Reconsidering Activism: And Just What Do You Mean by That?

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Are you an active member, the kind who would be missed, Or are you just contented, that your name is on the list?

- **Activism**, participation, volunteerism, or “UCB” widely recognized as critical – the *very fabric of unions*

- Is there a *problem*?
- Some reports say “No.” (e.g., WVS data)
- Others report *order of magnitude lower* activism, and see that as a *serious problem*
What Is To Be Done?

• About the “problem”: Better understanding needed before prescription

• In this paper and toward that end:
  – Explore relation between Likert-style scale and behavior-based self-reports, i.e., to better understand the meaning of alternate measures
  – Apply Azjen’s Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), incorporating seemingly neglected influence of perceived control (“activism efficacy”), i.e., belief that one’s activism matters or “makes a difference”
  – While we’re at it, we re-examine issues of exchange and covenant, subjective norms (activism context), and more
Azjen’s (1991) “TPB”
Theory of Planned Behavior

• Focus on predicting individual intentions, which have been shown to be good predictors of actual behavior

• Three main influences (all beliefs, broadly speaking)
  – About the behavior, e.g., attitude toward union
  – About others views (and their importance)
  – About perceived control or “self efficacy,” e.g., will my efforts make a difference?
Previous Research *In Brief*

- **Exchange and covenant** *(Snape & Redman 2004)*
  - Exchange: Economic, calculative, instrumental
  - Covenant: Social exchange, shared values-based, ideological
  - Causally linked? Exchange $\rightarrow$ Covenant *(Bamberger et al. 1999)*

- **Subjective norms or social context**
  - We care what others think
  - Some support in past studies *(Kuruvilla & Fiorito 1994, FTSPM 2011)*

- **Perceived control** *(similar to Bandura’s [1977] self-efficacy)*
  - Apparently not formally tested in union activism context
  - Effect strongly hinted *(in Upchurch et al. [2010] activist study where *nearly all* said activism is important, but far fewer said their own effort matters)*
Data, Measures, and Methods

- **Data:** Web-based 2011 union poll of “regular” faculty at large public U.S. university, approx. 320 union member responses (about 50% of members)
- **Measures:** Mostly single item Likert-style, plus activism behavior checklist (details in Tables 1-2 of paper)
  - Past activism and interest in future activism (intent)
  - 15-item behavior checklist (e.g., read, vote, attend, officer, recruiter, steward)
  - Instrumentality, i.e., union performance representing members like subject (Exchange)
  - Attitude, i.e., subject “feelings” toward the union (Covenant)
  - Union density in subject’s department
  - Union support among others in department
  - Belief that subject’s involvement in union will make a difference at university
  - Controls for satisfaction with employer, whether welcomed at joining (socialization), time as union member (longevity), tenure status
- **Analysis methods:** Charts, factor analysis, correlation, regression
Stem: In which of the following ways, if any, did you participate in the [union] during the past year? Please check all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item (condensed wordings)</th>
<th>Factor 1-Active</th>
<th>Factor 2-Passive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exec board member</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended Exec board meeting</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended state meeting</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CB team or other active committee</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steward or representative</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in union election</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in contract ratification</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended luncheon</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read printed union material</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited union website</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read union email</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended union social</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped recruit new members</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended union workshop</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factor Analysis
Results: Rotated Factor Pattern (promax)
Retained factors (e>1) accounted for 97% of total variance
Participation Specifics: Mean Levels and Correlations with Likert-Style Summary Item

% or r*100

- Read email
- Read printed
- Visited web site
- Ratification voter
- Election voter
- Social event
- Luncheon
- Workshop
- Exec. Council
- Statewide
- Steward
- Exec. Council
- Active comm.
- Recruited
- Other

Mean
Corr.
### Means, SDs, and Correlations Among Activism Measures
(N=224 after case-wise deletion for missing data for any study vars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Past Activism</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Activism Intent</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Participation Index</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Active Index</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Passive Index</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cross-tabulation of Participation Behaviors and Summary (Likert scale) Report
(N=322 using pair-wise deletion for missing data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lower Summary Activism</th>
<th>Higher Summary Activism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seven (7) or Fewer Participation Behaviors</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight (8) or More Participation Behaviors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Standardized Betas and $R^2$s for Alternate Activism Criteria

N=224; *: Significant at .05 or better; 1-tailed tests for IVs (boldface)

#### Criterion Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Past Activism</th>
<th>Activism Intentions</th>
<th>Partic. Index</th>
<th>Active Index</th>
<th>Passive Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentality</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Attitude</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.29*</td>
<td>0.20*</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Percent</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.09*</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Support</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes A Difference</td>
<td>0.23*</td>
<td>0.24*</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>0.09+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.11+</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Welcome</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.11+</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Longevity</td>
<td>0.47*</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td>0.39*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-Square</td>
<td>0.38*</td>
<td>0.27*</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>0.38*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings Summary, Part 1
And Just What Do You Mean by Activism?

• Participation behaviors data suggest:
  – Demanding or “active” behaviors are rare; easy or “passive” behaviors are common (duh!)
  – Relatively distinct dimensions of “active” and “passive” behaviors (r=0.37)

• Comparisons of behavior reports and summary assessments (“Likert”) suggest:
  – Discrepant activism reports reflect what we ask
  – Summary assessments prone to inflation

• There is a real problem of low activism, at least for more demanding roles
Findings Summary, Part 2
Determinants of Activism

• Exchange and covenant: Covenant motivations seem more important
• Subjective norms or activism context: Spotty evidence here, seem very much secondary
• Perceived control or activism self-efficacy
  – A “missing link”? Not previously tested
  – Importance comparable to covenant beliefs
• Some variation in effects by activism form, but broadly consistent
A “Surprisingly Strong” Membership Longevity Effect

- Longevity effect led us to reflect on unique aspect of our sample, a large membership surge in March-May, 2011
- Extra staff, volunteers, and campaign to reach 50% density turned threat into growth
- See the video! www.uff-fsu.org or FTSPM article (LSJ, 2011)
“Newbies” and Long-Term Members -- Post Hoc Analysis

• Differ on almost every measure

• Really not much opportunity for newbies to get involved due to timing
  – Election of officers and delegates preceded surge
  – Generally not well-known to membership or leaders

• Split-sample (low power) results
  – LT member results much like full sample
  – Newbie results weak, but more importance for welcoming, dissatisfaction, maybe instrumentality
Concluding Remarks

• Limitations of cross-section, one-shot survey, single items
• Generalizability limited by homogenous sample, unique circumstances (e.g., “threat and surge”)
• Exchange and covenant “debate” will continue, but findings here add weight to covenant side
• Disappointing results for subjective norms, but more focused referent group may help
• Encouraging results for perceived control (efforts will make a difference)
• Practical implications:
  – Recognize and reward activism, publicize how individual efforts contribute
  – Encourage developmental perspective on activism