

The Politics of Labor-Management Relations: Detecting the Conditions that Affect Changes in Right-to-Work Laws

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To contain the costs of conflicts between labor and management, governments in the advanced democracies have adopted far-reaching provisions that regulate labor-management disputes. This close control means that the legal climate is an important determinant of victory in these struggles, but there is almost no statistical research on the recent politics of labor-management relations despite the theoretical importance of this issue. To begin to fill this void, this study uses a pooled cross-sectional time-series analysis that detects the conditions that best explain the presence of right-to-work laws in U.S. states since 1960. Non contingent findings suggest that racial divisions and small business dominance increase the probability that the legal context will favor management instead of labor. Historically contingent results suggest that an accord between labor and large firms that broke down after the early 1970s also influenced these perennial political struggles.

Why do some states adopt provisions like right-to-work laws that help employers rather than workers? Accurate answers to this question would have broad implications. Without a better understanding of the disputes about the rights and duties of those who sell their labor to employers, we will remain uninformed about an influential social process that, for example, has powerful effects on the degree of inequality in modern societies. But a primary determinant of victory in these conflicts lies outside the workplace. To curb these occasionally violent and often costly disputes, developed democracies have adopted provisions that closely regulate labor-management relations. These influential statutes mean that conflicts between labor and management inevitably involve a quest for political influence. The disputant who is successful in the political arena will be far more likely to win workplace struggles. Studies that treat labor as a social movement currently are popular. This emphasis shows how important political conditions are because the literature on social movements suggests that favorable political opportunities make movement success more likely (Gamson 1990; Jenkins, Jacobs, and Agnone 2003; McAdam 1999; Tilly 1978). And one important political condition that seriously handicaps the labor movement is state right-to-work laws (Moore 1998).

Despite the importance of these ongoing struggles between labor and management to control their legal environment, gaps remain in the literature. Many sophisticated historical analyses of New Deal labor law and the initial passage of these provisions controlling labor-management conflicts have been conducted (Domhoff 1987; Finegold and Skocpol 1984; Goldfield 1987; Quadagno 1988). Yet similar political struggles in the post war era have been largely ignored (Cornfield 1991; for exceptions, see Canak and Miller 1990 or Form 1995). Quantitative studies that assess the explanatory power of theory across multiple places and

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times are even less common, but a few studies report universal findings that support a political approach. Some researchers use a time-series design to assess the effects of labor law on union density or strikes and find that this legislation has important effects (Freeman and Pelletier 1990; McCammon 1993, 1994).

Another study assessed the conditions that made U.S. states likely to adopt laws that favored either management or labor (Jacobs 1978), but this cross-sectional analysis was restricted to findings about one narrow historical period. We extend this research by analyzing the factors determining the presence of right-to-work laws in U.S. states from 1961 to 1991. Such state legal provisions are critical because they are strong determinants of labor's ability to organize (Moore 1998). Gauging the influence of various theoretical accounts over time and across multiple jurisdictions promises to uncover explanations that apply more generally than studies that focus on a restricted period or on the potentially idiosyncratic New Deal era.

This approach offers other benefits as well. A few historical and other studies suggest that racial divisions may be a crucial determinant of labor mobilization (Brown 2000). Yet minority presence varied across U.S. jurisdictions, while in the period this study analyzes, minority presence exhibited little change over time. In contrast to longitudinal studies that could not address jurisdictional differences (Freeman and Pelletier 1990; McCammon 1993, 1994), a design that is sensitive to cross-sectional *and* over-time contrasts can detect such effects. And insights from historical studies suggest that the influence of some determinants will not remain constant. The presence of theoretically important contingencies may alter the strength of relationships from one period to the next (Isaac and Griffin 1989). Because we test for such contingencies, this research will assess theoretically rich hypotheses about shifts in the strength of relationships. Our primary goal, however, is to isolate the social and political conditions that produce a crucial public policy that benefits either labor or management in their ongoing disputes.

Theory about the Politics of Labor-Management Conflicts

We see the state as embedded in an environment in which there are perennial conflicts over political outcomes. Public policy emerges from competitive struggles between social movements and other political actors. This means that social divisions within the contending movements could undermine movement political efforts. We therefore focus on fissures within the labor and employer movements—the key nongovernmental actors involved in setting labor policy. While we concentrate on these divisions, we also consider the partisan, ideological, and economic environment in which political struggles take place. We treat labor law as a political outcome, emerging from ongoing conflicts between social movements conducted within an ideological, partisan, and economic environment. That environment advantages one party or the other in the struggle to gain a favorable legal environment. We start with an explanation of right-to-work provisions and their development.

A Brief History of Right-to-Work Laws in the States

The 1947 Taft-Hartley Act gave federal backing to prior state efforts to forbid compulsory union membership with what are euphemistically called right-to-work laws (Feldacker 1990). After the act's passage these laws became increasingly popular in the states. Union contracts typically require that all covered workers join the union, but in a state with a right-to-work law, compulsory union membership is forbidden (Feldacker 1990). Unions operating in right-to-work states are handicapped because potential members can choose to "free ride" (Olson 1965). Because prior statutes compel unions to bargain for wages and process grievances for all workers covered by a contract, even if they are not members, free-riding workers

receive benefits from union activities without sharing the associated costs. When employers wish to mount drives against unions, authorities agree that a right-to-work law gives them a potent weapon (Reynolds, Masters, and Moser 1991). The presence of such laws, therefore, is a relevant issue for our purposes because, as Paul Sultan (1958) notes: "The study of the Right-to-Work controversy is a study of the competitive struggle for power between labor and management" (p. 3).

Employers began to mobilize for right-to-work laws in the mid-1940s as they sought to counter the wartime growth of unions. After the Taft-Hartley Act, unions were slow to develop an effective political response to the powerful individual rights message put forward by right-to-work advocates. By 1960, however, each side had developed a standard campaign repertoire. Since then, unions and employers have "battled continuously in state legislatures over the adoption or repeal of right-to-work laws" (Moore 1998:445). Business-led campaigns typically had small employers as their activist base, although studies suggest that the involvement of large enterprises intensified after the early 1970s, as corporate profits were squeezed and the preexisting accord between large firms and labor began to unravel (Canak and Miller 1990).

Right-to-work backers argued effectively that individual employees had to be protected from union abuses. In contrast, labor sought to portray efforts to pass a right-to-work law as an attack on unionism in principle and an outcome that would reduce living standards for entire communities. To counter business efforts successfully, labor needed to energize voters beyond the union community. In Missouri in the 1970s, for example, labor defeated right-to-work legislation largely because labor movement actors persuaded both nonunion, urban African Americans and nonunion, rural whites to vote against a right-to-work initiative (Gall 1998:196; Ratcliff and Jaffe 1981). In Louisiana, however, the unions were caught off guard by an intense right-to-work campaign and failed to mobilize sufficient community-wide support (Canak and Miller 1990:268). These experiences after 1960 suggest that the most effective way for labor to overcome the right-to-work movement was to form alliances with other groups, tying the fate of unions to the welfare of numerically important voting blocs (Canak and Miller 1990). Yet unions have found the creation and maintenance of such supportive, class-wide political coalitions to be difficult to achieve because their efforts have been complicated by racial fissures within the labor movement—fissures that became increasingly apparent during the civil rights era (Form 1995; Gall 1988, 1998).

The history of political conflicts about labor legislation in general, and right-to-work laws in particular, suggests that internal divisions within the opposing movements will help to explain which party is most likely to prevail (Erllich 1990; Form 1995; Gall 1998; Jacobs 1978). And success in these political endeavors is critical, since the presence of right-to-work laws decreases union density and unions' organizing activity (Ellwood and Fine 1987; Moore 1998). A comprehensive analysis of the determinants of right-to-work laws that does not ignore historical contingencies, therefore, should capture the social processes that best explain when the legal climate will favor either labor or management. While we focus on internal divisions that are likely to weaken the contending parties, we also assess the effects of other conditions that should help or hinder contestants' efforts to secure a favorable political environment. We begin with a discussion of how racial divisions undercut labor's organizational capacities.

Explanations Involving the Organization of the Contending Parties

Racial Divisions. Sharp disputes about race once were, and still may be, the most prominent division in U.S. politics (Goldfield 1997; Key 1949; Myrdal 1944). Such rifts may provide an important explanation of the presence of right-to-work laws because racial divisions interfere with labor's capacity to engage in concerted political action (Form 1995). Economic discrimination against minorities creates split labor markets that hurt the interests of all workers (Bonacich 1976; Syzmanski 1976), and these disparities undermine solidarity. The

use of unemployed or underemployed workers to break strikes in the past (Brown 2000; Brown and Boswell 1995) is a vivid example, but racial divisions reduce solidarity and make organized political action difficult in other important ways (Griffin and Korstad 1995). Racial antagonism on the shop floor deflects attention from shared grievances and lets employers divide their adversaries. Although methodological issues make his conclusions only suggestive, Albert Syzmanski (1976) has found that both minority and majority, white workers do worse economically when racial discrimination is most intense because these divisions undermine solidarity. While racial discrimination may now be more subtle in work environments, such internal divisions are unlikely to help the labor movement win political battles with employers.

Racial threat theory developed by V. O. Key (1949), Herbert Blumer (1958), and Hubert Blalock (1967) provides another conceptual foundation because it suggests that large minority populations will hinder efforts to create a legal climate that favors labor. An increase in minority presence threatens the political dominance of ascendant groups, who often respond with effective demands for laws that maintain their advantaged position. One result is that hostility toward minorities is greater in areas with more African American residents (Fosset and Kiecolt 1989; Taylor 1998). This enmity should reduce the likelihood that legislation will favor labor over management. Findings, for example, suggest that substantial minority percentages in a community produce increased white votes for candidates hostile toward minorities (Giles and Buckner 1993; Giles and Hertz 1994), and these candidates are unlikely to support outcomes that help the least prosperous. Legislation that helps labor is improbable in such racially divided jurisdictions because majority voters view disfavored minorities as the primary beneficiaries of such laws.

In most studies that assessed the effects of minority presence on redistributive political outcomes, researchers focused on welfare. Both historical (Quadagno 1994) and statistical (Soule and Zylan 1997; Zylan and Soule 2000) studies suggest that welfare provisions will be less generous when minority citizens are seen as the primary beneficiaries. Other research finds that progressive taxation was less likely in U.S. states with larger percentages of African American residents (Jacobs and Waldman 1983). A more pertinent study of labor laws shows that states with the largest percentages of African Americans were not as likely to have provisions that favored labor over management (Jacobs 1978), but the findings of these two cross-sectional studies conducted on 1960 data may not hold after the early 1960s. Theory, historical analysis, and findings, nevertheless suggest, that because minority presence undermines solidarity and because this presence reduces wider support for policies that help the least affluent *jurisdictions with larger minority populations should be less likely to have public policies that favor labor over management.*

Historical studies support this hypothesis. Coalitional tactics often helped labor counter business agitation for right-to-work laws. In the 1960s the political wing of the AFL-CIO initiated minority registration drives (Gall 1988; Greenstone 1977). Union leaders in Oklahoma, for example, attributed the defeat of a right-to-work initiative to the resulting increases in minority turnout, and they advocated increased efforts to create enduring alliances between labor and minorities. But these coalitions were difficult to create. According to Gilbert Gall (1988), for example, in Texas, many building trade unions fiercely resisted labor's efforts to form electoral alliances with minority voters. Such coalitional failures, he argues, were politically crippling, and allowed a few democratic politicians to retain labor's support, even as those same politicians "publicly appealed to retain the state Democratic Party's pro-right-to-work platform" (p. 160). While minority districts sometimes provided labor with its strongest support in right-to-work referendums (Gall 1988, 1998; Ratcliff and Jaffe 1981), minority-labor coalitions were difficult to establish, often due to opposition from within the labor movement.

Union Density. Labor's pre-existing organizational strength should be another determinant of their ability to mobilize politically. In industrial societies, unions are the primary

organizational and political weapon workers use to increase labor's share and to counteract management's control of the workplace. In part because the legal environment is such a crucial determinant of how shop floor disputes are resolved, union activities are not confined to the enterprise level. In addition to their effective representation of employee interests within firms, unions are probably the most potent interest group that acts on behalf of labor and the poor (Freeman and Medoff 1984; Greenstone 1977). Because workers are less divided in states with the most unionized workers, which enhances their ability to engage in concerted political action, *policies that help labor but hurt management should be more likely when or where the percentage of workers in unions is greater.*

Employer Divisions: Enterprise Size. Employer characteristics provide another explanation for this political outcome. The older literature in political sociology emphasized the owners of small enterprises, who were said to fear the power of big business and big labor. Martin Trow (1958) describes small business owners as nineteenth century liberals who value economic freedom but fear the economic behemoths that threaten their livelihood. Richard Hamilton (1975) claims that these employers favor policies that hurt unionization for economic reasons. Because small businesses are unable to benefit from economies of scale, their costs are higher than those of their large counterparts, while intensely competitive business environments reduce their profits (Scherer and Ross 1990). In contrast, large firms are likely to face oligopolistic markets, where price competition is restricted and profits are higher (Scherer and Ross 1990). Consequently, large enterprises can better afford provisions that aid labor's organizational efforts. These efforts also provide the comparatively disciplined labor force that can be an ancillary benefit of unionization (Doeringer and Piore 1971; Freeman and Medoff 1984).

These factors make it difficult for small enterprises to pass increased labor costs forward to their customers, so the operators of small enterprises resist public policies that facilitate union recognition. Ideological hostility toward public policies favoring unions is greatest in areas where small businesses are most common (Reynolds et al. 1991). As a result, small business operators were the most consistent proponents of right-to-work laws. The typical activist base consisted of small manufacturers and retailers, whose political activities were often coordinated by associations such as state and local Chamber of Commerce chapters, and the American Farm Bureau Federation (Canak and Miller 1990; Gall 1988). Although they were not the only participants, these small business operators were probably the most vocal supporters of right-to-work laws. Few would argue that large firms have been pro-union, but small firms apparently have been even more hostile to labor. Hence: *political outcomes that help unions will be less likely in jurisdictions dominated by small enterprises.*

Some scholars suggest that there was a temporary postwar accord between labor and large firms that broke down by the early 1970s (Brody 1980; Brueggemann and Brown 2003; Goldfield 1987; Rubin 1986). William Canak and Berkeley Miller (1990) provide a testable theory by claiming that after a long history of sharp resistance to labor, large firms initially avoided participating in political disputes about right-to-work laws in the postwar period. In the 1970s, events undermined the accord between large firms and labor and convinced the managers of large enterprises that political opposition to organized labor would be profitable. Large enterprises then reaffirmed their prewar alliance with the small enterprises that had always engaged in anti-union political activities (Canak and Miller 1990:269). If this contingent argument is correct: *states dominated by small businesses would have been likely to enact public policies that favored management in the first periods we study, but this relationship should become weaker with the passage of time.* We test this contingency by discovering whether small business presence had stronger effects in the first half of our sample. During the latter half, when small and large enterprises worked together, the presence of small businesses should not be as influential as when small enterprises pursued anti-labor provisions with little help from their large counterparts.

Alternative Explanations: Controls for the Political and Economic Climate

Political Ideology. Conservative values handicap unions because economic conservatives view collective bargaining as an unwarranted restraint on free trade (Barzel 1997; Thorne 1990). Because they also regard union efforts to control the workplace as inequitable transgressions against property rights, economic conservatives support laws that interfere with compulsory union membership. Liberals instead favor unions and support their political efforts (Barzel 1997; Thorne 1990). These considerations suggest that in liberal jurisdictions, political outcomes will favor labor. The recent trend toward ideological purity (Thorne 1990) suggests that another historically contingent hypothesis may help explain the resolution of these political struggles: In the last period covered by our study, if ideological homogeneity within jurisdictions has increased, so should the dominant ideology's effect on right-to-work laws.¹ It follows that associations between a continuous scale that measures citizen ideology as the mean position on a liberal-conservative continuum and provisions that regulate labor-management relationships should increase in strength in the last period in our sample because growth in the dominance of an increasingly harmonious liberal or conservative ideological camp at the expense of the other camp should strengthen political inclinations to help either labor or management. We expect that increases in the dominance of either the liberal or conservative ideology should produce strengthened legal provisions that help either labor or management.

Partisanship. Conservative political parties generally support economic policies that help the affluent. Time-series analyses by Douglas Hibbs (1987) and Rebecca Blank and Alan Blinder (1986) conducted on data from the late 1940s to the early 1980s and cross-national research (Hibbs 1987) show that comparatively conservative parties chose macroeconomic policies that benefited their prosperous constituents but hurt the poor. Other findings show that less progressive taxation that favors the affluent becomes likely when Republicans hold either the presidency (Allen and Campbell 1994) or state offices (Jacobs and Waldman 1983). These policy differences imply that Republicans should be more resistant than Democrats to laws that help unions. Throughout its history the Republican Party has favored business while Democrats have supported labor (Freeman and Medoff 1984; Greenstone 1977). These proclivities suggest that laws regulating labor-management relations will favor management when or where the Republican Party is strongest.

Joblessness. High unemployment reduces strikes because workers become more dependent on their employers. Interestingly, as slack labor markets strengthen management's hand in the workplace, labor has often engaged in countervailing political efforts. The progressive labor legislation passed during the Great Depression is a vivid historical example. In this period, exceptionally high unemployment rates spurred perhaps the most dramatic surge in U.S. legislation benefiting labor. There are other reasons to think that labor will do better in the political arena after expansions in unemployment. During recessions, public support for workers and unions increases (Miller and Ware 1963) and arguments that unions have too much power become less plausible. In a cross-national study, Terry Boswell and William J. Dixon (1993) find that probably because labor's strike weapon is substantially weakened dur-

1. We can provide an indirect test of this enhanced ideological purity hypothesis by using pooled time-series models to predict state scores on our measure of politically liberal versus conservative views. If we add interaction terms computed with the product of year dummies and dummies representing each of the nine narrowly defined regional Census divisions to our models, we find sharp differences in the point estimates for these nine divisions by time-interaction effects. The combined influence of these nine interaction terms are jointly significant to well beyond the .0001 level. Because this test must use Census divisions instead of individual states, it is somewhat indirect, but these strong findings, nevertheless, offer convincing evidence that regional differences in ideological purity have increased sharply during the period from 1960 to 1990.

ing recessions, labor movements were increasingly likely to seek political remedies instead. Although unemployment reduces labor's economic power, this outcome apparently increases labor's political endeavors and enhances the probability of laws that help unions.

Jurisdictional Affluence. Often, the total amount of available resources helps explain distributive political outcomes. According to Gerhardt Lenski (1966), in societies with few resources, political disputes are more strident because gains for one group require equivalent losses from others. The politics of abundance, however, can be described as a non zero-sum game because some parties can be rewarded without penalizing others to an equivalent extent. Because the gains and losses of selected parties need not be equal, studies find that redistributive legislation is more likely when mean prosperity is most substantial. This logic suggests that managerial elites in affluent jurisdictions can afford to be more generous because the absolute level of their resources is so substantial. To preserve economic stability and the conditions for accumulation, elites and their representatives will have the wherewithal to permit workers a few legislative victories (Amenta, Bonastia, and Caren 2001; Lenski 1966). Affluent states therefore should be more likely to enact provisions that help labor. Finally, the level of industrialization ought to matter, as labor's ability to disrupt economic endeavors should be greater in the most industrialized economies. Despite reductions in manufacturing, states that remained more industrialized should be less likely to have right-to-work laws. In the analyses that follow we test all of these hypotheses.

Methods

Research Design

We used state-level explanatory variables in 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1990 to explain the presence of right-to-work laws in 1961, 1971, 1981, and 1991.² We followed convention and employed one year lags to give the forces in question sufficient time to be influential. If the analysis is not confined to census years, the values of critical explanatory variables must be estimated for the years between each census. To avoid measurement error and findings that would automatically skew the results to favor some hypotheses, we restricted the analyses to these four periods. Using separated periods in pooled time-series analyses is useful because this procedure reduces serial correlation and the effects of measurement error (Johnston and DiNardo 1997). Recent events are most pertinent due to the void in the literature we seek to fill, so relationships before 1960 are of less interest. This decision let us include some theoretically important explanatory variables (such as ideology) that were not available before 1960.³

States adopted or dropped right-to-work laws throughout the years between 1961 and 1991. Our panel design, based on a sample of years within this period, captured both actual shifts in these policies and those that did not occur. Given that the presence of right-to-work laws could have changed after shifts in explanatory variables, such null relationships are the-

2. Other political outcomes that seem pertinent probably need not be analyzed. For example, state minimum wage laws typically are irrelevant because federal provisions supersede them. In any given year, only a few states will have a minimum wage higher than the federal standard.

3. Public policy in the U.S. federal system is shaped by both federal and state law but federal law trumps state law. But it is impossible to include federal law in this analysis. Section 14(b) of the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act gave states the right to enforce right-to-work laws. In 1949, the Supreme Court ruled in *Lincoln Federal Labor Union v. Northwestern Iron and Metal Company* and upheld the constitutionality of these state provisions. Despite repeated attempts by labor to repeal section 14(b) during Johnson's presidency, efforts stalled, and no major federal legislation or court decisions affected right-to-work provisions during the analysis period. Federal law, therefore, was fixed, both across states and over time and did not exhibit *any* variation during the period at issue.

oretically noteworthy in their own right. A panel design based on a sample of events at the start of decades therefore can provide an accurate picture of the relationships of interest. Experiments (not shown) with multiple lags and leads suggested that our use of one-year lags in combination with a sample that gauged associations at the beginning of each of these four decades has the greatest explanatory power.⁴ Such experiments resolve doubts about the timing of these events, and they suggest our analyses may detect the factors with the greatest explanatory power.

Dependent Variable and Estimation

We gauged the presence of right-to-work laws with a dummy variable scored “1” if a state had a right-to-work law in the year after each of the four census years. Fixed-effects models can only detect over time covariation, but the random-effects alternative captures *both* cross-sectional *and* over-time covariation. Consequently, a random-effects approach is better suited to an analysis of right-to-work laws because most (but by no means all; see Table 1) of the variation in this dependent variable is cross-sectional. We analyzed this dichotomy with a pooled random-effects probit estimator.⁵ We tested hypotheses about shifts in the strength of some relationships by interacting these explanatory variables with period-specific dummy variables (Hsiao 1986; McDowell, Singell, and Ziliak 1999). In addition to their substantive advantages, these period interactions should increase explanatory power because the coefficients on these periodized variables will not inappropriately be forced to be equal. We also include uninteracted year dummy variables in all models to capture otherwise unmeasured historical factors that could have altered these provisions across all states in particular periods (econometricians strongly recommend such controls in panel designs; see Jeffrey Wooldridge 2001).

Explanatory Variable Measurement

We assessed minority presence with the natural log of the percentage of African Americans (some explanatory variables are transformed to natural logs to reduce outliers), and we measured union density with the percentage of the nonagricultural labor force in unions.⁶ Enterprise size was gauged with the only available employer size measures. Due to a category

4. To check the timing of the relationships at issue, we analyzed right-to-work laws in years after or before the first year following a census and found that explanatory factors we must measure in census years best account for the presence of right-to-work laws one year later. The predictive power of the census year explanatory variables invariably diminishes as we increase leads or lags. These findings and the prohibition against sampling on changes in the dependent variable suggest that the one year lag we use produces the most accurate results. These results also suggest that if the data necessary for an analysis of all years from 1960 to 1991 were available, the findings would not differ. A possible criticism is that our pooled time-series cross-sectional design is somehow biased by inertia, and a study based on an event-history analysis somehow would not be subject to this bias. Jurisdictions, of course, need not alter their right-to-work laws after shifts in theoretically important explanatory factors, but such informative (non)outcomes will affect both our pooled time-series *and* Cox regression estimates. In Cox regression or survival analysis terminology, a jurisdiction with or without a right-to-work law is likely to “survive” in that state. And an event-history approach has problems with differing risk sets. States that have not adopted a right-to-work law can adopt this provision, but they cannot drop this law. Yet states that have adopted a right-to-work law can only drop it. The probit approach we use avoids this asymmetry.

5. We estimate with the population-averaged probit version of random effects (as described by Pendergast et al. 1996; see Alderson and Nielsen 2002 for precedent). The exact routine used to compute the estimates is the population-averaged random-effects probit routine in Stata version 7 (the Stata command is XTGEE). We correct the standard errors for heteroskedasticity with Halbert White’s (1980) method in part because this procedure makes our AR1 correction for serial correlation robust to misspecification.

6. Because the explanatory variables are lagged and because serial correlation is corrected with an AR1 term, simultaneous relationships (or feedback) between union strength (or any of the other explanatory variables) and the presence of right-to-work laws should not bias the results.

change, we had to use the percentage of enterprises with fewer than eight employees in 1960 and fewer than ten thereafter, but the inclusion of period specific dummy variables should correct this unavoidable disparity.⁷

William Berry and associates (1998) view citizen ideology as the mean position on a liberal-conservative continuum. To construct a measure that varies over time, they identified the ideological position of each member of Congress with ratings by the Americans for Democratic Action and COPE. These two interest groups computed each representative's liberalism-conservatism score from their voting record. Berry and associates estimated citizen ideology within each state congressional district with the ideology score for district incumbents and an estimated ideology score for each incumbent's challenger in the preceding election. Incumbent ideology scores are combined with estimated challenger ideology scores after being weighted by within-district vote margins to capture congressional district ideology. Berry and associates then computed state scores on liberalism-conservatism using the mean scores for all state congressional districts. This scale gives the highest scores to the most liberal states (other sociological studies that used this measure include Jacobs and Carmichael 2001, 2002; Soule and Olzak 2004).

We measured Republican strength with a dummy variable coded "1" for the presence of a Republican governor and also with the percentage of Republicans in state legislatures. We used unemployment rates to measure joblessness and controlled for industrialization with the percentage employed in manufacturing. To capture state resource differences, we included real median family income, and finally, we entered two dummy variables coded "1" based on regional Census definitions of the West and the South. No state in the Northeast had a right-to-work law, so entering three regional dummy variables that, together, represented the four census regions would have produced an under-identified probit model that could not be estimated.⁸

Specification

The prior discussion suggests that the coefficients on four explanatory variables should take a negative sign in the analyses. Union density, citizen ideology, unemployment, manufacturing employment, and median family incomes should have negative coefficients, but the coefficients on all remaining explanatory variables should be positive. One general specification of the random-effects probit models that account for the presence of right-to-work laws therefore is:

7. Unfortunately there are apparently no state-level figures on employer associations active in right-to-work disputes in the periods we study. Griffin et al. (1986) studied business resistance to labor in the early twentieth century with National Association of Manufacturers data, but these statistics are available only at the national level, well before our sample begins (Gable 1950). One of us has compiled data on employer mobilization about right-to-work in the 1940s and 1950s from state American Federation of Labor data, but this information is only available in that period. We used the following data sources: percent black—Decennial Census, various years; percent in unions—Leo Troy (1965), and the Statistical Abstract of the United States, various years; percent unemployed—Decennial Census, various years; percent manufacturing—Statistical Abstract of the United States, various years; median family income—Decennial Census, various years; Republican governor and Republican legislature, Statistical Abstract of the United States, various years; percent small enterprises—County Business Patterns, various years; ideology—Berry et al. (1998) ICPSR holdings.

8. Probit (and logit) estimators may refuse to converge or this estimator will provide biased significance tests when a condition that Jacob Cohen et al. (2003) aptly label sparsity is present. Imagine a multi-celled table of cross-tabulations constructed with a dummy dependent variable and multiple dummy explanatory variables. If no states are present in a cell, or if several cells contain quite small frequencies, this identification problem will be present. Even though there are 200 state-years in this analysis, breaking region into finer categories by using dummies that represent the nine Census defined geographic divisions instead of the two dummy variables that capture the South or the West is bound to produce this difficulty, particularly because no northeastern states had right-to-work laws. Again, because there is no variation, this identification problem and the resulting failure of models to converge will appear in a different form if we try to include a dummy coded 1 for the eleven ex-Confederate states that all had right-to-work legislation.

Table 1 • The Predicted Signs, Means, Standard Deviations, and the Standard Deviations across States and over Time (N = 200 state years)

Variable	Predicted Sign Right-to-Work Law Analysis	Variable Mean	Overall Standard Deviation	Cross-State Standard Deviation	Over-Time Standard Deviation
1 if Right-to-Work Law Present		.395	.490	.477	.128
Ln % Black	+	1.469	1.432	1.417	.268
% Small Enterprises	+	74.566	3.123	2.031	2.386
Ln % in Unions	-	2.928	.481	.417	.246
Citizen Ideology	-	46.440	17.280	15.485	7.901
Ln % Unemployed	-	1.719	.286	.211	.194
1 if Republican Governor	+	.405	.492	.257	.421
% Republicans in Legislature	+	39.805	21.073	18.995	9.419
% Employed in Manufacturing	-	21.997	9.983	8.772	4.886
Real Median Family Income	-	28930	6420	3972	5067

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Right-to-Work} = & \mathbf{b}_0 + \mathbf{b}_1\% \text{Black} + \mathbf{b}_2\% \text{Union} + \mathbf{b}_3\% \text{Unempld} + \mathbf{b}_4\% \text{Manuf} + \mathbf{b}_5\% \text{Medinc} + \\
 & \mathbf{b}_6\% \text{Repgov} + \mathbf{b}_7\% \text{Repleg} + \mathbf{b}_8\% \text{Smallent}_{1960-1970} + \mathbf{b}_9\% \text{Smallent}_{1980-1990} + \\
 & \mathbf{b}_{10}\% \text{Ideology} + \mathbf{b}_{11}\% \text{Ideology}_{1990} + \mathbf{b}_{12}\% \text{West} + \mathbf{b}_{13}\% \text{South} + \mathbf{b}_{14}\% \text{Year}_{1970} + \\
 & \mathbf{b}_{15}\% \text{Year}_{1980} + \mathbf{b}_{16}\% \text{Year}_{1990}
 \end{aligned}
 \tag{1}$$

with all variables defined as above. All required main effects are included in these equations.

Analyses

Descriptive Statistics and Tabular Analyses

Table 1 shows the expected signs, the means, and the overall standard deviations. The last two columns show the separate cross-sectional and over-time standard deviations. These results indicate that there is enough variation over time in the dependent variable to conduct pooled time-series analyses (the over-time standard deviation divided by the right-to-work law mean is .324). Significance tests on the period dummy variables and tests of the statistical significance of the period-specific interactions also showed that there is sufficient change in this outcome to make a panel analysis appropriate.

To give readers an intuitive understanding of the primary relationships at issue, we provide cross-tabulations of the most theoretically interesting explanatory factors and the presence of state right-to-work laws. Table 2 shows the proportion of right-to-work laws, cross-classified by the percentage of small enterprises and by the percentage of blacks in the states.⁹

9. States in the South, the Southwest, and in the Mountain or the Northern Midwest were most likely to have right-to-work laws. States in the South that had these laws in 1991 are: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Four Western states with this provision were: Arizona, Idaho, Nevada, and Wyoming. The Midwestern states with right-to-work laws in that year were: Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Note that while some regional groupings seem to explain the presence of right-to-work laws, these regional hypotheses can be tested. What is at issue is why states in some regions like the deep South almost invariably had right-to-work laws. By assessing the determinants of this outcome in all states, in analyses that also include controls for region, we can find out if these laws were present due to theoretically relevant factors, such as the presence of sharper racial divisions or small enterprise dominance. If the regional variables are non-significant, but these theoretically interesting social conditions explain this outcome, we can conclude that apparent regional influences mask the effects of more theoretically interesting accounts.

Table 2 • Proportion of States with Right-to-Work Laws Cross-Classified by the Percentage of Black Residents and by the Percentage of Small Enterprises

Percentage of Small Enterprises	Percentage of Blacks ^a			
	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Low	.125 (16)	.136 (22)	.517 (29)	.299 (67)
Moderate	.444 (18)	.261 (23)	.692 (26)	.478 (67)
High	.364 (33)	.273 (22)	.818 (11)	.409 (66)
Total	.328 (67)	.224 (67)	.636 (66)	

Notes: Anova F-test = 9.55; $p \leq .000$.

^aNumbers in parentheses represent the number of state-years in a category.

Table 3 • Proportion of States with Right-to-Work Laws Cross-Classified by the Percentage of Small Enterprises and by Citizen Ideology

Citizen Ideology	Percentage of Small Enterprises ^a			
	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Conservative	.800 (20)	.774 (31)	.813 (16)	.791 (67)
Intermediate	.174 (23)	.381 (21)	.478 (23)	.343 (67)
Liberal	.000 (24)	.000 (15)	.111 (27)	.045 (66)
Total	.299 (67)	.478 (67)	.409 (66)	

Notes: Anova F-test = 33.64; $p < .000$.

^aNumbers in parentheses represent the number of state-years in a category.

In accord with our hypotheses, these proportions increase along a diagonal that runs from the top left cell to the bottom right cell. Cross-classifying this outcome by state ideology scores and by the percentage of small enterprises, as shown in Table 3, supports theoretical expectations as well because these proportions increase sharply along the diagonal that runs from the bottom left cell to the top right cell. These contrasts may not persist after additional explanatory factors are held constant in the panel analyses but they suggest that equivalent results would not be an artifact of the advanced statistical approach we use to detect multiple effects.

Random-Effects Panel Analyses of Right-to-Work Laws

Table 4 presents the probit findings about the determinants of these provisions. We began with models that ignore period-specific interactions. Model 1 assessed the effects of racial divisions, small enterprise presence, union strength, citizen ideology, the unemployment rate, manufacturing employment, resources, and two controls for region, but this model ignored Republican strength. In Model 2 we added Republican governor presence and the percentage of Republicans in the legislature to see if partisanship influenced this outcome. In Models 3 and 4 we sequentially added interactions between period and small enterprise dominance and between period and ideology.

The findings in Model 1 show that African American presence and small enterprise dominance increased the likelihood that a state would enact a right-to-work law. Such results support our expectations about the explanatory power of social divisions within the contending parties. This analysis also suggests that union strength, an ideologically liberal citizenry,

Table 4 • Random-Effects Probit Models of the Determinants of State Right-to-Work Laws
(*N* = 200 state-years)

<i>Explanatory Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
Ln % Black	.2558** (.1029)	.3200** (.1243)	.3140** (.1246)	.2569** (.1113)
% Small Enterprises	.1295*** (.0405)	.1435*** (.0414)	—	—
Ln % in Unions	-.9918*** (.2287)	-1.0004*** (.2465)	-.9929*** (.2451)	-.8162*** (.2218)
Citizen Ideology	-.0112* (.0050)	-.0099* (.0056)	-.0103* (.0058)	—
% Unemployed	-.2089*** (.0570)	-.2164*** (.0647)	-.2184*** (.0682)	-.2127*** (.0674)
% Employed in Manufacturing	-.0275* (.0143)	-.0300* (.0139)	-.0264* (.0148)	-.0300* (.0138)
Real Median Family Income/100	-.0034* (.0014)	-.0041*** (.0013)	-.0042*** (.0013)	-.0019 (.0018)
1 if Republican Governor	—	.0644 (.0893)	.0727 (.0907)	.0396 (.0962)
% Republicans in Legislature	—	.0049 (.0038)	.0042 (.0038)	.0024 (.0036)
% Small Enterprises in 1960 & 1970	—	—	.1704*** (.0500)	.1574*** (.0463)
% Small Enterprises in 1980 & 1990	—	—	.1112** (.0452)	.1014* (.0460)
Citizen Ideology	—	—	—	-.0101* (.0051)
Citizen Ideology in 1990	—	—	—	-.0255* (.0127)
1 if West	-.1230 (.3965)	-.1419 (.3871)	-.1160 (.3891)	-.2265 (.3774)
1 if South	.3573 (.4295)	.4107 (.4331)	.4107 (.4270)	.5538 (.4235)
1 if 1970	.8645*** (.2364)	.9799*** (.2482)	1.1464*** (.2689)	.8734*** (.2763)
1 if 1980	.7107** (.2357)	.8239*** (.2605)	5.3591 (3.9829)	4.8070 (3.9279)
1 if 1990	.1452 (.1964)	.1988 (.2114)	4.7567 (3.9745)	5.4823 (3.9936)
Intercept	-4.7495 (2.9939)	-5.9460 (3.0977)	-8.0774* (3.7680)	-7.9399* (3.5768)
Chi-Square	59.07***	61.90***	66.18***	68.34***

Significance: * < .05 ** < .01 *** < .001 (one-tailed tests except for intercept and year and region dummies; White corrected standard errors in parentheses).

greater employment in manufacturing, and increased joblessness reduce the probability that states will adopt right-to-work laws. The results in Model 2 cast doubt on partisan explanations, as the coefficients on measures of Republican strength are effectively zero. Yet it remains to be seen if two of these relationships remain constant over time. In the next two models we gauged the effects of the interaction between small enterprise presence and political ideology with period dummies because (in analyses not shown but available on request) we found no differences when we tested for historical shifts using period or regional interactions between the presence of right-to-work laws and the remaining explanatory variables.

Recall that a period interaction effect is calculated with the product of an explanatory variable and the period dummy variables, based on historical conclusions about the timing of the large enterprise-labor accord. If a coefficient on one of these interaction terms is significant, we can conclude that this relationship is contingent. Hence, Model 3 is identical to Model 2, except that we broke the small enterprise explanatory variable into its earlier and later components to test claims (Brody 1980; Canak and Miller 1990; Rubin 1986) that the accord between unions and large firms broke down after the early 1970s. If this contingent hypothesis is correct, the presence of small enterprises should have stronger effects in the first half of our sample, when small firms largely acted alone. In Model 4, we tested the hypotheses about the increasing influence of ideological purity by including an interaction between ideology and the 1990 period dummy variable.

The findings in Model 3 resemble those from prior models because the effects of racial divisions and small enterprise dominance persist. Again, the results support claims that labor laws that help one party or the other will be likely when sharper divisions exist within the opposing movement. They also suggest that historical findings about shifts in right-to-work law and the contingent hypothesis about the breakdown in the accord between large firms and labor are accurate. The effects of small enterprise dominance weakened in the last periods, presumably because the resumption of political activity by large enterprises diluted the political effects of their small counterparts after the large firm-labor accord broke down. Model 4 also indicates that similar contingent findings are present when we tested for shifts in the strength of relationships between ideology and the presence of right-to-work laws. These findings suggest that the most conservative states had legal climates that were likely to favor management, particularly in the last period in our sample.¹⁰

Multiple findings suggest that that cross-sectional, time-series estimation is statistically appropriate when the presence of right-to-work laws is at issue. First, a Chi-square test (not shown) indicates that all four period dummy variables are jointly significant in each of these analyses. Second, the interactive results suggest that some relationships differ by period. Third, if we use regression instead of probit findings (not shown), based on supplemental random-effects linear probability models indicate that these results persist. Such consistent findings, along with the absence of any similarities in the covariate patterns (no two cases share the same mix of scores) suggest that our pooled design is apposite. These probit models also have considerable explanatory power. A tabulation based on predictions from an unreported probit equation, using the specification in Model 4, indicated that this analysis classified 88.5 percent of these cases correctly, and failed to predict the presence or absence of right-to-work laws in only 23 of the 200 state-years in our sample.

10. Additional test results support these specifications. The models pass the link test for misspecification (to use link tests, we had to estimate with probit and cluster-correct the standard errors). Multiple procedures show that outliers and overly influential cases do not distort the findings. The stability of our estimates suggests that colinearity is not a problem. For example, a claim that there is an overly high association between Republican strength and political ideology is incorrect. The correlation between Republican governor presence and ideology is .174; the correlation between the percentage of Republicans in the legislature and ideology is .264, and the correlations between the two periodized ideology variables and these Republican strength variables are less than .1. The similarity of the coefficients and the significance test results, despite sharp changes in the specifications, support a conclusion that colinearity is not present. No other interaction effects seem to matter and attempts to detect nonlinear relationships always failed.

The findings do not support expectations that political partisanship would explain this outcome, but these negligible findings could have been due to regional, within-party, ideological differences. To assess such claims about differences between southern and northern Democrats, we removed both the southern and the ex-Confederate states (in analyses not shown), yet partisanship still had negligible effects. Separating party (and the other explanatory) variables by period also did not alter the findings. Regional or over-time, within-party ideological differences apparently did not account for the negative findings about partisanship.¹¹ In additional analyses not shown, the presence of other groups facing discrimination did not affect this outcome. The percentage of Hispanics or the percentage of females in the workforce had no explanatory power. Finally, these results cannot be attributed to sectoral employment shifts because we found no evidence that the percentage employed in state and local government, agriculture, or service industries helped explain the presence of right-to-work laws.

More generally, the results showed that several theoretically-derived explanatory variables account for the presence of these laws. Racial divisions and small enterprise dominance enhanced the likelihood that the states would enact right-to-work laws. Contingent findings suggest that the presence of small enterprises mattered more in the earlier half of the analysis, but political ideology had stronger effects in the last period. Because we hold many alternative explanations constant, it is difficult to believe that omitted variables distorted the findings. These considerations suggest that we have isolated the major processes that produce state differences in this political outcome.

Implications

The Findings

We found evidence for contingent ideological effects. The most conservative states were likely to have policies that favored management rather than labor, and this relationship was stronger in the last period in our sample. Other evidence suggests that statewide resources matter: Labor does better in jurisdictions with comparatively abundant resources, probably due to the non zero-sum nature of politics in such states. When system-wide resources are plentiful, economic elites can afford to be more generous—albeit with the expectation of reductions in the cost of labor conflicts. Despite their intuitive appeal, geographic differences never are statistically significant. Our findings indicate that regional contrasts in theoretically relevant factors have greater explanatory power. The findings suggest that some states, such as those in the South, were more likely to have right-to-work laws because, in comparison to other states, these jurisdictions had relatively intense racial divisions, more small enterprises, and an extremely conservative citizenry.

The evidence also suggests that labor can resist right-to-work laws after sharp increases in unemployment. This somewhat counterintuitive finding should not be surprising given that high unemployment may thwart management's efforts to convince key political actors that right-to-work laws are required to control labor's unwarranted power. Slack labor markets and declining strike threats, tend to render less credible arguments decrying the excessive power of unions. And even the most conservative representatives risk political costs if they appear indifferent to the suffering unemployment causes. It follows that high joblessness

11. While other studies have found historically contingent relationships, these studies used a purely time series rather than pooled cross-sectional time-series research design (Isaac and Griffin 1989; McCammon 1994; Rubin 1986). Our use of statistical interactions with periods in a pooled time-series design to test for the presence of such contingent relationships is a more statistically powerful test because the main (or additive) effects are included in our models. The significant interaction terms therefore represent interactive relationships that appear after the relevant main effects have been held constant.

rates reduce labor's economic influence but bolster its political influence. Our results and those reported by Boswell and Dixon (1993) are consistent with this replacement hypothesis, as both studies show that increased unemployment raises the probability that labor will be politically successful. Researchers who used historical methods to study right-to-work campaigns also concluded that recessions did not impede labor's political efforts because public sympathy tilted toward workers in such periods (Miller and Ware 1963). It is noteworthy that the national legislation that probably produced the most substantial improvements in labor's legal environment occurred during the Depression, when more than 25 percent of the labor force could not find work.

In all analyses, the findings showed that states dominated by small enterprises were more likely to have right-to-work laws. This conclusion is plausible because small business operators often face intense competition, low profit margins, and a restricted ability to pass increased labor costs forward to buyers. The results therefore suggest that jurisdictions dominated by such enterprises are unlikely to have a legal climate that favors labor. The evidence also supports an historically contingent version of this account. Multiple authors (Brody 1980; Brueggemann and Brown 2003; Canak and Miller 1990; Rubin 1986) have argued that the temporary postwar accord between large firms and labor broke down in the early 1970s. The most specific versions of this hypothesis suggest that in the earlier periods in our sample, large firms did not engage in political struggles over right-to-work and similar labor policies to the extent they had before World War II. In the 1970s, however, increased competition and other factors convinced large enterprise managers to renew their alliance with small firms and to return to concerted anti-labor political activities.

If this contingent hypothesis is correct, small enterprise presence should be more important in the earlier periods, when large businesses participated in right-to-work campaigns less often. While coefficients on the two periodized small business measures do not differ significantly, a comparison of the size of these point estimates suggests that theoretically derived expectations about differences in the strength of this relationship are correct. We acknowledge, however, that large enterprises often fiercely resisted labor before the period in question (Griffin, Wallace, and Rubin 1986). While the evidence from this study suggests that in comparison to their smaller counterparts, large enterprises were less vocal about right-to-work legislation during the first half of the analysis period, it also suggests that this restraint no longer exists.

Our most theoretically important finding concerns racial divisions. With region and many other effects held constant, our results always showed that jurisdictions with the most African Americans were more likely to have provisions that hurt the interests of all workers. In his careful investigation of politics in the South, Key (1949) observed that despite substantial differences in the distribution of economic resources, debates about class issues and the proper allocation of public resources rarely occurred. Instead, Key found that the politics of race deflected the pursuit of policies that benefited the least affluent. Recent findings demonstrate that public policies benefiting the less affluent are less likely when disenfranchised minorities are perceived to be the primary beneficiaries (Jacobs 1978; Jacobs and Waldman 1983; Quadagno 1994; Zylan and Soule 2000).

Our evidence also shows that even the less conspicuous discrimination practiced today apparently still produces significant social divisions that harm majority workers as well as their minority counterparts. Such divisions reduce labor's ability to form effective class wide alliances (Bonacich 1976; Syzmanski 1976). And the results are consistent with the chronological record. As historical case studies by Ratcliff and Jaffe (1981), Gall (1988, 1998), and Greenstone (1977) suggest, the history of struggles over right-to-work laws following World War II shows that labor's political success depended on forming political coalitions with other, less affluent groups but that racial divisions hampered this process. It is equally noteworthy that when we tested for the presence of contingent relationships between the size of African American populations and the presence of right-to-work laws (in analyses not shown), we

found no support for claims that shifts in the strength of this association occurred in different periods. This absence of evidence for shifts in the strength of this relationship suggests that racial divisions continue to contribute to labor's recent political failures.

Wider Implications

Our research design illuminates important macro-level statistical relationships that have been largely overlooked. Macro analyses can detect previously unobserved associations that will remain invisible if researchers use micro-data. Despite the recent increase in case studies, we find little historical research documenting the strong associations between racial divisions and political outcomes injurious to labor and to the least affluent, in part because such political effects are more likely to be detected with macro-level statistical approaches. These approaches can expose general relationships that may only appear after other effects have been held constant. Perhaps additional macro-level research may reawaken interest in the all-too-often-overlooked relationships between politics and the recent surges in economic inequality that are, in large part, a result of labor's diminished political fortunes.

The findings also suggest that statistical approaches that are sensitive to historical contingencies may provide a useful supplement to labor history. There is no reason to believe that the statistical procedures we use can replace the rich, theoretically stimulating insights generated by interpretive historical approaches. The results of this research and additional statistical studies that revealed other theoretically based, historically contingent relationships (Isaac and Griffin 1989) nevertheless suggest that scholars who have criticized statistical approaches because they completely ignore the contingent nature of historical reality may have overstated their case.

Another major advantage offered by this approach is its sensitivity to relationships that hold true over long periods in multiple localities. But studies based on aggregate data have problems that are difficult to overcome without a strong historical literature. In the absence of the rich historical findings that have been so useful (Canak and Miller 1990; Gall 1988, 1998; Key 1949; Quadagno 1994), we would have to base hypotheses on untested assumptions about the intervening links between social conditions and their political effects. The joint use of these two research methods offers the possibility of improved social theory.¹²

In part because the literature on movements places such stress on how political environments influence success (Gamson 1990; Jenkins et al. 2003; McAdam 1999; McCammon et al. 2001; Tarrow 1993; Tilly 1978), we examined whether jurisdiction-wide political attributes altered the probability that one side or the other would prevail in these contests. We found that political context does matter because legislative decisions are more likely to favor labor in high resource jurisdictions, while states with a comparatively conservative citizenry often have right-to-work laws, especially in the last period in our sample. The attributes of the contending parties, however, had greater influence. The results always suggest that labor is less likely to be politically successful in jurisdictions dominated by small enterprises or in jurisdictions where minority populations are most substantial. The last result indicates that the racial divisions that reduced solidarity in the past (Bonacich 1976; Brown 2000; Brown and Boswell 1995) still contribute to labor's failures. Because political opportunities are such an important

12. We intentionally depart from one tradition in the historical work on labor issues. In this study we deliberately stress a nomothetic rather than an idiographic approach in part due to the gap we wish to fill in the literature. While there are now many historical analyses of changes in labor law in specific periods, such as the New Deal, quantitative studies that assess the explanatory power of specific theories across multiple places and times remain unusual. There are many strong reasons for our decision to stress a nomothetic approach, but perhaps the most important concerns the practical and ethical implications of our work. Research in sociology will offer little help to egalitarian movements if the generalities that emerge are restricted only to idiosyncratic and therefore unrepresentative events. Our approach nevertheless relies on extremely useful historical case studies that help us identify the causal links between the macro conditions we can measure and the political outcome at issue.

determinant of movement success, the largely undocumented political effects we have uncovered may pose even a greater threat to the labor movement than its other misfortunes.

Findings that underscore the inhibitory effects of racial cleavages on labor movement success highlight the difficulties politically progressive groups face when they attempt to create alliances between disenfranchised groups. The literature on these issues has concentrated on somewhat ephemeral alliances among various less-powerful groups that briefly flowered in the 1930s and in the 1960s. Yet we have overlooked the much more typical political conditions that make such coalitions so difficult to create and sustain. Perhaps sociologists could offer added insights into the handicaps faced by those who strive to form class-wide coalitions if we acknowledged the exceptional nature of these two brief historical interludes. In any case, the strong relationship between African American presence and adverse political outcomes that hurt labor emphasizes the continuing importance of the politics of race in a society with a history of bitter racial antagonism. Results that document the existence of this racial connection in every period we analyzed also, regrettably, imply that these powerful racial divisions endure.

There are other reasons for investigating these issues. Perhaps the topics closest to the intellectual core of our discipline concern the degree to which resources are allocated to the weak rather than to the strong (Clawson and Clawson 1999). Solving puzzles about class conflict or isolating the factors that best explain why egalitarian movements succeed or fail are issues at the heart of our discipline. Because the fortunes of the labor movement are essential for a complete understanding of the distributive process in capitalist economies (Clawson and Clawson 1999; Putterman, Roemer, and Silvestre 1998; Western 1997), additional research that uncovers new insights about the political conditions that help or hurt the labor movement should be invaluable in a time of deepening inequality.

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