Political Behavior
https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-019-09548-7

ORIGINAL PAPER

How Labor Unions Increase Political Knowledge: Evidence from the United States

David Macdonald[1]

Abstract

Labor unions have long been important political actors, mobilizing voters, shaping their members' attitudes, and influencing representation and economic inequality. However, little is known regarding unions' influence on political knowledge. In this paper, I argue that unions increase their members' political knowledge through two mechanisms: direct information provision and workplace discussion of politics. I use data from recent national election surveys and a matching technique, showing that union members, particularly those with less formal education, who face higher costs in seeking out political information, are significantly more politically knowledgeable than their non-union counterparts and better informed about where political parties and candidates stand on the issues. I conclude by discussing unions' capacity to reduce knowledge gaps and foster a more politically informed electorate.

Keywords Labor unions · Political knowledge · Information · Knowledge gaps

Introduction

The American mass public exhibits a "general impoverishment of political thought" (Campbell et al. 1960, p. 543). Indeed, democracy suffers if people are making political decisions grounded in ignorance (Achen and Bartels 2016). By one measure, nearly one in four American cast votes inconsistent with their preferences, with similar levels observed cross-nationally (Lau et al. 2008, 2014). This matters, given

A previous version of this paper was presented at the 2018 Midwest Political Science Conference in Chicago, Illinois. I thank Brad Gomez, Matthew Pietryka, and Teresa Cornacchione for their helpful comments and feedback.

Electronic supplementary material The online version of this article (doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-019-09548-7) contains supplementary material, which is available to authorized users.

✉ David Macdonald
dm14@my.fsu.edu

[1] Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL, USA

Published online: 29 April 2019

that several recent presidential elections in the United States were decided by razor thin margins in a few swing states. Changes in the electorate's levels of political knowledge could have altered these results, potentially awarding the presidency to the other party (e.g., Bartels 1996; Fowler and Margolis 2014).

Past research, examining the determinants of political knowledge, has emphasized demographics such as education (e.g., Barabas et al. 2014; Carpini et al. 1996; Highton 2009), gender (e.g., Dolan 2011; Dow 2009; Fraile and Gomez 2017; Mondak and Anderson 2004; Jerit and Barabas 2016), and race (e.g., Abrajano 2015; Pérez 2015), as well as media consumption (e.g., Barabas and Jerit 2009; Jr et al. 2000; Jerit 2009; Mondak 1995; Prior 2005). Despite their long political prominence, labor unions have received scant attention in studies of political knowledge. Unions mobilize voters and increase political participation (e.g., Asher et al. 2001; Flavin and Radcliff 2011; Francia and Orr 2014; Leighley and Nagler 2007), and influence their members' voting behavior (e.g., Francia and Bigelow 2010), and political attitudes (e.g., Ahlquist et al. 2014; Kim and Margalit 2017; Mosimann and Pontusson 2017). Unions also shape public policy liberalism (Radcliff and Saiz 1998), economic inequality (e.g., Bartels 2008; Bucci 2018; Western and Rosenfeld 2011; Brady et al. 2013; Ahlquist 2017), and how elected officials vote (Becher et al. 2018; Ellis 2013; Flavin 2016; Lamare 2016). Despite the important role that unions play in the political arena, we know very little about their influence on political knowledge, a central construct in public opinion and political behavior (e.g., Althaus 2003; Carpini et al. 1996; Zaller 1992).

In this paper, I argue that labor unions influence political knowledge, informing their members about politics through two mechanisms: direct information provision and workplace discussion. Across twenty advanced democracies, Iversen and Soskice (2015) find a positive association between union membership and political knowledge. While an important finding, union membership is not the main variable of interest in their paper. As such, the mechanisms through which union membership influences political knowledge are not fully considered, nor is heterogeneity in this relationship across educational attainment.

To assess the relationship between union membership and political knowledge, I employ survey data from the 2012 American National Election Study (ANES) and 2004 National Annenberg Election Study (NAES), and use exact matching to help address the non-random nature of union membership. Results show that union members, particularly those with the least formal education, who face greater costs in acquiring political information, are significantly more informed about general political knowledge, and more accurately perceive where political parties and candidates stand on a variety of issues.[1]

This paper contributes to our understanding of both political knowledge and of labor unions. It shows that political knowledge is not solely influenced by factors such as education, gender, race, and media consumption. Labor unions can play an

[1] Replication data, code to reproduce tables/figures for this paper, as well as the online supplemental appendix can be found at the *Political Behavior* Dataverse (https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/polbehavior).

important role as well. Declining union membership can thus deprive people, particularly the less educated, of a vital source of political information. This research also has implications for political equality. Labor unions can help to reduce "knowledge gaps" and bring more people into the political process, giving "voice" to those who would otherwise not be heard (Schlozman et al. 2012). As Carpini et al. (1996, p. 8) note, "political information is to democratic politics what money is to economics: it is the currency of citizenship."

How Unions Inform Their Members

I argue that two mechanisms, direct information provision, and workplace discussion of politics, increase the political knowledge levels of union members. Ideally, I could randomly assign union membership, or at least directly observe labor unions providing their members with political information. However, such a research design is not feasible with available survey data. Though I cannot randomly assign union membership, nor *directly* test these mechanisms, I make a strong effort to bring a variety of evidence to bear in support of these two mechanisms, building on a previous finding by Iversen and Soskice (2015) that demonstrates a link between union membership and political knowledge.

Direct Information Provision

Labor unions are inherently political organizations, seeking to mobilize their nearly 16 million members for political action. In doing so, unions provide several direct sources of information to their members, sending out emails, newsletters, and flyers to their members. For example, the AFL-CIO, the largest union organization in the United States with nearly 13 million members, sends out weekly emails providing information about organizing efforts, legislative victories, and candidate endorsements (Francia 2006, pp. 26–28). Unions also invest considerable time, money, and manpower into elections. As Asher et al. state, "the core of the political power of unions comes from their ability to deliver the votes of their members" (Asher et al. 2001, p. 26). Indeed, union members participate at higher rates, both in the United States (e.g., Kerrissey and Schofer 2013; Leighley and Nagler 2007) and cross-nationally (e.g., Flavin and Radcliff 2011; Radcliff and Davis 2000). In mobilizing their members, unions also provide them with information, endorsing candidates and highlighting important issues. Labor unions' electoral activity provides a direct source of political information to their members. This campaign activity not only mobilizes voters, but also reflects a considerable transmission of political information from unions to their members. Indeed, campaigns and electoral mobilization can help people to learn about the candidates and issues.(e.g., Arceneaux 2006; Gelman and King 1993; Holbrook 2002; Peterson 2009).

Consider the following campaign activity by organized labor in recent election years. In 2004, 30 million union households received mail from the AFL-CIO, while 90 percent of union households in battleground states received some piece of

political information from the AFL-CIO, be it a pamphlet, flyer, or newsletter (Francia 2006, p. 158). In the 2008 elections, 250,000 volunteers made 76 million phone calls, sent out 57 million pieces of mail, and distributed 27 million worksite fliers.[2] In 2012, hundreds of thousands of union volunteers mobilized voters, knocking on doors and making phone calls, particularly in key swing states such as Ohio where 800,000 voters were contacted by union members.[3] In 2016, the AFL-CIO enlisted thousands of volunteers and sent millions of pieces of mail in a massive mobilization effort encouraging members to vote and support pro-union candidates.[4]

In between elections, unions also keep their members abreast of political issues. The AFL-CIO's Legislative Action Committee (LAC) helps educate members about relevant legislation and how legislators have addressed issues (Francia 2006, p. 123). The AFL-CIO also sends out weekly emails to members providing information about organizing efforts, legislative victories, and endorsements of candidates (Francia 2006, pp. 26–28). Union leaders serve as liaisons for workers, communicating their concerns to politicians and then articulating elected officials' positions back to union employees (Zullo 2004). Union members receive this information relatively costlessly, while their non-union counterparts would have to invest time to seek out analogous information about salient legislation and political candidates. Consider the following press release from the AFL-CIO, a part of which is displayed in Fig. 1, regarding President Trump's proposed 2018 budget.[5] Simply by belonging to a union organization such as the AFL-CIO, people receive a bullet-point summary of President Trump's budget proposal, something that is for most individuals, a complex policy to understand. In contrast, people who do not belong to a labor union are likely to face greater costs in obtaining and understanding information regarding this budget proposal.

The AFL-CIO's blog similarly made information available regarding the 2017 Republican tax bill, and then provides members with information about how to contact their senator and voice their opinion.[6] Labor unions also make information available to their members regarding union stances on a variety of issues, including Supreme Court and cabinet nominations, immigration policies, and health care, providing members with a direct, top-down source of information about these political topics that their non-union counterparts likely lack, and would face greater costs in seeking out.[7] Union members also have easy access to additional political information, receiving text messages and emails simply by entering their information on the AFL-CIO's website. In short, labor unions help to reduce the costs of

[2] https://web.archive.org/web/20081106051952/http://blog.aflcio.org/2008/11/05/union-voters-helped-propel-obama-working-family-candidates-to-victory.

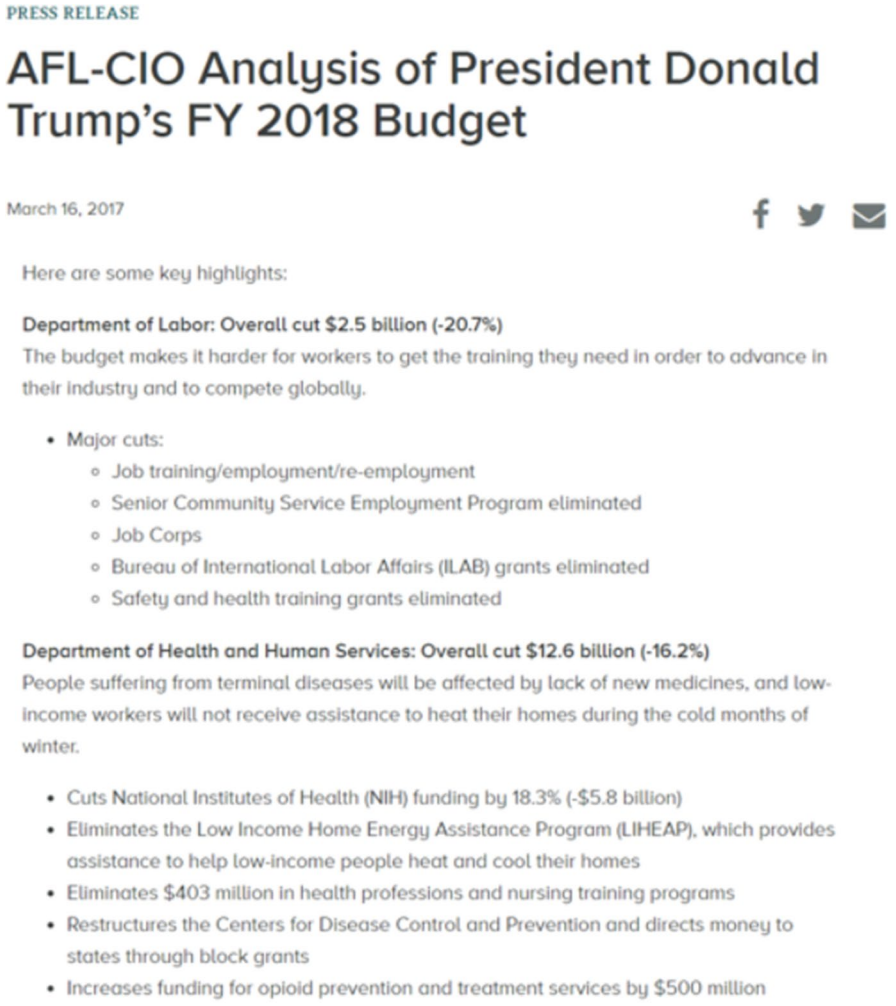
[3] https://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/11/07/labor-unions-claim-credit-for-obamas-victory/.

[4] https://aflcio.org/press/releases/afl-cio-plans-final-ground-game-labor-2016-campaign.

[5] https://aflcio.org/press/releases/afl-cio-analysis-president-donald-trumps-fy-2018-budget.

[6] https://aflcio.org/2017/11/16/house-republicans-throw-trillions-dollars-millionaires-and-corporations-hope-nobody-will.

[7] https://aflcio.org/what-unions-do/social-economic-justice/advocacy/legislative-alerts.



PRESS RELEASE

AFL-CIO Analysis of President Donald Trump's FY 2018 Budget

March 16, 2017

Here are some key highlights:

Department of Labor: Overall cut $2.5 billion (-20.7%)

The budget makes it harder for workers to get the training they need in order to advance in their industry and to compete globally.

- Major cuts:
  - Job training/employment/re-employment
  - Senior Community Service Employment Program eliminated
  - Job Corps
  - Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) grants eliminated
  - Safety and health training grants eliminated

Department of Health and Human Services: Overall cut $12.6 billion (-16.2%)

People suffering from terminal diseases will be affected by lack of new medicines, and low-income workers will not receive assistance to heat their homes during the cold months of winter.

- Cuts National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding by 18.3% (-$5.8 billion)
- Eliminates the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which provides assistance to help low-income people heat and cool their homes
- Eliminates $403 million in health professions and nursing training programs
- Restructures the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and directs money to states through block grants
- Increases funding for opioid prevention and treatment services by $500 million

Fig. 1 Unions provide their members with political information

acquiring knowledge about politics.[8] Overall, unions provide their members with a variety of direct information sources, via emails, newsletters, and campaign mobilization, something that helps people to learn about the parties and candidates. In

[8] The AFL-CIO is an umbrella organization consisting of 56 labor unions, ranging from letter carriers, to metal workers, to carpenters, to teachers. This includes a large majority of the union members in the United States https://www.infoplease.com/business-finance/labor-unions/national-labor-organizations-membership-over-100000. A smaller umbrella organization is called Change to Win, which has over 5 million members and consists of: the United Farm Workers, SEIU, and the Teamsters https://www.influencewatch.org/labor-union/change-to-win/. Though smaller than the AFL-CIO, this organization is similarly politically active. In short, most union members belong to a larger organization that is well-funded and politically active, and thus has the ability to easily provide political information to members, particularly in the era of modern electronic communication.

short, unions' direct information provision to their members should result in union members being more politically knowledgeable than their non-union counterparts.

Workplace Discussion of Politics

Americans spend considerable time in the workplace. According to the 2015 American Time Use Survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Americans working full-time spent an average of 8.1 h a day engaged in work-related activities.[9] The workplace is also a social environment. Most people do not perform their tasks in a solitary manner, but do so around and in collaboration with others. Democratic politics takes place in a similar fashion (e.g., Berelson et al. 1954; Huckfeldt 2001; McClurg 2006), in that political discussion within social networks has the capacity to inform. Workplace discussion has the potential to cultivate social capital and thus the potential to inform. As Putnam (2000, p. 343) notes, "social capital allows political information to spread."

Ahlquist et al. (2014) illustrate unions' informational capacity in a study of support for trade liberalization among unionized dockworkers in the U.S. West Coast. The authors note that unionized dockworkers have a material self-interest in supporting trade liberalization, as this would increase the volume of trade and thus the growth of dock work opportunities. However, these workers, represented by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), opposed the policy of trade liberalization and followed the position of the union in forming their views. Workers' attitudes on trade liberalization were influenced by the union's position through a socialization mechanism with ILWU members being frequently exposed to union trade positions through meetings, union-managed training, and the union newspaper and website. Kim and Margalit (2017) also note labor unions' ability to inform their members via workplace discussion. Kim and Margalit found that the frequency with which trade issues were discussed increased members' familiarity with their unions' trade policy stances and influenced their attitudes on free trade policy.

People who are in an environment where political discussion is more commonplace, are likely to be exposed to information about politics (e.g., Mutz and Mondak 2006; Straits 1991). Workplace discussion in and of itself is unlikely to facilitate political knowledge; the discussion must be politically relevant (Ronald and Huckfeldt 1998). This is more likely to be the case in union workplaces. Labor unions frequently hold meetings, and compared to other civic organizations such as voluntary groups or church, politics is much more likely to be a central theme (Kerrissey and Schofer 2013). As such, union members are more likely (than their non-union counterparts) to be exposed to discussion about political candidates, parties, and issues. Table 1 shows that union members report discussing politics at higher rates than their non-union counterparts, supporting the argument that political discussion, and thus the potential for political information transmission, is greater in union workplaces. Data from the 2004 National

[9] https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/atus.pdf.

Annenberg Election Study (NAES) in Table 2 similarly shows that union members engage in more frequent workplace discussion of politics.

Discussion of politics is more commonplace in labor unions than in non-union workplaces. By having more opportunities in which to discuss politics, but also being in an environment where political discussion is more commonplace, union members can become more politically informed. Past research has utilized panel data to show that more frequent political discussion positively influences political knowledge (e.g., Jr et al. 2005, 2006). Engaging in more frequent political discussion, but also being exposed to more frequent discussion, i.e., what people likely experience simply by belonging to a union, should, I argue, influence political knowledge. In short, discussion in the workplace, through the union, provides a means of acquiring information about politics.[10] Jerit et al. (2006) argue that the context in which individuals are embedded, one characterized by a high volume of political information flows versus one in which people lack access to political information, can influence their knowledge levels. In short, labor unions, via more frequent political discussion, offer an information environment that promotes higher levels of political knowledge among their members.

Unions, Education, and Political Knowledge

As a result of two mechanisms: direct information provision to members, via emails, newsletters, and electoral mobilization, and workplace discussion of politics, union membership should be associated with higher levels of political knowledge. However, union membership should not have the same influence on all individuals. It is costly to become politically informed (Downs 1957). Not all people face the same costs, however. In particular, less educated individuals face greater costs in acquiring political information. As a result, "knowledge gaps" emerge among an already poorly informed mass public. This is troubling both for democratic governance and political equality. As Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996, p. 5) note, "a central resource for democratic participation is political information."

Education is a powerful determinant of political knowledge and plays a crucial role in peoples' ability to evaluate candidates and understand politics (e.g., Galston 2001; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Indeed, engaging with the political world requires an investment of time (e.g., Brady et al. 1995) and expenditure of cognitive resources (e.g., Luskin 1990). So too does acquiring political information (e.g., Carpini et al. 1996; Zaller 1992). For less educated individuals, acquiring political information is particularly costly, the result of lower cognitive capacity or less

[10] In the Supplemental Appendix, I use data from the pre and post election components of the 2012 ANES (serving here as a panel), regressing post-election political knowledge on workplace discussion of politics, controlling for pre-election political knowledge, demographics, and interest in politics. The results from this regression show that more frequent workplace discussion of politics is positively and significantly associated with higher levels of political knowledge. I view this analysis as further evidence (and arguably stronger evidence than a cross-sectional analysis) in support of a proposed mechanism by which union membership influences political knowledge, via workplace discussion of politics.

Table 1 How often do you discuss politics at work? Source is the 2012 ANES

	Never		Hardly ever		Sometimes		A lot	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Union members	12.7	(37)	22.7	(66)	47.4	(138)	17.2	(50)
Non-union members	17.0	(381)	31.0	(695)	40.4	(904)	11.6	(259)

Note A t test shows a significant difference between union and non-union members ($t = 4.013$, $p = 0.000$)

Table 2 How many days in the past week did you discuss politics with people at work? Source is the 2012 ANES

	0 days		1–2 days		3–4 days		5–7 days	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Union members	31.7	(1969)	24.9	(1542)	19.5	(1210)	23.9	(1483)
Non-union members	38.2	(18,183)	26.4	(12,585)	17.4	(8,278)	18.0	(8,600)

Note A t test shows a significant difference between union and non-union members ($t = 13.031$, $p = 0.000$)

exposure to political information that comes along with more years of formal education (Barabas et al. 2014).

In a panel study of 50 neighborhoods in two Brazilian cities, Smith (2016) found that political discussion had a stronger influence on the factual political knowledge levels of less educated individuals as it helped reduce the costs of acquiring political information. Campbell and Niemi (2016) found that stricter U.S. high school civics requirements, and the courses that accompanied them, increased students' political knowledge, but that these civics courses had a stronger influence on the political knowledge of young people who were exposed to less political information at home and in their social networks. This disproportionately stronger influence on the knowledge levels of people who are not regularly exposed to political information and who face greater costs in acquiring it, is something Campbell and Niemi term the "compensation hypothesis." I expect labor unions to similarly reduce informational costs. More highly educated people possess a greater store of factual political knowledge (Barabas et al. 2014), as well as the resources (Brady et al. 1995), and cognitive capacity to more easily seek out and understand political information (e.g., Lau and Redlawsk 2006). As such, union membership should have a weaker influence on the political knowledge levels of the better educated than on the less well-educated.

Unions mobilize their members for political action (e.g., Flavin and Hartney 2015; Leighley and Nagler 2007; Radcliff and Davis 2000), providing them with direct sources of political information (Zullo 2004; Francia 2006). They also reflect a work environment in which politics are more likely to be discussed and thus political information disseminated (e.g., Kerrissey and Schofer 2013; Ahlquist et al. 2014; Kim and Margalit 2017). Both of these mechanisms, I argue, facilitate the flow of political information, resulting in union members being more politically

knowledgeable. Furthermore, the democratized environment of labor unions, involving non-management employees in decision-making, should cultivate civic skills among those who most need them, involving people (the less educated) who would otherwise eschew politics. Union mobilization efforts and information provision regarding candidates and issues, via emails and newsletters, also reach all members, rather than just the well-informed. Union meetings, where political issues should be among the topics of discussion, also involve rank and file workers including the less educated, thus providing them with a valuable source of information. In short, unions should disproportionately inform their less educated members the most, people who face greater costs and cognitive disadvantages in the quest for political information. I do not explicitly posit that union membership will have *no* effect for the more highly educated (Rainey 2014), but I do expect that union membership will matter more for people with less formal education.

Research Design

Exact Matching

Although people join unions for economic, rather than political reasons (Ahlquist and Margaret 2013; Ahlquist 2017; Iversen and Soskice 2015; Mosimann and Pontusson 2017), union membership is not randomly assigned. As such potential confounders, variables that influence both union membership and political knowledge, could introduce bias. While I cannot randomly assign union membership, I can attempt to address potential confounders. Beyond including demographics and political interest as statistical controls, I also employ a matching strategy to achieve balance between the treatment (union member) and control (non-union member) groups on a set of theoretically relevant covariates.[11] For both the ANES and NAES, I employ exact matching on the following covariates that I can plausibly assume to be pre-treatment and unrelated to "treatment assignment" (whether someone belongs to a labor union or not): gender (female vs. male), race (white vs. non-white), education (high school or less, some college, college degree), and survey mode (online vs. in-person), and whether an individual resides in a swing state.[12] After exact matching on these covariates, I regressed political knowledge on union

[11] I used the "MatchIt" package in R. For the 2012 ANES, 68 observations did not have an exact match, and were dropped. For the 2004 NAES, all observations had an exact match.

[12] The 2012 ANES was conducted both online and in-person. Online survey takers tend to exhibit higher knowledge scores, potentially a result of looking up answers (e.g., Clifford and Jerit 2016). The 2004 Annenberg study was conducted entirely over the phone. In 2004, swing states were: Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. In 2012, swing states were: Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

membership, controlling for several theoretically relevant variables associated with political knowledge.[13]

Independent Variables

The primary independent variable is a measure of union membership.[14] As control variables, I include the following demographics: race (white = 1, non-white = 0), gender (female = 1, male = 0), age (in years), age-squared (to account for the negative influence of advanced age), income (categories differ across surveys), marital status (married = 1, unmarried = 0), unemployment (unemployed = 1, not unemployed = 0) and formal education, another key explanatory variable (High school or less = 1, some college = 2, college degree = 3). I also include a measure of interest in politics, asking people how often they follow what is going on in government and public affairs/politics (five categories for the 2012 ANES, four categories for the 2004 NAES). Finally, I include measures of church attendance (never = 1, a few times a year = 2, once or twice a month = 3, once a week = 4, more than once a week = 5), an organization that has been linked to increased political engagement and cultivation of civic skills and social capital (Brady et al. 1995; Campbell 2004; Putnam 2000).[15] I also include state fixed effects and cluster standard errors by state. The inclusion of fixed effects take into account any state-level factors that may influence political knowledge, such as presidential campaign intensity. Clustering takes into account potential correlation among errors within each state, and independence across states.

[13] Matching is certainly not a panacea, and the inability to randomly assign union membership is a potential issue. I also run a model using non-matched 2012 ANES data (including the matching covariates as controls, rather than first matching and then including them as controls). The results are virtually the same. Nevertheless, I opt to use the matching technique as it does help to ensure balance on several important correlates of political knowledge, and can help to bolster confidence in the validity of the results.

[14] People who live in a union household, but are not union members themselves are coded as non-union members. Although unions may target households, not just its members, during an election, household members i.e. a spouse, child, or sibling, who is not a member of the union him/herself are unlikely to be exposed to the full cadre of union information flows, activities that result from actually being in the union; i.e., discussion of politics. Furthermore, I lack sufficient observations (only 234 individuals in the 2012 ANES are in a union household, but not members themselves) to separately examine union household members. By doing this, and including several "treated" (union) observations in the "control" (non-union) group, I am likely biasing the union "effect" *downward*, i.e., resulting in a more conservative estimate. Examining the influence of union membership on people in union households, but not in union members themselves, i.e., assessing whether there is a "contagion effect" from living in a union household, but not belonging to the union, is interesting to examine, but is beyond the scope of this paper.

[15] I do not include frequency of workplace discussion of politics as a control variable here, because this question was only asked to online respondents in the 2012 ANES, and thus including it would drastically reduce the sample size. I do, however, run models that include this as a control using data from the 2004 NAES. The results from this model, displayed in the supplemental appendix, show that union membership is associated with higher levels of political knowledge even when this control is included.

Dependent Variable: Political Knowledge

For the 2012 ANES, I make use of a large battery of questions. These questions ask respondents general political facts such as how long a U.S. Senate term is, how many terms someone can serve as president, and who currently serves in certain political offices. I also use questions asking about the Democratic and Republican Parties' ideology, and their placement on a series of seven-point scales (e.g., services and spending, aid to blacks, and government health insurance). I use analogous placement questions for Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. The dependent variable is thus an additive summary of how many political knowledge questions a respondent got correct (out of 41 possible).[16]

Questions from the 2012 ANES are focused on both general knowledge, i.e. how long a U.S. senator's term is, and how many terms someone may serve as president, and more policy-specific knowledge, i.e., where Barack Obama and Mitt Romney should be placed on the seven-point government health insurance scale, and where the Democratic and Republican Parties stand on defense spending.[17] Most of the knowledge questions utilized here are what Barabas et al. would term "static," in that they do not ask about events or figures who are salient in the news media at a particular time (Barabas et al. 2014).[18]

Do Unions Inform Their Members?

Figure 2 presents OLS coefficients illustrating the influence of union membership on political knowledge, based on data from the 2012 ANES.[19] Union members with a high-school diploma or less answered approximately 1.6 additional questions correctly (compared to their non-union counterparts). The difference was 0.9 for union members with some college education (although the coefficient fell just short of significance, $p = 0.104$). Among people with a college degree, there were

[16] See the supplemental appendix for a full listing of all knowledge questions. For the office currently held by John Roberts, the ANES coding scheme is (0, 0.5, or 1), reflecting incorrect, partially correct, or correct answers. I keep with the ANES coding and use the 0.5 designation for this question. All other knowledge questions (for both the 2012 ANES and 2004 NAES) are coded: correct = 1, incorrect = 0.

[17] These are seven-point scales, asking respondents to place candidates and/or parties. If people placed the candidate/party on the right side of the scale then they are coded as being correct. For example, the services and spending scale is coded so that 1 = the lowest level of spending spending and services, 4 = a midpoint, and 7 = the highest level of spending and services. If a respondent placed the Democratic Party at either 5, 6, or 7, then they would be correct. Had they placed the Democratic Party at 1, 2, 3, or 4, indicating that it takes a conservative or moderate position on this issue, then they would be coded as incorrect.

[18] The questions asking about Obama and Romney's positions on government spending scales, for example, are repeated across ANES surveys, and most previous nominees would be placed similarly (to the left or right of the midpoint) as Obama and Romney were.

[19] OLS coefficients are displayed here for greater ease of interpretability and because of the large number of knowledge questions. I also run Poisson models, for both the 2012 ANES and 2004 NAES, displaying results in the supplemental appendix. Results are similar to the OLS specification. See the supplemental appendix for all regression models associated with the figures and tables displayed here.

no statistically significant differences between the knowledge levels of union and non-union members ($p = 0.667$), consistent with the argument that unions reduce the costs of seeking out political information, something that primarily benefits the less educated.[20]

Unions, Education, and Political Knowledge Gaps

To better illustrate quantities of interest and demonstrate how unions can reduce information disparities among the mass public, I display predicted political knowledge scores, i.e., the number of questions correct out of 41 (based on the OLS model displayed in Fig. 2) by union membership and educational attainment in Table 3. The predicted knowledge score for someone with a college degree is 27.9. For people with less than a high school diploma it is 23.4. This 4.5 question "knowledge gap" reflects a non-trivial information disparity. Another way of conveying this is that someone with a high school education is 19 percent less politically knowledgeable [((4.5/23.4) × 100] than someone with a college degree.

Labor unions help to reduce these knowledge disparities. Non-union members with a high school diploma or less have a predicted knowledge score of 23.2. In contrast, union members had a predicted knowledge score of 24.8. In other words, the knowledge gap between non-union members with a high school diploma or less and college graduates (all respondents) is 4.7 questions (27.9–23.2). This gap is 3.1 questions for union members (27.9–24.8). For people with a high school diploma or less, union membership reduces the knowledge gap with college graduates by 34 percent ((1.6/4.7) × 100).

In Table 4, I further illustrate the substantive findings, comparing the influence of union membership (for the least educated) to changes in several other correlates of political knowledge. For people with a high school diploma or less, (1.6 additional questions correct), moving from non-union to union membership increases their political knowledge by a comparable amount as increasing someone's income from between $20,000–$40,000 up to between $40,000– $60,000 (1.0 additional questions answered correctly), or increasing someone's interest in politics from "about half the time" to "most of the time" (2.5 additional questions answered correctly). The influence of union membership (for the least educated) also compares favorably to the difference between men and women (1.3 questions) and the difference between whites and non-whites (2.3 questions). In short, while relatively modest, the effect size of union membership is not trivial.

[20] Several of the independent variables included here could potentially be post-treatment, i.e. influenced by union membership. This could bias estimates (e.g., Acharya et al. 2016). To address concerns, I run additional models that drop the following variables that could plausibly be viewed as post treatment: income, church attendance, unemployment, marital status, and interest in politics. I also run a simple baseline model that only includes the union × education interaction. Some models show that union membership is associated with higher political knowledge for people with some college education, but no degree. Regardless of the specification, however, results are non-significant for people with a college degree. See the Supplemental Appendix for the results of these regression models.

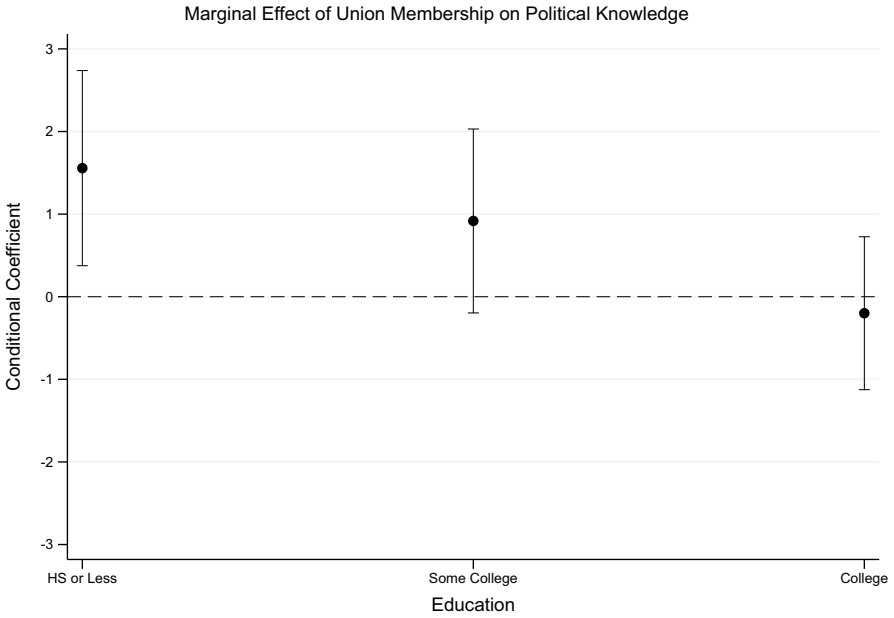


Fig. 2 Union Membership and Political Knowledge by Educational Attainment. *Note* Marginal effects based on an OLS regression model. Bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals. $N = 4880$. Source is the 2012 ANES

Results from the 2012 ANES show that union membership positively and significantly influences political knowledge, but only for less educated individuals. Rather than only informing the better educated, and thus exacerbating knowledge disparities, unions provide knowledge in a more egalitarian manner, reducing disparities by informing the less educated, for whom acquiring political knowledge is more costly.

Robustness of Findings

Additional Years

One concern is that the results are specific to the 2012 ANES, i.e., that they do not hold in additional years or surveys. To address this, I also run models using data from the 2004 National Annenberg Election Study (NAES), using a mix of both general political knowledge, i.e., which branch of government deems laws unconstitutional, and policy stances taken by the presidential candidates. The 2004 NAES survey is a rolling cross-sectional study (conducted from before the presidential primaries until shortly after the November election) and thus not all respondents were asked all questions. The seven questions used here reflect a fairly similar, albeit smaller, index of political knowledge as those in the 2012 ANES. Results in Fig. 3 show that union membership positively and significantly influences political knowledge for the less educated, but does not make a significant difference for more highly

Table 3 Union membership and predicted knowledge levels by educational attainment Source is the 2012 ANES

	HS or less	Some college	College degree
All respondents	23.4	25.9	27.9
	[23.0, 23.8]	[25.5, 26.3]	[27.6, 28.2]
Non-union members	23.2	25.8	28.0
	[22.8, 23.6]	[25.4, 26.2]	[27.7, 28.3]
Union members	24.8	26.7	27.8
	[23.7, 25.8]	[25.7, 27.8]	[26.9, 28.6]
95% CI for difference	[0.5, 2.7]	[− 0.2, 2.0]	[− 1.1, 0.7]

Note Predicted knowledge levels are based on the OLS model in Fig. 2. Brackets show 95 percent confidence intervals. Difference is between non-union and union members

Table 4 Comparing the political knowledge gains of union membership Source is the 2012 ANES

				Knowledge Increase
Labor union	Non-member	→	Member	
	23.2		24.8	1.6
	[22.8, 23.6]		[25.4, 26.2]	[0.5, 2.7]
Income	$20,000 to $40,000	→	$40,000 to $60,000	
	25.2		26.2	1.0
	[24.9, 25.5]		[25.8, 26.7]	[0.4, 1.6]
Interest in politics	About half the time	→	Most of the time	
	25.0		27.5	2.5
	[24.6, 25.4]		[27.2, 27.8]	[2.0, 3.0]

Note Predicted values are based on the OLS model in Fig. 2. Shows the predicted number of additional questions that a respondent answers correctly. Change from non-union to union is calculated by setting education to HS or less. Changes for income and interest in politics are for all respondents. Brackets show 95 percent confidence intervals

educated individuals. Overall, the use of an additional election year, with a different set of knowledge questions, should serve to bolster confidence in the results.

I also consider whether the ability of labor unions to inform their members is time-bound. In 1995, John Sweeney was elected president of the AFL-CIO, and sought to revitalize union efforts in the electoral arena, starting with the 1996 elections (Jacobson 1999; Minchin 2013). As such, it is possible that as a result of stronger union mobilization efforts, information dissemination to members is more frequent and thus unions have greater capacity to inform in the past two decades, as compared to the 1970s and 1980s.

To examine this, I use data from the Cumulative American National Election Studies (CANES) from 1968–2016. I regress the subjective interviewer assessment of a respondent's political knowledge (an imperfect measure, compared to objective factual questions, but one that is available over a long period of time) on an interaction of union membership and education. Results from these simple models

in Table 5 show that union membership is associated with higher levels of political knowledge for the less educated, both pre and post-1996, suggesting that unions' ability to inform is not bound to the past two decades.

Addressing Self-selection into Labor Unions

Self-selection may also be of concern here. Again, though people join unions for economic, rather than political reasons (e.g., Ahlquist and Margaret 2013; Iversen and Soskice 2015; Mosimann and Pontusson 2017), it is possible that some more politically interested and active people gravitate toward joining unions. To address this, I leverage variation in labor laws across the U.S. states, following an approach taken by Kim and Margalit (2017). Many states have "right to work" (RTW) legislation, which bars unions from requiring people to join a union in a unionized workplace. People in these states can still reap the benefits of the union without joining it, i.e., they can "free-ride," and thus the economic incentives for joining a union are likely to be weaker. In short, if self-selection is driving the results observed here, union membership should have a significantly stronger influence in RTW states, i.e., results would be driven by politically interested individuals selecting into labor unions.[21]

To assess this, I subset the 2012 ANES data into states that have right to work legislation and states that do not, regressing political knowledge the same set of independent variables as in Fig. 2. Results in Table 6 (this and all other full regression models, including controls, are displayed in the supplemental appendix) show that self-selection is not driving the results. In fact, union membership has a non-significant influence on political knowledge in right to work states meaning that the results displayed in Fig. 2 do not reflect self-selection, and are at best, a conservative estimate of the extent to which labor unions can boost their members' political knowledge.

Public Versus Private Sector

I also examine whether the influence of union membership on political knowledge is different for private and public sector unions. Although U.S. labor union membership has decline considerably over the past several decades, it has remained quite high in the public sector. Current Population Survey (CPS) data from 2017 shows that 34.4% of public sector employees belong to a union, compared to 6.5% in the private sector.[22] Though I expect unions of all stripes to influence political knowledge, it is possible that public sector unions, which have remained stronger in terms

[21] States are coded as right to work if they have implemented legislation prior to 2012. http://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/right-to-work-laws-and-bills.aspx.

[22] http://www.unionstats.com/.

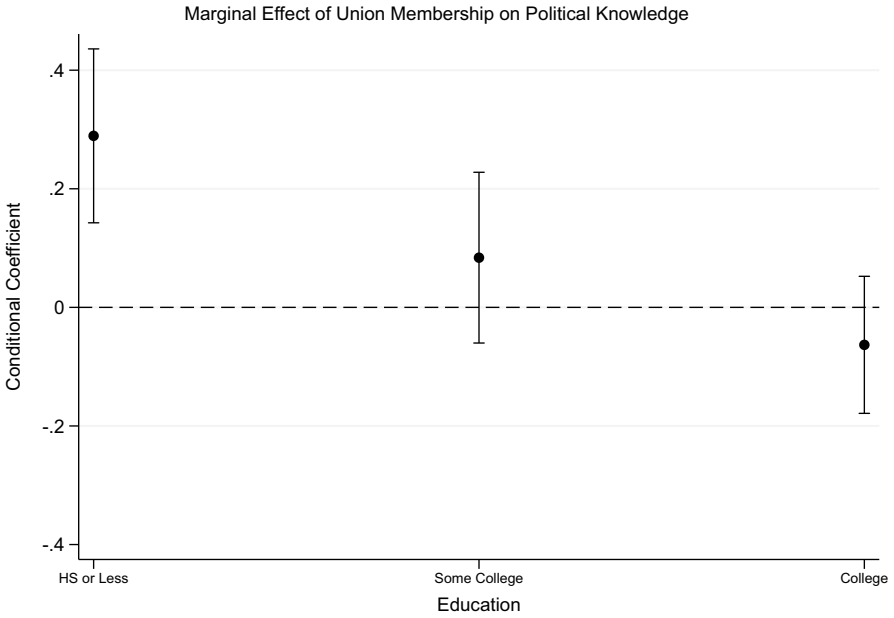


Fig. 3 Union membership and political knowledge by educational attainment. *Note* Marginal effects based on an OLS regression model. Bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals. $N = 13{,}894$. Source is the 2004 NAES

of membership, than their private sector counterparts, are better organized and thus more likely to disseminate political information.[23]

To test this possibility, I use data from the 2004 NAES, which has a larger sample size than the 2012 ANES, and thus allows for me to split up the data by public and private sector employment. I interact union membership with education, controlling for the same set of variables in Fig. 3. Results in Table 7 show that both public and private sector unions can inform their members, suggesting that it is membership in a labor union, rather than public versus private sector membership, is what matters for political knowledge.

[23] It is also possible that results differ by industry, but it is likely that these differences would emerge for specific issues rather than for general political knowledge. For example, people who belong to a steelworkers union in the private sector would likely be well-informed about issues of free-trade, while people who belong to a teacher's union in the public sector would be informed about education-related issues. In terms of more general political knowledge, I have no theoretical reason to expect that the intensity of union communications or frequency of workplace discussion would be any higher in a steelworkers union, as opposed to a union in food service. Furthermore, I do not have sufficient observations to split the data up by industry.

Table 5 Union membership and political knowledge over time Source is the CANES (1968–2016, presidential years only)

	(1) 1968–1992		(2) 1996–2016	
Union membership	0.275***	(0.032)	0.290***	(0.057)
HS or less (Ref.)	–	–	–	–
Some college	0.693***	(0.020)	0.576***	(0.026)
College degree	1.335***	(0.022)	1.158***	(0.026)
Union member × some college	− 0.198***	(0.051)	− 0.109	(0.081)
Union member × college degree	− 0.192***	(0.064)	− 0.309***	(0.078)
Year fixed effects?	✓		✓	
Observations	14,583		9989	
R-squared	0.217		0.188	

Dependent variable is interviewer assessment of political information

The coefficient for union membership is for people with HS or less

OLS coefficients

Robust standard errors in parentheses

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1, two-tailed

Table 6 Union membership and political knowledge by right to work state status Source is the 2012 ANES

	(1) Non-RTW states		(2) RTW states	
Union membership	1.974***	(0.586)	0.634	(1.566)
HS or less (Ref.)	–	–	–	–
Some college	2.862***	(0.406)	2.275***	(0.357)
College degree	5.056***	(0.248)	4.299***	(0.588)
Union member × some college	− 1.123	(0.785)	0.520	(1.540)
Union member × college degree	− 2.427***	(0.809)	− 0.298	(1.590)
Controls?	✓		✓	
State Fixed Effects?	✓		✓	
Observations	2827		2053	
R-squared	0.418		0.379	

Dependent variable is a political knowledge score

The coefficient for union membership is for people with HS or less

OLS coefficients

Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1, two-tailed

Table 7 Union membership and political knowledge by sector Source is the 2004 NAES

	(1) Private sector		(2) Public sector	
Union membership	0.246**	(0.106)	0.499**	(0.211)
HS or less (Ref.)	–	–	–	–
Some college	0.535***	(0.052)	0.312***	(0.112)
College degree	0.986***	(0.051)	0.946***	(0.099)
Union member × some college	− 0.211	(0.148)	− 0.170	(0.304)
Union member × college degree	− 0.536***	(0.186)	− 0.391*	(0.204)
Controls?	✓		✓	
State fixed effects?	✓		✓	
Observations	6020		1884	
R-squared	0.338		0.345	

Dependent variable is a political knowledge score

The coefficient for union membership is for people with HS or less

OLS coefficients

Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1, two-tailed

Variation by State Union Strength

I also consider whether the influence of union membership varies by state labor union strength. It is possible that union information dissemination and workplace discussion is greater in states where union density is higher, and thus organized labor is a more prominent political actor with more resources, and thus greater capacity to inform its members. For instance, it is plausible that unions in South Carolina (3.3% membership in 2012) are not as politically active as their counterparts in New York (23.2% membership).[24] To assess this possibility, I split up the 2012 ANES data into states that have above and below the median level of union membership. Results in Table 8 show that labor unions positively influence their less educated members' political knowledge levels, but only in states with higher levels of union membership. These findings suggests that the intensity and frequency of union information dissemination is greater in states where organized labor is stronger, and thus union members in these contexts benefit by being more politically knowledgeable. These findings also suggest that the main results from the 2012 ANES (presented in Fig. 2, and in Tables 3 and 4), including *all* states, are conservative estimates that under-sell the extent to which unions can inform their members.

[24] The correlation between state union membership and state RTW (right to work) status in 2012 is − 0.826.

Unions, Knowledge, and Democratic Citizenship

Democratic governance benefits from more knowledgeable citizens, who are more likely to vote, volunteer their opinions in surveys, and make electoral decisions consistent with their preferences (Carpini et al. 1996; Althaus 2003; Lau and Redlawsk 2006). Politically knowledgeable citizens, i.e., sophisticates, tend to better understand the left-right dimension of ideology and structure their attitudes along those dimensions (Converse 1964; Lupton et al. 2015; Luskin 1990). Political sophisticates not only participate at higher rates (Carpini et al. 1996) but also "vote correctly," more often making electoral choices consistent with their preferences (Lau et al. 2008). Political sophisticates tend to make more effective use of heuristics (Lau and Redlawsk 2001) and bring to bear more considerations when making political judgments (e.g., Gomez and Matthew Wilson 2001; Sniderman et al. 1991), leading to a more thoughtful and informed decision. Knowledgeable citizens also tend to be more politically tolerant (Brewer 2003; Mutz and Mondak 2006; Peffley et al. 2001) and hold meaningful opinions on the important political issues of the day (Zaller 1992).

Some argue that information deficiencies can be overcome as people can rely on cues from the media and political elites (e.g., Lupia 1994, 2016; Popkin 1991). These information shortcuts may only serve to exacerbate knowledge disparities, however, given that more informed people tend to make better use of heuristics (Lau and Redlawsk 2001). Political knowledge matters, given that people's attitudes and policy preferences would be different had they been more informed (e.g., Althaus 2003; Gilens 2001; Kuklinski et al. 2000). In short, a more informed electorate in which less educated citizens are better informed, and thus political knowledge is more evenly distributed, is beneficial for democracy. Furthermore, among the prominent correlates of political knowledge, including: race, gender, education, interest in politics, and media consumption, union membership is the only one that can be influenced by policymakers, i.e., via legislation that empowers or weakens organized labor.

U.S. labor union membership peaked at 35 percent of the workforce in 1953 (Goldfield and Bromsen 2013). In 2016, less than 11 percent of American workers were unionized, according to updated Current Population Survey (CPS) data from Hirsch and Macpherson (2003). This decline, fueled in part by right-to-work legislation (e.g., Moore 1998; Holger et al. 2004; Eren and Ozbeklik 2016), long present in the American South, but also recently enacted in Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Missouri, and Kentucky, deprives individuals, particularly the less educated (Kerrissey and Schofer 2013; Rosenfeld 2014), not only of a source of political mobilization (e.g., Asher et al. 2001; Flavin and Radcliff 2011; Francia and Orr 2014) but also a crucial source of political information.[25]

[25] At the time of this writing, Missouri voters had replealed their state's right to work legislation. Nevertheless, many state Republican governments have recently focused their efforts on enacting right to work legislation. https://www.npr.org/2018/08/08/636568530/missouri-blocks-right-to-work-law.

Table 8 Union membership and political knowledge by state union strength Source is the 2012 ANES

	(1) High union states		(2) Low union states	
Union membership	2.105***	(0.596)	0.523	(1.334)
HS or less (Ref.)	–	–	–	–
Some college	3.217***	(0.367)	2.015***	(0.315)
College degree	5.099***	(0.266)	4.312***	(0.528)
Union member × some college	− 1.678**	(0.699)	1.030	(1.565)
Union member × college degree	− 2.276***	(0.797)	− 1.021	(1.643)
Controls?	✓		✓	
State Fixed Effects?	✓		✓	
Observations	2565		2315	
R-squared	0.415		0.386	

Dependent variable is a political knowledge score

The coefficient for union membership is for people with HS or less

OLS coefficients

Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1, two-tailed

Unions' capacity to inform their members, particularly the less educated, as well as to mobilize them for political action, can increase civic engagement, affording more citizens a "voice" and ability to influence public policy. The less educated and less informed tend to eschew politics. Unions bring these people into political life, not only through mobilization efforts, but also by providing them with a source of political information. This expands the mass electorate, bringing more people, but crucially, more informed people into the political arena. By reducing informational disparities and "knowledge gaps," unions can produce a more informed voting public. When more people turn out to vote and have the political information needed to hold their elected representatives accountable, democratic governance benefits. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954, p. 308) state that "the democratic citizen is expected to be well informed about political affairs." Labor unions can help ensure that people are better equipped to fill this role of democratic citizenship.

References

Abrajano, M. (2015). Reexamining the 'Racial Gap' in political knowledge. *Journal of Politics*, *77*(1), 44–54.

Achen, C. H., & Bartels, L. M. (2016). *Democracy for realists: Why elections do not produce responsive government*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Acharya, A., Blackwell, M., & Sen, M. (2016). Explaining causal findings without bias: Detecting and assessing direct effects. *American Political Science Review*, *110*(3), 512–529.

Ahlquist, J. S. (2017). Labor unions, political representation, and economic inequality. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *20*, 409–432.

Ahlquist, J. S., Clayton, A. B., & Levi, M. (2014). Provoking preferences: Unionization, trade policy, and the ILWU puzzle. *International Organization*, *68*(1), 33–75.

Ahlquist, J. S., & Margaret, L. (2013). *In the interest of others: Organizations and social activism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Althaus, S. (2003). *Collective preferences in democratic politics: Opinion surveys and the will of the people*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Arceneaux, K. (2006). Do campaigns help voters learn? A cross-national analysis. *British Journal of Political Science*, *36*(1), 159–173.
Asher, H. B., Heberlig, E., Ripley, R., & Snyder, K. (2001). *American labor unions in the electoral arena*. Baltimore: Rowman and Littlefield.
Barabas, J., & Jerit, Jennifer. (2009). Estimating the causal effects of media coverage on policy-specific knowledge. *American Journal of Political Science*, *53*(1), 73–89.
Barabas, J., Jerit, J., Pollock, W., & Rainey, C. (2014). The question(s) of political knowledge. *American Political Science Review*, *108*(4), 840–855.
Bartels, L. M. (1996). Uniformed votes: Information effects in presidential elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, *40*(1), 194–230.
Bartels, L. M. (2008). *Unequal democracy: The political economy of the new gilded age*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Becher, M., Stegmueller, D., & Käppner, K. (2018). Local union organization and law making in the US congress. *Journal of Politics*, *80*(2), 539–554.
Berelson, B. R., Lazarsfeld, P. F., & McPhee, W. N. (1954). *Voting: A study of opinion formation in a presidential campaign*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Brady, D., Baker, R. S., & Finnigan, R. (2013). When unionization disappears: State-level unionization and working poverty in the United States. *American Sociological Review*, *78*(5), 872–896.
Brady, H. E., Verba, S., & Schlozman, K. L. (1995). Beyond SES: A resource model of political participation. *American Political Science Review*, *89*(2), 271–294.
Brewer, P. R. (2003). Values, political knowledge, and public opinion about gay rights: A framing-based account. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *67*(2), 173–201.
Bucci, L. C. (2018). Organized labor's check on rising economic inequality in the US states. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, *18*(2), 148–173.
Campbell, D. E. (2004). Acts of faith: Churches and political engagement. *Political Behavior*, *26*(2), 155–180.
Campbell, A., Converse, P. E., Miller, W. E., & Stokes, D. E. (1960). *The American voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Campbell, D. E., & Niemi, R. G. (2016). Testing civics: State-level civic education requirements and political knowledge. *American Political Science Review*, *110*(3), 495–511.
Carpini, D., Michael, X., & Keeter, S. (1996). *What Americans know about politics and why it matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
Clifford, S., & Jerit, J. (2016). Cheating on political knowledge questions in online surveys: An assessment of the problem and solutions. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *80*(4), 858–887.
Converse, P. E. (1964). The nature of belief systems in mass publics. In D. Apter (Ed.), *Ideology and discontent*. New York: Free Press.
Dolan, K. (2011). Do women and men know different things? Measuring gender differences in political knowledge. *Journal of Politics*, *73*(1), 97–107.
Dow, J. K. (2009). Gender differences in political knowledge: Distinguishing characteristics-based and returns-based differences. *Political Behavior*, *31*(1), 117–136.
Downs, A. (1957). *An economic theory of democracy*. New York: Harper.
Ellis, C. (2013). Social context and economic biases in representation. *Journal of Politics*, *75*(3), 773–786.
Eren, O., & Ozbeklik, S. (2016). What do right-to-work laws do? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *35*(1), 173–194.
Flavin, P. (2016). Labor union strength and the equality of political representation. *British Journal of Political Science*, *48*, 1075–1091.
Flavin, P., & Hartney, M. T. (2015). When government subsidizes its own: Collective bargaining laws as agents of political mobilization. *American Journal of Political Science*, *59*(4), 896–911.
Flavin, P., & Radcliff, B. (2011). Labor union membership and voting across nations. *Electoral Studies*, *30*(4), 633–641.
Fowler, A., & Margolis, M. (2014). The political consequences of uninformed voters. *Electoral Studies*, *34*, 100–110.

Fraile, M., & Gomez, R. (2017). Why does Alejandro know more about politics than Catalina? Explaining the Latin American gender gap in political knowledge. *British Journal of Political Science*, *47*(1), 91–112.

Francia, P. L. (2006). *The future of organized labor in American politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Francia, P. L., & Bigelow, N. S. (2010). Polls and elections: What's the matter with the white working class? The effects of union membership in the 2004 presidential election. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, *40*(1), 140–158.

Francia, P. L., & Orr, S. (2014). Labor unions and the mobilization of Latino voters: Can the dinosaur awaken the sleeping giant? *Political Research Quarterly*, *67*(4), 943–956.

Galston, W. A. (2001). Political knowledge, political engagement, and civic education. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *4*, 217–234.

Gelman, A., & King, G. (1993). Why are American presidential election campaign polls so variable when votes are so predictable? *British Journal of Political Science*, *23*(4), 409–451.

Gilens, M. (2001). Political ignorance and collective policy preferences. *American Political Science Review*, *95*(2), 379–396.

Goldfield, M., & Bromsen, A. (2013). The changing landscape of US unions in historical and theoretical perspective. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *16*, 231–257.

Gomez, B. T., & Wilson, J. M. (2001). Political sophistication and economic voting in the American electorate: A theory of heterogeneous attribution. *American Journal of Political Science*, *45*(4), 899–914.

Highton, B. (2009). Revisiting the relationship between educational attainment and political sophistication. *Journal of Politics*, *71*(4), 1564–1576.

Hirsch, B. T., & Macpherson, D. A. (2003). Union membership and coverage database from the current population survey: Note. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, *56*(2), 349–354.

Holbrook, T. M. (2002). Presidential campaigns and the knowledge gap. *Political Communication*, *19*(4), 437–454.

Holger, R., Shulman, S., & Weiler, S. (2004). Right-to-work legislation, social capital, and variations in state union density. *The Review of Regional Studies*, *34*(1), 95–111.

Huckfeldt, R. (2001). The social communication of political expertise. *American Journal of Political Science*, *45*(2), 425–438.

Iversen, T., & Soskice, D. (2015). Information, inequality, and mass polarization: Ideology in advanced democracies. *Comparative Political Studies*, *48*(13), 1781–1813.

Jacobson, G. C. (1999). The effect of the AFL-CIO's 'Voter Education' campaigns on the 1996 house elections. *Journal of Politics*, *61*(1), 185–194.

Jerit, J. (2009). Understanding the knowledge gap: The role of experts and journalists. *Journal of Politics*, *71*(2), 442–456.

Jerit, J., & Barabas, J. (2016). Revisiting the gender gap in political knowledge. *Political Behavior*, *39*(4), 817–838.

Jerit, J., Barabas, J., & Bolsen, T. (2006). Citizens, knowledge, and the information environment. *American Journal of Political Science*, *50*(2), 266–282.

Jr, E., William, P., Hayes, A., Shah, D. V., & Kwak, Nojin. (2005). Understanding the relationship between communication and political knowledge: A model comparison approach using panel data. *Political Communication*, *22*, 423–446.

Jr, E., William, P., & Scheufele, D. A. (2000). Connecting news media use with gaps in knowledge and participation. *Political Communication*, *17*(3), 215–237.

Jr, E., William, P., & Thomson, T. (2006). Is it talking, Thinking, or both? A lagged dependent variable of political discussion effects on political knowledge? *Journal of Communication*, *56*(3), 523–542.

Kerrissey, J., & Schofer, E. (2013). Union membership and political participation in the United States. *Social Forces*, *91*(3), 895–928.

Kim, S. E., & Margalit, Y. (2017). Informed preferences? The impact of unions on workers' policy views. *American Journal of Political Science*, *61*(3), 728–743.

Kuklinski, J. H., Quirk, P. J., Jerit, J., Schwieder, D., & Rich, Robert F. (2000). Misinformation and the currency of democratic citizenship. *Journal of Politics*, *62*(3), 790–816.

Lamare, J. R. (2016). Union experience and worker policy: Legislative behavior in California, 1999–2012. *ILR Review*, *69*(1), 113–141.

Lau, R. R., Andersen, D. J., & Redlawsk, D. P. (2008). An exploration of correct voting in recent U.S. presidential elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, *52*(2), 395–411.

Lau, R. R., Patel, P., Fahmy, D. F., & Kaufman, R. R. (2014). Correct voting across thirty-three democracies: A preliminary analysis. *British Journal of Political Science*, *44*(2), 239–259.
Lau, R. R., & Redlawsk, D. P. (2001). Advantages and disadvantages of cognitive heuristics in political decision making. *American Journal of Political Science*, *45*(4), 951–971.
Lau, R. R., & Redlawsk, D. P. (2006). *How voters decide: Information processing in election campaigns*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Leighley, J. E., & Nagler, J. (2007). Unions, voter turnout, and class bias in the US electorate, 1964–2004. *Journal of Politics*, *69*(2), 430–441.
Lupia, A. D. (1994). Shortcuts versus encyclopedias: Information and voting behavior in California insurance reforms. *American Political Science Review*, *88*(1), 63–76.
Lupia, A. D. (2016). *Uninformed: Why people seem to know so little about politics and what we can do about it*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Lupton, R. N., Myers, W. M., & Thornton, J. R. (2015). Political sophistication and the dimensionality of elite and mass attitudes. *Journal of Politics*, *77*(2), 368–380.
Luskin, R. C. (1990). Explaining political sophistication. *Political Behavior*, *12*(4), 331–361.
McClurg, S. D. (2006). The electoral relevance of political talk: Examining disagreement and expertise effects in social networks on political participation. *American Journal of Political Science*, *50*(3), 737–754.
Minchin, T. J. (2013). Labor is Back?: The AFL-CIO during the Presidency of John J. Sweeney, 1995–2009. *Labor History*, *54*(4), 393–420.
Mondak, J. J. (1995). Newspapers and political awareness. *American Journal of Political Science*, *39*(2), 513–517.
Mondak, J. J., & Anderson, M. R. (2004). The knowledge gap: A reexamination of gender-based differences in political knowledge. *Journal of Politics*, *66*(2), 492–512.
Moore, W. J. (1998). The determinants and effects of right-to-work laws: A review of the recent literature. *Journal of Labor Research*, *19*(3), 445–469.
Mosimann, N., & Pontusson, J. (2017). Solidaristic unionism and support for redistribution in contemporary Europe. *World Politics*, *69*(3), 448–492.
Mutz, D. C., & Mondak, J. J. (2006). The workplace as a context for cross-cutting political discourse. *Journal of Politics*, *68*(1), 140–155.
Peffley, M., Knigge, P., & Hurwitz, J. (2001). A multiple values model of political tolerance. *Political Research Quarterly*, *54*(2), 379–406.
Peterson, D. A. M. (2009). Campaign learning and vote determinants. *American Journal of Political Science*, *53*(2), 445–460.
Popkin, S. L. (1991). *The reasoning voter: Communication and persuasion in presidential campaigns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Prior, M. (2005). News vs. entertainment: How increasing media choice widens gaps in political knowledge and turnout. *American Journal of Political Science*, *49*(3), 577–592.
Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
Pérez, E. O. (2015). Mind the Gap: Why large group deficits in political knowledge emerge-and what to do about them. *Political Behavior*, *37*(4), 933–954.
Radcliff, B., & Davis, P. (2000). Labor organization and electoral participation in industrial democracies. *American Journal of Political Science*, *44*(1), 132–141.
Radcliff, B., & Saiz, M. (1998). Labor organization and public policy in the American states. *Journal of Politics*, *60*(1), 113–125.
Rainey, C. (2014). Arguing for a negligible effect. *American Journal of Political Science*, *58*(4), 1083–1091.
Ronald, L. D. L., & Huckfeldt, R. (1998). Social capital, social networks, and political participation. *Political Psychology*, *19*(3), 567–584.
Rosenfeld, J. (2014). *What unions no longer do*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Rosenstone, S. J., & Hansen, J. M. (1993). *Mobilization, participation, and American democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Schlozman, K. L., Verba, S., & Brady, H. E. (2012). *The unheavenly chorus: Unequal political voice and the broken promise of American democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Smith, A. E. (2016). Talking it out: Political conversation and knowledge gaps in unequal urban contexts. *British Journal of Political Science*, *48*, 407–425.
Sniderman, P. M., Brody, R., & Tetlock, P. E. (1991). *Reasoning about politics: Explorations in political psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Straits, B. C. (1991). Bringing strong ties back in interpersonal gateways to political information and influence. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *55*(3), 432–448.

Western, B., & Rosenfeld, J. (2011). Unions, norms, and the rise in US wage inequality. *American Sociological Review*, *76*(4), 513–537.

Zaller, J. R. (1992). *The nature and origins of mass opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zullo, R. (2004). Labor council outreach and union member voter turnout: A microanalysis from the 2000 election. *Industrial relations: A journal of economy and society*, *43*(2), 324–338.