

LABOR UNIONS, ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF REPRESENTATION, AND THE EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY RELATIONS IN U.S. WORKPLACES

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The authors draw on a telephone survey of 1,000 U.S. workers to explore whether alternative, nonunion forms of representation are filling the gap left by union decline; whether this matters to authority relations at work; and whether these first two points help to explain union decline. The authors find that nonunion associations do not appear to be filling the gap, but that management-established, nonunion representation systems are one-and-a-half times as widespread as is union representation and are evaluated somewhat more favorably by workers. Both unions and management-established systems bear positive associations with authority relations at work before controlling for management practices, but these are substantially weakened once management practices—especially “bureaucratic” practices—are entered. The authors argue that, in the case of unions, this is likely because unions cause employers to adopt these practices. This is not likely to be the case of management-established systems, however, which are more likely to be set up in conjunction with these practices. Finally, results suggest that management-established systems are often in violation of the Wagner Act, but they bear no association with the propensity to vote for a union. Instead, bureaucratic practices matter, independently of these systems.

Labor unions have long been argued to be the primary institutions of workers in the United States, providing not only improved wages and benefits but also rights and protections related to the exercise of authority and ultimately to the realization of democratic values at work (Chamberlain and Kuhn 1965; Sinyai 2006). Union decline might therefore be seen, in this respect, to represent a diminishment of American democracy (Kochan 2005). Yet the extent to which this may actually be the case is not clear. Not

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only has there been a paucity of multivariate research into the actual impact of union representation on authority relations at work, it is possible that alternative forms of representation, coupled with employment law and management practice, have been filling any void left by union density decline, effectively displacing unions. Particularly interesting is the possibility that employees have been joining identity-based associations (Helfgott 2000; Scully and Segal 2002; Kochan 2005: 169–71; Piore and Safford 2006), but there is also some likelihood that employers have been quietly establishing alternative, nonunion systems of representation. This may skirt or even violate the law, but it represents a real possibility in view of widespread worker support for such systems (Freeman and Rogers 1999), substantial support in employer and some academic circles for legal reforms to allow for such systems (see Estlund 2010: 33–35, 250), and the limited resources and enforcement powers of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

The extent to which these possibilities hold true has important implications not only for understanding the current state of representation and authority relations in American workplaces but also for debates over labor law reform. First, to the extent that unions can still be shown to democratize authority relations at work, the case for stronger labor laws is supported. Second, to the extent that management-established systems appear to serve as effective alternatives to union representation, the case for repealing legal prohibitions against these systems may also be strengthened. This may be especially so if it can be shown that these systems do not serve as impediments to union organizing, which remains the sole means to the attainment of legally protected and independent collective representation rights in the United States.

This article draws on a random telephone survey of 1,000 employed Americans to address these questions. We explore the extent to which workers in our sample are represented by a union, a management-established system, or an independent nonunion association, and how they evaluate each of these forms of representation where established. We also explore the associations between these systems and the exercise of authority at work, as perceived by workers. Finally, we explore whether nonunion systems are associated with a lower propensity for nonunion workers to vote for a union should a ballot be held, and hence, whether any growth in the prevalence of these systems may help to explain union decline.

Research Questions

In the United States, labor unions have been widely viewed as the primary means by which workers can collectively achieve democratic rights and protections within the employment relation, whether in the form of “concrete freedom on the job” (Perlman 1928), industrial jurisprudence (Slichter 1941; Chamberlain and Kuhn 1965), or collective voice in the determination of the terms and conditions of their employment (Freeman and Medoff 1984). These rights and protections may be considered of value in and of

themselves, but they are also commonly associated with a variety of positive outcomes, particularly enhanced security, dignity, fairness, and justice. Unions may not alter the basic structure of the employment relation, but they, in theory, substantially alter the conditions under which management authority is to be exercised, and in this sense arguably bring an element of democracy into the workplace (Lieserson 1973), with potential implications not just for the quality of the employment experience but also for the quality of the democracy within which this experience occurs.

These “democratization effects,” as they may be referred to, have served as an essential justification for unions throughout the past century (Derber 1970), providing a major impetus for laws supporting the right to union representation and collective bargaining (*ibid.*) and for international human rights declarations in favor of this right (Human Rights Watch 2000). They may be argued to be as, or more, important than the economic effects of unions. To quote Walter Reuther:

Our economic gains . . . are important; but most important is the fact that we have won a measure of industrial democracy within our industries. We have won recognition of workers’ rights. A worker is no longer a mere clock-card number; he is now a person—a human being, who can hold his head high and demand the respect and consideration to which he is entitled. We have in truth given substance to the old phrase “dignity of labor.” (Reuther 1951, as cited in Derber 1970: 463)

Yet, not only has the effectiveness of unions in serving a democratization function sometimes been questioned, there may also be alternative means of doing so, thereby filling (or even explaining) any void left by union decline (Kaufman 2005).

First, it is possible that alternative forms of representation have come to serve as effective substitutes for unions. Particularly noteworthy have been American-style works councils, traditionally labeled as “company unions” but referred to in this paper as “management-established representation systems” (or just “management-established systems”). These systems have been widely criticized as unacceptable substitutes for unions (Gitelman 1988; Brody 1994; Kelly 1996), and in the United States they are illegal under section 8(a)(2) of the Wagner Act if established by the employer and if they operate as “labor organizations,” as defined under Section 2(5) of the Act (Gely 1998). But according to some authors, they provided effective representation for workers in the early decades of the twentieth century (Fairris 1995; Kaufman 1999) and may still do so where established (Kaufman 2000, 2005).

These systems can take a variety of forms and serve a variety of functions (Taras and Kaufman 2006), many of which may fall within the definition of an illegal labor organization under the Wagner Act.¹ There is, however, evidence of widespread worker support for *some* form of workplace representation,

¹In the *Electromation* and *DuPont* decisions, the NLRB essentially ruled that this restriction applies not only to traditional company unions but also to high-performance or involvement work systems if they

including management-established systems (Freeman and Rogers 1999: 146–47). Moreover, legal restrictions on these systems are ambiguous, and their legitimacy has been widely questioned (Estlund 2010: 33; Patmore 2010). Their enforcement may also be lax. In practice, a union has to bring a charge to the NLRB, which may serve little purpose unless the workplace is/has been an organizing target. Even then, the NLRB is unlikely to deal with such a charge in a timely fashion, and the available sanctions are limited and largely regarded as ineffective (Estlund 2010: 37; Patmore 2010: 93). Thus, it is quite possible that management-established representation systems in some form are not only becoming widespread but also that they do indeed serve as substitutes for unions.

Second, a number of authors have suggested that the growth in substantive regulation over the past half-century, as embodied in statutes, administrative rulings, and court decisions, may have increasingly rendered the rights associated with labor unions superfluous and could help to explain union decline (Fiorito and Maranto 1987; Piore and Safford 2006: 301; Estlund 2010: 60). Most noteworthy have been the arguments advanced by Piore and Safford (2006: 301–2). They maintain that state regulation began to be especially important in the early 1960s, when Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was passed. Since then, protections against discriminatory practices have been extended to a variety of groups and minorities. They also argue that legislation mandating family leave and advance notice of layoffs, limits imposed on the doctrine of employment-at-will, and a proliferation of employment legislation at the state and local levels (e.g., living wage laws) have led employers to adopt standard personnel policies and practices and a new strategy centered on private arbitration procedures.

It is thus possible that a general increase in legal employment rights has lessened the difference between union and nonunion workplaces and hence the extent to which unions can be said to have democratization effects, regardless of whether a management-established system is in place. This may be especially so to the extent that any such effects are indirect, through the impact of unions on employer policies and practices. If so, the spread of “standard personnel practices” in nonunion workplaces may also have lessened the consequences of union decline, potentially rendering unions redundant where adopted. It is also possible, however, that unions have become supplanted by alternative “identity”-based groups and associations. These groups have not only helped to promote government regulation, they have also, according to Piore and Safford, become active at the workplace level. Although Piore and Safford do not explicitly state that they serve as substitutes for unions, it is possible they help to ensure that various rights and protections within a new employment rights regime are established and enforced, and hence, that they serve as an alternative means of representation in this regard.

include representative committees (Patmore 2010: 91). Although controversial, attempts to amend the Act so as to allow for such committees failed (i.e., the 1997 “TEAM” Act).

These possibilities give rise to five research questions:

1. Have management-established representation systems and more independent, identity-based associations become widespread?
2. Do workers perceive these systems/associations to be as effective as they do unions?
3. Does union representation have observable democratization effects at the present point in history and, if so, to what extent are these attributable to policies and practices associated with unions but which may also be found in many nonunion workplaces, and not to union presence per se?
4. Do alternative systems of representation (i.e., nonunion, management-established systems and associations) have democratization effects comparable to those of unions?
5. Do alternative systems of representation lower the propensity of workers to join a union?

To date, there would appear to have been little U.S. research directly addressing Questions 1 and 2. Freeman and Rogers (1999: 92–93) found that 37% of all participants in their 1994 survey of 2,408 American workers had “committees of employees that discuss problems with management on a regular basis” in their workplaces, and that 29% of workers with these committees judged them to be “very effective.” In comparison, 30% of union employees reported their union to be “very effective.” But these findings may now be dated, and it is not in any case clear that the question asked referred to representation systems or simply, for example, problem-solving groups (also known as quality circles). In contrast, the 1996 Lipset and Meltz survey of 1,750 Americans specifically asked employed, nonunion respondents if they had a formal nonunion employee representation system and whether representatives in this system discussed compensation and benefits with management. Fifteen percent reported they had such a system, and seven in ten of these respondents reported that compensation and benefits were discussed (Lipset and Meltz 2000: 226). This survey did not, however, address the effectiveness of these systems, and it is possible that its findings are also dated.

There appears to have been no research directly addressing Question 3 (the workplace democratization effects of unions, as defined in this article). There has, however, been considerable research into the association between union presence and job satisfaction. Measures of job satisfaction may be too blunt to pick up the democratization effects of unions, but this research can shed some light on these effects and how to address them. In essence, the overall results have tended to be uneven, with only one study finding positive effects (Pfeffer and Davis-Blake 1990), and others finding neutral or even negative ones (Bryson, Cappellari, and Lucifora 2004). This could in part reflect a tendency for the positive “objective” effects of unions to be offset by the negative “subjective” effects of more adversarial, lower

trust relations, in reflection of U.S. norms around union representation. Union workers may also possess values or beliefs that render them more likely to be in a union job and to evaluate their jobs negatively. Finally, there may be unobserved differences in union and nonunion workplaces, particularly as they pertain to job quality, that come to be reflected in job satisfaction (Pfeffer and Davis-Blake 1990). Although little research has been published regarding the first of these possibilities,² research tends to support the latter two, finding that negative associations disappear once possible selection biases and job content are accounted for (Powdthavee 2011). We might expect similar results for the democratization effects of unions.³

The presence of a union may not be what matters, however; it may also be the practices associated with one. The former should mean a change in authority relations, because workers now have a system of legal representation. But in addition, unionization means that employers are required to negotiate a grievance system enabling employees to seek justice if treated unfairly or subject to discipline. Various work and seniority rules negotiated into collective agreements to ensure fair and just treatment and to provide security to workers reinforce this system. Research finds support for this argument, revealing union presence to be strongly associated with these more “bureaucratic” practices (Verma 2005; Godard 2009). It also finds that such practices bear strong positive associations with the subjective outcomes of workers (Godard 2010), despite the unpopularity of many of them in the management literature.

This suggests that unions have indirect as well as direct democratization effects through these practices. Yet it also lends support to the argument that the consequences of union decline have been lessened by the adoption of similar practices in nonunion firms, lessening the average gap between union and nonunion employers and hence the magnitude of any observed union effects. This may be especially so if this gap has also been diminished by employment laws. To date, there has been no research into either possibility; however, there has been some research into the implications of employment laws for unions in general. It finds that these laws often enhance rather than reduce the union role (Hirsch, MacPherson, and Dumond

²Using British panel data, Powdthavee (2011) finds that positive union effects diminish over time and conjectures that this is due to a tendency for unions to “fan the flames of discontent during negotiations.” But he is unable to explore this possibility, and his findings may not generalize to the United States due to institutional differences.

³Research into union voting propensity supports this possibility, consistently finding that both job content and job satisfaction are negatively associated with the propensity to vote for a union (Fiorito and Gallagher 1986; Godard 2008a). Of particular note is a recent Canadian study (Godard 2011) finding a particularly strong negative association for a measure of job quality. This measure comprised a number of variables that should be subject to union democratization effects, including coercion, voice (labeled *influence*), and justice (labeled *rights efficacy*). The finding thus suggests that workplaces that are susceptible to unionization tend to score less favorably on these variables to begin with than do other workplaces. If so, research into the democratization effects of unions may face specification issues similar to those in the literature on unions and job satisfaction.

1997; Weil 1999; Harcourt, Wood, and Harcourt 2004), thereby suggesting that they may actually strengthen union democratization effects.

Question 4 raises the possibility that the democratization effects often attributed to unions may also be achieved by nonunion representation systems. This possibility is important in itself, but it also suggests that research into the democratization (and job satisfaction) effects of unions will be biased if these systems are not included in the analysis. To date, there has been no multivariate research specifically doing so. There have been a number of qualitative studies of nonunion representation (Question 4), especially of management-established nonunion systems (Helfgott 2000; Kaufman 2003; Gollan 2006). Although these studies offer rich insights into how these systems operate and what they *can* do, they have generally yielded mixed results as to what these systems *actually* do. They have also not specifically addressed workplace democratization effects (as defined in this article).⁴

In addition, there has been little consideration as to whether it is these systems per se or rather policies and practices that tend to be adopted in conjunction with them that matter. This may include “new” human resource management (HRM) practices designed to shape employee attitudes, values, and expectations and which tend to be associated with nonunion workplaces (Godard 2009). It may also include the more bureaucratic practices discussed above, especially if these enhance perceptions of fairness and justice. If so, it is possible that any effects initially observed for nonunion systems are in considerable measure attributable to these practices. Yet, it would be a mistake to hypothesize indirect effects similar to those hypothesized for unions. This is especially so for management-established systems. Because these systems are established on management’s terms and do not normally engage in formal, Wagner-style bargaining, various practices are likely to be adopted in conjunction with them rather than established as a result of formal negotiations.

Turning to Question 5, there has been considerable debate over the extent to which alternative systems of representation, and management-established systems in particular, are implemented in whole or in part to avoid unionization. There may be a number of ways in which they can achieve this outcome. One may be the provision of an improved ability to detect discontent and head off an organizing drive before one can begin. Another, and the one we are most interested in here, may be to lower the propensity of workers to vote for a union by providing representation that substitutes for that provided by a union. Although substantial evidence can now be found that employer practices matter to union voting propensity (Godard 2008a, 2009, 2010), the research into the implications of alternative systems of representation has, again, been largely qualitative in nature. Such research has yielded mixed results overall (Kaufman and Taras 2010: 277; Timur, Taras,

⁴They have also often explored company representation programs in the first half of the twentieth century (Jacoby 1997; Kaufman 1999), and so may be of limited contemporary relevance.

and Ponak 2012), although at least one study found that these systems can actually serve as precursors to unionization (Taras and Copping 1998).

Overall, therefore, little research has addressed the five questions identified above, and the research that has been conducted has tended to be limited in important ways. Below, we seek to address this void in the literature.

Data and Methods

Our data set is drawn from a 2009 nationwide survey of 1,000 employed Americans over 17 years of age and working more than 15 hours per week for the same employer for six months or more.⁵ The survey averaged about 23 minutes in duration and was conducted by a professional polling firm, Eastern Research Services, using random digit dialing and computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) with up to three call-backs per household. Those working less than 15 hours per week or less than six months with their current employer were excluded to ensure that respondents were in meaningful jobs (in terms of time) and would be sufficiently familiar with employer practices and workplace conditions (including representation) to be able to respond in a meaningful and informed way to the questions in our survey.

Our sample is not perfectly representative of the U.S. labor force because of the sampling strategy, but to ensure that it was reasonably so, we used quota sampling on the basis of gender, race, and U.S. census region. Thus, women composed 50% of the sample and whites 82%, both of which roughly match BLS estimates for the general employed labor force. Respondents from the Northeast composed 20% of the sample, from the West 20%, from the South 30%, and from the Midwest 30% (2006 census estimates were 18%, 24%, 36%, and 22%, respectively). In turn, although sectoral designations are always subject to some classification error, 20% of our sample reported employment in “public utilities, manufacturing, telecommunications, construction, or resource-based” industries, which compares to roughly 17% for the general employed labor force. However, 46% reported that they were in what we refer to as “public services” (government, education, health and social services), compared to 35% for the general employed labor force.⁶ This likely reflects both classification error and sampling strategy (i.e., workers in these sectors are more likely to work 15 hours per week and to have long-term jobs). Exploratory analysis in any case revealed that it made no meaningful difference to the results, except possibly for union coverage. Seventeen percent of respondents reported being represented by a union, compared to the 2009 BLS estimate of 13.6% for the general em-

⁵Economic conditions at the time of the survey may have had implications for the data collected; although we delayed the survey in part due to these conditions, we could not delay further without threat of losing our grant.

⁶This includes those who provide a public service but work for private employers (e.g., hospitals).

ployed labor force. This would also appear to be attributable to our sampling strategy.⁷

Our survey was designed as part of a grant to study work, institutions, and society in the United States and Germany. To meet the terms of the grant, the survey addressed an array of broader issues than those presented in this analysis, including the implications of work and employment for general health and happiness, for civic virtue, and for political and social engagement. Because of this, we had to balance the need for “fidelity” against the need for “band width” when designing the instruments, restricting the number of items we could include for each of the constructs reported in the present analysis. Thus, some of our measures may be weaker than otherwise. But this is common in national surveys of this nature and in the analysis of data from these surveys,⁸ and follows from our belief that preoccupation with measurement (and specification) can yield diminishing returns and even engender a flawed, unduly objectified (positivist) conception of social actors and institutions (Godard 1993, 1994, 2001, 2010).

Questions 1 and 2: How Widespread Are Alternative Forms of Representation and How Do Workers View Them?

Respondents were asked about three general categories of representation: union representation, management-established representation systems, and representation by an independent, nonunion group or association. Although both management-established systems and independent nonunion associations can vary extensively in nomenclature, form, and function, our interest is only to address the overall prevalence and average effects of these categories of representation at the time of our survey, not their morphologies. Thus, although we did ask selected follow-up questions as to the functioning of each, more fine-grained questions would have contributed little. In view of the variation in nonunion systems and associations and the terminology around them, they would also likely have been of little value.⁹

⁷Workers in their first six months of employment are more likely to be in temporary jobs and hence less likely to be represented by a union. BLS data reveal that 1 in 5 workers has less than a year of tenure (data on those with six months or less are not available); if we infer that 1 in 10 has less than six months and that these are nonunion workers in most or all cases, this could account for as much as 2.0 percentage points of the difference. In addition, an analysis of 2010 BLS data reveals that those working less than 15 hours per week are about half as likely to be represented by a union, potentially accounting for about another 0.6 percentage points of the difference. (We thank Barry Hirsch for this analysis.) Only an additional percentage point may be explained by the overrepresentation of public service workers, who are more highly unionized (26% in our sample reported union coverage). Although not mutually exclusive, these factors may therefore in combination account for a sizeable portion of the 3.7 percentage point difference between union coverage in our sample and BLS estimates.

⁸Indeed, economists often rely on single item measures (e.g., for job satisfaction, Helliwell and Huang 2010), and there is even some acceptance of single item measures in the industrial and organizational psychology literature (Wanous and Hudy 2001). However, only one of the main subjective measures in the present analysis is single item.

⁹As Gollan (2010: 213) notes, “variations in terminology do not equate to differences in form or function.”

The three main questions were (1) Are you covered by a union agreement?, (2) Is there a nonunion, management-established system where worker representatives meet with management?, and (3) Are you a member of another type of association to assist with work related matters? This association may be based on your occupation, race, gender, or some other characteristic you identify with.

These questions were designed to be as direct and precise as possible given the purposes of this study. To ensure clarity, they were included in a section that began with the following lead-in: “Now, I would like to ask you about representation in your workplace.” The question asking about a management-established system explicitly asked if there was a “system” in order to avoid confusion with the existence of a more “micro” committee (e.g., for health and safety). If the respondent indicated that a system was in place, one of the follow-ups also asked if representatives actively consulted with management over wages and benefits (see below), enabling us to establish if the system appeared to meet the general definition of a management-established representation system advanced by Taras and Kaufman (2006) and Gollan (2006) and if it appeared to violate the prohibition on company unionism under the Wagner Act (Patmore 2010: 91).

Because the management-established, nonunion representation question was designed to address alternatives to union representation, and because we wanted to avoid respondent fatigue, this question and the follow-ups to it were asked only if the respondent was not covered by a collective agreement. However, in view of the tendency for identity groups and associations to form within union as well as within nonunion workplaces, the association question was asked of both union and nonunion workers. Where the respondent reported membership in an association, he was further asked to indicate “the main characteristic that unites members of this organization,” followed by a prompt stating “this could be occupation, race, or some similar characteristic,” to be read if the respondent appeared not to understand the question.¹⁰

Question 1: How Prevalent Are Alternative Forms of Representation?

Table 1 reports the descriptive findings for various forms of representation. It would appear that management-established systems have indeed been replacing unions to a significant extent, but that independent associations have not been doing so. Although 17% of respondents in the total sample reported union representation, 34% of nonunion respondents, or 28% of the total sample, reported a nonunion, management-established system.

¹⁰This was simply intended to reinforce the clarification that followed the original question. We did not include sexual orientation in either because we were concerned that this would be viewed as too intrusive, especially in our German sample. We did, however, include this as a response option, to be read out only if needed.

Table 1. Prevalence of Alternative Forms of Representation

Percentage covered by a collective agreement ($n = 1,000$).	17
Percentage of respondents not covered by a union agreement ($n = 820$)* who are covered by “a nonunion, management established system, where worker representatives meet with management.”	34
Percentage of total sample ($n = 993$)* covered by “a nonunion, management established system, where worker representatives meet with management” and not covered by a union.	28
Percentage of total sample ($n = 1,000$) who are “a member of another type of association to assist you with work-related matters. This association may be based on your occupation, race, gender, or some other characteristic you identify with.”	15
Percentage covered by a collective agreement ($n = 173$) and who are members of an association.	18
Percentage not covered by a collective agreement ($n = 827$) and who are members of an association.	14
Percentage not covered by either a collective agreement or a management-established nonunion representation system ($n = 552$) but who are members of an association.	11
Percentage of total sample ($n = 1,000$) represented only by an association.	6
Percentage of association members ($n = 148$) reporting that “main characteristic that unites members of this association” is:	
occupation	74
race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation	7
religion	1
other	17

*Of the total sample ($N = 1,000$), 7 respondents stated that they were not sure whether they were covered by a collective agreement; these respondents were counted as not covered, but they were also excluded from the questions about management-established representation due to the interview design.

Fifteen percent of the total sample reported that they were a member of another type of association. The answer to the latter differed only slightly by union status, with 14% of nonunion and 18% of union respondents reporting membership in an association. Of those with neither a union nor management-established system, 11%, representing 6% of the total sample, reported membership in an association. These results may not be perfectly representative of the U.S. labor force, especially in view of the overrepresentation of public service workers. Yet subsequent analysis (available on request) revealed little difference between the results for the total sample and those for the reduced sample excluding these workers (with the exception of union representation, as discussed earlier).

Although it would not appear that associations are substituting for unions except perhaps for a very small percentage of the labor force, the characteristics of these associations may be of interest if they are based on identity groups. As also reported in Table 1, however, 74% in the total sample are reported to be based on occupation, and only 7% are reported to be based on race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. Seventeen percent are reported as “other,” and it is possible that some portion of these respondents chose this option because the sexual orientation option was too sensitive to answer. Nonetheless, it would appear that nonconventional associations, based on “identity groups,” do not at present play much role in the U.S. labor market and are not filling the gap left by union decline. A similar conclusion can be reached for even occupational associations. Subsequent analysis revealed that 78% of those reporting an occupational association also

Table 2. Evaluations of Alternative Forms of Representation

	<i>Very little if at all</i>	<i>To some extent</i>	<i>To a great extent</i>
Evaluations of unions: all respondents covered by union agreements:			
Union representatives can be counted on to stand up for workers, even if this means a disagreement with management ($n = 170$).	16	30	54
Union representatives actively consult with workers about their ideas or concerns ($n = 170$).	23	36	41
Evaluations of management-established, nonunion representation systems: all respondents covered by a nonunion system:			
Nonunion representatives can be counted on to stand up for workers, even if this means a disagreement with management ($n = 261$).	17	33	51
Nonunion representatives actively consult with workers about their ideas or concerns ($n = 270$).	11	35	54
Evaluations of employee associations: all respondents reporting membership:			
This association or organization can be counted on to stand up for workers, even if this means a disagreement with management ($n = 141$).	32	30	38
This association or organization actively consults with workers about their ideas or concerns ($n = 144$).	13	43	44
Percentage of workers with a management-established nonunion representation system reporting that their representatives actively consult with management over wages and benefits ($n = 274$).	20	42	37

identified themselves as a member of a profession, suggesting that these are conventional professional associations and not new forms of representation.

Question 2: How Do Workers Evaluate Different Forms of Representation?

The results reported in Table 2 address research Question 2. For each of the three representation questions, respondents who answered affirmatively were also asked a series of questions about the nature of the representation they were receiving. These questions differed by form of representation; because these forms vary, we had somewhat different questions we wished to explore for each. For all three forms, however, respondents were asked about the extent to which representatives “can be counted on to stand up for members, even if this means a disagreement with management” and the extent to which they “actively consult with workers about their ideas and concerns.” As discussed above, we also asked workers with a management-established system whether their representatives “actively consult with management over wages and benefits” to glean some additional indication of whether, indeed, these systems appear to be functioning as “labor organizations” and hence as potentially in contravention of section 8(a)(2).

As revealed in Table 2, a larger percentage of workers with management-established representation systems (54%) rate their representation highly when it comes to consultation with members than is the case for those with union representation (41%). The percentage of these workers rating their system highly when it comes to standing up for members (51%) is roughly

the same as for those with union representation (54%). Those reporting association membership rate their association about the same as for unions when it comes to consultation with members (44%) but less favorably with respect to standing up for members (38%). Those reporting association membership but no other form of representation rate their association less favorably on the latter criterion (27%). This suggests that when it comes to standing up for workers, an association is more effective where some other form of representation is in place and hence they are more likely to serve as complements to each other.

These results should be treated with caution, not just because our sample may not be perfectly representative but also because different forms of representation may give rise to different expectations and hence perceptions. This may be especially true of management-established systems, in which employers may be able to frame both expectations and the information available to workers as to their effectiveness. Thus, these systems may actually do less for workers than do unions, yet still be evaluated as, or more, favorably. Nonetheless, the findings for management-established representation systems do suggest that these systems in particular are filling the gap left by union decline (as per Table 1), and they may even be as, or more, effective than unions—at least from the point of view of workers. Associations may also be filling some of the gap, but much less so than is the case for management-established systems.

The results in the bottom row of Table 2 further suggest that management-established nonunion systems are effectively replacing unions. They reveal that 79% of respondents reporting these systems also report that their representatives actively consult with management over wages and benefits either “to some extent” (42%) or “to a considerable extent” (37%). This suggests that a large majority of management-established representation systems perform at least some substitution function when it comes to wage and benefit determination, and hence that violation of section 8(a)(2) is widespread.

It is also possible, however, that these systems operate as part of high-performance work systems and hence serve a “mutual gains” function, one that has little to do with the traditional union role. This question has been at the heart of debates over whether section 8(a)(2) should be amended or repealed and were central to arguments in favor of the TEAM Act. Our survey contained a number of questions about these systems, and so we explored the association between management-established representation systems and an index of high-performance practices.¹¹ The correlation was of moderate size ($r = .25$) and statistically significant ($p \leq .01$), suggesting some association (the correlation with union representation was .04 and statistically insignificant). We also explored, however, whether there is an association between consultation on wages and benefits and high-performance practices

¹¹This was an additive index consisting of items d, g, h, i, j, and k from *new practices*, as reported in Table 3 (below). Cronbach's alpha = 0.75.

where a management-established system is in place. The correlation was weak ($r = .07$) and statistically insignificant. In addition, there was a relatively weak albeit statistically significant correlation ($r = .16, p \leq .02$) between the presence of a management-established system and a measure of team work. It does not appear, therefore, that the mutual gains explanation bears much support.

Questions 3, 4, and 5: Does Union Decline Really Matter to Relations at Work?

Overall, the findings to this point suggest that management-established systems of nonunion representation may be replacing unions. Not only have these become widespread, covering more than a third of the nonunion respondents in our sample, they are evaluated as favorably as, or more favorably than, unions, and they are typically consulted in the determination of wages and benefits. Although they may bear some association with high-performance practices, it is not likely that the facilitation of these practices is their only, or even main, purpose. The important questions, however, are whether the apparent spread of these systems is actually filling the gap left by union decline as it pertains to authority relations at work, and whether, indeed, unions even matter any longer to these relations in view of the prevalence of these systems and of individual worker rights and protections under the law (as discussed earlier). In particular, do unions have democratization effects at the present point in time (Question 3) and, even if so, do management-established systems have democratization effects that are comparable (Question 4)?

In addition, although there is little evidence to this point that independent nonunion associations are displacing unions or filling the gap left by union decline, and although these associations are largely based on occupation, they also tend to be evaluated favorably by members and, where established, may also have democratization effects comparable to those for unions.

Our data set contains a wide array of measures that can be used to address the noneconomic consequences of union representation. For present purposes, however, we limit our analysis to four constructs that, we believe, are most relevant to the question of whether unions alter relations of authority in the workplace and whether alternative forms of representation are as, or more, effective in doing so. These include *security*, *dignity*, *fairness*, and *justice*. The items making up each construct, along with (where relevant) their inter-item reliability scores (Cronbach's alpha) are in Table 3, which also includes the other variables in our analysis; descriptive statistics and correlations for these variables and other key variables in our study appear in Table 4.

Security is a single item measure, based on a five-point agree/disagree Likert scale, worded generally in an attempt to address not just perceived security from layoff but also how secure the respondent feels *in* his or her actual

Table 3. Variables

Dependent Variables

Security (single item): You feel that your job is secure. (1 = disagree strongly to 4 = agree strongly, 2.5 = neither)

Dignity (3-item scale, divided by 3, $\alpha = .79$): a) Management consults workers or their representatives on major work-related decisions (if R unclear, say “. . . for example, if work is to be reorganized”). b) You feel free to openly question a manager’s decision if you disagree with it. c) The person for whom you work treats you with respect (if more than one, ask about the main person to whom R reports). (1 = disagree strongly to 4 = agree strongly; neither = 2.5)

Fairness (4-item scale, divided by 4, $\alpha = .81$): a) The way in which work is assigned is fair. b) The way in which pay levels are decided is fair. c) The way in which promotions are decided is fair. d) Employees are treated fairly when they do something wrong. (1 = disagree strongly to 4 = agree strongly; 2.5 = neither)

Justice (4-item scale, divided by 4, $\alpha = .77$): a) If a co-worker was unjustly dismissed, it is likely that something could be done to make things right. b) If a female co-worker was denied a promotion due to her gender, it is likely that something could be done to make things right. c) If a co-worker was bullied by a manager, it is likely that something could be done to make things right. d) If a co-worker was denied pay or bonus money to which she was entitled, it is likely that something could be done to make things right. (1 = disagree strongly to 5 = agree strongly) (For each item, if R needs clarification, state “This could involve going to a government body, a union rep, a manager, or some other channel.” If for any item, R states “would not happen,” respond with “Well, what if it did?”)

Union voting propensity (single item): If an actual ballot was held today, would you be likely to vote for a union? (1 = no, 2 = yes)

Independent Variables

Union (single item): Are you covered by a union agreement? (1 = yes, 2 = no or not sure; 1% were not sure)

Mgmt-established system (single item): Is there a nonunion, management-established system where worker representatives meet with management? (1 = yes, 2 = no or not sure; 7% were unsure, 1% no response)

Association (single item): Are you a member of another type of association to assist you with work-related matters? This may be based on your occupation, race, gender, or some other characteristic you identify with. (1 = yes, 2 = no or not sure; 1% were not sure)

Objective Controls (mixed response formats; mean insertion if missing values): a) average hours worked per week, b) number of employees at workplace (1 = under 25, 4 = over 500), c) employer’s current financial situation (1 = very good to 5 = very bad); d) age; e) if male, f) average hourly pay; g) education, h) 4 occupational dummies, j) if public services.

Job Content Controls: fulfill (3-item additive scale, divided by 3, $\alpha = .73$): a) There is a lot of variety in what you do in your job. b) Your job makes you keep learning new things. c) Your job is fulfilling. **autonomy** (2-item additive scale, divided by 2, $\alpha = .56$), a) You are free to choose how you do your work. b) You are free to alter the times at which you work. (1 = disagree strongly to 4 = agree strongly; neither = 2.5)

Subjective Controls: Conservative Thinking politically and socially, where would you place yourself on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is very liberal and 10 is very conservative? **Happy nature** You have always, by your nature, tended to be a happy person. **Justice concern** You have always, by your nature, tended to worry about issues of fairness and justice. **Work centrality** You have always, by your nature, tended to view working as central to who you are. **Obedient** You have always, by your nature, tended to believe employees should always follow management instructions, without questioning them. **Union believer** You have always, by your nature, tended to think unions are needed to look out for workers. **Engager** You have always, by your nature, tended to get involved in things, such as political, cultural, or religious activities. **Truster** You have always, by your nature, tended to trust others. (item a: 1 = very liberal, 10 = very conservative, mean insertion if missing value; items b to h: 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree; neither = 2.5)

Table 3. Continued

New practices (9-item additive index, divided by 9, all items standardized, $\alpha = .70$): a) When you were first hired by your current employer, were you asked to participate in any team building, communication, or similar exercises? b) Before you were hired, were you given a test asking about your attitudes, preferences, or general personality? c) Over the past twelve months, how many days have you spent in employer-sponsored training or development sessions? d) Are you and your co-workers subject to a system for measuring your performance? e) How often do managers hold formal meetings with you and your co-workers with the primary purpose of keeping you informed about things? Such meetings might be held on a team, departmental, workplace, or even company-wide basis. f) To what extent does management encourage employees to engage in continuous learning or long-term development? g) To what extent are you and your co-workers subject to a continuous quality improvement system? h) How about a group- or team-based system, in which people do their work as members of formally designated teams? i) To what extent are these teams self-managed, with no direct supervision? j) To what extent does your pay depend on incentives or bonuses? (mixed response formats; mean insertion if missing value)

Bureaucratic practices (4-item additive index, divided by 4, all items standardized $\alpha = .67$): a) When a job opens up, current employees are given priority over external applicants. b) When a job opens up, employees with the most seniority are given priority, provided they are qualified. c) Job security policies or protections make it unlikely that permanent employees will ever be laid off. d) Workers who believe they have been unfairly treated are able to get a formal hearing, with some form of representation. (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; mean insertion if missing value)

Trust in mgmt (single item) You can trust management. (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree; neither = 2.5)

Notes: For the Likert-type items, the original range was 1 to 5, with 3 = "neither agree nor disagree." The percentage of respondents in the latter category ranged from 2 to 17%. The higher levels were on items that asked for conjecture (e.g., "if a co-worker is dismissed, it is likely that something could be done") or simplification (e.g., "the way in which promotions are decided is fair"). Except in these cases, the percentage of "neither" responses was typically in the 2 to 6% range. These items were thus recoded to range from 1 to 4, with the "neither" response scored 2.5. Note that respondents were not provided a "don't know" or "non-response" option as both would be redundant. Thus, the effective response rates on these items were 100%.

α = inter-item reliability score (Cronbach's alpha).

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations: Key Variables

	Range	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. <i>Secure</i>	1 to 4	3.2	.98									
2. <i>Dignity</i>	1 to 4	3.2	.78	.41								
3. <i>Fairness</i>	1 to 4	3.1	.75	.45	.64							
4. <i>Justice</i>	1 to 4	3.1	.75	.32	.51	.55						
5. <i>Union</i>	0 to 1	.17	.39	.01	-.08	-.03	.09					
6. <i>Mgmt-estab. system</i>	0 to 1	.28	.44	.10	.18	.12	.12	-.32				
7. <i>Association</i>	0 to 1	.18	.36	.07	.13	.12	.13	.04	.08			
8. <i>New practices</i>	-1.2 to 1.3	.00	.51	.16	.25	.21	.21	.04	.23	.17		
9. <i>Bur. practices</i>	-1.9 to 1.0	.00	.71	.44	.52	.62	.53	.15	.12	.10	.27	
10. <i>Trust</i>	1 to 4	.31	1.01	.50	.69	.66	.48	-.12	.14	.14	.22	.50

Notes: If a correlation is greater than .06, $p = .05$ or less. Descriptive statistics and correlations with and between the control variables identified in Table 3 are available on request. N = 1,000.

job and hence how much he or she might fear being demoted or dismissed. This is, we believe, more reflective of authority relations of work.

Dignity is a three-item (Likert) additive scale. Despite some literature addressing the determinants of dignity at work (see in particular Hodson 2001), we were unable to find any precedents for how to measure this construct. However, the concept of dignity has to do ultimately with whether

management treats employees as if they are equals, including willingness to consult with them, whether they treat them with respect, and whether they allow employees to question decisions. The items included in this measure address each of these three questions.

Fairness consists of four (Likert-type) items addressing perceived fairness in the exercise of authority. In turn, we believe that justice refers more to perceptions of rights at work and, in particular, whether “something could be done to make things right” in the event that these rights are violated. Accordingly, *justice* comprises four items that address this question, as adapted from Godard (2011). If a respondent was unclear about the meaning of “something could be done,” he was told, “This could involve going to a government body, a union rep, a manager, or some other channel.” If the respondent answered that the violation would not happen where she worked, she was then asked “Well, what if it did?”

We also include two indices to address the possible role of workplace and management practices. The first, *new practices*, is an additive index of nine items commonly associated with “new” work and human resource management (HRM) practices. The second, *bureaucratic practices*, is an additive index of four items associated with the bureaucratic/internal labor market practices emergent in the post–World War II era and is largely consistent with the arguments of Piore and Safford (and others) as to the rationalization of the personnel function. The items for both measures are drawn from earlier research (Godard 2009, 2010) and are conceptually rather than empirically derived (e.g., from factor analysis), based on the findings of that research and on the research questions underlying the present analysis (also see Godard 2009: 177–78, 2010).¹² However, the number of items for each measure was reduced in the present study, for reasons discussed earlier. Items were selected largely on the basis of their relative contributions to scale reliability (Cronbach’s alpha if item deleted) in the earlier research, and of sensitivity analyses addressing whether their deletion made a difference to the observed associations in that research. The items for each measure, and their inter-item reliability scores, appear in Table 3, while their descriptive statistics and correlations with other key variables in the analysis are in Table 4.

Also identified in Table 3 are a series of control variables included in our analysis to address possible specification biases. In addition to standard “objective” controls, we include perceptions of employer finances (*finances*). Doing so should help to partial out insecurity attributable to employer health and any association this may have with union coverage. We also include two variables measuring job content, *job autonomy* and *job complexity*, thereby addressing the possibility that unions are more likely to become organized (or nonunion systems less likely to be established) in jobs associated

¹²In the previous research, work practices and new HRM practices were included in separate indices. Because potentially separate effects of these practices are not of interest in the present analysis, we combined them for the sake of parsimony.

with lower autonomy and fulfillment. The items making up *job complexity* are adapted from the Oldham and Hackman (1980) job diagnostic index. In addition, we include seven “subjective” variables, measuring values and beliefs that may be both more characteristic of union workers and associated with the dependent variables in this analysis. These two additional sets of controls are included to address the explanations discussed earlier for why unions often appear to have negative or at best no association with job satisfaction and hence to reduce possible specification bias. (The subjective items did not correlate sufficiently to justify creating a composite index or factor and so are entered individually.)

One question that follows from the job satisfaction literature is whether and how the estimated effects of unions and of alternative representation systems are sensitive to specification. To address this question and whether each of our sets of controls appear to matter to it, we report hierarchical ordinary least squares regressions¹³ for each dependent variable. We begin with union representation as the sole independent variable, before entering the other two representation measures. This allows us to explore whether failure to include the latter may matter to the observed effects of the former (as suggested earlier). We then introduce the standard “objective context” controls, followed by sets of controls that are less common in the literature, including the job content measures, then the subjective values and beliefs measures, then each of the two management practice measures, then a measure of trust (as discussed below). Results are in Table 5. Only the coefficients for the representation and management practice measures are relevant to our research questions, so the coefficients for the remaining variables are not reported (but are available on request).

Question 3: Do Unions Have Democratization Effects?

As revealed in column 2 of Table 5, the bivariate regressions reveal union representation to have a statistically insignificant association with *security*, a statistically significant negative association with *dignity*, a statistically insignificant association with *fairness*, and a statistically significant positive association with *justice*. However, the results suggest substantially stronger and more positive effects once alternative forms of representation (column 3), then objective controls (column 4), then job content controls (column 5), then subjective controls (column 6) are entered. Prior to the introduction of the management practice measures (columns 7 and 8), the coefficient for *union* is positive and significant in the regressions for *security*, *fairness*, and *justice*. The significant negative association with *dignity* also disappears.

¹³Even though *security* is based on a single, five-point item, ordinary least squares is a valid statistical approach (Schwab 2005: 99–100); it also facilitates comparisons with the results for the other dependent variables. However, ordinal regression analysis yields the same pattern of results; the only difference is that *union* becomes statistically significant (albeit barely: $p = .09$) in the column 9 regression of Table 5 (available on request).

Table 5. Representation and Authority Relations at Work, Hierarchical OLS Regressions

	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	<i>Union</i>	<i>Alternative</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Job content</i>	<i>Subjective</i>	<i>New</i>	<i>Bur.</i>	<i>Trust in</i>
	<i>coverage</i>	<i>forms of rep</i>	<i>controls</i>	<i>controls</i>	<i>controls</i>	<i>practices</i>	<i>practices</i>	<i>mgmt.</i>
	<i>only</i>	<i>entered</i>	<i>entered</i>	<i>entered</i>	<i>entered</i>	<i>entered</i>	<i>entered</i>	<i>entered</i>
Security regressions								
Union	.006	.038	.067**	.087***	.090***	.087***	.011	.044
Mgmt-estab. system		.106***	.087***	.053*	.055*	.048	.014	.021
Association		.050	.034	-.006	-.008	-.011	-.013	-.026
New practices						.038	-.013	-.038
Bur. practices							.325***	.218***
Rsq.	.000	.014	.095	.183	.199	.200	.278	.331
Dignity regressions								
Union	-.083***	-.037	-.003	.030	.030	.018	-.064**	-.016
Mgmt-estab. system		.157***	.149***	.094***	.096***	.068**	.030	.040*
Association		.111***	.102***	.038	.033	.021	.019	.001
New practices						.156***	.102***	.066***
Bur. practices							.350***	.200***
Rsq.	.007	.045	.116	.346	.370	.388	.479	.584
Fairness regressions								
Union	-.032	.000	.030	.057***	.071**	.064**	-.056**	-.014
Mgmt-estab. system		.109***	.100***	.050*	.051*	.033	-.021	-.012
Association		.095***	.084***	.025	.016	.009	.005	-.011
New practices						.097***	.018	-.014
Bur. practices							.509***	.379***
Rsq.	.001	.023	.082	.274	.306	.313	.504	.584
Justice regressions								
Union	.089***	.133***	.132***	.148***	.153***	.146***	.045	.074**
Mgmt-estab. system		.152***	.138***	.102***	.105***	.091***	.044	.050*
Association		.111***	.099***	.055*	.047	.041	.038	.027
New practices						.079**	.011	-.011
Bur. practices							.438***	.348***
Rsq.	.008	.044	.078	.178	.212	.207	.349	.388

Notes: Hierarchical analysis with standardized coefficients; each column adds additional controls to the specification in the preceding column. See Table 3 for each set of controls. The full results are available on request. * = significant at .10 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, *** = significant at the .01 level (two tailed). N=1,000.

These results are generally consistent with the union-job satisfaction literature, suggesting that a failure to find positive effects for unions may reflect inadequate controls, including controls for alternative forms of representation. Results change substantially, however, once the two management practice measures are entered (columns 7 and 8). This is especially true with regard to the introduction of *bureaucratic practices* (*bur. practices* hereafter). Although the coefficients for *bureaucratic practices* (column 8) reveal strong positive associations with all four dependent variables, those for *union* are statistically significant in only the regressions for *dignity* and *justice*, where their signs are actually negative.

As discussed earlier, unions are likely associated with more adversarial, lower trust relations, in reflection of the U.S. industrial relations environment. If so, the union coefficients in column 8 may reflect negative affect attributable to this distrust, in addition to the actual treatment afforded workers. To explore this possibility, we reran the column 8 regressions, adding

Table 6. Estimated Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects of Union Coverage

(1) <i>Dependent variable</i>	(2) <i>Total objective union effect</i> (cols. 4+5)	(3) <i>Total objective + subjective</i> (cols 4+5+6)	(4) <i>Direct union effect</i>	(5) <i>Indirect, through bureaucratic practices</i>	(6) <i>Indirect, through trust in mgmt</i>
<i>Security</i>	.095	.067	.045	.050***	-.028***
<i>Dignity</i>	.038	-.004	-.011	.049***	-.042
<i>Fairness</i>	.081	.044	-.011	.092***	-.037***
<i>Justice</i>	.152	.128	-.076***	.076***	-.024***

Notes: All estimates are computed with the same variables as in columns 8 and 9 of Table 5, but using path analysis (we used AMOS, version 17; see Appendix for the raw results).

*** = significant at the .01 level or better, Cols. 5 and 6 report sobel tests (Preacher and Leonardelli 2001).

a single item measuring trust in management (see Table 3) on a five-point disagree/agree Likert scale. As revealed in column 9 of Table 5, the negative coefficients for *union* in the *dignity* and *fairness* regressions decline substantially and become statistically insignificant, while the positive coefficients in the *security* and *justice* regressions increase in size, with the latter becoming statistically significant.¹⁴ It would thus appear that the column 8 regressions are indeed picking up negative affect as well as the actual treatment afforded workers.

These results suggest that unions have largely indirect effects, through implications for both bureaucratic practices and trust relations. To explore this further, we estimated direct, indirect, and total effects for *union* using AMOS (version 17), which is a structural equation modeling (SEM) package that does path analysis based on maximum likelihood estimation techniques. Although AMOS also allows for the computation of latent variables (i.e., similar to factor analysis), we were interested only in specifying direct and indirect associations between the relevant variables in Table 5, and so we used the same measures (and controls) as in that table.

The estimated effects, based on this analysis, are reported in Table 6 (the raw results are in the Appendix). They are consistent with those in Table 5, despite slight differences (compare column 4 of Table 6 with column 9 of Table 5) due to the different estimation techniques. The estimated direct effect for *union* (column 3) is statistically significant only in the regression for *justice*. However, the coefficients used to compute the indirect effects through *bureaucratic practices* (column 5) are in all cases significant. This is also the case for the effects of unions through *trust in management* (*mgmt* hereafter) (column 6), except that the signs are negative rather than positive.

¹⁴However, controlling for *trust in mgmt* made little difference to the union coefficient in the column 3 to 6 regressions. Subsequent analysis (with *trust in mgmt* as the dependent variable) revealed that this is likely because unions bear little association with trust until *bureaucratic practices* is entered. Thus, it would appear that unions have indirect positive implications for trust through their implications for management practices, but negative direct implications.

As a result, the estimated total effects of *union* are smaller after *trust in mgmt* is accounted for (column 2) than they are before (column 1).

In answer to Question 3, therefore, these results suggest that although unions bear direct positive associations with only perceptions of justice at work, they do have positive indirect associations with perceptions of security, fairness, and justice through their implications for bureaucratic practices. These associations are partly offset by a higher tendency for union workers to distrust management and hence by negative affect. Thus, unions improve the *actual* treatment afforded workers to a greater extent than suggested by worker perceptions alone. They do little, however, to alter the dignity with which workers are treated. Moreover, it is not union representation per se, but rather bureaucratic practices, that matter most.

These results can be said to reveal indirect effects for unions only if we can assume that unions are causally prior both to the adoption of bureaucratic practices and to lower trust in management. Nonetheless, they do suggest that unions have substantial democratization effects, especially as there are good theoretical reasons to infer causality.

Question 4: Do Nonunion Forms of Representation Have Equivalent Effects?

In contrast to the findings for *union*, the coefficients for *mgmt-established system* are initially positive and statistically significant for all four dependent variables, while those for *association* are initially positive and significant in the regressions for *dignity*, *fairness*, and *justice* (see column 3 of Table 5). Yet in both cases they steadily decline in magnitude as controls are introduced. The coefficients for *association* become statistically insignificant across all four dependent variables once the subjectivity controls have been introduced (column 6) and remain insignificant thereafter. Those for *mgmt-established system* are all positive and statistically significant at this point, but become statistically insignificant in the regressions for *security* and *fairness* once *new practices* is entered (column 7), and in the regressions for *dignity* and *justice* once *bur. practices* is entered (column 8). Once *trust in mgmt* is entered (column 9), the coefficients for *mgmt-established system* return to statistical significance (and are positive) in the regressions for *dignity* and *justice*, although they are relatively small and significant at only the .10 level.¹⁵

It would thus appear that, as for union representation, failure to introduce a full array of controls can result in significant estimation biases and that, in the case of management-established systems, the remaining effects once these controls have been introduced are largely attributable to their

¹⁵In regressions with *trust in mgmt* as the dependent variable (also see fn. 10), the coefficient for *mgmt-established system* is positive until *bur. practices* is introduced, at which point it becomes negative. Although it is small in magnitude and statistically insignificant, this likely explains why the inclusion of *trust in mgmt* yields only small increases in the magnitude of the coefficients for *mgmt-established system* in the Table 4 regressions.

associations with management practices. But the estimation biases are upward rather than downward. There is also little basis for positing that management-established systems have indirect effects through management practices, if these systems are assumed to be part of a strategy that includes various management practices and hence are not causally prior to them. As discussed earlier, we believe this is a reasonable assumption, especially as management-established systems are by management design and do not entail Wagner-style bargaining (even if they often involve consultation over wages and benefits).¹⁶

In answer to Question 4, therefore, neither independent associations nor management-established systems would in general appear to matter to authority relations. Workplaces with management-established representation systems appear *on average* to be comparable (from the point of view of workers) to union workplaces when it comes to the exercise of authority, but this is likely because of the broader bundle of practices that they tend to be implemented in conjunction with, not because of these systems per se.

Question 5: Do Nonunion Systems Lower the Propensity to Vote for a Union?

The final question to be addressed (Question 5) is whether nonunion forms of representation may be serving a union substitution function, thereby lowering demand for union representation. To address this possibility, we ran a series of specifications as in Table 5, but on the nonunion sample only and with *union voting propensity* as the dependent variable (see Table 3).¹⁷ Because this is a binary variable, we used logistic regression analysis.

As revealed in Table 7, there is little evidence that nonunion systems matter to voting propensity. Neither *mgmt-established system* nor *association* is significant in any of the specifications. The coefficients are especially small for the former. It is possible that much depends on the extent to which representatives address wage and benefit issues, rather than whether some form of system is in place per se. The results did not change, however, when we replaced *mgmt-established system* with a composite measure allowing us to address this possibility. Finally, *bur. practices* bears a statistically significant negative association with *union voting propensity*. This is to be expected in view of the associations between these practices and each of the outcome variables in Table 5, and is consistent with recent Canadian findings (Godard 2009, 2011).

¹⁶For this reason, we do not report estimated direct and indirect effects for this variable; however, these are available on request.

¹⁷Twenty-two percent of nonunion respondents stated that they would vote for a union, while 68% stated that they would not (10% were uncertain). This is lower than prior national-level estimates, which have ranged from roughly 30 to 50%. However, the developments of 2008–2010 appear to have substantially lowered general support for unions (Jones 2011); they also likely lowered the perceived effectiveness of unions. Both have been consistently found to bear strong associations with voting propensity (Godard 2008a).

Table 7. Nonunion Representation and the Propensity to Vote for a Union, Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis

	(2) <i>Objective controls entered</i>	(3) <i>Job content controls entered</i>	(4) <i>Subjective controls entered</i>	(5) <i>New practices entered</i>	(6) <i>Bur. practices entered</i>
<i>Mgmt-estab. system Association</i>	-.048	.100	.121	.072	.134
<i>Bur. practices</i>	-.419	-.276	-.162	-.175	-.141
Cox and Snell Rsq.	.066	.111	.307	.308	.312

Notes: Hierarchical analysis with unstandardized coefficients; each column adds further controls to the specification from the preceding column.

* = significant at .10 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, *** = significant at the .01 level (two tailed). N = 736.

Conclusions

Our findings should be treated with caution. First, they are based largely on employee perceptions, which are not always entirely accurate and may be subject to systematic attempts (e.g., by employers or union leaders) to distort them. Second, because our data are cross-sectional, our ability to draw causal inferences from our multivariate results is limited. Third, our sampling and measurement strategies could mean that our results are subject to some sample bias and/or measurement error. Yet our data set has enabled us to explore the nature and implications of workplace representation more fully than other studies, and in the process to establish that the findings of these studies have, indeed, likely suffered from specification biases.

Overall, our analysis leads us to conclude that unions continue to serve a democratization function in U.S. workplaces. They appear to do so largely through their implications for employer practices, particularly the adoption of more bureaucratic practices that unions have traditionally stood for and continue to be strongly associated with. Although such practices are often maligned, they clearly have positive implications for workers. Moreover, union workers are more likely to distrust management and hence evaluate authority relations less favorably than otherwise to begin with. As a result, the overall effects of unions on actual authority relations are stronger than they are on perceptions of these relations.

Our results also suggest, however, that management-established representation systems and various practices associated with them may have been taking the place of unions. Although our sample may not be perfectly representative of the U.S. labor force, workers in our sample are substantially (1.5 times) more likely to be subject to such a system than they are to be represented by a union. They also report that these systems are typically involved in the determination of wages and benefits. Moreover, workers subject to these systems evaluate them as, or more, favorably as union workers do their unions. These systems do not, in themselves, appear to have meaningful democratization effects, and they do not appear to lower the propensity of workers to vote for a union. However, they tend to be part of broader

workplace “regimes” that do have meaningful democratization effects and hence appear to serve as effective substitutes for unions. So it would seem that, although unions continue to matter, they have been substantially displaced if not by management-established systems, then by sets of practices that tend to be associated with these systems.

In contrast, it would appear that independent nonunion associations, especially identity-based ones, do not appear to have been displacing unions. Only a small portion of our sample is a member of an independent nonunion association, and this association is typically occupationally based. Although evaluated relatively favorably by their members, these associations also do not appear to bear any relationship with workplace authority relations once objective, job content, and subjective controls are introduced to the analysis. It is possible that some or many nonunion associations do alter authority relations and that our measure is too crude to establish that this is so. Nonetheless, it does not appear that, overall, independent nonunion associations are filling the gap left by union decline.

Finally, our results suggest that, although alternative forms of representation may not lessen the propensity of workers to vote for a union, the adoption of bureaucratic practices does. This is consistent with recent Canadian findings (Godard 2009, 2011) and with the argument that the spread of these practices in the nonunion sector (to the extent that this has occurred) may lessen the consequences of union decline and even help to explain this decline.

Our results have two main policy implications. First, our conclusion that unions continue to matter to workplace authority relations (even if largely indirectly, through employer practices) is consistent with arguments for labor laws reforms to enhance union organizing effectiveness. Second, our finding that management-established representation systems are not associated with union voting propensities, coupled with our finding that they may serve as part of a bundle of practices with positive implications for authority relations, is consistent with arguments for the repeal of section 8(a)(2) of the Wagner Act. The latter implication, however, must be qualified. Because management-established systems may be used to forestall unions in a number of ways other than lowering voting propensities (e.g., to detect and quash increases in support for a union), we cannot conclude that repeal of section 8(a)(2) is fully supported by our findings. In addition, both management-established systems and management practices largely exist at management's behest and on management's terms and so do not provide workers with real democratic *rights*. Although widespread, they are also far from universal. Thus, any apparent diffusion of these systems and practices should not be viewed as weakening the case for stronger labor laws.

Appendix

Table A.1. Path Analysis Estimates for
Computing Union Direct and Indirect Effects
(Standardized Regression Weights)

			Estimates	P
<i>Bur. practices</i>	←	Union	.208	.001
<i>Trust in mgmt</i>	←	Union	-.084	.001
<i>Security</i>	←	Bur. practices	.238	.001
<i>Security</i>	←	Trust in mgmt	.339	.001
<i>Security</i>	←	Union	.045	.112
<i>Dignity</i>	←	Bur. practices	.235	.001
<i>Dignity</i>	←	Trust in mgmt	.500	.001
<i>Dignity</i>	←	Union	-.011	.663
<i>Fairness</i>	←	Bur. practices	.443	.001
<i>Fairness</i>	←	Trust in mgmt	.435	.001
<i>Fairness</i>	←	Union	-.011	.651
<i>Justice</i>	←	Bur. practices	.367	.001
<i>Justice</i>	←	Trust in mgmt	.280	.001
<i>Justice</i>	←	Union	.076	.005

Notes: These estimates are subject to the same controls as those for columns 8 and 9 of Table 5 but are computed with causal modeling using AMOS, version 17. N = 1,000.

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