

Status, Networks, and Social Movement Participation: The Case of Striking Workers¹

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Individual participation has been at the core of much theorizing and research on social movements. Little of this attention, however, has focused on the labor movement and individual strike involvement. In this article, the authors extend the literature by employing rational choice and network perspectives on social movement participation and by analyzing strike mobilization in a recent action by the Communication Workers of America. The data are unique to social movement analyses as they include participants as well as nonparticipants, have significant heterogeneity across lines of status, and provide potentially influential individual background and network indicators. Findings show how race, income, and occupational distinctions are influential for strike behavior. Importantly, workers' networks at the point of production also impact strike involvement. The authors discuss the implications of these and related results for understanding worker insurgency and social movement participation more generally.

Individual participation and its determinants are at the core of social movement analyses. While movement formation and persistence are certainly shaped by more aggregate processes, such as historical junctures of subordinate group opportunity (Jenkins 1983; Tilly 1978) and tactical innovations of insurgent groups and elites (McAdam 1983), mobilization itself is ultimately dependent on individual participation and related

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status, cultural, and microstructural dynamics (Fantasia 1988; Klandermans 1984; Snow, Zurcher, and Eckland-Olson 1980; Taylor and Whittier 1992).

In recent years, a growing body of work has applied insights from social movement theory to the American labor movement (e.g., Ganz 2000; Isaac and Christiansen 2002; Johnston 1994, 2001; Voss and Sherman 2000). Yet little of this work has addressed individual participation in industrial actions, strike activity in particular. This is unfortunate. Successful union organizing drives in the United States involve nearly 250,000 workers annually, and more than 200,000 workers take part in strike events each year (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2002; Clawson and Clawson 1999). But what influences who participates in work-based collective action? Is involvement shaped by rational decision making by actors, each of whom weighs the costs of participation relative to their own status position? Might social networks—a key focus in social movement theory—also persuade or dissuade worker involvement in strikes?

Building on rational choice conceptions of social action and movement participation (e.g., Huber 1997; Marini 1992; Oberschall 1980, 1994) and research on potentially influential status distinctions between workers (e.g., Cornfield and Kim 1994; Form 1985; Wright 1985), this article extends the literature on social movement participation and strike activity.² We also consider more aggregate network processes that may condition the costs and benefits of participating in the first place. Indeed, rather than existing in a social or cultural vacuum, individual decision making is ultimately bounded and conditioned by social attachments and associations (Blau 1964; Oberschall 1994). Our data and analyses, which focus on an actual strike in 2000 by the Communications Workers of America (CWA), are appropriate for addressing these questions. They are also unique relative to much prior work in that they include participants and nonparticipants and allow for the inclusion of both individual status distinctions and potentially influential network dynamics. We conclude by discussing our findings relative to existing research on worker insurgency and more general perspectives pertaining to social movement participation and formation.

² Rather than the typical formulation of utility maximization employed in economics, we adopt a less restrictive model of purposive and conscious choice that may include utility maximization in the economic sense, but that also recognizes the role that values, beliefs, trust, friendship, and group and network affiliations may play in goal-directed decision making (see also Blau 1964). This is made more explicit in our theoretical development section, where we discuss historically forged status identities as well as the ways in which network and group affiliations may impact individuals' choices, calculations, and actions.

STATUS, SOCIAL MOVEMENT PARTICIPATION, AND LABOR
INSURGENCY

The importance of individual status to social movement participation has been at the center of historical arguments and analyses pertaining to the civil rights, women's rights, and antiwar movements. Grounded in assumptions regarding rational decision making, this literature holds, most generally, that individuals of markedly low status or those with greater autonomy from institutional or political constraint will be more likely to participate, since the costs of involvement (be they social, political, or economic) will be lower and the rewards arguably higher. Such a premise, usually implicit, is not too far removed from the relatively straightforward costs-benefits analyses put forth by classical rational choice and exchange theorists (e.g., Homans 1961).

Notably, however, a tension exists regarding individual status, costs/benefits, and the choice to participate—a tension that becomes apparent upon closer inspection of the social movement literature. On the one hand, some analyses suggest that aggrieved groups and subordinated individuals will be more likely to participate in a mobilization campaign given that it is in their rational interest to do so. Classic social movement literature, such as Piven and Cloward's *Poor People's Movements* (1977), as well as some resource mobilization accounts (e.g., Klandermans 1984; McCarthy and Zald 1977) certainly rest on this assumption. Yet, we also find examples of advantaged individuals taking part, leading, or even becoming a protest core in movements given greater autonomy from structural constraint and, arguably, the lower political and social costs that participation might entail. McAdam's (1988) Freedom Summer activists, more highly educated, middle-class whites involved in women's movements (Higginbotham 1992; Mathews 1982), and the high-status participants in environmental and peace movements (Oliver 1984; Oskamp, Bordin, and Edwards 1992; Walsh and Warland 1983) serve as cases in point.

Participant status differences across movements certainly exist and may be a function of historical era (see Melucci 1985). In this regard, some have highlighted the tendency of "old" social movements to recruit on the basis of, and appeal to, material grievances. Lower-status groups are thus more likely to participate. "New" social movements, in contrast, are more likely to organize and mobilize on the basis of identity (Taylor and Whittier 1992). This strategy generates a following among those for whom the identity is salient, including especially those of advantaged status positions. Despite such historical tendencies *across* movements, it is equally important to recognize that status divides exist *within* both historical and contemporary movements, with serious implications for movement cohesion and success.

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The question of status and status divides likewise exists, both theoretically and empirically, in research dealing specifically with the labor movement. Research on historical labor mobilizations, and that pertaining to union membership more generally, has highlighted the tendency of not just workers but especially poor, low-status, and racial and ethnic minority workers to be the most fervent in terms of class-conscious attitudes, activism in organizing campaigns, and the unfolding of actual strike events (e.g., Letwin 1998; Roscigno and Kimble 1995; Zingraff and Schulman 1984). Status divisions among workers (be they race, gender, skill, occupation, etc.) and their relation to labor organization, development, and cohesion are, nevertheless, complex and often historically contingent (Baron 1991; Cornfield 1989; Goldfield 1997; Gordon, Edwards and Reich 1982). Indeed, any resulting labor organization and mobilization can vary considerably in type and character depending on the degree of elite cohesion, specific workplace grievances, and strategies formulated at the point of production (Brown and Boswell 1995; Kimeldorf 1999; Kimeldorf and Stepan-Norris 1992).

In contrast to work highlighting the central role of low-status workers, other labor research denotes significant participation in, and initiation of, collective action by more advantaged, skilled workers. Rather than being driven strictly by material grievances, skilled workers' participation is related to a historically forged class identity, solidarity-generating labor processes, and greater workplace power and autonomy (Form 1985; Lichtenstein 1980; Zetka 1992, 1995). Just who becomes the protest core may thus reflect a divide between worker mobilizations based on heightened material grievances and those tied to an advantaged labor market position (Cornfield 1985; Fantasia 1988). The contemporary labor movement and related recruitment strategies arguably embody both tendencies. This is evidenced by the recent upsurge in organizing activity among predominantly low-paid immigrant and racial and ethnic minority service workers, as well as in that of somewhat more privileged professionals (Milkman 2000; Waldinger et al. 1998; Cornfield and Fletcher 2001).

Individual status is undoubtedly influential for movement participation, via rational calculation processes, and this association continues to be important for labor organization and strike activity. The possibility of somewhat contradictory status pulls and tensions, however, remains. Those of the lowest status probably have the least to lose in absolute terms and, therefore, should be more likely to collectively mobilize. In contrast, higher-status individuals may exhibit greater participation since they will hold some power and autonomy relative to existing power structures and oftentimes hold an already established, historically driven, class-based identity. In our view, both scenarios are plausible—that is, there may exist a bipolar effect of status on involvement. Such a possibility has

been difficult to address because of a lack of data on status attributes and *variations between social movement participants and nonparticipants*.

McAdam and Paulsen's (1993) analysis of Freedom Summer begins to get at the question by analyzing activists' relatively advantaged status, although the comparison group is not young adults or even college students generally, but rather those who applied to the Freedom Summer project (i.e., those who wanted to participate). Hodson, Ziegler, and Bump (1987) similarly analyze worker status effects relative to a particular strike campaign, yet the workers they examine are quite homogeneous in terms of status attributes. As a consequence of these data limitations, social movement and labor analyses have tended to focus on participants and processes pertaining to mobilization, rather than comparing participants and nonparticipants on various status dimensions.

NETWORKS, SOCIAL MOVEMENT CULTURE, AND PARTICIPATION

Along with being patterned by individual status attributes, social movement participation is also a function of the networks one is embedded in and of related normative, cultural, and cognitive processes that translate movement issues into the day-to-day experiences of individuals. Indeed, networks are necessary for the recruitment and coordination of individual participants (Kim and Bearman 1997; Klandermans 1984; Myers 2000; Oberschall 1994; Oliver 1984; Opp 1988; Zhao 1998), and they serve as the conduit for identity building, framing, and dissemination of social movement culture (Fantasia 1988; Gamson 1995; Melucci 1985; Snow et al. 1986; Taylor and Whittier 1992). Networks and what they disseminate may, in fact, alter calculations and either facilitate or hinder individual involvement.

Network accounts can inform the question of why individuals participate and are intuitively linked to discussions of social movement culture, identity, and framing. Oppositional cultural formation and identity, in fact, are salient only to the extent that they are somehow transmitted to group members and potential participants. Conversely, networks will be influential to the extent that they are disseminating something of consequence (Roscigno and Danaher 2001) or are altering actors' calculations at some temporally proximate moment (Marwell and Oliver 1993; Oberschall 1980). Network accounts thus tend to focus on the conduit itself and the resulting spread of social movements across time, place, and population, while research on framing, social movement culture, and identity delineate what precisely is being transmitted. Both aspects, certainly interdependent, are important for mobilizing individuals (Strang and Soule 1998).

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Although little labor research has dealt specifically with network effects and potentially related social movement cultural and identity processes, there is good reason to suspect that these foci are important. Fantasia's (1988) analyses of contemporary strike campaigns, for instance, suggests that transportation and communication networks provide a necessary conduit for strikers and that "cultures of solidarity" emerge and are disseminated with clear implications for individual involvement and commitment (see also Letwin 1998). In a more recent analysis of textile worker mobilization in the U.S. South during the 1920s and 1930s, Roscigno and Danaher (2001) explicate the role of radio networks in the activism that occurred, along with the cultural content that was transmitted and that arguably fostered necessary dimensions of identity, interpretation, and collective political efficacy. Certain key questions nevertheless remain. To what degree might network processes pattern worker identity and action, regardless of individual status attributes? And, what forms of network processes might occur, particularly at the point of economic production, with implications for worker resistance? In the next section, we address these questions within the context of contemporary workplace divisions and structures. For many workers, we suggest, status position and related calculations may be directly influential, although they are also often tied to, if not embedded within, relevant network processes.

THE CASE OF STRIKING WORKERS

Understanding worker mobilization requires attention to influential status distinctions, potentially relevant network processes, and their respective associations. The most obvious starting point in these regards is literature pertaining to class status in the United States—a literature that highlights the complexities of the working class and their implications for collective and political efficacy (Grusky and Sorensen 1998; Rubin 1986). Such foci are central to Wright's (1978, 1985) work on contradictory class locations, whereby individuals are conceived of as holding power in occupational hierarchies without necessarily owning or controlling assets within the structure of production. Although this is especially pertinent to the case of the contemporary middle class, Form (1985, 1995) has delineated increasing segmentation among the working class as well, resulting in cleavages most notably between skilled and nonskilled workers. Such divides, he suggests, have implications for, and if anything undermine, class mobilization and political efficacy.

While occupational and skill divisions contribute to the complex and possibly fragmented nature of the working class, status divisions of race/ethnicity and gender may also be important for understanding worker

mobilization and strike campaigns. Race and gender represent meaningful background statuses in and of themselves, patterned within and outside the economic arena, with implications for mobilization generally and class-based action (Cornfield and Kim 1994; Zingraff and Schulman 1984). These status attributes and associated inequalities may be commensurate with worker grievances and, thus, can enhance the capacity to organize on a class basis. At the same time, however, and as made clear in historical and social movement literatures, such divisions may also undermine cohesion and the ability to organize working class individuals and groups. This is particularly true when the specific grievances of subordinate group participants within a movement are overlooked or neglected (Gabin 1990; Gilroy 1991; Geschwender 1971; Roscigno and Anderson 1995). Cornfield and Kim's (1994) analysis of union support provides some conceptual clarity on these issues, denoting how worker status should be conceptualized of as multifaceted and measured both at the workplace level (i.e., occupation, skill, income, etc.) and in terms of more ascriptive background attributes (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.). But how and why might particular statuses prove to be influential in the case of labor organization? And, might not status variations undermine efforts toward collective action?

In relation to the first question, one might expect workers with high occupational status to have greater allegiance to, and identify more with, their employer than the union (Cornfield and Kim 1994). This tendency will be driven by prestige associated with skill level, possibly greater seniority, and higher relative wages. Such a straightforward prediction, however, lacks clear delineation of historical context and the complexities of class. Skilled workers should indeed exhibit greater commitment to employers and a diminished likelihood of striking, given their relatively high pay and prestige. At the same time, however, these very same workers have a historical legacy of successfully organizing and striking (Form 1985). Such *intrastatus* tension, between higher rewards on the one hand and a historical union legacy on the other, leads to the expectation that wages and job status may have countervailing effects, particularly for skilled workers.

In contrast to highly skilled workers, who may experience contradictory pulls in the process of labor organizing and mobilization, those of low workplace and subordinate race/ethnic and gender statuses may have an overall greater propensity to participate (see Cornfield and Kim 1994). We see this as partially driven by lower relative status inside and outside the economic arena and, consequently, heightened material grievances. It is also likely that historical exclusion, persistent segregation, and a legacy of action through collective, informal political channels, especially for African-Americans and Hispanics in the United States, will play a role

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in fostering participation among what Oberschall (1993) calls “negatively privileged groups” (see also Tilly 1975; Zingraff and Schulman 1984). It is for these reasons that unions, at least in the contemporary era, have been more inclined to recruit and mobilize based on background statuses.

Rational calculations pertaining to movement involvement or, in our case, strike action are thus structurally patterned by status distinctions. Equally important is the recognition that potential actors and their decision making are fundamentally bounded by, and linked to, social attachments and network processes. Making explicit the social milieu within which decision making unfolds or is even constrained is not only useful but necessary (Blau 1964; Huber 1997; Oberschall 1994). It is usually the case, for instance, that movements themselves introduce grievance frames, collective identity processes, and even repertoires in a manner that alters potential participants’ calculations and that can bridge status divides (Fink 1985; Letwin 1998; Snow et al. 1986). Actors’ embeddedness within social networks may or may not be, strictly speaking, related to a movement or mobilization campaign. Such networks nevertheless may condition the terms, rewards, and/or costs of individual involvement (Calhoun 1982).

Network and cultural processes are issues not entirely distinct from the topic of individual statuses, rational calculations, or identities. The structuralist perspective in social movements (e.g., Gould 1995; Wellman and Berkowitz 1988), in fact, typically assumes an isomorphism between individual processes and structural location. Constructionists, in contrast, suggest there is “considerable indeterminacy between identities and their roots in either personality or social structure” (Snow and McAdam 2000, p. 46). Rather than adopting either extreme, Snow and McAdam (2000) suggest that the task is to identify situations in which identity convergence—a situation wherein individual identities and calculations correspond to the goals and framing of a movement—occurs. This process, they continue, unfolds in part through solidarity networks or through networks of individuals “who are not only linked together structurally in some fashion or another but also share common social relations, a common lifestyle, and a common fate and who therefore are likely to share a common identity” (p. 48). To successfully recruit, a movement must tap into such networks and make effective use of grievance frames—grievance frames that are relatively consistent with already established identities and that bridge potential status divides (e.g., see Fink 1985; McAdam 1982; Morris 1984). If successful on these counts, rapid mobilization is more likely since “bloc recruitment” (as opposed to individual recruitment) will be possible (Oberschall 1973; Snow and McAdam 2000).

Although little research directly addresses the relevance of networks and their interplay with calculations among workers, there are several

pieces of work from which we can draw. Notable in this regard is the early work by Kerr and Siegel (1954) on interindustry strike propensity, wherein the authors suggest that preexisting social relations among workers are crucial. Especially important, they continue, are situations in which members of an aggrieved group are linked to one another by conditions and concentration in their lives and at work. Lincoln (1978, p. 217) similarly suggests that employment concentration increases strike activity because it "defines the actual organizational boundaries in which interaction networks among workers are formed" (see also Shorter and Tilly 1974).

It is conceivable that there exists considerable capacity for the formation of influential networks at the workplace itself, as opposed to those occurring across broader communities or through autonomous institutions or organizations highlighted elsewhere in the social movement literature (Minkoff 1993; Morris 1984; Taylor 1989). Prior research on worker grievances, communication, and insurgency suggest that the workplace itself is the arena within which individuals formulate impressions about their jobs, the adequacy of rewards, and their capacity to demand change (Burawoy 1979; Hodson 1996, 2001; Vallas 1987). What this suggests to us is that networks occurring naturally at the point of production, while certainly not the only network a worker may be embedded in, may be most influential for shaping individual involvement in strike action. Indeed, sociohistorical accounts of union involvement and striking suggest that rather than being shaped by the goals, strategies, or networks of a larger union or broader-based class mobilization, worker grievances and insurgency are often formulated and fostered more proximately to the point of production (e.g., Fantasia 1988; Kimeldorf 1999).

But how might networks be forged at work, and why might they be influential in shaping mobilization and individual strike support specifically? Workers tend to be segregated by skill level and by race and sex (Kilbourne, England, and Beron 1994; Okamoto and England 1999; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993), and concentration of workers of similar statuses may have implications for identity and consciousness. Such segregation in large organizations typically occurs across the lines of work unit, with certain units being comprised of lower-skilled or race- or gender-specific employees. And, it is within such units and via job segregation that several processes with implications for insurgency may unfold.

First, if concentration within a workplace, or within units of a given workplace, is particularly intense, those of similar statuses (advantaged or disadvantaged) will be working alongside one another, communicating, and possibly sharing grievances (see Oberschall 1973). Here, the work unit becomes the natural network conduit, and within such a unit lies the potential that consciousness, working class identity, and grievances

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will homogenize among unit members despite possible status variations that exist. If greater union or class loyalty manifests within a unit, for instance, this may encourage individual support of a union or actual strike participation above and beyond the impact of one's own pay, seniority, or feelings toward unions or strikes. If racial segregation within work units is evident, one might expect racial identity to become salient. This may help or hinder the unfolding of class action depending on whether the movement can successfully frame and negotiate identity differences across work units. That is, grievance framing within a movement, if effective, will bridge potential status divides among workers of various structural locations.

A second possibility is that networks may be influential not simply because of potential information, identity, or oppositional culture that is shared but, rather, through their effects on rational calculation at a given, arguably pivotal, point in time (Marwell and Oliver 1993; Oberschall 1980). Such might be the case during a walkout, when an individual must choose to stay behind on her job or walk out with fellow workers. While such on-the-spot decision making will undoubtedly be patterned by an individual's particular statuses, it will also be weighted by the immediate and/or future costs associated with not walking out with one's coworkers. Although actors may garner such information informally through their networks days or even weeks prior to the mobilization, there is often on-the-spot "milling" that occurs, where actors assess the immediate likelihood that others will participate (Brown 1965; Oberschall 1993). What this means is not only that rational calculation will make its way into individual status effects, but that such calculation also typically occurs within a context of network position and group affiliation. In either scenario—the first, where identity building and grievance sharing occur informally and prior to a mobilization campaign, or the second, where momentary calculations are made—one's workplace networks will be crucial. The analyses that follow attempt to delineate which, if either, is occurring, although we do not view the two possibilities outlined as mutually exclusive but perhaps instead reinforcing.

THE DATA, THE CASE, AND MEASUREMENT

Our analyses draw from data on a strike by the Communications Workers of America (CWA) that occurred in the spring of 2000 at Ohio State University. This data, which includes a variety of relevant indicators pertaining to the background and workplace status of the 1,681 full-time dues-paying university workers covered by the CWA collective bargaining agreement, was provided to us by CWA Local 4501 immediately following

the strike.³ Also included are work unit identifiers and university time records for each employee over the three-week strike period. These allow for the computation of several aggregated network measures and an indicator of individual strike participation. We supplement this quantitative data with ethnographic material, including our own interviews with strikers and union officials, observational notes of protest events and pickets, and archived media accounts.⁴

The significance of this particular strike and the more general usefulness of case analyses are worth highlighting. Although detailed, historical analyses of unique cases may undermine efforts toward generalizable conclusions, cases that lend themselves to assessment of theoretically meaningful questions have been essential to the development and understanding of common social processes (Ragin 1991; Ragin and Becker 1992). Indeed, rigorous sociological analyses of a single case provide the benefits of both theoretical generality and “situational groundedness” (Harper 1992, p. 139; see also Kimeldorf 1985). We thus bring to this analysis general theoretical questions pertaining to mobilization, in-depth knowledge of the specific context within which the strike at Ohio State University (OSU) unfolded, and the explicit goal of informing theoretical understanding of mobilization outside the context of this one case.⁵

The strike by CWA workers at OSU was the first walkout in 33 years, and it marked a breaking point from generally conciliatory labor relations with the university. In the context of the city of Columbus, where the labor movement has been historically inactive and poorly integrated relative to other industrial strongholds in the region (Form 1995; Hirsch and Macpherson 2000), the three-week strike at one of the largest and most well-known employers in the area was indeed a significant action. Despite voting to strike at the expiration of numerous contracts over the past 25 years, all previous efforts to strike were eventually averted, with the union consistently conceding on wages, health care, and the contracting out of jobs to nonunion employees (Devault 1975; Doulin 1990; Flood 1994;

³ The bargaining unit covers all skilled trades, service, and maintenance workers on the main campus in Columbus. Skilled trades include electricians, carpenters, plumbers, pipe fitters, etc.

⁴ All quotations are from interviews the authors conducted during and after the strike unless otherwise noted.

⁵ We nevertheless recognize that, in the face of attempting to draw generalizable conclusions, it is important to define or even constrain the theoretical scope of the questions and the theoretical generalities we can make given the specifics of the case we analyze. For this reason, we have made explicit in our literature review and theoretical development section that the impact of various status attributes, such as race, tensions between status groups (i.e., skilled vs. unskilled workers), and union recruitment strategies will vary by historical era and that our case is reflective of labor and recruitment in the modern day. We return to issues of generalizability in our concluding discussion.

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Helsel 1988). In the case of the 2000 strike, however, workers did not concede.

The service, skilled trades, and maintenance workers at OSU made clear to a reluctant union leadership and a disbelieving administration that they were fed up, underpaid, and ready to walk out. As a veteran female custodian put it: "This has been 30 years in the coming. Let 30 years of frustration build up and when they walk, they're not going to come back until they get what they want" (Marx and Thomas 2000, p. 1).

Under the banner of "2 for 2000" (or the demand for an immediate two dollar raise across the board in the year 2000), nearly 80% of all CWA members walked out and stayed out for the duration of the three-week strike. What resulted was a general upheaval at the relatively quiet Mid-western campus, known more for its football than for its activism. Picket stations and noisemakers dotted the campus, workers and students staged nearly a monthlong sit-in of the administrative offices, and many faculty and graduate instructors orchestrated teach-ins and held classes outside as a showing of solidarity. The administration responded by cancelling strikers' health insurance that was already paid for, taking away employee building keys before the strike even unfolded, bringing in temporary workers (often students), and threatening wayward instructors through mass e-mails and a full-page ad in the student newspaper (Marx and Thomas 2000; Thomas 2000).

Rallies and meetings, complete with chants and slogans highlighting wage grievances and economic inequalities, kept workers tied to one another, garnered sympathizers, and also rekindled excitement every few days. According to one striker,

The last rally we had was a shot in the arm for all of us. After talking to everyone, and listening to everyone who we don't see but are our friends, there's a lot of students, and there were faculty, which really surprised me too. They put their necks on the line, and hopefully there won't be any repercussions after this is all settled on them . . . for speaking their minds. . . . Everybody walked away from it feeling like we can get back out there, and we can keep the fight going, so that was really positive.

The introduction of new tactics generated excitement and greater public awareness as well. In one of the most visible of protest events, strikers (with student support) shut down the \$187 million dollar construction project at the university football stadium, thus highlighting their material grievances in the midst of seemingly abundant wealth. In the process, national attention was focused on the OSU case (Meatto 2000). The Teamsters responded by offering support and by helping to shut down campus mail services, vending machines, and deliveries. The Construction and

Building Trades Union followed suit by refusing to cross picket lines, and poet Maya Angelou and NAACP President Kwesi Mfume canceled previously scheduled appearances on the campus. Local, regional, and national visibility escalated as strike events were reported daily by the student newspaper and the Columbus city papers. The strike action would eventually receive coverage in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* and would be counted in *Mother Jones* magazine as one of the top 10 campus protests of 2000.

The strike by CWA workers at OSU was particularly impressive given the diversity across race and ethnicity, as well as across status distinctions of skill, occupation, and rewards. In the previous section we noted the theoretical implications of such segmentation for worker mobilization. We suggested that the impact of status distinctions, and potential divides across them, may vary depending on network dynamics and the ability of the movement to frame issues broadly. In terms of the latter, the dominant frame was clearly a material one. The 2 for 2000 slogan, which became ubiquitous across campus, demanded an immediate and universal rectification of years of inadequate wage practices. This struck a chord for workers across the board, high and low status, black and white, male and female. As an African-American custodial worker noted,

We need the money. Wages plus cost of living, everything is going up. They don't want to give us that, the two dollars, they don't want to give us that. They want to give us lower wages, and people ain't gonna' go for that, man. We want more, this is a new millennium. Year 2000 now, things are changing now, that's why we are out here. To make them understand that we ain't gonna' go for that no more. No more low wages and stuff, that's pennies, nickels, and dimes, man.

The issue of wages resonated with skilled workers as well, as suggested to us by a white male electrician, employed by OSU for nearly 24 years:

The university keeps taking more and more away from us, as a whole, and it's got to a point where they have got our backs against the wall. Uh, first they took away longevity, which they used to have step raises and longevity, they took away the step raises, and they took away the longevity, so now the only raises I would get would be, uh, the annual raises.

There was certainly some potential for racial division and the emergence of an overriding racial injustice frame, given the disparate concentration of African-Americans in the least skilled and lowest paying jobs on campus (discussed momentarily). Such framing might have alienated the disproportionately white, skilled workers on the campus. Although periodic slogans and chants emphasized racism by the university, this never became

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the overriding theme during the strike or for workers themselves. Instead, the focus on low wages, the use of the 2 for 2000 slogan, the tactical and verbal emphasis on university multimillion dollar spending on a football stadium, and the contrast between OSU's wages and those of other public sector employees off campus, all of which were played out in the local media and during rallies, kept levels of solidarity high.

With high levels of participation throughout the three-week period and strong student and community support, workers at OSU made some meaningful financial gains (averaging raises of more than 18%), although the final contract included contentious pay differentials between north campus and medical center employees.⁶ Equally important to financial gain was the statement workers made to the administration by walking out for the first time in three decades. As one union official described, "People who had been ignored for a long time got heard" (Marx 2000, p. 11E).

In the context of this strike, framed largely in material terms, the following analyses attempt to disentangle and more fully understand the impact of pertinent status distinctions among workers and their structural location in the workplace hierarchy. We also examine more aggregate processes occurring in worker networks and their impact on individual strike involvement. Our analyses and the data from which they draw are quite unique relative to prior studies, which have been limited to a single occupation or a relatively homogeneous population. Furthermore, and unlike many social movement analyses, these data include not only participants in the mobilization *but also nonparticipants*. Ideally, such data would be longitudinal and allow for measurement of predictors at an earlier time point relative to the outcome of interest. Although the analyses that follow are cross-sectional,⁷ confidence in causal ordering is bolstered to some degree by firsthand accounts by strikers and by the media and archival sources from which we draw.

Strike Participation

Our indicator of strike participation measures in dichotomous fashion whether an individual took part in striking over the entire three-week period. Approximately 80% of the 1,681 workers did so, while the remainder continued to work during this period. Of the nonstrikers, about

⁶ While many regarded the new contract as the best in recent years, the union conceded on a 10¢ pay differential separating north campus and medical center workers.

⁷ To model the processes described longitudinally would require detailed, daily, individual records of worker action starting on the first day of the strike, which we do not have.

half crossed the picket line at some point during the strike (most at the conclusion of the first week), while the other half worked the entire period. Rather than treating nonstrikers as a homogeneous category, we ran models of strike participation using a continuous measure of total hours worked during the strike. We also analyzed strikers, strikebreakers, and nonstrikers in multinomial logistic regression. The patterns, however, were consistent with findings derived from the dichotomous indicator reported in the forthcoming tables, suggesting that nonstrikers and strikebreakers are more similar than distinct, relative to those striking over the three-week period. Table 1 presents descriptions, means, and standard deviations for our dichotomous indicator of strike participation, along with key individual and network explanatory variables.

Background and Workplace Status

Consistent with Cornfield and Kim (1994), we include measures of an individual's background and workplace statuses. Among background status indicators are age of the employee, measured in years, and sex (1 = male). Race is coded as African-American and other, with white as the referent.

The data provide relatively specific measures of workplace status, the most important of these being occupation. Occupational categories include custodial worker, hospital service worker, maintenance/manual worker, and skilled worker, with service worker as the referent in the analyses. Note the substantial occupational heterogeneity within the sample, with custodial workers making up the largest portion of workers, followed by the service workers (the referent and 28% of the sample), skilled workers, maintenance/manual workers, and hospital service workers, respectively.⁸

While background and workplace status may have direct effects on participation, it is also likely that they may be influential through associated reward structures and/or individual class identity. For these reasons, we include measures of income (hourly wage), seniority, and card-carrying union member status. Rational choice perspectives would suggest a depressant effect of income on participation, while the impact of seniority is less clear-cut. On the one hand, seniority may reflect an organizational commitment to the employer. At the same time, seniority may be related to higher commitment to the work group itself and, thus, may facilitate action (Burawoy 1979; Hodson et al. 1987).

Card-carrying status, an indicator of individual, class-based identity,

⁸ Hospital service workers, while not at the top of the wage scale, faced a number of normative challenges to striking. This included emphasis by the university on "patient care and well-being."

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TABLE 1
VARIABLE NAMES, VARIABLE DESCRIPTIONS, AND MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS

Variable	Description	Mean	SD
Dependent variable:			
Strike participation	Dichotomous measure of whether an individual worker took part in the strike (0 = no; 1 = yes)	.80	.29
Background status:			
Age	Age in years	43.25	11.24
Race/ethnicity	Reference = white		
African-American	1 = African-American; 0 = other	.57	.50
Other	1 = Asian, Hispanic, and Native American; 0 = other	.10	.30
Sex	1 = male; 0 = female	.66	.47
Workplace status:			
Occupation	Reference = service worker		
Custodial	1 = custodian	.38	.48
Hospital service	1 = hospital service workers	.07	.26
Maintenance/manual	1 = maintenance/manual workers	.10	.29
Skilled	1 = skilled workers	.17	.38
Income	Hourly wage in dollars	10.48	2.64
Seniority	Seniority in years	9.63	9.37
Card-carrying	Individual, class-based identity as denoted by the worker's union card-carrying status (1 = yes; 0 = no)	.65	.48
Network measures:			
% card-carrying in unit	% employee's work unit that is card-carrying, not including specific employee	65.43	16.41
% African-American in unit	% employee's work unit that is African-American, not including specific employee	56.63	21.92
% striking in unit	% employee's work unit that went on strike, not including specific employee	80.13	17.12

should have a positive impact on individual strike involvement. Upon hire, workers have the option to become a card-carrying union member or a “fair-share” member, the latter meaning that they pay dues but do not identify with the union. Although perhaps a symbolic gesture upon being hired, the decision to be card-carrying likely reflects commitment to the union, class-based attitudes, and an overall greater propensity to act during a strike. Our quantitative findings along with qualitative insights, discussed momentarily, support these possibilities.

Networks

To gauge network and associated collective identity processes, we use aggregate workplace unit data. The work unit sets the organizational boundaries in which workers interact on the job and thus can be a conduit for information flow and communication. The union's shop steward system is also built around work unit organization. Shop stewards are, among other things, responsible for disseminating information between union leadership and rank-and-file members for each work unit. Importantly for prestrike mobilization, shop stewards were responsible for bringing to workers the pragmatic details of a potential strike (information on legal rights, potential picket locations, how strike pay works, etc.) as well as reports from prestrike informational meetings, which grew considerably in attendance and contentiousness toward the end of the negotiations period.⁹ The 1,681 employees in the data are spread out across 82 workplace units on the campus, ranging in size from 1 to 368. More than three-quarters of these individuals are concentrated in 13 units of 30 or more people.¹⁰

Earlier we suggested that the concentration of individuals of a similar status may have implications for identity, consciousness, and strike action. Moreover, networks at the point of production may be influential through their effects on decision making at a temporal point in time. To address the first of these possibilities, we use the percentage of an individual's work unit that is card-carrying and the percentage of the individual's work unit that is African-American as indicators of aggregate class- and race-based identity within the work unit. The percentage of a workplace unit that went on strike is used as a proxy for social pressure to strike

⁹ According to union officials and rank-and-file activists, the informational meetings held during the negotiations period drew unanticipatedly high attendance (200–300 in attendance vs. the 20–50 at typical union meetings). While attendance at meetings typically increases during contract talks, this was substantially more than in recent years and thus meant that, in addition to the shop stewards, there were more rank-and-file members bringing back information to their work units. In fact, it was during these meetings that rank-and-file members demanded that union leadership ask for more at the bargaining table and coined the 2 for 2000 slogan that was used throughout the mobilization. It was also during this period that some rank-and-file activists (given a degree of autonomy on their jobs that allowed them to move across campus) began to spread information on negotiations, grievances, strike possibilities, and the like across work units on the campus.

¹⁰ One of our initial concerns was whether work unit size itself was conditioning the individual likelihood of striking. For this reasons, we include work unit size in our analyses of network effects. The influence appears to be mild and slightly negative. We also introduced dummy indicators for small, medium, and large work unit size, which confirmed the general, linear relationship reported in our findings section.

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within the network and offers insight into the temporal component. Figure 1 reports the distribution of work activism across work units in our study.

Given the possibility of nonlinear pressure associated with workers in one's unit walking off the job, we use the natural log function of this indicator—something we discuss in our analytic strategy section and graphically display in our results.¹¹ The variable itself, as the reader will note in figure 1, is negatively skewed to begin with: a fact that is not remedied by the log transformation being used. This should not raise concern, however, given that logistic regression makes no assumption and has no restrictions pertaining to the distribution of independent variables (von Hippel 2003). We nevertheless undertook several steps to bolster confidence that the negative skew was not altering the patterns or associations we report.¹² Potentially influential outliers were eliminated, as were small and low activism units, resulting in a more normal distribution. Results pertaining to the impact of work unit activism and its slope, however, did not change.

Importantly, the actual individual under examination was excluded from the three network computations pertaining to his unit. This was done to insure that findings are not influenced by collinearity artificially created during aggregation. Workers in one-person units ($N = 11$), by virtue of our measurement strategy, automatically receive a score of 0 for network activism (given that they do not have any immediate union coworkers). To insure that this coding scheme and especially its application to very small work units were not altering our findings, we controlled for individuals in units of 1–3 people, introduced a dummy control for units of fewer than 10 workers, and also excluded small units from the analyses altogether. None of these procedures altered the results, thus bolstering confidence in our measures and findings.¹³

¹¹ We use the natural log of this indicator given the theoretically derived expectation not only that the effect may be nonlinear but that its initial impact may be significantly more pronounced, followed by a tailing off.

¹² There are 16 work units between 0% and 10% when it comes to work unit activism. Predictably, these units are small, ranging from one employee to 12. Combined, these work units have 36 workers.

¹³ We recognize that our work unit network measures may not capture potentially influential network processes manifested outside the workplace. Little work, however, has incorporated network and identity dynamics into strike analyses to begin with. Thus, despite the limitations of these measures, they are the best proxy for network processes occurring at the point of production.

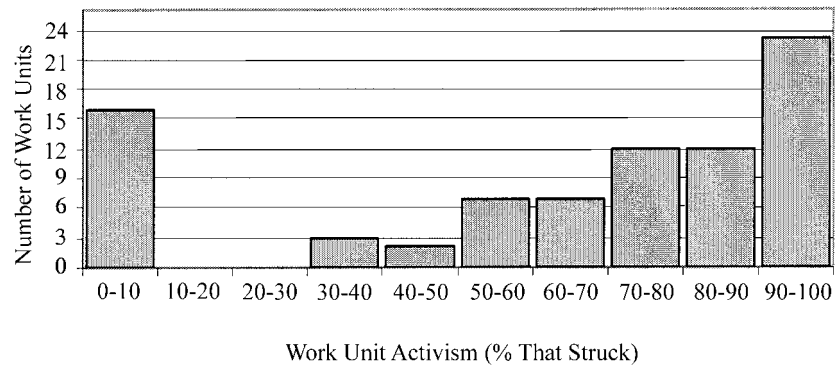


FIG. 1.—Distribution of work unit activism across work units ($N = 82$)

ANALYTIC STRATEGY AND RESULTS

The analyses proceed in two steps. We first illustrate linkages between background and workplace statuses and their respective associations with individual strike participation. This provides insight into the relations and varying effects of status described by Cornfield and Kim (1994), although it is an extension in two regards. First, by delineating associations between background and workplace statuses, we acknowledge that such statuses are often interdependent and consequential for understanding race/sex disparities in pay and occupational segregation—something clearly noted in recent stratification research (e.g., Tomaskovic-Devey 1993). Second, we extend the analytic focus not to union support, which is typically done, but rather to mobilization in the form of strike participation. For strike participation models, we introduce background status, workplace status, and then individual income, seniority, and card-carrying status. Declines in coefficient magnitudes and significance across equations highlight the degree to which background status matters through occupational disparities and whether occupational rewards (i.e., income), class-based identities (i.e., card-carrying), or seniority mediate some of the status effects we find. Quantitative findings are supplemented throughout with qualitative, open-ended interview material, gathered by the authors during the strike.

The second portion of our analyses highlights the importance of network processes for individual strike involvement. We introduce the percentage of card-carrying members in the employee's work unit, the percentage of African-Americans in the work unit, and the percentage in the work unit that struck. These are examined in separate equations and then simultaneously, while controlling for status, income, identity, and seniority measures specified earlier. Declines in significance for the percentage of

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card-carrying members and the percentage of African-Americans in the final equation, when network strike participation is included, is suggestive of a network identity process, played out through action (i.e., strike participation in the network).

Persistent and nonlinear effects of work unit strike support on individual strike participation may be driven by prestrike network identity processes or by more temporally proximate calculations of individuals based on whether those in their work unit walked out when the strike unfolded. Indeed, decision making with regard to collective action does not occur in a vacuum but rather is interdependent with the attitudes and actions of those in close proximity (Granovetter 1978; Klandermans 1984; Oberschall 1980). Especially important may be the existence and impact of an initial, critical mass of strike supporters within the network (see Marwell and Oliver 1993).¹⁴ It is for this reason that we utilize a nonlinear function of work unit activism in our modeling and plot the relationship in figure 2 (displayed later on) for the distinct subgroups highlighted in our initial findings.

Admittedly, most employees fall in work units with high levels of activism, providing less than ideal variation at the lower end of the work unit activism continuum. Dropping low activism units from the analyses, however, does not alter our results. Moreover, while confidence intervals around the average effect (also illustrated below in fig. 2) are understandably wider for low activism units, given their limited representation in the data, the general pattern and interpretation do not differ significantly. Such data limitations notwithstanding, our finding of a nonlinear effect of work unit activism, its actual graphical pattern, and our own interviews with strikers and union leaders suggest that on-the-spot calculations were made by many workers.

Individual Status, Income, and Identity

Table 2 reports associations between workplace occupational status, the background statuses of race and sex, and income, seniority, and union support measured by card-carrying status. Consistent with much research on work organization and stratification, the workforce at OSU is relatively segregated across occupational lines. Minority groups tend to be concentrated in lower-status service and custodial jobs. White males, in contrast, are concentrated in the skilled trades and in maintenance and manual work. This pattern of segregation is most pronounced among skilled workers, nearly three-quarters of whom are white and virtually all male. As

¹⁴ This implies a nonlinear effect, or what Marwell and Oliver (1993) refer to as a “decelerating production function,” where returns decrease at increasing levels of X_1 .

TABLE 2
WORKER ATTRIBUTES BY OCCUPATION

Occupation (<i>N</i>)	% Minority	% Female	% Card- Carrying	Average Hourly Wage	Average Seniority
Custodial (646)	84.20	40.10	65.00	8.95	7.17
Hospital service (126)	80.90	65.10	57.00	10.34	9.52
Maintenance/manual (161) ...	38.60	1.90	71.00	11.89	10.93
Skilled (296)	25.10	1.40	70.00	13.71	13.60
Service (452)	73.60	49.20	64.00	10.10	10.18

denoted in the table, it is within these higher-skilled and maintenance jobs that wages are higher, as is the general level of union support. These workers, as we suggested earlier, may consequently experience intrastatus contradictory pulls when it comes to strike action.

Disparate occupational concentration may also hold consequences for reward structures across race and gender lines. The resulting wage gaps between minority and white workers and between male and female workers, reported in table 3, are both considerable and statistically significant. On average, whites receive over two dollars more in hourly wages than blacks and others, and men receive about a dollar and a half more an hour than women in the sample. Arguably, this deficit in wages should increase minority and female involvement in protest action since the absolute wage costs of participation will be lower and material grievances probably more pronounced.¹⁵

Table 4 reports the consequences of background status, workplace status, income, seniority, and card-carrying status for strike participation among 1,681 workers over the three-week strike period. Consistently, African-Americans and other racial/ethnic minorities are significantly more likely to strike relative to whites. For African-Americans specifically, the likelihood is nearly double that of white workers ($P < .001$). Although there is no apparent gender influence, workplace status clearly matters. Occupational differences in the likelihood of striking are reported in equation (2) of table 4. Custodians, skilled workers, and maintenance and manual workers are all more likely to strike than service workers generally, as well as hospital service workers.

Equation (3) of table 4 introduces potential mediators—individual income, seniority, and card-carrying status. Income, in the form of hourly

¹⁵ Although this is not reported in the table, African-Americans are somewhat more likely than whites to be card-carrying union members. This difference is statistically significant below the .05 level. Other racial/ethnic minorities did not differ significantly from whites, and men and women displayed no apparent difference on this indicator.

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TABLE 3
AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE BY
RACE AND SEX

Category	Hourly Wage
Race:	
Black	9.84
White	12.01
Other	8.83
Sex:	
Male	11.02
Female	9.42

wage, has an expected, negative effect on striking. For each dollar per hour in wages, the average likelihood of an individual's striking declines by approximately 25% ($P < .001$).

In contrast to income, seniority and union identity (measured by card-carrying status) positively shape the likelihood of striking. A card-carrying union member is about four times more likely to strike than a counterpart without similar union identification ($P < .001$). We proposed initially that card-carrying status implied a more general commitment to the union and that this might foster strike participation. Although many striking workers noted that their reasons for striking were strictly economic, several high-skilled workers with considerable seniority highlighted their commitment to the union. Such was the case with the following white male technician, with 23 years of service to the university: "I support the union as a union card-carrying member. They all voted to strike. I have to follow suit with their decisions. . . . When you're a card-carrying union member you got to honor what they decide and it was a 98% strike vote."

Intrastatus contradictory tensions are apparent, however, with the addition of wages, seniority, and card-carrying status in equation (3) and in conjunction with the descriptive associations reported earlier. Skilled and maintenance/manual workers experience the highest wages and strongest union identity, yet wages and union identity have countervailing effects. The depressant effects of wages on striking explains why occupational status effects among skilled and maintenance workers actually increase in equation (3). These occupational groups are likely to support collective action because of individual union identity and probably recognition of broader union and strike history and potential—something captured by the persistent, strong, and significant effects of these occupational designations. Yet, their higher incomes mitigate, to some degree, their likelihood of actual participation. This important finding highlights some level

TABLE 4
 LOGISTIC REGRESSION ESTIMATES OF STRIKE PARTICIPATION ON INDIVIDUAL
 BACKGROUND AND WORKPLACE STATUS MEASURES

VARIABLE	EQUATION		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Background status:			
Age	-.003 (.006)	-.006 (.006)	-.014 (.007)*
Race/ethnicity:			
African-American ....	.675 (.137)***	.718 (.151)***	.527 (.161)**
Other .....	.482 (.228)*	.473 (.238)*	.450 (.254)
Sex .....	.071 (.139)	-.184 (.152)	-.057 (.159)
Workplace status:			
Custodial .....		.820 (.163)***	.572 (.176)**
Hospital service		-.475 (.223)*	-.324 (.236)
Maintenance/manual ...		.761 (.245)**	1.108 (.274)***
Skilled .....		.655 (.200)**	1.454 (.265)***
Income			-.299 (.058)***
Seniority .....			.031(.013)*
Card-carrying			1.448 (.153)***
Constant	1.095	.924	3.237

NOTE.—*N* = 1,681; nos. in parentheses are SEs. Two-tailed tests of significance.

* *P* < .05.

** *P* < .01.

*** *P* < .001.

of discontinuity between subjective and objective criteria informing individual decisions pertaining to work-based actions.¹⁶

Custodial workers, whose ranks tend to be disproportionately African-American, display persistent and positive strike support. The coefficient decline suggests that this is partially a function of lower pay and, in all likelihood, clearer-cut wage grievances. When asked why he was participating, a custodial worker with eight years experience suggested that it was

for better wages. Because like right now, just paying off my insurance and all that, and child support, I bring home \$230 every two weeks. And that's nothing. You see, so I'm struggling, and I like to spend a lot of time with my children. If I have to go out and get another job, then we won't have time at all. You see, and I need this raise, bad.

¹⁶ More broadly, this finding reflects a division between conceptions of worker resistance focused on heightened subjective grievances (or consciousness-based approaches) versus accounts more informed by resource mobilization theory, which tend to highlight the structural capacity of workers in more advantaged labor market positions and their ability to withdraw labor without fear of replacement.

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Notable as well in table 4 is the persistent effect of being African-American even with workplace status and other potential mediators included. As suggested earlier, this lingering effect may be tied to the history of collective action in the African-American community and its viability, even in the contemporary era, for addressing workplace grievances. This is consistent with the reflections of a black male worker, given while out on the picket line: “Well, I’m kind of like a ’60s child, kind of, I was back in the ’60s where you protested for what you wanted. A lot of that’s there. A lot of it is actually, uh, feeling for other people.”

Findings presented thus far denote a strong effect of both background and workplace status attributes on individual strike participation. For background status, race is clearly the most meaningful. While part of its impact is tied to occupational concentration, the impact of African-American status remains strong and stands alone. Among workplace status attributes, occupational designations clearly make a difference. Although some of the impact is tied to differences in income and union identity, these effects remain. Simply, occupational designations and identities are meaningful for workers and for their strike involvement (see also Klandermans and de Weerd 2000). Although skilled workers may have a stronger union identification and, consequently, a relatively high propensity for involvement, their higher incomes appear to seriously mitigate this potential. Nevertheless, results suggest that along with lower-status African-American custodial workers, high-skilled, mostly white, workers remain more likely on average to mobilize. The implication is that there is a heightened capacity for action, even within a single labor campaign, among low- and high-status mobilizers.

The Impact of Networks

The preceding analyses illustrated the impact of background and workplace status on strike participation and the partial mediation of these effects through income, seniority, and individual union identity. In table 5, we analyze the impact of workplace network dynamics, with controls for the status, income, and individual union identity indicators specified earlier. We also account for unit size throughout.

Equation (1) suggests important effects of work unit class identity on individual strike participation. Recall that the computation of this work unit network measure does not include the individual under consideration. The influence of individual card-carrying status, reported in the lower portion of the table, remains significant and virtually unchanged relative to the earlier, individual model. This suggests to us an identity dynamic occurring in the network, not reducible to individual preferences or individual union affinity.

TABLE 5
 LOGISTIC REGRESSION ESTIMATES OF STRIKE PARTICIPATION ON WORK UNIT
 ATTRIBUTES, WITH INDIVIDUAL CONTROLS

VARIABLE	EQUATION			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
% Card-carrying in unit ...	.009 (.004)*			.003 (.004)
% African-American in unit .....		.005 (.004)		-.001 (.004)
(ln) % striking in unit .....			.682 (.124)***	.663 (.131)***
Background status:				
Age	-.014 (.007)*	-.014 (.007)*	-.015 (.007)*	-.015 (.007)*
Race/ethnicity:				
African-American .....	.562 (.162)**	.524 (.162)**	.505 (.165)**	.514 (.166)**
Other .....	.476 (.254)	.436 (.255)	.408 (.258)	.416 (.259)
Sex	-.074 (.160)	-.052 (.161)	-.007 (.163)	-.012 (.164)
Workplace status:				
Custodial .....	.629 (.180)**	.646 (.180)**	.498 (.184)**	.495 (.184)**
Hospital service	-.426 (.249)	-.520 (.250)*	-.365 (.259)	-.346 (.263)
Maintenance/manual	1.217 (.285)***	1.306 (.285)***	1.115 (.291)***	1.101 (.294)***
Skilled	1.461 (.270)***	1.653 (.284)***	1.293 (.275)***	1.262 (.297)***
Income	-.314 (.059)***	-.314 (.059)***	-.305 (.060)***	-.304 (.060)***
Seniority .....	.029 (.014)*	.032 (.014)*	.033 (.014)*	.032 (.014)*
Card-carrying	1.460 (.155)***	1.489 (.155)***	1.461 (.157)***	1.453 (.158)***
Control for work unit size	-.001 (.0005)*	-.001 (.0005)*	-.001 (.0005)*	-.001 (.0005)*
Constant	3.016	3.209	.687	.630

NOTE.— $N=1,681$; nos. in parentheses are SEs. Two-tailed tests of significance.

* $P < .05$.

** $P < .01$.

*** $P < .001$.

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Work unit racial composition exhibits no apparent influence on the likelihood of individual striking (eq. [2]). The effect of having strikers in one's work unit, however, is quite sizable and significant ($P < .001$). Social movement scholars have debated for some time over the issue of potential protestors' calculations within the context of social connections and network embeddedness, suggesting possible exponential costs of not participating when others do or an initial and strong pull to participate once a core takes action (Marwell and Oliver 1993). Our use and finding of a nonlinear effect lends some weight to these claims. Figure 2 displays the pattern graphically for the two high-activism groups of workers, highlighted in the first portion of our analyses, relative to all other employees. The figure reports the predicted probabilities of striking derived from equation (3) of table 5.¹⁷ In the lower right corner, the reader will note the average impact of work unit activism on striking, with confidence intervals surrounding the mean effect.

What we find in figure 2 is an initial and quite strong slope for all three groups of workers. The impact of unit activism on the probability of individual strike participation continues to increase at higher percentages but at a decelerating rate. Notably, and consistent with our expectations and findings reported earlier in table 4, both low- and high-status mobilizers start out with a greater likelihood of striking relative to other employees. It is interesting to note, however, variations in the slopes for the three groups and, specifically, a steeper initial slope especially for African-American custodial workers—a pattern that seems to suggest that these workers may be more amenable to activism when there is already support in the network. The same seems to be the case for high-status white workers, although their higher incomes have a mitigating effect (see also tables 2 and 4).

The finding of a stronger initial slope is most consistent with an "initial activist core" interpretation, while the persistent but decreasing coefficient at higher levels of network strike support seems congruous with the "de-

¹⁷ Figure 2 is generated from eq. (3) of table 5, using the coefficient for work unit activism and discrete attributes of groups of workers informed by the patterns suggested in our analyses of individual attributes (table 4). High-status mobilizers are white skilled workers who are card-carrying union members, and who earn one standard deviation above the mean in hourly wages. Low-status mobilizers are African-American custodial workers who are card-carrying union members, and who earn a standard deviation below the mean in hourly wages. All other workers are represented who do not hold these attributes. Although bivariate associations suggest that levels of participation may be somewhat higher in larger work units, this association becomes weak and slightly negative once controls for individual status attributes and network identity and strike support measures are included. Consequently, the actual slope effects and our interpretations did not vary when we ran separate models for small, medium, and large work units.

celerating production function” argument posed by Marwell and Oliver (1993; see also Oliver, Marwell, and Teixeira 1985). These two possibilities may exist simultaneously. An initial core of workers who walk off the job reduces for others *the potential costs of striking*. The fact that the positive influence does not completely tail off or reverse implies that there are also *costs associated with not striking* when those in one’s work unit are doing so at high percentages. These conclusions are nevertheless tempered by our recognition of data limitations, especially the fact that most workers in our case fall into units with high activism. That the mean effect and the confidence intervals surrounding it remain largely consistent do, however, offer some empirical leverage relative to our interpretation (see fig. 2, lower right-hand corner).

Our conclusions regarding on-the-spot calculations relative to one’s network associations are also tentative given that the data represents a cross-section of workers who either walked off the job or did not (as opposed to a longitudinal account of workers striking and their coworkers following afterward). Our discussions with participants and union officials

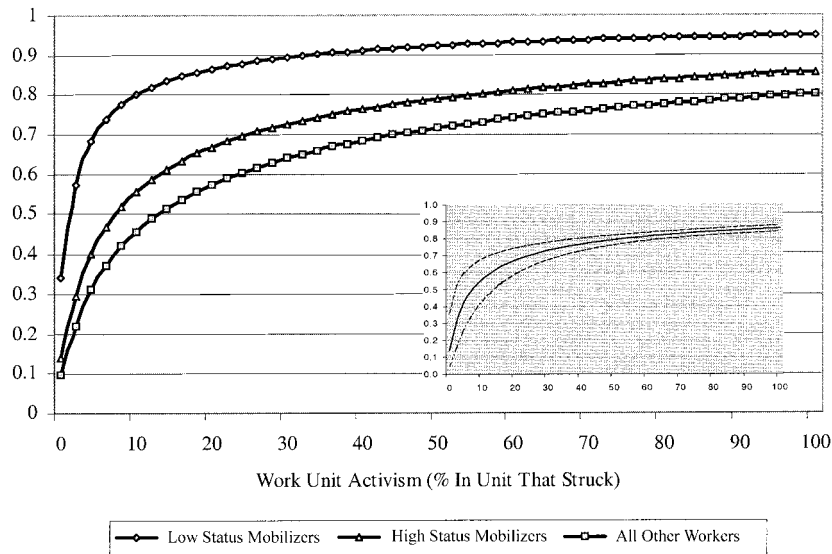


FIG. 2.—Predicted probabilities of individual strike participation by work unit activism for low-status mobilizers, high-status mobilizers, and all other workers (lower right corner: average impact of unit activism and 95% confidence intervals). Groups of workers are defined as follows: (1) low-status mobilizers are African-American, custodial, card-carrying workers with the average custodial hourly wage (\$8.95); (2) high-status mobilizers are the white, skilled workers who are card-carrying union members with the average wage for skilled workers (\$13.71); (3) the last group (all other workers) represents the average values for all workers not included in the first two occupational categories.

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nevertheless do substantiate our interpretations and the possibility of an immediate effect. As late as the evening before the strike, for instance, union officials were only sure that about half the workers who actually walked out would in fact go. The decision whether or not to strike was especially instantaneous for many third-shift workers. Having already reported to work the evening prior to the strike, these employees were faced with the immediate decision of whether or not to walk out at midnight. Many, it turned out, actually *ran* out at midnight despite the negotiations being extended until 2:00 A.M. the morning of the strike (McKinney 2000).¹⁸

One rank-and-file activist summed up these possibilities by suggesting that while workers were signing up for picket duty in the week leading up to the strike, and certainly talking to one another and “sizing each other up,” many made up their minds at the last possible moment. Most workers signed up for picket duty in locations proximate to their actual work sites. This produced a situation across campus on the first strike day whereby employees coming to work saw their very own coworkers picketing: a scene that generated tremendous social pressure. More pointedly, as this employee recalled, workers were all of a sudden struck with the reality that “oh shit, everybody else in my department walked out.” Both of the possibilities we have described—grievance sharing prior to the strike and temporally proximate decision making—were forged by worker networks and were important in this particular mobilization.

The final equation of table 5 introduces the three network indicators simultaneously. The impact of percentage card-carrying declines to the point of nonsignificance once work unit strike action is included. Since card-carrying status was determined well before the strike, we interpret this decline to be reflective of the importance of class identity in the work unit, but only through strike action. This is not to suggest, however, that strike action in the unit is purely a function of identity dynamics. The persistent and strong effect of strike action in the unit, in conjunction with the actual pattern displayed in figure 2 and our ethnographic material, suggest to us that much of the impact was more temporally immediate.

¹⁸ The vast majority of CWA members work on the first shift. The third shift workers, however, who reported to work on the evening before the strike faced an immediate on-the-spot decision of whether or not to walk out. According to one of our informants, many came with picket signs and noisemakers at hand and actually ran out of the facilities in a jubilant display at midnight.

CONCLUSION

This article extends the understanding of social movement participation, and strike action specifically. Building on prior social movement and labor analyses, we suggested that participation in collective action will be patterned by both calculations associated with status position and the embeddedness of actors in networks—networks that may condition decision-making processes through information, grievance sharing, and identity building or that may more directly pressure individuals to act. The case of a labor strike on a large university campus provided the opportunity to address these questions with appropriate and unique data. These data include straightforward measures of participation, demographics on participants and nonparticipants alike, and network indicators that are meaningful given our population of interest and the actual form of mobilization examined.

Findings revealed the importance of background and workplace status, and their associations, for individual strike involvement. African-American and other racial and ethnic minority employees displayed higher levels of strike participation relative to whites. This is partially attributable to their disparate concentration in lower-paying custodial work. Here, the absolute income costs of participation are lower and wage grievances arguably more pronounced—something quite evident in our qualitative observations of protest events and pickets. Maintenance and especially skilled workers, in contrast, experienced a contradictory intrastatus tension between rewards on the one hand (which decrease strike support) and union loyalty and history (which increase strike support) on the other. Indeed, once we accounted for the depressant effect of their higher incomes, these workers were the most likely to strike. Importantly, as noted in our background discussion, this particular mobilization framed issues broadly and mostly in material terms. This served to bridge potential interstatus divides between black and white workers and between low- and high-skilled workers.

Such findings inform labor and social movement research given the explicit focus on the complexities of class and other background statuses in relation to action. Labor research, because of data limitations, has been somewhat limited in this regard to examinations of single occupations or relatively homogeneous workforces. Thus, variation in status impact and mobilization potential among advantaged and disadvantaged groups is often overlooked. This is unfortunate, as the status divisions and pulls specified here are relevant not just to labor mobilization but to social movement participation and persistence generally. Most movements, in fact, attempt to appeal to distinct social groups. In order to persist, they must also successfully negotiate internal status divisions.

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Equally, if not more important, is our finding that strike participation is shaped by more than individual status, income, and identity. Networks, too, are influential. Results indicated that, above and beyond individual causes, class identity within networks and especially strike action among those in one's unit have implications for individual involvement. Both quantitative results and supplemental ethnographic material suggest that workplace networks are crucial through grievance sharing and identity formation prior to the strike, as well as through individual decision making and calculations at a pivotal point. Here, an initial core of strikers in the unit appeared to be influential for engaging others in strike mobilization. The results also suggested, through a declining but persistent positive effect of network strike support, a possibility that there are lingering costs associated with not striking when others in one's unit do.

The impact of networks on involvement has been noted by social movement researchers for some time. Networks, this literature suggests, are essential to both the diffusion of insurgency across geographic space and in the recruiting and mobilizing of individual participants. Consistent with our focus, recent theorizing attempts to explicitly bridge discussions of individual status and decision making with those pertaining to network processes and impact (Snow and McAdam 2000). Our analyses build upon and apply these insights and recent developments in the social movement literature to labor mobilization specifically. Workers, we have argued, are typically embedded in networks at the point of production. The status composition of such networks, the potential information and identity shared among members, and the degree of protest involvement within, as findings revealed, may all have consequences for individual calculations and strike propensity beyond the impact of individual attributes.

Our conclusions are nevertheless tempered by recognition of data limitations. These include the inability to measure network dynamics outside the work environment, as well as limited detail pertaining to coworker interactional processes and potential friendship networks within the workplace. Consequently, the effects of networks on strike action presented here may be somewhat understated. Equally important, the generalizability of findings from our particular case must be considered, relative to other labor actions and social movements. Here, it is important to be explicit that our theoretical discussion and predictions are conditioned by the historically variable relevance of particular statuses, discussed previously, as well as by the university, public sector, and institutional context within which the mobilization we have described unfolded.

The employment setting on a large university campus likely entails more diversity than most workplaces and social movements.¹⁹ This par-

¹⁹ This arguably makes such a setting ideal for case analyses of mobilization. The

ticular university setting also represents public sector employment, where elite countermobilization may be somewhat constrained and where employers, historically speaking, have been more receptive to labor representation. Finally, the fact that the strike examined occurred within one institution also makes it somewhat unique relative to many social movements or industrywide strikes, which must recruit and forge networks in a broader geographic sense. One consequence is spatial and structural proximity of potential participants: something that lends itself to significant bloc recruitment (Zhao 1998). This may contribute to the high level of participation, relative to that of other social movements. Although variations in levels of activism were less than ideal, our data and analyses nevertheless reflect an important extension in a literature that typically examines *only* participants.

Despite these qualifications, most movements and workplaces have some internal status variations that may, to a greater or lesser degree, impact the capacity to mobilize. Furthermore, most social movements and labor mobilizations, be they intra- or interinstitutional, or public or private sector, typically rely on preexistent networks to recruit, share information and social movement culture, and alter potential participants' decision making. In the case of the analysis presented in this article, we combined analytical rigor with in-depth detail and background to address general theoretical questions pertaining to status distinctions among workers, their social networks, and their implications for individual participation. We thus have confidence in our findings and conclusions, and their utility for understanding more general strike and movement processes, and we see them as unique contributions to, and extensions of, prior work. The labor movement's multidimensional character as both a social movement and labor market institution, in fact, provides an ideal setting for studying the processes outlined and represents a rich, yet relatively untapped arena for social movement scholars.

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significant variation in statuses denoted throughout, on the other hand, may make our case more complicated than some mobilization campaigns that organize around a unique identity or a singular status.

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