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Mobilization, Strategy, and Global Apparel Production Networks: Systemic Advantages for Student Antisweatshop Activism

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Mobilization, Strategy, and Global Apparel Production Networks: Systemic Advantages for Student Antisweatshop Activism

Cover Page Footnote

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In the early 1960s, U.S. workers made nearly all the clothes sold in the U.S. They had wages, conditions, and collective power that labor unions and federal labor policies had dramatically – albeit insufficiently and unevenly – boosted since the turn of the twentieth century. But since the 1960s, U.S. consumers’ clothes have come to be made mostly by Global South workers (sometimes as migrants working in the U.S.) who are routinely paid far below a living wage. In many cases these workers also experience labor rights violations including delayed or denied wages and benefits; unhealthy and hazardous working conditions; and physical, sexual, and verbal abuse. The most fundamental rights violation, however, is disempowerment: Global South apparel workers’ rights to organize to defend their other rights are often obstructed by employers who block unionization efforts, who break existing unions, and who move production from unionized factories to nonunion factories. Global South governments, which often cannot or will not defend labor rights, commonly ignore or collude in these abuses (Bonacich and Appelbaum 2000; Dicken 2015; Ross 2004).

In the early 1990s, a transnational labor rights or “antisweatshop” movement emerged in the U.S. and other Global North countries to support Global South workers’ rights, focusing particularly on apparel production. Labor unions played a pivotal role initiating this movement to reform transnational capitalist production relations, frequently allied with or augmented by a non-union consumer-based fraction of the movement in the U.S. and elsewhere (Anner 2011; de Lagerie 2013; Esbenshade 2008; Garwood 2011; Wimberley 2009). Such Northern antisweatshop actors have provided valuable support to many Southern production workers and organizers who took the fundamental initiative and serious risks to stand up for their own rights.

U.S. college student antisweatshop activism was born in this context. It first emerged at Duke University in fall 1997, initiated by a student who had participated in the AFL-CIO’s recently-launched Union Summer internship program. Soon students at scores of campuses protested against administrations and corporations to thwart labor abuses at factories making “licensed collegiate products”: goods bearing schools’ trademarked symbols. Firms (“licensees”) contract with and pay royalties to college administrations for the right to organize these goods’ production and marketing. Many of these goods are apparel – usually made in the Global South – which has been the primary focus of the student sector of the U.S. antisweatshop movement (Featherstone and United Students Against Sweatshops 2002; Katz forthcoming; Van Dyke, Dixon and Carlon 2007). These student activists have often changed target actors’ behaviors, sometimes promoting significantly better conditions for production workers.

Our purpose in this article is to explicate the student sector’s systemic advantages, *vis-à-vis* other consumer-based parts of the U.S. antisweatshop movement, that have facilitated its activity and effectiveness in struggles over

collegiate-licensed apparel. We offer new arguments to show how college campuses contain mobilization advantages for antisweatshop efforts, how collegiate apparel production is structured, how college administrations play pivotal roles in the power relations governing those global structures, how college students possess potential to exercise power over administrations, and how all these conditions in combination create systemic opportunities for antisweatshop action that are spatially commensurate with the power relations these student groups seek to change. To accomplish these goals, we examine micro-, meso-, and macrolevel processes and actors and the connections among them. We sketch a picture of the single overall network that links Global South apparel workers, U.S. college student activists and administrations, and companies producing and marketing collegiate licensed apparel. That picture's purpose is to show how this network constitutes a single system of movement dynamics and power relations that enables student activists to impact apparel manufacturers' and marketers' behavior and thereby support apparel workers' struggles for their own rights.

Although U.S. student antisweatshop activists have fought other battles, including violations of campus workers' and low-paid U.S. workers' rights (Garwood 2011), much of their effort remains focused on the grievance out of which the movement's student segment was born: violations of apparel workers' rights in the Global South, particularly workers making apparel for the collegiate licensed market or making other apparel for brands that participate in that market. An extraordinarily grim recent example of such labor rights violations is the April 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza apparel factory building in Bangladesh, which killed at least 1,129 people and received extensive international news coverage. The previous year, several hundred workers died in Bangladeshi apparel factory fires. These events were not truly "accidents." Under cost pressure by the Global North brands for whom they contract, Bangladeshi apparel manufacturers skimp on building safety, as well as paying particularly low wages and routinely suppressing unions (International Trade Union Confederation 2014; North 2013).

Apparel workers in other countries generally face less deadly, less visible abuses than those suffered by well over one thousand Bangladeshi apparel workers crushed and burned to death in recent years. Yet, serious violations of apparel workers' rights pervade much of the Global South. In the Dominican Republic the Korean-owned BJ&B cap factory, which made collegiate-licensed caps for many schools, exemplified such violations. In 1998 the U.S. garment workers' union UNITE, responding to a Dominican union federation's request, documented BJ&B's wages of about 70 U.S. cents per hour (fairly typical for Dominican apparel workers) and multiple kinds of labor rights violations, including firing workers injured on the job. One BJ&B employee stated that "when you get in trouble, [managers] will grab your face and smack you on the head." UNITE reported that "workers were sexually abused as well – managers

often groped women with impunity. Workers also suffered verbal humiliation, with Korean managers yelling graphic racial and sexual insults at the employees” (Ross 2004:275).

Rana Plaza and BJ&B represent apparel workers’ rights violations in many other factories and countries. This is the central grievance of the U.S. antisweatshop movement’s student sector. What have these student activists done about it, and to what effect?

STUDENT ANTISWEATSHOP ACTIVISM: HOW ACTIVE? HOW EFFECTIVE?

The U.S. student antisweatshop sector has been persistently *active* – i.e., mobilized – in that grassroots student activists have organized on many campuses, pressed administrations and corporations to act to promote workers’ rights, created and maintained national organizations to pursue their goals, and met with apparel workers who were already fighting for their own rights in the Global South. Beginning in 1997 campus antisweatshop groups set off “an explosion of student protest activity” at many U.S. colleges, including occupation of administrative offices (Van Dyke, Dixon and Carlon 2007:193); they soon pressured many college administrations to impose labor codes of conduct on collegiate product licensees (Featherstone and United Students Against Sweatshops 2002; Garwood 2011). Student antisweatshop groups emerged in colleges across the U.S., including large doctorate-granting public universities (e.g., University of California-Los Angeles, Ohio State, Virginia Tech), smaller public schools (e.g., Central Connecticut State University, Lewis-Clark State College in Idaho, Truman State University in Missouri), Ivy League universities (e.g., Harvard, Brown), small private liberal arts colleges (e.g., Swarthmore, Morehouse), and other private schools (e.g., Tulane, Northwestern) (United Students Against Sweatshops 2000-2010).

This 1999 sit-in was characteristic of early U.S. student antisweatshop activity:

University of Michigan students sat outside the school president's office, demanding a meeting to discuss working conditions at factories that make university-licensed apparel. Members of Students Organizing for Labor and Economic Equality say they want to make sure the factories aren't operating under sweatshop conditions.... Students planned to spend the night in the building and resume their protest today. The protest follows similar demonstrations at other campuses across the country.... A key student demand is that manufacturers reveal the locations of the factories that make licensed apparel to check on pay, safety and workers' ages. (Associated Press 1999)

Student antisweatshop activists continue tackling new problems, as in this more recent example:

The Dallas Cowboys have a new merchandising arm that recently jumped into the business of producing college-logo apparel for leading universities, but the Cowboys subsidiary has already encountered a stubborn opponent – student groups that contend it is using overseas sweatshops.... At the University of Southern California, students [in the Student Coalition Against Labor Exploitation] returning to campus this fall are voicing outrage that their school signed an ambitious 10-year licensing deal with the Cowboys last May while keeping the negotiations secret from the students. (Greenhouse 2011)

These student activists created national organizations. First, to facilitate coordination, in 1998 student antisweatshop groups created the national umbrella group United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), which had approximately 150 campus chapters and several paid staff members in early 2015 (Featherstone and United Students Against Sweatshops 2002; Garwood 2011; United Students Against Sweatshops 2015).

Second, the campus chapters and USAS concluded that they needed an ongoing, well-resourced organization to help translate codes of conduct into reality in collegiate-licensed product factories. While some corporations, colleges, and non-student nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) had ostensibly formed the Fair Labor Association (FLA) monitoring organization for this purpose in 1999, USAS and campus antisweatshop groups rejected the FLA because of its corporate influence. In 2000 USAS and its campus affiliates campaigned to establish the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), which would have no corporate representation and whose priority would be to respond to production workers' complaints. They pressed college administrations to join it and leave the FLA, but administrations at many colleges initially refused or equivocated. Student activists then applied pressure. For example, students did sit-ins at Michigan, Wisconsin, Arizona, New York-Albany, Oregon, Iowa, Kentucky, Tulane, and Macalester; there was an 11-day hunger strike at Purdue and a two-day fast as well as a sit-in at the University of Pennsylvania; and "twelve Syracuse students biked across campus 100 percent garment-free" (Featherstone and United Students Against Sweatshops 2002:20). At some schools administrators had police use tear gas and arrest dozens. But ultimately 44 schools pledged to join the WRC by the time of its official creation in April 2000. By 2015 the WRC included 180 colleges and had a long record of documenting labor conditions and brokering solutions (Esbenshade 2008; Garwood 2011; Worker Rights Consortium 2015). The

WRC's endurance despite the corporate-backed FLA's competition "evidence[s] the power of student protests" (Garwood 2011:69).

In addition to organizing themselves and engaging opponents, student antisweatshop activists have frequently made face-to-face contact with Global South apparel workers. As part of its support for BJ&B workers in the Dominican Republic, the UNITE union brought two BJ&B workers, Kenia Rodriquez and Roselio Reyes, on a speaking tour to several U.S. college campuses in 1998, giving students direct encounters with workers who made caps that bore their own schools' logos and helping to spur early campus antisweatshop mobilization. Subsequent tours that visited student activists on multiple campuses included workers and often union organizers. Among these tours were those from Mexmode, Mexico (2001, 2006); TOS Dominicana, Dominican Republic (2008); Jerzees de Honduras (2009); Alta Gracia, Dominican Republic (multiple tours beginning in 2011); PT Kizone, Indonesia (2013); and Rana Plaza, Bangladesh (2014 and 2015) (authors' direct observations 2008-2015; Brown Student Labor Alliance 2013; Evans 2006; Garwood 2011; Ross 2004).

Student activists also went to apparel workers' home countries to meet them. USAS has organized summer internships; in 2005, for example, USAS interns were in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Haiti, Swaziland, Kenya, Turkey, India, China, and Cambodia (United Students Against Sweatshops 2005). Groups of USAS activists visited Kukdong/Mexmode workers in Atlixco, Mexico in 2000 and 2001. Also in 2001, USAS sent former student antisweatshop activist Evelyn Zepeda to Atlixco to facilitate solidarity actions with Kukdong/Mexmode workers, and then sent her on to Villa Altagracia, Dominican Republic, where she lived and worked as a liaison with BJ&B workers for almost two years. Student delegations to BJ&B workers in Villa Altagracia began in 2003 (Ross 2004). USAS and later a related organization, Solidarity Ignite, organized several student delegations to meet with Alta Gracia workers (many of whom worked for BJ&B before it closed) beginning soon after that factory opened in 2010 (Creager 2014; Potter 2012).

Thus, since the late 1990s student antisweatshop activists have been numerous, widespread, well-organized, and connected to their movement's Global South partners and intended beneficiaries. However, although success requires activity, activity does not guarantee success. So, how *effective* has the U.S. antisweatshop movement's student sector been in achieving its goal of promoting labor rights?

A detailed answer is far beyond the scope of this article, but the BJ&B unionization struggle illustrates some of the student sector's effectiveness. Here we focus on U.S. student contributions to this effort, but we emphasize that without the BJ&B union activists' tenacity, no amount of outside support would have made any impact.

BJ&B workers tried to form a union after UNITE documented the factory's violations in 1998, without success; at one point BJ&B fired 20 union activists. In 2001 USAS' on-site representative Evelyn Zepeda collaborated with BJ&B unionists to file a complaint to the WRC monitoring organization. Over the next year and a half the WRC demonstrated its effectiveness by leading and coordinating U.S. efforts to support BJ&B workers' right to organize. In the process the WRC partnered with its competitor the FLA, and it persuaded BJ&B clients Nike, Reebok, and adidas to complain to the company.¹ BJ&B resisted the union at each step, firing or threatening to fire union members and contesting the Dominican labor department's certifications of the union's status. Along the way student activists held actions in the U.S. and pressured BJ&B's client brands, but the greatest direct leverage on BJ&B appears to have been the effort led by the WRC – the organization that student activists fought to initiate in 2000. WRC Executive Director Scott Nova identified codes of conduct, another hard-fought student accomplishment, as another key to ultimate success against BJ&B (Garwood 2011; Ross 2004).

The new union, Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Empresa BJ&B S.A., negotiated and implemented a contract with the company that took effect in mid-2003, boosting wages 10 percent as well as ending involuntary overtime hours and providing “educational scholarships, paid holidays, and the establishment of a workers' committee to deal with health and safety concerns at the factory” (Garwood 2011:180). Dominican FEDOTRAZONAS labor federation head Ygnacio Hernández, who was closely engaged in this struggle, credited USAS activists with playing a crucial role: “We were determined to win, but without them it would have taken us five more years. And it would have been more traumatic without them because all we would have was the pressure to strike” (quoted in Gonzalez 2003). In a 2007 conversation with one of the authors – about a month after BJ&B announced it was closing, a result of production moving to other countries with lower wages – Hernández again emphasized U.S. student activists' important roles in FEDOTRAZONAS' organizing efforts (first author's notes, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, March 29).

Other examples of U.S. student antisweatshop activists' effectiveness include:

- pressing Nike to release licensed collegiate product supplier factory locations in 1999, a major breakthrough in the movement's ability to detect labor abuses. Other major marketers followed (Garwood 2011; Greenhouse 1999).
- supporting successful unionization and collective bargaining struggles at multiple collegiate apparel and textile factories noted above:

¹ The European antisweatshop organization Clean Clothes Campaign was also involved in this struggle.

- Kukdong/Mexmode in Mexico (2000-2002); Hanes TOS Dominicana/Dos Rios in the Dominican Republic (2006-2008); and Russell Athletics' Jerzees de Honduras/Jerzees Nuevo Dia in Honduras (2008-2009) (Anner 2011; Ross 2004; United Students Against Sweatshops 2008).
- helping promote the creation and growth of the unique Alta Gracia collegiate apparel factory in Villa Altagracia, Dominican Republic after the BJ&B factory closed there in 2007; Alta Gracia, which began production in 2010, pays workers a living wage over three times the typical Dominican wage for such work (Dreier 2011).
 - pressing 23 colleges to require licensees producing in Bangladesh to join the Bangladesh Accord for Building and Fire Safety in response to the 2013 Rana Plaza factory collapse, and pressing 17 collegiate apparel licensees to do so, as of August 2014 (United Students Against Sweatshops 2014).
 - supplying a source of new staff to non-student U.S. labor rights groups, e.g., the union UNITE HERE and the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) (Garwood 2011).

To our knowledge, no quantitative study has isolated the student antisweatshop sector's impact at the level of an entire nation-state or industry. However, one analysis of the Indonesian textile, apparel, and footwear manufacturing sectors – the targets of much global antisweatshop activism during the 1990s, including U.S. student activism – finds that wage levels in these sectors did in fact appear to increase due to movement activity, without any net loss of sector employment (Harrison and Scorse 2010).

These positive examples do not mean that student antisweatshop efforts have overwhelmingly succeeded. Abuse and union-busting still pervade the global apparel industry. The antisweatshop movement as a whole has achieved only moderate “private-sector regulation” against labor rights violations, lacking the force of effective state regulation. The movement's efforts to support workers' struggles to organize are also often hamstrung by the “global runaway shop,” the growing ability for firms to relocate production to lower-wage, union-hostile locations (Ross 2004), which caused the 2007 closure of BJ&B noted above.

But, within its hostile neoliberal environment, the student sector has significantly impacted Global South apparel production for U.S. markets. The student sector's accomplishments are even more impressive when compared to some national non-student consumer sector antisweatshop organizations that recently ceased to be independently viable (Sweatfree Communities and USLEAP, both absorbed into the ILRF) or simply evaporated (Campaign for Labor Rights). While an organization's existence or independence does not guarantee its effectiveness, its nonexistence guarantees ineffectiveness, and declining resources lessen its likely impact (Alliance for Global Justice 2014; Sweatfree Communities 2014; US Labor Education in the Americas Project

2013). It may even be that these organizations have declined or disappeared specifically because they lack some of the student sector's advantages that provide a steadier flow of optimistic, highly engaged participants.

Overall, then, the student sector of the U.S. antisweatshop movement has been well mobilized since 1997, and it has had some success in meeting its social change goals. What conditions facilitated this activity, and how has that activity been converted into effectiveness? In the remainder of this article we identify student sector advantages that answer this question.² To accomplish our purpose we blend elements of disparate literatures including research on college students and administrations; social movement scholarship on collective identity, networks, strategy ("repertoires of contention"), and opportunity structures; and the political economy of global production networks (GPNs). Our analysis focuses on the most common student antisweatshop activity: at four-year and graduate degree-granting not-for-profit U.S. colleges, among young full-time students at those schools, targeting the apparel that makes up a large fraction of collegiate-licensed products. This analysis is important because identifying the student sector's strengths may better enable its activists and allies to effectively play to those strengths; because our answers help illuminate social movements' roles in GPNs; and because this analysis provides a foundation for further empirical research on these issues.

We next examine college student mobilization advantages related to campus collective identity and to the ease of interaction among students within campus networks. Then, we introduce GPNs as economic geographers have elaborated this concept, augmented with sociological understandings of power relations, and we apply this analytical tool to collegiate and other apparel. Finally, we delineate students' strategic advantages rooted in administrators and students' mutual dependence, in students' relative ease of access to administrators, and in administrators' pivotal position in global collegiate apparel production networks.

MOBILIZATION ADVANTAGES

College students have commonly played key roles in social movements, such as the U.S. civil rights and China's 1989 Tienanmen Square protests (Morris 1981; Zhao 1998). As individuals, traditional-aged college students have high movement participation potential partly due to "biographical availability" (minimally competing life demands), particularly among more privileged students

² This article's concern is the question of *how* the student sector came to be as persistently active and effective as it has, not *whether* it is more active and effective *compared* to the pre-existing non-student consumer sector of the U.S. antisweatshop movement. We suspect the "whether" question's answer may be "yes," but this article's scope does not permit that comparison between sectors. The non-student consumer sector might have been at least equally active and effective in different ways and for different reasons than those we analyze for students.

(McAdam 1988). Academia's formal cultural content, which ideally prepares students to critically examine their society and themselves, may also promote activism (Boren 2001; Polletta 1999). Some colleges have decades-old student activist subcultures that facilitate new movement activity (Crossley 2008; Van Dyke 1998). In this section we examine two intertwined campus features that promote student antisweatshop mobilization: campus cultures that nurture collective identity, and dense campus interaction structures.

Collective Identity

To exist and be effective, a movement requires participants who share a collective sense of identity: a shared sense of belonging to a larger community, promoted by symbolic rituals, places, and objects (Durkheim [1915] 1965; Hawdon and Ryan 2011). Unsurprisingly, in many movements "recruitment has taken place primarily through preexisting solidarities" (Polletta and Jasper 2001:290); any movement possessing this advantage has a head start developing collective identity.

Taylor and Whittier emphasize that *boundaries*, "the social, psychological, and physical structures that establish differences between a challenging group and dominant groups" (1992:111), shape existing movements' collective identities. Such boundaries apply equally to preexisting solidarities that supply members to movements, such as a given student body that feeds activists and supporters into a campus antisweatshop group. To exist, any group must create and recreate boundaries to divide "us" from "them" (Hunt and Benford 2007); to do so, groups use symbolic places, objects, events, and actions³, and they pass these cultural elements on to new members. Such boundaries impel students to identify with their college and each other (cf. Garwood 2011:67-72).

Many objects, events, and actions mark student body boundaries. Owning college-identified symbolic objects – mugs, class rings, or collegiate apparel – indicates school affiliation. Classes, meals, and other routine ritual interactions with faculty, staff, and other students give students a sense of belonging to the college and each other, as do formally organized ritual events (Bronner 2012; Nielsen 2011).

Boundaries that mark a student body's collective identity are often geographic: on-campus places, delineated by symbolic objects located within them, as well as events and actions related to those places and objects. In other words, a student body tends to share a "sense of place," often so strong that students refer to the school as "home" (Nielsen 2011). It is partly associated with a school's architecture and landscapes, evident in these comments: "When I first

³ By "event" we mean something that, from a given individual's point of view, others have performed. By "action" we mean a behavior that a given individual commits.

walked on campus, I fell in love with it. Take a tour! It's wonderful! Enjoy the grass knolls and tall brick buildings before you decide Towson University is your home" (Cappex 2009). Students figuratively own the landscape, exemplified by one school's official statement that its continually repainted Spirit Rock "represents the spirit of UMW – whether advertising an event, showing spirit, or celebrating a recent victory.... The Spirit Rock belongs to students" (University of Mary Washington 2013:8). Whereas entities controlling a space as a "political place" often control its "cultural place" content as well, students exercise significant (albeit hardly hegemonic) ownership over campus symbols despite the administration's legal authority over that space (Banerjee 2012).

Near-campus sites, such as bars, restaurants, coffee shops, and clusters thereof, also play important symbolic parts in school collective identities (e.g., High Street adjacent to The Ohio State University) (Wilson 2005). Off-campus student-dominated residential areas play similar roles.

Many events and actions important to campus collective identity occur at stadiums and arenas. The largest and most frequent face-to-face student gatherings may well be football or basketball games, where the team, marching bands, mascots, and revered coaches symbolically represent the college. These games reinforce collective identity partly by distinguishing "us" from "them." Game chants often include first person plural pronouns, as in "We are ... Penn State!" or Virginia Tech's "Let's go ... Hokies!"; ritually participating with others at these visible and audible symbolic events – e.g., wearing the right colors, chanting the right chants at the right time – locate a person within a particular student body's boundaries (Bronner 2012).

Particularly pertinent to our purpose is students' wearing school logo apparel as a symbolic act that expresses group boundaries. Students at some schools wear this apparel several days a week. It is virtually required at athletic events, where its absence signals group members that the person is not one of them (Hunt and Benford 2007). That such apparel symbolizes a boundary for students – embedded in a system of other symbolic places, objects, actions, and events – provides an emotion-laden opportunity for a student antisweatshop group to frame apparel production labor abuses as an outrage that fellow students must help change (Katz forthcoming). In short, at any given College X (more at some colleges than others), intertwined boundary markers help define the student body as a consciously collective group. Students call themselves Eagles or Aggies. They refer to themselves as "we" and "us" at games and in routine informal conversations.

How, then, does the collective identity of College X students compare to the collective identity of Major Retail Chain Q or Apparel Brand R customers? The question matters because it is a question of the student antisweatshop sector's mobilization capacity vis-à-vis that of the movement's general (non-collegiate)

consumer sector. In the U.S. individuals commonly identify with particular companies' apparel and with shopping at particular retail chain stores (Copeland and Labuski 2013; Lichtenstein 2009). That is, customers often identify with a company's *brand*, a concept so pivotal that well-known companies like Nike and Russell Athletics are often referred to simply as "apparel brands"; U.S. college administrators also tend to think of their schools as having brands. A brand is a group symbol. Brand identification promotes shared identity among that brand's devotees, be they Eagles, Aggies, or Macy's or Walmart shoppers.

We contend that students and alumni from a given college typically share a much stronger collective identity than particular chain retailers' and apparel brands' customers share among themselves. Retailers and brands simply lack the range and intensity of collective identity-promoting factors we described for colleges. For example, an Ohio State alumnus traveling abroad might enthusiastically initiate a conversation by introducing himself as a Buckeye to another traveler wearing an Ohio State t-shirt (as one of the authors has experienced while wearing such a t-shirt abroad), but a U.S. Walmart shopper abroad will less likely encounter another North American wearing apparel obviously labeled "Walmart" and will less likely enthusiastically introduce herself with the words "I'm a Walmart shopper!" if she did. A given school's students experience symbolic places, events, actions, and objects together more intensely than retailers' and brands' customers – to the extent those consumers even interact.

Our point is not that Retailer Q/Brand R customers lack strong collective identities in the middle ground between nation or culture, on the one hand, and friends and families on the other. They may readily say "we" to refer to themselves and others from their cities or professions, for example. Our point is that they lack strong collective identities with these corporations' other customers, hobbling a mechanism that might otherwise mobilize efforts to change these companies' behaviors. College X students lack this disadvantage.

Ease of Interaction: Proximity and Networks

Just as movements routinely emerge from preexisting collective identities, movements routinely emerge from preexisting social structures and the relationships within them. Dense friendship, family, organizational, and other networks facilitate movement emergence, and a movement organization's embeddedness in such networks goes far to account for the support it can mobilize (Crossley 2008; Diani 2007; Klandermans and Oegema 1987; Morris 1981; Snow, Zurcher and Eklund-Olson 1980). For example, an individual's preexisting network ties to a given movement – or their absence – strongly influence whether that person will participate in the movement (McAdam 1988).

College campuses teem with intersecting networks, linking individual to individual, organization to organization, and informal group to informal group. The same face-to-face interaction that facilitates campus collective identity catalyzes these networks. It occurs at the on-campus and near-campus places described above. Students constantly encounter each other in academic activities, campus organizations and events, dining and drinking places, informal gatherings, and part-time jobs. They often live with fellow students in dormitories and apartments. These campus phenomena create and sustain a lively set of social networks. Thus, college campuses tend to be “free spaces” structurally conducive to movement activity (Crossley 2008; Polletta 1999). Once a campus movement group forms, members’ pre-existing ties and ongoing frequent face-to-face encounters with other students become channels to recruit campus individuals’ and organizations’ support.

To compare these College X students to customers of Retail Chain Q or Apparel Brand R, we offer the concept of *spatial commensurability*: the degree to which movement actors or whole movements can effectively engage their targets, directly or indirectly, unimpeded by physical distance. Spatial commensurability is not simply proximity to a particular target, but an overall strategic ability to reach targets so as to achieve movement goals. A College X student campaign is *born* embedded in dense local potentially-supportive networks that are spatially (or geographically) commensurate with a local but pivotal actor in the pertinent global production networks (GPNs): College X’s administration⁴, as we explain below. But potential activist customers of Retail Chain Q or Brand R typically face the company itself as the pivotal GPN actor to influence. This corporation depends on nationally⁵ dispersed brand promotion, stores, and other marketing operations. A non-collegiate consumer-sector campaign might *achieve* the spatial commensurability needed to confront this national target by developing – or more likely borrowing or organically emerging from – vigorous national networks.

⁴ By “administration” we largely mean top positions in central administration that are ultimately responsible for licensed product policies. The particular administrative unit responsible for licensing varies among colleges (Rooksby 2014) – such as public relations offices and athletic departments – though a short review of news reports would show that student antisweatshop groups commonly engage presidents directly. In some cases a licensed product agreement and intercollegiate athletic equipment agreement may be combined, as in Ohio State’s current agreement with Nike (Byler 2013); such a link between licensed products and the broader interests of an athletic program and powerful coaches would doubtless influence an antisweatshop campaign’s dynamics on any given campus (e.g., to gain leverage in negotiating a favorable major agreement like this one, an administration might resist contemporaneous student antisweatshop activists’ demands such as joining the WRC). For lack of space in this article-length treatment, we do not examine such internal administration forces further.

⁵ In this article we commonly refer to retailers’ and apparel brands’ operations as “national” for brevity. In reality, some major retail chains operate only regionally, while some other retail chains and especially apparel brands operate and market transnationally.

Non-student antisweatshop activists have done this before. The 2000-2001 Nicaragua labor rights campaign coordinated protests in 99 U.S. cities as part of a shaming strategy against Kohl's and Target stores, relying significantly on preexisting national Central America peace movement activist networks (and aided by USAS) (Ricker and Wimberley 2003). This national antisweatshop network soon faded; it is hard for part-time volunteer activists to maintain networks and the collective identity that glues them together across a continent, though new communication technologies help. Other nationally robust networks might function similarly, one obvious candidate being labor unions. In other cases the movement's general consumer sector has successfully organized locally to influence major local decision-makers in GPNs, similar to campus antisweatshop campaigns; Sweatfree Communities, noted earlier as having retrenched, pressured local governments (significant economic actors at many GPNs' consuming ends) to adopt and enforce labor codes of conduct similar to collegiate codes (Esbenshade 2008).⁶ But the movement's student sector campus milieu generates most of its spatially commensurate network infrastructure without activists' exertions. A campus antisweatshop group is born with these advantages that non-collegiate consumer-sector efforts commonly must try to build.

STRUCTURAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS: POWER RELATIONS IN GLOBAL PRODUCTION NETWORKS

Movements' grievances about injustices are grievances against particular power configurations, and effective movement struggles to stop injustices require the movement's injecting itself into those power relations to change them. For the antisweatshop movement, troublesome power relations exist within production and distribution processes. Sociologists and others have named and analyzed such processes as "commodity," "value," and "supply" chains (Bair 2009), sometimes focusing on labor-capital power relations more broadly (e.g., Dunaway 2014) but often focusing almost entirely on power relations among firms (e.g., Gereffi, Humphrey and Sturgeon 2005). We analyze these processes and their larger contexts through the related but more holistic global production network (GPN) perspective developed by economic geographers (Barrientos 2013; Coe, Dicken and Hess 2008; Dicken 2015).

⁶ However, some efforts to solve the spatial commensurability puzzle depend not on multitudinous grassroots activists' widespread direct physical proximity to targets, but on a few activists' or paid staffers' virtual presence in media. The National Labor Committee helped put "the sweatshop issue on the map" (Ross 2004:154) in 1996 using news media to nationally reveal Kathie Lee Gifford's apparel brand's reliance on child labor. Similarly, online activists have successfully attacked companies on a national scale with "culture jamming": turning brands against their owners, often with parodies such as the "Justice: Do it Nike" takeoff of Nike's "Just do it" slogan (Katz forthcoming; Klein 1999).

A GPN is a set of social actors linked in a transnational process of producing, exchanging, sharing information about, struggling over, and ultimately consuming a product, all embedded in particular places and in a larger structural and cultural context. GPN actors include workers, firms, consumers, states, and civil society organizations, among others. Thus, GPNs contain both the problems constituting the antisweatshop movement's grievances and – potentially – part of their solution. Expressed differently, GPNs and their contexts constitute much of the movement's opportunity structure: economic, cultural, political, and other conditions constituting the movement's opportunities and constraints (McAdam 1996; Wimberley 2009).

To understand how the antisweatshop movement can inject itself into these GPNs, we must understand movement actors' potential roles in the GPNs. For this we must identify a GPN's preexisting actors and how they use resources to pursue goals within this network. We must understand what power advantages certain GPN actors have vis-à-vis other actors, what makes these actors pivotal, and what makes them vulnerable.

Apparel GPNs

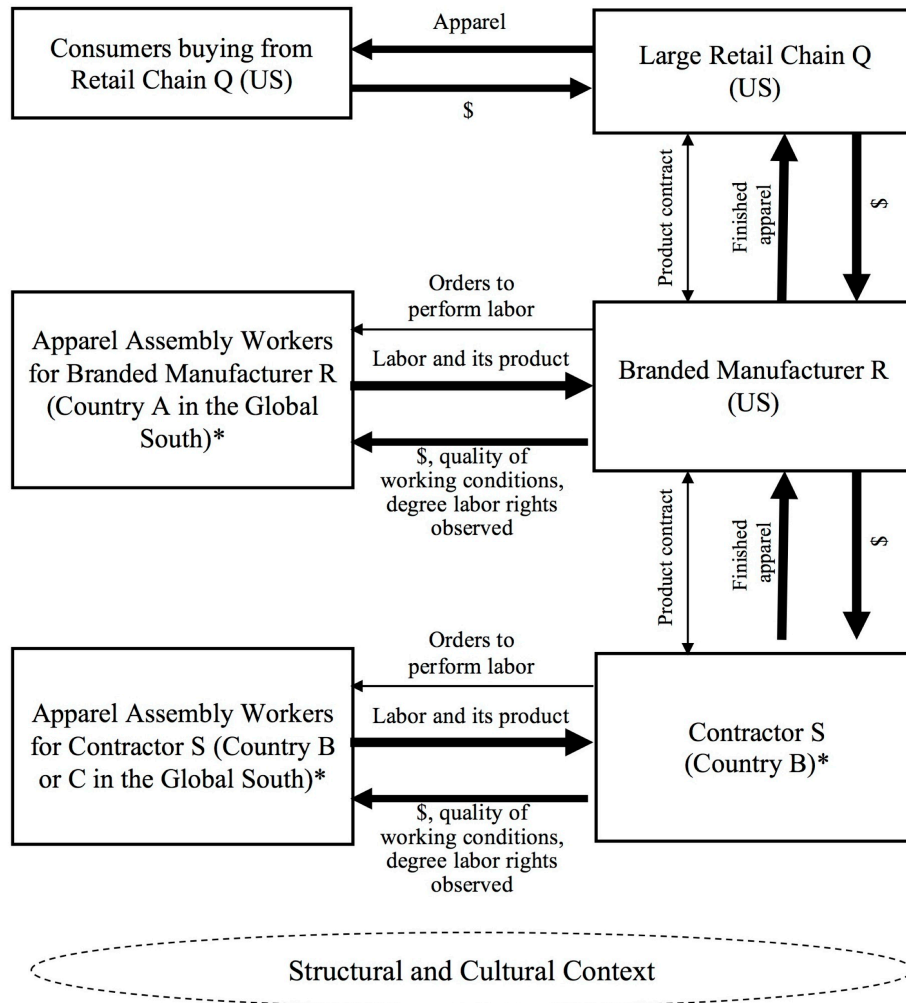
Three types of lead firms – which are also brands widely recognized by consumers – disproportionately capture profits in the dominant apparel GPNs supplying U.S. consumers. The first two types operate no factories: branded marketers (e.g., Nike) that have well-advertised brands; and retailers (e.g., major retail chains as different as Wal-Mart discount stores and upscale Nordstrom, and specialty retailers such as Gap), who often sell their own private label (store) brands and, at least if they are more upscale, branded marketers' apparel as well (Appelbaum and Lichtenstein 2006). These retailers and branded marketers rely heavily on unbranded “full-package production” contractors, often based in the Global South (e.g., Mexico's Grupo Kaltex), who obtain the raw materials and organize the production process. The third lead firm type, branded manufacturers (e.g., Fruit of the Loom or HanesBrands), possess widely-recognized brand names; they operate their own factories, or closely coordinate “industrial subcontracting networks” of firms that themselves run factories, or both (Bair and Gereffi 2003). In all these cases, assembly routinely occurs in the Global South.

These three types of leading firms tend to exercise disproportionate power over their suppliers, but they are not equals. Spurred significantly by neoliberal practices, the “pull system” or buyer-driven production network – in which retailers tend to dictate prices, specifications, and schedules to manufacturers – now dominates the apparel industry (Appelbaum and Lichtenstein 2006; Gereffi 1994). Monopolistic market shares make large retailers particularly powerful vis-à-vis manufacturers.

Figure 1 depicts a GPN for a large U.S. retail chain buying apparel from a U.S.-based branded manufacturer with assembly in the Global South. (Space limitations prohibit examining GPNs for branded marketers or for branded manufacturers that rely entirely on external subcontracting networks.) This simplified GPN includes only actors engaged in economic exchanges with each other (heavy arrows) and excludes inputs, e.g., fabric. Light arrows signify information flows such as contract negotiations and orders to perform work. Large Retail Chain Q is a major discounter (e.g., Walmart, Target) or department store (more likely a “downmarket” store such as Sears or Kohl’s, since upscale stores’ more prestigious brands tend to come from branded marketers). Branded Manufacturer R may use its own Assembly Workers to make all the apparel, or it may contract some or all assembly to Contractor(s) S. All this is embedded in a structural and cultural context including trade agreements, labor laws and their enforcement, labor pools, competing firms, interfirm relationships, consumer preferences and firms’ efforts to shape those preferences, political and economic ideologies, political structures and conflicts, and social movement activity, among other elements.

This network is a set of power relations. What gives which actors how much power over which other actors in this GPN? Although its account of power is limited, exchange theory helps answer this question by implying three other questions about exchange networks (Emerson 1981): (1) What resources does each actor control? (2) Which other actors value or seek these resources? (3) What alternative sources do the latter actors have for each of these resources? Figure 1 indicates the key resources that the GPN’s actors seek from and exchange with each other. Space precludes discussing all these power relations, but a key principle governing them is that having more alternatives vis-à-vis other actors gives one a power advantage that translates into economic advantages.⁷ Notably, Large Retail Chain Q has more flexibility to choose alternatives to

⁷ This principle fundamentally explains why the unionized BJ&B factory in the Dominican Republic (described at length earlier) closed in 2007. Soon after the 2003 union contract took effect, BJ&B began laying off many workers when Nike and Reebok – despite these branded marketers’ previous apparent cooperation in calling on BJ&B to allow workers to organize – cut the prices they would pay contractors for caps. BJ&B shut down completely in 2007 after losing branded marketers’ orders to factories in lower-wage sites, an option more readily available to the brands due to increasingly freer trade policies (notably the 2005 demise of the Multifibre Arrangement (MFA), which had placed quotas on apparel imports (Dicken 2015)) (Garwood 2011). Despite workers’ intense efforts and despite initially effective foreign solidarity with them, the BJ&B workers were ultimately devastated by global mobility of production – the fact that brands like Nike have many alternatives and there is little to prevent their using those alternatives. Power over workers’ pay and conditions ultimately lies much more with the world’s Nikes than with its BJ&Bs, but due to complex contracting arrangements in buyer-driven GPNs – arrangements that few consumers understand but that we seek to clarify in this article – the Nikes can usually shift blame for union-busting, low wages, and poor conditions to the BJ&Bs.



*Branded Manufacturer R may produce in its own factory with its own employees, contract production to Contractor S, or both. Country B may be the US, Country A, or another country.


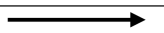

	material resource exchange (money (\$), labor, product, legal permissions, working conditions, or observance of labor rights)
	information flow (single-headed arrow signifies an order or request; double-headed signifies negotiations)
	

Figure 1. Power relations among actors in a US-retail-chain-driven global apparel production network (GPN) sourcing from a branded manufacturer with production in the Global South

Branded Manufacturer R than R has alternatives for Q (e.g., even though there is a limited number of Branded Manufacturers to choose among, Q could replace one large R with another, and the replacement R could even use some of the same contractor factories as its predecessor to fill increased production needs, but an R that loses a large retailer will have difficulty making up those sales); the larger Q's retail market share, the stronger its advantages over any given R. Retailer Q has comparatively many alternative Customers – although, if the Customers were organized, they could withdraw their resources (capacity to spend) on which the entire GPN's existence depends. Just as notably, Apparel Workers for R or S in the Global South have relatively few employment alternatives, whereas Branded Manufacturer R and Contractor S have many alternative employees due to frequently high unemployment and underemployment in the Global South, and due to many such firms' capacity to move to other countries.

Consider this example for Figure 1's generic GPN: a Fruit of the Loom (FOL) men's short-sleeve, crew-neck cotton t-shirt with no imprint, made in El Salvador and sold in four-packs of assorted colors for \$11.44 at a Walmart Supercenter retail store in 2013. Branded manufacturer FOL, a Berkshire Hathaway subsidiary, made about 33 percent of its 2013 sales to Walmart. For apparel it sells in North America, FOL "generally performs its own ... cutting, sewing and packaging," performing assembly "in lower labor cost facilities in the Caribbean and Central America" (Berkshire Hathaway 2014). However, as we show below, FOL collegiate licensed apparel assembly in El Salvador relies partly on contractors, and it seems unlikely that FOL would organize its noncollegiate Salvadoran apparel assembly very differently. Thus, the t-shirts at Walmart apparently were assembled in one or more FOL-owned factories and/or one or more contractor factories in El Salvador.

In this t-shirt GPN, Walmart appears to have more alternatives than other actors, considering that if Walmart dropped FOL as a supplier it might well replace those t-shirts from other branded manufacturers or nonbranded full-package contractors, either of which might increase production rapidly by subcontracting (including to FOL's current contractors). FOL likely cannot replace the one-third of its sales going to Walmart, giving Walmart considerable leverage over FOL to keep prices low. This cost pressure passes through the GPN to FOL's and contractors' Salvadoran Assembly Workers. With 6 percent unemployment in 2012 (International Labour Organization 2014), El Salvador's workers had more job alternatives than workers in countries with very high unemployment, but their country's 34 percent poverty rate in 2012 severely limited alternatives for higher-paying jobs (World Bank 2014).

Collegiate Apparel GPNs

Licensed collegiate branded apparel (hereafter “collegiate apparel”) is apparel that bears a college’s name or other trademarks. Branded marketers, branded manufacturers, and unbranded manufacturers pay college administrations royalties in return for legal permission (licenses) to supply it to retailers (Rooksby 2014). Thus, administrations are gatekeepers in the collegiate apparel GPNs that student antisweatshop groups target for change.

Figure 2 depicts a collegiate apparel GPN with a branded manufacturer as the licensee. Power relations among Branded Manufacturer Y, Contractor Z (if present), and Assembly Workers essentially match those in noncollegiate apparel GPNs. Here we focus on power dynamics between College X’s Administration and Branded Manufacturer Y, ignoring retailers’ roles to simplify discussion. College X Administration’s key resource is monopoly control over access to the College X apparel market. If College X will not grant Branded Manufacturer Y a license, Y may not easily find a substitute, especially if enrollment size, athletic program prominence, or other factors make X’s apparel market large. Branded Manufacturer Y’s resources are its abilities to organize production, distribute products, and attract consumers with a more or less recognized brand. Though X’s Administration has multiple prospective branded manufacturer licensees, Y’s absence might create a royalty gap for which X cannot easily substitute. College X’s Administration also has a relationship with College X Students, examined later. These students purchase much of College X’s apparel, making its administration and Branded Manufacturer Y dependent on them.

Consider this example: in 2013 online retailer Amazon offered a \$15 scarlet Ohio State men’s cotton short-sleeve crew-neck t-shirt with mascot Brutus Buckeye printed on front, listed as made in El Salvador, from the Russell Brands division of branded manufacturer Fruit of the Loom (Amazon.com 2013; Berkshire Hathaway 2014). Worker Rights Consortium factory database entries for July 2012 through March 2013 indicate that one or more of ten factories made this line of t-shirts.⁸ FOL appeared to operate four of the them, evidenced by contact email addresses with the company’s “fruit.com” internet domain name: Joyas, Lamatepec, and Montecristo in Zona Franca American Industrial Park, Ciudad Arce; and Santa Ana Apparel Limitada in Export Salva Free Zone, Colón (Worker Rights Consortium 2012-2013).

The other six factories appear to be independent contractors. Apple Tree in San Marcos (Zona Franca San Marcos), owned by the Korean AT Group, reportedly has other factories in Nicaragua and Bangladesh (Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights 2011). Korean-owned Lido Industrias in San Juan

⁸ Other universities reported these factories – dozens of schools, in some factories’ cases. But Ohio State, though a WRC member, does not report this information. Thus, we cannot be certain we have identified all OSU-Russell t-shirt factories.

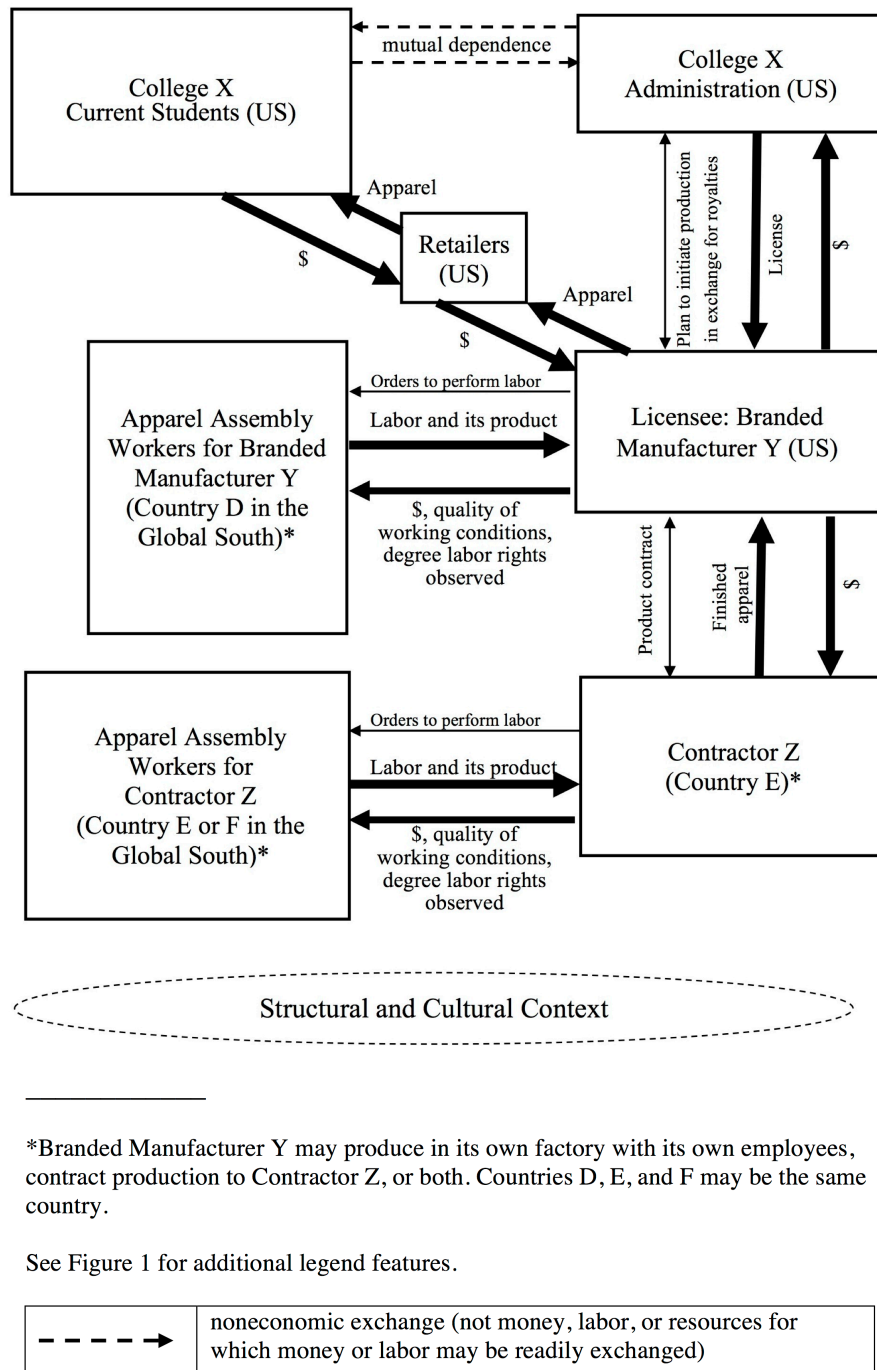


Figure 2. Power relations among actors in a collegiate licensed apparel GPN sourcing from a branded manufacturer with production in the Global South

Opico (Zona Franca Lido Industrias), apparently a single-factory firm, shut down without paying workers in 2007 but reopened by early 2009 (Worker Rights Consortium 2008). Manufacturas del Río in El Rosario (Zona Franca El Pedregal), which closed without warning at the end of 2013 after a union organized the plant, was part of a Nicaraguan-based firm that is majority-owned by Mexico's Grupo Kaltex full-package contractor (Centro de Estudios y Apoyo Laboral 2014). These three factories illustrate the diversity of company sizes, national origins, and organizational forms among apparel contractors. We could not locate such details about the other three contracting factories: Hermano Textil II, San Marcos; Confecciones Maya, Metapán; and Memosa Manufacturing, Apopa. FOL's ability to choose among alternative contractors in El Salvador and elsewhere should help it boost profits by providing leverage to minimize contractors' prices.

The \$15 Russell Athletics Ohio State t-shirt embodies the power relationship between College X's Administration and Branded Manufacturer Y. This large university with prominent athletic programs recently claimed to have the "most lucrative" U.S. college licensing program, with annual retail sales estimated at about \$300 million (Rouan 2012). FOL would find it difficult to make up for a lost Ohio State license accounting for just a few percentage points of this \$300 million, which tends to give the Ohio State administration strong leverage to extract high royalty rates and other resources from FOL.⁹ Simultaneously, the Ohio State administration depends on FOL and other licensees to generate royalty revenues, and it only has just so many alternatives to FOL. But this power relation reveals FOL's vulnerability to Ohio State's gatekeeping decisions; the administration's power has limits. (Note that states affect these power relations (Dicken 2015), but states' changed roles under neoliberal globalization combined with their fundamentally secondary roles in labor-capital conflicts have helped exclude them as primary actors and movement targets in this immediate context.)

Apparel GPNs' dominant actors sustain themselves from marketing and other operations dispersed over national (or larger) geographic domains, posing a huge field for U.S. antisweatshop actors to cover. But the fact that one key actor in collegiate apparel GPNs – the administration – operates largely within a local domain creates a spatially commensurate opportunity for a locally effective antisweatshop group. We next examine how such movement actors can tap into and use Ohio State's and other administrations' vulnerabilities, which in turn gives them an opportunity to inject themselves into these GPN power relations and change them.

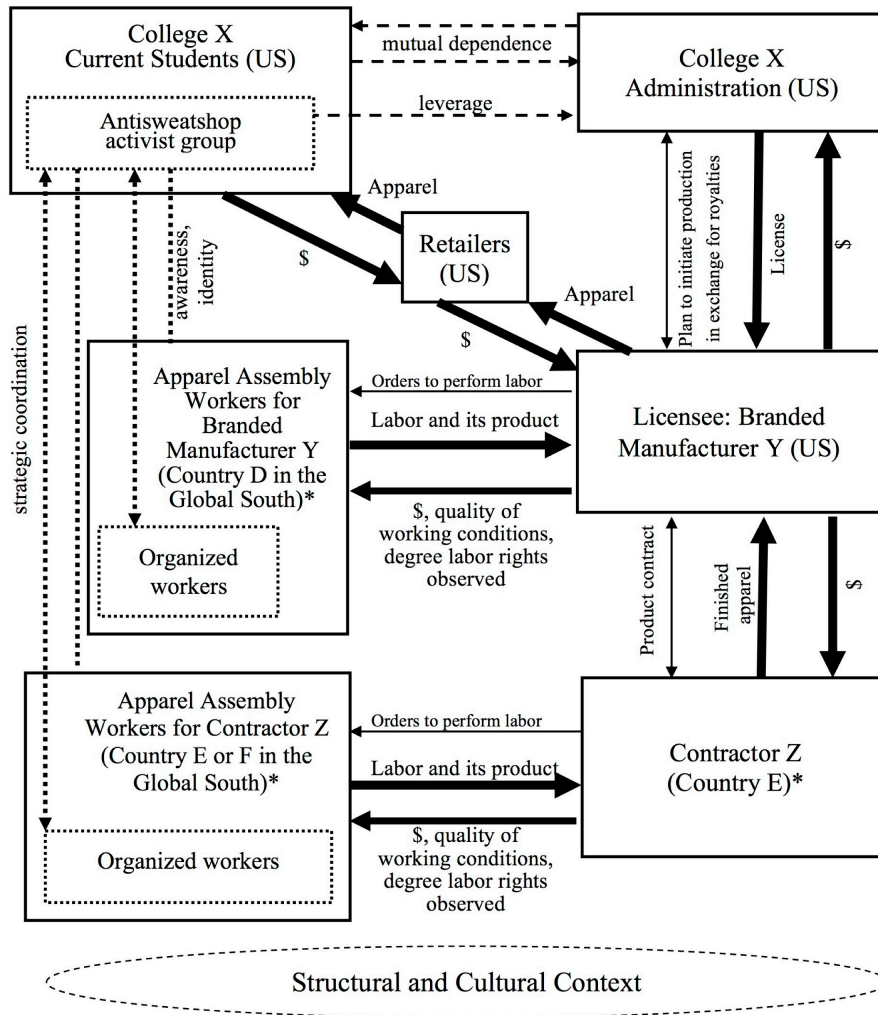
⁹ However, Ohio State's administration clearly lacks chain retailer Walmart's leverage, its one-third share of FOL sales being undoubtedly vastly greater than Ohio State's share.

STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES

Movement actors choose targets for various reasons (Bartley and Child 2014), but one of the most important criteria is access. Piven and Cloward observed that college students protesting the Vietnam War by “attacking blameless administrators and faculties” were simply protesting where they could, “where they played a role on which an institution depended, so that their defiance mattered.... People cannot defy institutions to which they have no access, and to which they make no contribution” (1979:22-23). U.S. student antisweatshop activists today have perhaps even less access to Congress and the U.S. president than student anti-war protestors had in 1970. But their effective capacity to defy their own administrations reflects a strategic *opportunity* for present-day student antisweatshop activists (Kelly and Lefkowitz 2003), for whom administrations are apt targets (see Garwood 2011): a given school’s administration occupies a gatekeeping position in collegiate product GPNs, deciding whether any given particular marketer or manufacturer will receive a license to use their logos. The administration is student agency’s primary entry point into collegiate apparel GPNs, a pivot to leverage production networks that shape production workers’ rights and conditions. This particular *strategic* advantage, which the U.S. antisweatshop movement’s general consumer sector lacks, is a structural opportunity that complements student antisweatshop activists’ *mobilization* advantages examined earlier. Student activists’ ability to act upon this advantage derives from their effective claims on and proximity to the administration.

Students obviously need certain things from administrations, but the dependence is mutual (Figure 2). Students can claim an administration’s attention because administrations need cooperation and certain vital resources from students (cf. Nielsen 2011); students are in an exchange network with the administration. In Figure 2 this potential was unrealized, with students unorganized and relatively passive. In Figure 3 a student antisweatshop group identifying and coordinating with apparel factory workers has emerged to turn this potential power into leverage over collegiate apparel GPN gatekeepers. Noncollegiate customers of large apparel retailers and brands typically lack this advantage unless they can organize many activists nationally. Compared to those firms’ dependence on almost any set of non-collegiate consumers ever organized by the U.S. antisweatshop movement, a given school’s administrators have much greater dependence on even a small campus antisweatshop group. Because student antisweatshop groups coordinate nationally through USAS, this dynamic repeats at scores of colleges, translating to significant national limits on collegiate apparel licensees’ alternatives.

A college administration needs enrollments that justify the school’s existence to legislators or donors, and it needs students’ tuition and fees. But for



*Branded Manufacturer Y may produce in its own factory with its own employees, contract production to Contractor Z, or both. Countries D, E, and F may be the same country.

See Figures 1 and 2 for additional legend features.

Figure 3. Power and other relations among actors in a collegiate licensed apparel GPN sourcing from a branded manufacturer with production in the Global South, with an organized student group

Figure 3, continued.

.....	noneconomic student activist identification with production workers (however, few or none of these workers may know of this campus)
←.....→	noneconomic strategic coordination relationship between student activist group and apparel assembly worker union
.....	movement group within a larger constituency

what else does an administration depend on its students? Part of the answer is that current students are future alumni. An administration depends on loyal alumni's donations. Supportive alumni also foster state officials' (for public colleges) and governing boards' favorable perceptions, channeling outside resources to the administration. An important part of an administration's cultivating alumni support is creating a positive image with them while they are still students. Outright dismissal of student overtures creates a negative image that may spread beyond antisweatshop activists to their friends, to other sympathizers among the student body, and even to alumni.

Administrations consciously depend on students' and alumni's positive words to friends, family members, and others to help recruit applicants. For example, a University of Mary Washington email urged alumni to "Support Mary Washington by referring a future [Mary Washington] Eagle.... Our alumni serve as UMW's best recruiters" (University of Mary Washington Office of Alumni Relations 2013). School identities that facilitate antisweatshop mobilization, discussed above, can also inspire student and alumni favor toward administrations.

More broadly, what students and alumni tell others about the college assists or impedes administration efforts to promote a particular school "brand" to state officials, prospective students, and others – a goal reflecting the ideology that colleges should be run like businesses, part of the same neoliberal milieu that generated current apparel GPNs (McAlexander and Koenig 2010). Brands relate directly to collegiate-licensed apparel: administrations depend on students, alumni, and their families to buy this branded apparel. An administration thus has a motive to avoid apparel brand damage among this audience, as exemplified by a Haverford College official who noted "schools don't want the backlash that Kathie Lee Gifford faced years ago when labor activists revealed that some garments from her clothing line came from a Honduran sweatshop" (Cohen and Levinson 2000). A campus antisweatshop group's ability to sully a school's brand by publicizing labor rights abuses is a strategic advantage.

Aside from specific resources administrators obtain from students such as enrollments, tuition, future donations and other support, help in recruiting new students, and positive impacts on the brand, administrators rely on students for cooperation in general – a major student “contribution,” Piven and Cloward might say. Active nonviolence strategists have long understood this principle (e.g., Gandhi [1925-1929] 1993). As in any relationship between people in authority and others who routinely accept their authority, students have the power to withdraw their cooperation, although students infrequently think to do so as a collective strategy. Administrations depend on students not to do so, relying on them to adhere to procedures and norms central to everyday campus operations; to not generate negative publicity; and to not occupy campus offices in protest. Merely the perceived threat of noncooperation may lead administrators to accede to student demands. If students openly clash with administrators, the latter may appear ineffective to the governing boards that hire, fire, evaluate, and promote them. In public colleges such conflicts may impair administrators’ relationships with state officials.

A “rational” and informed administration seems likely to cultivate friendly, cooperative, and supportive student and alumni relationships, especially considering that administrations have limited substitutes for such supporters. But an administration might reject student antisweatshop activists’ demands for various reasons, including disinclination to expend time and effort to address student concerns (among competing problems and multiple constituencies that seem more compelling than the student activists), or fear that labor rights measures may limit royalties (although administrations could benefit from cultivating “boycotts” favoring apparel produced under just conditions (Katz 2011)), or resentment toward student intrusion in what the administration considers its prerogatives. These factors may emerge from individual administrators’ personal inclinations, from organizational inertia, and/or from firmly established local administrative norms. Like students, administrations have cultures and inhabit social structures. For that matter, key administrators may disagree. Of course, just as an administration depends on its students, students depend on the administration. Students have potential power over the administration, but the administration simultaneously has power over students and has practice exercising it, making activism potentially costly.

Administrators’ dependence on students creates one particularly important corollary advantage for student activists: college students have relatively easy – often face-to-face – access to administrators compared to consumers’ access to major retailers’ and brands’ executives. This varies among colleges, but administrators seem likely to pay any student’s complaint some attention, and student government (sometimes engaged as a partner by student antisweatshop groups) commonly has routine communications with upper administrators.

Furthermore, security barriers that separate major retail and brand executives from their customers typically do not exist to nearly the same degree between college administrators and students. For example, in 2014 members of USAS@VT (USAS Local 124) at the first author's university, accompanied by two Bangladeshi factory worker representatives, their translator, and a national USAS staffperson – at least 16 people – entered the administration building, passed by visiting prospective students and their parents, and walked into the president's outer office unhindered, all while chanting for the university to end a contract with VF Corporation for not joining the Bangladesh Accord for Building and Fire Safety (direct observations and photographs by first author, April 15, 2014).

Students also have easier access to administrators due to a factor identified earlier as promoting student-to-student interaction that facilitates mobilization: physical proximity. Few Walmart shoppers live close to corporate headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas, but students may routinely walk past campus administration buildings and even encounter upper-level administrators. To draw another example from USAS@VT, in 2014 its members spoke directly with the university president when they unexpectedly met him warily descending the administration building steps as they were about to enter the building (direct observations by first author, March 28, 2014).

Aside from leverage over administrations, the student sector has some leverage over branded collegiate product manufacturers and marketers simply because the student sector represents these firms' customers – similar to the U.S. antisweatshop movement general consumer sector's more widely dispersed relationships with such firms. But the student sector's best opportunity to leverage GPN power relations remains with college administrations.

When a few students at a given college become aware of and identify with people in the Global South who make their school's apparel, when they organize on campus, and when they coordinate with subsets of apparel workers who have organized into unions and similar groups (Figure 3), they transform this opportunity with their administration into strategic action. At this point they insert themselves into the collegiate apparel GPN's power relations, to collaborate with production workers to help change those relationships. This is the final link in the chain that makes student antisweatshop efforts spatially commensurate with the GPNs they seek to change.

CONCLUSION

The U.S. antisweatshop movement's student sector's goals include promoting labor rights and better working conditions among collegiate apparel workers in the Global South, taking direction from those workers and from the union organizers and human rights activists who are their local allies. We have spelled

out new arguments to illuminate conditions facilitating the student sector's mobilization around – and its moderate success with – these goals, compared to the movement's non-student consumer sector. Two distinctive campus conditions help the student sector recruit and activate supporters: pre-existing collective identity and frequent interaction among students. Student activists often can convert this potential into achieved goals because students can leverage the college administrations that decide whether a firm may market their licensed collegiate apparel. This structural and cultural context renders the movement's student sector spatially commensurate with economic actors it must pressure and global production networks it must change to achieve its goals.

Our analysis contributes an exemplar to sociologists' and other scholars' efforts to understand how social movement agency can strategically engage complex and spatially large structures of global political economy. Networks and power relations constitute our two key conceptual tools for linking these various actors and processes that range from the microlevel (mobilization among students on a single campus) to the mesolevel (U.S. student group ties across campuses and to organized Global South apparel workers; a given school's administration and its relations with students and with licensees) to the macrolevel (entire global production networks attached to networks of campus relationships). The student antisweatshop sector's home lies within campus networks among students and with administrators. These campus networks overlap with global collegiate apparel production networks (GPNs) in that administrations occupy pivotal positions in both networks. Power relations pervade both networks; because these seemingly disparate networks overlap, they constitute a single larger network, providing a single system of power relations and movement dynamics for student activists to take strategic advantage of – and for scholars to make sense of.

We also link antisweatshop activism with spatial principles and perspectives. Economic geographers' GPN approach, compared to sociologists' current global commodity chain approaches that focus more exclusively on economic actors, facilitates our analysis with its explicit emphases on networks and movement actors (Coe, Dicken and Hess 2008). Our analysis in turn offers GPN scholars sociological understandings of (1) the power relations emphasized in GPN literature (e.g., applying exchange theory) and (2) social movement dynamics (e.g., how certain movement actors can more readily mobilize to leverage economic actors in apparel GPNs). Further, we offer social movement scholarship the concept of spatial commensurability as a heuristic device to analyze movement actors' and targets' overlapping spatial distributions and the implications of such overlap (or its absence) for movements' engagement with those targets – particularly pertinent for movements having transnational grievances.

Finally, we hope to assist and encourage current and prospective student antisweatshop activists and their allies by identifying their potential strengths. Understanding the logics of and synergies among the mobilizing processes, strategic locations, and global production contexts that we have examined can help activists effectively plan and use their systemic advantages. Our analysis may also help alert non-student labor rights activists to the student sector's advantages and the possible need to emulate or substitute for them. We invite activists' feedback.

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