

Managerial Hostility and Attitudes Towards Unions: A Canada-US Comparison

Michele Campolieti · Rafael Gomez · Morley Gunderson

Published online: 31 August 2012
© Springer Science+Business Media, LLC 2012

Abstract We use a cross-country survey of attitudes toward work and unions, which includes a sample of managers in both the US and Canada, to explore whether there is greater attitudinal hostility to unions in the U.S. Our estimates indicate that American manager's attitudes towards unions are, perhaps surprisingly, less hostile than those of Canadian managers. We explain this first finding by the differential effect of perceived union power, which is greater in Canada than the US and which is correlated negatively with union approval. We also find that US managers are less likely to use extreme methods to oppose union organizing drives, implying that the lower union rates in the US as compared to Canada are not likely the result of greater negativity towards unions themselves but rather some other factor or combination of factors. The implication is that if Canadian managers faced the same labor relations playing field as their US counterparts, they would likely find it easier to thwart union certification drives as well. Alternatively stated, Canadian-style labor relations reforms (such as card-check systems or quicker certification votes) could perhaps tip the balance in favor of unions when organizing in the US.

Keywords Unions · Attitudes · Managerial opposition · Canada-US differences

JEL Classification J51 · J52 · J53

M. Campolieti · R. Gomez (✉) · M. Gunderson
Centre for Industrial Relations, University of Toronto, 121 St. George, Toronto, ON, Canada
e-mail: ralph.gomez@utoronto.ca

M. Campolieti
e-mail: campolie@chass.utoronto.ca

M. Gunderson
e-mail: morley.gunderson@utoronto.ca

Introduction

Union density rates in Canada and the U.S. have been diverging since the mid-1960s, with the Canadian union density rate now three times as large as the rate in the U.S. Several well-known explanations for this divergence have been presented in the literature including: differences in market composition and structures (Troy 1990); differences in public policies (Goddard 2003); labor laws (Weiler 1983, 1984); union wage impacts (Freeman and Kleiner 1990)¹; union philosophies (Artz 2011); and firm size (Robinson 1996). Our focus in this paper is on a topic less often considered a serious contender: the greater opposition to unions by American employers (Freeman 1988; Betcherman et al. 1994; Gould 1993; Kochan et al. 1986 [1994]). American employers have historically been viewed as less accommodating of unions than Canadian employers (Poole 1986; Jacoby 1991) and emblematic of this hypothesis is Freeman and Rogers (1999:39) remark that “With a labour-relations system that is in many ways very similar to that of the United States...[Canada’s] business community historically has been less fiercely opposed to unionism than has American business.”

Reasons for differing levels of employer resistance to unions between the US and Canada can be grouped into two major categories. First, because of cultural differences that in the US emphasize individual over collective rights, the intensity of managerial hostility to unions is said to be greater than in Canada. This first explanation can also be modified slightly to include *the nature* of managerial strategies (e.g., the use of anti-union consultants etc.) that prevent unionization, which are said to be more sophisticated and aggressive in the US (Logan 2002, 2006). Second, managers may face varying constraints in the form of legal regimes and their enforcement (Kaufman 1996, 2004) making anti-union behavior not necessarily more ‘abundant’ or ‘intense’ south of the border, but simply more ‘effective’ in diffusing organizing activity than in Canada (Ferguson 2008; Eaton and Kriesky 2009).²

Studies of managerial behaviour towards unions conducted in other jurisdictions with somewhat similar Wagner-style regimes (i.e., Australia) have found that while “some tactics have emerged organically through new management practices....employer [resistance towards unions] has been primarily state-led; legislative and non-legislative interventions have created opportunities, incentives and pressures for firms to adopt anti-union strategies” (Cooper et al. 2009:339). In this regard, numerous studies have categorized the differences in legal regimes across Canada and the US and have attempted to trace their effect on variations in successful union certifications (Goddard 2003; Riddell 2004; Slinn 2004; Campolieti et al. 2007) and union density (Martinello and Yates 2004).

Despite this previous work, relatively few studies have relied on comparative cross-country surveys of employers to measure the intensity of any self-reported

¹ The incentive arises, in part, from higher union wage premiums in the US as compared to other countries for which similar estimates are available (Blanchflower and Freeman 1992 and Blanchflower and Bryson 2004).

² We have some evidence on this already since in Canada we know from Riddell (2004) that unfair labour practices (ULPs) are twice as effective under elections relative to card check (though the amounts of ULPs are the same) with similar findings for the US (Abraham et al. 2009).

managerial resistance. Differences in managerial anti-union strategies across comparable national jurisdictions have elicited even less attention.³

In this paper we examine alternative avenues of possible employer resistance by asking whether American managers have a greater *attitudinal* propensity to oppose unions, or whether they are essentially the same as Canadian managers but are subject to fewer *constraints* in opposing union organizing drives. Our empirical analysis focuses on the attitudinal responses and self-reported union avoidance strategies of individual managers in both countries. We use a historically unique survey⁴ of attitudes toward work and unions conducted for the late Seymour Martin Lipset and Noah Meltz by the Angus Reid Group (now Ipsos-Reid). With this data we can address two specific questions: (1) Are managerial attitudes towards unions more hostile in the US than in Canada? (2) Are American managers more likely to employ extreme measures to thwart a unionization drive?

We find in response to our first question that managers in the U.S. and Canada had surprisingly similar attitudes to unions, confirming findings from earlier papers using different data sources. Whereas previous studies did not have a plausible explanation for this result, we can partially account for this by noting the differential effect of perceived union power, which is greater in Canada than the US and which is correlated negatively with union approval.

Second, in a result that has not been previously observed in the literature and which places differences in certification success in the U.S. and Canada in a different light, we find that managers in the U.S. state that they are less likely to use extreme methods to oppose union organizing drives. The low union rates in the US as compared to Canada are therefore not likely the result of greater negativity towards unions themselves but rather some other factor or combination factors. The implication is that if Canadian managers faced the same labor relations playing field as their American counterparts, they would likely find it easier to thwart union certification drives as well. Or, alternatively stated, Canadian-style labor relations reforms (such as card-check systems or quicker certification votes) could perhaps tip the balance in favor of unions when organizing in the US.

These results, of course, offer up another puzzle; namely how is it that the US can have greater anti-union legislation, while simultaneously hosting a class of relatively union friendly managers? We feel that an explanation may lie in the diminished presence (and hence effectiveness) of American unions as compared to their Canadian counterparts. It is likely that in the private sector at least, unions have been reduced to the point where they are considered little more than an annoyance to corporate America, and have therefore attracted little attention (negative or otherwise) from managers. It is therefore quite possible that US managers' report lower levels of anti-union sentiment and

³ See Towers (1997); Kumar (1993); Rose and Chaison (1990, 1996); Martinello and Yates (2004) and Bruce (1989). Recent evidence of the importance of card-check offs in improving union organizing have been found in Riddell (2004) and Slinn (2004).

⁴ Because of their expense, difficulty in achieving appropriate response rates through telephone surveying, and complexity, cross-national surveys of this kind—with such a comprehensive focus on labor relations—are now quite rare.

aggressiveness simply because unions have become (or have been for some time) weak and unthreatening.⁵

Our [Background and Hypotheses](#) section presents a brief review of previous work on managerial hostility, some background information and our hypotheses. We describe our data in [Survey and Data Description](#) section and empirical approach in [Empirical Framework](#) section. [Results](#) section presents our empirical findings, while [Concluding Observations](#) section contains a discussion of our estimates and their relation to previous estimates. We present a summary and some concluding remarks in our final section.

Background and Hypotheses

Many trade unionists and on-the-ground organizers have emphasized greater American managerial hostility to labor groups in contrast to Canadian managers as one of the factors adversely affecting union organizations in the U.S. (Singh 1999). Several earlier studies have specifically examined managerial hostility.

Saporta and Lincoln (1995:551) noted that “researchers have emphasized management attitudes and behavior towards union formation as an important determinant of union success or failure in North America.” They quote conclusions reached by industrial relations researchers such as Freeman, Poule and Jacoby that greater management hostility to unions in the United States than in Canada is “the major cause of the decline in private sector density.” Surprisingly, Saporta and Lincoln (1995)—using questions that probed opinions towards various aspects of union-firm relations—found that managerial attitudes in the two countries did not differ. The “management is inherently more hostile” view has also been countered by Taras (1997) who concluded that there is no evidence that managers are any more likely to express anti-union sentiments in the US compared to Canada. Taras (1997) based her conclusions on a 1992 survey of managers in Canadian and American owned firms operating in Canada within the same industry. A single question was asked of managers and the question related to the priority managers placed on remaining union free. Taras (1994) found no significant differences between managers in the U.S. and Canada. In a later paper Taras (2001) suggested that cultural factors could inhibit anti-union Canadian employers from vigorously acting out their sentiments since their country does not have the American “tradition of union avoidance” and therefore “an anti-union stance lacks a sustaining structure in the culture.” Thompson (1995) examined a cross-section of 106 Canadian based firms, and looked at whether

⁵ At the time of the Lipset and Meltz survey, 1996, there were 16 US states that had union density rates less than 10 %. The lowest rate in Canada by contrast was found in Alberta at 22 %. This sets up another potential supporting piece of evidence for this explanation of our findings. The states that enacted right-to-work laws after the Taft-Hartley amendments of 1947 were States in which union density had always been historically low (North Carolina, Alabama etc.). This can be seen in Appendix table 5. In other words, non-favourable union laws were an affirmation (and to some extent an insurance) of union weakness, not the direct cause.

American ownership affected employer attitudes towards unions. The similarity in attitudes among firms was found to be quite strong. Finally, Lipset and Katachanovski (2001) also found that there was not a great deal of differences in attitudes towards unions between U.S. and Canadian managers.⁶

Despite the observed similarity in employer attitudes, union organizing is more successful in Canada than in the United States (Ferguson 2008). The ratio of successful certifications to organizing attempts was 20–30 % higher in Canada in the 1990s.⁷ The ratio of unfair labor practice complaints to certifications and elections (a measure of the degree of opposition to labor organizing) also tends to be lower in Canada.⁸ It is on the basis of these and other statistics that most observers have concluded that Canadian management is less resistant to unions (Wood and Godard 1999).⁹

While we agree with this assessment, the question of *why* employer resistance is lower in Canada or more effective in the U.S. is still open to debate. Is it because managers are ‘inherently’ more hostile towards unions or is it because managers in the US are faced with differing constraints in the form of less stringent legislation thereby making their resistance more effective?¹⁰ Although our paper cannot confirm the latter conjecture directly, it can at least discount the former if it is found that attitudes towards unions are relatively similar in the two countries. For if it is the case that American and Canadian managers are *attitudinally* the same, then rather than intense anti-unionism, a combination of lax legislation and skilled managerial techniques are behind the greater effectiveness of US employers in diffusing organizing drives. This is clearly highlighted in the work of Logan (2002, 2006) which details the sophistication of the union avoidance consulting industry in the US; a feature not as prevalent in Canada. Such a conclusion is echoed by Kochan et al. (1986 [1994]: xiii) who have long contended that “the low road is much more available [in the US] than in other countries...[so that] the element of feasibility, not desirability or innate ideology, explains managerial actions.”

We will focus on examining two questions. First, are American managers more hostile to collective bargaining and unions? Second, are American managers more likely to not support unions and use more aggressive means to thwart union organizing drives?

⁶ Lipset and Katachanovski (2001) also used the Lipset-Meltz data. However, they only provided comparisons of means and did not undertake any multivariate analyses of the manager subsample that is used in this paper.

⁷ Ancillary analysis based on the success rate of certification applications in both countries demonstrates that on average 70 % of organizing drives are successful in Canada as compared to 47 % in the United States. See Meltz and Verma (1996: Table 4) and Kumar (1993:30, Tables 5).

⁸ For example, in 1994 the ratio of complaints to elections in the US was 0.630 compared to 0.242 in British Columbia [US Data: Annual Report of the National Labour Relations Board; B.C. Data: Labour Relations Board, Annual Reports to the Minister of Labour].

⁹ The implicit assumption here is that union organizing is of equal “quality” and “quantity” in both countries. Meltz (1985) argued that the lack of competition among unions for members in the US had reduced proactive organizing as compared to Canada.

¹⁰ Changes to labor law in a number of Canadian provinces during the 1990s allowed for longer delays in the union certification process (Campolieti et al. 2007).

Survey and Data Description

The Survey and Sample Representativeness

The data for this paper are drawn from a cross-national survey conducted for Seymour Martin Lipset and Noah M. Meltz in 1996, covering a total of 1,681 respondents in the United States and 1,495 in Canada.¹¹ This original sample of 3,245 adults respondents refers to the representative sample of the two country populations. Of this total, 800+ in each country was used for the representative workforce samples (providing a standard margin of error of ± 3.5 percentage points). It is from the workforce sample that the managerial responses are drawn.

The purpose of the survey was to probe the views of each country's population in general and of employees, in particular, toward work, institutions and social policy. The main areas of interest were: general values of workers; individualism versus group or communitarian orientation; the role of governments; confidence in institutions; and attitudes toward work, business and unions. Surveys of this sort are not very common.¹²

The Angus Reid Group (now Ipsos-Reid), one of Canada's leading public opinion survey firms, administered the survey through telephone calls from Canada and the United States in June and early July 1996. The survey was conducted in French in the province of Quebec and was also translated into Spanish to obtain a representative sample of Hispanics in the US.¹³

Though some may question, given the age of the data source, whether this study is better viewed as an interesting historical snapshot of the two countries, we feel that the paper has currency in the current labour relations landscape. There are several reasons for this. First, the period from the mid-to-late 1990s to the present is one characterized by continuity of existing patterns—i.e., slow but steady union decline in the private sector, though with some small upticks in membership numbers in the US in the mid-2000s, steady-state in the public sector, declines in the share of manufacturing employment, no major changes to legislation—rather than the kind of radical drop in density and change in political support that occurred in a similar time span from early 1980s to mid-1990s. Second, though in Canada the actual union density numbers fell gradually over this period they do not represent a radical break with prior or subsequent trends. So based on these factors we feel that these findings are still relevant and not just of historical interest.

¹¹ Findings from the survey (upon which the data for this paper is based) were originally made available in Lipset et al. (2004). Our paper however draws on primary data, literature and results not published in that volume.

¹² An exception is the “What Workers Want” data collected by Freeman and Rogers (1999) for the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

¹³ In terms of extrapolating to national observations, the survey was undertaken by a well-known pollster Ipsos-Reid (then known as Angus-Reid) familiar with nationally representative surveys of this kind. When the survey was originally completed, the three survey samples for each country (so six in total)—there was a general population sample, a workforce sample and a union member sample—were examined against the various socio-demographic and workforce characteristics of the representative populations. According to Ipsos-Reid “The samples were considered to be satisfactorily representative across the range of descriptors examined with one exception of reported educational attainment, which [was] higher than the actual across all six samples.” (Lipset et al. 2004: 182).

Identification of Managers

The survey identified managers by asking those employed the following question “Would you describe yourself as a ‘manager’—that is, as someone who participates in establishing policies at your company or organization?” Managers were then asked their position in the managerial hierarchy (high, middle, low) and whether they supervised workers or not. The managers were asked a series of questions concerning attitudes towards unions and a variety of other related issues: their attitudes towards their job; their beliefs about unions in general; their beliefs about unions’ (actual or likely) effect on their own workplace; and their likely course of action should a union attempt to organize. These questions make up the dependent variables of our analysis and are summarized in Table 1.

The total potential sample of managers based on the first question above was 688, with 361 in the US and 327 in Canada respectively.¹⁴ However, the questions about hypothetical union organizing drives in private sector non-union workplaces were only asked of 321 managers in both countries. We present summary statistics for the variables used in our models in Appendix Table 5.

Empirical Framework

Managerial Attitudes to Unions

Our *logit* model estimates the probability of approval of unions by managers in both countries. We control for *individual* characteristics (such as managerial level, age, education and gender); *workplace* characteristics (such as whether the workplace is unionized, and size of the workplace); *sector* (whether the manager works in the public, private or non-profit sector); and *managerial perceptions* of the power of unions; and, a dummy variable indicating the manager is in the U.S. In addition to employing a single United States dummy variable to capture nationality, we also use a category variable to capture variation within the United States. In particular, we use three mutually exclusive indicators capturing whether an individual manager is employed in a high, medium or low union density state. The cut-offs were based on whether the state was above, close to or below the US national union density rate at the time of the survey. These categories account for substantial and persistent inter-state differentials in union density, which in turn may be a proxy for unobserved cultural differences between states. This is captured in Figure 1, panels a and b, which show the correlation of historical union density as measured in 1964 with the 1996 state rankings and the 1996 rankings as correlated with the most current (2011) union density numbers. In both cases, the upward slope of the scatterplots is clearly visible indicating the close association (correlations of 0.85 and 0.93 respectively) between

¹⁴ Results presented in the text refer to the self-reported sample of managers who responded yes to the question “Would you describe yourself as a manager—that is, as someone who participates in establishing policies at your company or organization?” and who responded yes to the question “In your capacity as manager are you responsible for supervising or monitoring the work of subordinates?”

Table 1 Variable definitions for union attitudinal responses by managers

Variables	Definition
Attitudes towards unions	Measures of general attitudes towards unions.
1. Union approval	A dichotomous variable coded 1 if respondents approved of unions and 0 otherwise. Based on the following question: “Do you approve or disapprove of unions”
Managerial opposition to unions	Measures of intensity of managerial opposition to unions
1. Intensity of managerial opposition	A five point scale measuring the intensity of opposition to union organizing. The scale runs from very weak (1 = welcome the union), weak (2 = do nothing), neutral (3 = information campaign), strong (4 = use threatening consequences), to very strong opposition (by going after workers who organize).
2. Reasonableness of a wage increases to oppose a union.	A four-point scale measuring how reasonable managers felt that offering a wage increase would be to oppose a union. The scale ran from very reasonable to very unreasonable.
3. Reasonableness of running an information campaign to oppose a union.	A four-point scale measuring how reasonable managers felt that running an information campaign would be to oppose a union. The scale ran from very reasonable to very unreasonable.
4. Reasonableness of threatening to relocate to oppose a union.	A four-point scale measuring how reasonable managers felt that suggesting that operations will be moved if a union were formed. The scale ran from very reasonable to very unreasonable.
5. Reasonableness of dismissing workers to oppose a union.	A four-point scale measuring how reasonable managers felt that threatening to dismiss organizers would be. The scale ran from very reasonable to very unreasonable.
6. Legality of firing union organizers.	A dichotomous measure coded 1 if respondents felt that it should be legal to fire workers who start a union. Based on the following question: “As far as you are concerned, do you think it should or should not be legal for employers to fire workers who try to start up a union.”
7. Legality of hiring replacement workers during a strike.	A dichotomous measure coded 1 if respondents felt that it should be legal to hire workers to replace striking workers. Based on the following question: “As far as you are concerned, do you think it should or should not be legal for employers to hire replacement workers who are out on a legal strike?”

Lipset and Meltz, Angus Reid Survey, 1996

the survey year density (1996) with the historical (1964) and most recent state estimates (2011).

The justification for grouping only states (and not provinces) into high, medium and low union density areas is the strong and persistent positive relationship between several measures of historical average union density and current union density rates (see Lipset and Meltz 1998: 109). As seen in Appendix Table 6, the probability of a state remaining in the bottom one-third or top one-third of union density rankings is very high. In other words, low union states have always been low union density enclaves and rankings rarely have changed dramatically. This striking stylized fact

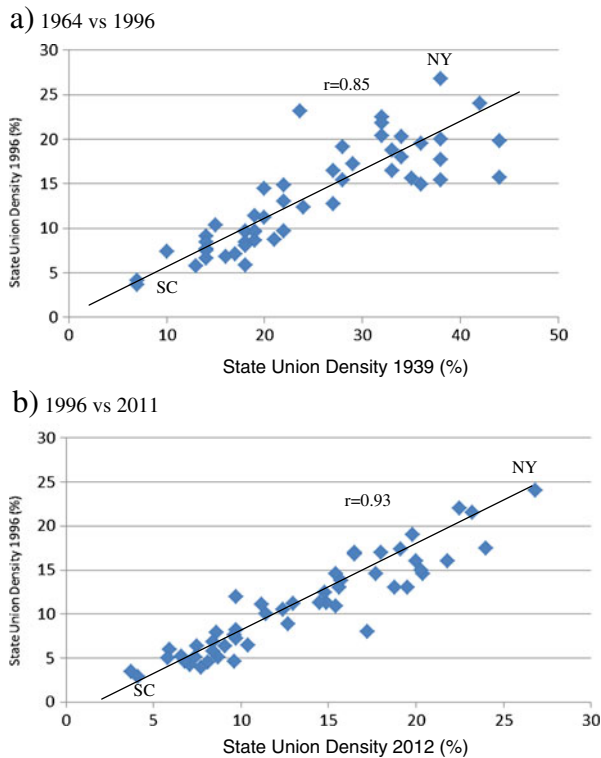


Fig. 1 Correlation of union density across US States over time, 1964, 1996 and 2011. Source: Data based on Appendix Table 6

suggests that there may be underlying social and cultural characteristics which allow certain states to consistently have higher or lower relative union density rates.¹⁵ In Canada, the relationship between historical and current provincial union density is not as strong and the differences across provinces not as pronounced.¹⁶ Holding the desire for representation constant across workers, the expectation would be that in low-density areas, managerial hostility would be greater than in high-density states.

Managerial Attitudes to Union Organizing

We also use an *ordered logit* model to estimate the probability of the intensity of managerial resistance to a hypothetical union organizing drive. The dependent variable is an ordered categorical variable based on a question asking managers in non-unionized workplaces to predict their reaction to a group of employees trying to form a union. The reactions are ordered from very weak (welcoming the union) to

¹⁵ Lipset et al. (2004: 109) show correlations between historical average union density in the following periods (1939–1992), (1939 to 1974), (1939 to 1964), and (1982 to 1992) and demonstrate a strong positive relationship between current union density levels across states. The correlations are respectively 0.89, 0.82, 0.77, and 0.96.

¹⁶ The correlation between historical average union densities (1939 to 1992) in Canada was 0.51.

very strong opposition (oppose the union by going after workers who organize it). We include controls for *individual* characteristics (such as managerial level, age, education and gender) in these models as well as the U.S. dummy. Like the dichotomous logit models, we also estimate a specification using the low, medium and high union density state dummies.

Results

Managers and Union Approval

We present the logit estimates for cross-border differences in managerial approval of unions in Table 2. The approval variable is dichotomous and given that this is an opinion poll question, a scale measure would have been preferred. Nevertheless, several variables with large and significant relationships with respect to the probability of approving of unions include: sector (public and non-profit managers are more approving of unions than private sector managers); workplace (managers in unionized workplaces are more approving than those in non-union workplaces); managerial level (higher level managers are more approving than lower level ones); and perceived union power (compared to managers who viewed unions as being too powerful, those who thought unions did not have enough power, were significantly more likely to view unions favorably).

Given that many of these variables are potentially differentially linked with US and Canadian managers, this would make the overall national differences less intense when we controlled for variables such as the perceived power of unions. Indeed, we can see that in keeping with what we expected to find: younger managers are significantly less approving of unions than older counterparts (row 1, Table 2); high-level managers were more approving of unions than medium or lower level ones (row 4); managers in large workplaces (with 1,000+ employees) were less approving (row 5); private sector managers were significantly less approving of unions than either public or non-profit managers (row 6); and managers with the presence of a union at the workplace were more favorable than their non-union counterparts. The largest and most significant associations were found with our perceived union power variable, which we hypothesize is related to actual power, and which was negatively related to approval of unions. That is, managers who felt that unions were too powerful had a 20 percentage point reduction in their approval probability than those who felt the opposite.

After controlling for perceived union power and the aforementioned individual and structural controls in rows 1–7, the adjusted probability of union approval among managers was 10.8 percentage points higher in the United States than in Canada (Table 2, column 1, row 1a), and the difference was statistically significant. These estimates suggest that American managers, in their stated attitudes, are not more anti-union than Canadian managers.

In column 2 of Table 2 we also control for variation in union density within the United States as a way of capturing unobserved regional differences in pro/anti-union sentiment. We grouped managers, based on 1996 state density rankings, into high

Table 2 Determinants of probability of union approval among Canadian and American managers

Independent variables		Logistic regression with dependent variable: union approval			
		With US country dummy [1]		With US state dummies [2]	
		Marginal effect	z-value	Marginal effect	z-value
1a. country dummy	[Canada]				
	United States	.108***	2.88	–	–
1b. union density state ranking	[Canada]				
	High Density	–	–	.085***	2.05
	Medium Density	–	–	.092*	1.54
	Low Density	–	–	.034	0.65
Control variables					
1. Age	[18–24]				
	25–34	–.136*	–1.39	–.138*	–1.41
	35–44	–.171**	–1.77	–.174**	–1.80
	45–54	–.118	–1.21	–.109	–1.13
	55+	–.111	–1.02	–.108	–1.00
2. Education	[<High School]				
	Post Sec.	–.019	–0.41	–.014	–00.31
	University	–.009	–0.21	–.012	–0.25
3. Gender	[Female]				
	Male	.008	0.22	.011	0.30
4. Managerial level	[Low]				
	Medium	.016	0.36	.020	0.47
	High	.101***	2.15	.098***	2.08
5. Size of firm	[<20 employees]				
	20–49 employees	–.008	–0.14	–.004	–0.08
	50–99 employees	–.001	–0.00	–.007	–0.11
	100–199 employees	–.086	–0.94	–.087	–0.94
	200–499 employees	–.027	–0.35	–.022	–0.29
	500–999 employees	–.006	–0.01	.009	0.09
	1000+ employees	–.139*	–1.48	–.133*	–1.41
6. Sector	[Private]				
	Public	.115***	2.38	.114***	2.36
	Non-Profit	.218***	5.00	.219***	5.04
7. Union workplace	[Non-union]				
	Unionized	.164***	3.74	.150***	3.32
8. Perceived power of unions	[Not enough]				
	Too much power	–.241***	–6.70	–.250***	–7.24
Pseudo R-squared		0.124		0.119	
Sample size		688		688	

Terms in [] refer to omitted reference categories. Critical values, at the .01, .05 and .10 level, for z statistics are 1.89 (***) 1.65 (**) and 1.28 (*) respectively for the one tailed test (when the expected sign is unambiguous). The dependent variable is a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent approves of unions when asked “Do you approve or disapprove of unions?” and 0 otherwise

Authors calculations based on Lipset and Meltz, Angus Reid Survey, 1996

(above average), medium (average) and low (below average) union density states (see Appendix Table 6 for cut-offs). These three categories were applied to American respondents and compared to the same omitted reference category of Canadian managers as in column 1. Interestingly, based on the interstate dummy variables (Table 2, column 2, row 1b), we found that only those managers residing in high and medium union density states were more likely than Canadian managers to approve of unions. We also found that the estimate for managers in low density states was not statistically significant. This means that the overall 11 percentage point union ‘approval premium’ that American managers have over their Canadian managers is being driven by those managers residing in high and medium density states (i.e. states 1 through to 33 in Appendix Table 6).

Managers and Potential Union Organizing

Prior to presenting the ordered logit estimates we offer some descriptive evidence in Table 3 on manager’s hostility toward unions in the context of their reaction to a hypothetical union organizing drive. Table 3 rows 1–7 show the results of our difference- of- means tests for the strength of employer opposition to unions and organizing drives in private sector non-union workplaces.

Our first measure (Table 3, row 1) is an ordered categorical variable measuring the intensity of managerial opposition to a hypothetical unionization drive. It is based on a question that asked managers to anticipate their most likely reaction to a group of employees trying to form a union. The five reactions were ordered from very weak

Table 3 Mean differences for type and intensity of managerial opposition to unions

Managerial opposition to unions [measures of intensity of managerial opposition to unions]	Sample mean values [unweighted]		
	U.S. [2]	Canada [2]	Δ Diff US-Canada [3]
1. Intensity of management opposition to union organizing [very weak (1)...very strong (5)].	2.367	2.772	-.355*** (3.52)
2. Reasonableness of using a wage increase to oppose a union [very reasonable (1)...very unreasonable (4)].	2.051	1.915	.136*** (2.09)
3. Reasonableness of running an information campaign [very reasonable (1)...very unreasonable (4)].	2.331	2.371	-.041 (-0.60)
4. Reasonableness of threatening to move the operation [very reasonable (1)...very unreasonable (4)].	3.028	2.959	.069 (0.94)
5. Reasonableness of threatening to dismiss workers who organize [very reasonable (1)...very unreasonable (4)].	3.452	3.401	.051 (0.81)
6. Should be legal to fire workers who start a unionization drive.	.079	.129	-0.049*** (1.97)
7. Should be legal to hire replacement workers during a strike.	.421	.368	.052 (-1.26)

* Significant at $p < .10$ level ** Significant at $p < .05$ level *** Significant at $p < .01$ level; t-values in parentheses. See Table 1 rows 1–7 for definitions of variables

Authors calculations based on Lipset and Meltz, Angus Reid Survey, 1996

(welcoming the union) to very strong opposition (oppose the union by going after workers who organize it). American managers are significantly less likely to state that they would employ extreme methods in opposing a union.

The next four comparisons of means tests, in rows 2–5, are based on a question that asked managers to rank how reasonable they found certain tactics in opposing a unionization drive. Only one action elicited a significantly different response. American managers were more likely to think it unreasonable to raise wages as a counter measure in opposing a union than Canadian managers. The last two variables (rows 6 and 7) were based on questions that asked whether it should be legal to fire workers who start a union and whether it should be legal to hire replacement workers during a strike. American managers were significantly less likely to approve of the legality of firing union organizers.

One important question raised by these data is how much veracity can we ascribe to them? Though cross-national surveys of these kind are rare, Freeman and Rogers (1999) had a question that is similar to our first measure of union opposition in their survey. Their question asked managers who were working at a company where there was a union organizing drive: “Which best describes how management responded to this effort: Did management: welcome the union; oppose the union with information only; oppose the union by threatening or harassing some union supporters; do nothing?” This is similar to its counterpart in the Lipset-Meltz data, which used a 5-point scale, and was a hypothetical question about organizing drives worded in a very similar way. Though clearly not identical, it is similar enough to be of use in at least benchmarking our responses.

The figures from the Freeman-Rogers data indicated that 9.6 % of managers would welcome the union and 25.5 % of the managers would do nothing to oppose the union. The opposition to the union was mostly in the form of using information (52.1 %), while the more aggressive opposition involving threats or harassment was only about 12.7 %. The US managers in the Lipset-Meltz data indicated 14.6 % would welcome the union, 44.3 % would do nothing, 34.6 % would oppose with information and 6.5 % would use more aggressive measures, such as threatening or going after the organizers. The proportions for the Lipset-Meltz data are based on a sample of 185 managers, while only 94 responses are available for the Freeman-Rogers data, so this may account for some of the differences we observe. The general conclusions though are surprisingly similar across the two surveys. In particular, the US managers do not engage in virulent forms of opposition and when they do so it is primarily information-based instead of more aggressive tactics. The correspondence of the responses across the two surveys corroborates our findings and suggests that our data are reflective of the management-union relations environment in the late 1990s.

Our estimates of the ordered logit model are presented in Table 4. We also present the marginal effects for the coefficient estimates, which allow us to see how the magnitudes of country and state ranking dummies change by differing categories of managerial intensity. The estimates in Table 4 are consistent with our earlier findings that American managers are less likely to use extreme opposition in thwarting an organizing drive than are otherwise similar Canadian managers. More specifically, we found that marginal effects for the US dummy were associated with a statistically significant increase the probability of very weak or weak managerial opposition. These marginal effects were also quite large relative to the mean

Table 4 Probability of managers strongly opposing union organizing

Independent variables		Ordered logistic regression with dependent variable: strength of union opposition				
		$Pr(\text{very weak} = 1; \text{weak} = 2; \text{neutral} = 3; \text{strong} = 4; \text{very strong} = 5)$				
Ordered logit model coefficients		Marginal effects across levels of managerial opposition				
		Very weak $Pr=.105$	Weak $Pr=.393$	Neutral $Pr=.422$	Strong $Pr=.040$	Very strong $Pr=.039$
		Model 1	Model 2			
1. Country dummy	[Canada]					
	United States	-.797*** (3.62)	–	.12*** (.039)	-.14*** (.037)	-.03*** (.011)
2. United States by union density state ranking	[Canada]					
	High Density State		-.667*** (.271)	.09*** (.039)	-.12*** (.051)	-.02*** (.008)
	Med Density State		-.231 (.397)	.03 (.054)	-.04 (.073)	-.01 (.012)
	Low Density State		-.719** (.313)	.08** (.043)	-.13*** (.058)	-.02*** (.009)
Threshold points†						
/Cut 1	-1.756*** (.451)	-2.313*** (.459)				
/Cut 2	.380 (.436)	-.190 (.435)				
/Cut 3	2.852*** (.474)	2.249*** (.464)				
/Cut 4	3.601*** (.511)	2.996*** (.500)				

Table 4 (continued)

Independent variables		Ordered logistic regression with dependent variable: strength of union opposition				
		<i>Pr</i> (very weak = 1; weak = 2; neutral = 3; strong = 4; very strong = 5)				
Ordered logit model coefficients		Marginal effects across levels of managerial opposition				
Model 1	Model 2	Very weak	Weak	Neutral	Strong	Very strong
		<i>Pr</i> =.105	<i>Pr</i> =.393	<i>Pr</i> =.422	<i>Pr</i> =.040	<i>Pr</i> =.039
LR test	23.66 (10)					
Prob > chi2	(0.008)					
Sample size	321					

Terms in [] refer to omitted reference categories. Standard errors in parentheses (). LR = likelihood ratio. Critical values, at the .01, .05 and .10 level, for z statistics are 1.89 (***), 1.65 (**) and 1.28 (*) respectively for the one tailed test (when the expected sign is unambiguous). The dependent variable is based on a five point scale measuring the intensity of opposition to union organizing. The scale runs from very weak (1 = welcome the union), weak (2 = do nothing), neutral (3 = information campaign), strong (4 = use threatening consequences), to very strong opposition (by going after workers who organize). Controls for age, gender, managerial level and education are included in models [1] and [2], but are not presented

†In the ordered logistic regression, the threshold points are unknown and must be estimated with the coefficients on the control variables. The threshold points provide the boundaries on the latent variable that indicates which of the ordered outcomes are observed

Authors calculations based on Lipset and Meltz, Angus Reid Survey, 1996

probability levels, i.e., a marginal effect of 0.07 relative to a mean probability of 0.11 and a marginal effect of 0.12 relative to a mean probability of 0.39 for very weak and weak opposition (respectively). Likewise, we also saw a consistent pattern when we considered the probability of strong and very strong managerial opposition, where we found the US was associated with a statistically significant decrease in the probability of strong and very strong managerial opposition. These marginal effects are also quite large since they were about 75 % increase relative to the mean, i.e., -0.03 divided by a mean of about 0.04.

We also consider the effects for the US more carefully by looking at regional differences by union density (high, medium and low). Relative to Canada, managers in states with medium union density levels do not have any statistically significant differences in the probability of managerial opposition. However, managers in high and low density states do have some statistically significant differences. In particular, high density states are associated with a large increase in the probability of very weak and weak managerial opposition. Likewise, high density states are also associated with a decrease in the probability of strong and very managerial opposition relative to Canada. We also found that low union density states were associated with increases in the probability of very weak and weak managerial opposition relative to Canada as well as a decrease in the probability of strong and very strong managerial opposition. Our estimates suggest that managers in medium density states in the US are not statistically different in their probability of managerial opposition to their counterparts in Canada. Unfortunately, we do not have a large number of observations in the middle density states (there are about 50 % fewer observations in the medium density category relative to the number of observations in the low and high density states), so this limits our ability to make firm conclusions about the lack of a statistically significant relationship in these states. We did find that being located in a low or high density state generates significant differences in the probability of managerial opposition relative to Canada. Interestingly, the size of the effect is similar in magnitude across the low- and high-density states, despite the fact that almost all of the low- density states have Right-to-Work laws.

Concluding Observations

The somewhat surprising evidence of much less attitudinal opposition to unions on the part of American managers than is typically ascribed, combined with the greater level of effective employer resistance to unions in the US than in Canada (as demonstrated by the lower success rate of certification drives) is suggestive of several possibilities. The first is that legislative constraints such as the absence of time limits or quick votes (Campolieti et al. 2007) are much less binding in the United States than in Canada. This allows managers in the US much more freedom (and time) to make the case against unionization from the start of certification to the time of election, and this lessens the need for more intense or severe opposition. This conjecture is buttressed by recent Canadian evidence that has

measured variations in provincial union election rules, whereby delays in union elections were found to be a significant and positive predictor of union failure to organize (Campolieti et al. 2007).

Second, it may be that union organizers have fewer resources or are less motivated to get workers organized in the US than in Canada, thereby making unions a more benign threat for American management (Robinson 1996). In this regard, Meltz and Verma (1996) found that after the 1981–82 recession there was a substantial decrease in attempts to organize workers in the US, as compared with the continued levels of union organizing that occurred in Canada over that same period. Similarly, Farber and Western (2004:324) found that for the period 1973–2001, the decline in union density could only have been stemmed by “extremely large increases in union organizing activity” and that the organizing resources required are substantially larger than those currently deployed (collectively) by the labor movement. This possibility is also consistent with some of the earlier findings (Riddell 1993; Freeman and Rogers 1999; Lipset et al. 2004) in the literature showing that the predominant factor in accounting for the gap in unionization is unsatisfied demand for unionization on the part of American workers. Curiously, our findings also suggest that if managers had more contact with unions, they may view them more favorably too, given that there was higher union approval amongst managers in unionized workplaces as compared to non-union workplaces in both countries (see Table 2, row 7).

Third, it may be the case that rather than intense anti-unionism, a combination of lax legislation and skilled managerial techniques are more effective in diffusing organizing drives in the US than in Canada. This is clearly highlighted in the work of Logan (2002, 2004) which details the sophistication of the union avoidance consulting industry in the US. This is something which is not as prevalent in Canada. Such a conclusion is echoed by Kochan et al. (1986 [1994]:xiii) who have long contended that “the low road is much more available [in the US] than in other countries...the element of feasibility, not desirability or innate ideology, explains managerial actions.”

The low union rates in the US as compared to Canada are therefore not likely the result of greater negative views towards unions themselves but rather some other factor or combination factors. Anti-union tactics are more successful in the U.S. than in Canada because of the absence of time limits or quick votes, rather than more aggressive ‘anti-union’ managers or management style. The implication is that if Canadian managers faced the same labour relations playing field, they may find it easier to thwart union certification drives. Or alternatively, Canadian style labour relations reforms (such as card-check systems or quicker certification votes) could tip the balance in favor of union organizing in the US.

How likely is it that such reforms will ever be enacted is a question that seems already answered by the failure, even by Democratically controlled governments over the last half century, to “achieve any significant improvement in collective bargaining rights for unions or for protection for workers” (Baird and Lansbury 2007:352). While we cannot isolate the interplay between attitudes and labor law and their potential impact on organizing success, this is an important question for future research.

Appendix

Table 5 Summary statistics for variables included in logit model

	Mean	Standard deviation
1. Age [18–24]		
25–34	0.244	0.430
35–44	0.286	0.452
45–54	0.285	0.452
55+	0.128	0.334
2. Education [<high school]		
Post-secondary	0.372	0.484
University	0.379	0.486
3. Gender [female]		
Male	0.605	0.489
4. Managerial level [low]		
Medium	0.366	0.482
High	0.231	0.422
5. Size of firm [<20]		
20–49	0.150	0.357
50–99	0.093	0.291
100–199	0.076	0.265
200–499	0.097	0.297
500–999	0.033	0.180
1000+	0.077	0.267
6. Sector [private]		
Public	0.222	0.416
Non-profit	0.055	0.229
7. Union presence at work		
Unionized	0.363	0.481
8. Perceived power of unions		
Too much power	0.172	0.377
9. Country [US]		
Canada	0.475	0.500
Overall sample size	688	

Table 6 Union density rankings by state, 1964, 1996 and 2011

		1964	1996	2011
	High Density States			
1	New York	38	26.8	24
2	Michigan	42	24.0	17.5
3	Hawaii	24	23.2	21.5
4	Alaska	32	22.5	22
5	New Jersey	32	21.8	16

Table 6 (continued)

		1964	1996	2011
6	Nevada*	32	20.4	14.6
7	Minnesota	34	20.3	15
8	Illinois	38	20.0	16
9	Washington	44	19.8	19
10	Ohio	36	19.5	13
11	Rhode Island	28	19.1	17.4
12	Wisconsin	33	18.8	13
13	Oregon	34	18.0	17
14	Pennsylvania	38	17.7	14.6
15	D.C.	29	17.2	8
16	California	33	16.5	17
17	Connecticut	27	16.5	16
	Middle Density States			
18	West Virginia	44	15.7	13.8
19	Montana	35	15.6	13
20	Massachusetts	28	15.4	14.6
21	Missouri	38	15.4	10.9
22	Indiana	36	14.9	11.3
23	Maryland	22	14.8	12.4
24	Maine	20	14.5	11.3
25	Iowa*	22	13.0	11.2
26	Kentucky	27	12.7	8.9
27	Delaware	24	12.4	10.5
28	Alabama*	19	11.4	10
29	New Hampshire	20	11.2	11.1
30	Oklahoma*	15	10.4	6.4
31	Colorado	22	9.7	8.2
32	Vermont	18	9.7	12
33	Wyoming*	19	9.7	7.2
	Low Density States			
34	Kansas*	18	9.6	7.6
35	Tennessee*	19	9.6	4.6
36	North Dakota*	14	9.1	6.3
37	Idaho*	21	8.7	5.1
38	Nebraska*	19	8.6	7.9
39	New Mexico	14	8.4	6.8
40	Utah*	18	8.4	5.8
41	Louisiana*	18	8.1	4.5
42	Georgia*	14	7.7	3.9
43	Florida*	14	7.5	6.3
44	South Dakota*	10	7.4	5.1
45	Arkansas*	17	7.1	4.2

Table 6 (continued)

		1964	1996	2011
46	Virginia*	16	6.8	4.6
47	Texas*	14	6.6	5.2
48	Arizona*	18	5.9	6
49	Mississippi*	13	5.8	5
50	North Carolina*	7	4.1	2.9
51	South Carolina*	7	3.7	3.4

The 1964 data drawn from Troy (1990) while 1996 and 2011 data from BLS estimates

The * denotes a Right-to-Work state

References

- Abraham S, Eaton AE, Voos PB (2009) Card check recognition: resulting labor relations and investor reaction. *Adv Ind Labor Relat* 17:1–30
- Artz B (2011) The voice effect of unions: evidence from the US. *J Lab Res* 32(4):326–335
- Baird M, Lansbury R (2007) Reworking or restoring the American dream. *Labor Hist* 48(3):347–354
- Betcherman G, McMullen K, Leckie N, Caron C (1994) *The Canadian workplace in transition*. Queens University IRC Press, Kingston
- Blanchflower D, Bryson A (2004) What effect do unions have on wages now and would Freeman and Medoff be surprised? *J Lab Res* 25(3):383–414
- Blanchflower D, Freeman R (1992) Unionism in the United States and other advanced OECD countries. *Ind Relat* 31(1):56–79
- Bruce PG (1989) Political parties and labour legislation in Canada and the US. *Ind Relat* 28(2):115–141
- Campolieti M, Riddell C, Slinn S (2007) Labor law reform and the role of delay in union organizing: empirical evidence from Canada. *Ind Labor Relat Rev* 61(1):32–48
- Cooper R, Ellem Briggs B, van den Broek D (2009) Anti-unionism, employer strategy, and the Australian State, 1996–2005. *Labor Stud J* 34(3):339–362
- Eaton A, Kriesky J (2009) NLRB campaigns vs. card check campaigns: results of a worker survey. *Ind Labor Relat Rev* 62(2):157–172
- Farber H, Western B (2004) Can increased organizing reverse the decline of unions in the United States? In: Wunnava P (ed) *The changing role of unions: new forms of representation*. M.E. Sharpe, New York, pp 323–361
- Ferguson J-P (2008) The eyes of the needles: a sequential model of union organizing drives, 1999–2004. *Ind Labor Relat Rev* 62(1):3–21
- Freeman R (1988) Contraction and expansion: the divergence of public and private sector unionism in the United States. *J Econ Perspect* 2:188–201
- Freeman R, Kleiner M (1990) The impact of new unionization on wages and working conditions. *J Labor Econ* 8(1):S8–S25
- Freeman R, Rogers J (1999) *What workers want*. Cornell University Press and Russell Sage Foundation, Ithaca and London
- Goddard J (2003) Do labor laws matter? the density decline and convergence thesis revisited. *Ind Relat* 42(3):458–492
- Gould WB (1993) *Agenda for reform: the future of employment relationships and the law*. MIT Press, Cambridge
- Jacoby S (1991) American exceptionalism revisited: the importance of management. In: Jacoby S (ed) *Masters to managers: historical and comparative perspectives on American employers*. Columbia University Press, New York
- Kaufman B (1996) Why the Wagner act? reestablishing contact with its original purpose. In: Lewin D, Kaufman B, Sockell D (eds) *Advances in industrial and labor relations*, vol. 7. JAI Press, Greenwich, pp 15–68

- Kaufman B (2004) Prospects for union growth in the United States in the early twenty-first century. In: Verma A, Kochan T (eds) *Unions in the 21st century*. Palgrave, London, pp 44–60
- Kochan T, Katz H, McKersie R (1986 [1994]) *The transformation of American industrial relations*, 2nd edn. Cornell ILR Press: Ithaca
- Kumar P (1993) *From uniformity to divergence: industrial relations in Canada and the United States*. Queens' University IRC Press, Kingston
- Lipset SM, Katachanovski I (2001) The future of private sector unions in the U.S. *J Lab Res* 22(2):229–244
- Lipset SM, Meltz N (1998) Canadian and American attitudes toward work and institutions. *Perspect Work* 1(3):14–20
- Lipset SM, Meltz N, Gomez R, Katachanovski I (2004) *The paradox of American unionism*. Cornell University Press
- Logan J (2002) "Consultants, lawyers and the union-free movement in the United States since the 1970s." *Ind Relat J* (August): 197–214
- Logan J (2006) The union avoidance industry in the United States. *Br J Ind Relat* 44(4):651–675
- Martinello F, Yates C (2004) Union and employer tactics in Ontario Organizing Campaigns. *Adv Ind Labor Relat* 13:157–190
- Meltz N (1985) Labor movements in Canada and the United States. In: Kochan TA (ed) *Challenges and choices facing American labor*. MIT Press, Cambridge, pp 315–334
- Meltz N, Verma A (1996) "Beyond union density: union organizing and certification as indicators of union strength in Canada and the United States." Paper presented for the 33rd Annual Meeting of the Canadian Industrial Relations Association
- Poole M (1986) *Industrial relations: origins and patterns of national diversity*. Routledge, London
- Riddell WC (1993) Unionization in Canada and the United States: a tale of two countries. In: Card D, Freeman R (eds) *Small differences that matter: labor markets and income maintenance in Canada and the United States*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago
- Riddell C (2004) Union certification success under voting versus card-check procedures: evidence from British Columbia, 1978–1998. *Ind Labor Relat Rev* 57(4):493–517
- Robinson I (1996) "Re-thinking labor movement power: from movement character to mobilization capacity." Paper Presented to the Annual meeting of the Comparative Industrial relations Research and Teaching Society
- Rose J, Chaison G (1990) New measures of union organizing effectiveness. *Ind Relat* 20(3):457–468
- Saporta I, Lincoln B (1995) Managers and workers attitudes toward unions in the US and Canada. *Relat Ind/Ind Relat* 50(3):550–566
- Singh G (1999) "An analysis of public policy options to address the representation gap: elites' values and diverging approaches in Canada and the US." In: *Proceedings of the 51st Annual Meeting of the Industrial Relations Research Association*. Urbana-Champagne: Industrial and Labor Relations Association: 122–131
- Slinn S (2004) An empirical analysis of the effects of the change from card-check to mandatory vote certification. *Can Labor Employ Law J* 11(2):258–301
- Taras D (1994) *The impact of industrial relations strategies on selected human resource practices*. Ph.D dissertation, University of Calgary
- Taras D (1997) Collective bargaining regulation in Canada and the United States: divergent cultures, divergent outcomes. In: Kaufman BE (ed) *Governmental regulation of the employment relationship*. Industrial and Labor Relations Research Association, Urbana-Champagne, pp 295–342
- Taras D (2001) "Explaining Canadian-American differences in union density." In: *Proceedings of the 53rd Annual Meeting of the Industrial Relations Research Association*. Urbana-Champagne: Industrial and Labor Relations Association, 153–162
- Thompson M (1995) The management of industrial relations. In: Gunderson M, Ponak A (eds) *Union-management relations in Canada*, 3rd edn. Addison-Wesley, Don Mills, pp 105–129
- Towers B (1997) *The representation gap: change and reform in the British and American workplace*. Oxford University Press, New York
- Troy L (1990) Is the U.S. unique in the decline of private sector unionism? *J Lab Res* 11:111–143
- Weiler PC (1983) Promises to keep: securing workers' rights to self-organization under the NLRA. *Harv Law Rev* 96:1769–1827
- Weiler PC (1984) Striking a new balance: freedom of contract and the prospects for union representation. *Harv Law Rev* 98:351–420
- Wood S, Godard J (1999) The statutory recognition procedure in the employee relations bill: a comparative perspective. *Brit J Ind Relat* 37(2):203–45

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.