Unionization and Workers' Attitudes toward International Trade: the ILWU puzzle

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Abstract: If any group of American workers has benefitted from the growth of trade it is the unionized dockworkers along the US West Coast. Shipping volumes through West Coast ports have increased substantially in the last 20 years, ballooning most rapidly in the 2002-2008 period. Employment, hours worked, and real compensation for dockworkers grew in tandem. Nevertheless, the powerful and militant International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) representing these workers is remarkably opposed to liberalization. In this paper we argue that the union’s stance is interpretable as a costly demonstration of its organizational culture. We trace the union’s stance on trade over several decades. In the most recent period we rely on interviews with several union leaders in addition to a survey of both newly-registered and long-term ILWU members in Los Angeles/Long Beach, Seattle, and Tacoma from 2007-2011. We compare ILWU members’ attitudes toward trade and immigration with those of non-members with otherwise similar characteristics. We also compare new union members with older cohorts. The union’s stance appears consistent with the ideological commitments of its founders and the members appear to support the union’s position. Our findings indicate that the political support for trade depends not just on voters’ structural positions in the economy but also on the organizations in which they are embedded. Unionization has the potential of transforming sectoral interests into something class (or “factor”)-based.

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If any group of American workers has benefitted from the growth of trade it is the unionized dockworkers along the US West Coast. It is estimated that over 40% of US imports pass through the Los Angeles/Long Beach port alone (Bonacich and Wilson 2008). Container shipping volumes through West Coast ports tripled between 1990 and 2007, growing at an average annual rate of almost 5.4% between 1990 and 2010. Over the same period the total value of US international trade grew at an average annual rate of 7% while annual GDP growth averaged 2.5%. Employment, hours worked, and real compensation for West Coast dockworkers grew in tandem. The collapse of work on the docks in 2009-2010 dispelled any doubts these workers may have had regarding the connection between their livelihoods and international trade activity. During the near-meltdown of the world economy in 2008-2009 the value of US trade showed a 20% decline and West coast shipping volumes dropped 15%.1

While international trade and the “logistics revolution” may have abetted the offshoring of manufacturing jobs and the decline of unionization more broadly (Bonacich and Wilson 2008), most external observers would expect dockworkers to support freer trade. Nevertheless, the powerful and militant International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), which represents these workers, has opposed trade liberalization for several decades. The ILWU couches its position in terms of “fair trade,” a stance often criticized as “shadow protectionism.” More recently, the union shut down the ports in 1999 to protest the WTO ministerial in Seattle and has voiced opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) as well as new bilateral free trade agreements with South Korea and several Central American countries, among others.

In this paper we argue that the union’s stance is interpretable as a costly demonstration of its organizational culture (Ahlquist and Levi 2011, Kreps 1990), which emphasizes that “an injury to one is an injury to all.” Union participation is capable of provoking preferences from the members. We trace the union’s stance on trade over several decades. In the most recent period we rely on interviews with several union leaders in addition to a survey of both newly-registered and long-term ILWU members in Los Angeles/Long Beach, Seattle, and Tacoma from 2006-2011. We compare ILWU members’ attitudes toward trade with those of non-members with otherwise similar characteristics. We also compare new union members with older cohorts. The union’s stance appears consistent with the ideological commitments of its founders and difficult to justify otherwise. Union members with longer tenure tend to be more likely to have an opinion about trade policy, to favor restrictions on trade, and to oppose NAFTA when compared to similar non-union members. Our findings indicate that the political support for trade depends not just on voters’ structural positions in the economy but also on the organizations in which they are embedded. Unionization can induce members to crystallize their opinions and has the potential of transforming sectorial into class (or “factor”)–based interests. This paper contributes to the growing literature on the determinants of

1 Shipping volume data are as reported in American Association of Port Authorities (2011). Trade data are from United States Bureau of Economic Analysis (2011).
citizen support for liberalized trade as well as the literature on the relationship between unionization, public opinion, and political mobilization.

In the next section we briefly review this literature, identifying how our focus on one union can add nuance to our understanding. Section 2 discusses the notion of “organizational culture,” as applied to labor unions, exploring how costly signals of an organization’s culture can improve organizational performance and possibly transform the members. Section 3 documents the expansion of shipping through the West Coast ports in recent years along with the benefits accruing to dockworkers in terms of wages and employment opportunities. Section 4 documents the ILWU’s stance on international trade over a period of six decades. The final section concludes. We collect details on the survey instrument and matching procedures in the appendix.

1. International trade and public opinion
Since the Great Depression policy makers and scholars have viewed public acquiescence to free trade policies, especially in the rich democracies, as important for maintaining a stable and growing world economy. Establishing the distribution of public opinion about trade policy and the extent to which individual attributes, cultural characteristics, and various public policies can affect voters’ opinions on trade remains a vigorous and contested area of research.

Early work was based squarely in either the sector-based (Ricardo-Viner) or factor-based (Hecksher-Ohlin) models of trade. Under the former, workers (and capital) are assumed to be “fixed” in their respective industries or sectors. Expressed preferences over trade exposure should vary systematically with industry of employment and the extent to which that industry benefits from trade. In the latter, increased trade benefits the owners of productive “factors” in which a country is relatively well-endowed while the owners of relatively scarce factors see their incomes decline. Rich industrial nations are generally held to be relatively well-endowed in capital and skilled labor; capital owners and high-skill workers stand to benefit from more trade while unskilled workers run the risk of lower wages and deteriorating employment prospects. Empirical work consistently turns up evidence that more educated individuals tend to favor lower trade barriers (Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Mayda and Rodrick 2005), a finding frequently interpreted as consistent with the Hecksher-Ohlin model.

Arguments about whether an individual’s opinions about trade policy derive from how they earn their income (factor-based) vs. the industry in which they are employed (sector-based) have given way to more nuanced claims involving sociotropism (Mansfield and Mutz 2009), preferences for fairness (Ehrlich 2010), exposure to economic ideas during college education (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006), risk exposure (Walter 2010), individual risk tolerance (Ehrlich and Maestas forthcoming), and survey framing effects (Hiscox 2006). Directly germane to this paper, there is no consistent evidence that unionization has any relationship with
trade opinions one way or another.² Taken together, these papers indicate that, at minimum, trade preferences are not so easily reducible to the expected earnings effects derived from economic models.

A criticism that can be leveled at all these studies, however, is the reliance on the standard national-level survey instruments. While surveys can be powerful tools, it is not always clear what we are tapping with our questions, all the more so when asking respondents to conjure opinions on topics about which they may be ill-informed. When asking about trade protection, tariffs, and various international treaties, it stands to reason that many survey respondents have little knowledge of these issues.³ Examining the ANES question commonly used to measure American attitudes on trade (e.g., in Scheve and Slaughter (2001)) we see that “haven’t thought much about it” is the modal response.⁴ And even if they are aware of these issues there is little evidence that voters consider them salient or important. For example, the Gallup “most important problem” question⁵, a widely used measure of issue salience, records a negligible number of respondents mentioning trade or the trade deficit as among the most important problems facing the United States in 2011, a period in which economic issues are extraordinarily salient.

Then there is the truly enormous literature, going back over six decades in the United States (Masters and Delaney 1987), looking at the “effect” of unionization on public opinion and voter behavior. Unions are held to be particularly interesting organizations since workers end up as union members for reasons of employment; there is little evidence that workers sort into unions for political reasons. Early contributions to this literature relied on interviews and, occasionally, surveys of union members for specific unions⁶ in order to describe the political opinions and activities of union members. But these studies never constructed compelling, rigorous comparisons with non-unionists. Later studies (Nagler and Leighley 2007) relied on large-scale public opinion surveys to compare the political opinions and behavior of those claiming union membership against non-members. These studies have the opposite problem: we have no information on which unions respondents belonged to or their level of exposure, though these studies have developed better estimates of unionization’s effect on voter turnout in the United States (Nagler and Leighley 2007; Radcliff 2001) and other democracies (Radcliff and Davis 2000). After 60 years of research on unions we still lack convincing evidence of whether or how union membership affects political attitudes.

We contribute to both these literatures by focusing on a group of workers for whom international trade is, objectively, intensely salient; their earnings prospects are directly bound up with the volume of international trade, especially in the Pacific

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² Interestingly Ehrlich (2010) finds a null relationship between unionization and reported support for “fair trade.”
³ Hiscox (2006) shows that negative framing effects are largest among the less educated.
⁴ For example, in the 2004 ANES 44% of respondents reported not having thought much about trade issues (http://www.electionstudies.org/onlinecommons/defaultcore2008/varfiles/Q456_2004.htm)
⁵ http://www.gallup.com/poll/1675/most-important-problem.aspx
⁶ The United Auto Workers was a particularly well-studied union in the 1950-60s.
Rim. They are already employed and their likelihood of remaining so depends positively on shipping volumes. They tend to live near the docks in the cosmopolitan and outward-facing areas like Los Angeles/Long Beach/San Pedro, Portland, Seattle/Tacoma, and San Francisco/Oakland. The level of skill needed to work on the docks has also increased over the years, especially since the advent of containerization in the late 1960s and computerized dispatch and tracking in the 1990s and 2000s. All these factors point to the conclusion that it is manifestly in dockworkers’ interest to support more liberalized trade. But these workers are also nearly completely unionized in one of the most powerful, militant, and socially activist unions in the United States. The ILWU is renowned for its vibrant internal democracy and rank-and-file participation (Levi et al. 2009; Witter and McGinn 2004) as well as the easy recall of its leaders. The ILWU has long maintained a broad “social justice” orientation. We argue that the ILWU’s stance on trade is consistent with its stated “organizational culture” and serves to credibly communicate the union’s organizational culture to its members. Participation in the union is likely to provoke preferences from the members. Available survey evidence as well as the longevity and consistency of the union’s position across leadership cohorts seems to imply that the membership has bought in.

2. Unions and organizational culture

Formal organizations exist because they solve informational and distributional problems associated with collective action under changing conditions (Coase 1937; Arrow 1974). It is impossible to write organizational constitutions specifying how an organization (or its leaders) will act in all possible states of the world (Williamson 1985; Kreps 1990; Miller 1992). All organizations, therefore, rely on a combination of governance rules, stated principles, and norms to enable members and leaders to form expectations about how the organization will behave over time. In the context of firms, Kreps (1990) and Miller (1992) call this “corporate culture,” a concept we generalize to organizational culture.

Organizational culture is composed of explicitly stated principles that delineate the scope of organizational action, define key attributes such as leadership rents, and provide focal points in situations where multilateral trigger strategies are critical for supporting organizational performance.

Muste (1928) nicely sums up the organizational dilemma facing labor unions:

...the trade union seeks to combine within itself two extremely divergent types of social structure, that of an army and that of a democratic town meeting... the members constitute an army but an army that elects its own generals... (and) votes on the declaration of war and on the terms of armistice and peace... Imagine the conflict in the soul of a union official who

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7 Scheve and Slaughter (2001) show that support of trade declines among homeowners in counties that are negatively affected by trade. Los Angeles/Long Beach, Portland, Seattle/Tacoma and the San Francisco Bay Area have all had very robust real estate markets over the last 20 years, recent declines notwithstanding.
must have the attitude and discharge the functions at one and the same
time of both a general and a chairman of a debating society

Given the labor union’s multiple “faces,” organizational culture is particularly
important. For Kreps, Miller, and us, an organizational culture is, in part, a statement
by the leadership (or prospective leaders) about how they will deploy resources
when unforeseen contingencies arise, even if these actions are not in the immediate
self-interest of the leaders. As Kreps notes (124-27), for the organizational culture
to be effective it must be clear and simple enough that both the membership and the
leader know what should be done. For this to function, the principles must be
widely communicated both inside and outside the organization. The actions of the
leaders as they relate to decisions implicated in the organizational culture must be
transparently observable to all.

If we understand the production of the organizational culture as the result of a kind
of contract between leadership and members, then there is also a question of how it
is reproduced through time. As new members join, they will likely view the culture
of the union as so many norms of behavior. They will comply, i.e. engage in called
upon actions, so long as there are sufficient numbers around them visibly engaging
in that behavior. Initially, we expect that some combination of sanctions and
expectations about others will promote compliance. Over time, however, the new
recruits may come to reconsider their beliefs and preferences. They may begin to
develop new normative motivations as the basis for their compliance.

For their part, workers come to the job with beliefs about what is attainable through
a union and what the union has a right to expect of them. Some of these beliefs are
crystallized before joining; others are evoked in the process of belonging.
Participation in certain types of social interactions, especially in a formally
structured organizations with strong organizational culture, is likely to induce
members to reconsider the set of relevant actions, with implications for individual
action and group-level outcomes. This notion is consistent with other theorists
(Brady et al. 2005; Weingast 2005; Bicchieri 2006) especially the “active decision
hypothesis” of Stutzer et al. (2011; Fehr and Hoff 2011). They argue that

[e]ngaging uninformed individuals in an active decision to contribute or not
contribute to a public good induces them to reflect and form a subjective
value for the prosocial activity. If their value is sufficiently high, they will
contribute. Indeed, it is often argued that only slight nudges are sufficient to
engage individuals in deliberations that substantially affect their behaviour

Extended exposure to a strong organizational culture that repeatedly demands
active decisions of the members implies a chrystallization and, possibly, shift in
members’ opinions on the relevant topics.
3. Employment, compensation, and shipping volumes on the US West Coast

In this section we briefly document the positive effect expanded international trade has had on employment prospects ILWU members. Before proceeding, some discussion about the nature of work on the docks is necessary. Dock work is notoriously variable, oscillating rapidly between periods of slack and very high demand. While macroeconomic trends and seasonal variation drive the average employment levels there is substantial short-term variation around these averages due to things like production delays, weather, natural disasters, and the skill of ship captains. Time spent in port is expensive for shipowners. Stevedoring companies therefore require a large pool of labor that can be called upon at short notice in periods of high demand. For their part, dockworkers would prefer some predictability. To address these competing demands the ILWU and employers have developed a system of tiered worker classifications and job rotation/work sharing within tiers. Worker classifications are based on job type (clerk, foreman, “walking boss”, mechanic, etc.) and seniority. The most senior workers, enjoying full ILWU membership rights and first dibs on work shifts are referred to as “Class-A.” The less-senior ILWU members are “Class-B.” The “Casual” pool is called upon in high demand periods. Among the Casuials, the so-called “Identified Casuials” are those with an ongoing relationship with the ILWU; as they accrue more work hours they become eligible to become Class-B members. “Unidentified Casuials” are individuals who might work just a few shifts on the docks. As a rough analogy, this division among longshoremen is similar to the seniority divisions in academic departments, with Identified Casuials as the tenure-track assistant professors and Unidentified Casuials as the visiting adjunct faculty of the maritime world.

The ILWU has a strong commitment to equalization of work opportunities across members, especially within each tier. The ILWU-controlled dispatch system offers shifts to workers based on seniority and past work opportunities. Workers are never obliged to accept a shift. A declined shift simply passes to the next person in the dispatch queue.

Figure 1 displays the relevant data. In the upper left panel we plot shipping volume, measured in millions of twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), and total hours of paid longshore work (for all tiers of longshoremen). Both show impressive, sustained increases from 1995-2007 reflecting the expansion of US trade in the Pacific Rim, especially with China. The financial crisis and ensuing recession of 2008-09 induced a pronounced decline in trade and shipping volumes, but hours worked by West Coast longshoremen decreased even more sharply.
The upper-right panel gives us one picture of the expansion of ILWU membership (and available work) over the last 25 years. The solid line displays the number of active Class-A workers, i.e., those working at least one hour in that year. This value remained essentially flat through the 1980s, declined in the early 1990s and then expanded systematically from 1995 onward. The two broken lines represent the number of Class-A individuals working full time or better (at least 2000 hours/year) and those getting consistent overtime work (at least 2800 hours/year). Both of these values show sustained increases demonstrating that the expansion in trade was addressed by both expanding the workforce and increasing hours worked. As a demonstration of the ILWU’s commitment to equalization of work opportunity note that the collapse in trade and work opportunities at the end of the 2000s does not
show up in the size of the active Class-A workforce, though the proportion of Class-A workers putting in full-time hours or better declined markedly. Rather than push workers off the rolls ILWU members shared the pain.

The bottom panel displays the average real earnings for Class-A workers over time by the same hours-worked divisions used above. These data indicate that compensation grew along with the size of the workforce, opportunities to work, and international trade. This growth in real earnings is even more remarkable when we consider that median real incomes for American blue-collar workers have been near-stagnant since the 1980s. By virtually any measure ILWU members have benefitted from expanded US trade, especially with the countries of the Pacific Rim. It seems unlikely that ILWU members would expect future trade to harm them given the union’s continued strength and long-term contracts with the PMA.

It may be argued that the ILWU position on trade is the result of a political compromise within a union whose constituency includes more than dockworkers. The union, itself, recognizes this:

Because the ILWU's membership includes longshore workers who rely on international commerce for employment, sugar workers in Hawaii who need legislative protection from sugar imports, warehouse workers who handle both domestic and international products, and hotel workers whose livelihood rests on a growing global economy, the union has sought to develop a solution to the trade problem that answers all members' concerns.

Nevertheless, the union’s Longshore Division remains the heart of the union; all ILWU presidents have come from Longshore. Our survey data below look only at Longshore workers, presenting a difficult test for our claims. While it may be the case that Hawaiian sugar workers are more protectionist than the Longshore division we demonstrate that long-term ILWU members are considerably more skeptical about trade than similar non-members.

4. The ILWU’s organizational culture and International Trade

4.1 The ILWU’s organizational culture
Since its 1937 founding, the ILWU has maintained a vigorous and explicit organizational culture, rooted in the experiences of the “Big Strike” of 1934. For decades, the union has encoded this culture in the “10 Guiding Principles” (International Longshore & Warehouse Union 2006). Most relevant to the issue of trade are guiding principles 2, 4, 7, and 8:

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8 This decline in average hours worked by Class-A men is far less drastic that the decline in paid hours displayed in the upper left panel of Figure 1, indicating that the other tiers, especially the Casuals, bore the brunt of the collapse in work on the docks in 2008-09.
9 Average earnings values do not include the generous health and pension benefits the ILWU has won. Nominal values were adjusted for inflation using the CPI for US urban West-region consumers.
10 http://www.ilwu19.com/history/the_ilwu_story/international_solidarity.htm
#2: Labor unity is at all times the key for a successful economic advancement. Anything that detracts from labor unity hurts all labor. Any group of workers through craft unionism or through cozy deals at the expense of others will in the long run gain but little and inevitably lose both its substance and its friends. No matter how difficult the going, a union must fight in every possible way to advance the principles of labor unity.

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#4: “To help any worker in distress” must be a daily guide in the life of every trade union and its individual members. Labor solidarity means just that. Unions have to accept the fact that solidarity of labor stands above all else, including even the so-called sanctity of contract. We cannot adopt for ourselves the policies of union leaders who insist that because they have a contract, their members are compelled to perform work, even behind a picket line. Every picket line must be respected as if it were our own.

...

#7: Just as water flows to its lowest level, so do wages if the bulk of the workers are left unorganized. The day of craft unionism-the aristocracy of labor-was over when mass production was introduced. To organize the unorganized must be the cardinal principle of any union worth its salt; and to accomplish this is not merely in the interest of the unorganized, it is for the benefits of the organized as well.

#8: The basic aspirations and desires of the workers throughout the world are the same. Workers are workers the world over. International solidarity, particularly among maritime workers, is essential to their protection and a guarantee of reserve economic power in times of strife. (emphasis in the original)

Principle #8 is particularly noteworthy in the context of trade since it represents and explicit invocation of “class interest” in justifying the union’s actions and objectives.

Acting consistently with these principles requires the combination of leadership commitment to political causes and rank-and-file democratic governance arrangements. It also requires continuing to win industrial actions, and the ILWU leadership has long proved its effectiveness in winning improvements in membership wages, hours, conditions, and benefits.

Establishment of and compliance to democratic governance is one way the leader can signal the depth of her commitment to her principles, and this is the path the ILWU has chosen (Levi et al. 2009). Rank-and-file democracy enables members to learn from each other as well as leaders and to legitimate leadership goals through the process of challenge.
In the ILWU, leaders subject themselves to extensive procedural controls, including limits on their compensation. By submitting to constraints, the leaders arguably increase their ability to persuade followers to engage in actions that have little to do with their own immediate interests (Ferejohn 1999; Levi 2005). The leaders are paid salaries equivalent to those of the rank and file; they trade monetary compensation for ideological influence. Even to this day, the officers maintain an economic status similar to those they serve, and it is customary for those defeated for office in the ILWU to return to the docks as rank-and-file workers. Recent examples include International Presidents David Arian and Brian McWilliams in 1994 and 2000, respectively; Coast Committeeman Joe Wenzl in 2006; and Local 13 (Tacoma) President Conrad Spell in 2010. International President James Spinosa completed two terms in 2006, stepped down, and then became president of Local 63 (clerks) in San Pedro until his retirement from the union in 2011.

Recall is easy, and elections have always been free and open. Notably, the founding fathers of both unions stayed in power for a long time, but the elections were clean and fair. On the other hand, local leadership tended to be subject to cycles and still is.

Through the years ILWU leaders possessed strong normative and political commitments. They reveal the strength of their commitments by their willingness, if necessary, to arouse membership resistance and government punishments, including jail time. Harry Bridges, the founding president, angered some of his members by opposing the Korean War, but most rallied to his defense when he was sent to jail for speaking out. Most members certainly supported him during the many trials and threats of deportation as he tried to win citizenship and disprove prosecutorial claims of Communist party membership.

4.2 ILWU leadership and trade policy

For the majority of its history, the union supported low trade barriers, but the rationale expressed by union leaders was not one of classical comparative advantage. Rather the ILWU’s trade stance reflected the leadership’s express commitment to broad labor solidarity and support for the Communist and Socialist regimes in Asia and Eastern Europe. After the union’s initial leadership (and Communism) had passed from the scene, the ILWU’s trade stance evolved in ways consistent with both the broader American labor movement and the leaders’ reading of the 10 Guiding Principles.

During his forty-year term as president, Harry Bridges often spoke of trade as a way to increase cultural contact with other nations, particularly with the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe. Between 1955 and 1973, the union passed several resolutions to this effect.11 In his column “On the Beam” in the ILWU’s official

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newspaper, *The Dispatcher*, Bridges occasionally commented on this issue. In 1955, he wrote:

As things shape up now probably the next most important step in the improving relations between the United States and the socialist countries of the world will come about in the field of expanded East-West trade. Foreign trade and more of it has always been the life blood of the ILWU.\(^{12}\)

In 1965, in opposition to the AFL-CIO’s position to prohibit increased trade with China, Bridges wrote:

Any student of history knows that expansion of world trade has always strengthened the cause of peace. It may be true that many wars have broken out in the past over a division of world markets, but even in these cases the aims were to increase trade for one country over another. No reasonable nation ever assumed its capacity to grow and prosper without trade.\(^{13}\)

Bridges’ position is clearly informed by his pro-Communist political stance. Gene Vrana, the ILWU’s Associate Director of Education, notes: “Bridges supported these policies due to his political convictions and it was easy for the rank and file to get behind him out of self-interest.”\(^{14}\)

In a 1968 statement before the US House of Representatives’ Committee on Ways and Means, the ILWU Washington Representative summarized the union’s position, noting: “The ILWU supports free trade and urges the opening of markets in Eastern Europe and China as a means of improving our trade balance and helping world peace.” And “Recognizing the frustrating problems in working out agreements, we believe that negotiations, such as those being conducted through GATT, are the answer.”

Concerns about labor injustices associated with freer trade generally emerged after Bridges’ time, but his thinking clearly shapes current ILWU policy. Joe Wenzl, a former member of the ILWU’s Coast Labor Relations Committee\(^{15}\) states; “The union’s position [on trade] is right in line with Bridge’s type of thinking. It flows directly from our 10 Guiding Principles.”\(^{16}\)

The current opposition to trade liberalization dates to the Reagan Administration but became particularly pronounced around NAFTA. In the 1980s the union formally voiced its concern to Congress on a number of trade issues. For example, the union wrote to the Senate Finance Committee in 1987 expressing support for a


\(^{13}\) Harry Bridges, “On the Beam”, *The Dispatcher*, Vol. 23, no. 6, Mar 19 1965, p. 2

\(^{14}\) Gene Vrana, ILWU Associate Director of Education, interviewed by author. June 12, 2011.

\(^{15}\) The Coast Committee is the executive body for the union’s dominant longshore division (International Longshore & Warehouse Union 2006).

\(^{16}\) See ILWU (2006)
bill that would define denial of workers’ rights as an unfair trade practice (Lewis 1987). The letter states,

For the ILWU the current trade imbalance only confirms what we have long known: that American workers’ own well-being is inseparably bound up with the progress of our fellow workers abroad. But self-interest is not our only motivation. Just as we reject the callous assumption by some that economic recovery in the United States will require the steady erosion of domestic labor costs...we reject the common assumption that labor rights must be trampled on as they are in many countries for the sake of what is euphemistically called ‘initial capital formation.’

We note that even in this letter the ILWU’s conception of “self-interest” seems to encompass all American workers, not simply ILWU members.

In April 1991 the International Executive Board issued a Statement of Policy on the North American Free Trade Zone raising concerns about “the maquiladora pattern” - or the likelihood that these agreements would give companies unfettered access to easily exploitable populations of workers and resources. In the same month, ILWU International President Dave Arian made a speech to the union’s Coast Committee, referencing government abuses of the Stevedores Union in Veracruz, Mexico and linking free trade to the attenuated power of organized labor in liberalizing economies.

In the run up to NAFTA ratification the union issued several statements opposing the agreement and launched an educational campaign to inform its members of the deleterious effects of free trade on workers’ rights, both American and foreign. The union utilized its District Councils, Regional Organizing Committees and International Representatives to disseminate information on NAFTA. The educational material, entitled “No on NAFTA” Petition; Fair Trade, Free Trade, and the ILWU”, involved an effort to raise 10,000 signatures to send to American, Canadian and Mexican government officials in opposition to the trade agreement.

Joe Wenzl states; “The vast majority of the ILWU opposes NAFTA and CAFTA. You’ll be hard pressed to find a dissenting opinion. NAFTA has become a dirty word to the average longshoremen, same as ‘employer’”,17 Gene Vrana confirms; “You won’t be able to find any officer who is going to sidetrack this issue. We have a consistent policy of 20 years by the union against free trade and an even longer history of being in favor of worker solidarity internationally”.18

It is important to note that though certain members might articulate protectionist reasoning in their opposition to NAFTA, the union has never espoused overt protectionism. David Arian emphasized this stance in a speech during US negotiations leading up to NAFTA; “First I would like to point out that our Union has

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17 Joe Wenzl, former International Coast Committeemen and Local 19 Executive Board, interviewed by author.
Seattle, WA. August 30th, 2011.
18 Gene Vrana, interviewed by author
always supported free and fair trade, but the agreement that is being negotiated is neither free nor fair...”\textsuperscript{19} Instead the International leadership has condoned apparent worker-friendly international trade programs, such as the European Community codifying worker rights in its design and certain AFL-CIO trade proposals.

The WTO again brought the issue of US trade policy to the union’s attention. In August 1999, in a Statement of Policy on the World Trade Organization, the International Executive Board detailed the union’s plans to demonstrate against the WTO meting in Seattle. In support of the protests, the union stopped work for eight hours on November 30\textsuperscript{th}, 1999 at all locals along the West Coast. During a speech on the first day of protests, ILWU International President Brian McWilliams stated the union's position:\textsuperscript{20}

And let us be clear. Let’s not allow the free traders to paint us as isolationist anti-traders. We are for trade. Don't ever forget -- it is the labor of working people that produces all the wealth. When we say we demand fair trade policies we mean we demand a world in which trade brings dignity and fair treatment to all workers, with its benefits shared fairly and equally, a world in which the interconnectedness of trade promotes peace and encourages healthy and environmentally sound and sustainable development, a world which promotes economic justice and social justice and environmental sanity. The free traders promote economic injustice, social injustice and environmental insanity.\textsuperscript{21}

More recently in December 2010, ILWU President Robert McEllrath sent a letter to then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi expressing the ILWU’s opposition to the South Korean Trade agreement. Reiterating the union’s position on these matters, McEllrath states:

By all accounts, the Korea-United States Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) will increase trade between South Korea and the United States, which will result in an increase in cargo movement between the two countries. An increase in cargo movement is good for dockworkers. However, this fact alone is insufficient to overcome the vast deficiencies of the KORUS FTA.

The KORUS FTA will cost jobs, lower environmental, labor, food and product quality standards, and empower corporations from the United States and South Korea to challenge public interests in both countries. The labor standards provision of the agreement only provides that each country enforce its own laws to adhere to the core labor standards identified by the International Labor Organization. The United States and South Korea’s laws

\textsuperscript{19} David Arian speech to the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, April 1992
\textsuperscript{20} The continued hostility the union feels towards the WTO and similar organizations is accessible to ILWU members on Local 19's website: http://www.ilwu19.com/history/wto/wto.htm
\textsuperscript{21} http://www.ilwu19.com/history/wto/speech.htm
and enforcement in this area are completely inadequate and must be amended prior to the implementation of the agreement.\textsuperscript{22}

Though official statements and resolutions put forward by the International largely express these issues in terms of global worker solidarity, local opposition can take a more protectionist form. Scott Mason, current President of Local 23 in Tacoma, elaborates his position:

If imports rise faster than exports, Americans workers lose. A net balance that results in a trade deficit affects the whole country. We ship a lot of empty containers and longshore workers are not okay with this. We benefit from both imports and exports and we even benefit from shipping empties, but we’re only happy when the balance helps the American worker. We realize that shipping away all of our jobs is not smart in the long run. In Tacoma at the local level, we support Obama’s mission to double exports, but not by shipping out empty containers. Of course we are not against all forms of trade, but only when the net effect means we’re losing more than gaining.\textsuperscript{23}

In interviews with several former and current ILWU leaders, not one reported a change in the position of the union leadership or the rank and file with the collapse of trade in recent years. In the several conventions and International Executive Board meetings since the onset of the financial crisis, the union has not changed its stance on this issue.

\textit{Discussion}

Across the years, ILWU leaders clearly believe that trade issues are relevant to the union’s mission. The leadership regularly invokes the declared principles of the union to justify and explain their stance. Interestingly, however, these stances, especially since the 1980s, seem to conflict with the immediate, short-term material interests of the members and, perhaps, the leaders as well. Taking such positions, and using union resources to do so, the leaders behave exactly as Kreps and Miller describe: taking costly stands that have no matrial benefits in the short term reinforces the organization’s culture, with positive effects for leadership credibility more generally.

Comparing east coast and west coast dockworker’s unions provides further evidence that the ILWU’s position on trade is organizationally specific. The union representing dockworkers on the east coast, the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA),\textsuperscript{24} has a long history of corruption, racketeering, and conservative politics (Ahlquist and Levi 2011; Kimeldorf 1988). Extensive searches in both the secondary literature and primary source archives turned up no record of the ILA taking formal positions on trade policy one way or another. They certainly were not

\textsuperscript{22} No author, December, 2010. http://www.ilwu.org/?p=1626

\textsuperscript{23} Scott Mason, current president of Local 23 (Tacoma), interviewed by author. June 16\textsuperscript{th}, 2011.

\textsuperscript{24} The ILWU was formerly the ILA’s Pacific Coast District but seceded in 1937 to form the ILWU.
advocating “fair trade” positions in the Congressional Record or calling work stoppages to protest the WTO.

4.3 Dockworkers’ attitudes toward trade

The leadership has a long history of taking stands on international trade that are deeply informed by the union’s organizing principles and the current international economic environment. These stances, especially the union’s anti-NAFTA position and subsequent opposition to major international trade agreements and organizations, are costly; the union’s members are unambiguous beneficiaries of increased US trade with Pacific Rim nations.

But what of the members? Do we see evidence that the union has succeeded in provoking preferences over trade policy? To what extent do their opinions track those stated by the leadership? Are ILWU members systematically different from otherwise similar non-members?

We measure dockworkers’ attitudes toward trade through individual-level survey data of ILWU members and registered casuals (both groups subsequently referred to as members) in the locals of Seattle, Tacoma and Los Angeles/Long Beach. The survey was conducted from 2006–2011.25 Surveys were administered in a variety of formats. Early surveys were administered over the phone. After some in the union objected to phone surveys subsequent survey administration occurred on site at the union hall during meetings using pencil-and-paper survey instruments. Members were encouraged to participate via a raffle of local college football tickets. Over the same period we generated a sample of non-union members by administering a similar survey using random digit dialing (RDD) into the telephone exchanges with geographic coverage covering the most common union member residences areas in each local. In total, we surveyed 675 ILWU members and 604 non-ILWU members.

We made tremendous effort to generate a reasonable random sample of the union membership. Nevertheless, due to some internal union opposition, significant non-native English speaking populations, especially in Southern California, and the dramatic effect of the global economic crisis on dock work availability (and therefore member availability and interaction with the union, especially for newly registered casuals) we ended up with a set of respondents that selected in to our study. For this reason we rely heavily on ex-post matching techniques to construct defensible comparisons of ILWU members with non-members.

We focus on two survey questions: one asking the respondent to declare whether they favor increased restrictions on imports and a second asking their level of approval of NAFTA.

Matching

25 The union’s requirement that we repeatedly gain permission of the local leadership to conduct the survey and their prohibition of the survey during the contract year of 2008 account for the extended survey time frame.
Recent work has shown the utility of matching methods to simulate an experimental design when the treatment, in this case being a member of the ILWU, cannot be considered randomly assigned (Eggers and Hainmueller 2009; Imai 2005; Simmons and Hopkins 2005). The matching approach allows us to control for potential bias resulting from the respondents’ observable characteristics in the treatment (ILWU) and control (RDD) groups.

Following the strategy proposed in Ho et al. (2007), we use a matching step to “preprocess” our data, selecting a balanced subset of ILWU and RDD respondents. By matching prior to implementing standard parametric models we are better able to estimate the average treatement “effect” of ILWU membership on trade attitudes. We put the term “effect” in quotation marks because we cannot unambiguously rule out the possibility that workers select in to the ILWU for unmeasured reasons that may be correlated with their political attitudes (such as family history in dockwork and ILWU membership). That said, we are confident that survey respondents (and ILWU members more generally) are not self-selecting in to the ILWU for political reasons, nor are they exiting the union when the union takes political stands with which they might disagree (Ahlquist and Levi 2011).

In some sense the ideal “control” group would be West Coast dockworkers who are not members of the ILWU. There are none; virtually every West Coast dockworker is somehow affiliated with the ILWU. That said, our baseline expectation is that dockworkers should be more pro-trade than otherwise similar individuals, especially since most dockworkers hold education levels that are not generally considered “high skill” in the literature. Matching, in this case, lets us construct the most defensible set of comparisons even if we are not able to claim to have identified the “causal effect” of union membership.

Matching allows us to select, weight or selectively drop observations so that our covariates of interest are balanced in the treatment and control groups. We are able to do so without inducing bias as long as our method does not depend on the future outcomes variables, which we exclude from the the preprocessing step. By discarding observations that do not fit in the range of a balanced distribution of covariates we eliminate approximately 27% of our observations but achieve ILWU and non-ILWU groups that are closely balanced on observables.

Because we have several covariates and a limited number of potential matches, one-to-one exact matching is not feasible. Instead we use the genetic matching technique described in Abadie and Imbens (2011) and Diamond and Sekhon (2010), in which a search algorithm iteratively checks and improves covariate balance across matched and treated units. This is done by calculating and searching through potential distance metrics (including the Mahalanobis distance between groups) each corresponding to a particular assignment of weights for all matching covariates. The algorithm then selects the appropriate weight for each variable based on paired t-tests (for dichotomous variables) or Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests (for continuous
variables) so as to maximize the balance on observables in the matched dataset.\textsuperscript{26} We discard observations for which there are no effective match in both the treatment and control groups. Observed covariates are the age, sex, ethnicity (white vs. non-white), education level, geographic location, and the year the survey was conducted. We do not match on the respondents’ political party identification or income category as these are arguably effects of increased tenure in the union for ILWU respondents.\textsuperscript{27} As a balance diagnostic, a plot showing the standardized difference in means between the treatment and control groups for each included covariate in both the matched and unmatched data is included the appendix.

Because we include personal covariates with lower response rates, our data are sensitive to listwise deletion. For most of our covariates the rate of missingness is from 0 – 10%. The most problematic variable is the respondents’ income category, which is asked at the end of the survey and is missing from 37% of observations. Since personal covariates are of obvious importance in our regressions, we impute missing values rather than list-wise delete entire observations (King et al. 2001). We use R’s Amelia II package to perform the multiple imputations. We perform our analyses across five imputed and matched datasets and report the averaged coefficients and standard errors across regression results.\textsuperscript{28}

\textit{Attitudes on US trade barriers}

The first relevant survey question asks respondents their opinion on the US government limiting imports. Our survey uses the same wording as the ANES question commonly used in other studies. The question reads:

“Some people have suggested placing new limits on foreign imports in order to protect American jobs. Others say that such limits would raise consumer prices and hurt American exports. Do you favor or oppose placing new limits on imports, or haven’t you though much about this?”

The respondents were allowed to answer “Favor”, “Oppose”, or “Haven’t thought much about it”.\textsuperscript{29} Table 1 displays the frequency distribution of ILWU and RDD responses to this question for both the raw data and the matched set of observations. As point of comparison we include the ANES 2004 responses as well.

\textsuperscript{26} We also ran our regressions on matched datasets generated by propensity score and Mahalanobis distance methods. Substantive interpretation is unchanged.
\textsuperscript{27} We also include the survey mode (paper/pencil, phone, web) in the final regression analyses, but we do not include this in the matching step as RDD respondents were only surveyed over the phone.
\textsuperscript{28} Regression coefficients are averaged across the five results and standard errors are computed to account for the uncertainty associated with imputation methods as suggested by Rubin (1987) and Schafer (1997).
\textsuperscript{29} The possible response “Don’t Know” and “Refuse to answer” was also included on our survey, but only 7% of ILWU respondents chose this answer and 3% of RDD respondents, so we exclude it from analysis.
Table 1: Distribution of responses to whether the US government should place new limits on imports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ILWU (unmatched)</th>
<th>RDD (unmatched)</th>
<th>ILWU (matched)</th>
<th>RDD (matched)</th>
<th>ANES 2004 (weighted)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haven’t thought about it</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favor</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 reveals that in the raw data a similar number of ILWU and RDD respondents report holding an overall opinion on this issue in either direction (67% and 64% respectively). However, contingent on having an opinion, 58% of ILWU respondents said they favored new restrictions on imports, whereas 47% of RDD respondents choose this category. In the matched data, of those that reported an opinion (69% of ILWU respondents, and 70% of RDD respondents), 42% of RDD and 54% of ILWU respondents reported favoring increased restrictions (a difference of 12 percentage points as opposed to 11 points in the unmatched data). All groups in our survey are more likely to have an opinion on trade restrictions and to be more likely to oppose trade restrictions than the ANES 2004 sample, though the difference in time and regional specificity of our survey make this comparison less illuminating.

We take the three possible response categories, “favor”, “oppose”, and “haven’t thought much about it” to construct the dependent variable for our multinomial logistic regressions. We perform regressions on each of the five imputed and matched datasets and average the results. With the reference category of not having thought about the issue, Table 2 displays the averaged coefficients, standard errors, and odds-ratios of the included covariates. We model union tenure with a series of interaction terms (we plot the distributions of responses by union rank for each of the three locals in the appendix).  

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30. In addition, our survey asked respondents the follow up questions “If you favor/oppose, do you strongly favor/oppose or just favor/oppose placing new limits on imports”. Though we do not include the follow up question in our regression models, it is interesting to note that among ILWU respondents, 48% said they strongly favored new limits and 35% strongly opposed, whereas among RDD respondents 42% strongly favored new limits and 64% strongly opposed.

31. While we also have data on self-reported length of time a respondent has “worked on the docks” we prefer the union rank indicator as a measure of union tenure and exposure since hours worked on the docks determines rank. It is possible to have worked on the docks infrequently but over a long stretch of calendar time.
Our results indicate that registered casuals and B-men in the ILWU are not significantly more likely to favor import restrictions instead of not having thought about the issue compared to the matched non-union members. But registered casuals are significantly less likely to oppose restricting imports. Class-A members are significantly more likely to favor increased restrictions on imports.

To further investigate the age cohort vs. union tenure interpretation we conducted a separate matching exercise in which we matched ILWU union members (A- and B-men) on age and then examined the differences between them. The frequency distribution is reported in the left-hand columns in table 3. Even among those of similar age, union rank affects attitudes toward import restrictions. We also matched A and B men on the number of years they report being a registered member of the union (highly correlated with age) and report the distribution frequencies in the right hand columns of Table 3. B-men who have been in the union as long as A-men, but have consistently not logged enough hours of work to achieve A-status are much less likely to have an opinion on foreign imports as well as less likely to favor increased restrictions.

Table 2: Multinomial logistic regression results on attitudes toward trade barriers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Favor Import Restrictions/ No Opinion</th>
<th>Oppose Import Restrictions/ No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coefficients (SE)</td>
<td>Odds Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-1.085 (1.103)</td>
<td>-2.529 (1.268)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILWU member</td>
<td>-0.675 (0.521)</td>
<td>0.509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILWU * Class A</td>
<td>0.600 (0.301) *</td>
<td>1.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILWU * Class B</td>
<td>-0.173 (0.349)</td>
<td>0.841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political party (Dem)</td>
<td>-0.076 (0.213)</td>
<td>0.927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Party (Rep)</td>
<td>-0.268 (0.342)</td>
<td>0.764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0.234 (0.203)</td>
<td>1.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.304 (0.219)</td>
<td>1.355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>0.021 (0.294)</td>
<td>1.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacoma</td>
<td>-0.202 (0.303)</td>
<td>0.816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.012 (0.007)</td>
<td>1.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>0.083 (0.061)</td>
<td>1.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey year</td>
<td>-0.049 (0.126)</td>
<td>0.952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income category</td>
<td>0.001 (0.046)</td>
<td>1.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey mode (paper)</td>
<td>0.827 (0.481)</td>
<td>2.287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey mode (web)</td>
<td>0.933 (0.602)</td>
<td>2.542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Lik</td>
<td>-973.140</td>
<td>[DF]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>932</td>
<td>[BIC]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001
Note: Reference categories are Independent for political party, San Pedro for geographic area, and phone for survey mode.
Table 3: Comparing trade attitudes among union members by union tenure, matching on age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A-men (matched on age)</th>
<th>B-men (matched on age)</th>
<th>A-men (matched on years in the union)</th>
<th>B-men (matched on years in the union)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haven’t thought about it</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favor</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows the regression results of the same model, but with the coefficients expressing the likelihood of opposing import restrictions with the reference category of favoring them. Union membership and the interaction term with Class-A are both negatively associated with being likely to oppose in comparison to being in favor of increased restrictions, but neither of the coefficients achieve traditional significance levels.
Table 4: Multinomial logistic regression results on attitudes toward trade barriers (alternate reference category)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Favor Import Restrictions/</th>
<th>Oppose Import Restrictions</th>
<th>Coefficients (SE)</th>
<th>t-statistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.549 (0.954)</td>
<td>1.624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILWU member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.375 (0.483)</td>
<td>0.776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILWU * Class A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.212 (0.303)</td>
<td>0.702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILWU * Class B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.174 (0.318)</td>
<td>-0.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political party (Dem)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.355 (0.198)</td>
<td>1.785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Party (Rep)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.027 (0.287)</td>
<td>0.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.011 (0.196)</td>
<td>0.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.433 (0.240)</td>
<td>-1.804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.216 (0.292)</td>
<td>-0.415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacoma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.133 (0.280)</td>
<td>-0.475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.001 (0.007)</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.167 (0.056)</td>
<td>-2.939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.088 (0.121)</td>
<td>-0.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income category</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.033 (0.049)</td>
<td>-0.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey mode (paper)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.034 (0.439)</td>
<td>-0.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey mode (web)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.062 (0.562)</td>
<td>1.111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Log Lik: 973.140  DF: 1832  N: 932  BIC: 2155.164

Note: Reference categories are Independent for political party, San Pedro for geographic area, and phone for survey mode.

We note that our findings are consistent with other previous studies: men are more likely to oppose restrictions on imports, more educated respondents are also more likely to oppose restrictions on imports, and those self-identifying as Democrats are less likely to oppose trade restrictions. We uncover no evidence of significant regional variation in trade opinions along the West Coast.

The presence of interaction terms makes interpretation of results somewhat complicated. To that end Figure 2 presents a ternary plot displaying each respondent’s predicted probability for each possible response. ILWU respondents \((n=652)\) are plotted in blue while RDD respondents \((n=280)\) appear in red. ILWU members (in general, including all ranks) are more likely to favor increased trade barriers, whereas RDD respondents are more likely to oppose increased restrictions. These plots, however, do not take into account the uncertainty surrounding the estimates.
Figure 3 highlights the union tenure effect by comparing the predicted response probabilities of class-A men in blue (n=321) and casuals in red (n=175). A-men are clearly separated from the casuals: they are more likely to have opinions and more likely to favor new restrictions on imports than casuals.
In sum, it appears that A-men, representing 49% of the ILWU observations in the matched dataset, and casuals (27%) are driving our results in different directions. Casuals are less likely to have thought about whether the US government should place new limits on foreign imports. A-men have. They are more likely to have an opinion on this issue in either direction – thought they tend to significantly favor increasing import restrictions. Similarly situated respondents in the general population are less protectionist, with a stronger tendency to oppose new restrictions. In general, ILWU members appear more “protectionist” (either in the classical sense or under the aegis of “fair trade”) then their RDD counterparts. This pattern is most pronounced among high-ranking members of the union, consistent with the notion that organizational culture can affect individual political preferences. Nevertheless, this relationship is not as clear as opposition to specific trade treaties such as NAFTA, to which we now turn.

**Attitudes toward NAFTA**

The second relevant question on free trade asks respondents their opinion on NAFTA. We find this question particularly important for our study since the ILWU
leadership generally takes positions on specific trade agreements, especially NAFTA, as opposed to making vague pronouncements about trade or tariffs in general. We would therefore expect member opinions on NAFTA to differ from the broader population more dramatically compared to the more generic “trade restrictions” question. The survey question reads:

“I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all? – NAFTA”.

Unfortunately, the wording on this question, which we took from the US version of the World Values Survey, is vague. Leaving aside the fact that NAFTA is not an organization, the respondent may be unclear if the question is asking him/her to state their level of confidence in whether member parties will uphold the treaty or whether they are confident that NAFTA is good policy. Based on introspection and conversations with some unionists we believe the most likely interpretation of the question is the latter. The response distribution based on raw data displayed in Figure 4 makes clear that ILWU members are much more likely to have “no confidence at all” in NAFTA than RDD respondents. The 2006 WVS response distribution \((n = 1117)\) is included here for comparison. The WVS distribution is quite similar to the RDD sample, increasing our confidence that the RDD sample is providing a reasonable approximation to the broader population.

Figure 4: Distribution of respondents’ level of confidence in NAFTA for RDD, ILWU and 2006 World Values Survey

We use the four possible survey responses to construct an ordered dependent variable, and run ordered probit regressions on the five imputed and matched
datasets. Table 5 displays the averaged regression coefficients, standard errors, and associated t-statistics.

Table 5: Ordered probit regression results on confidence in NAFTA (higher on the response imply less confidence)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficients (SE)</th>
<th>t value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ILWU member</td>
<td>0.286 (0.212)</td>
<td>1.346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILWU * Class A</td>
<td>0.600 (0.151)</td>
<td>3.983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILWU * Class B</td>
<td>0.293 (0.144)</td>
<td>2.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political party (Dem)</td>
<td>-0.044 (0.095)</td>
<td>-0.463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Party (Rep)</td>
<td>-0.055 (0.124)</td>
<td>-0.440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0.307 (0.092)</td>
<td>3.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.186 (0.097)</td>
<td>1.914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>0.010 (0.127)</td>
<td>0.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacoma</td>
<td>0.059 (0.128)</td>
<td>0.461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.005 (0.003)</td>
<td>1.537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>0.012 (0.025)</td>
<td>0.485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey year</td>
<td>0.059 (0.055)</td>
<td>1.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income category</td>
<td>-0.019 (0.021)</td>
<td>-0.896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey mode (paper)</td>
<td>0.016 (0.193)</td>
<td>0.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey mode (web)</td>
<td>-0.266 (0.257)</td>
<td>-1.031</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Residual DF: 2040.061  N: 932
LogLik: -1009.869   BIC: 2141.646

Intercepts:
1|2    -0.422 (0.407)  -1.033
2|3    0.342 (0.407)   0.839
3|4    1.451 (0.409)   3.545

Note: Reference categories are Independent for political party, San Pedro for geographic area, and phone for survey mode.

Both ILWU-A and ILWU-B members show significantly decreased confidence in NAFTA. Figure 5 plots the predicted first differences between ILWU and RDD responses with covariates held at their appropriate central tendencies. That is, the simulation describes the difference between an ILWU (A-man) and an RDD respondent who are both 46-year old white males from Tacoma with college degrees, earning between $50,000–75,000 annually, self-identifying as Democrats and taking the survey by phone in 2010. As an odds-ratio, the ILWU member is almost three times as likely to express no confidence at all in NAFTA compared to the RDD respondent.
Using the results from the ordered probit regression model, Figure 6 shows the predicted first differences in probabilities between class-A men and registered casuals (the descriptive distribution by responses for each rank is plotted in the appendix). With their observable traits held to the same central tendencies described in the scenario above, Class-A men are much more likely to express having no confidence in NAFTA at all compared to similarly situated casuals.

Expressed as an odds-ratio, an A-man is more than twice as likely to have zero confidence in NAFTA than an ILWU casual with similar characteristics and an incoming casual is eight times more likely to report having great deal of confidence in NAFTA than a similarly situated A-man.

Discussion

Findings from our survey uncover several interesting features about the ILWU membership, largely consistent with our argument about organizational culture and the notion that organizational participation can provoke members into having more clearly-formulated preferences. First, ILWU members are significantly more likely to report strong opinions about abstract trade policy issues than otherwise similar non-members. Second, ILWU members appear somewhat more skeptical of trade liberalization compared to matched individuals drawn from nearby communities. Third, ILWU members are significantly more skeptical of NAFTA than either the
broader American population or matched non-members who live in nearby communities. This discrepancy between the ILWU members’ responses to the generic trade restriction question and the NAFTA question closely parallels the ILWU’s stated goals and objectives: ILWU leaders have consistently opposed specific free trade treaties while maintaining a rhetorical commitment to “fair trade” and expanded work opportunities for the membership. Union members are correspondingly more likely to oppose the only specific treaty we asked about, NAFTA, while having less crystallized opinions about “new limits on foreign imports.”

Also consistent with our argument about the impact of the ILWU’s organizational culture over time, class-A members are more likely to support increased restrictions on foreign imports – a belief that, if put in practice, would directly detract from their primary source of income. In addition, confidence in NAFTA significantly decreases among high-ranking members in the union compared to incoming casuals. Indeed, in two of the three surveyed locals there were no class-A men who reported “a great deal of confidence” in the treaty. Although our research design does not allow us to claim a casual effect of ILWU membership on dock worker attitudes over time, our results do indicate that increased tenure in the union is associated with member beliefs more in line with the union’s overarching stance on international trade policy.

5. Conclusion
Do unions affect the political opinions of their members? Our study presents compelling evidence that they can. We examined the puzzling case of the ILWU: a union that has taken strong and consistent stances against a variety of trade-expanding policies and international agreements even though the union’s membership appears likely to benefit from these agreements, at least in the short term. We linked the union’s stance on these agreements to their long-standing and deeply ingrained organizational culture that “an injury to one is an injury to all.” For decades the union leadership has consistently reinforced that the union’s interests are bound together with the fate of working people the world over. The union’s stance here is a costly demonstration of its organizational commitments.

We then turned to an examination of the opinion of the rank-and-file in three of the ILWU’s main locals. Using newly developed matching techniques we compared ILWU members of varying levels of seniority to otherwise similar non-members. We found consistent evidence that ILWU members were more likely to have crystallized opinions about trade policy issues and that they were more likely to favor trade restrictions and oppose trade agreements like NAFTA. Those having the longest and most intense exposure to the union differed the most from their non-union matches. Further investigation showed that this difference is not due to an age cohort effect but seems to be directly related to exposure to the union.
Appendix

A.1: Matching Diagnostics
The following plot shows the standardized bias for each included covariate before matching and after matching. Standardized effect sizes are defined as the difference between the treatment and comparison group means, divided by the treatment group standard deviation. The standardized biases for all covariates and the distance measure between groups (as defined through the genetic matching algorithm) are all under 0.1 in the matched data.

A.2: Distribution by rank for both survey questions

Attitudes on import restrictions

Figure A2 shows the distribution of ILWU attitudes toward import restrictions by rank. Class-A men across all three locals are most likely to favor new restrictions on imports, less likely to oppose them and least likely to to not have thought about the issue. This suggests that increased tenure in the union may be associated with the increased likelihood that a member will have both thought about the issue as well as favor increased restrictions. The responses among B-men and casuals are less systematic across locals.
Attitudes toward NAFTA

Among the matched ILWU observations, rank within the union appears to play a significant role in determining members’ attitudes toward NAFTA. Figure A3 shows the distribution responses by category for each rank in the union across the three locals. Class-A men in all three locals are much more likely to express no confidence in NAFTA at all as compared to casuals in the union.

Figure A3: Distribution of responses of level of confidence in NAFTA by local and ILWU rank.
References


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