

DIALOGUE: WORKING CLASS

Why are there so few working-class people in political office? Evidence from state legislatures

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Why do so few working-class Americans go on to hold political office? This paper uses data on state legislatures to assess several common (and often untested) explanations. Contrary to the widespread view that workers are less likely to hold office because they are less qualified, I find no relationship between the qualifications of workers in a given state and their representation in the state legislature. The shortage of the working class in office appears to have far more to do with structural characteristics of the political landscape such as parties, interest groups, and institutions. Scholars who want to understand why there are so few working-class Americans in political office – and people who want to do something about it – should probably focus on these kinds of “demand-side” forces, not on the supposed “supply-side” shortcomings of the working class.

Keywords: descriptive representation; social class; working class; supply-side theories; demand-side theories

Politicians in the United States tend to be vastly better off than the people they represent. Compared to ordinary citizens, lawmakers in every level and branch of government in the US are wealthier, more educated, and more likely to have come from a white-collar occupation. If millionaires were a political party, that party would make up roughly 3% of American families, but it would have a super-majority in the Senate, a majority in the House, a five to four majority in the Supreme Court, and a man in the White House. If working-class Americans¹ – people employed in manual labor and service industry jobs – were a political party, that party would have made up more than half of the country since the start of the twentieth century. But legislators from that party (those who last worked in blue-collar jobs before entering politics) would never have held more than 2% of the seats in Congress (Carnes 2013; see also Carnes 2012; Matthews 1954a, 1954b, 1985).

These inequalities in the social class makeup of our political institutions have serious consequences for public policy. Scholars of public opinion have long known that people from different classes tend to have different views about a wide range of economic issues (e.g., Gilens 2009; Hout 2008; Hout, Manza, and Brooks 1995). Scholars of elite decision-making have recently begun to show that the same is true for politicians. Just as the shortage of women in office affects policy outcomes on issues related to gender (e.g., Berkman and O'Connor 1993; Swers 2002; Thomas 1991), the shortage of working-class people – who tend to be more liberal on

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economic issues – appears to bias policy on issues like the minimum wage, taxes, and welfare spending towards the more conservative positions typically favored by affluent Americans (Carnes 2012, 2013; Griffin and Anewalt-Remsburg 2013; Grose 2013; Kraus and Callaghan 2014; see also Carnes and Lupu 2015). Social safety net programs are stingier, business regulations are flimsier, tax policies are more regressive, and protections for workers are weaker than they would be if our political decision-makers came from the same mix of classes as the people they represent.

Why, then, are there so few working-class people in our political institutions in the first place? If the policy stakes are so high, why does our representative process consistently yield such an unrepresentative group of decision-makers?

Scholars still have a great deal to learn about these important questions. To date, only a handful of studies have attempted to answer them, and most have focused on just one promising hypothesis at a time in a somewhat piecemeal fashion (Carnes 2013, 2015; Sadin 2012; Sojourner 2013). No study on the shortage of workers has seriously engaged with larger theories about the numerical representation of social groups or with the findings in adjacent literatures on the shortage of women and minorities in public office. Research on the shortage of working-class people in our political institutions is off to a good start, but there are still many stones left unturned.

This paper tries to develop a more comprehensive account of the factors that keep working-class Americans from holding political office, one that considers a broad range of possibilities and that explicitly connects to the larger literature on representation. Whereas past work has examined just one explanation at a time, I begin by canvassing the literature on the numerical representation of social groups for potential culprits. I outline a wide range of possibilities, including both *supply-side explanations* (which argue that there are fewer qualified workers who might run) and *demand-side explanations* (which emphasize larger external or structural factors that might discourage qualified workers from running or winning). I then test these hypotheses using data on the social class makeup of state legislatures, which allows me to test many explanations at the same time using a common dataset. In short, this paper tries to make several contributions to the nascent literature on the shortage of workers in public office: it grounds work on this topic in the larger literature on representation, it tests several hypotheses simultaneously (including several that have never been tested), and it brings previously unused data to bear on this important question.

My findings suggest several promising new directions for research on the shortage of workers in office – and also highlight some avenues that may not be as fruitful. Contrary to the view that workers are less likely to hold office because they are less qualified, I find no relationship between the supply-side qualifications of workers in a given state and their representation in the state legislature. The shortage of the working class in office appears to have far more to do with demand-side factors, that is, with structural characteristics of the political environment such as parties, interest groups, and institutions. Scholars who want to understand why there are so few working-class Americans in political office – and people who want to do something about it – should probably focus on these kinds of “demand-side” forces, not on the supposed “supply-side” shortcomings of the working class.

Descriptive representation

The numerical or *descriptive representation* (Pitkin 1967) of any social group can be reduced by one of two processes. First, some people from the group will not be qualified to hold office, either because they are not legally eligible (a 34-year-old cannot be president) or because they do not have the skills necessary for public service (someone who does not know who the current

president is does not stand much of a chance, either). Second, of those who are qualified, most would not run, and of those who run, many would not win. If a social group is disproportionately screened out by either process – if people from that group are less likely than others to be qualified or to run and win – the group will be numerically underrepresented in public office relative to its numbers in the population as a whole.

The scholars who study the numerical or descriptive shortage of particular social groups in our political institutions sometimes refer to differences in qualifications as *supply-side explanations*, explanations that “suggest that the outcome reflects [some quality of the] applicants wishing to pursue a political career” (Norris and Lovenduski 1995, 15). And they often use the term *demand-side explanations* to refer to explanations that attribute the shortage of a social group to external or structural forces that discourage qualified members of the group from running for office or from winning elections.

To date, most research on descriptive representation in the US has focused on the shortage of women and racial or ethnic minorities in public office. Much of the early research in this literature focused on gender- and race-based differences in supply-side characteristics such as resources (Clark 1994), ability (Gaddie and Bullock 1995), aspirations, and self-perceptions (Lawless and Fox 2005). More recently, scholars have begun to shift their attention to the demand-side factors that seem to discourage qualified women and minorities from running for office and winning elections: unsupportive party and interest group leaders (Burrell 2006; Crowder-Meyer 2010; Lawless and Fox 2005, 2010; Niven 1998; Pimlott 2010; Sanbonmatsu 2002, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c), biased voters (Citrin, Green, and Sears 1990; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Dolan 2004; Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997), and institutional arrangements that disadvantage historically underrepresented groups (Palmer and Simon 2001, 2010; Trounstein and Valdini 2008). Every step of the way, women and minorities appear to face significant barriers to descriptive representation; scholars have identified not one but *many* glass ceilings.

Scholars have been slower to study the factors that discourage working-class Americans from holding office. This may partly reflect the stagnant pace of workers’ integration into our political institutions: there has been far more variation over time in the number of women and minorities in public office, which has encouraged empirical research on these groups. Figure 1 plots the percentages of congressional seats held by women, racial and ethnic minorities, and lawmakers

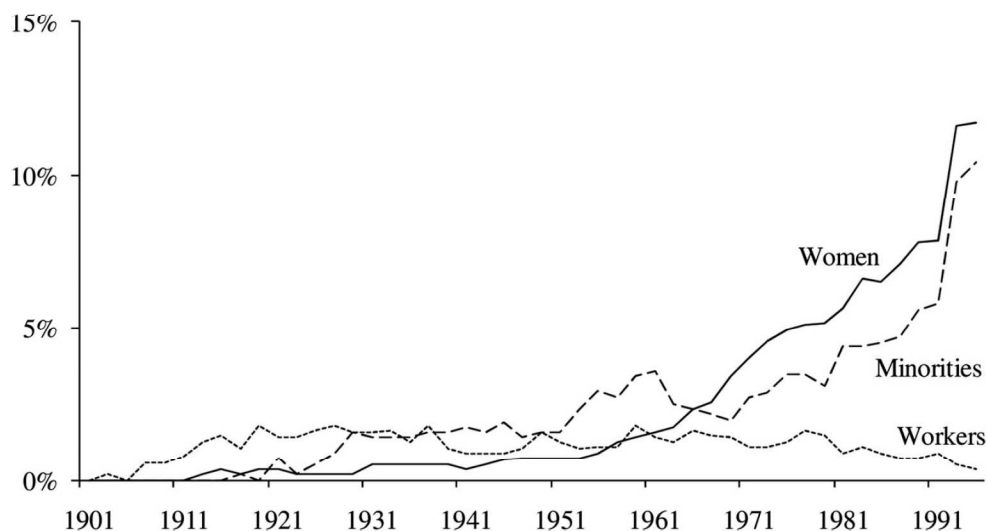


Figure 1. The Demographic Composition of Congress, 1901–1996.
Source: ICPSR and McKibbin (1997).

from the working class (i.e., who last had blue-collar jobs before getting involved in politics) in each Congress between 1901 and 1996. Although women and racial minorities were still underrepresented at the end of the twentieth century, their gains during the postwar period sharply contrasted the stable underrepresentation of the working class, which never made up more than 2% of Congress.²

Although workers have remained sharply underrepresented, in the last few years, a handful of political scientists have begun to investigate the factors that discourage working-class Americans from holding public office. Their research has been partly motivated by new work suggesting that the descriptive representation of lower-income and working-class people affects their *substantive representation*, the extent to which their views prevail in the policy-making process (Carnes 2012, 2013; Griffin and Anewalt-Rensburg 2013; Grose 2013; Kraus and Callaghan 2014; see also Carnes and Lupu 2015). And it is partly motivated by a recent surge in interest among political activists. In New Jersey, the AFL-CIO has run a “candidate school” since the 1990s that has identified, recruited, and trained hundreds of working-class citizens to run for offices ranging from local government to the state legislature. The program has been strikingly successful – its graduates have a 75% win rate in over 900 elections – and similar working-class candidate schools are now in the works in California, Connecticut, Maine, Nevada, New York, and Oregon (Carnes 2013, Ch. 6). As activists and scholars have become more certain that the shortage of workers in office matters, research on the causes of that shortage has started to pick up.

That research is still new, however; it is still a long way from the kind of comprehensive body of knowledge that political scientists have amassed about other historically underrepresented groups. There are still only a few studies on the factors that drive the descriptive representation of the working class. Moreover, most have focused on just one explanation at a time, usually a demand-side factor like voters or interest groups. Sadin (2012) uses survey experiments to show that *voters* are not biased against hypothetical candidates from blue-collar jobs – they evaluate them about as favorably as otherwise-identical candidates from white-collar jobs. Carnes (2013, Ch. 6), too, focuses on voters, noting that lawmakers from working-class jobs receive about as many votes in actual elections as lawmakers from white-collar professions. Sojourner (2013) uses data on state legislatures to show that when workers in a given field are better represented by *unions*, they are more likely to hold office. And Carnes (2015; see also Carnes 2013, Ch. 1) illustrates that *institutions* may matter, too; in California, working-class people are more likely to run and win in races for local office than in races for county or state office.

These findings provide interesting clues about how demand-side factors such as voters, interest groups, and institutions can discourage working-class people from holding office. However, the body of scientific knowledge about this topic is still small, and it has proceeded in a somewhat piecemeal fashion. Scholars have examined promising explanations one at a time, and the literature on the shortage of workers has been mostly disconnected from the theories and findings in the larger literature on descriptive representation. If we want to understand why there are so few workers in public office, we still probably have a lot to learn from research on why there are so few women and minorities.

One especially noteworthy omission is the virtual absence of research on the *supply-side qualifications* of working-class Americans. These kinds of explanations were an important starting point in the research on the shortage of women and minorities in office. They have also been popular with proponents of government by the privileged. In *Federalist* 35, Hamilton ([1788] 1961, 214) argued that the working class would never hold office in large numbers because workers were less qualified; their interests, he wrote “can be more effectually promoted by the merchant than by themselves.” Modern scholarship on *elite theory* makes essentially the same case, arguing that “all social order is necessarily hierarchical, and ... leadership is a specialization necessitated by the division of labor in all societies” (Cohen 1981, 5). In this view, the

shortage of working-class people in political office simply reflects the fact that professionals have more of the skills and characteristics that make for good candidates and good lawmakers: resources, interest, ability, confidence, and so on.

To date, just one study on the shortage of workers has taken these kinds of supply-side arguments seriously. Using data from the National Election Study (NES), Carnes (2013, 144) shows that there are about as many working-class Americans who have three supply-side characteristics associated with candidate quality (tolerance, attention to public affairs, and confidence about their ability to participate in politics) as there are white-collar professionals with those traits. The text notes, however, that the exercise is only “a crude way to gauge how qualified someone is to hold public office.” Supply-side explanations deserve a great deal of more attention from scholars interested in why so few working-class Americans hold office.

Going forward, it may be helpful to think about the descriptive underrepresentation of workers in terms of the supply and demand framework that scholars have used to study the underrepresentation of women and minorities. For one, that framework helps to connect and organize the many individual explanations scholars might develop. Moreover, it also highlights explanations that have not yet surfaced in the literature on workers. Table 1 illustrates this point by outlining five supply-side explanations and four demand-side explanations for the shortage of working-class Americans in political office. Each explanation applies a concept studied in the wider literature on descriptive representation to the working class. Women are less likely to hold office, for instance, in part because they are less likely to see themselves as qualified to do so (e.g., Lawless and Fox 2005). It stands to reason that the same may be true for workers, too. The explanations in Table 1 may not exhaust the entire universe of potential causes, but they represent a solid starting point for empirical work and a substantial improvement over the current state of scholarly thinking about this question.

Viewed this way, it is easy to see what the existing research on the shortage of workers lacks, and which hypotheses hold the most promise. There are a wide range of supply-side factors that might discourage workers from holding office: workers may be less likely to hold office because they (1) have fewer *resources* like time and money, (2) are less *interested* in politics and government, (3) are less likely to have the *skills* required to run and win, (4) are less likely to *aspire* to hold office, and (5) are less likely to *perceive themselves as qualified*. These explanations may hold some promise, but scholars have all but ignored them so far.

There are also demand-side factors that have been neglected. Workers could be underrepresented in public office because of structural forces that scholars have already studied (one at a time); it is possible (6) that voters prefer white-collar candidates, (7) that the interest groups that recruit and support potential candidates are less likely to support workers, or (8) that the

Table 1. Why are there so few working-class people in political office?

<i>Supply-side explanations</i>	
1. Resources	Working-class people have fewer resources like money and free time
2. Interest	Working-class people are less interested in politics and government
3. Ability	Working-class people are less likely to have the skills needed to run and win
4. Aspirations	Working-class people are less likely to want to hold political office
5. Self-perceptions	Working-class people are less likely to see themselves as qualified to hold office
<i>Demand-side explanations</i>	
6. Voter biases	Voters prefer candidates from white-collar professions
7. Interest groups	Interest groups are less likely to support working-class candidates
8. Institutions	Institutional arrangements make it hard for working-class people to hold office
9. Gatekeeper biases	Political recruiters are less likely to support working-class candidates

demands of serving in large “professionalized” institutions might discourage even the most qualified working-class people from pursuing careers in public office. Or the shortage of workers could reflect demand-side factors that have yet to surface in the piecemeal literature on workers, like (9) differences in political gatekeeping by party leaders and candidate recruiters. The gatekeepers and party officials who recruit, train, and support candidates may underestimate workers’ chances of winning office and consequently ignore them when reaching out to potential candidates, as they often do with women (Crowder-Meyer 2010). Or they simply may not know many working-class people in the first place; recruiting blue-collar workers may be a harder, more time-consuming task. The underrepresentation of the working class could simply be the result of features of the candidate recruitment process that reinforce existing biases in the composition of political stakeholders.

Given what we already know, the most promising hypotheses in Table 1 would seem to be those that focus on interest groups and institutions. With so little extant research, however, all of these hypotheses warrant further investigation. It is still too soon to rule out any suspects.

Moreover, it is important to think carefully about the relationships *between* the many explanations suggested by the broader literature on descriptive representation. If scholars only investigate one hypothesis at a time, they risk finding spurious relationships and overlooking lurking variables. If, for instance, unions are strong in places where working-class people have more resources and are more interested in politics and government, scholars studying unions alone might give organized labor credit that belongs in part to the supply-side characteristics of the working class. If scholars want to learn why there are so few working-class people in political office, they need to take seriously the broader set of possible explanations suggested by the larger literature on descriptive representation.

Learning from state legislatures

State legislatures are an ideal setting in which to begin doing so. At the national level, lawmakers’ class backgrounds vary so little (Figure 1) that it can be difficult to isolate the factors that influence whether working-class people hold office. At the city and county levels, lawmakers’ class backgrounds vary a great deal, but the sheer number of local governments and the difficulty of generating county- or city-level measures of many potentially interesting variables make studying local politics challenging. States strike an ideal balance. Information about citizens and political institutions is far easier to compile at the state level. And the class compositions of state legislatures vary considerably: Figure 2 graphs data from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) on the percentages of lawmakers in each state employed in working-class jobs³ in 2007. Sixteen state legislatures fell in the 0–2% range, but another 16 were made up of 4–10% working-class lawmakers, far more than we would observe in any recent Congress.

Although individual-level data on the occupational or social class backgrounds of state lawmakers (and lawmakers in other levels of government) are scarce, the NCSL has compiled aggregate data on the occupational compositions of state legislatures in 1993, 1995, and 2007.⁴ Since the compositions of state legislatures were nearly identical in 1993 and in 1995, I focus only on 1993 in this analysis.⁵ I also draw on a dataset compiled in the same fashion by the Insurance Information Institute in 1979. Together, these three aggregate datasets provide 150 state-year observations staggered at 14-year intervals: 50 cases in 1979, 50 in 1993, and 50 in 2007. (I have chosen to omit one extreme outlier – Maine in 1979, which had a 20% working-class legislature – out of concern about the case’s statistical leverage, although doing so did not alter my results in any meaningful way.)

To test the supply-side explanations summarized in Table 1, I have relied on surveys from the National Election Study’s Cumulative Data File, which includes nationally representative data on

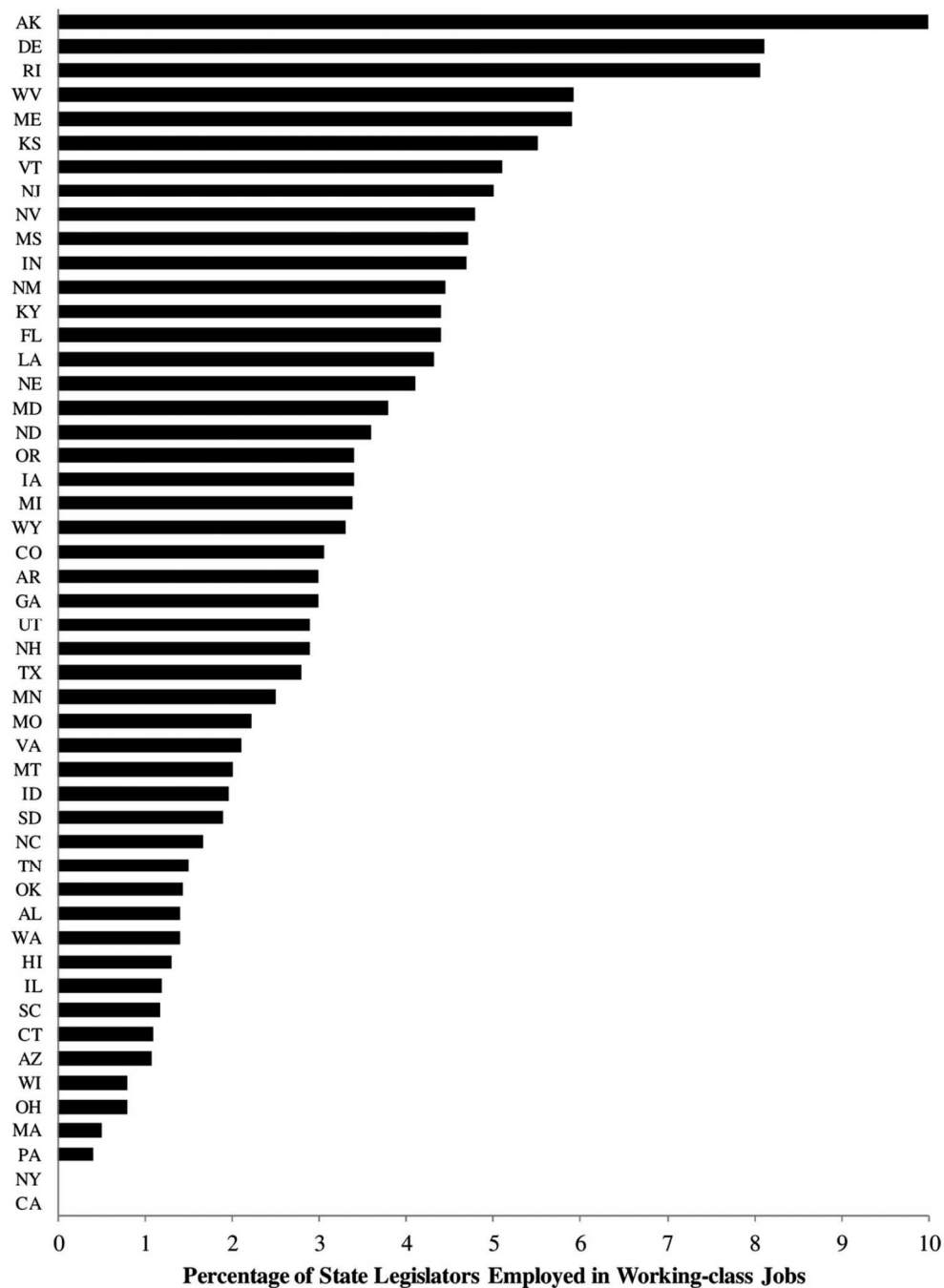


Figure 2. Working-class representation in state legislatures, 2007.
Source: National Conference of State Legislatures.

a wide range of supply-side characteristics for most election years since World War II. Unfortunately, the NES survey in any single year often had too few cases to allow me to generate reliable state-level estimates of the characteristics of working-class people. As such, for each of the three years for which I have aggregate legislator class data (1979, 1993, and 2007), I pooled data from the four prior waves of NES surveys (e.g., for 1979, I pooled surveys conducted in 1972, 1974, 1976, and 1978). I ignored any state and year for which this process yielded fewer than 20 surveys with working-class people, which reduced my sample size to 99 state-year observations (but preserved at least one observation for each of 41 states).⁶

Using these pooled surveys, I created several measures that tapped the supply-side factors outlined in Table 1. If working-class citizens are less likely to hold office because they simply make up a smaller share of the pool of “suitable” candidates – candidates with the right supply-side characteristics – then blue-collar workers should be more likely to hold office in states where they make up larger shares of that pool.⁷ To estimate working-class respondents’ share of the citizens with *resources* in each state, I computed the percentage of survey respondents who reportedly fell in the top third of the distribution of family income who also had working-class jobs, that is, the working class’s share of high-income people in each state.⁸ To measure *political interest*, I computed the working class’s share of respondents who said that they follow public affairs most of the time and (separately) who reported that they were very interested in elections, who reported that they routinely consume campaign-related media from two or more news sources, and who reported that they attended a campaign rally or meeting during the last election. As a rough measure of *ability*, I computed the percentage of working-class people among the survey respondents in each state who held college degrees, who reported that they had attempted to influence how others vote in a recent election, and whose levels of political knowledge were rated “fairly high” or “very high” by the interviewer after their surveys.⁹ And as a rough measure of *aspirations* and *self-perceptions*, I computed the working class’s share of respondents who disagreed when asked whether they felt that politics and government were too complicated for people like themselves.¹⁰ (The texts of the survey items used to create these state-level averages are listed in Appendix 1.)

I was also able to test several demand-side explanations with the NES data. If *voters* are behind inequalities in working-class representation, it may be because white-collar professionals – who vote at disproportionately high rates – prefer white-collar candidates. Or it may be because the working class’s political views are too far outside of the mainstream for voters. As a simple test of these ideas, I computed the working class’s share of voters in national elections in each state and the difference between the percentage of working-class people who identify as Republican and the percentage of voters statewide who identify as Republican. If white-collar voters prefer white-collar candidates (or if working-class people are simply more likely to run where they are more numerous), places where working-class people make up larger shares of the electorate should elect more working-class lawmakers. If working-class people are politically out of step with the electorate, they should tend to fare better in places where the working class’s politics are more like those of the state as a whole.

I also generated a rough measure of the extent to which working-class citizens were close to *political gatekeepers* by computing the percentage of people from the working class among those respondents who reported that they had worked for a party or candidate in the last election. Formal campaign organizations are a common point of entry into the political process for many Americans and provide ready access to other volunteers and staff members who are socially and professionally connected to political gatekeepers. Of course, this measure also reflects the supply-side characteristics of working-class people: just as attending a campaign or rally signals political interest, working or volunteering for a campaign is a clear indication of engagement with elections and public affairs. Working for a campaign, however, involves direct contact with formal political organizations in a way that simply attending a rally does not. If there is any benefit to contact with electoral and partisan institutions over and above what can be attributed to the political interest necessary to initially make that contact, it should be captured by this measure.

Likewise, to measure the importance of *interest groups*, I computed the percentage of citizens in each state who belonged to labor unions. Again, union density may itself be an indication of political interest or engagement on the part of the working class, but to the extent that unions provide some external assistance to politically attentive workers, there should be a unique

association between union membership and office holding over and above what can be attributed to the working class's political interest.¹¹

Finally, as a simple measure of the importance of *institutional demands*, I analyzed an index of state legislative professionalism estimated using Squire's (1992) method. This index combined information about the time and energy involved in legislative service – factors that should make holding office more difficult for individuals in working-class jobs – and about the salaries, benefits, and staff resources legislators enjoy – factors thought to “attract better qualified members” (Squire 2007, 213), that is, factors that make legislative service more attractive to white-collar professionals. Composite measures of professionalism are widely used in the study of legislative politics and are correlated with many other features of the institutional environment that may make office holding prohibitive to working-class people, like the competitiveness (and therefore costliness) of elections. Although they undoubtedly miss many aspects of the institutional contexts in state legislatures that might affect working-class citizens' chances of holding office, they usefully summarize the amount of time and resources that campaigning and holding office in a state typically require, that is, the extent to which serving on the state legislature is a personally disruptive experience.¹² (Appendix 2 lists summary statistics for these variables.)

It is important to note up front that the aggregate-level data I have assembled for this analysis inherently overlook or “black box” the processes that link the explanatory variables I have measured and working-class office holding. Simply knowing that a given characteristic is associated with representation in the aggregate is not the same as observing the underlying processes behind that association at the individual level. Aggregate-level data provide us with a useful starting point, a way to sort through many feasible explanations. They are especially important given that individual-level data on the class backgrounds of state officeholders are scarce. As we begin to collect those data, we need to know what we should be looking for. Aggregate-level analyses usefully summarize the end results of the processes that give rise to inequalities in the class composition of government and, in doing so, provide guidance for future individual-level analyses. They give us a bird's-eye view of the forest that can help guide us as we begin examining the trees more closely.

The empirical evidence

What does that bird's-eye view reveal? Do any of the explanations summarized in Table 1 hold up in analyses of data on state legislatures?

Figure 3 consists of eight panels, one for each of the supply-side characteristics I have measured using NES surveys. In each panel, the vertical axis on the graph represents the percentage of state lawmakers from the working class, the horizontal axis records the characteristic in question, and I have added best-fit lines from simple linear regressions (dashed when the relationship is not statistically significant). All eight of the characteristics examined in Figure 3 have been hypothesized to be positively associated with working-class representation. If resource disparities are behind the shortage of working-class people, workers should be more likely to hold office in states where the working class makes up a larger percentage of high-income families. If disparities in political interest are responsible, workers should hold more offices in states where the working class makes up a larger share of politically interested citizens. And so on.

The most striking feature of Figure 3 is how little the representation of the working class in state legislatures appears to depend on the representation of the working class among people with the right supply-side characteristics. Nearly all of the traits measured here are essentially uncorrelated with office holding: meeting attendance, media consumption, education, attempting to influence others' votes, political knowledge, and political confidence. Only one – the working

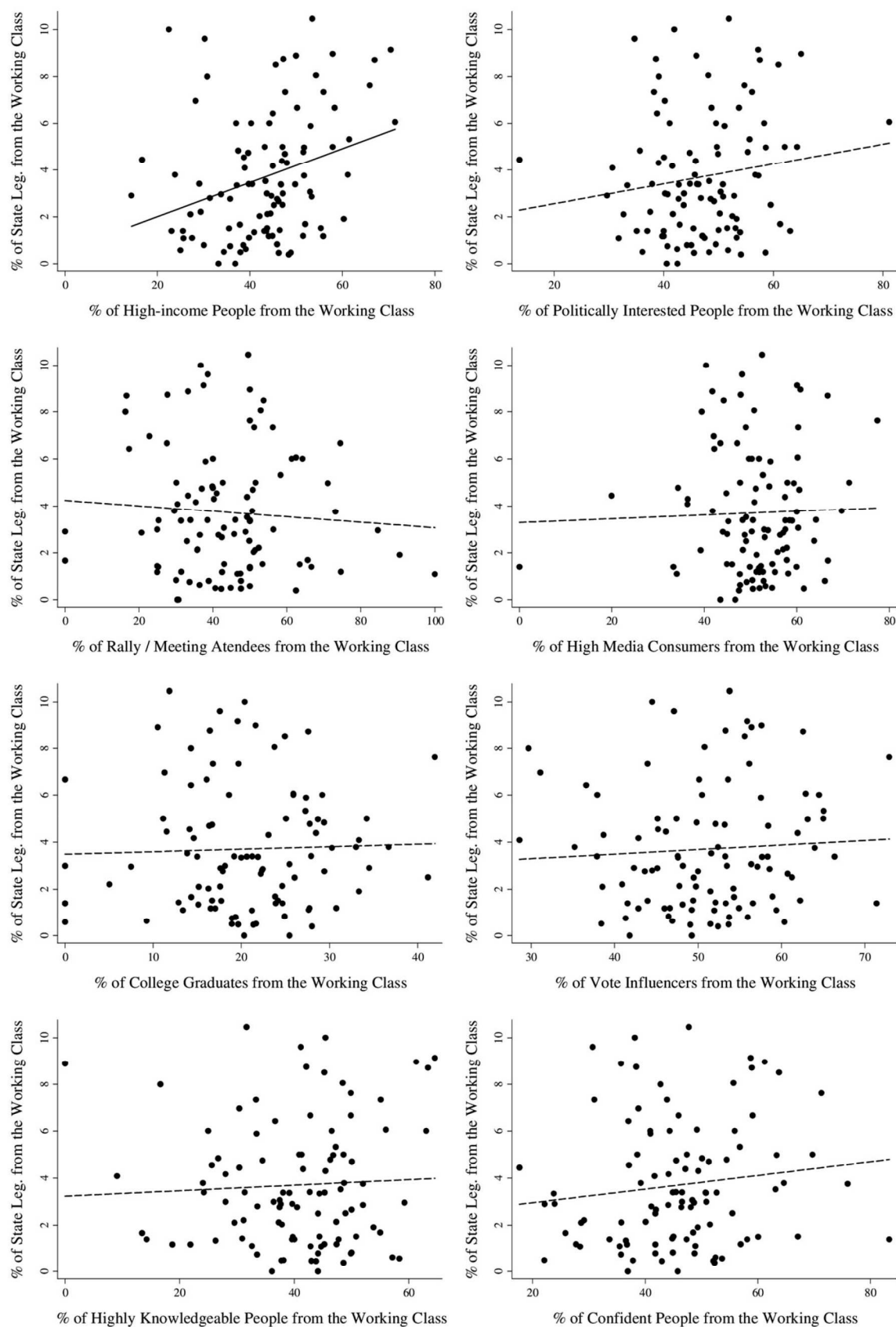


Figure 3. Supply-side explanations.

Sources: NCSL, Insurance Information Institute (1979), and ANES (2010) Cumulative Data File.

class's representation among high-income families – was positively and significantly associated with office holding, about what we would expect by chance alone. When it comes to explaining the aggregate-level shortage of working-class people in political office in the US, at first glance, supply-side explanations focused on the characteristics of the working class seem not to matter all that much.

Of course, two important caveats should be noted here. First, even after pooling multiple waves of NES surveys, my sample sizes were often small. As a result, many individual estimates of the working class's share of people with supply-side traits were moderately imprecise; it is doubtful, for instance, that there is any state where working-class people make up 0% of the citizens who attend political meetings or rallies, or any state where they make up 100% of attendees. Second, the measures used in Figure 3 are by no means a complete or perfect list of the characteristics that we might think “good” office holders should have. The NES does not measure honesty or compassion or bargaining skills or backbone.

Even so, the supply-side characteristics that it can measure – albeit somewhat imprecisely – should be correlated with working-class representation, at least if arguments about qualifications are correct.¹³ If working-class people are less likely to hold office because they are less well suited for the job, we would expect some of measures in Figure 3 to be associated with the working class's share of the state legislature. However, they are not (even if we ignore obvious outliers and states with small sample sizes). The most these data on supply-side characteristics allow us to say about the working class's suitability for office holding is that workers might hold more offices if they made more money.¹⁴

This is not to say that supply-side characteristics are unimportant at the *individual level*. Working-class people who are more knowledgeable, more interested in politics, and so on are almost certainly more likely to run for office. But a collective deficit of these traits among working-class Americans does not seem to be responsible for the aggregate-level shortage of working-class people in our state legislatures.

Nor does the demand-side idea that voters prefer candidates from white-collar backgrounds to those from the working class. Figure 4 plots the five demand-side measures I created for this analysis in the same fashion as Figure 3. The top two frames display the associations between working-class representation and the working class's share of the electorate (top left) or the working class's partisan congruence with the state as a whole (top right). Neither association is substantively large or statistically significant. Whether the working class makes up one quarter of a state's electorate or more than two-thirds, on average, blue-collar citizens make up about the same share of seats in the statehouse. In most states, the working class tends to identify more with the Democratic Party than the state as a whole does (as Bartels 2006 and others have argued, in contrast to journalistic accounts like Frank 2004), but whether the working class's political views are squarely in line with those of the state or farther to the left seems to have little bearing on the numerical representation of the working class in state legislatures.

The other demand-side characteristics summarized in Figure 4 appear to matter far more. Workers are more likely to hold office in states where they make up a larger share of party or campaign staff (my rough measure of their connection to political gatekeepers' networks), where unions are stronger (my measure of interest group support), and where the legislature is less professionalized (my measure of the institutional demands associated with office holding). The simple linear regression coefficients for each of these variables are substantively large and statistically significant. In places where working-class citizens are more likely to belong to formal organizations that represent their interests, where workers are more likely to play a role in the formal organizations from which many political gatekeepers recruit potential candidates, and where serving in the state legislature is a less prohibitive activity, the working class plays more of a role in legislative institutions.

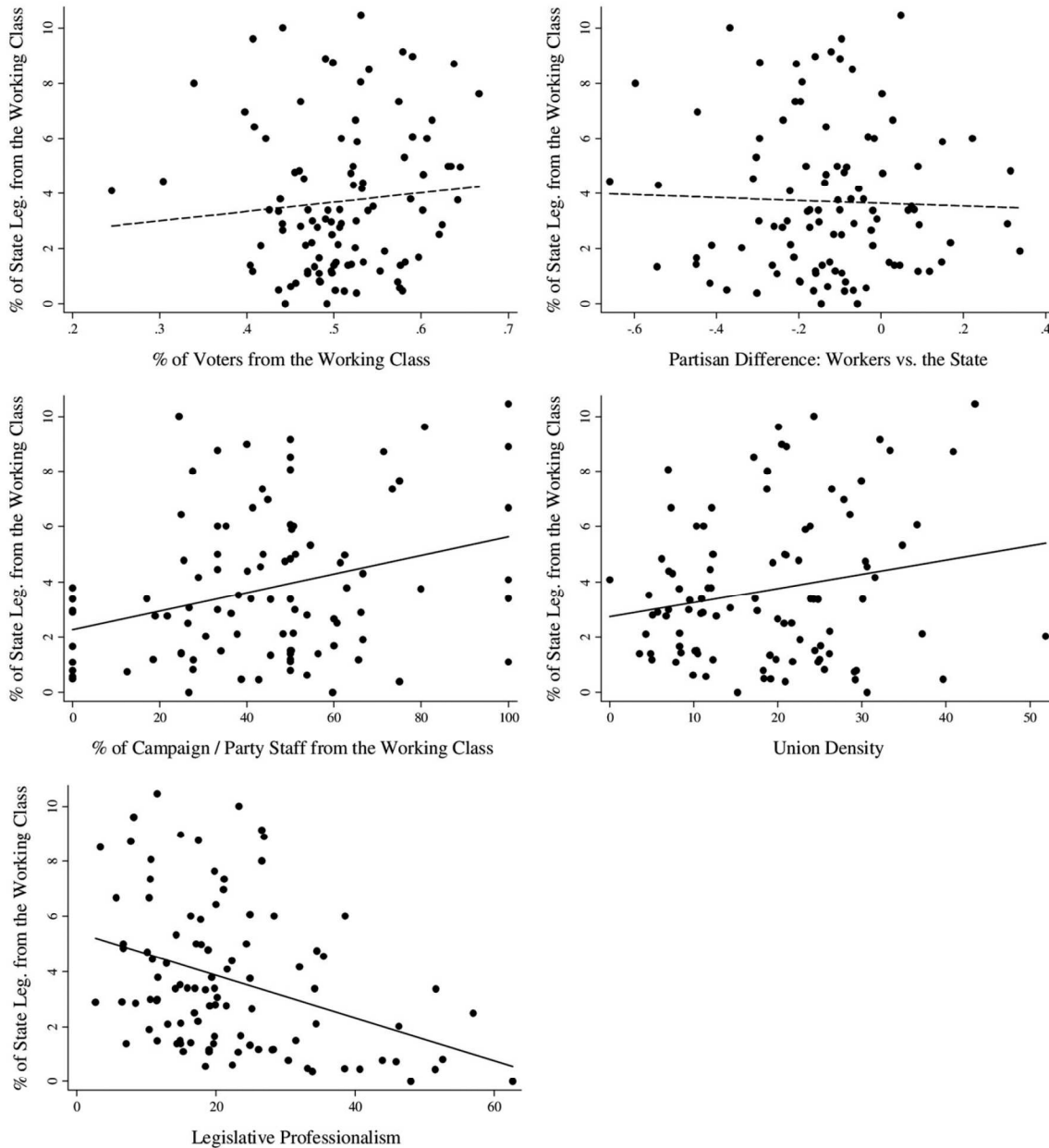


Figure 4. Demand-side explanations.

Sources: NCSL, Insurance Information Institute (1979), ANES (2010) Cumulative Data File, and Squire (1992).

Regression analyses that simultaneously test all of the explanations considered here reach the same basic conclusions. Table 2 reports a series of ordinary least-squares models that relate the percentage of working-class people in each state's legislature to (1) the supply-side characteristics in Figure 3, (2) the demand-side characteristics in Figure 4, (3) both the supply- and demand-side characteristics, and (4) the three demand-side characteristics that stand out in Figure 4, the working class's share of party and campaign staff, the state's union density, and the state legislature's professionalism score.¹⁵

In model 1, the coefficients for each of the supply-side factors are comparable to those in the simple regression summarized in Figure 3. Only the income measure is significant and in the

Table 2. Supply- and demand-side explanations and working-class representation.

	1	2	3	4
<i>Supply-side explanations</i>				
% of high-income people from the working class	0.09* (0.04)	—	0.06 ⁺ (0.03)	—
% of pol. interested people from the working class	0.00 (0.04)	—	−0.02 (0.03)	—
% of rally/meeting attendees from the working class	−0.02 (0.02)	—	−0.02 (0.02)	—
% of high media consumers from the working class	−0.07* (0.03)	—	−0.04 (0.04)	—
% of college graduates from the working class	−0.02 (0.03)	—	0.00 (0.02)	—
% of vote influencers from the working class	0.00 (0.04)	—	−0.03 (0.05)	—
% of knowledgeable people from the working class	0.00 (0.03)	—	0.00 (0.04)	—
% of confident people from the working class	0.03 (0.03)	—	0.04 (0.03)	—
<i>Demand-side explanations</i>				
% of voters from the working class	—	−3.02 (2.49)	−1.99 (5.12)	—
Partisan difference: voters vs. workers	—	−0.90 (1.46)	−0.86 (1.41)	—
% of campaign/party staff from the working class	—	0.02 ⁺ (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Union density	—	0.11** (0.03)	0.10** (0.027)	0.10** (0.02)
Legislative professionalism	—	−0.11** (0.02)	−0.11** (0.022)	−0.11** (0.02)
Intercept	3.40 ⁺ (1.75)	4.77** (1.50)	5.87** (1.679)	3.43** (0.73)
N	98	96	96	96
R ²	0.1472	0.3220	0.3898	0.3100
Standard error	2.5701	2.2748	2.2609	2.2697

Sources: NCSL, Insurance Information Institute (1979), ANES (2010) Cumulative Data File, and Squire (1992).

Notes: Cells report coefficients (with clustered standard errors in parentheses) from models relating the percentage of working-class people in the state legislature to the variables in question.

⁺ $p < .10$, two-tailed.

* $p < .05$, two-tailed.

** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

expected direction. Whether examined on their own or as a group, the supply-side characteristics of workers that are often the subject of defenses of government by the upper class are, in reality, mostly uncorrelated with whether workers actually hold office.

Likewise, the results of model 2 largely confirm what the simple scatterplots in Figure 4 illustrated. Considered together, the demand-side characteristics of a state – at least those pertaining to its institutional arrangements – are strongly associated with working-class representation. As in Figure 4, the characteristics of voters appear unrelated to the class compositions of legislatures. The share of working-class people is about the same in states where workers make up large shares of the electorate and in states where they make up small shares. It is about the same where the working class is ideologically in step with the state and where it is not. However, in states where more workers play an active role in party or campaign organizations, where more people belong to labor organizations, and where legislative service is less demanding,

working-class people lead in greater numbers. The association between working-class representation among campaign and party staff and working-class representation in the statehouse was substantially weaker in this analysis: a 10-percentage-point increase in the share of the working class involved in formal campaign or party organizations was associated with a marginally significant 0.2-percentage-point increase in the share of state legislators from the working class. However, the associations between working-class representation and union density or legislative professionalism remained strong. A 10-point increase in the percentage of the state that belonged to labor unions was associated with a 1-point increase in the percentage of state lawmakers from the working class, as was a 10-point decrease (on a scale of 0–100) in legislative professionalism.

These associations did not appear to be the spurious products of correlations between the supply-side characteristics of the working class and the demand-side measures available for this analysis. As model 3 illustrates, two of the three demand-side measures that were significantly associated with working-class representation in model 2 remained significant when controls were added for the supply-side characteristics in model 1. In model 3, the coefficient for working-class involvement in campaigns and parties was slightly smaller than in model 2 and fell short of statistical significance ($p < .236$), although this reduction in significance is hardly surprising in a model with 96 observations and 15 explanatory variables. Otherwise, the results were essentially the same. One of the benefits of studying multiple explanations simultaneously is that we can rule out spurious correlations. For instance, if unions are stronger in places where working-class people have more resources, an association between unions and working-class representation might be spurious. The results presented here, however, are consistent with previous research suggesting that unionization (e.g., Sojourner 2013) and other demand-side factors are associated with working-class representation over and above what we can attribute to other supply- and demand-side characteristics.

Together, the three factors highlighted in models 2 and 3 – the social class makeup of party and campaign staff, union density, and legislative professionalism – appear to be strongly associated with the representation of the working class. Model 4 regressed the percentage of state lawmakers from the working class on just these three variables. The R^2 estimate was high, and the model's standard error was low: these three factors alone are good predictors of working-class representation. Taken at face value, the coefficients in model 4 can account for much of the shortage of working-class people in state legislatures: supposing, for instance, that 60% of party and campaign staff were blue-collar workers (one standard deviation above the mean in this sample, and a number not far off from the representation of the working class in the population as a whole), that 35% of people lived in union households (the highest of any observation in this sample), and that the state's legislative professionalism score was 2.7 out of 100 (the lowest in this sample), model 4 suggests that the working class would make up close to 9% of state legislative seats – almost triple the current rate – a difference that would close roughly one-fifth of the gap between workers' numbers in the population as a whole and workers' representation in political office. The supposed supply-side shortcomings of blue-collar Americans appear to have little to do with their underrepresentation in our state legislatures. Working-class representation appears to depend far more on the extent to which the political environment in a state harnesses or inhibits the political potential of the working class.

What we still need to know

In his widely cited book *In Defense of Elitism*, Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalist William A. Henry III (1995, 21) briefly discusses the shortage of working-class people in political office:

Can democracy be reconciled with elitism? The answer is that in our society, it already has been. ... Voters repeatedly reject insurrectionist candidates who parallel their own ordinariness, even candidates who vow to further the individual voter's interests, in favor of candidates of proven character and competence.

Why are there so few working-class people in political office in the US? In this view, white-collar professionals simply have more character and more competence, and voters know it.

The findings reported in this paper join a small but growing body of evidence suggesting that the views embodied in these kinds of statements are seriously out of step with the realities of American politics. Regardless of how similar blue-collar workers are to voters – how much of the state electorate the working class constitutes or how mainstream the working class's political views are – this study finds that workers remain underrepresented in state legislatures. Regardless of how much education they acquire, how interested they are in politics, how attentive they are to current events, how much they participate in the political process, how knowledgeable they are about politics, or how confident they are in their political abilities, this study finds that workers are numerically underrepresented in our state legislatures. Like others before it, this study finds no evidence that the shortage of people from the working class in political offices in the US has anything to do with the voters' preferences or with the working class's "character and competence."

Quite the contrary, this study suggests that the factors that *are* associated with the representation of the working class in American political institutions bear little resemblance to those envisioned by proponents of the view that "[v]oters ... reject insurrectionist candidates who parallel their own ordinariness." The working class's representation seems to have far more to do with structural- or demand-side characteristics of the political environment such as parties, interest groups, and institutions than with demand-side biases on the part of voters or with the supply-side characteristics of workers themselves. In places where the working class has ties to labor unions or to electoral institutions, workers make up greater shares of the legislature. In places where holding office is a less disruptive experience, where legislatures more closely resemble city councils than Congress, the working class holds more seats. These findings are a far cry from a complete answer to the question of why there are so few working-class people in political office, but they clearly suggest that demand-side, institutional explanations hold more promise than those centered on voters or on the working class itself. The literature on women and minorities in office increasingly emphasizes demand-side explanations; research on the shortage of workers in office would probably do well to focus more on those kinds of explanations, too.

The same may be true for reformers, too: these findings suggest that groups interested in increasing the working class's representation should focus on finding ways to compensate for the barriers that more professionalized legislatures create for workers¹⁶ and on building ties between the working class and the parties and interest groups that typically recruit political candidates. The North Carolina Center for Voter Education has long lobbied to increase state lawmakers' compensation – currently around \$13,000 for up to six months of full-time work – in an effort to offset the opportunity costs associated with holding office (Heagarty 2007). The New Jersey AFL-CIO actively works to identify, recruit, and train union members to run for political office; each year, it hosts a "candidate school" for working-class citizens. In 2011, the New Haven, CT, chapter of the union UNITE HERE recruited and trained 16 of its members to run in municipal government elections, where they won 15 of those races and thereby gained majority control of the New Haven Board of Aldermen (Smith 2011). The findings reported in this paper suggest that efforts like these, efforts that focus on reducing the barriers to office holding and actively recruiting politically capable working-class candidates, hold far more promise than the kinds of programs we might envision if we believed that voters preferred affluent candidates or that the working class was unfit to govern.

Of course, this analysis is only one cut at a complex problem. This study's findings are consistent with the idea that parties, interest groups, and political institutions influence the representation of the working class, but we have yet to directly observe the processes by which that influence plays out. We have yet to see when in the candidate emergence process (e.g., the decision to run, the election, etc.) these factors screen out working-class people. And we have only observed associations; we have yet to explore the potentially complex causal relationships between the political environment and the representation of the working class.

We have to start somewhere, though. Despite its limitations, this study represents an important step in an "undertilled field" (Arnold 1982) in the study of representational inequality. In the past, research on the shortage of workers has been somewhat scattered and has been mostly disconnected from the larger literature on representation. This paper has attempted to organize the extant work on the shortage of working-class people and to connect that research more directly to the scholarship on the descriptive representation of other social groups.

This more comprehensive approach has helped to clarify where scholars should go next, and perhaps where they should not. A broader view of the many possible reasons why there are so few workers in office suggests that structural and institutional features of the political environment are probably more important than any deficiency in the supply-side qualifications of working-class Americans. Those wish to understand class-based inequalities in office holding – and those who wish to do something about them – would do well to focus on our political institutions, not on the supposed shortcomings of the working class.

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Notes

1. I define a person as belonging to *the working class* (or having a *blue-collar job*, or as simply a *worker*) if he or she is employed in manual labor jobs (e.g., factory worker), service industry jobs (e.g., restaurant server), clerical jobs (e.g., receptionist), or union jobs (e.g., field organizer). Likewise, I define a person as having a *white-collar job* if he or she is not a part of the working class. Of course, there are other ways to disaggregate occupations (e.g., some people might not classify clerical jobs as "blue-collar"), and other ways to measure class (e.g., education, income, wealth, family background, subjective perceptions of class, etc.). Most modern class analysts agree, however, that any measure of class should be rooted in occupational data, that is, information about how a person earns a living (e.g., Hout, Manza, and Brooks 1995; Weeden and Grusky 2005; Wright 1997). And the distinction between working-class jobs and white-collar jobs seems to be the major class-based dividing line in political opinion in the US (Hout, Manza, and Brooks 1995; Hout 2008). Research on legislators (Carnes 2012; 2013) squares with both intuitions: lawmakers from working-class jobs tend to vote significantly differently than legislators from white-collar jobs; however, legislators with higher net worths, more formal education, or well-to-do parents tend not to behave as differently. There are important differences within the working-class and white-collar categories (e.g., between manual laborers and clerical workers), of course, but the major dividing line is between workers, who tend to support more progressive economic policies, and professionals, who tend to support a more conservative role for government in economic affairs.

2. The same has been true in other branches and levels of government. Between 1976 and 2007, women's representation in state legislatures skyrocketed from 8% to 24%, and the share of state lawmakers who were Black or Latino grew from 9% to 11%. During the same period, the share of state legislators from the working class fell from 5% to 3%. (The occupation and race/ethnicity estimates are from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and the gender estimates are from Equal Representation in Government and Democracy, <http://www.ergd.org/StateLegislatures.htm>; accessed 5 January 2011.)
3. I define state lawmakers as working class if they were listed in the NCSL's Labor Unions category or in its Business (Non-manager) category, a category that was defined as "blue collar; other white collar (clerical, sales etc.) and personal services (barbers, hairdressers, cashiers, etc.)" in the first study of the occupational profiles of state legislatures (Insurance Information Institute 1979, 6).
4. The organizations that compiled these data recorded the main occupation held by each state legislator at the time. Obviously, more detailed occupational histories would have important advantages – it would be nice to know how many state legislators had *ever* had working-class jobs – but those data do not exist. Moreover, a legislators' main or last occupation appears to be a decent proxy for more detailed occupational history data (see Carnes 2013, ch. 2), in part because many legislators work in similar jobs throughout their entire careers.
5. My findings are the same when I focus on 1995 instead of 1993, and when I average the two years.
6. Alternative cutoffs of 30 and 50 produced nearly identical results. Appendix 3 replicates Table 2 using these alternative cutoffs.
7. Alternatively, one might argue that it is not workers' relative share of this pool but simply the percentage of blue-collar workers with good characteristics that determines the rate at which working-class people hold office. This alternative approach yields the same basic findings.
8. People in working-class jobs can earn higher or lower incomes, depending on the legal and economic environment in a given place, and that variation might help explain why workers are better represented in some states and underrepresented in others.
9. These three measures tapped ability in different ways – formal education, self-reported political behavior, and interviewer evaluations – but produced similar findings. Many studies of candidate emergence use previous experience running for office as a proxy for quality, but that was not feasible in this application (because the NES surveys analyzed here did not ask respondents whether they had ever run for office). The larger question of what constitutes a "qualified" candidate is unfortunately beyond the scope of this study, but empirical research suggests that the proxies used here are not far off: voters and other stakeholders tend to report wanting candidates who are knowledgeable and hardworking (Broockman et al 2014).
10. Of course, feeling that politics is not too complicated is a "low bar" compared to the high level of political ambition that most actual candidates exhibit. More fine-grained measures of political confidence are not available for this period, unfortunately, but the blunter measure I use here is at least suitable for gauging whether a deep deficit in political confidence is behind the shortage of workers in office.
11. Since both private- and public-sector unions could support working-class candidates in a variety of ways, this analysis does not distinguish between private- and public-sector unionization rates (although future work could).
12. Of course, future work could certainly shed more light on this point by disaggregating legislative professionalism scores into their constituent parts – or by analyzing other aspects of the institutional and legal environment in each state.
13. As I show in Figure 2 and Table 2, moreover, demand-side measures generated using the same dataset and similarly coarse survey items are significantly associated with working-class representation. The null findings reported here therefore probably cannot be dismissed as the simple products of sample size problems or sampling error.
14. Moreover, the causal processes underlying this finding could run in either direction. It could be that workers hold more offices because they have more resources, or it could be that states where workers govern enact policies that support working-class incomes (or both). The one supply-side characteristic that predicts working-class representation is among the most likely to be a *result* of working-class representation, not a cause of it.
15. Unfortunately, it was not feasible to include state fixed effects in these models, since many states only appeared once in the dataset.
16. De-professionalizing legislatures – reducing the frequency with which they meet or decreasing staff support for lawmakers, etc. – is probably not feasible or desirable.

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Appendix 1. Survey questions used to create state-level measures

% high-income people from the working class

Of the respondents who reported that their family incomes fell into the categories “68 to 95 percentile” or “96 to 100 percentile” when prompted with the NES family income question (VCF0114), I computed the proportion who were working class. The wording varied from year to year:

About what do you think your total income will be this year for yourself and your immediate family? (1952, 1956–1960)

Would you tell me how much income you and your family will be making during this calendar year, 1962. I mean, before taxes. (1962)

About what do you think your total income will be this year for yourself and your immediate family. Just give me the number/ letter) of the right income category. (1964, 1968)

Many people don’t know their exact (1966/1970) income yet; but would you tell me as best you can what you expect your (1966/1970) income to be – before taxes? You may just tell me the letter of the group on this card into which your family income will probably fall. (1966,1970)

Please look at this card/page (2000 FTF: the booklet) and tell me the letter of the income group that includes the income of all members of your family living here in [previous year] before taxes. This figure should include salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest, and all other income. (IF UNCERTAIN:) What would be your best guess? ((1972–1990, 1992 long form, 1994 later exc., 2000 telephone)

Can you give us an estimate of your total family income in 1991 before taxes? This figure should include salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest and all other income for every member of your family living in your house in 1991. First could you tell me if that was above or below \$24,999? (IF UNCERTAIN: what would be your best guess?) (IF ABOVE/BELOW \$24,999:) I will read you some income categories, could you please stop me when I reach the category that corresponds to your family situation? (1992 short form)

I am going to read you a list of income categories. Please tell me which category best describes the total income of all members of your family living in your house in 1999 before taxes. This figure should include salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest, and all other income. Please stop me when I get to your family’s income. (2000 telephone)

Response Categories:

1. 0 to 16 percentile
2. 17 to 33 percentile
3. 34 to 67 percentile
4. 68 to 95 percentile
5. 96 to 100 percentile

% of politically interested people from the working class

Of the respondents who reported that they follow public affairs “most of the time” when prompted with the NES’s interest in public affairs question (VCF0313), I computed the percentage who were from the working class.

Some people seem to follow (1964: think about) what’s going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there’s an election going on or not. Others aren’t that interested. Would you say you follow what’s going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?

We’d also like to know how much attention you pay to what’s going on in politics generally. I mean from day to day, when there isn’t any big election campaign going on, would you say you follow politics very closely, fairly closely, or not much at all? (1960, 1962)

Response Categories:

1. Hardly at all (1960,1962: not much at all)

2. Only now and then
3. Some of the time (1960,1962: fairly closely)
4. Most of the time (1960,1962: very closely)
9. DK

% of rally/meeting attendees from the working class

For those who responded “yes” to the NES question on whether respondents attended campaigns or rallies (VCF0718), I computed the percentage from the working class.

Did you go to any political meetings, rallies, (1984 AND LATER: speeches,) (1978,1980,1982: fund raising) dinners, or things like that (1984 AND LATER: in support of a particular candidate)?

Response categories:

1. No
2. Yes
0. DK; NA; Inap.; missing; question not used

% of high media consumers from the working class

For those respondents who reported that they had consumed campaign-related news from two or more media according to the NES composite media exposure count (VCF0728) or whose composite media exposure count indicated that they had consumed news from one source and who separately indicated that they had also read about the campaign on the internet (VCF0745), I computed the percentage who were from the working class.

% of college graduates from the working class

For respondents who reported that they held at least a bachelor’s degree using the NES’s six-category education question (VCF0140), I computed the percentage from the working class.

How many grades of school did you finish? (1952–1972)

What is highest grade of school or year of college you have completed? Did you get a high school diploma or pass a high school equivalency test? (1974 AND LATER)

(1974,1976: Do you have a college degree? IF YES: What degree is that?)

(1978–1984: Do you have a college degree? IF YES: What is the highest degree that you have earned?)

(1986 AND LATER: What is the highest degree that you have earned?)

Response Categories:

1. 8 grades or less (‘grade school’)
2. 9–12 grades (‘high school’), no diploma/equivalency
3. 12 grades, diploma or equivalency
4. 12 grades, diploma or equivalency plus non-academic training
5. Some college, no degree; junior/community college level degree (AA degree)
6. BA level degrees; advanced degrees incl. LLB
8. DK
9. NA; RF; Inap.; missing; question not used

% of vote influencers from the working class

For those who replied “yes” when the NES asked whether they had attempted to influence how someone else voted in the last election (VCF0717), I computed the percent from the working class.

(1952, 1956, 1960–1964: I have a list of some of the things that people do that help a party or a candidate win an election. I wonder if you could tell me whether you did any of these things.) (1968, 1972 and later: Now I'd like to find out [1990 AND LATER: We'd/we would like to find out] about some of the things that people do to help a party or candidate win an election.) During the campaign, did you talk to any people and try to show them why they should vote for (1984 and later: or against) one of the parties or candidates?

Response Categories

1. No
2. Yes
0. NA; RF; Inap.; missing; question not used

% of highly knowledgeable people from the working class

For respondents whose general level of political knowledge was deemed “fairly high” or “very high” by their NES interviewers (VCF0050b), I computed the percent from the working class.

Respondent's general level of information about politics and public affairs seemed:

Response Categories:

1. Very high
2. Fairly high
3. Average
4. Fairly low
5. Very low
9. NA
0. Inap.; missing; question not used

% of confident people from the working class

For those respondents who replied “disagree” when asked whether they agree that politics and government seem too complicated for someone like themselves (VCF0614), I computed the percentage from the working class.

“Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.”

Response Categories

1. Agree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree (1988 and later only)
9. DK; depends; not sure; can't say; refused to say
0. NA; inap.; missing; question not used

% voters from the working class

Using the NES standard voter turnout question (VCF0702), I computed the percentage of voters from the working class.

In the election, about half the people voted and about half of them didn't. Did you vote? (1948)

One of the things we need to know is whether or not people really did get to vote this fall. In talking to people about the election we find that a lot of people weren't able to vote because they weren't registered or they were sick or something else came up at the last minute. Do you remember for sure whether or not you voted in the November election? (1962)

In talking to people about the election we (1972 AND LATER: often) find that a lot of people weren't able to vote because they weren't registered or they were sick or they just didn't have time. (1956–1960: How about you, did you vote this time?) (1964–1970: How about you, did you vote this time, or did something keep you from voting) (1972–1976: How about you, did you vote in

the elections this fall?) (1978 and later: How about you, did you vote in the elections this November?) (1952–1960, 1964–1998, 2002 version 1, and 2004 version 1)

In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. Which of the following statements best describes you:

One, I did not vote (in the election this November);

Two, I thought about voting this time – but didn't;

Three, I usually vote, but didn't this time; or

Four, I am sure I voted?

(2000, 2002 version 2, 2004 version 2, 2008 version “old”)

Which one of the following best describes what you did in the elections that were held November 4th?

Definitely did not vote in the elections

Definitely voted in person at a polling place on election day

Definitely voted in person at a polling place before election day

Definitely voted by mailing a ballot to elections officials before the election

Definitely voted in some other way

Not completely sure whether you voted or not

(IF NOT COMPLETELY SURE:) If you had to guess, would you say that you probably did vote in the elections, or probably did not vote in the elections? (2008 version “new”)

Response Categories:

1. No, did not vote
2. Yes, voted
0. DK; NA; refused; Washington D.C. (presidential years only); inap.; question not used

Partisan difference: voters vs. workers

I computed the average score on the NES seven-point party identification scale among the working class and subtracted it from the average score among the state as a whole, then took the absolute value of that difference to compute the magnitude of the partisan gap between the working class and the state as a whole. I rescaled this measure so that its feasible range was 0–100 (i.e., a state where the working class had an average score of 1 and the state had an average score of 7 would be a 100, and a state where the working class's partisanship was identical to that of the state as a whole would be a 0).

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? (IF REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT) Would you call yourself a strong (REP/DEM) or a not very strong (REP/DEM)? (IF INDEPENDENT, OTHER [1966 AND LATER: OR NO PREFERENCE]:) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party?

Response Categories

1. Strong Democrat
2. Weak Democrat
3. Independent – Democrat
4. Independent – Independent
5. Independent – Republican
6. Weak Republican
7. Strong Republican
9. Apolitical (1966 only: and DK)
0. DK; NA; other; refused to answer; inap.; question not used

% campaign/party staff from the working class

For those respondents who replied “yes” when asked whether they had worked for a part or candidate during the last election (VCF0719), I computed the percentage from the working class.

Did you do any (other) work for one of the parties or candidates?

Response Categories

1. No
2. Yes
0. DK; NA; inap.; question not used

Union density

I computed the percentage of respondents who reported that they or someone in their household belonged to a labor union (VCF0127).

Does [the head of the household] belong to a labor union? (1948)

Do either you or the head of your household belong to a labor union? Who is it that belongs? (1952, 1954)

(1956–1984, 2002: Does anyone) (1986 and later, excluding 2002: Do you or [1988: does] anyone else) in this household belong to a labor union? (IF YES:) Who is it that belongs? (1956 and later)

Response Categories

1. Yes, someone (1948: head) in household belongs to a labor union
2. No, no one in household belongs to a labor union
0. DK; NA; inap.; question not used

Appendix 2: Summary statistics

	<i>N</i>	Mean	Stand. Dev.	Min.	Max.
<i>Dependent variable</i>					
% of working class in state legislature	150	4.56416	3.345443	0	19.56522
<i>Supply-side explanations</i>					
% of high-income people from the working class	100	43.46548	11.15707	14.37649	71.42857
% of pol. interested people from the working class	100	47.27475	9.662862	13.63636	81.13208
% of rally/meeting attendees from the working class	99	43.89892	16.55189	0	100
% of high media consumers from the working class	100	51.29022	10.19839	0	77.44173
% of college graduates from the working class	100	20.54725	8.422476	0	41.93535
% of vote influencers from the working class	100	51.33601	8.958625	28.57143	75.86207
% of knowledgeable people from the working class	100	40.83561	12.41396	0	77.77778
% of confident people from the working class	100	46.17968	12.04116	17.64706	83.33333
<i>Demand-side explanations</i>					
% of voters from the working class	100	50.99578	7.514113	24.51613	67.11712
Partisan difference: voters vs. workers	100	-0.130007	0.1852372	-0.6597261	0.3376069
% of campaign/party staff from the working class	97	43.84369	24.56252	0	100
Union density	122	17.9344	11.54042	0	51.86916
Legislative professionalism	150	19.13533	11.4167	2.7	62

Appendix 3: (From note 6) replication of Table 2 (supply- and demand-side explanations and working-class representation) using alternative sample size cutoffs of 30 (first table) and 50 (second table)

Sample size cutoff of 30	1	2	3	4
<i>Supply-side explanations</i>				
% of high-income people from the working class	0.08 ⁺ (0.04)	—	0.04 (0.03)	—
% of pol. interested people from the working class	0.01 (0.04)	—	−0.01 (0.04)	—
% of rally/meeting attendees from the working class	−0.03 (0.02)	—	−0.03 (0.02)	—
% of high media consumers from the working class	−0.07 (0.04)	—	−0.05 (0.05)	—
% of college graduates from the working class	−0.02 (0.03)	—	−0.01 (0.02)	—
% of vote influencers from the working class	0.01 (0.05)	—	0.00 (0.06)	—
% of knowledgeable people from the working class	−0.01 (0.03)	—	0.00 (0.04)	—
% of confident people from the working class	0.03 (0.03)	—	0.03 (0.03)	—
<i>Demand-side explanations</i>				
% of voters from the working class	—	−0.04 (0.03)	−0.02 (0.05)	—
Partisan difference: voters vs. workers	—	−1.21 (1.65)	−1.01 (1.70)	—
% of campaign/party staff from the working class	—	0.02* (0.01)	0.02 ⁺ (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)
Union density	—	0.11** (0.03)	0.10** (0.03)	0.10** (0.02)
Legislative professionalism	—	−0.11** (0.02)	−0.11** (0.02)	−0.11** (0.02)
Intercept	3.13 (2.03)	5.09** (1.59)	6.16** (1.86)	3.23** (0.74)
N	95	93	93	93
R ²	0.1462	0.3492	0.4031	0.3311
Standard error	2.5936	2.2468	2.2581	2.2521

Sources: NCSL, Insurance Information Institute (1979), American National Election Studies (ANES, 2010) Cumulative Data File, and Squire (1992).

Notes: Cells report coefficients (with clustered standard errors in parentheses) from models relating the percentage of working-class people in the state legislature to the variables in question.

⁺ $p < .10$, two-tailed.

* $p < .05$, two-tailed.

** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

Appendix 3. Continued

Sample size cutoff of 50	1	2	3	4
<i>Supply-side explanations</i>				
% of high-income people from the working class	0.10* (0.04)	—	0.06 (0.03)	—
% of pol. interested people from the working class	0.02 (0.05)	—	0.01 (0.04)	—
% of rally/meeting attendees from the working class	−0.03 (0.02)	—	−0.04 ⁺ (0.02)	—
% of high media consumers from the working class	−0.06 (0.04)	—	−0.05 (0.05)	—
% of college graduates from the working class	−0.03 (0.03)	—	−0.01 (0.03)	—
% of vote influencers from the working class	0.00 (0.05)	—	0.00 (0.06)	—
% of knowledgeable people from the working class	−0.02 (0.03)	—	−0.01 (0.04)	—
% of confident people from the working class	0.03 (0.04)	—	0.03 (0.04)	—
<i>Demand-side explanations</i>				
% of voters from the working class	—	−0.06 ⁺ (0.03)	−0.06 (0.06)	—
Partisan difference: voters vs. workers	—	−0.70 (1.77)	−0.18 (1.85)	—
% of campaign/party staff from the working class	—	0.02* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02 ⁺ (0.01)
Union density	—	0.11** (0.03)	0.09** (0.03)	0.11** (0.03)
Legislative professionalism	—	−0.12** (0.02)	−0.11** (0.02)	−0.11** (0.02)
Intercept	3.46 (2.10)	6.01** (1.80)	7.32** (2.01)	3.40** (0.79)
<i>N</i>	89	89	89	89
<i>R</i> ²	0.1566	0.3485	0.4151	0.3297
Standard error	2.6364	2.275	2.2675	2.2802

Sources: NCSL, Insurance Information Institute (1979), ANES (2010) Cumulative Data File, and Squire (1992).

Notes: Cells report coefficients (with clustered standard errors in parentheses) from models relating the percentage of working-class people in the state legislature to the variables in question.

⁺*p* < .10, two-tailed.

**p* < .05, two-tailed.

***p* < .01, two-tailed.