restrained political policy. There was a sense of urgency among the CIO leaders in organizing, as they tried to keep those new unionists who were so disappointed in the AFL (*ibid*).

ACWA

Hillman of the ACWA quickly changed his strategy after Roosevelt's election, appealing to the new administration. Late in 1932, Secretary of Labor Francis Perkins asked Hillman to outline his plan for economic recovery, focusing on specific steps, rather than philosophical underpinnings (Gould 1952). In December 1932, after Roosevelt's election but before he assumed office, Hillman wrote a three-page memo to Perkins outlining his suggestions for economic action, centering on regulation of industry. He sent it for Roosevelt's consideration (Sidney Hillman memo to Frances Perkins, December 1932, Speeches and writings, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY). He also appealed to the president through his Harvard Law professor and friend, Felix Frankfurter. Frankfurter had a meeting with Roosevelt to share some of Hillman's ideas with the president-elect (Josephson 1952). After the meeting, Frankfurter wrote Hillman that Roosevelt had responded favorably to Hillman's views and took notes on the proposals as well as his personnel suggestions. He relayed that Roosevelt was interested in meeting him, having heard of some of his accomplishments (Felix Frankfurter to Sidney Hillman, January 5, 1933, Correspondence, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY).

When a bill authored by Senator Black from Alabama to mandate the 30 hour workweek was determined to be unfeasible, Secretary of Labor Perkins appointed a committee of labor leaders including Hillman to advise her on wages and working conditions. This committee then had to work with industry leaders to create a bill, which eventually resulted in the NIRA (Josephson 1952). Hillman remained on a labor advisory

board for Perkins and eventually became an ally of Roosevelt (*ibid*). Later on, Hillman was the only labor representative on a seven-person committee that oversees the NIRA. The AFL urged Hillman to cut the workweek and raise wages (*ibid*). With a sympathetic president, Hillman became an institutionalized figure in national politics.

Also after Roosevelt's election, the ACWA put out pamphlets, likely to unorganized workers in the industry, publicizing the new labor laws and relief measures (Organizing leaflets, undated, Printed and Pamphlet material, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY). A pamphlet on the Wages and Hours law (*ibid*) described the new bill, why the union fought for it, and then explained how joining the union was the only way to ensure that employers followed the law. A pamphlet put out after the Supreme Court declared the NLRA constitutional in April 1937 included quotes from the Act, including quotes from the act on why workers need unions (*ibid*). Another pamphlet focuses on why unions are necessary and what unions do for workers, including negotiating wages and working conditions but also "the pleasures of organized, intelligent recreation, social activities, a chance to have a good time with your fellow workers after hours" and "through your union you can take part in politics, in the history-making activities of the labor movement" (*ibid*). Another pamphlet advertises a demonstration during the election cycle of 1936, reminding people of the hard times of the past and calling Roosevelt a "great humanitarian." The speakers list included union leaders and the pamphlet urged workers to quit work at 2 to join the parade to the demonstration site (*ibid*).

In 1936, Hillman received correspondence from The New Republic probing the union's interest in a third party of farmers and laborers (Bruce Bliven to Sidney Hillman,

March 16, 1936, Correspondence, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY). *New Republic* is a political magazine, and at time they were working with the League for Independent Political Action. I found no reply in the archives, and no evidence that he was in support of a third party at that time. Logically, although his start in labor was from the outside and he was friendly to the Socialist party, he made it clear that he favored genuine progress over allegiance to an ideology. Thus, as he was enjoying insider status and influence with Roosevelt, it is unlikely that at that time he would have been willing to give up his ability to shape policy progress through institutional channels, through which he found success.

BRT

President Whitney of the BRT continued to connect high standard weekly hours of work to high unemployment. He almost succeeded in achieving the six-hour day for rail workers; the Emergency Railroad Transportation Act of 1933 contained a provision for the 6 hour day, which passed when the bill went through the House, but was stricken from the Senate's version of the bill (McCaleb 1936). "Whitney holds the view that we must come to shorter working hours or else the permanent dole. It is generally admitted that we can produce as many goods today as we did in 1929 with from fifteen to twenty per cent less labor. Such being the case, and since we had in 1929 two to three millions of unemployed, how shall we provide work for the 5,000,000 of today?" (*ibid*: 143-4). In the archives, there is brief correspondence from one of BRT's legislative representatives explaining the steps for getting the 6-hour bill passed and discussed some strategies for making it more likely to get the bill passed through Congress (Johnston Shea Whitney to

B.M. Jewell, January 30, 1934, Legislative and Political Files, 1937-1966, Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY).

Whitney also devoted much of his time and energy to passing some amendments to the Railway Labor Act in the 1933-34 Congressional session, along with 6 other bills that they, along with the Railway Labor Executives Association, sponsored. Whitney corresponded with legislative representatives, members of Congress, other labor unions, and interested parties about these amendments. This included the difficult process of finding an agreeable congressman to introduce it. Whitney wanted to protect the closed shop and percentage agreements (which mandate that a company must maintain a certain percentage of union members in their workforce) and this was a concern for some of the other labor unions as well as a point of opposition in Congress (various, Railroad Labor Act Safety State Railroad Laws, Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY).

A letter hand handwritten to Whitney dated June 15, 1934 details expenses incurred while working to elect congressman Dill in Washington during the fall of 1928. Dill was the Senator who was selected to introduce the amendments to the RLA and the BRT ended up dissatisfied with Dill. These expenses included salary and expenses for a legislative representative, and costs related to the distribution of handbills and other campaign materials. The interesting thing about the list of expenses was that although the total amount spent was \$1027.94, \$213.55 of the expenses were charged to the budget under the category of 'organizer expenses.' The rest was charged to the Washington State Legislative Advance Fund (S.G. Deisher to A.F. Whitney, June 15, 1934, Legislative and Political files, Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen records, Kheel Center Archives,

Cornell University, Ithaca, NY). Although this is a relatively small amount, this evidence of accounting practices suggests that the exact amounts spent on political activity during this time will be very difficult to know. Without this letter to President Whitney, written six years after the expenses discussed were incurred, we would not know that organizer expenses sometimes include political activity. The evidence suggests that Whitney was interested in this information because he was disappointed in Dill's performance.

It wasn't just the national president that was active during this time, though. In February 1934, which was during the time that the rail unions were trying to get 7 bills passed, including the Railway Labor Act, Whitney received correspondence from a local's secretary-treasurer reporting that the area locals from the 21 railroad brotherhoods had formed an organization to support the RLEA's legislative agenda. They did not accept the agenda blindly though, as the purpose of the correspondence was to ask questions about the bills. They primarily wanted to clarify that their right to strike was not being taken away (Lodge 512 Secretary-Treasurer to A.F. Whitney, February 10, 1934, Legislative and Political files, Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY). Similarly, Will O'Rourke, chair of the General Grievance Committee from a subdivision of the BRT, wrote expressing regret that he was "not at all pleased with the proposed legislation." In particular, he was in opposition to proposals granting additional authority to the Board of Mediation. Whitney responded that he and the rest of the RLEA had studied the situation carefully but would take his comments into consideration (Whitney to Lodge 512 Secretary treasurer, Legislative and Political files, Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY).

In May 1934, an unknown person (signature illegible) wrote to several elected officials such as Texas Senator Tom Connally asking them to support RLA amendments, arguing that BRT had always been conservative, not radical, and willing to work with employers (unknown to Tom Connally, May 27, 1934, Legislative and Political files, Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen records, Kheel Center Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY). Reminding elected officials that the BRT had been conservative and business-friendly seems like an odd strategy in this year, probably one of the most productive years for radical legislation. This suggests a cautious approach, one that did not seem to work out very successfully for them at this time. Other political action taken in 1934 by BRT was the support of social security legislation, as well as a proposal for old age security legislation for rail workers (McCaleb 1936). Whitney was considering aiding in the formation of a third party, but changed his mind when he saw that Roosevelt was taking up the cause of farmers, laborers, and veterans (*ibid*).

Discussion

The ACWA responded to the Depression initially by maintaining established conventional channels of influence, through relations with elected officials, but also circumvented the bureaucracy by broadcasting a critique of the Hoover administration and the economic policies that led to the Depression, and suggesting policy improvements. After the election of Roosevelt, they abandoned appeals directed at the general public and became even more entrenched in established politics. The BRT responded to the Depression by maintaining the same level of action. They continued to pursue conventional political activity through lobbying for rail worker friendly bills after the election of Roosevelt, but did not significantly change their approach to politics.

The scope of ACWA's political activity was broad, focusing on issues that encompassed all citizens and all workers. This includes unemployment insurance, industry regulation, and a shortened workweek. ACWA maintained the scope of their political activity throughout each change, but quickly adjusted their strategy to each perceived change in the political opportunity structure. This includes disseminating critique to a wide audience during economic crisis under an administration that was unfriendly to labor, and working within institutional politics during economic crisis under a labor-friendly administration. In addition to the swift timing of ACWA's response, the strength of ACWA's response was robust. Hillman used multiple avenues to disseminate his critique of the Hoover administration's handling of the crisis, and his suggestions for policy solutions. When Roosevelt's administration took over, Hillman aggressively sought avenues to accomplish his goals legislatively.

The scope of BRT's political activity was narrow, focusing primarily on issues that covered rail workers. This includes amendments to the Railway Labor Act, and limits on hours for rail workers. BRT maintained this scope throughout each change, and also maintained their strategy throughout each change. They focused political efforts on working within institutional politics. BRT essentially failed to respond to the opportunity presented by economic crisis.

I argue that a friendly administration made it logical and perhaps easier for ACWA to work from the inside. Hillman was appointed to several boards where he had power and influence to make the changes he advocated. There is little evidence that he continued to disseminate his critique of problems in society and his recommendations for solutions. Whitney and his crew seemed to maintain the intensity with which they

proposed legislation after Roosevelt's election, and continued to primarily focus on rail workers. While passing legislation that mandated a shorter workweek for rail workers, or social insurance for rail workers, might have opened the path for other workers to gain similar measures, this type of action that fights for exclusive privileges can also divide the labor force and generate further inequality.

This research does not attempt to evaluate whether either union's actions caused specific political changes. However, the temporal distance from this time period to today allows me to consider whether the goals of each union were realized. Neither union seemed to find much success during the crisis under the Hoover administration. The more innovative union found success during the crisis under the Roosevelt administration, but abandoned most of the more confrontational tactics after Roosevelt's election.

Conservative, industry-specific action was not effective under the Roosevelt administration, perhaps because Congress focused on larger matters affecting larger groups of people, given the difficult situation they face. More radical efforts to address the systemic crisis, through conventional, established means, were quite effective.

The data in this research indicate that political activity of these unions centered around the president of the organization, but this could be a function of the nature of the data. Archival materials rely on members of the organization to save information, and later rely on archivists to organize, preserve, and retain that information. This type of information biases the data towards the leaders of the organization, and is known to be incomplete. These findings still offer valuable conclusions about the political activity of ACWA and BRT during the Great Depression, but do not provide a complete analysis. Particularly in large unions like ACWA and BRT, some of the locals' records are

archived. An analysis of political activity of local unions during the Great Depression is likely the best option for approaching political activity of rank-and-file union members during the Great Depression. This would still be biased towards the leaders of locals, but they have substantially more contact with members than the national leaders.

In sum, both unions were politically active during the Great Depression. The ACWA adjusted its political activity in response to two perceived changes in the political opportunity structure: the onset of economic crisis, and the election of a labor-friendly presidential administration. The BRT maintained its political activity. The data in this study indicate that the political activity of national labor unions revolves almost exclusively around the leadership of the union, primarily the president.

CHAPTER IV
THE POLITICAL, ORGANIZING, AND BARGAINING ACTIVITY OF LABOR
UNIONS DURING THE ECONOMIC CRISIS OF 2008:
UAW AND SEIU, 2005-2010.

This paper focuses on political activity of two national labor unions in the context of economic crisis. Labor unions are the largest organizations whose primary objective is to represent workers' interests, with the potential to play a vital role in democratic society (Krugman 2011). The wealthy are overrepresented in US politics, via donations and lobbying and labor unions have provided a counter-balance to that bias during distinct periods of the 20th century (Radcliffe and Davis 2000). Previous research on labor union political activity falls into two categories: case studies covering a short time period with focus on limited aspects of political activity (Zullo 2004, Patton and Marrone 1984, Juravich and Shergold 1988), or individual-level analyses of survey data examining national patterns in the voting behavior of labor union members (McDermott 2006, Radcliffe 2001, Sousa 1993). This paper works to fill a deficit in the literature and in public knowledge by systematically comparing the wide-ranging political activities of two labor unions over a period of five years. By examining labor union efforts to influence national policy, we will better understand how unions handle this task, which organizational characteristics affect their ability to adjust to external change, and how political goals are balanced against organizational needs.

Economic crisis arguably represents a political opportunity, an opening in the governmental power structure (Eisinger 1973, Tarrow 1998), as politicians work to satisfy voters' and donors' demands for solutions to economic problems. This creates a chance for unions and other social movement organizations, as well as firms, to promote their critique of the economy and alternative proposals. However, political opportunity theory does not predict how organizations may respond. Some may not take action, and those that do may do so by increasing political activity either through institutional means or through contentious politics (Tarrow 1989). Through studying the behavior of two US labor unions chosen as exemplars of particular situations, I describe and analyze labor union response. I offer initial suggestions to amend political opportunity theory in order to incorporate organizational characteristics that influence response. I also make recommendations for effective labor movement strategy.

This project compares two unions during financial crisis of 2008. The goal is to describe and explain paths that unions take during hard times, developing an assessment of the wide range of political activities in which unions engage, how those activities change when political opportunity is present, and what organizational characteristics explain differences between unions concerning allocation of resources. Most studies of political opportunity theory have focused on one type of mobilization, but it is important to know how political opportunities influence different organizations to respond in varying ways (Meyer 2004). Narrative analysis has the advantage of permitting a focus on the sequence of events within each time periods, which would be obscured using conventional analytical approaches (Abbott 2001:153). The order in which events unfold is central to this analysis; when unions change their activity as economic crisis develops,

and what differences exist between unions that change at different times and with different intensities must be dealt with extensively.

Theory

Political opportunity theory suggests that factors external to a social movement may influence its chances for success, or the strength or timing of its mobilization. Specifically, changing elements of the political environment shape an SMO's assessment of the likelihood of victory, encouraging or deterring collective action (Gamson and Meyer 1996 in Tarrow 1998: 76-7). For example, Costain explains that lobbyists for women's issues in the 1970s were legislatively successful, in spite of poor resources and organization, because of the political opportunity created by three things: realignments in the legislature's coalitions (caused by voter dissatisfaction with economic and social conditions), the increasing prominence of women in society through their involvement in higher education and the workforce, and feminist grassroots activity bringing national attention to women's issues (1992). In this research I study SMOs' assessment of opportunity by comparing labor union behavior before and after the crisis, rather than their success in achieving goals.

The specific elements that researchers include as aspects of political opportunity theory vary, but true to Eisinger's original use of the concept, most scholars assume openness of the political structure (Eisinger 1973, Tarrow 1983, Meyer and Minkoff 2004, McAdam 1996); instability of elites (McAdam 1996), specifically political alignments (Costain 1992, Tarrow 1983); and presence of allies, whether those allies are elites (McAdam 1996) or other social movement organizations (Costain 1992, Tarrow 1983). These three indicators of political opportunity structure represent structuring cues

that SMOs use to evaluate whether conditions are favorable for advocating for policy changes (Tarrow 1998).

The crisis of 2008 increased contentious politics around the globe (Tarrow 2011) and has each of the three aspects of political opportunity, as explained in the following three paragraphs. I argue that the presence of economic crisis constitutes a generalized opening of the political structure for policy change, particularly for SMOs working on economic issues. During the Great Depression, the number of social movements in Europe and the US increased, contrary to expectations that economic crisis with its high unemployment would inhibit contention (Tarrow 1998: 73). This suggests that social movement actors in stable nations perceive an opening in the political structure during economic crisis. High unemployment and increasing numbers of home foreclosures highlight problems in the current economic structure and generate widespread dissatisfaction among citizens. In October 2008, 90% of respondents in a Washington Post-ABC News poll said that they thought the country was generally going in the wrong direction, compared to 78% in August 2008¹⁶ (TNS Telecoms 2011). Elected officials strive to pass policies to alleviate the country's financial and social problems and SMOs can take advantage of need for new ideas by offering and advocating for their preferred solutions (Gamson and Meyer 1996). These conditions create the potential for increasing social movement activity, but do not automatically yield an increase in social movement activity.

In regards to the presence of allies, the crisis began under a Republican president and a Republican-controlled Congress. Then in the election immediately following the

¹⁶ A t-test determined that the difference between these means is significant at the .001 level.

crisis' onset, a few months later, the self-proclaimed "friends of labor" Democrats regained control of both congress and of the presidency, putting allies of labor into power. Although many would argue that the Democratic Party pursues many anti-labor policies is more likely to secure favorable policy outcomes under Democratic leadership than under Republican leadership, or at least avoid legislative setbacks. For example, the US president appoints members of the National Labor Relations Board, who rule on unfair labor practice filings, directly impacting the climate for union organizing and bargaining. "Republicans take the NLRB very seriously and have gone to the mat to prevent the appointment of NLRB members who would be sympathetic to labor and to the NLRA's policies and to ensure the appointment of pro-business, anti-NLRA members" (Dannin 2006: 12). Additionally, one of the largest political setbacks for labor unions occurred under Republican leadership. Republican President Ronald Reagan fired striking Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization workers, then decertified the union. After this event, private sector employers were more likely to respond to strikes by firing workers; thus many consider it a pivotal moment for union organizing (Wallace, Leicht, and Raffalovich 1999: 270).

During economic crisis, divisions among political elites intensify as policy-makers disagree over opposing solutions to economic problems, struggling to control the policy response (Gourevitch 1986). While US elites aren't considering any alternatives to capitalism, divisions exist over specific policy decisions within that system, such as the passage of a government health care bill (Espo 2009). The 111th Congress, in office from January 2009-January 2011, exhibited heightened conflict compared to its predecessors, with House Republicans united against all initiatives introduced by Democrats, using

delay tactics to inhibit their passage (Ornstein 2011). Additionally, the voting records of members of each party reached a new high in polarization; only five House Republicans had voting records more liberal record than the most conservative Democrat, and four House Democrats had voting records more conservative than the most liberal Republican. This is the least amount of ideological overlap between the two parties in three decades (Brownstein 2011). The effect of party membership on legislators voting behavior has grown from .58 in 1973 to .80 in 2003 (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2005: 43)¹⁷.

In addition to creating political opportunity, economic crisis is important to study because it is a rare, unexpected, and highly impactful event (Taleb 2007: xvii). Economic models based on normal business cycles fail to predict when these crises will occur because although crises are inevitable, models do not account for unexpected yet highly impact events (*ibid*: 18). Both financial institutions and political institutions continue to reel from the drastic changes in the economy. In addition to the overall impact on society, the decrease in GDP and the subsequent unemployment devastate some individuals and families. Crises represent a moment when the political and economic system is relatively more open, during which leaders make choices that will re-create or reinvent the system (Gourevitch 1986). Voters develop or deepen attachments to political parties during crises that persist through stable times (Key 1955, Burnham 1965). Elections in which a town, state, or region experienced a sharp and durable shift in party alignment, such as New England in the 1928 presidential election, revealed that that important events leave significant impressions on voters to form lasting partisan attachments. Most likely,

¹⁷ McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2005) use a technique for determining polarization that determines where each Congressional vote falls on the liberal – conservative scale, then measures the relative distance of legislators from that ideal point. This allows comparisons of legislators not serving in the same term, and comparison of individual legislators over time.

subsequent events solidify newly formed loyalties (Key 1955: 6). Writing in 1965, Burnham asserted that the 1928-1936 partisan re-alignments had shaped the political climate of that period (23).

After crisis, economic and political conditions are drastically changed. In the Great Depression,

“as the collapsing international economy disrupted older relationships among economic actors, new combinations became possible.... Some capitalists wanted to abandon the deflationary prescriptions of the classical school but met strong resistance from their orthodox brethren. This resistance could be overcome by using the support of labor and the discontent of agriculture. By linking the various instruments of mass power (ballot box, workplace, street) with the various instruments of business (capital, ownership, legitimacy), coalitions formed which had considerable potential for action.” (Gourevitch 1986: 25)

Divisions within the business community enabled labor, agriculture, and mass pressure generally to influence the economic policy debate. Unions, agricultural groups, and certain industries moved past their usual tensions with each other, ready to receive any form of help. Mass support was the key element to the experimentation that took place; without it, leaders who were open to new solutions would not have found support in business elites who tended to prefer letting the business cycle run its course (Gourevitch 1986). Political opportunity theory suggests that social movement organizations will recognize the chance to create a place for themselves in this new terrain.

Background

Economic context

The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) identified the most recent recession as beginning in December 2007 (Business Cycle Dating Committee 2008). The Business Cycle Dating Committee is responsible for identifying dates of peaks and troughs in US economic activity, and the expansions and recessions that subsequently occur. The committee makes a judgment about the overall state of the economy, considering multiple indices for employment, income, GDP, and sales (NBER 2011). Causes of the 2007 recession include a housing bubble fueled in part by the expansion of subprime mortgages, financial innovation increasingly complex and risky investment products, and deregulation of the banking industry (Krugman 2009). In September and October 2008, large financial institutions including Lehman Brothers, Washington Mutual, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, AIG, and Merrill Lynch collapsed (Altman 2009) and the stock markets declined as much as 20% one week (Sibun 2008) and later in the month, 10% in a single day (Kumar 2008). Unemployment rose relatively quickly, but also importantly, length of unemployment increased. Average duration of unemployment increased from 17.1 weeks in November 2007 to 33.8 weeks in November 2010 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010). These events alerted the public that the economy was in distress, and though panics did not occur, there was widespread understanding that this was a crisis situation as Congress acted to abate the problems with a bailout. “The extra spending, a sore point in normal times, has been widely accepted on both sides of the political aisle as necessary to salvage the banking system and avert another Great Depression” (Uchitelle and Pear 2008).

The US government's response to the current economic crisis had similarities to that of the Great Depression. For example, both began under conservative leadership that chose to take no direct action to assist workers. In September 2008, the US Congress began debating the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, which authorized 700 billion dollars to purchase assets from failing banks (Herszenhorn 2008). The controversial bill was passed on October 3rd, amid fierce criticism from economists who believed it was not a sound investment (Stiglitz 2008; Wolfers 2008) and working people who were frustrated by the government's willingness to rescue the rich while so many ordinary citizens were struggling (Bensinger 2008). By the time this bill was under discussion, unemployment had already increased from 4.4% in October 2007 to 7.2% in December 2008 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2009). In February 2009, Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which included tax incentives to individuals and businesses, aid to the unemployed, and infrastructure investment, among other things.

Also relevant to this analysis, in late November 2008, the "Big 3" US automakers – Ford, General Motors (GM), and Chrysler, who are the largest unionized employers in the country – approached Congress to request emergency loans. Some commentators such as professor Jeffrey Sachs said refusing to help the auto companies would devastate the national economy, losing a large chunk of jobs in a short period of time. At the same time, US GDP would drop considerably as consumers purchasing automobiles would only be able to choose foreign-made cars (Isidore 2008). Other experts maintained that the economy runs best without interference. They argue that businesses only fail when their product isn't needed or their business practices are ineffective. "It's time to let the market forces operate, and have consumers decide which car companies should survive"

(McGarvie 2008). Negotiations over the bailout were hostile, but eventually GM and Chrysler were given 13.4 billion (Ford chose not to take bailout money) and given a deadline to produce a plan to prove their long-term viability (Sanger, Herszenhorn and Vlastic 2008). They were required to get Congressional approval for their restructuring agreements, and UAW cooperated by voluntarily entering into discussions to amend their collective bargaining contracts.

The NBER declared the recession to have ended in June 2009. Although any future recessions would be classified as a new recession, and not a continuation of the 2008 recession, the committee's report explicitly stated that they "did not conclude that economic conditions since that month have been favorable or that the economy has returned to operating at normal capacity" (Business Cycle Dating Committee, 20 September 2010). After June 2009, recovery was slow. Unemployment fell slightly, though it remained much higher than typical US standards. GDP and GNP increased, and the stock market grew stronger, but economic conditions remained fragile for several months. In August 2011 the stock market fell 15% in two weeks, ending with a 5-7% drop the day after Standard and Poor downgraded the US's credit rating, causing political turmoil about national debt (Sweet 2011). Corporate profits accounted for 14 percent of national income, the highest level since 1942, while employee wages fell below 50% of national income for the first time ever (Norris 2011). Some experts wondered if the US was headed towards another, perhaps deeper recession (The Economist 2011, Rampell 2011). However, a slowing of new jobless claims and a drop in commodity prices offered consolation (Reuters 2011, The Economist online 2011).

Organizational context

The unions in this analysis operate in a formalized organizational structure, but also in an informal movement including labor unions outside their federation and non-union labor organizations. Both provide the context in which unions make decisions about spending their resources and prioritizing political struggles, and also impart certain constraints on the unions' actions. In particular, changes within the formal organizational structure of the larger union movement could indicate a shift in priorities, which influences member unions but is also driven by them in a reciprocal process. It is useful to discuss this larger context in order to assess the decisions individual unions make and determine how findings regarding these case studies can provide insight into other organizations.

Union density steadily declined starting in the early 1970s, and by the early 1990s some experts in the labor movement argued that leaders should take swift action to reverse the decline while there was still a chance (Brofenbrenner et al 1998). Much speculation and hope centered around a significant administration change for AFL-CIO in 1995, but little changed in spite of rhetoric about the importance of organizing. An alliance of unions later called the Change to Win coalition determined that part the problem was AFL-CIO's lack of enforcement capability; though they could encourage unions to spend more on organizing, they have no authority to impose these spending guidelines on member unions. They argued that in order to reverse union decline, each union should spend a certain percentage of their budget on organizing. They also argued for a restructuring of the unions, consolidating and streamlining the jurisdictions (Schiavone 2008: 50). After attempts to pass mandates for these changes seemed futile,

seven major unions formally left AFL-CIO to start the Change to Win Federation (CTW) in 2005. The exodus of CTW unions reduced AFL-CIO membership by 48% (Schiavone 2008: 52).

The split has some similarities to the Depression-era split of CIO unions from AFL; in both situations the economy was stagnant and the labor movement was declining, and the challenger unions wanted to take a new strategic direction to improve union strength. However, the CIO unions were expelled in the middle of a long economic crisis, while the CTW unions chose to leave prior to the onset of recession. CTW places a higher priority on organizing than AFL-CIO (Milkman 2005: 23). Some argue that splits in the labor movement spur competition, improving conditions for union members (Stepan-Norris and Southworth 2010), but others maintain that the internal bickering that leads to splits like these distract attention and resources away from workers' needs towards petty organizational and financial details (Fletcher and Gapasin 2008, Schiavone 2008). Although CTW unions claim that the split was about commitment to organizing, Fletcher and Gapasin speculate that it had more to do with avoiding the threat of globalization: the CTW unions were organizing in sectors relatively safe from the threat of outsourcing and wanted to create a space free from those pressures to focus on domestic strategies, while the AFL-CIO unions had a mixture of those who were directly impacted and those were not (2008: 4).

Another key difference between AFL-CIO and CTW is that AFL-CIO political policy focuses almost exclusively on supporting Democratic candidates. They are active in elections – in the 2008 campaigns, they pledged that their member unions would spend a combined \$200 million, increasing the amount they spent in the 2004 campaigns by

33%. Data from Federal Election Commission (FEC) filings show that Change to Win unions spent 67 million, a per-member average of \$11.94 compared to AFL-CIO's \$19.05 per-member average (Center for Responsive Politics 2011). AFL-CIO argues that with the employer hostility towards unions and the challenges of the global economy, the best strategy is to focus resources on electing Democrats who might enact labor-friendly policies, providing a better environment for organizing. CTW disagrees, reasoning that Democratic administrations in recent years have failed to advance labor and organizing rights. Instead, the labor movement should focus on issues and make single-issue-focused alliances, working with any organization that shares the same particular goal. SEIU is generally critical of the Chamber of Congress and their lobbying against worker-friendly bills, but they are coalition partners against an employment verification system in Arizona. They both consider it to be flawed so they joined forces, although they dislike the bill for different reasons. At the same time, some CTW unions occasionally support Republicans that do not have labor-friendly records (Fletcher and Gapasin 2008: 130).

Finally, CTW unions are reducing the level of democracy in their unions. As the CTW unions prepared to leave AFL-CIO, members were not encouraged to offer feedback or even educated about the ongoing discussion (Schiavone 2008: 49-50; Fletcher and Gapasin 2008: 152-3). Unions that have implemented the reorganizations CTW advocates, such as the Carpenters, have substantially reduced the power of locals by barring them from hiring their own staff and eliminating elected positions (Schiavone 2008: 56). Fletcher and Gapasin argue that consolidations of the type CTW promotes will curtail the rights and the leadership participation of women unionists and unionists of color (2008: 159). Some of SEIU's local activists have criticized the international union's

model as being top-down and sacrificing workers' needs in the interest of short-term membership growth (Borsos 2009).

Union typology

This analysis will look at labor unions as SMOs, but it is important to remember that some labor unions have more similarities with some social movements than others. A useful typology for this analysis divides unions according to inclusiveness and presence of social and economic critique (Robinson 2000). This distinction between social movement unions and business unions allows social movement theories to be applied to unions (Dreiling 2001:21). Unions that are inclusive (conceive of the labor movement broadly rather than limiting their efforts to a particular set of workers) and critical of economic policy are categorized as social movement unions. In these unions, members participate in resolving grievances and bargaining new contracts, freeing the union's professional staff to spend their time on organizing campaigns. Unions that are exclusive (only protect the interests of a select group of workers) and accept conventional political and economic ideas are business unions. In the business union model, members' dues pay for union staff to solve their work-related problems, and new organizing is not a priority. Using this typology, in 2000 Robinson categorized most AFL-CIO unions as social unions, which are inclusive but not very critical. This category is distinct from the social movement union category, which incorporates a critical analysis of the economy. Robinson argues that the US union movement is moving on a trajectory towards social movement unionism (2000: 129-130).

SEIU

SEIU, one of the two cases examined in this study, is a dynamic but controversial union. Their achievements include raising the level of attention on the importance of organizing in the labor movement; successfully organizing low-wage service workers that were once considered impossible to unionize, such as janitors and home health workers; and aggressive political action campaigns that mobilize high numbers of members to attend events and pressure elected officials on stances. They were also one of the unions that initiated and led the Change to Win coalition out of the AFL-CIO, in protest over AFL-CIO's stagnant strategy for improving the labor movement. SEIU's organizing and bargaining strategy focus on the structure of the industry: analyzing growth patterns and connections between firms helps them choose which firms to target and what tactics to use (Tattersall 2007: 161). However, other labor activists have criticized SEIU for poaching other union's members and using undemocratic measures, such as taking local unions into trusteeship when the local union leaders openly disagree with SEIU's executive leadership. They also have made compromises in developing business-labor partnerships by agreeing to limit their organizing campaigns to certain worksites (Borsos 2009, Fletcher and Gapasin 2008, Fraser 2009, Schiavone 2008).

Critics of SEIU's undemocratic behavior acknowledge that in organizing campaigns SEIU encourages member involvement, and they skillfully mobilize members to take an active role in national politics. However, some perceive this as a pragmatic rather than ideological approach (Schiavone 2008: 49-50). Members must be trained to run their unions so that staff are freed up to take on further organizing projects, so high levels of member involvement in organizing campaigns are critical for the union's

success. Since unions are unable to compete with corporations financial resources in political campaigns, they must use the asset they have: mass numbers of voters. The national leaders have responded to instances of contention in locals by taking the union into receivership, and possibly allowing dissidents to leave SEIU for another union. Rather than take opportunities to educate members, SEIU informs them of the leadership's stance on an issue (Fletcher and Gapasin 2008, 153).

In their quest for members and business cooperation, one questionable decision is found in an arrangement made with a nursing home corporation. A large employer agreed to not resist union efforts. In exchange SEIU agreed to limit their organizing efforts to half of the homes, and to actually resist unionization efforts by workers in the homes that weren't sanctioned for organizing by the employer (Schiavone 2008: 54-5, Thomas 2007). Leadership of the union argues that labor unions should work with businesses rather than against them, focusing on how labor unions can add value to businesses. This was reinforced in several press releases on new organizing, which highlighted the ability of the union to help workers do their jobs better, for example by providing better patient care in the health care industry. Yet in organizing one large hospital chain, they conceded to reductions in care, helped fight a legal battle limiting the ability of patients to sue HMOs, and allowed the de-skilling of the workforce by condoning the replacement of RNs with workers with lesser qualifications.

UAW

UAW is also the subject of controversy during this research period, but for different reasons. They are a relatively traditional union, having risen in the 1930s in the industrial economy. Throughout the prosperous 1950s and 1960s, UAW bargained

contracts for members that included a stable retirement plan and health care for workers, retirees, and their families. They also bargained some unique features; for example, they created a jobs bank in 1987 that allowed the auto companies some flexibility with the workforce while keeping members economically stable. Officially, both the union and the auto companies kept details of the program quiet. The auto industry has struggled since the 1970s, due to increasing competition from foreign automakers, oil prices, and globalization.

The union gradually lost members and power throughout the 1979 through 2009, in part through buyouts and two-tier contracts. The latter allowed employers to hire younger, newer workers at lower wage rates and benefit packages, and the former encouraged older, more expensive workers to retire early so that they could be replaced by the cheaper second-tier workers newly allowed in the contract. The first buyouts only offered early retirement, but later buyouts were extended to all workers, sometimes offering lump sums or educational benefits to get workers to give up their union jobs. As they did, the unions membership rolls shrank (Richardson 2010: 88-90). When workers who held good, stable, secure jobs were bought out, that good job disappeared and was either eliminated altogether or replaced with a less stable, less well-compensated job, lowering standards in the industry and the community overall.

These buyouts gave each member the individual choice to take the offer or stay in the job, prompting workers to make individually rational decisions about whether to take the buyout or stay in the auto industry. For many the decision to stay was based on the benefit package, which was not offered through any of the work alternatives available to most of the workers (Richardson 2010: 91). Discussions over the buyouts revealed

tension between workers and union officials, with one local leader complaining that every worker who took the buyout was reducing UAW's assets. Still, for many workers the real problem was higher up in the structure of the union. "The union local's leadership, while subordinate to that of the International, is distinct: when UAW members complain about fat cats and porkchoppers, they are usually talking about people who have appointments with the International – that is, persons who in a way could be said to have 'tenure' in the union's hierarchy, meaning high pay for little work and even fewer results. While there are certainly people who have received cushy jobs in the local through family connections, the gravy doesn't really get thick and fat until you're part of the International" (Richardson 2010: 95).

UAW recently came under public criticism for the premium compensation packages its contracts offered workers, particularly when the executives of the automotive companies asked for bailout money (McGarvie 2008). The company and some union critics argued that the expense of the unionized workforce, particularly the benefit package for retirees and the jobs bank, made the US auto companies unable to compete and innovate in the global economy and thus were responsible for the companies' problems (Lott 2008). UAW members and their allies argued that those benefits were contractually owed to them (Rau 2008). They also pointed to high executive compensation in the US auto companies, particularly compared to the foreign auto companies (Carty 2007).

This background context of the two case studies establishes detailed features of these two organizations. This helps determine what is typical and what is unique about them in comparison to other union organizations. In analyses relying on small numbers of

cases, the details are critical to establishing generalizability and determining into what other organizations the cases can provide insight (Flyvbjerg 2006).

Methods

This research employs the comparative historical method of analysis. By comparing the ways labor unions responded the economic crisis of 2008, against their behavior in two years of non-crisis immediately preceding each crisis, we will better understand how organizations respond to external change by adjusting strategy. For this time period, I examine two unions claiming large membership, one in an industry that is declining and one in an industry that is growing. I look at the United Automobile Workers, representing the declining automobile industry, and the Service Employees International Union, representing the growing service sector¹⁸. Examining unions from both a growing industry and a declining industry controls for the marketplace power of labor unions, which is heavily dependent on the economic position of the industry in which they operate (Wallace, Griffin, and Rubin 1989). These two unions are exemplars of particular situations, and are suggestive of trends that may occur in the larger populations they represent. Chapter V will expand the number of cases under examination, parcing random variation from variation due to the differences highlighted in the present analysis.

The present analysis utilizes two techniques. The primary technique is content analysis of press releases from UAW's and SEIU's websites. This is supplemented with descriptive statistics on their annual budgets. Press releases are useful because they are non-reactive and synchronous primary sources. They are a systematic source of

¹⁸ In particular, health care has been a growing industry and a growing area of unionization in recent years.

information that reveals what an organization was experiencing and how they were handling it at the time it happened. However, they are flawed because they are controlled by that organization, and the organization can choose what to reveal or not reveal to the public. Budget information provides behavioral evidence assessing labor union reports of organizing, bargaining, and political activities. Finally, in a large organization such as a labor union, press releases are skewed towards the top leadership of the organization.

From December 2005-December 2010, UAW published 259 press releases and SEIU published 756 press releases. Press releases announce and report on political activity, organizing activity, and collective bargaining activity. They also provide a platform for the union and its executive leaders to comment on current events and establish and clarify the union's position on political and social issues. I read each press release, coding accounts of political activity, organizing activity, collective bargaining activity, and alliances. The coding scheme looked for instances of those activities; some documents had multiple codes and some had zero. The following two paragraphs explain the coding scheme in detail.

Some press releases discussed multiple separate actions related to a single issue. If multiple actions occurred in a single day for a single issue, such as the rally and press conference for State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) on September 28, 2007, I coded them as one account. I coded multiple actions that addressed a single issue but occurred over a week of action according to the number of days on which actions took place. Ongoing actions were counted no more than once per month; in the 12 months leading up to the 2008 election, there were many accounts of members participating in telephone drives and door-to-door canvassing. Perhaps a future analysis

will address accounts of the numbers of hours spent on these activities, or the number of voters reached, but for the purpose of this analysis I limited it to one account per month. Some actions counted as more than one type of activity, such as an alliance cooperating to influence a policy outcome. Thus, some accounts of political activity are included in more than one category. Finally, some press releases were irrelevant to this research and thus were excluded from this analysis. This included announcements publicizing staff changes or deaths of past officials, as long as they did not mention current political issues, organizing, or bargaining.

An example that illustrates the coding complexities is a press release from August 24, 2010 (SEIU). It announced that SEIU janitors were launching a week of action to protest layoffs by JP Morgan Chase, a firm that accepted \$95 billion in bailout money, paid \$9 billion in bonuses, and then laid off 16 of the lowest paid employees as a way to cut costs. Tuesday, August 24th featured the beginning of a 3-day fast; Wednesday, August 25th featured a rally and candlelight vigil; Thursday, August 26th featured a march and rally; and Friday, August 27th featured a breakfast sponsored by clergy that ended the fast. I coded the 3-day fast as one account of non-institutional political action, because it was an ongoing event. The events from Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday each counted separately as individual instances of non-institutional political action. The breakfast with clergy also counted as an instance of alliances. The entire event counted as an instance of bargaining as well, since the janitors were represented by SEIU and the event was intended to protect the janitors' jobs. The four counts of non-institutional political action were classified as such because in addition to the goal of protecting jobs, the protest also addressed the broader national issues of rising unemployment, accountability of

businesses that took bailout money, responsibility of banks to the communities in which they do business, and rising foreclosures.

The Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) requires labor organizations to file financial information with the US Department of Labor on an annual basis, among other things not related to this analysis. This information includes assets, liabilities, receipts, and expenditures broken down into categories. Because labor unions must include each transaction in the report, this is a very detailed and rich source of information. The reports also include officer and staff salaries and reimbursements along with membership information. Categories are representational activities; political activities and lobbying (excluding PACs); contributions, gift, and grants; general overhead; and union administration. For each officer and staff member, in addition to the salary and disbursements, the report gives the percentage of their time used for each of those five activities. This research uses the first two categories. Representational activities include organizing, bargaining, and contract enforcement. Political activities and lobbying includes any money spent dealing with branches of the government or private entities to pass or defeat laws (OLMS 2010). In LMRDA reports, representational expenditures mostly went to hotels, airlines, service providers (mainly food), local unions, law firms, consultants, and temporary staffing agencies. Political expenditures went to airlines, non-profits, local unions, law firms, travel, consultants, printing and publications, and political committees (i.e., to reelect a politician).

Analysis

I divided political activities into three categories: conventional member-based action, activist or non-institutional member-based action, and leader action. Conventional

member-based actions include voter turnout drives, petitions encouraging passage of bills, call-in or letter-writing campaigns, and lobby days (an organizations' members hold several meetings with congressional offices concerning an issue or set of issues on a single day). These actions rely on large numbers of rank-and-file member participants to be effective, but they are characterized by use of traditional political channels for influence. The effectiveness of conventional member-based action depends on the ability to compel an agent with power to take the desired action – even a successful voter turnout campaign has few intrinsic rewards to the organization if the elected officials do not comply with the desires of the voters who supported them. These events are dependent on the actions of an elected public official for the desired outcome, and an event is frequently considered a failure if it does not result in a specific goal, such as the passage of a specific bill. These events are relatively private, often taking place in homes or in offices. At the same time, many of these activities are uncontroversial and are less likely to draw criticism than some of the activist actions. This type of political action is not dependent on media interest or garnering popular support and outrage in order to be effective, as long as a sufficient number of members are mobilized. An additional advantage to this type of action is the one-on-one contact that occurs in voter mobilization efforts, enabling dialogue and personalizing an issue.

Non-institutional member-based actions include marches, rallies, and protests, as well as any unique or novel action. For example, SEIU sponsored a few bus tours during the research period in which members traveled around the country, most often with the goal of educating and spreading awareness about a topic. The key feature of these actions is the circumvention of traditional political channels for citizen activism. Some, like

protests, are disruptive and contentious while others, like candlelight vigils, are intentionally peaceful. Generally the act is more intrinsically useful for its publicity, awareness-raising, or educational value, rather than for bringing about a specific policy change; though they typically are organized around a particular issue, success is measured by the generation of momentum for a political goal more than immediate policy change. These actions typically, but not necessarily, rely on large numbers of members to participate in order to be effective. The goal is to draw attention to a particular issue and convince others beyond the labor movement of its importance, perhaps even incite others to action.

Leader action involves those in elected union positions (e.g. the members of the executive board, most often the President or Secretary-Treasurer) taking political action in an official capacity as representative of the organization. The most common forms of leader-based political action include testifying before Congress, making public statements in print or in speeches, and making endorsements. There is an important distinction between non-critical leader action and critical leader action, because the latter challenges the status quo in national politics and opens up dialogue in which the union risks attack or some form of retribution. Non-critical leader action can include comments on national politics without taking a stance, or support for elected officials or policies. Although this analysis will address the distinction between critical leader action and non-critical leader action, I primarily treat both types of leader action as a single category because the goals, character, and measurement of success are more similar than they are different.

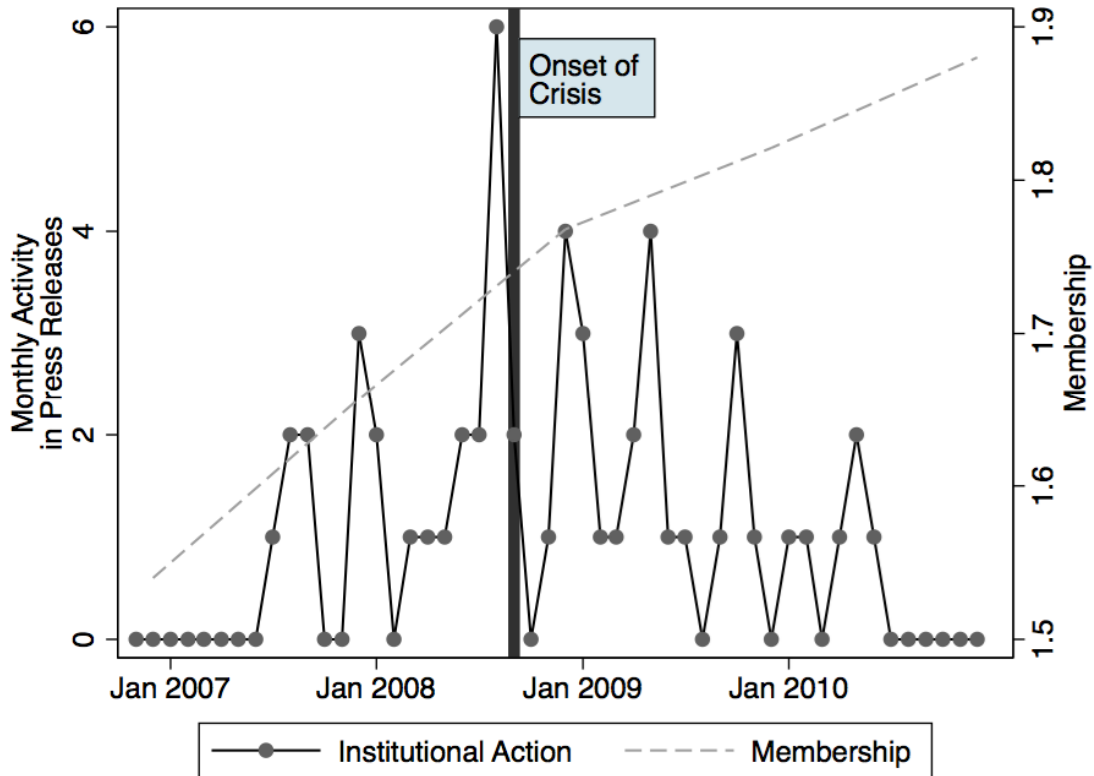
Results

Institutional political action

SEIU accounts of conventional political action primarily included voter turnout efforts, such as canvassing and phonebanking. These were ongoing efforts throughout the 2008 national election cycle and focused on presidential, congressional, and gubernatorial elections. They also included new voter registration, lobby days, petitions, town halls, congressional testimony, statements at press conferences, leafleting, endorsements, participation in conference calls, and blogging, calling, emailing, and letter-writing efforts aimed to pressure politicians. Taking September 2008 as the pivotal month, SEIU accounts of conventional political action increased from 1.15 accounts per month before crisis to 1.4 accounts per month after crisis. Because the bulk of SEIU conventional political action consisted of voter turnout efforts during the 2008 campaign, we must consider the pivotal month as November 2008 as an alternative pivot point for changing political opportunities to the onset of economic crisis. Using the 2008 election as the pivotal month, SEIU accounts of conventional political action decreased from 1.5 accounts per month pre-election to 1.2 accounts post-election. A graph of the data shows that conventional political activity peaked before the onset of crisis and gradually tapered off over the crisis period, even through midterm elections in 2010 (see figure 4.1).

Pre-crisis, one of SEIU's political efforts focused on the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Two consecutive bills extending SCHIP passed both houses of Congress, but Bush vetoed them both. After the first veto, SEIU worked to increase support for the second bill, hoping to circumvent the possibility of veto. They publicized names of 11 members of Congress who voted against the bill, and announced plans to

Figure 4.1. SEIU membership in millions and number of mentions of SEIU institutional member political actions in press releases, 2007-2010.



target those elected officials by prompting voters to email and call their representatives (10/9/07). After the House of Representatives passed the bill the second time, SEIU reported that they had spent 1.9 million to support the passage of SCHIP at that point, as well as collected over a million petition signatures and encouraged tens of thousands to directly contact their representatives (10/26/07). This campaign also include non-institutional member actions, described below. The effort to override Bush’s veto failed, and Bush vetoed the second bill as well.

Another conventional political action campaign announced after the onset of economic crisis focused on a bailout bill that would help taxpayers, or “Main Street”

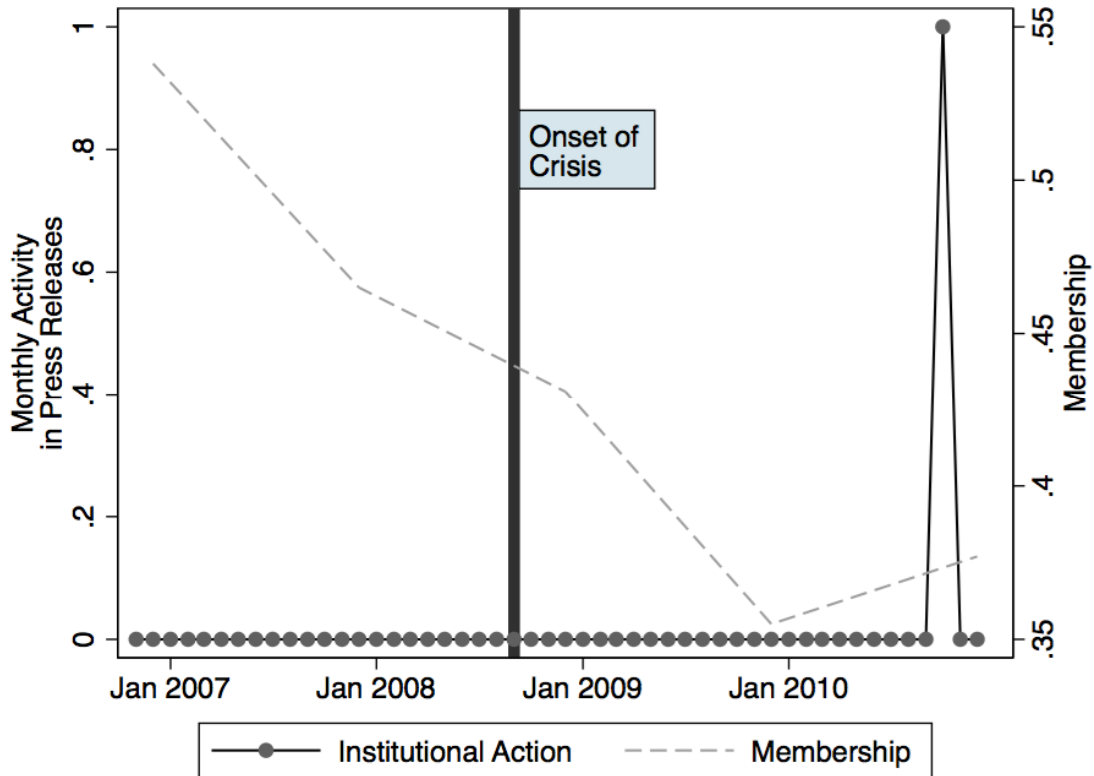
people as opposed to Wall Street people. SEIU reports that thousands of their members are going to contact their elected representatives to urge swift action to relieve economic problems facing working people. They call for relief to state and local governments, infrastructure spending, and innovations in health care and energy, arguing that these investments will increase jobs and services, improve communities, and raise US competitiveness (1/6/09). They also include efforts to support some of Obama's nominees, such as Hilda Solis (1/9/09) and Sonya Sotomayor (5/26/09).

In stark contrast to SEIU, UAW accounts include only one instance of member-driven conventional political action throughout the entire research period, occurring in October 2010. In this month, UAW sponsored a canvass to support a candidate for governor of Michigan (10/15/10). UAW experienced turnover in its presidential office in June 2010, which may have resulted in new opportunities for member political action. A graph of the data displays the overall trend (see figure 4.2).

Non-institutional political action

SEIU accounts of non-institutional political action cover a wide range of activities. In addition to rallies, candlelight vigils, marches, protests, fasts, boycotts, and civil disobedience, they sponsored many unique actions. One is the "Walk a Day in My Shoes" campaign, which matched candidates for political office with SEIU workers to spend a day together. They were to spend the day together doing the SEIU member's job, then share a meal together, with the goal of educating politicians about the daily lives of the people they represent. Barack Obama and Joe Biden both participated during the

Figure 4.2. UAW membership in millions and number of mentions of institutional member political actions in press releases, 2007-2010.



presidential primary season, and throughout the research period a number of (mostly Democrat) potential Senators, Representatives, and Governors participated.

A few of their novel demonstrations include children delivering petitions to Congress in red wagons for SCHIP (9/28/07); people taking wheelbarrows full of money from the IRS to a ‘fat cat tycoon’ to protest excessive government contracts held by Carlyle Group (10/10/07); staged graduation ceremonies to protest Congress’s failure to pass Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) legislation¹⁹

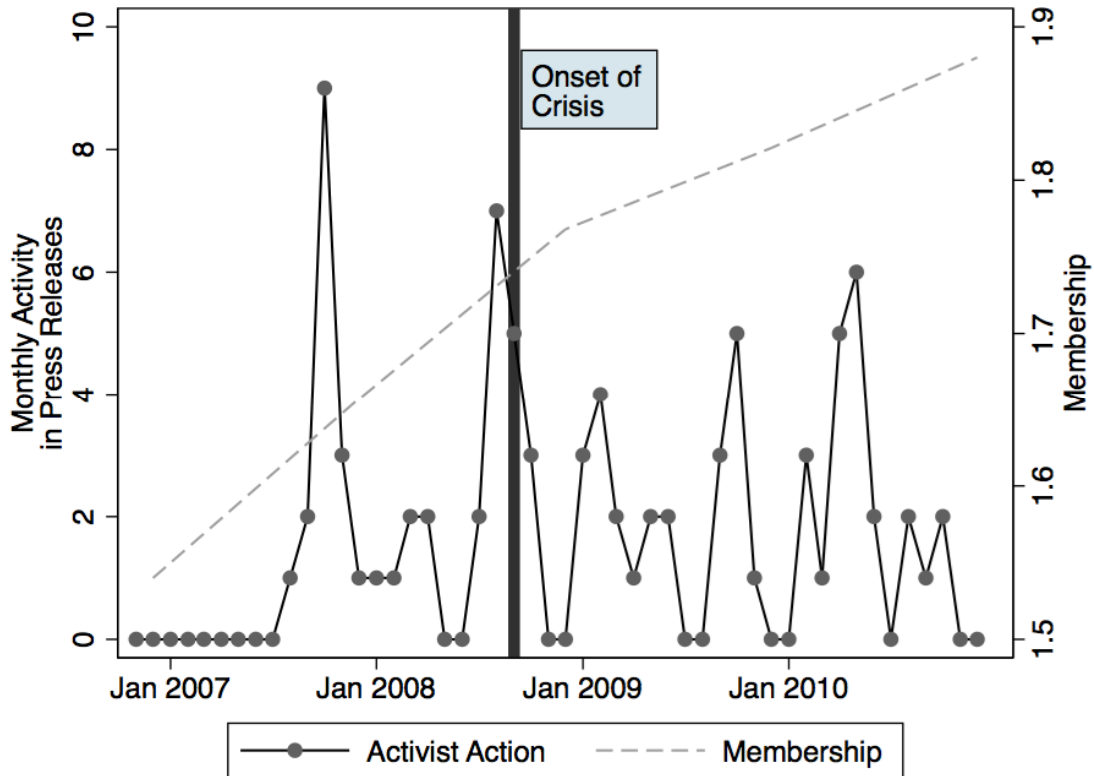
¹⁹ This bill intended to provide a path to citizenship for people who entered the country illegally before they turned 16 years old. Currently, alien minors have no path to citizenship without returning to their country of birth.

(6/23/09); publicizing hotlines to share information about citizen's rights under Arizona SB 1070²⁰ (6/2/10); and displaying colorful scrubs signed by thousands of doctors and nurses to support a government health care bill (9/22/09). Accounts of non-institutional political action decreased slightly from 2.4 per month pre-crisis to 1.9 per month post-crisis(see figure 4.3). Though the crisis and the election occurred very closely together, nearly all activist political actions were aimed at issues, not candidate elections. This suggests the decrease in non-institutional political action should not be attributed to the 2008 presidential election; however, two spikes in the data occur at important points in the presidential election cycle, so it is not confirmed.

As mentioned above, SEIU worked to get SCHIP signed into law during the Bush administration. Announcing a campaign to pressure Congress to override Bush's veto of the SCHIP, SEIU claims that "Thousands of healthcare workers, parents, children, faith leaders, and concerned citizens will take to the streets in communities across the country this week as part of a nationwide effort to win healthcare for nearly 10 million children" (10/9/07). The campaign also includes media events such as television and radio ads, rallies, and vigils; SEIU and partner organizations planned over 300 vigils across the US for October 16, 2007 (10/15/07). Soon after Obama took office, the bill passed both houses and Obama signed the bill into law with praise from SEIU (2/4/09).

²⁰ This bill makes it a misdemeanor crime for an immigrant to be in Arizona without carrying their registration documents. It obligates the police to investigate a person's citizenship status when reasonable suspicion is aroused during any stop, detention, or arrest. It is considered one of the harshest anti-immigration measures in decades.

Figure 4.3. SEIU membership in millions and number of mention of activist member political actions in press releases, 2007-2010.



Throughout the research period, SEIU generated long-term campaigns around an issue, then targeted specific companies by exploiting their various weaknesses. They began a campaign pre-crisis calling for more transparency and oversight of private equity buyout groups, which unlike publicly traded firms, are not required to disclose the business practices of their operations or their holdings. Carlyle Group, owner of Synagro Technologies, was one such private equity fund. Synagro Technologies was in the business of sewage sludge, an industry that processes municipal waste and distributes it for land use. Communities living near sites where the sewage sludge has been applied have reported increased health problems. SEIU warned that because it was bought by a

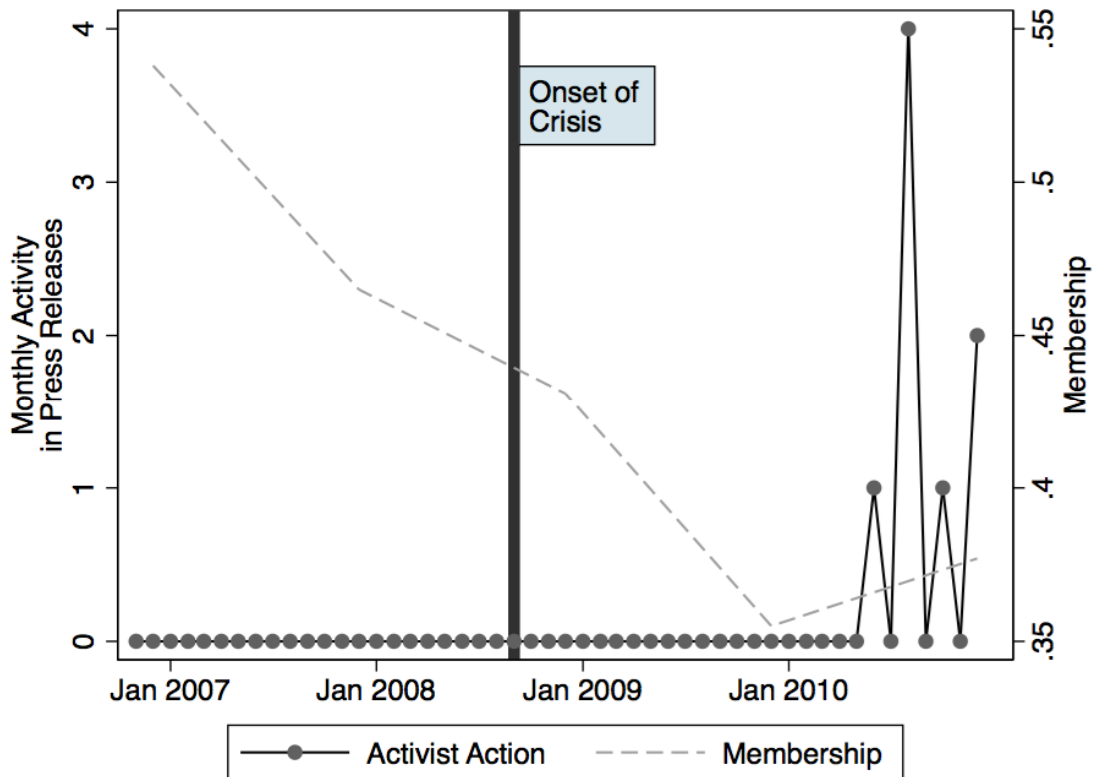
private equity fund, “Synagro may no longer be required to disclose publicly the existence of regulatory inquiries or legal complaints against the company resulting from health hazards caused by Synagro products and product distribution.” They held a demonstration dressed in hazmat suits, and were making efforts to form alliances with other organizations that may share interest in opposing these practices (12/17/07).

A post-crisis example of an SEIU non-institutional member-based political activity is found in a campaign highlighting and opposing firms that took bailout money and then lobbied against worker-friendly bills, arguably using taxpayer funds to promote a corporate agenda. This particular action day included a protest outside of the Rayburn House Office Building. It included a fake Bank of America ATM with a screen reading “thank you taxpayers for making us rich.” It also included a box of Burger King french fries with the slogan “Burger King and Goldman Sachs – Having it Their Way.” Goldman Sachs is one of the largest owners of Burger King, who along with Bank of America has spent hundreds of millions opposing the Employee Free Choice Act. They also criticize the employers for failing to provide health care for their employees or pay a living wage. The action was timed to coincide with a US House hearing featuring CEOs from eight large banks that received billions in taxpayer-funded bailout money (2/10/09).

UAW offered zero accounts of non-institutional political action before the crisis or immediately after the crisis. However, after the June 2010 change in executive leadership, they averaged 1.14 accounts per month (see figure 4.4). Because these instances begin to occur simultaneously with new leadership, 18 months after the onset of crisis, they are not necessarily the direct result of opening political opportunities created by economic crisis; however, the election of a new leader more inclined towards non-

institutional action is arguably a utilization of opening political opportunities. Their non-institutional actions included a march and rally against Wall Street; two protests for international workers rights focusing first on UPS workers in Turkey, then supporting human rights of Korean workers; and finally, leafleting at Chase banks to protest foreclosures.

Figure 4.4. UAW membership in millions and number of mentions of activist member political actions in press releases, 2007-2010.



During the 2006-2010 time period, the first member-driven political action took place in 2010, immediately after Bob King was elected to his first term as International President at the 35th convention. UAW members joined the Teamsters and NAACP to “demand that Wall Street pay for the damaging recession it caused by paying its fair

share to **create the 11 million jobs America needs** [boldface in original], by ceasing its opposition to financial reform and by making loans available to homeowners to stop foreclosures, to communities, small businesses and other entities starved of credit.” This was part of a “Good Jobs Now” campaign launched by the AFL-CIO, and participation in the march was King’s first action as UAW president (6/16/10).

UAW also participated in campaigns focused on workers’ rights in other countries. UAW, as an affiliate with the International Transport Workers Federation (ITWF), joined a global protest against United Parcel Service (UPS) for human rights abuses in Turkey. At this time, UPS had been firing workers who were trying to form a union, and tolerating or possibly promoting police abuse against those workers. ITWF sponsored forty-five protests worldwide, and UAW expected members to participate in protests in Detroit and in Louisville, Kentucky (8/31/10).

In July 2010, UAW announced participation in the Rebuild America: Jobs, Justice and Peace campaign with the Rainbow Push Coalition, headed by Reverend Jesse Jackson (7/9/10). In addition to the UAW and Rev. Jackson’s Rainbow Push coalition, US representative John Conyers from Michigan and Lansing mayor Virg Bernero joined the campaign. The campaign works for three main things: job-creating trade policies that support US manufacturing, enforcement and creation of laws supporting workers and civil rights, including education and health; and ending of wars to refocus budget on American needs. They also call for stopping home foreclosures. In August the UAW announced their participation in a week-long series of events with the campaign, including a bus tour of several Michigan cities ending in Detroit on the day of a rally. The event commemorated the Walk to Freedom of 1963, where Martin Luther King, Jr made

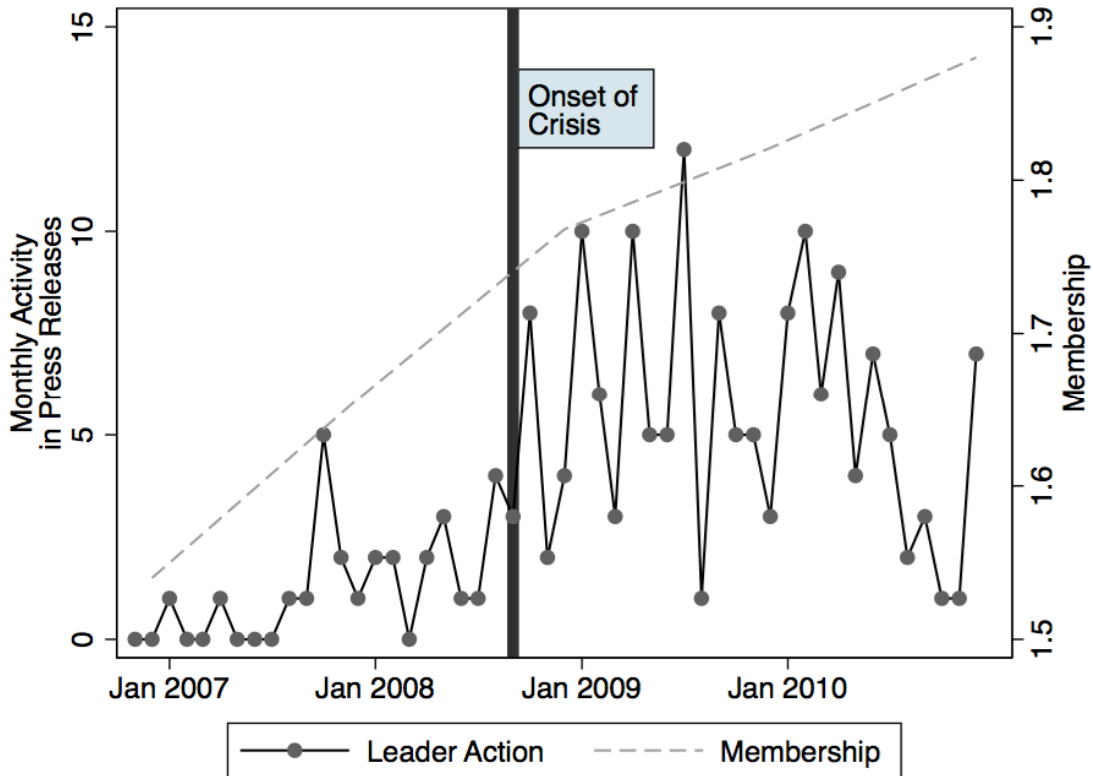
his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech and included a news conference, march, and rally. Several politicians were scheduled to speak, along with SEIU president Mary Kay Henry. The NAACP-Detroit, US Labor Against the War, Jobs With Justice, Earth Day Network, Code Pink/Michigan, Retirees for Single Payer Health Care, Planned Parenthood of Michigan, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, and several other unions, anti-war groups, environmentalist groups, religious groups, and organizations promoting other progressive causes also joined the Rebuild America campaign (8/28/10).

Leader action

SEIU largest category of political activity is leader action. This include congressional testimony, statements in print, endorsements, speeches at conventions, press conferences, meetings with politicians or leaders from other organizations, lobby days, and publicizing polls or reports commissioned by SEIU and its coalition partners. Leader-driven political action greatly increased after the economic crisis, jumping from 1.92 mentions per month to an average of 5.46 mentions per month, a 184% increase. A t-test indicated this is a significant difference (see Table 1). A graph of the data displays the overall trend of increasing leader political action (see figure 4.5).

In addition to the increase in volume, the rhetoric became much more critical. Prior to September 2008, SEIU's leaders mainly testified before congressional committees, participated in conferences, and spoke at conventions. A total of four leader actions accounts had a disparaging tone pre-crisis. For example, they focusing on golden parachutes of executives of failing businesses, detailed in the following paragraph. They also criticized the Secure America through Verification and Enforcement (SAVE), which

Figure 4.5. SEIU membership in millions and number of mentions of leader political actions in press releases, 2007-2010.



attempts to curb illegal immigration through increased border security and through making permanent the e-verify system.²¹ SEIU objects to the SAVE act for its high expense, the ineffectiveness of similar programs in reducing illegal immigration, and its potential to hurt employers and workers due to errors in the system (5/6/08). In comparison, approximately 28 instances of disparaging leader action post-crisis included several attacks on Republican inaction and obstruction in Congress, demands for limits on executive compensation, demands for financial reform, and criticism of specific

²¹ E-verify is an online database of social security numbers allowing employers to instantly check an employee or applicants' work eligibility.

politicians and companies. During this time, mentions of President Obama or his administration were neutral or supportive.

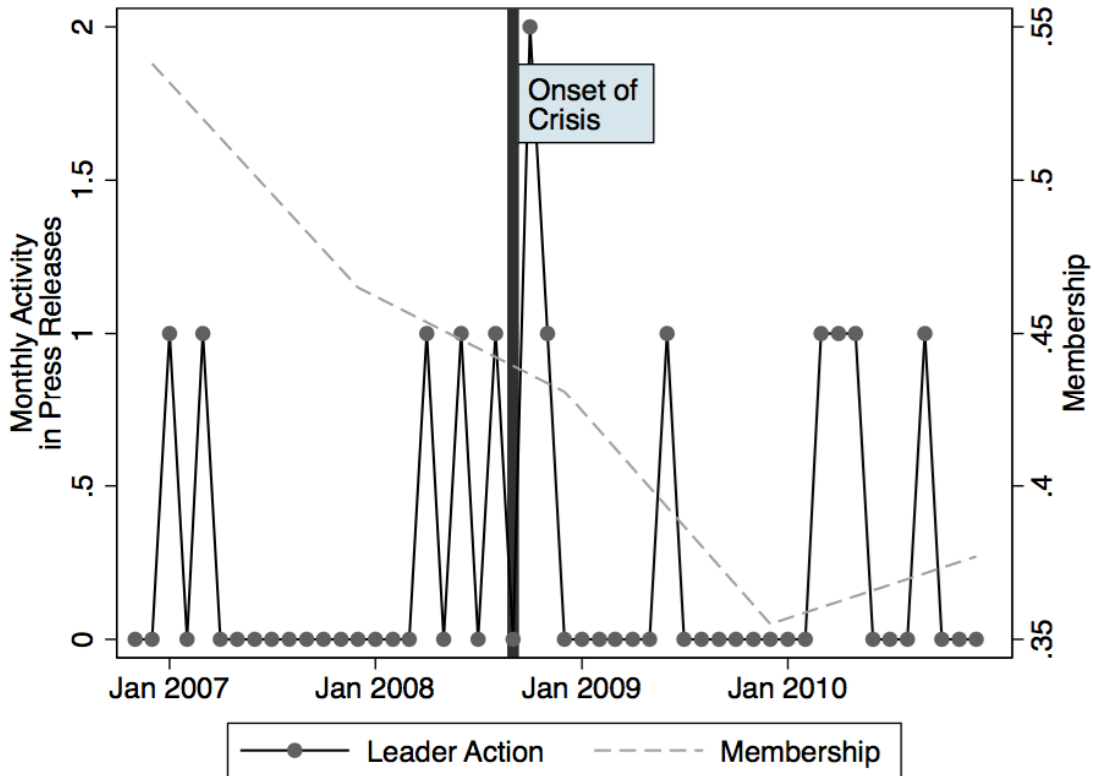
After Countrywide's CEO received a severance package worth \$115 million, including rides on the corporate jet and paid country club dues, Andy Stern made a statement on golden parachutes with many instances of disparaging rhetoric. "It is clear that corporatism's [sic] ethos of enriching companies while impoverishing people is alive and well." He calls for an end to allowing corporations and their executives to profit while workers go without health care, and a new era of putting working people and communities' needs first. "Wouldn't this be a great time to prioritize what those families who lost their homes in the subprime meltdown need rather than Angelo Mozilo's next golf game?" (1/11/08). In the same month, Eliseo Medina provides an example of non-disparaging rhetoric in Congressional testimony supporting increasing funding to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, enabling them to process applications more quickly. "Today's hearing seeks to ensure that the gatekeepers to granting US citizenship—one of the most highly prized honors in the world—receive the proper direction, resources, and oversight necessary to do their jobs well." (1/17/08).

Post-crisis, Andy Stern made a statement in support of the Big Three automakers' request for emergency bridge loans. "We now know from unfortunate experience that change is inevitable, but progress is optional. If taxpayers are going to be asked to invest in \$15 billion or more in bridge loans to keep the industry afloat, the package must include serious taxpayer protections, limits on executive pay, and a strong hand for Congress and the White House in shaping and implementing the immediate restructuring necessary to restore the competitiveness of these three engines of the American

economy." He is not unconditionally supportive; he calls on the auto executives to join healthcare reform efforts, drop lawsuits against states with high emissions standards, and produce fuel-efficient cars (12/8/08). Finally, characteristic of SEIU's supportive relationship with Obama, Anna Burger released a statement highlighting the accomplishments of the Obama administration during the first 100 days in office. She reported that following an Agenda for Working Families, Obama achieved five of nine points and has made progress on the other four (4/28/09).

Leader action comprised the largest category of political activity for UAW as well, but leader action of a political nature was still rare compared to SEIU. It includes the legislative affairs director attending a televised town hall, congressional testimony, endorsements, meetings with elected officials, and statements supporting political candidates. On average, pre-crisis leader action occurred .23 times per month and .29 times per month post-crisis. Leader action was disparaging in nature at times; before crisis, UAW President Ron Gettelfinger criticizes excessive executive compensation in the US auto industry, arguing that there is a competitive gap between executives of US auto companies and executives of foreign-based auto companies (4/4/08). Immediately after crisis, Gettelfinger issued a statement blaming Bush-era deregulation of the economy for the financial crisis (10/3/08). The third and final instance of disparaging rhetoric in UAW accounts occurs in September 2010, when leaders of UAW joined faith leaders in withdrawing all funds out of banks with excessive foreclosures (9/23/10). They focused their criticism on JPMorgan Chase Bank for financing corporations that engage in poor labor practices and for foreclosing on unemployed homeowners. A graph of the

Figure 4.6. UAW membership in millions and number of mentions of leader political action in press releases, 2007-2010.



data shows the peak of activity occurring immediately after the onset of crisis (see figure 4.6).

UAW President King said "George Bush came into office with a \$127 billion surplus. He proceeded to give billions of dollars in tax cuts to the richest Americans and wasted trillions of dollars on useless wars while funding for schools and other basic services was gutted. Bush and the Republicans left the American public with a trillion-dollar deficit, a crumbling infrastructure, and the worst economic recession since the Great Depression" (7/9/10). This is a good example of disparaging rhetoric; King

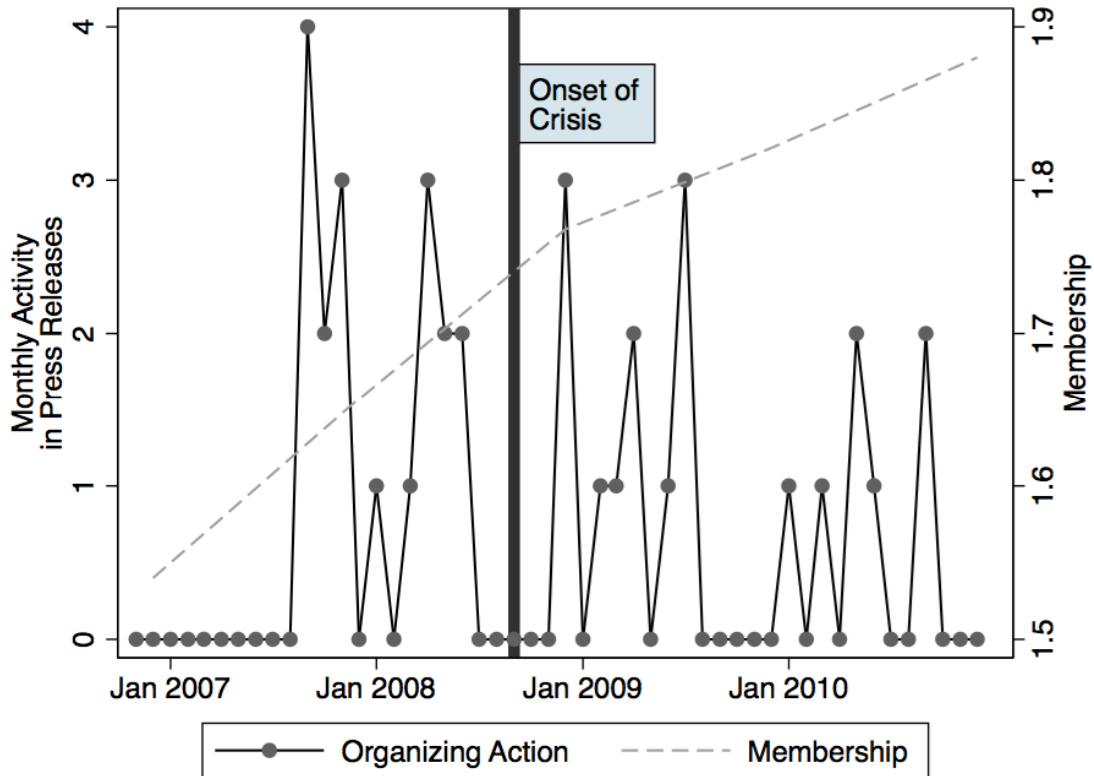
condemns the actions of Bush and places blame for some of America's most serious problems on Bush and his allies. In the days immediately preceding the events, King's rhetoric took a more neutral tone, providing a good example of non-critical rhetoric. "Every community has in some way witnessed the affects of the nation's economic meltdown than working men and women. We need industrial and employment policies that work to keep jobs and manufacturing in the United States. Workers need to earn decent wages to provide for their families and help keep their neighborhoods and communities viable," said UAW president Bob King (8/23/10).

Organizing

SEIU accounts of organizing activity include announcements of new campaigns, successful and unsuccessful votes for new unions, strikes, and other statements related to organizing; for example, SEIU called for an investigation into firings at a Sodexo operation in March 2010. Workers at Sodexo facilities in four separate states filed NLRB charges that Sodexo spied on, interrogated, and fired activists who were in the process of forming a union (3/2/10). SEIU accounts of organizing activity dropped from an average of 1.5 per month pre-crisis to an average of .79 post-crisis. The graph of SEIU organizing activity displays the decrease in activity after the onset of economic crisis (see figure 4.7). In spite of their reduced focus on organizing, as observed in newsletter accounts, SEIU continued to experience increasing membership.

Prior to the economic crisis, SEIU included several accounts of organizing, such as strikes, protests, and successful campaigns. One example of an ongoing campaign is SEIU's work with a group of security guards, who after organizing a union five years earlier, had not achieved a first contract. Newsletters covering actions or updating readers

Figure 4.7. SEIU membership in millions and number of mentions of organizing actions in press releases, 2007-2010.



on the campaign’s progress highlight the disparity between workers and their employers. “While the multibillion dollar corporate real estate industry enjoys low vacancy rates, rising rental rates and record breaking profits, the private security officers experience low wages, no access to quality, affordable health care, no respect, inadequate training and lack of a professional career ladder” (10/27/07). In addition to working on organizing private security guards across the country, they successfully organized child care workers (10/29/07, 11/8/07).

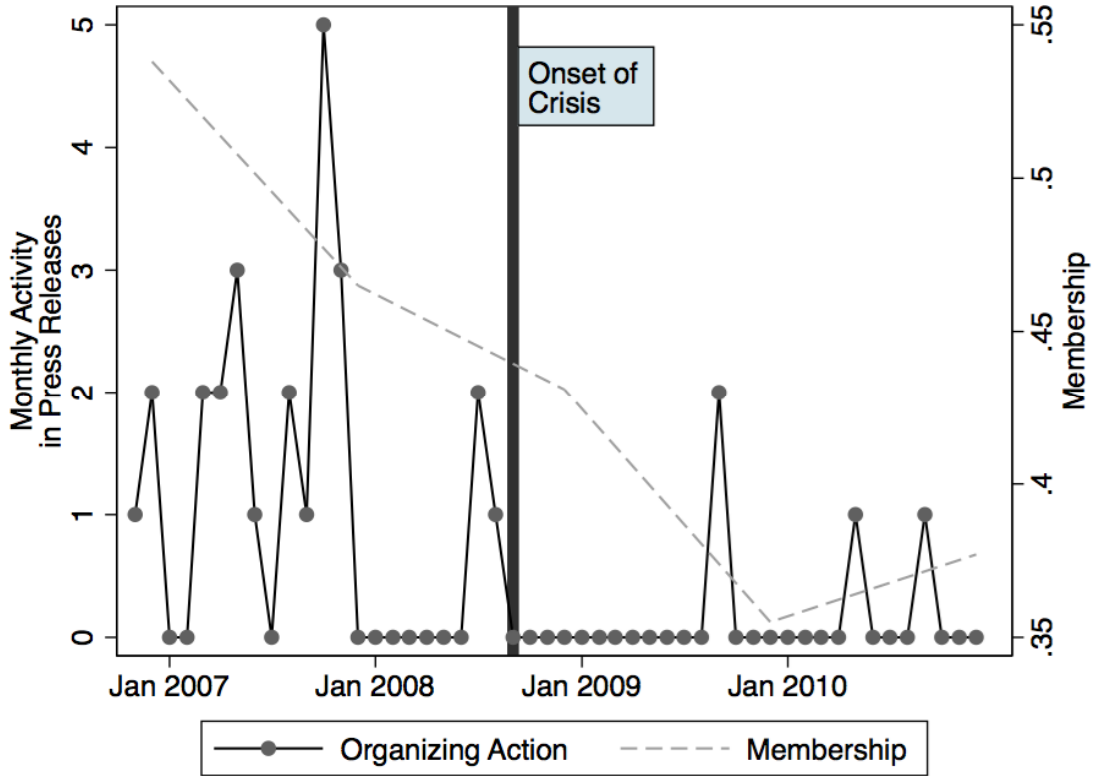
SEIU continued to successfully complete new organizing after the onset of crisis, in spite of employer resistance. They organized two new home care unions (5/5/10 and

5/6/10), a doctors union (6/24/10) and an airports concessions union (7/24/09). They spent several months working on a campaign against Sodexo, including cooperating with the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), the largest French union, to file charges against France-based Sodexo. Sodexo fired workers in Colombia who were trying to form a union, but also had several outstanding NLRB charges against its US operations (7/30/10). Workers at the George Mason University Sodexo went on strike to protest unsafe working conditions which have resulted in burns and broken bones. When students signed petitions calling for Sodexo to provide safety measures, Sodexo responded by changing work assignments to keep activist workers from positions involving student contact (9/8/10). SEIU did not resolve the campaign against Sodexo during this research period.

UAW accounts of organizing activity include votes for new unions and announcements of NLRB decisions affecting units the UAW was in the process of organizing. UAW's new organizing activity mainly took place in casinos; they organized dealers primarily in Atlantic City and Detroit. They also organized workers in higher education, such as post-doctoral researchers in California and NYU graduate students. UAW accounts of organizing activity dropped from an average of 1.05 per month pre-crisis to an average of 0.14 per month post-crisis. This is a significant reduction in reports of organizing activity (see table 1). A graph of this data shows the decline in activity after the onset of economic crisis. During this time, they faced dwindling membership numbers (see figure 4.8).

Prior to the onset of economic crisis, UAW successfully organized ten new locals, including a child care union in addition to the education and gambling industry workers

Figure 4.8. UAW membership in millions and numbers of accounts of organizing actions, 2007-2010.



mentioned in the previous paragraph. They also lost four organizing campaigns, defeated a decertification effort prompted by the National Right to Work Legal Defense Fund (4/18/07), and held events in solidarity with workers for offshore-based auto companies. One of these campaigns used card check certification; all others were NLRB elections. They also filed several unfair labor practice (ULP) charges, mostly against the casino owners, many of which UAW later reported were upheld by the NLRB. In response to a failed vote, UAW released the statement that “After gathering a strong majority in favor of a union last month, dealers at Trump Marina did not vote for union representation” and maintained that the vote “will not slow dealer organizing in efforts at other cansinos in

Atlantic City” (5/12/07). This characterizes the tone of newsletters reporting defeats; they focus on accomplishments and continuing the fight but unlike SEIU, did not emphasize poor working conditions or employer resistance.

There were also indications that they had intentions to organize the non-US auto plants. In a speech, Gettelfinger said “Offshore automakers who operate in the United States come very close to matching the wage and benefits standards negotiated by UAW members. They do it to keep their workers from having a voice in the workplace. But, in doing so, they are raising the living standards of dedicated workers who they employ. We don't get the credit for it, but we are definitely a driver in lifting the quality of life for all working people in America” (11/14/06). Along with a state senator and a reverend, UAW vice president Terry Thurman attended a town hall forum to hear about Kentucky Toyota workers’ issues related to compensation and working conditions, including on the job injuries (3/29/07). They include quotes from workers discussing gradually deteriorating conditions such as ever-shrinking bonuses, reductions in training opportunities and paid time off, and increased reliance by the company on temporary workers. UAW announced that along with Jobs with Justice and community organizations, they planned to establish a neutral workers’ rights board to recommend improvements in working conditions to Toyota (3/31/07).

Bargaining

SEIU accounts of bargaining activity include announcements of new contracts and contract-related actions, including strikes, rallies, and announcements of bargaining goals. For example, SEIU announced a new initiative to bargain “green” in February 2009 (2/27/09). In January 2010, a union of janitors voted to strike against their employer

because they wouldn't consider their proposals for environmentally friendly cleaning supplies and practices (1/30/10). SEIU accounts of bargaining activity dropped from 1.5 per month pre-crisis to .68 per month post-crisis, which is statistically significant (see Table 4.1). A graph of SEIU bargaining activity shows the decline (see figure 4.9).

Table 4.1. Comparison of mean monthly accounts of activities in SEIU and UAW newsletters before and after September 2008 with t-tests.

Press releases	SEIU		UAW	
	Pre-Crisis	Post-crisis	Pre-Crisis	Post-crisis
Institutional	1.15	1.4	0	.03
Non-institutional	2.4	1.9	0	.3
Leader	1.9***	5.5***	.2	.3
Bargaining	1.5*	.68*	1.77	1.57
Organizing	1.5	.79	1.05**	.14**

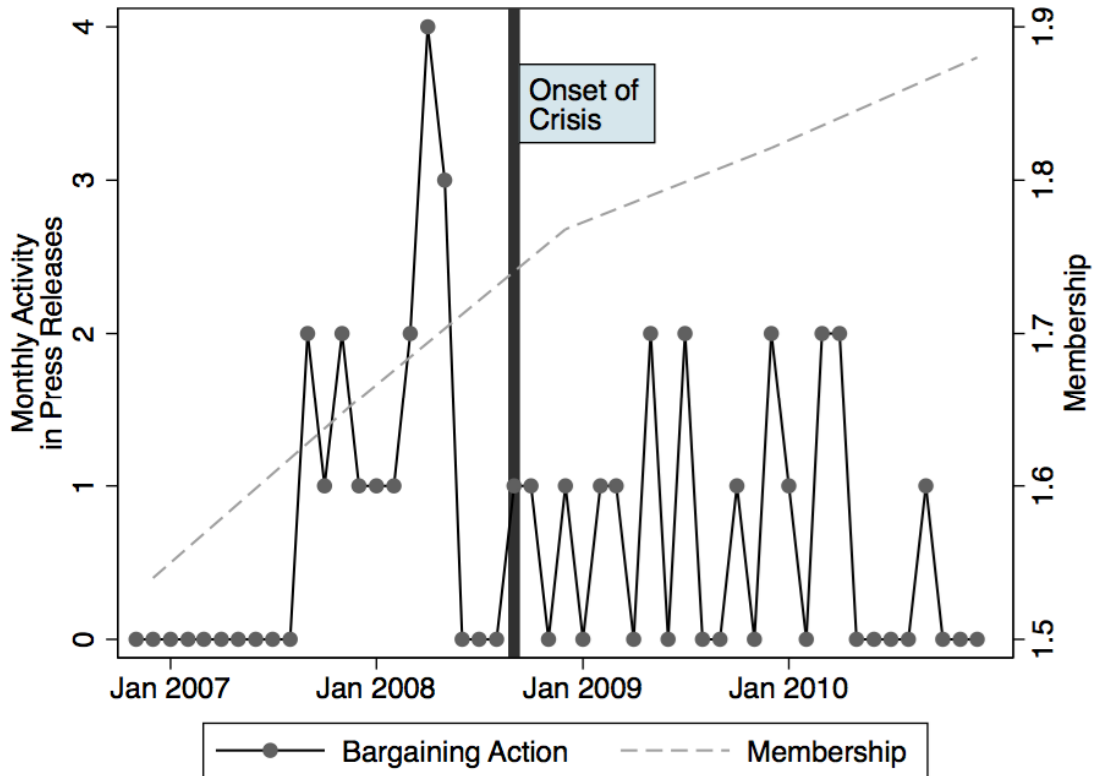
* a <.05

** a <.01

***a<.001

SEIU accounts of bargaining activity include several strikes as well as reports of successful contract negotiations. Office cleaners in New York City won a contract that gave 16% wage increases and improved pension benefits (12/29/07). Security officers, however, voted to go on the first ever strike of private security guards in San Francisco to protest unfair labor practices. Guards in this area were typically making around \$24,000 per year. Several other unions honored the picket line and the local labor council granted strike sanctions (9/24/07). In the months following the onset of economic crisis, SEIU bargaining activity primarily included strikes, lawsuits, and protests, but they did achieve contracts with some of the security companies they were working on earlier in this time

Figure 4.9. SEIU membership in millions and numbers of mentions of bargaining actions in press releases, 2007-2010.



period. They also made a commitment to bargain “green,” including an energy efficiency training program for building superintendents (2/27/09). They settled a lawsuit against hospitals that conspired to constrain nurses’ wages, sharing wage data on nurses to keep their pay at below-market rates. “Competitive wage practices offer hospitals the opportunity to enhance patient outcomes and ensure medical needs are handled by competent, compassionate nursing staff” (3/9/09). This is characteristic of SEIU’s focus on union members providing high-quality labor.

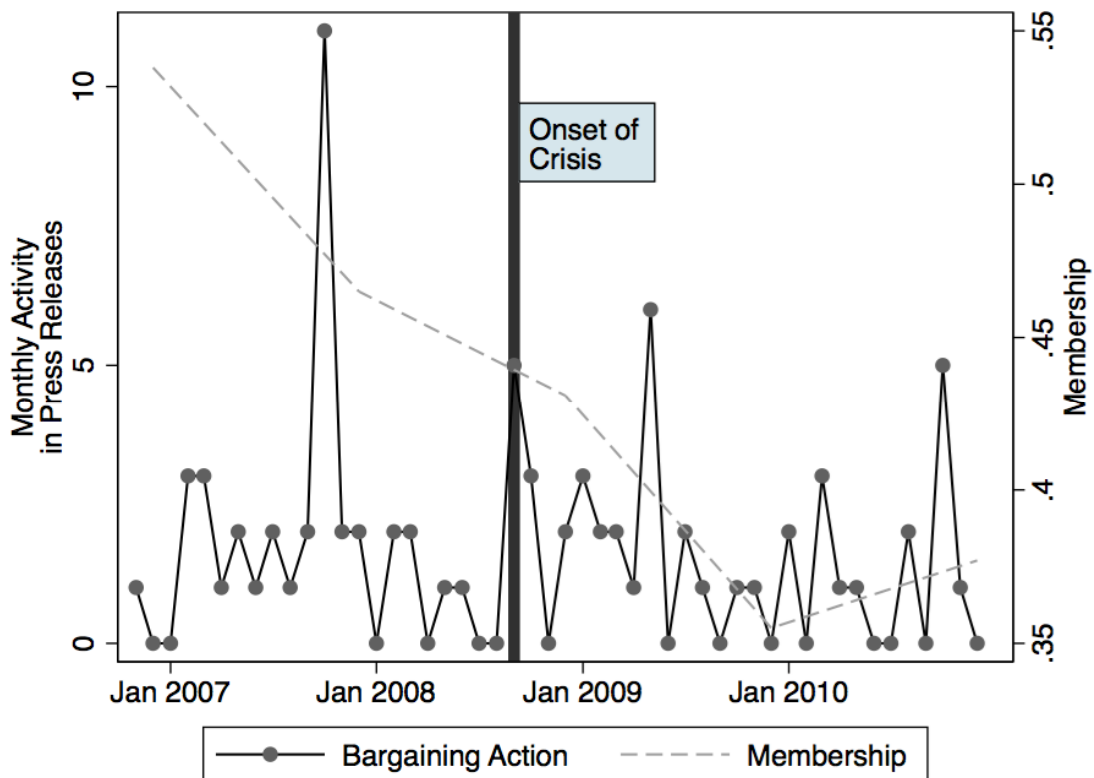
UAW accounts of bargaining activity primarily included announcements of new contracts. Through the negotiations over a single contract, UAW often produced multiple

news releases covering the initiation of bargaining, updates on progress, the tentative agreement, and the ratification. I excluded accounts announcing the initiation of new bargaining. In uncomplicated bargaining cases, since the tentative agreement and ratification occurred closely together, I only counted the tentative agreement. A bargaining campaign may have received multiple mentions in the case of unfair labor practice charge filings or contract-related strikes; I included each contentious action in my analysis. In only one situation did the members fail to ratify a tentative agreement, and this was the result of re-opened negotiations after the crisis in the US automakers. Both General Motors and Chrysler workers ratified their new agreements, and in March 2009, Ford workers agreed to modify their voluntary employment benefit association agreement with close to 58% approving the agreement (UAW 3/9/09), but in November of the same year, they refused further modifications with 70% voting to reject the new contract (UAW 11/2/09).

Overall, accounts of bargaining went from an average of 1.77 per month pre-crisis to 1.57 post-crisis. This is a small difference that could indicate a retreat; more detailed analysis is necessary to understand the conditions that led to this slight drop. Since contracts typically last multiple years, it could be that fewer agreements expired in post-crisis years. I categorized bargaining events as combative or neutral; combative events imply contract negotiations were difficult for the union. This included plant closings, strikes, a contract workers rejected, a contract that involved givebacks, or a legal battle to defend contracts. All other bargaining events were contracts ratified by members that improved compensation and working conditions, or where no information was given about a negotiated contract, which means that this analysis is relatively conservative. Pre-

crisis, 26% of bargaining events were combative. Post-crisis, 38% of bargaining events were combative. There were fewer bargaining accounts post-crisis, but a higher percentage of them were combative. The most likely explanation is that there were slightly fewer expired contracts needing re-negotiation in the years post-crisis, but those that did expire were more difficult to bargain. Also, there were more instances of employers violating contracts post-crisis. A graph of the data show that the peak of bargaining activity occurred in October 2007 (see figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10. UAW membership in millions and numbers of mentions of bargaining activity in press releases, 2007-2010.



Though most of the accounts of bargaining activity were fairly straightforward announcements of progress on negotiations or descriptions of the final settlement, one

news release condemned the economic structure. UAW publicized a plant closure agreement for Guide Corporation, which until that point had produced head and tail lamps exclusively for GM. Guide Corporation was closing after GM decided to use suppliers in Canada, China, and Mexico. “Once again, hardworking people are paying the price of our country’s unfair trade policies and our failure to address the health care crisis in this nation,” said UAW vice president Jimmy Settles (2/1/07). The agreement promised workers different packages depending on their seniority and years of service, ranging from lump sum payments of \$35,000 to monthly pensions of \$2900. UAW also negotiated with GM to hire laid-off Guide workers preferentially.

In response to DaimlerChrysler’s restructuring announcement, UAW produced a news release on 2/14/07. They assured members that the union will work to negotiate an attrition program and opportunities for members to return to work, but also condemned the economic structure. “Once again, our nation’s ill-conceived trade policies are causing tremendous hardship for working families. Over the past six years DaimlerChrysler has closed or sold 16 facilities and reduced its workforce by one-third. We maintain that the company cannot cut its way to profitability and have emphasized that a successful growth strategy depends on the skills and know-how of the UAW workforce,” said UAW president Ron Gettelfinger and vice president General Holiefield in a joint statement.

During the time period, UAW struggled to settle first contracts for several newly organized local unions in the casino industry. In August, UAW announced a rally to kick off negotiations for newly organized casino dealers preparing to bargain the first-ever contract for Atlantic City casino dealers. The rally was scheduled to precede the bargaining team’s presentation of their first proposals (8/8/07). In June the following

year, UAW held another event since the contract had not progressed. “A long parade of marchers, stretching for several city blocks, streamed past the city's major casinos following a rally which featured New Jersey Gov. John Corzine, Sen. Robert Menendez and a wide range of elected officials, labor leaders and community representatives.” In addition, Senator Menendez (D-NJ) read a statement supporting the workers by US President Obama, and the rally was attended by several elected officials and leaders and members from four other unions: UFCW, LIUNA, IAFF, and the Painters (6/21/08). The casino workers at Trump Plaza in Atlantic City is an example of a casino local that encountered difficulties settling their first contract. Although 68 percent of workers had voted in favor of the union two years earlier, in September 2009, they had still not achieved a contract. Petitions were circulating to de-certify the union in spite of majority support (9/17/09).

In September 2007, UAW planned to strike against GM after negotiations stalled. UAW vice president Cal Rapson said “In 2007 company executives continued to award themselves bonuses while demanding that our members accept a reduced standard of living.” (9/24/07). The strike lasted less than two days, and thousands of members participated. The settled contract won a signing bonus, lump sum payments, a company commitment to invest in new US facilities, a moratorium on plant closings for the life of the four-year agreement, maintained health care, and increased pension benefits (10/10/07).

Beginning in late 2008, all three of the US automakers initiated restructuring processes that included re-negotiating contracts with UAW, a mandatory requirement for receiving a large federal loan. In a statement released on 12/3/08, UAW announced that they agreed to negotiate modifications to their 2007 national agreements including

dismantling the jobs bank and allowing the company to delay payments to their voluntary employee beneficiary association. President Gettelfinger also agreed to testify in favor of urgent bridge loans for the auto companies. “Gettelfinger stressed that the tough times facing domestic automakers are not unique, but are affecting auto companies around the world. Virtually every other auto producing country -- including Germany, Japan, United Kingdom, South Korea, Brazil, Russia and China -- has provided or is considering billions of dollars in aid to its auto industry.” By emphasizing that their problems as well as the remedy of government help were occurring industry-wide, they were both resisting efforts to blame the union and normalizing government assistance.

Although GM, Chrysler, and Ford workers all initially ratified the new contracts (5/29/09, 4/29/09, and 3/9/09, respectively), additional negotiations with Ford occurred later in the year which Ford workers rejected. The news release reports that “the additional modifications that were recently negotiated contained product commitments which insured long-term job security for Ford workers. While we will not be returning to the bargaining table, our International Executive Board, staff, local union leadership and membership will continue to work with Ford on a daily basis in an effort to keep new products coming into our plants” (11/2/09). This example reveals a conflict between members and leaders of the union concerning goals in bargaining.

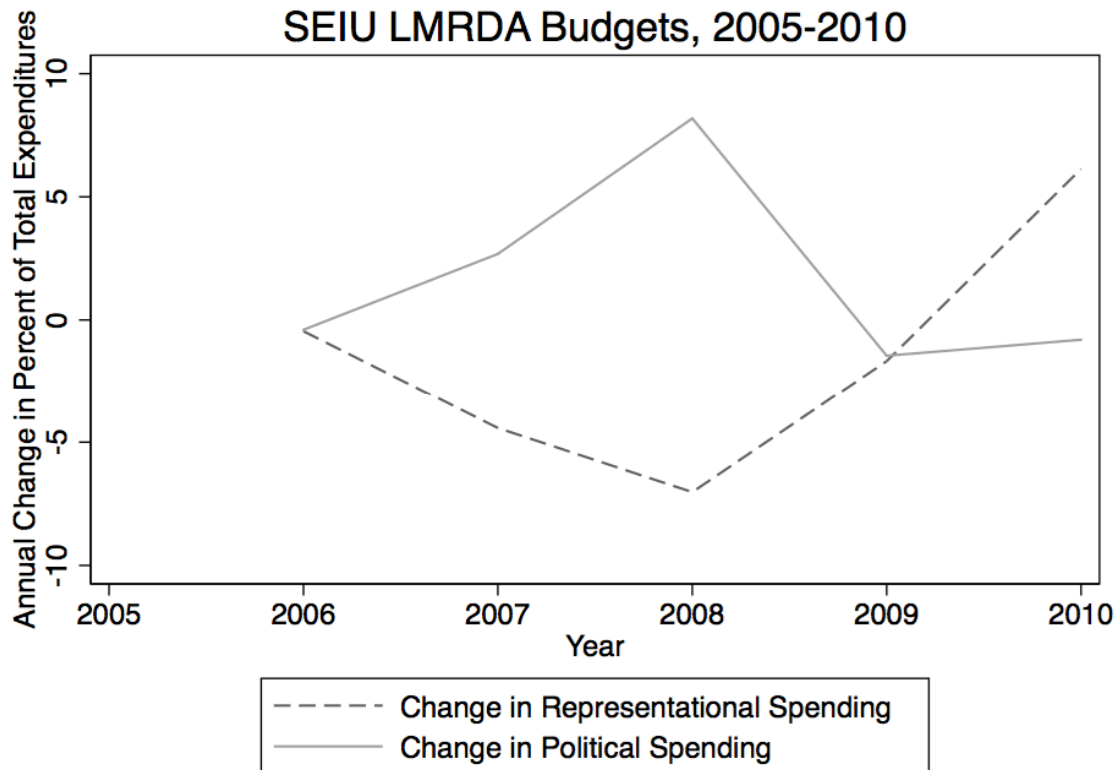
Budgets

To corroborate self-reported data from press releases, this analysis incorporates data on union finances. According to budgets on file with the Office of Labor-Management Standards, SEIU increased political activity as a percentage of overall budget while decreasing representational activities, namely bargaining and organizing

(see Figure 4.11 and Table 4.2). From 10.2% of total expenditures in 2005, to 20.6% in 2008, with a slight decrease to 18.4% in 2010, SEIU increased the percentage of their overall budget devoted to political activity (see Table 4.2). The increase in 2008 could be motivated by the 2008 election cycle, but the relative stability the following two years suggests that the political budget remained heightened in order to capture the opportunity presented by economic crisis. They spent approximately 26 million in 2005 and just over 67.1 million in 2008, dropping off to 55.1 million in 2010. The percentage of the budget devoted to representational activities dropped gradually over the five year period, from 50.3% of the disbursements in 2005 to 42.9% of disbursements in 2010. Their total expenditures shrank from 2008 to 2010 by just over 25 million dollars. From 2005 to 2009, active membership grew steadily from 1.48 million to 1.88 million, increasing approximately 27%.

UAW also increased the proportion of their budget spent on political activity from 2005 to 2010 (see Figure 4.12 and Table 4.2), but much more modestly: their budget increased from 2.7% to 3.8% of total disbursements. Notably, this is a 41% increase. The 2010 proportion of the budget was slightly increased over 2008, when they spent 3.4% of their total budget on political activities, indicating that the increase cannot be explained solely by the 2008 presidential election. The dollar amount increased from about 8.1 million in 2005, to 10.6 million in 2008, then 10.5 million in 2010. The percentage of the budget going to representational activities dropped from 38.4% in 2005 to 36% in 2007, then increased to 42.4% of the budget by 2009, then dropped back down to 37.2% in 2010. Their overall disbursements dropped about 40 million dollars from 2008 to 2009. From 2005 to 2009, active membership steadily dropped from 557,099 to 355,191,

Figure 4.11. Annual change in percent of SEIU budget devoted to political and representational activities, 2006-2010.



finishing 2009 with about 64% of the 2005 membership, but increased slightly to 376,612 in 2010.

Discussion and Conclusions

This research combines political opportunity theory with union typologies to suggest that two different types of organizations, innovative unions and traditional unions, respond differently to economic crisis. These results are consistent with the suggestion that innovative unions identify and respond to the opportunity presented by economic crisis by increasing political activity and decreasing alternative union activities. Unexpectedly, the data indicate that the theory must be amended to clarify that the

Table 4.2. Annual dollars spent on political and representational activities, percentage of total expenditures, and membership. Figures in millions.

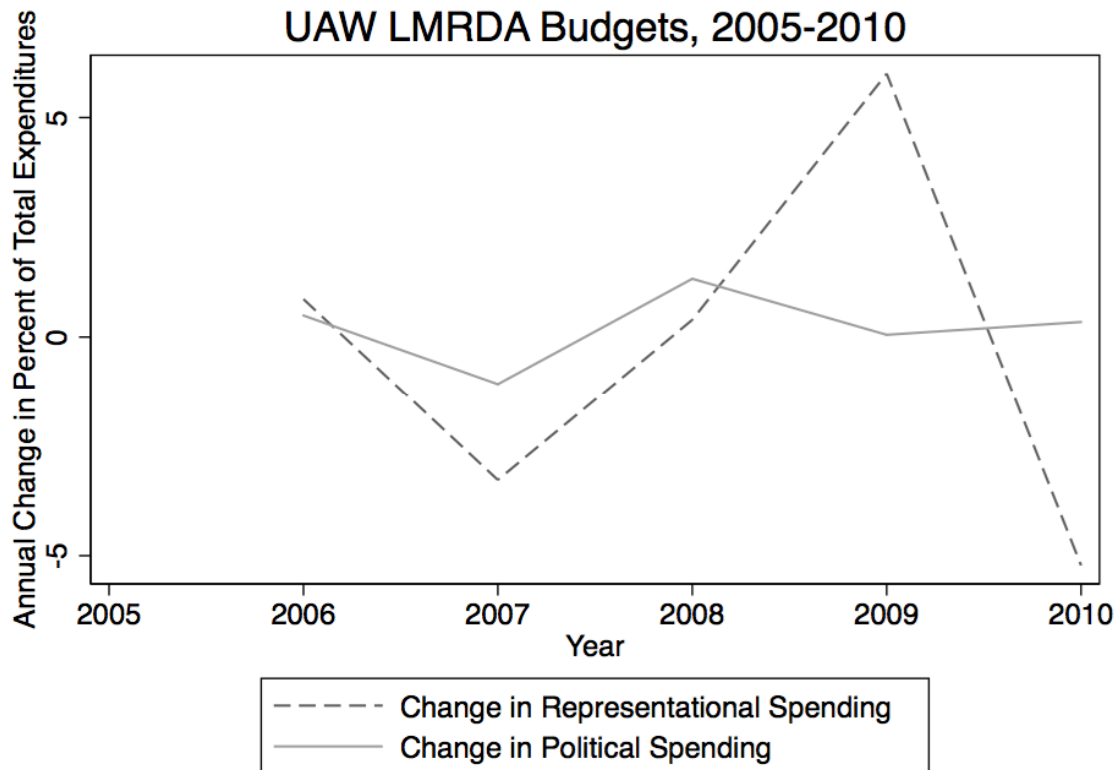
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
UAW						
Political	8.15	9.62	6.87	10.57	9.67	10.46
	2.7%	3.2%	2.1%	3.4%	3.5%	3.8%
Representational	117.56	119.74	118.91	112.84	118.46	102.23
	38.4%	39.3%	36.0%	36.4%	42.4%	37.2%
Membership	.557	.538	.465	.431	.355	.377
SEIU						
Political	26.01	26.57	32.94	67.06	58.01	55.11
	10.2%	9.8%	12.4%	20.6%	19.2%	18.4%
Representational	128.90	135.82	120.34	124.95	111.21	128.65
	50.3%	49.9%	45.5%	38.4%	36.8%	42.9%
Membership	1.476	1.540	1.657	1.768	1.821	1.880

Source: Office of Labor-Management Standards. Form LM-2 Labor Organization Annual Report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor. Retrieved 10 April 2011. (<http://www.dol.gov/olms/regs/compliance/rrlo/lmrda.htm>)

change in political behavior seem limited to the activity of leadership. The data provide mixed support for the suggestion that traditional unions will not increase political activity, and instead will commit more resources towards core activities of bargaining and organizing.

The innovative union (SEIU) greatly increased the scope and intensity of leader-driven political action from pre-crisis to post-crisis. They also increased the amount of money they spent on political activity, and the percentage of the budget devoted to political activity. SEIU advocated on behalf of a wide range of issues and became involved in campaigns for several candidates for public office, at the national, state, and even occasionally at the local level in mayor's races. The innovative organization acted as union typology predicted it would, but the locus of the change was limited to executive leadership rather than members in actions reported in press releases.

Figure 4.12. Annual change in percent of UAW budget devoted to political and representational activities, 2006-2010.



The traditional union (UAW) showed only slight changes in leader-driven political action from pre-crisis to post-crisis both in terms of accounts in news releases and in their budget. UAW political activity was limited to a few issues, mostly related to the automotive industry or other industries in which they organize. Overall, their political attention took a limited focus on the US President, offices in Michigan, and a few instances of endorsements for Indiana and Kentucky races. The only significant change that occurred by UAW was that their leader action increased scope after crisis, changing focus from the industries in which they organize to a more generalized critique of Bush deregulation and excessive foreclosures in the banking industry. The traditional

organization essentially maintained bargaining activity, slightly increased political activity, and greatly reduced organizing activity.

The membership activity of the innovative union did not change significantly from pre-crisis to post-crisis, nor did the membership activity of the traditional union change. It is plausible that leaders of organizations are more capable of identifying the opportunity that exists in economic crisis than members, who generally do not have training in politics or organizations. Although most (if not all) of the member-driven actions were initiated by leaders of the organization, it could be that member participation in these events dropped, prompting the leaders to reduce the number of events they planned. Leadership turnover in each union seemed to influence activity; SEIU accounted slightly fewer occurrences of member action, conventional or non-institutional, after their leadership change while UAW accounted substantially more occurrences of member action after their leadership change. The change in member action may have originated due to the change in leadership philosophy held by the new executives of each union, or shifting member demands could have prompted the leadership change. It is unlikely that the leadership turnover was instigated by shifting member demands, because the incumbent leadership retired or otherwise stepped down rather than being ousted, and the new leadership arose from the high ranks of the union executive structure. I argue that two explanations contribute to understanding why leadership action had the most significant shift in response to economic crisis. Due to training, and due to the demands of their offices, the leaders of organizations are in a better position to identify the opportunity that exists in crisis.

In regards to the strength and timing of mobilization, SEIU activist activity displays a gradual increase after the onset of crisis (the averages contradict this, but they appear to be influenced by two spikes in the pre-crisis data) while institutional activity has the opposite trend. SEIU leader action also increases gradually after the onset of crisis, though it begins to die down about 18 months later. UAW activist and institutional activity both increase about 20 months after the onset of crisis, but especially activist action. Leader action spikes immediately after the onset of crisis but returns to normal. In member actions, SEIU's strength and timing in response to economic crisis was rapid but not particularly strong, while UAW's was substantially delayed but strong. The strength and timing of SEIU's leader action was gradual but substantial, while the strength and timing of UAW's leader action was swift but ultimately too weak to regard it as a true response to the economic crisis.

Results from organizing and bargaining, taken together to represent conventional union activity, reveal that SEIU reduced those core union activities during economic crisis. They cut bargaining activity slightly more than organizing activity. Although both reduced considerably in accounts and in budgets, they continued to report high success rates in organizing new locals and achieving contractual improvement for members. UAW also reduced these activities, but reduced organizing substantially more than they reduced bargaining. This indicates that they reduced their focus to existing members and fighting for their needs rather than expand the union's membership or expand the membership's political rights. Bargaining activities were maintained or reduced as well, indicating an overall retreat of internally-focused activities. Coupled with their relatively static political activity, this suggests that UAW's strategy is to conserve resources during

tough times, waiting until economic conditions improve to work on growing the union. It also could simply have more to do with the industry in which they operate rather than leader strategy; in a declining industry, opportunities for organizing are more limited.

One issue with this research is the reliance on union-produced press releases. This data could reveal more about the image the union wants to portray than their actual behavior and values. The use of union's annual budgets, available through the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act, are an important substantiation of changes in behavior. Studying the percentage of the budget devoted towards organizing and political activities, and how it changed pre- and post-crisis, strengthens this research by providing a behavioral check on self-reported accounts of activity. A second issue is that it could distort activities to over-emphasize leader action and attitudes towards economic crisis. Future research should collect and analyze data on how the political activity of rank-and-file union members may have changed after the onset of economic crisis. This will strengthen the body of literature on union political activity by providing insight into concerns of members lower in the organizational hierarchy.

Organizational leaders from SEIU, the innovative union, identify and respond to economic crisis as an expansion of opportunity rather than a contraction of opportunity because they envision the union as a social movement. Though not directly measured, this is observed in the activities they encourage, their messages to the public and to union members, and the direction they set for the union's priorities. They conceive of the union's goals broadly, as working to improve the lives not just of the workers they represent, but of all workers and perhaps even all of society. SEIU publicized difficult contract battles and failed attempts to unionize extensively and unapologetically, placing

the blame for the lack of a good contract on employers. They were able to perceive economic crisis as increasing political opportunities because their goals included national policy changes for issues such as immigration, health care, public services, and increasing regulation of business and financial sector. For political goals, economic crisis offers expanding opportunities because it accentuates the weaknesses of the American economic and social system, cultivates widespread dissatisfaction, and shifts national alignments.

The leadership of traditional unions sees the union as a business agent, helping workers increase their wages and compensation and improve their working conditions based on their market position. This ability originates from the representation of a large number of members, offering them a vantage point that gives them insight into the workers' bargaining strengths but also unifies workers to enter into contracts together. Thus, traditional unions like UAW present themselves publicly as successful at achieving these goals, even when objectively they are floundering. When bargaining failed to make gains, they still communicate features of new contracts in a positive light, saying for example "we managed to maintain their excellent benefit package." They typically did not publicize a contract strike until after it was settled, suggesting that perhaps the leaders viewed resorting to a strike as evidence their own ineffectiveness at winning contractual gains for members. Because they conceive of the union's terrain and goals as limited to increasing wages and benefits for members, when market conditions were worsening they reacted to it as a shrinking of opportunities. If the union's scope is limited to wages and working conditions in a declining sector, economic crisis limited the union leadership's bargaining power.

Facing economic crisis, unions are likely to be most successful if they identify an expanded role for their organization and seek to pursue their goals in alternative ways other than improving working conditions one job site at a time. During economic downturn, efforts should use the instability created by economic crisis to advocate for policy solutions on behalf of workers' needs. The latter approach may create alliances and galvanize members' political consciousness in a way that will continue to benefit the union even when business conditions improve.

This research has potential applications beyond unions. Although unions have a unique legal status, other types of organizations such as firms will have many of the same organizational characteristics as unions. All organizations must adapt to a constantly changing environment, and the ability to do so when external conditions change suddenly may be essential to an organizations' survival. Finding a way to grow and improve the organization, regardless of the situation, is critical to long-term organizational success.

CHAPTER V
ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND THE POLITICAL,
ORGANIZING, AND BARGAINING ACTIVITY OF
TEN LABOR UNIONS, 2005-2010

This chapter continues the examination of labor union response to economic crisis, expanding the study to include a systematic analysis of 10 labor unions. Labor unions are the largest organizations whose primary purpose is to represent working class interests. Thus, they have the potential to balance financial elite interests in US democracy, illustrating the worthiness of this topic. Economic crises are a strategic and valuable setting to study labor union political activity, in part because economic crises can be pivot points in history. Labor unions are a type of organization that must respond strategically to the change in external conditions in order to preserve a role in society. Additionally, the weak economy generates dissatisfaction with the status quo and more people are willing to consider alternatives to the current economic structure. Because of this, organizations can use this time to advocate for policies that offer solutions to the nationwide problems and that might benefit their groups. I believe this is the first systematic study of multiple labor unions' range of political activity.

This chapter makes three contributions to theory. First, it brings organizations in to political opportunity theory, working to establish how organizational characteristics are consistent with identifying and responding to opportunity. External conditions change continually, but a radical change like economic crisis is an excellent site to examine

which organizational characteristics are consistent with the an organization's ability adjust in response to external cues. Second, it improves over previous studies of political opportunity because it examines multiple types of political action: from activist to institutional, including leaders' actions as well as members'. Complex organizations such as labor unions are diverse and can be expected to have varying response to economic crisis, even increasing political activity through different channels. Third, by examining activity before as well as after the opportunity presented by economic crisis occurs, it is able to measure changes in behavior. This extends research related to political opportunity, which has focused on movements that arose in response to opportunity rather than examining changes in behavior of organizations that existed prior to the onset of the opportunity.

This is accomplished through an examination of organizational characteristics and political, organizing, and bargaining activity of 10 national labor unions. Reports from the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act provide detailed information on organizational characteristics of labor unions, including financial activity. Union newsletters provide data on political, organizing, and bargaining activity. These two sources combine self-reports of activity and behavioral measures of spending. Data are analyzed using fsQCA, which maintains the integrity of the characteristics of individual cases while allow systematic analysis. This expands the examination of how unions respond to economic crisis from the previous case studies to a larger number of unions in a more systematic way.

Literature

Union typologies

Social movement unions will respond quickly to the political opportunity engendered by an economic crisis, while business unions will respond more slowly and cautiously in an attempt to ride out change from their secure market niche. Social movement unions are identified as those with a general social and economic critique of capitalism. They employ organizing tactics that involve the membership in organizing and they use specific injustices both to gain membership and to attack employers. Business unions, in contrast, do not offer a general critique of capitalism, use professional staff in organizing, and seek to negotiate a cooperative relationship with management.

Organizational ecology

Organizational ecology puts forward a different-but-complementary set of mechanisms that influence the success or failure of organizations. The level of competition or density within the field is a key concept for organizational ecology, which often identifies a carrying capacity for a given environment, beyond which it is difficult to grow. Successful organizations are found to have a great deal of inertia or resistance to change, and they often imitate one another in a quest for success. Network studies show that firms are connected via personnel and via their boards of directors and that these can serve as conduits for imitation. Some of the foundational studies in organizational ecology are on the birth and death of US labor unions (Hannan and Freeman 1987, 1988) and the theory continues to offer insight into labor union behavior.

In contrast to the previously cited research, organizational ecology assumes that organizations rarely change in response to external conditions, because change is

disruptive (Singh et al 1986). Attempts to make core changes frequently result in organizational failure. Rather, a natural selection process occurs where organizations that are structurally effective in the environment thrive, and organizations that are not suited die out while new organizations with more appropriate organizational conditions replace the failed organizations. Older organizations generally have more structural inertia as a result of this selection process. Hannan and Freeman (1977) argue that organizational flexibility requires a generalist structure which is likely to be outperformed at any given moment by an organization which is specialized for that same environment. By this logic, the drastically changing environment could result in a higher number of labor unions disbanding rather than adapting to new conditions.

Organizational flexibility

Organizational flexibility – an organization’s ability to adapt to changes in internal or external conditions (Georgopoulos and Tannenbaum 1957) – is an important concept in this research. It allows me to consider how nimbly unions may redirect resources to where they will be most effective under crisis conditions, and adjust leadership structures and organizational goals when necessary as well. Key factors associated with high organizational flexibility include access to resources and high leadership turnover (Martin 2008), staff-centered organizations (Minkoff 1999), and low professionalization of employees (Zald and Denton 1963). This data allows me to consider both organizational factors and social movement practices.

Previous studies have indicated several characteristics to be associated with the ability of organizations to adapt to changing external conditions. Older organizations are generally more flexible (Minkoff 1999). Over a 30-year period, age and staff size both

had a positive impact on organizational flexibility as well as organizational survival.

“Characteristics associated with more established or legitimate organizations – particularly age and formalization – more generally are correlated with flexibility and survival.” (Minkoff 1999: 1696). Thus, this analysis will include age of the union and size of staff as a percentage of membership as causal variables. Although many unions have roots extending prior to World War II, mergers and acquisitions have occurred with increasing frequency since the 1980s, and these should be treated as new organizations (Hannan and Freeman 1987).

In their seminal article on organizational change, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggest that coercive (regulatory), mimetic (uncertainty leading to imitation), and normative (professionalization) pressures alter an organization’s response to new conditions. I expect network connections among union organizers and staff to affect the particular course that a labor union takes when confronted with a crisis of the magnitude of our current economic recession. Organizations experiencing a major disruptive external event adapt better if they have exposure to other organizations already under the same circumstances (Allmendinger 1996). Federated organizational structures allow autonomy for locals that results in greater organizational flexibility (Zald and Denton 1963). Following this research, I expect that unions belonging to a federation will be more likely to increase political activity. Though some independent unions exist and will be in my sample, most unions belong to either the Change to Win or AFL-CIO federation.

Organizations with enrollment-based membership, such as the YMCA, are more likely to be flexible in response to external changes (Zald and Denton 1963). An

organization with enrollment-based membership is able to quickly notice when a change is needed because members fail to re-enroll. Because they depend on member fees, they must adapt quickly to stay in existence by finding new ways to meet potential members' needs. Based on this argument, unions with rapidly falling union membership are more likely to be flexible in response to changing external conditions.

Following this research, I expect that unions which are simultaneously older, federated, declining, and staff-centered will be more likely to respond to economic crisis by increasing overall political action. Previous research does not indicate if I should expect all four conditions to be present or if some of the conditions are substitutable for each other. I test the most stringent hypothesis, that all conditions must be present. This establishes a high standard for confirming the hypothesis, but allows the results to illustrate when alternative combinations of these variables are consistent with the outcome in question. This is the base hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 1: AGE*FED*DECLINE*STAFF = INCREASE OVERALL*

Martin (2008) argues that oligarchy is one potential reason some unions have not adapted to the current organizing climate; they continue to use NLRB organizing procedures even though evidence suggests that non-NLRB organizing is more successful. Though it could be a rational choice driven by financial strategy, it also could be that highly static leadership structures result in union officials' hesistance to allow changes that might result in a disruption of the organizational stability. Non-NLRB organizing tends to utilize rank-and-file member activism in contentious actions, which could alter a union's reputation in the community as well as encourage organizational restructuring as

members increase involvement. Unions with high leadership turnover are more likely to adapt in response to external change.

Thus, I argue that unions with low leadership turnover are more likely to respond to economic crisis by increasing leader-based political action. Additionally, unions that pay high salaries to elected officers will be more likely to increase leader-based political action. Based on findings from chapters two and three, I expect that leader action is the primary way unions respond to crisis. As a subset of increasing overall political action, I expect the same variables from hypothesis 1 to be necessary in hypothesis 2. This is the oligarchy hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 2: OLD*FED* DECLINING*STAFF* turnover*OFFICERPAY = INCREASE LEADER*

The presence of resources, both financial and human, increases organizational flexibility (Martin 2008). Organizational size can influence capability to change, but it depends on external constraints (Haveman 1993). In some cases, medium-sized firms are the most well-adapted to change because they are large enough to have resources and market advantage, but small enough to have flexible bureaucracy. In other contexts, the market advantage of larger firms puts it in the best position to make adaptive changes. This research on market-based firms applies to unions, but the administrative parts of unions never approach the size of large businesses. So, I argue that large membership will facilitate organizational flexibility for member action. Although resources increase organizational flexibility, I argue that unions will increase member action when they have plenty of human resources in the form of members, but limited financial resources. Additionally, I expect that efforts to mobilize members will be more successful in

declining unions, as members will discern the threat facing their jobs and be more willing to participate in political action with the union. This is the resource exchange hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 3: DECLINING*resources*MEMBERSHIP = INCREASE MEMBER*

As they age, many organizations go through a process of formalization, increasing paid staff, achieving financial stability, and creating an efficient division of labor.

However, these formalized organizations engage in disruptive collective action less often than their informal counterparts (Staggenborg 1988: 603). Efforts to maintain the organization become higher priority than the original goals of the movement, resulting in increasingly conservative actions (Zald and Ash 1966: 338-339). However, others have found no relationship between formalization of an organization and direction of activity (Minkoff 1999:1695).

In the aftermath of terrorist activity in the early 2000s, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have faced a changing socio-legal environment. INGOs in countries with the largest changes in regulations responded more radically than INGOs in countries with smaller changes. But overall, most changes in organizational behavior were caused by self-censorship in light of uncertainty over how changes would be enforced. “Uncertainty has also encouraged organizations to become conservative regarding funding and political advocacy, relying on more established, thus safer activities” like providing services rather than political advocacy (Bloodgood 2011: 168). When political conditions are favorable, mobilization alone will achieve results, but unfavorable political conditions require activist mobilization (Amenta, Caren, and Olasky 2005).

Following research that organizations with the biggest threat had the most radical response, I expect that declining unions will be the most important characteristic in increasing activist political actions. Additionally, following research that activist mobilization overcomes unfavorable conditions, I see activist mobilization as an intensified form of political action and expect that the same four conditions that result in increasing overall action will result in increasing activist action: old, professionalized, federated, declining unions. This is the threat hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 4: (OLD+STAFF+FED)*DECLINING = INCREASE ACTIVIST POLITICS*

Following Bloodgood, research, I expect that independent, non-formalized unions will be more likely to increase institutional political actions because they are more vulnerable to uncertainty. At the same time, because great resources are necessary to be successfully involved in US politics, I expect that unions with high financial resources and membership to increase institutional political action. I also expect that older unions will be more likely to have established relationships with political figures, and thus will be more likely to increase institutional politics. This is the vulnerability/influence hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 5: staff*fed*RESOURCES*MEMBERSHIP*AGE = INCREASE INSTITUTIONAL POLITICS*

Finally, I argue that the inverse of characteristics expected to result in increasing political action will be consistent with unions that increase the internally-focused activities of organizing and bargaining.

*Hypothesis 6: old*fed*staff*declining = INCREASE INTERNAL ACTIVITIES*

Method

Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) is a method that uses set theory and boolean algebra to determine how configurations of causal variables are consistent with an outcome. Charles Ragin refined and popularized this method through a series of books (1987, 2000, 2008), and it is beginning to gain prominence in sociology. Research using these methods has increasingly appeared in top journals over the last decade (c.f. Roscigno and Hodson 2004; Grant, Trautner, Downey, and Thiebaud 2010). It is a middle way between qualitative (case-oriented) research and quantitative (variable-oriented) research, not only in the number of cases it is capable of analyzing but in the strengths of the method. Through its use of configurations, it maintains the integrity of cases and allows systematic comparison between types of cases. It is also useful for theory testing and development. This analysis can capture if there are multiple paths to an outcome, different combinations of conditions that can achieve the same result (Ragin 2008: 113-4). In an analysis of organizations such as this one, it makes intuitive sense to retain the wholeness of the cases.

Case selection

This is a preliminary analysis of 10 cases, which will eventually expand to 30. Following the above explanation of QCA, it is more important to maximize diversity in truth table rows than to increase the number of cases. Although counterfactuals are standard due to naturally occurring limited diversity (Ragin 2008: 158), when a configuration does exist empirically, cases representing the configuration should be included. Because data collection for the outcome variables was extensive, I used proxy information to choose a group of unions that would result in a diverse truth table prior to

collecting data. To capture diversity, I considered the strength of the industry in which the union predominantly organized and the federation. I also chose unions with available data (see Table 5.1). Although most cells are represented by cases in this analysis, there were no non-AFL-CIO unions in a declining industry with available data. Another issue is that some unions organized broadly in multiple sectors of the economy, with no clear central focus. This includes Teamsters and IBEW. Rather than exclude them from the analysis, I treated them as stagnant – neither growing or declining.

Table 5.1. Case selection.

	Growing industry	Stagnant industry	Declining industry
AFL-CIO	SPFPA, SAG	NATCA, IBEW, UTU	BCTGM, Iron Workers
Non-AFL-CIO	UGSOA, ANA	Teamsters	n/a

Outcome variables

The goal of this analysis is to explain union response to economic crisis, focusing on changes in political, organizing, and bargaining behavior. I include multiple measures of this behavior to capture the range of possibilities, from institutional to activist types of activities. I collected data on activist member action, institutional member action, positive leader action, negative leader action, organizing activity, and bargaining activity (see previous chapter for definitions of these variables). I combined these measures into sets in order to apply existing theories to the data and to facilitate generalizable conclusions, resulting in increased member action (highest score of activist member action and institutional member action), increased leader action (highest score of positive leader action and negative leader action), increased activist action (highest score of activist

member action and negative leader action), increased institutional action (highest score of institutional member action and positive leader action), and increased internal action (highest score of organizing and bargaining). Analyzing these broader categories facilitates the analysis by increasing the number of positive cases in each analysis and allowing the research to synthesize with existing theoretical knowledge.

Causal variables

I include four categories of causal variables, all measuring organizational features. The first is resources, which includes specific measures of assets and overall membership size. The examines the financial and human resources they can access for union activities. The second is bureaucracy, which includes the age of union, federation, and professionalization (staff to member ratio). Higher values of each of these are indicators of bureaucracy, which facilitates nimble changes in strategy. The third is centralization, which includes officer salaries and officer turnover. High officer salaries and low turnover are both indicators of union centralization, which will be most important when looking at leader action outcomes. Finally, membership decline measures context. Although membership growth is not perfectly consistent with industry growth, they are very closely related. Complications with industry make it an undesirable variable to include in the analysis, and membership growth is more closely related to the question of the security of the organization's future (see table 5.2).

Data collection

I collected monthly data from LMRDA reports and union newsletters, covering the time period from December 2005-December 2010. LMRDA reports report financial

Table 5.2. Causal variable data and fuzzy set conversion

	ANA ¹	BCTGM ²	IBEW ³	IW ⁴	NATCA ⁵	SAG ⁶	SPFPA ⁷	IBT ⁸	UGSOA ⁹	UTU ¹⁰
Set: Old Unions										
Measure: year founded										
Raw	1962	1886	1891	1896	1987	1933	1948	1903	1992	1969
QCA	0.4	1	1	1	0.2	0.6	0.6	1	0	0.4
Set: Unions with Declining Membership										
Measure: rate of change of membership 2007-2009										
Raw	1.13	0.92	0.95	0.91	1.08	1.01	1.12	0.97	1.27	0.82
QCA	0	0.75	0.75	0.75	0	0	0	0.25	0	1
Set: AFL-CIO										
QCA	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1
Set: Professionalized Unions										
Measure: # of members per staff										
Raw	984	2358	1673	1333	262	386	1080	2120	1017	821
QCA	0.6	1	0.8	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.6	1	0.6	0.4
Set: Unions with High President Turnover										
Measure: years in office in 2008										
Raw	2	16	7	7	2	3	8	10	1	0
QCA	0.75	0	0	0	0.75	0.75	0	0	1	1
Set: Unions with Highly Paid Officers										
Measure: mean officer salary in 2008, in thousands										
Raw	0.00	56.83	125.39	190.27	45.83	0.00	52.95	124.91	42.91	62.70
Measure: president salary in 2008, in thousands										
Raw	0.00	191.52	295.46	317.01	220.00	0.00	134.37	287.95	85.46	287.12
QCA ¹¹	0	.67	1	1	.67	0	.67	1	0.33	.67

Table 5.2. (Continued)

	ANA	BCTGM	IBEW	IW	NATCA	SAG	SPFPA	IBT	UGSOA	UTU
Set: Unions with High Financial Assets										
Measure: assets in 2008, in millions										
Raw	9.79	23.67	241.66	94.32	16.56	21.41	1.57	86.00	0.24	24.71
QCA	0.4	0.6	1	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.8	0	0.6
Set: Unions with Large Membership										
Measure: membership in 2008										
Raw	209494	89617	709244	136010	14932	181156	25915	1437046	9150	74682
QCA	0.6	0.4	0.8	0.6	0	0.6	0.2	1	0	0.4

¹ American Nurses Association

² Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union

³ International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

⁴ International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental, and Reinforcing Iron Workers

⁵ National Air Traffic Controllers Association

⁶ Screen Actors Guild

⁷ International Union, Security, Police, and Fire Professionals of America

⁸ International Brotherhood of Teamsters

⁹ United Government Security Officers of America

¹⁰ United Transportation Union

¹¹ The QCA score for the set of highly paid officers is based on both the mean officer salary and the president salary.

information for a national union organization for a period of one year. These usually run from January 1 to December 31, but some unions are on different reporting schedules, running from July 1 to June 30 (for example). In the monthly spreadsheets, I entered data from LMRDA reports in the final month of the reporting period. I entered data from newsletters in the month the newsletter was published when that information was available. When it wasn't, I entered the latest month of the volume; for example, a newsletter titled as the March/April version went in April's data row. Some newsletters are published seasonally. I entered spring newsletters in May, summer newsletters in August, fall newsletters in November, and winter newsletters in February.

Data measurement

Data on outcome variables are collected and coded using the same scheme as in chapter IV. I measured increases in activities (political, bargaining, and organizing) as the rate of change, using the average of activity for two years post-crisis and the average of activity two years pre-crisis (see table 5.3 for case scores on outcome measures). I excluded the year that included the onset of economic crisis in September 2008. This made the time periods equal and prevented the 2008 election cycle from interfering with the measure. Each time period includes a non-election year and a midterm election year, so they are reasonable representations of union activity. For unions that had no instances of a type of activity prior to the onset of crisis, but did have activity after crisis, I added 1/10000 of a percentage point to the denominator. This created a number that was substantially less than unions that exhibited only one instance of activity in the entire two year period, but still allowed a measure of change. The final values are negative if unions

decreased activity and positive if unions increased activity, scaled to their pre-crisis activity rates.

Table 5.3. Fuzzy membership scores on outcome variables

	Increased Overall Political Action	Increased Member Action	Increased Leader Action	Increased Activist Action	Increased Institutional Action
ANA	0	0	0.75	0.75	0
BCTGM	0.75	1	0.75	0.75	1
IBEW	0.25	1	1	0.75	1
IW	1	1	1	0	1
NATCA	0	0	1	0	1
SAG	1	1	1	1	1
SPFPA	0	0	0	0	0
Team	0	0	1	0	1
UGSOA	0.25	1	0	0	1
UTU	0.5	0	0.75	0.75	0.75
Total number of cases with the outcome	6	5	8	5	8

Note: The calibration of these fuzzy membership scores are the author's assessment of the sets.

Categories of activities from newsletters are coded so that a value of 0 means that the union exhibited no change from pre-crisis to post-crisis. A value of 1 means the union doubled their action, and a value of -1 means the activity dropped to near 0. Each outcome variable is calibrated into a set of unions that greatly increased the number of actions. Any cases with values equal or less than 0 are coded as 0 in the fuzzy set. Cases above zero but less than .05, a 5% increase in activity, are coded as .25. Cases between .05 and .20, an increase of more than 5% but less than 20%, are coded as .75. Cases

above .20, an increase in activity of more than 20%, are coded as 1. This holds for CMA, DMA, PLA, NLA, bargaining action, and organizing actions.

I measured most causal variables using single data points taken from the time period including September 2008. This indicates their organizational position at the onset of crisis. This includes age of the union, federation, professionalization (staff-center), size of membership, financial resources, officer turnover, and officer salaries. Membership decline is a measure of change, so its measurement is explained below.

Data on the age and the federation of the union are both taken from union websites. The fuzzy set of older unions is determined by the age of the union. Those that are less than 20 years old receive a score of 0. Those that are 21-40 years old receive a score of .25. Those that are 41-60 years old receive a score of .5. Those that are 61-80 years old receive a score of .75. Those that are more than 80 years old receive a score of 1. Unions that belong to a federation receive a fuzzy set score of 1, whether they belong to AFL-CIO or CTW. Independent unions receive a score of 0.

In the set of cases with fast declining membership, unions with stagnant or growing membership receive a score of 0. This is measured as the change from membership in the two years prior to the onset of crisis and to membership in the two years after the onset of crisis. Unions with membership decline of less than 2% receive a score of .25. Unions with membership decline of between 2% and 4.9% receive a score of .75. Unions with more than 5% membership decline receive a score of 1. I originally intended to examine the strength of the industry, but this proved to be a difficult measure to use. Some unions restrict their organizing to specific industries and occupations, making it easy to determine if their organizing context was improving or declining. But

some organize across multiple industries and occupations, with no primary focus. For example, Teamsters organizes across many industries. International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) represents a particular set of occupations that work in multiple industries.

The number of staff members is collected from LMRDA documents. The set of professionalized unions is calibrated using data on the average number of members per staff person. Professionalized organizations are more bureaucratic, but more flexible. This is another set where there were no theoretical suggestions for how to calibrate the variable, so I use natural breaking points to create categories. Unions with less than 250 members per staff person have a high concentration of staff; they receive a value of 1. Unions with 251 to 500 members per staff person receive a value of .8. Unions with 501 to 900 members per staff person receive a value of .6. Unions with 901 to 1500 members per staff person receive a value of .4. Unions with 1501 to 2000 members per staff person receive a value of .2. Finally, unions with more than 2000 members per staff person receive a value of 0.

The set of resource-rich unions is measured using the average net assets during the year in which the crisis began. LMRDA reports include net assets at the beginning and end of the reporting period. This is not scaled per member because it represents the overall financial resources of the union. Assets affect their ability to spend money in politics, both in campaign contributions, purchasing air time to promote their candidates and issues, and political polling and literature to influence members. Their financial power does not change if dollars represent more or less members. There are no theoretical suggestions for breaking points in calibrating this measure, so I looked for

natural divisions. Unions with more than 150 million dollars in assets receive a score of 1. Unions with between 50 million and 99 million dollars in assets receive a score of .75. Unions with between 10 million and 49 million dollars in assets receive a score of .5. Unions with between one million and nine million dollars in assets receive a score of .25. Unions with less than one million dollars in assets receive a score of 0.

Membership data comes from LMRDA reports. The set of large membership is measured using the number of members in the year during which the onset of crisis occurred. Members are a resource that can potentially be mobilized to action. Unions with more than one million members receive a fuzzy set score of 1. Unions with between 500,000 and 999,000 members receive a score of .8. Unions with between 100,000 and 499,000 receive a score of .6. Unions with between 50,000 and 99,000 receive a score of .4. Unions with between 25,000 and 49,000 members receive a score of .2. Finally, unions with less than 25,000 members receive a score of 0.

Information on officer salaries is calculated using information in LMRDA documents, which report salaries and allow me to calculate average officer salary. They report direct salaries, allowances, and disbursements. I consider direct salary only. Unions that do not pay officers salary receive a score of 0. Unions with average salaries of less than 50 thousand dollars or presidential salaries of less than 100 thousand dollars receive a score of .33. Unions with average salaries of between 50 thousand dollars and 100 thousand dollars or presidential salaries of more than 200 thousand dollars receive a score of .67. Unions with average salaries of more than 100 thousand dollars receive a score of 1.

Finally, the set of unions with high officer turnover is created using data on the tenure of the president in September 2008, collected from union websites. Unions with presidents who had served for more than 6 years received a score of 0, indicating low turnover. Unions with presidents who had served for 5 years received a score of .25. Unions with presidents who had served for 2 or 3 years received a score of .75. Unions with presidents who had served for a year or less received a score of 1.

Analysis

Descriptive

I began the analysis by examining the truth table for trends. This provides additional insight to the QCA analysis; by including additional causal variables and outcome variables, to aid in the development of theories dealing with organizational characteristics not covered by existing theories. I first looked at unions that increased political activity in multiple ways compared to those that decreased political activity overall.

Unions with declining or stagnant membership, that do not spend a high proportion of their budget on representational activities, political activities, or staff are the most likely to increase political activity. Union that increased alliances and non-institutional member actions were more likely to increase political activity overall. Most unions that increased political activity are large. The small unions that increased political activity are all in declining industries, while the only large union that did not increase its political activity (Teamsters) is not in AFL-CIO. Most of the unions that increased political activity were experiencing declining or stagnant membership, with the exception of ANA. In addition to being in a growing industry, ANA is distinct because it is not in

AFL-CIO and is one of the unions with fewer resources. The organizational profiles of ANA and UGSOA are very similar, yet they respond very differently to crisis. This is a point for further investigation. Their only difference is that ANA is large and spends a high percentage of their budget on staff.

Unions that spend a high proportion of their budget on representational spending are more likely to decreased political activity overall. All unions that decreased political activity overall spend a lot on representational activity. There are two unions that spend a lot on representational activity and still increased their political activity overall: SAG and ANA. Those two are large unions that also spend a high proportion of their budget on staff. Unions that spend a low proportion of their budget on political activities are more likely to increase political activity overall. Every union that increased political activity overall spent a low proportion of their budget on politics. Two unions had lower political spending yet did not increase their activity: UGSOA and SPFPA. These are the only two unions that are small but growing in membership.

The amount of resources held by unions was somewhat consistent with increasing political activity. High resource unions were more likely to increase political activity than low resource unions. Three unions defy this trend: ANA, which has low resources but increased political activity; and NATCA and Teamsters, which each have high resources but decreased political activity overall. Again, ANA is distinguished because it is the only union increasing political activity that was experiencing growing membership, while NATCA and Teamsters were the only two unions in a stagnant industry.

Staff to member ratios, the percent of the budget spent on staff, the age of the union, and the federation all did not have a clear direct impact on increasing political

activity overall. In the following pages I will analyze how causal variables relate to increases in each type of outcome activity.

Five of the 10 unions increased non-institutional member action (DMA), 3 maintained their levels of DMAs, and 2 decreased DMAs. The 8 unions that either increased or maintained their level fo DMAs spend a low proportion of their budget on politics, while the 2 that decreased DMAs spend a high proportion of their budget on politics.

Six of the 10 unions increased conventional member action (CMA), 2 maintained CMAs, and 2 decreased CMAs. Most of the unions that maintained or increased conventional member action were experiencing declining membership. NATCA is an exception, a growing union that increased CMAs. It was also one of the only unions that increased CMA with a smaller membership, along with UTU. SPFPA and UGSOA both have small increasing membership, and maintained their levels of CMA. Those unions also had low staffing levels and spent a small proportion of their budgets on political activity. Unlike NATCA, they also had low resources.

Five of the unions increased positive leader action (PLA), with 1 maintaining their level of PLA, and 4 decreasing their level of PLA. Each union that increased PLAs spends a lower proportion of their budget on political activity. There are no consistent trends with unions that spend a low proportion of their budget on political activity, but did not increase PLA. Four of the 5 had low staffing levels and spent a low proportion of their budget on staff. Four of them were old AFL-CIO unions while one was a young independent union.

Four unions increased negative leader action (NLA), with 2 maintaining their level of NLAs and 4 decreasing their level of NLAs. All unions that increased or maintained spent a low percentage of their budget on political activity.

Four unions increased alliances, while 3 maintained alliances, and 3 decreased alliances. With the exception of the Teamsters, large unions increased alliances. Teamsters is also the only one that spends a high percentage of their budget on political activity. Unions that spend a low percentage of their budget on political activity nearly all increased or maintained alliances. BCTGM is the only union that spends a low percentage of their budget on political activity, but increased alliances. There is no clear connection to any of the organizational variables.

Two of the 10 unions increased bargaining, while the other 8 decreased bargaining activities. The two that increased are BCTGM and SAG, and there is no clear explanation. The two unions have little of their organizational variables in common, other than both being old unions in the AFL-CIO, but that is not unique in this data. I cannot argue that this was a strategic move for the two of them, responding to economic crisis by increasing a focus on existing members rather than expanding or influencing the external world, because SAG was the union that increased political activity the most.

Four of the unions increased organizing activity while 1 maintained organizing activity and 5 decreased organizing activity. BCTGM is the only union that increased both organizing and bargaining. IW, UTU, and UGSOA all decreased bargaining while increasing organizing. SPFPA, Teamsters, NATCA, IBEW, and ANA all decreased both. SAG increased bargaining while maintaining organizing. All of the unions that increased or maintained organizing spend a low percentage of their budget on staff. Two of the

unions that spend a low percentage of their budget on staff but decreased organizing are unions in with growing membership. One union in a growing industry with growing membership increased organizing, UGSOA, but it is a small, young union without a lot of assets. The other union that spends a high percentage of their budget on staff but decreased organizing is IBEW, who increased their political action considerably. They also have lots of resources, distinguishing them from the other two that decreased organizing but spend a high percentage of their budget on staff (ANA and Teamsters).

Some unions increased one type of action at the expense of another. For example, Ironworkers increased positive leader action while decreasing negative leader action. BCTGM increased non-institutional member actions while decreasing conventional member action. Teamsters and NATCA did the opposite, increasing conventional member action while decreasing non-institutional member actions. UTU, SPFPA, and ANA all increased negative leader action while decreasing positive leader action. Fraternal Order of Police is excluded from most of this analysis because they do not have LMRDA reports on file with the Office of Labor-Management Standards, thus I am missing data for most of their organizational variables. However, they decreased both types of member action while increasing both types of leader action.

SPFPA, Teamsters, and NATCA all retreated overall. Not only did they reduce political action overall (through increasing a couple of types of activity while decreasing the rest of the types of political activity), they also decreased bargaining and organizing activity. ANA was the most politicized by the economic crisis. They decreased organizing and bargaining both in action and in proportion of spending. They swapped

conventional and positive political action for non-institutional and negative political action, as well as alliances.

BCTGM is the only union to increase both bargaining and organizing activity. It is also the only small, declining union.

Unions experiencing declining membership were more likely to increase organizing activity: this includes BCTGM, IW, and UTU. UGSOA is an exception – a union with increasing membership that also increased organizing, but they are a small union. ANA is the only large, growing union. The unions with increasing membership were also less likely to increase bargaining, though overall few of the unions focused on that effort. Unions experiencing either growing or stagnant membership consistently spent a large percentage of their budget on representational activities.

The only two unions to spend a large percentage of their budget on political activity were the least likely to engage in political actions, or at least to discuss political actions much in their newsletters: Teamsters and NATCA. They were also the two that exhibited the largest overall retreat in response to economic crisis. Teamsters is unusual because it is the only old union that is not in AFL-CIO. NATCA is one of two young AFL-CIO unions, and it is in growing membership in spite of being in a stagnant industry – the other young AFL-CIO union, UTU, is declining membership in spite of being in a stagnant industry. NATCA also spends a high percentage of their budget on political activity while UTU spends a low percentage of their budget on political activities.

Three of the unions had low resources, and all three were situated in growing industries with growing membership. They also had in common low staffing levels compared to membership, spent a low percentage of their budget on political activity, but

but spent a high proportion of their budget on representational activity. The three all decreased or maintained CMAs, as did nearly all of the high resource unions with the exception of BCTGM.

Also noteworthy is the CMAs and NLAs seem to operate inversely; with the exception of two unions, an increase in one is consistent with a decrease in the other. UTU increases both, and UGSOA maintains both. SAG and SPFPA increase one while maintaining the other. Teamsters, NATCA, IBEW, and IW all increase CMA and decrease NLA. BCTGM and ANA both decrease CMA and increase NLA.

Although the industry variable should be treated with suspicion, I did observe that unions in declining industries were slightly more likely to increase representational spending. Three of the four in growing industries decreased representation spending and one maintained it. Those in stagnant and declining industries were evenly split between increasing representational spending and maintaining it. Another noticeable trend related to the strength of the industry in which the union organized is that unions in growing industries increased or maintained negative leader action, while those in stagnant or declining industries were more likely to decrease. However, 2 of the 6 unions in declining industries did increase negative leader action.

Two of the 3 unions with low staffing levels in comparison to membership, but who spend a high percentage of their budget on staff, are non-AFL-CIO unions. UGSOA is the only independent union that spends a low percentage of their budget on staff, while SAG is the only AFL-CIO union that spends a high percentage of their budget on staff.

Younger unions seem more likely to decrease PLA. UGSOA is the exception – a young union that increased PLA. SPFPA is the other exception – an old union that

decreased PLA. SPFPA and UGSOA are in similar industries, and according to LMRDA reports, both spend 0 dollars on political activities. UGSOA is predominantly government, while SPFPA is a small union without a lot of financial resources or staff.

Neither federation nor staffing levels has a clear direct connection to any of the outcome variables. I also failed to find any consistent connections between organizational variables and increased spending.

QCA

Table 5.4 shows the results of the base hypothesis. The reduced configuration shows that unions must be both AFL-CIO and declining, and either old or professionalized to increase overall political action.

Table 5.4. FsQCA results for the base hypothesis

<p>Individual configurations (and number of unions) OLD*DECLINING*AFLCIO (3) + DECLINING*PROFESSIONALIZED*AFLCIO (1) = Reduced form of configurations AFLCIO*DECLINING (OLD + PROFESSIONALIZED)</p>

Table 5.5 shows the results of the oligarchy hypothesis. The reduced configuration shows that unions must be both AFL-CIO and old, then must either be declining unions with low turnover, high officer salaries, and a low concentration of staff, or they must be non-declining professionalized unions with high turnover and low officer salaries, to increase leader action.

Table 5.6 shows the results of the resource exchange hypothesis. The reduced configuration shows that unions must have large membership and be non-declining, or have substantial financial resources, to increase member action.

Table 5.5. FsQCA results for the oligarchy hypothesis

Individual configurations (and number of unions) DECLINING*AFLCIO*turnover*SALARIES*professionalized*OLD (3) + Declining*AFLCIO*TURNOVER*salaries*PROFESSIONALIZED*OLD (1) = Reduced form of configurations AFLCIO*OLD ((DECLINING*turnover*SALARIES*professionalized) + declining*TURNOVER*salaries*PROFESSIONALIZED))
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Table 5.6. FsQCA Results for the resource exchange hypothesis

Individual configurations (and number of unions) LARGE*declining (3) + RESOURCES (7) = Reduced form of configurations (LARGE*declining) + RESOURCES

Table 5.7 shows the results of the threat hypothesis. The reduced configuration shows that unions must be both AFL-CIO and declining, and either old with low staff density or young and professionalized to increase activist political action.

Table 5.7. FsQCA Results for the threat hypothesis

Individual configurations (and number of unions) DECLINING*OLD*AFLCIO*professionalized (3) DECLINING*old*AFLCIO*PROFESSIONALIZED (1) = Reduced form of configurations DECLINING*AFLCIO ((OLD*professionalized) + (old *PROFESSIONALIZED))
--

Table 5.8 shows the results of the vulnerability/influence hypothesis. The reduced configuration shows that unions must be have substantial resources, and either be old, or a small professionalized union to increase institutional member action.

Table 5.8. FsQCA Results for the vulnerability/influence hypothesis

Individual configurations (and number of unions)
RESOURCES*OLD (5)
RESOURCES*PROFESSIONALIZED*large (2) =
Reduced form of configurations
RESOURCES (OLD + (PROFESSIONALIZED*large))

Consistency and coverage are two concepts useful to evaluating QCA results (see table 5.9). Consistency is a measure of the strength the relationship between a set of conditions and a given outcome; in other words, the degree to which cases with that condition agree in sharing the outcome. Coverage is a measure of the proportion of cases with that outcome that have that relationship; in other words, the degree to which cases with that relationship are a subset of cases with that outcome (Ragin 2008: 44).

Consistency and coverage are generally a trade-off. Having a higher score on one means a lower score on the other (Ragin 2008: 117). This research achieved good consistency scores for the base hypothesis (.79) and the threat hypothesis (.78). Generally, .75 is the lowest benchmark for consistency that a reasonable researcher would make. This research achieved high consistency scores for the oligarchy hypothesis (.93) and excellent consistency scores for the resource exchange hypothesis (.93) and the vulnerability/influence hypothesis (.95).

Discussion

These results support theoretical expectations concerning which organizational characteristics will be consistent with increases in overall political activity. The stability provided by age and federation membership, the resources of a professionalized, staff-centered union, and the change signal provided by declining membership are all important for an organization to identify the opportunity present in economic crisis and

Table 5.9. Configurations for increasing political activity.

	H1 (Base)	H2 (Oligarchy)	H3 (Resource Exchange)	H4 (Threat)	H5 (Vulnerability/ Influence)
Old	◆	●		◇	
AFL-CIO	◆	●		◆	●
Professionalized	◆	◎		◇	
Declining	●	●		●	
Large			●		
High Officer Salaries		○			
Turnover		◎			
Resources			●		●
Consistency	.79	.93	.97	.78	.95
Coverage	.60	.52	.8	.53	.54

- = core condition present
- = core condition absent
- ◎ = core condition present or absent, depending on the presence or absence of other conditions
- ◆ = secondary condition present
- ◇ = secondary condition absent
- ◇ = secondary condition present or absent, depending on the presence or absence of other conditions

Note: Core conditions are those which are present in the parsimonious solution, which ignores non-empirical cases. Secondary conditions are not present in the parsimonious solution, but are present in the intermediate solution, which includes non-empirical cases that the researchers judges as relevant.

respond by increasing political activity. This suggests that stability, resources, and threat are all necessary, but one source of each is sufficient (see table 5.10).

Four of the other hypotheses had mixed support. I developed hypotheses that expand political opportunity theory by suggesting how organizations with different characteristics might respond to economic crisis by increasing activity in different ways. Each received mixed support, suggesting that organizational characteristics are important

Table 5.10. Theoretical findings

Hypothesis	Old	Declining Union	AFL-CIO	Staff-Centered	President Turnover	Officer Salaries	Resource	Large Union
1. Base	Expected:	+	+	+	+			
	Finding:	+	+	+	+			
2. Oligarchy	Expected:	+	+	+	+	-	+	
	Finding:	+	o	+	o	o	o	
3. Resource Exchange	Expected:		-				-	+
	Finding:		-				+	+
4. Threat	Expected:	+	+	+	+			
	Finding:	o	+	+	o			
5. Vulnerability / Influence	Expected:	-		-	-		+	+
	Finding:	+		+	+		+	-

+ : present

- : absent

o : important but dependent on other conditions

but that the theories should be revised. Old, AFL-CIO unions are most likely to increase leader action. Beyond that, the oligarchy hypothesis suggested that unions with high officer salaries and low turnover would be most likely to increase leader action. This was true for declining unions with low professionalization. However, for professionalized, non-declining unions, the opposite is true – unions with low officer salaries and high turnover also increase leader action. This suggests the theory must be revised to reflect this nuance. Possibly, unions require stability and networks to increase leader activity.

The resource transfer hypothesis expected that non-declining unions with high membership and low resources will respond to the opportunity present in economic crisis by increasing member action. This was partially supported; the set of large, non-declining unions consistently increased member action. However, the set of unions that are resource-rich also consistently increased member action, countering the hypothesis. This suggests that some sort of resources are necessary to increase member action, but either financial resources or human resources will suffice. One type of resource can be substituted for another. Possibly, the two sets of unions increase member action in distinct ways, with one focusing on institutional action and one focusing on activist action. This suggests that in order to increase member action, unions should have a sizable and stable membership. If they do not, resource-rich unions can also increase member action.

The threat hypothesis suggested that the causal variables that result in overall increases in political action would be consistent with increasing activist action, but that decreasing membership would be a core causal variable. This was mostly supported by the data; declining membership was the primary causal variable. Additionally, AFL-CIO

unions that were either old or professionalized were likely to increase activist types of actions. This suggests that for activist actions, which carry some risk, unions need networks and the threat of declining membership. Beyond that, they need some sort of organizational stability, in this case provided by either age or staff.

The vulnerability/influence hypothesis suggested that old, large, resource-rich unions as well as young, non-declining, staff-centered unions would also respond to the opportunity present in economic crisis by increasing institutional political action. Results show that the most important characteristic consistent with responding to economic crisis by increasing institutional political activity is possessing vast resources. After that, unions that are either old, or staff-centered and small will increase institutional political action. This confirms the expectation that unions with financial clout will respond to economic crisis by increasing institutional politics. Beyond that characteristic, older unions are more likely to have networks and political relationships built up over time, providing support for the influence hypothesis. On the other hand, small, staff-centered unions may focus energies towards institutional politics as a less risky course of action, providing support for the vulnerability hypothesis. Theory should be amended to reflect this nuance.

The internal hypothesis found no support. This research failed to find a combination of causal factors to consistent with unions that respond to economic crisis by increasing internal focus. This suggests that the theories which explain increasing political activity in response to economic crisis do not offer guidance when explaining increases in other types of activity in response to economic crisis. Additional research is necessary to

develop a theory with power to explain which organizations will perceive economic crisis as a threat, and respond by increasing focus on internal affairs.

This analysis prioritized finding sets of organizational characteristics that were consistent with a given outcome. Typically, each equation included all of the empirical cases of an outcome except one; a union that displayed the outcome but that did not share the configuration of causal characteristics of the other unions with that outcome. Two unions were consistently in that situation: ANA and UGSOA. These are two unique cases that I believe have idiosyncratic explanations for their behavior. ANA, although growing, was dealing with a uniquely competitive field. National Nurses United is a relatively new national union, and SEIU continues to organize nurses as a core constituency. Although ANA experienced membership growth throughout the time period in question, I argue that the competition in their industry acted as a threat. As such, their behavior was consistent with that of a declining union instead of one of the fastest growing unions. UGSOA is unique because it organizes government workers almost exclusively. This restricts how they may act, especially in political involvement.

Conclusions

Although these results are strong, certain issues must be considered when interpreting and determining generalizability. First, this small number of cases represented a group of unions that is diverse on key points, as QCA requires. However, additional cases could strengthen the results. With six dependent variables and eight independent variables, it is not possible to have empirical cases covering every row of the truth table. Empirical cases exist for some of the truth table rows that were left empty in this analysis, and adding them will provide a slight but important increase in diversity.

Additionally, more cases could boost indicators of consistency and coverage, adding to the persuasive power of these results.

Future research following this analysis should include a qualitative study of organizations to determine the mechanism enabling the organizational variables to result in a change in activity. This could uncover additional critical factors that were not included in this research. In particular, the cases that were most representative as well as the two cases that were most difficult to explain should be studied. This research should include interviews of union leaders to determine how decisions about strategy are made, and what factors are considered once opportunities such economic crisis present themselves. Finally, additional research should work to uncover organizational variables that are consistent with increasing internal activities, and organizational variables that are consistent with maintaining or reducing political action. This analysis found that a relationship between a set of organizational characteristics and an outcome will not necessarily hold for the inverse of that set of organizational characteristics and the converse outcome.

Additionally, this research should be extended to non-union organizations to determine if the results apply to all organizations or if they are unique to unions. Research could also examine different types of opportunity, such as minor economic crises, or political moments of change without economic disaster. This research focused on a general opening of political opportunities; another option for further research is to examine the union response to more limited openings of the political structure. For example, if right-to-work rules are overturned in individual states, this could be examined as an instance of a limited opening in the political structure. Examining states with public

union backlash like Wisconsin and Ohio in 2010 could reveal how unions act under conditions that read more uniformly as political threat rather than opportunity.

Organizations may wish to consider these findings if their political efforts are not achieving the results they seek. They may find that they are taking an unusual path compared to organizations with similar characteristics to them. If the other organizations with similar characteristics are more successful, this may suggest that the organization's unusual strategies are ill-suited for their capabilities. Alternatively, if they do not wish to adjust their political behavior, they may choose to focus on changing organizational characteristics (for example, increasing the staff-to-member ratios) to accomplish their goals without changing their approach. The next logical step in this analysis is to examine whether the political goals of the cases in this study were realized, to further ground the significance of these findings.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this research study was to examine how organizations respond to external change. Labor unions are a good site for this analysis because of their long-term stability, large size, complex organizational structure, and efficient communication capabilities. Organizations must continually adapt to the changing environment in order to survive. Economic crisis is an external change that can be interpreted as an expansion of political opportunity. High unemployment, mass foreclosures, and bank failings highlight the problems in the current economic structure and generate widespread dissatisfaction. Politicians will look for solutions to satisfy constituents, and organizations like labor unions can utilize the chance to advocate for their goals. At the same time, labor unions may have a hard time maintaining their organizations when economic conditions are weak. The challenge over where to put resources make economic crisis a good instance of external change to examine how organizations respond to political opportunity.

This project sought to make four contributions to theory. First, it brought organizations into political opportunity theory, amending it to suggest which organizational characteristics are consistent with the ability to identify and respond to an expansion of opportunity. Second, it contributed to political opportunity theory by examining how stable organizations acted before and after a change in opportunity structure, allowing examination of how existing organizations adjust behavior in response

to expanding opportunities. Third, it contributed to political opportunity theory by examining a wide range of activities that an organization undertakes, including institutional and activist types of actions carried out by both members and leaders. Fourth, it contributes to business cycle theory by suggesting the role that union agency plays in responding to poor economic conditions.

This project also contributes to the substantive literature on labor union political activity. A number of studies exist in this area, but they fall into two categories: case studies of individual locals, and analyses of survey data. In addition to the theoretical contributions outlined above, this project provides systematic data on the political activity of multiple labor unions over time. This primarily focuses on contemporary labor unions, but two additional cases in the Great Depression provide a useful comparison.

Finally, this project also makes an important contribution by examining economic crisis. Economic crises are unexpected, significant events with long range impacts. It provides a detailed account of how events unfolded during economic crisis and in particular, how a type of organization adjusted to the new challenges presented during economic crisis. Although a few experts identified major problems in the economy, most of the nation's leaders were caught off guard by the economic events of September 2008. The more efforts we undertake to understand the nature of and solutions to economic catastrophes, the better we will be able to ameliorate its impacts on people.

Review of Findings

Chapter III examined two national labor unions, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) and the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (BRT), as exemplars of certain situations. Both unions were politically active. At the onset of crisis,

ACWA was in the growing textile industry, it took an innovative approach to organizing, and its political agenda had a broad scope. The BRT was in a declining industry, it took a traditional approach to organizing, and its political agenda had a limited scope. The data suggested that the political activity of both labor unions revolved around their leaders.

ACWA identified the opportunity presented by the onset of economic crisis, and later the opportunity presented by the election of a labor-friendly administration in Franklin D. Roosevelt. They responded quickly to the first opportunity by increasing the intensity of their political activity, using institutional channels as well as activist channels to promote their agenda. They responded quickly to the second opportunity by maintaining the intensity of their political activity, but adjusting their strategy to focusing on institutional politics. They maintained a broad scope in their political goals throughout the time period this paper examined. Ultimately much of their agenda was realized, although this research cannot determine whether their efforts caused the outcome.

The BRT evidently failed to identify the opportunity presented by the onset of economic crisis, or the opportunity presented by the election of a labor-friendly administration in Roosevelt. They maintained the intensity, frequency, and scope of their political activity. Throughout the time period, their political agenda used institutional political strategies and kept a limited focus on the rail industry. Although they had some success when Herbert Hoover appointed their legislative representative, William Doak, to the position of Secretary of Labor, they were ultimately disappointed with his achievements in the office. Their main legislative goals were not achieved.

Chapter IV also examined two national labor unions, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the United Automotive Workers (UAW), as exemplars of

particular situations. Both unions were politically active. SEIU was growing throughout the crisis of 2008, they were innovative in their organizing strategies, and their political agenda focused on broad goals. UAW was declining through the crisis of 2008, they were traditional in their organizing strategies, and for the most part their agenda focused on limited goals. The data in this chapter indicated that political action at the national level revolves around the leadership, but incorporates member-based actions as well.

SEIU identified the opportunity present in economic crisis, and the election of labor-friendly president Barack Obama, and responded primarily by increasing leader action. They tripled the quantity of leader action, indicating a strong response. Their actions increased somewhat gradually after the onset of crisis, indicating a moderate timing. SEIU continued to pursue broad goals affecting workers in all industries. They pursued a divided approach, including both institutional actions and activist actions, but placed more emphasis on activist actions after the onset of crisis. They reduced bargaining and organizing activities, but maintained critical rhetoric of employers throughout the time period of interest.

UAW arguably identified the opportunity present in economic crisis, along with the election of labor-friendly president Obama, and responded by increasing the intensity of their political activity. They maintained the quantity of leader action. Throughout most of the time period of interest, they focused on limited political goals specific to the automotive and casino industries. They also maintained member political activity, which was non-existent prior to the onset of crisis or for most of the post-crisis period. Their change in activity primarily occurred in June 2010, when Bob King was newly elected International President of UAW. After this, member action increased, especially activist

member actions. They reduced organizing activities and maintained bargaining activities throughout the crisis, but approached the two core functions traditionally.

Chapter V examined 10 unions in the crisis of 2008. These cases represent the diversity of the union movement, including some that were growing and some that were not, some that were federated and some that were not, and some that were politically active and some that were not. This examination focused on which organizational characteristics were consistent with the ability to identify and respond to the opportunity created by economic crisis, and which organizational characteristics were consistent with which types of response. Some organizations did not change political behavior in response to economic crisis. The stability provided by age and federation membership, the threat provided by declining membership, and the resources provided by a high concentration of staff were all consistent with organizations that adjusted to economic crisis by increasing political behavior.

Overall Hypotheses

Looking across the data in chapters III and IV allows me to evaluate the hypotheses in chapter II. The first set of hypotheses expected that innovative unions would increase political activity and decrease representational activity, while traditional unions would decrease political activity and increase representational activity. Chapters III and IV answer this hypothesis. The innovative unions in both time periods clearly increased political activity overall in response to economic crisis, supporting hypothesis 1a. The traditional unions in both time periods maintained political activity overall, failing to support hypothesis 1b.

The second set of hypotheses dealt with differences between the two time periods. Several distinctions between the two periods assist with interpretation of these results. First and most importantly, the political opportunity structure in the Great Depression was different in general because of the timing when allies of labor assumed political power. This allows the separation of the opportunity presented by economic crisis from the opportunity presented by economic crisis with the presence of elite allies. Second, the political opportunity structure in the Great Depression was different for unions in particular because of their legal standing. In the Great Depression, unions were no longer considered a criminal conspiracy but they did not have any legal protections. In the crisis of 2008, unions were governed by a set of laws that provided some protections but also offered certain constraints on their actions. In essence, unions were institutionalized in the crisis of 2008, but not in the Great Depression.

The second set of hypotheses expected that unions in the Great Depression would increase activist types of actions, while unions in the crisis of 2008 would increase institutional types of actions. Because the BRT was governed by the Railway Labor Act, they in essence were institutionalized the way unions in the crisis of 2008 were; this could explain their reliance on institutional types of political activity, though it does not explain why they failed to identify the opportunity presented by economic crisis.

The third set of hypotheses dealt with how unions would respond using different categories of political activity. Both ACWA and SEIU incorporated more activist types of activity than the traditional union of that time period, supporting hypothesis 3a. BRT exhibited more institutional political activity than activist activity, but UAW actually exhibited more activist activity than institutional political activity, when considering

member actions. Thus, the data fail to support hypothesis 3b. ACWA and SEIU both increased activist political activity after the onset of crisis; however, ACWA reduced activist political activity after the election of Roosevelt, a labor-friendly president. This offers weak support for hypothesis 3c. Finally, although I expect traditional unions to be less political active and to focus efforts on institutional actions, hypothesis 3d suggested that traditional unions would reduce institutional political action after the onset of crisis. Both UAW and BRT maintained institutional political action, failing to support hypothesis 3d.

The fourth set of hypotheses expected that because innovative unions have features of social movements, they would respond similarly to social movements to the onset of crisis. Compared to traditional unions, they would mobilize more quickly and with more intensity. ACWA provided strong support for both of these, while SEIU had a strong response as the tripled their leader political activity, their mobilization was gradual. Both responded more quickly and with more intensity than the traditional unions during their time period.

Hypotheses 5a and 5b dealt with the scope of political activity each union undertook. Both ACWA and SEIU pursued broad political goals, while both UAW and BRT pursued limited political goals, supporting these hypotheses. However, UAW began to pursue some broader political goals after the onset of economic crisis, moderating support for this conclusion.

Finally, hypothesis 6 suggested that traditional unions would adjust representational activity after the onset of economic crisis, but their response would be

delayed. UAW appears to reduce both organizing and bargaining activities rapidly after the onset of economic crisis, failing to support this hypothesis.

The general features of the two crises had many similarities, including increasing unemployment, stagnating inflation, declining GDP, and tightening credit. However, economic conditions such as unemployment were measured with different techniques during the Great Depression. This makes it difficult to compare, but in all likelihood economic conditions in the crisis of 2008 were not as challenging as they were during the Great Depression. The economy was adjusting to increasing reliance on new types of energy, particularly electricity and gas. In hindsight it is clear the impact those new fuel sources had, and we do not have the benefit of that hindsight when examining the conditions in the current economic crisis.

The two time periods also differ in the ease with which unions can communicate with their members. Internet and cellular technology make it easy for unions to communicate quickly, easily, and frequently with members all across the nation. This facilitates leaders ability to prompt member action, and provides a good explanation for why member action was a more significant component of the political strategy in the crisis of 2008. These changes also facilitate citizen action in general, so it is likely that the landscape for political participation has generally broadened to encompass more individuals with new avenues for action in the crisis of 2008.

Results for chapter IV suggest amendments to business cycle theory. Clearly, at least in crisis-level economic conditions, some unions disinvest in organizing. This could be to free up resources for other uses, as SEIU and UAW data suggest, or simply to conserve resources until economic conditions are more favorable for organizing.

However, this did not consistently translate to membership decline. Although UAW membership fell throughout almost the entire research period, SEIU membership grew throughout the research period. The rate of SEIU's membership growth slows after the onset of crisis, but UAW appears unaffected by the onset of crisis, and actually increases during 2010, the final year of research period.

Limitations and Future Research

This analysis has some limitations. First, although analyses of the current crisis were able to encompass member-based political activity, overall it over-emphasizes leader-based political action. This was a function of the research design focusing on national unions, and the sources of data. Leader political action is a primary way that labor unions get involved in politics, so this research made an important contribution in the close examination of leader political behavior. However, future research should establish a complementary research design to capture member political behavior. I suggest a systematic study of multiple local unions, incorporating document analysis but ideally adding participant or non-participant observation methods to provide an in-depth analysis of member mobilization political actions.

Second, although this analysis revealed which characteristics are consistent with which types of political response, it could not offer additional explanations for those patterns. To determine the mechanisms that allow these characteristics to combine in ways that influence specific types of responses, an in-depth case study of a union such as the American Nurses Association and the United Government Security Officers of America. These two unions did not comply with the patterns, and examining their organizations in more detail could reveal alternative characteristics that meet certain

conditions, like stability. I recommend a research design including non-participant observation, interviews, and document analysis for several months before and after a major election. Significant changes could happen any day, but elections are the most reliable sources of change that could compel a union to adjust its behavior. This research design would allow analysis of an event as it took place. A more practical solution would identify a change in recent months and analyze a union's documents. It would also interview and survey key actors, using their reports to compile a cohesive explanation about the events, their impacts on the organization, the strategic decisions made, and the resulting outcome.

To further substantive knowledge on union political activity, future research should examine labor union political education programs. This would illuminate the relationship between leaders and members in determining a union's political agenda, and offer insight into the role of labor unions as a political agent representing working people. I suggest a quasi-experimental design of local unions in a contested local or state race. This research would use pre- and post- surveys to establish members knowledge and interest in politics, and include non-participant observation at union political education programs.

This research has important implications for labor unions. First, this research validates the vital and historical role that unions play in national politics. Unions have been involved in politics in various ways throughout most of US history. Other organizations, some that have competing goals with labor unions, are politically active and unions must remain in the arena to gain an equal playing field. The political process has placed legal rights and restrictions on labor unions, and in order to fulfill their core

functions of organizing and bargaining, unions must continue to use a voice in that political process.

Secondly, this research emphasizes the benefit of union political activity during economic crisis. Particularly, political activity working towards broad goals is more likely to be effective during this time than working towards limited goals. At this writing, we are three and a half years into the crisis of 2008. Three and a half years in the Great Depression, the government had taken very little action. Few of the policies we now associate with the Great Depression were in place. At this point, the recession that encompassed the crisis of 2008 is officially over, but it remains to be seen if the economy will improve. Unions should be prepared to increase political advocacy.

Finally, unions are particularly vulnerable to changes in the political and economic environment compared to other organizations. Their rights and restrictions are more dependent on political appointments in the National Labor Relations Board, and the position of state and federal political leaders. The assault on public sector unions in spring 2011 made this clear, in Wisconsin, Ohio, and several other states. They are generally more susceptible to membership losses during economic downturns, though this depends somewhat on the industry. This indicates that it is particularly crucial for unions to take steps to increase their organizational flexibility, enabling them to change strategy and adjust their allocation of resources as the political and economic environment transform.

APPENDIX

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON FS/QCA METHOD

Purpose of the Method

Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) is method that uses set theory and boolean algebra to determine how configurations of causal variables are consistent with an outcome. Charles Ragin refined and popularized this method through a series of books (1987, 2000, 2008), and it is beginning to gain prominence in sociology. Research using these methods has increasingly appeared in top journals over the last decade (c.f. Roscigno and Hodson 2004; Grant, Trautner, Downey, and Thiebaud 2010). It is a middle way between qualitative (case-oriented) research and quantitative (variable-oriented) research, not only in the number of cases it is capable of analyzing but in the strengths of the method. Through its use of configurations, it maintains the integrity of cases and allows systematic comparison between types of cases. It is also useful for theory testing and development.

QCA uses set theory to establish an approach that differs from complexity-oriented research (qualitative) or generality-oriented (quantitative) by focusing on the diversity in cases. Diversity bridges complexity and generality (Ragin 2000: 35). This improves upon case-based research by formalizing the framework for examining cases, and extending it by increasing the number of cases (Ragin 2000: 38). It also improves upon the generality-based research's view of variables as discrete, independently operating, and having homogenous meanings (that having a given value of a variable

means the same thing in all cases). It does so by considering that a value may mean different things in different contexts, and variables may operate together to have different outcomes in different combinations. Additionally, diversity-oriented research focuses on a certain outcome, and intentionally examines the clearest cases of that outcome.

Generality research expects high variation and would not be interested in studying something that doesn't vary by only examining cases with a given outcome. (Ragin 2000: 40-41). The challenge of QCA is “in trying to make sense of the diversity across cases in a way that unites similarities and differences in a single, coherent framework” (Ragin 1987: 19).

Number of cases

QCA is intended for a moderate number of cases (5-50) but can be used for more. The number of cases is not as important as the number of rows on the truth table, since cases with the same combination of values are all in the same line (Ragin 1987: 121). Even when an analysis looks at a large numbers of cases, this method maintains the same complexity as it allows in smaller numbers of cases (Ragin 1987: 171). The number of variables can range as well, but because it looks at configurations, each additional variable exponentially multiplies the complexity of the analysis (Ragin 2008: 124-5). Due to the moderate number of cases (10) and the small number of variables (8), QCA is appropriate for the present analysis.

Configurations

A configuration is a specific combinations of condition. Each case has a value for each variable, and their particular combination of values for each variable establishes their configuration. A given configuration may or may not exist empirically; when it does

not, it is a counterfactual and can still be useful for interpretation. The number of configurations in an analysis depends solely on the number of variables, and can be figured using the equation 2^k , where k is the number of variables (Ragin 2008: 128).

This framework for analysis is a primary feature of QCA because it is what maintains the integrity of the cases while allowing systematic analysis of large numbers of cases. This is novel and it represents important improvements in social science. “When a causal argument cites a combination of conditions, it is concerned with their intersection. It is the intersection of a set of conditions in time and in space that produces many of the large-scale qualitative changes, as well as many of the small-scale events, that interest social scientists, not the separate or independent effects of these conditions.... Typically, there are several combinations of conditions that may produce the same emergent phenomenon or the same change.” (Ragin 1987: 25). This is particularly true for large-scale changes in societies (Ragin 1987: 24). This analysis can capture if there are multiple paths to an outcome, different combinations of conditions that can achieve the same result (Ragin 2008: 113-4). In an analysis of organizations such as this one, it makes intuitive sense to retain the wholeness of the cases.

Systematic comparison

QCA enables systematic comparison of cases, allowing the researcher to use substantive and theoretical reasoning to find commonalities in those cases (Ragin 1987: 1). The method is well-suited to historical interpretation and explanation. The systematic comparison of many cases can yield important insights for further research, such as anomalous cases that necessitate further explanation (Ragin 1987: 170). The approach “has a strong inductive element (which mimics case-oriented research) because it

proceeds from the bottom up, simplifying complexity in a methodical, stepwise manner. It starts with a bias toward complexity – every logically possible combination of values is examined – and simplifies this complexity through experiment-like contrasts – procedures which approximate the logic of ideal social scientific comparison.” (Ragin 1987: 101). Rather than focusing on the unique details of each case, the present analysis is examining multiple cases searching for consistent sequences, making QCA a good choice for this analysis.

Theory

Finally, in QCA theory plays a large role in every step of the analysis. When the researcher makes decisions about case selection, variable selection, measurement of variables, and how to treat counterfactuals, it is especially important in QCA that those decisions are guided by theory and substantive knowledge. In having this tight connection between theory and operationalization of a concept, researchers using fuzzy sets can distinguish between relevant and irrelevant variation (Ragin 2000: 160-1).

In turn, QCA is useful for developing theory. It allows the researcher to focus on the operation of key variables in multiple cases rather than selecting cases to illustrate a theory or examine a case where a theory doesn't work. This can help adjudicate between competing theories. After analysis, the resulting reduced equation can inform further development of theory (Ragin 1987: 169). “In statistical analyses...variables compete with each other. If one set of variables wins, then the theory they represent is supported. In the Boolean approach this competition between theories is transcended. Different combinations of causal conditions define different situations. In some situations the variables associated with a certain theory may be important. In others they may not. This

feature provides a basis for evaluating competing explanations and for advancing theory.” (Ragin 1987: 123). Since the goal of this analysis is to arbitrate between multiple theories explaining organizational behavior in the face of external change, as well as to extend those theories, this is another feature of QCA that is a good fit with the goals of this research.

Alternatives to QCA

For the goals of this analysis, QCA is superior to all other options. Conventional qualitative analysis techniques do not offer the ability to make rigorous judgments about consistent trends in the data. With 10 cases, this analysis does not meet standards for statistical analysis of data. Even if the project had sufficient cases, quantitative analysis has limitations that QCA transcends, as explained below. This includes the way variables are treated, the way they are measured, and the way populations are defined, all explained in detail below.

Treatment of variables

Conventional quantitative analysis treats variables as though they have independent, linear, additive effects. If two variables are thought to have a combined effect, the researcher can create interaction terms to capture this, but this is inherently different from QCA. With configurations, variables may act different under different circumstances, with the other circumstances being the presence or absence of other conditions. It follows that configurational methods can test more complex interactions than quantitative analysis (Ragin 2008: 112-3). “The challenge posed by configurational thinking is to see causal conditions not as adversaries in the struggle to explain variation in dependent variables but as potential collaborators in the production of outcomes. The

key issue is not which variable is strongest (i.e., has the biggest net effect) but how different conditions combine and whether there is only one combination or several different combinations of conditions (causal recipes) capable of generating the same outcome.” (Ragin 2008: 113-4).

Measurement

In QCA, fuzzy set variables are calibrated to match a theoretical concept more closely than conventional continuous variables used in quantitative social science (Ragin 2000: 6). Calibration is explained more thoroughly below. It enables variables to capture both the qualitative understanding of being completely in a set or completely out of a set, as well as the quantitative measurement accounting for variation (Ragin 2000: 9).

Conventional quantitative methods uses indicators to represent concepts, and researchers seek indicators with lots of fine gradations. However, the differences between two cases that are close together on a given indicator are not necessarily meaningful (Ragin 2008:79-80). QCA requires that the researcher calibrate the variables to reflect only relevant variation in the cases.

Defining populations

Conventionally, populations are strictly defined. Those definitions can be broad or narrow, but once set, the researcher should not have leeway to stretch or squeeze the boundaries of that population. Researchers do not entertain the possibility of partial membership in a population, or the possibility of great diversity within that population. In diversity-oriented research, populations are flexible and should be revised as the research unfolds to make sure that the population includes cases that are good theoretical matches with the research goals (Ragin 2000: 63).

An Example

To demonstrate the utility of his approach in contrast to more traditional methods, Ragin concludes his 2008 book with two analyses for comparison: the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth data analyzed with fsQCA and with conventional quantitative methods. Both are seeking to explain how youth avoid poverty. The conventional analysis looks at the net effects of variables, and finds that education and marital status have the strongest explanatory power. Test scores also matter, but parental income doesn't. Based on substantive knowledge, this is surprising. The problem of limited diversity is dealt with implicitly in the quantitative analysis by assuming that the effect of a variable is the same for unobserved cases as it is for observed cases. "Conventional quantitative research circumvents the problem of limited diversity by assuming that causation is unrealistically simple" (Ragin 2008: 157-8). This is contrasted by the QCA analysis, which with limited diversity (which still exists in spite of a large N) by considering the plausibility of each case that is theoretically possible but does not empirically exist. In contrast to the conventional quantitative analysis results, the authors find that there are multiple ways to stay out of poverty. All of these include education and either being married or childless, but non-low scores and non-low parental income also contribute to avoiding poverty. (Ragin 2008: 190-208.)

Truth Tables

One of the analysis tools in QCA is the "truth table," which includes the number of cases with each logically possible combination of values on the set of variables. If there are three variables (A, B, and C), there will be eight rows on the truth table, determined by the formula 2^k as explained earlier. Representing the absence of a

condition with a lower case letter and the presence of a condition with an upper case letter, the possible rows are ABC, ABc, AbC, Abc, aBC, aBc, abC, and abc. Along with the formulas, the truth table includes the number of cases that offer empirical evidence of each configuration. The introduction of fuzzy sets into the truth table increasing the complexity, and the researcher should think about each configuration as a vector space (or a corner, if you visualize a two-variable grid) rather than a row. Corners of the truth table that without empirical cases may be irrelevant to the analysis, depending on the interests of the researcher and other things. If you have a relatively large N, corners or rows with small numbers of cases may also be irrelevant to the analysis (Ragin 2008: 133).

“In the translation of fuzzy sets to truth tables, the truth table represents *statements* about the corners of the vector space formed by the fuzzy-set causal conditions. Two pieces of information about each vector space corner are especially important: (1) the *number* of cases with strong membership in each corner (i.e., in each combination of causal conditions) and (2) the *consistency* of the empirical evidence for each corner with the argument that the degree of membership in the corner is a subset of degree of membership in the outcome.” With fuzzy sets, cases may have partial membership in multiple rows of the truth table. (Ragin 2008: 130)

Counterfactuals and Limited Diversity

Logically possible combinations that have no empirical cases are called counterfactuals or remainders in QCA. They exist because of the lack of diversity in the social world, and will be present in nearly every analysis. Because social science generally makes use of naturally occurring data, and can rarely conduct experiments with

cases that are alike in all conditions except one in order to precisely determine the impact of that condition, they must contend with the reality that multiple dynamics acting upon the cases in addition to the causal variables make it difficult to determine effects (Ragin 2008: 152). Not only is it hard or impossible to find matched cases in every situation, but when causal arguments are particularly complex the researcher would need a cumbersome number of cases to meet all conditions (Ragin 2008: 154).

Again, limited diversity is to be expected. “Social diversity is limited not only by overlapping inequities of wealth and power but also by history.... If the empirical world would only cooperate and present social scientists with cases exhibiting all logically possible combinations of relevant causal conditions, then social research would be much more straightforward” (Ragin 2008: 147). However, researchers can use counterfactuals to improve their analysis. There are three ways that social scientists can deal with the fact of limited diversity. First, we can restrict ourselves to lab experiments. Second, we can estimate unknown data using statistical techniques. Third, we can do thought experiments, which requires the researcher to have excellent familiarity with theoretical and substantive knowledge concerning the subject. (Ragin 2008: 158-9).

Because limited diversity is typical, researchers should prepare ways of dealing with it. Increasing the number of cases does not guarantee that all logically possible configurations will be empirically observed. “Any analysis that allows combinatorial complexity will almost certainly confront an abundance of remainders and thus a wealth of potential counterfactual cases” (Ragin 2008: 158). Some configurations that appear on the truth table will not be logically possible, if membership in two or more conditions

would conflict. But when evidence does not exist for configurations which are logically possible, researchers must be cautious about making claims (Ragin 2000: 201).

Researchers using QCA should consider logical counterfactuals when there is limited diversity (Ragin 2008: 150). They can simply be excluded from the analysis, by declaring them ‘false,’ meaning they are not instances of the outcome. Alternatively, they can be included as potential simplifying assumptions. In the latter option, the researcher considers whether including the case would result in a simpler solution. As usual, the researcher must use theory and substantive knowledge to evaluate the plausibility of the remainders and use that knowledge to decide if including them in any way is reasonable (Ragin 2008: 155-6). When there is substantive empirical evidence applying to a configuration, the counterfactual is an easy one to deal with. However, when the researcher is working with a lack of evidence or if is arguing for a counterfactual that disagrees with the evidence that already exists, this is a difficult counterfactual and they must use extra care in laying out their case for including it (Ragin 2008: 161-2).

Set Theory

Set theory is an important foundation to QCA, because variables are treated like sets. Rather than a condition by which cases vary, QCA variables are a particular condition that cases either meet or don’t meet. For example, rather than measuring ‘income,’ as a variable in dollars, a QCA set would determine a target, such as ‘high income’ (Ragin 2008: 83). A case is either in or out of the set, or with fuzzy sets, can be somewhat in the set. The fuzzy-set approach includes more cases; all cases with nonzero membership in a set are included because they are somewhat in the set (Ragin 2000: 249).

Necessity and Sufficiency

The principles of necessity and sufficiency are important in QCA analysis. Ultimately the researcher is looking for causal conditions that are either necessary or sufficient to result in the outcome. A variable is necessary if the outcome only occurs when that variable is present. A variable is sufficient if the outcome always occurs when that variable is present. Using the language of set theory, necessary variables are a consistent subset of the outcome, while with sufficient variables the outcome is a consistent subset of the causal variables (Ragin 1987: 99-100). “Necessary conditions provide important theoretical signposts and can bring clarity to large bodies of social science thinking... The identification of manipulable necessary conditions is especially important in social science subdisciplines that are concerned with social intervention.” By the latter, he means that by focusing on eliminating a necessary condition, negative outcomes could be prevented (Ragin 2000: 203).

A researcher determines sufficient causes by using methods based on theoretical and substantive knowledge, intimate understanding of the evidence, and the researcher’s goals and intended audience, among other things (Ragin 2000: 132-3). When evaluating whether a combination of conditions is sufficient for a given outcome, there may be alternative configurations that are sufficient for the same outcome. The fact that there are additional sufficient configurations is less relevant for evaluating the configuration at hand, as long as the score on the outcome is higher than the score on the causal configuration. “A sufficient causal condition or combination of conditions establishes a *floor* for the expression of the outcome – a minimum level for the observed outcome. A case’s score on the outcome should not be lower than the level set by its score on relevant

sufficient conditions” (Ragin 2000: 237). This is another instance where QCA can accomplish more than conventional statistics, which cannot establish necessity or sufficiency (Ragin 2000: 258-60). In fact, quantitative researchers would interpret visual displays of necessary and sufficient condition patterns as exhibiting the problem of heteroskedasticity.

When carrying out the analysis, there are two types of approaches to determining necessity and sufficiency: veristic (discussed below) and probabilistic. The probabilistic approach tests the “significance of the difference between the observed proportion of positive instances and a benchmark proportion specified by the investigator.” With fewer than 30 cases, researcher should use an exact probability test rather than a z test. “The researcher must set a benchmark proportion and a significance level before making these assessments. For example, a researcher might argue that if the proportion of cases displaying the outcome in question is significantly greater than .65, using a .05 significance level (one-tailed test), then the causal combination in question is ‘usually sufficient’ for the outcome.” (Ragin 2000: 133). Determining that a variable is usually sufficient or usually necessary, rather than always, can also be valid conclusion (Ragin 2000: 249-252). Sufficiency tests are examined on all combinations of variables, including combinations that exclude some of the variables.

The veristic approach, on the other hand, uses a frequency threshold. This selects cases for closer scrutiny by examining all configurations where, for example, there are zero instance of negative outcome or at least 2 instances of positive outcome. Then the combinations are simplified. This does not allow false positives (Ragin 2000: 137-8). Generally, with smaller Ns where you have more in-depth knowledge of cases the veristic

approach is probably better, while with large Ns, the probabilistic approach is better because you want some leeway for dealing with imperfect evidence (Ragin 2000: 138-9). To provide some leniency for measurement and calibration errors, the diagonal for sufficient conditions can be moved up slightly and the diagonal for necessary conditions can be moved down slightly, if there are cases just below or above the line (Ragin 2000: 247).

Calibration

Calibration is an important step in QCA analysis of fuzzy sets. With crisp sets QCA, each variable is dichotomous – generally, conditions that are either present in the case (coded 1) or absent in the case (coded 0). Fuzzy sets can have any number between 1 and 0. They are calibrated to match a theoretical concept more closely than conventional continuous variables used in quantitative social science (Ragin 2000: 6). Fuzzy sets incorporate both the qualitative understanding of whether a case is completely in or out of a set, as well as the quantitative measurement accounting for variation (Ragin 2000: 9). Calibration gives cases theoretically relevant scores in variables, providing clear interpretation, rather than just having scores that vary in relation to another without a strong connection to the variables they are measuring (Ragin 2008: 72).

There are two methods for converting variables into fuzzy sets with calibration: the first is direct, and involves the researcher determining benchmarks for full membership, full nonmembership, and the breaking point when the case is neither in nor out of the set. The benchmarks are used for converting the rest of the scores. The indirect method involves the researcher evaluating the degree to which cases are in or out of the set, then applying scores. (Ragin 2008: 85). I used the former in my analysis.

Analysis

To assess sufficiency with fuzzy sets, first the researcher determines which combinations of variables will be tested. Then, they calculate scores for each case of each configuration. Comparing the scores, they establish which combinations are subsets of the outcome. They simplify the list of combinations into the equation. They examine the remaining combinations to make sure they don't provide unique explanatory power – if not, they eliminate them. Next they create an equation using logical *or* of the combinations that remain. Finally, they examine a scatterplot to determine if the result is a reasonable representation of the data. (Ragin 2000: 245-6). A similar path determines necessity. Each step is explained in further detail below.

Equations

Ultimately the analysis results in equations, or simplified 'recipes' of causal combinations to determine how the variables result in the outcome. This uses Boolean algebra. As in the previous example, the researcher might determine that condition A must be present for the outcome, or both B and C. In Boolean terms the logical *or* is represented by +, while the logical *and* is represented by *. So the final recipe would be $A + B * C$.

With fuzzy sets, degree of membership in a configuration uses the logical *and* – the lowest score in the variables within that configuration is the case's score on that configuration (Ragin 2008: 114). After determining the cases' scores in the configuration, only cases that are more in the set than out of the set will be considered in the analysis. Their scores on that configuration must be higher than .5, unless the researcher wants to include cases at the crossover point. This is potentially problematic because those cases

will have equal membership in the converse configuration, but the researcher must decide based on theoretical and substantive knowledge (Ragin 2000: 192-3).

When a union of variables is being examined (logical *or*), the highest score of the variables making up the set is taken as the membership in the new union set. (Ragin 2000: 173-4). For example, the researcher may have a set of variables representing a single concept. They can use the logical *or* to capture membership in the concept if any evidence of that variable is satisfactory. This can also reduce the number of variables (Ragin 2008: 142).

To assess sufficiency with fuzzy sets, first the researcher determines which combinations of variables will be tested. Then, they calculate scores for each case of each configuration. Comparing the scores, they establish which combinations are subsets of the outcome. They simplify the list of combinations into the equation. They examine the remaining combinations to make sure they don't provide unique explanatory power – if not, they eliminate them. Next they create an equation using logical *or* of the combinations that remain. Finally, they examine a scatterplot to determine if the result is a reasonable representation of the data. (Ragin 2000: 245-6).

Evaluation

Consistency and coverage are two concepts useful to evaluating QCA results. Consistency is a measure of the strength the relationship between a set of conditions and a given outcome; in other words, the degree to which cases with that condition agree in sharing the outcome. Coverage is a measure of the proportion of cases with that outcome that have that relationship; in other words, the degree to which cases with that relationship are a subset of cases with that outcome (Ragin 2008: 44). Much like with

diversity, the researcher should not expect perfect scores on these measures. “Perfectly consistent set relations are relatively rare in social research. They usually require either small Ns or macrolevel data or both. Generally, social scientists are able to identify only rough subset relations because exceptions are almost always present... It is important, therefore, to develop useful descriptive measures of the degree to which a set relation has been approximated, that is, that is, the degree to which the evidence is consistent with the argument that a set relation exists.” (Ragin 2008: 45). Consistency and coverage are generally a trade-off. Having a higher score on one means a lower score on the other (Ragin 2008: 117).

The analysis should proceed as follows: first, figure out cases’ membership in configurations with the most variables; then with a smaller number of variables; then the cases’ membership in the outcome. Then examine consistency and coverage of the configurations with more variables; then with fewer variables; then compare the results. (Ragin 2008: 116-7). When examining consistency scores, the researcher generally sorts them and looks for a natural break. However, “when observed consistency scores are below 0.75, maintaining on substantive grounds that a set relation exists, even a very rough one, become increasingly difficult” (Ragin 2008: 46). Consistency and coverage are determined by formulas rather than simple percentages of cases. The formula gives more weight to cases that violate consistency with higher membership scores than cases that violate consistency with low membership scores. (Ragin 2008: 52). Cases with highest membership scores in causal conditions are the most relevant cases to consider, whether they are consistent with the outcome or not. (Ragin 2008: 49).

Finalize

Ragin's computer program, fsQCA, offers three solutions for comparison. The parsimonious solution incorporates counterfactuals as long as they yield simpler solutions. Conventional quantitative analysis prefers parsimonious explanations because there are no unexplained cases. (Ragin 2008: 148). The complex solution ignores all counterfactuals. The intermediate solution relies on the researcher to determine whether to include counterfactuals, by input in whether each causal condition should be absent, present, or either one in the outcome. (Ragin 2008: 174). When competing explanations are available, theoretical and substantive knowledge should drive the researcher's choice (Ragin 2008: 149).

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