

ACTIVISM & UNION RENEWAL

Britain and the USA

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Introduction

- Background & motivation
- Union renewal & union commitment
- Methodology & design
- Cases
- Findings
- Discussion
- Conclusion

Activism, commitment & renewal

- Union commitment
 - Greater the commitment, greater the participation
- Union renewal
 - Different conceptions
 - Measures of Process vs. Measures of Outcome
 - Bottom-up vs. Top-Down
- Member activism
 - Voluntary engagement of members
 - Beyond administrative participation

Methods

- Definition of union renewal
 - Union recognition
- 32 cases of organizing success
 - 23 from the US; 9 from the UK
- Ranking the key factors for success
 - Significant Member Activism (SMA)
 - Partially Significant Member Activism (PSMA)
 - Insignificant Member Activism (IMA)
- 12 cases of organizing failure
 - 4 from the US; 8 from the UK

<i>Author(s)</i>	Simms (2007a; 2007b; 2007c)	
<i>Case</i>	Call Center (Typetalk)	Retail Chain
<i>Motivation for Campaign</i>	Hot-shop. Campaign part of union strategy to expand presence in the telecommunications sector.	Campaign part of union strategy to strengthen presence in industry.
<i>Employer Response</i>	Adverse	Neutral
<i>Campaign Outcome</i>	Voluntary recognition	Voluntary recognition
<i>Rank Order of Factors Critical to Organizing Success</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong organizing committee of workplace activists to promote the union 2. Campaigning around issues identified by union staff 3. New Chief Executive, which led to a more cooperative approach with the union and voluntary recognition 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Securing a constructive relationship with the employer 2. Union staff gaining access to the workplace 3. Role of paid union staff in recruiting workers and “selling” the advantages of the union
<i>Role of Member Activism in Success</i>	Significant Member Activism	Insignificant Member Activism

Findings from case studies

	US		UK	
	Win	Loss	Win	Loss
SMA	12	2	6	2
PSMA	8			
IMA	3	2	3	6

Findings from case studies

- “Hot shops”
- Employer resistance
- Statutory and voluntary recognition
 - UK organizing tradition
 - Certification elections and activism
- Tactics: grassroots & top-level
- Unsuccessful cases
 - Activism not a sufficient condition for success

Discussion

- Tier I: Activism central and sufficient
 - United Faculty of Florida
- Tier II: Activism central but NOT sufficient
 - LA Janitors
- Tier III: Activism neither central nor sufficient
 - USDAW (Retail clothing)
 - PCS (Training organization)
- Unsuccessful cases
 - Significant member activism but failure

Whither activism?

- Study limitations
 - Renewal in broader context
 - Post certification (Sustainable structures)
 - Case writer bias
- Focus on activism misplaced → Bargaining power
 - Activism one factor in reconstituting union power
- Statutory certification mechanisms
 - Alternatives to pure bargaining power
 - Union commitment paradox

Conclusions

- Member activism & union renewal
 - Neither clear nor consistent (SMA + PSMA + IMA)
 - Bargaining power fundamental to renewal
- Renewal combination of strategies
- Future research questions
 - Activism as union sustainability
 - Activism in other renewal strategies
 - Role of activism in reconstituting union power