

Worker Control: The Bases of Women's Support

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A vast amount of research on women and work indicates that women have not gained parity with men in the paid workforce. Workplace democracy is particularly relevant for women. I employ US national survey data from 1991 to analyze women's support for worker control over workplace decision-making. The nature of this support is hypothesized using four branches of feminist theory. An analysis of the gender gap in attitudes is performed and then I incorporate logistic regression to test for cleavages in women's attitudes. The lack of consistency across the items suggests that these specific work issues are not reflective of a larger, generalized predisposition to workplace democracy. I conclude by considering the relationship between women and the labor movement. Union-supported worker participation is most likely to improve women's working conditions.

Keywords: attitudes, feminist theory, women workers, worker control, workplace democracy

Introduction

A vast amount of research on women and work indicates that women have not gained parity with men in the paid workforce. Studies of income attainment, occupational prestige and occupational and job segregation consistently illustrate that women are disproportionately represented in low-status, low-paying jobs with little opportunity for advancement. Class analyses indicate that women are largely proletarianized and underrepresented in capital-owning class locations. Within organizations, relatively few women occupy positions of authority and they generally lack decision-making power and job autonomy.

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Transformations of the relations in production are of particular relevance to women.¹ If women had greater control over the labor process, they could ameliorate the detrimental division of labor that has subjugated them. In this study I explore women's attitudes toward workplace reforms. In particular, I employ US national survey data to analyze women's support for worker control over workplace decision-making. The data analysis allows me to address three key questions: Are women more supportive of worker control than men? Are there certain decision areas that are specifically 'women's issues'? What are the bases of women's support for worker control over decision-making?

Literature

Workplace Democracy and Worker Control

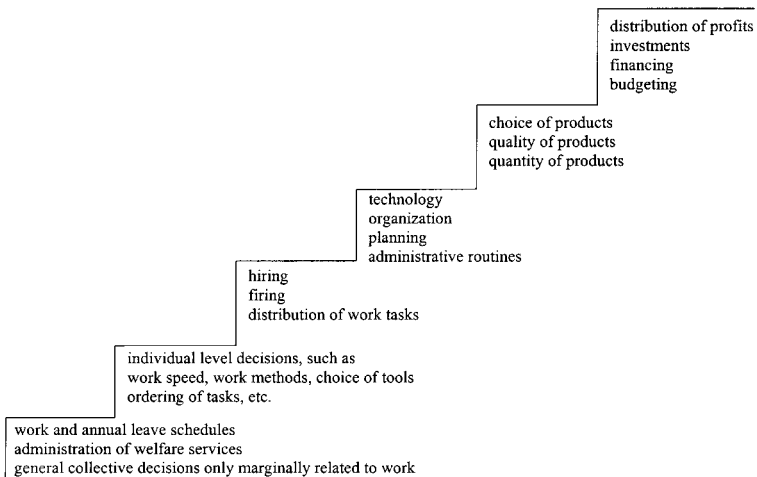
There is an extensive literature on workplace democracy and its related concepts (i.e. economic democracy, employee involvement, co-determination, industrial democracy, self-management, worker control, worker participation, etc.). Greenberg (1986) identifies workplace democracy as emerging from three intellectual/political traditions that have nurtured the democratic left. First, there has been great interest in the problem of alienation and its alleviation. Second, the tradition of participatory democracy is based upon the belief that participatory decision-making in all major social institutions is both necessary and proper. Third, the tradition searching for radical, yet democratic strategies for the overthrow of capitalism has interpreted workplace democracy as the first step toward a self-governing democratic socialism.

Workplace democracy is primarily an issue of control, rather than ownership (Archer, 1995). Perhaps the most well-known form of workplace democracy is worker participation in decision-making. Today in the USA there are a variety of corporate programs such as 'employee involvement', 'production teams', 'labor-management committees' and 'quality circles' which do grant some workers some voice in some decisions. However, worker participation varies tremendously and the concept requires clarification. First, the *depth* of workers' influence over workplace decisions is central to determining the relevance of participation (Dachler and Wilpert, 1978; Cotton et al., 1988; Levine and Tyson, 1990; Rock, 1991;

Andriessen, 1998). Of course, there are a multitude of decisions that need to be made in order to run a workplace. Therefore, another critical issue for worker participation is the *breadth* of the issues over which workers have influence (Dachler and Wilpert, 1978; IDE, 1981; Levine and Tyson, 1990; Rock, 1991). The vast majority of the contemporary US participation programs do not grant workers significant decision-making power over significant issues, lacking both depth and breadth (see Osterman, 1994). 'Online' substantive forms of participation (Batt and Appelbaum, 1995) are rare in the USA (Jones and Rock, 1992). Worker participation is thus variable and forms a continuum based upon the breadth of the decisions and the depth of workers' power.

In this article I am primarily concerned with the issue of breadth as I will analyze support for *worker control* over various workplace decisions. Figure 1 provides Karlsson's (cited in Stephens, 1980) hierarchy of decisions. Each step up provides workers with more substantive power and control over the firm's resources (capital). This typology will be useful in considering women's attitudes toward worker control to determine whether there are any patterns associated with decision breadth.

FIGURE 1
Breadth of Potential Issues under Worker Control



Adapted from Stephens (1980: 24)

Women and Workplace Democracy

The literature on workplace democracy largely neglects women. The concept is overwhelmingly discussed in the context of traditional white male, blue-collar factory work (Smith, 1996). Yet workplace democracy may be more relevant for women. As power is transferred from capital to labor, factors that lead to women’s subordination as workers can be more adequately addressed. Under flexible capitalism, women’s work has become increasingly contingent and deskilled (Harvey, 1990; Reskin and Padavic, 1994; Rubin, 1996). Technological advances have tended to routinize women’s work more so than men’s. Valentine (1992) considers this a gendered revision of the reskilling/deskilling thesis as male jobs are upgraded and female jobs are static or deskilled.

Feminist theory is the most appropriate basis from which to hypothesize about women’s potential support for worker control. Rothschild (1992) argues that the organizational requirements of ‘collectivist-democracy’ are virtually the same as the values and organizational practices of feminism. While the literature that explores the link between women and worker control is slim, there are two main foundations that are hypothesized to be critical. The first is a materialist approach which contends that women’s subordination within the workplace leads to a consciousness that supports such alternatives. The second is a psychoanalytic approach that roots support for workplace democracy in a distinctive female ethic of care that is anti-hierarchical. When combined, these two foundations represent four different theoretical approaches. Figure 2 classifies the four approaches by the presence or absence of the two criteria. I have used conventional labels from feminist theory to identify each approach.²

FIGURE 2
Comparing Feminist Theories

		Female Ethic?	
		YES	NO
Subordinate Consciousness?	YES	Socialist Feminism	Marxist Feminism
	NO	Psychoanalytic Feminism	Liberal Feminism

Ferguson's (1984) discussion of women and workplace democracy can be considered socialist feminist according to Figure 2. She contends that as subordinates, women's experience sheds considerable light on the nature of bureaucratic domination. Also, as caretakers, women's experience offers the grounds for envisioning a non-bureaucratic collective life. Ferguson argues that feminism is not compatible with bureaucracy. 'A feminist restructuring of work entails rejection of the hierarchical division of labor of bureaucratic capitalism and the reintegration of the planning and performance of tasks' (Ferguson, 1984: 205). Alvesson and Billing (1997) can also be located at this theoretical junction. They claim that workplace democracy can be assumed to be in the interests of women since they are overrepresented at the lower levels of organizations. They also contend that workplace democracy is congruent with feminine principles and values. Women tend to have had a lot of practice from an early age in caring for and communicating with others.

It is possible that many women are more inclined to adopt a democratic style than some men. How can we account for any possible tendency in this direction? It may be 'natural' for them, in light of childhood experiences, female socialization or later experiences in family or at work. But it may also be an expression of their weaker authority. (Alvesson and Billing, 1997: 146-7)

According to Figure 2, Sirianni (1994) adopts a psychoanalytic approach in her discussion of the women's liberation movement and participatory democracy. She claims that a feminist ideal emerged within the women's movement that stressed the democratization of all leadership roles. The distinctively female 'ethic of care' from feminist theory served as the basis for the adoption of a radically egalitarian version of participatory democracy in the women's movement. The notion of a consciousness derived from subordination does not play a role in Sirianni's discussion.

Approaches that are materialist and reject the idea of a female ethic can roughly be considered as Marxist feminist. Robinson and Bell (1978: 128) develop the 'underdog principle' and argue that 'individuals who objectively benefit from the stratification system in comparison with others are more likely to judge its inequalities to be just. Conversely, people who are objectively less well off are more likely to judge equality to be fair.' Applying this principle to workplace democracy, Fenwick and Olson (1986: 506) note that, 'participation should appeal primarily to workers at the

bottom of the organizational hierarchy as a reaction to dissatisfaction with their work and/or workplace'. Likewise, Hollens (1994) contends that many women see participation programs as the 'white light at the end of the tunnel'. 'Low pay, low seniority, and lack of work autonomy may make the promises of participation particularly attractive to women' (Hollens, 1994: 171). In short, these materialist approaches see women's potential support for workplace democracy as based in their historic oppression at work.

Finally, the theoretical junction that does not claim a material, subordinate consciousness or a female ethic can be considered a liberal feminist approach. Smith (1996) contends that there are two reasons why women have different interests in workplace democracy than men. They are relatively new workforce entrants and they are disproportionately found in an expanding, white-collar service economy. Smith claims that women workers are compelled to participate in new systems of governance for the work experience. Women see workplace democracy as an opportunity to gain new skills and as part of the process of career building. This is a human capital approach that rests on the notion of equal rights and equal opportunity and resonates with the claims of liberal feminists. So, despite the different bases of women's support, all four theoretical approaches do predict the same thing. That is, women will hold more favorable attitudes toward worker control than men.

Previous Research

There are also several empirical studies that help shed light on whether women are more supportive of workplace democracy than men. Haas (1980) conducted a survey of workers in Indianapolis in 1976. Respondents were read a list of 12 policy areas and were asked who should ideally have the final say in making the decisions about such matters (private employers, a public authority, or the workers). Haas finds that women are significantly more likely than men to feel that workers should have the final say in making decisions. Zipp et al. (1984) use US national survey data from 1975 to consider workplace democracy attitudes. They construct a scale from five items (three on whether increased democratization benefits the economy, one on whether a lack of hard work can be attributed to a lack of democracy and one asking whether the respondent prefers to work under democratic conditions). Women

are significantly more pro-workplace democracy than men on the measure. Fenwick and Olson (1986) use a national survey of workers from 1977 to measure attitudes toward worker participation. They construct a factor consisting of five items which deal with how much control workers feel they should have over certain workplace decisions. Women are also found to be more pro-worker than men. Freeman and Rogers (1999) have recently reported their findings on the most comprehensive US national survey of workers on worker participation issues to date, the Worker Representation and Participation Survey of 1994. One of their analyses combines eight items concerning various workplace decisions to form a scale of the amount of influence respondents wish to have. Here there are no gender differences as these scale scores are exactly the same for men and women. However, Freeman and Rogers also create a scale of the amount of influence respondents currently have over each of the eight areas. This allows them to analyze the 'influence gap', the amount of influence workers want compared to the amount that they currently have. This analysis indicates that women currently have less influence over these areas than men and thus have a larger influence gap score. Thus, in a relative sense, gender is significant. For the most part then, all of the previous US attitudinal studies of workplace democracy have consistently found that women are significantly more supportive than men.

There are also a few case studies which consider women and democratic working conditions. Wajcman (1983) studied a woman-owned and controlled cooperative. This work experience increased the women's self-confidence. They appreciated not being told what to do and the convenient hours and flexibility of scheduling. Wajcman found that the full-time women without heavy domestic duties and childcare responsibilities were the most ideologically committed to the cooperative. In their study of the women's movement, Ferree and Hess (1994) discuss feminist 'collectivist' organizations. They found that the time-consuming, democratic decision-making processes made it difficult for women with familial demands to participate in collectivist organizations. 'The communal, expressive, egalitarian nature of collectivist work organizations required a degree of personal attention and nurturance that younger women without children could better afford' (Ferree and Hess, 1994: 58). Alvesson and Billing (1997) review several studies of the leadership style of women managers. Overall, women are

found to have a slightly more democratic leadership style than men. This previous research also indicates a certain congruity between women and participatory democracy.

Despite the consistency of these findings, women are not politically homogeneous. Previous research has also documented that women are particularly divided by race and class in their political attitudes (see Robinson and Kelley, 1979; Wright, 1997; Collom, forthcoming). Women of color are most vulnerable to intense forms of exploitation under flexible capitalism (Amott and Matthaei, 1991; Reskin and Padavic, 1994). Therefore, they are likely to have differing economic interests than white women (Malveaux, 1985; Sandoval, 1991). While there is much debate over the concept of class, Wright (1978, 1985, 1997) has convincingly illustrated that authority, decision-making power and autonomy are major bases of class location. Previous research has documented that women tend to lack supervisory authority and decision-making power (Wolf and Fligstein, 1979a, 1979b; Spaeth, 1985; Jacobs, 1992; Reskin and Ross, 1992; McGuire and Reskin, 1993; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993; Huffman, 1995; Wright et al., 1995) as well as job autonomy (Jaffee, 1989; Glass, 1990; Adler, 1993). Therefore, I would expect that the relatively few women that do have such abilities will be less supportive of worker control since it may be interpreted as threatening their own workplace power. I consider this analysis exploratory as it searches for factors that divide women's thought. Therefore, I do not provide any hypotheses. My approach is novel in seeking to identify the worker control issues that are particularly relevant to women and then exploring the factors which divide such preferences.

Data and Methods

The data employed here are the second US wave of the Comparative Project on Class Structure and Class Consciousness (Hout et al., 1992).³ This national telephone survey of American adults over 18 years old was fielded in late 1991. The survey includes a set of ten questions on worker control over decision-making that are of particular importance here. The first analysis simply tests for gender differences in opinion on these ten variables. The items in which women are significantly more supportive of worker control than men are used in the second analysis. Here I only analyze

women since I am specifically interested in identifying the factors which divide their thought on these issues. I incorporate logistic regression in order to test for cleavages in attitudes among women.

Dependent Variables

Respondents were asked how much influence they thought that management and non-management employees should have over decisions in the workplace. They were asked to choose whether the following decisions should be made mainly by management or mainly by employees who are not part of management: how much time employees can take for lunch breaks; what time employees should arrive/leave work; who is assigned to work overtime and how much; which employees carry out different tasks; who introduces new technology; who decides about the appropriate discipline for various problems; who introduces new ways of organizing work; who decides about making changes in the products or services; who decides about the pay levels for different jobs; and who decides about layoff policies. I coded the 'mainly by managers' responses '0' and the 'mainly by non-management' (pro-worker control) responses '1'.

Independent Variables

A multitude of independent variables were tested for significant effects in the logistic regression analysis. Only the following 14 variables were included in the analysis as they significantly effect the model. Twelve of the variables are significant in at least one of the models and the other two remain given their effect on other predictors. 'Age' is a continuous variable that ranges from 18 to 90. 'Education' is an ordinal variable that ranges from 'not a high school graduate' to 'college graduate'. 'Married' is dummy coded with '1' representing women who are living with a partner or who are legally married. 'Race' is dummy coded with '1' capturing women of color (African-Americans and Latinas). 'Faith in co-workers' is derived from a question in which respondents were asked whether they thought the non-management employees at their own work *could* run things effectively without bosses. The variable is dummy coded with those agreeing with the statement

assigned '1' (strong faith). 'Political views' is derived from the classic seven-point political self-identification. Those women who chose values from 1 to 3 were recoded as '1' (liberal). 'Hourly wage' is computed by simply dividing personal monthly earnings by the average number of hours worked in a month. The variable is dummy coded into a lower and higher category. Those who earn US\$6.25 or less per hour are assigned '1' (low wage). 'Profession' taps into the skill level of one's occupation. It is a dummy-coded variable with 'skilled' or 'expert' professions coded '1' (see Wright, 1997: 82). 'Authority1' determines whether the respondent has supervisory authority at her job. The variable is dummy coded with 'nominal' and 'task' supervisors (see Wright, 1985: 309) coded '1'. 'Authority2' is a dummy variable with 'sanctioning' supervisors coded '1'. 'Decisions1' determines the role which respondents currently play in the decision-making processes at their work. It is a dummy-coded variable with '1' representing those women who are advisors. 'Decisions2' is a dummy variable with those who have the power to make decisions on their own coded '1'. 'Job satisfaction' is derived from a five-point 'I hate/love my job' scale. Those women who chose values ranging from 1 to 3 were coded '1' (unsatisfied). Finally, 'Demonstrate' captures those women who have ever taken part in a public action such as a demonstration, protest meeting, or sit-in. It is dummy coded with '1' assigned to the protesters.

Findings

Table 1 presents the raw findings of the percentage of respondents who selected the 'pro-worker control' response. The questions are sorted by Karlsson's (cited in Stephens, 1980) typology with the most substantive decision first.⁴ Overall, the respondents are not very supportive of worker control. On six of the ten items, less than one-quarter of the respondents are pro-worker. These results are not surprising given that the average American worker is currently unable to make any of these decisions independent of management. On one decision item (with significant substance) the majority of the sample did take the pro-worker response. Most Americans feel that workers should be able to control the introduction of new ways of organizing work. Interestingly, there appears to be little connection between the degree of support of workers' control

TABLE 1
Attitudes Towards Workers' Control

Workplace Decisions	% Pro-Worker (N)	Location in Typology
Who decides the pay levels for jobs?	17.0% (280)	1
Who decides about making product changes?	28.7% (472)	2
Who introduces new ways of organizing work?	55.7% (915)	3
Who introduces new technology?	31.9% (524)	3
Who decides about appropriate discipline?	22.0% (362)	3
Who decides about layoff policies?	14.8% (243)	4
Which employees carry out different tasks?	18.7% (307)	4
Who is assigned to work overtime?	37.2% (611)	6
How much time for lunch breaks?	18.8% (309)	6
What time arrive/leave work?	14.0% (230)	6

N = 1643.

and the degree of the actual decision breadth. Theoretically, people should be more supportive of the less substantial items since they are not a radical departure from existing capitalist relations in production. However, the 'product', 'organize' and 'technology' items are second, third and fourth in terms of substantiality and each is significantly supported. The 'overtime' item also has solid support and is low on the breadth scale.

Table 2 provides the ten items and the percentages of women and men who took the pro-worker control response. Women have higher percentages of support on every item except the layoff policies. Statistically, the *t*-test results indicate that on four of the ten items women are significantly more pro-worker control than men. Women are more likely to be pro-worker in respect to the introducing of new ways of organizing work, the carrying out of tasks, the assignment of overtime and deciding when to arrive and leave work.

Figure 3 is an illustration of the gender gap in attitudes.⁵ On this graph, the least substantial decision items are listed first. The largest gender gap is found on the 'overtime' item. Three of the four items lowest on the scale have large gender gaps ('arrive', 'overtime' and 'task'). Women and men appear to be slightly more divided when it comes to workers making decisions of lesser substance. As you

TABLE 2
Attitudes Toward Workers' Control by Gender

Workplace Decisions	Women % Pro- Worker (N)	Men % Pro- Worker (N)
Who decides the pay levels for jobs?	17.7% (161)	16.2% (119)
Who decides about making product changes?	30.2% (275)	26.9% (197)
Who introduces new ways of organizing work?***	59.1% (538)	51.5% (373)
Who introduces new technology?	32.3% (294)	31.4% (230)
Who decides about appropriate discipline?	22.8% (208)	21.0% (154)
Who decides about layoff policies?	14.4% (131)	15.3% (112)
Which employees carry out different tasks?*	20.9% (190)	16.0% (117)
Who is assigned to work overtime?***	40.7% (371)	32.8% (240)
How much time for lunch breaks?	19.2% (175)	18.3% (134)
What time arrive/leave work?***	16.9% (154)	10.4% (76)

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

$N = 1643$.

recall, Karlsson's typology ranks decisions according to substantive power and control of the firm's resources. The larger gender differences at the lower level of the scale indicate that there may be issues that despite their relative lack of apparent substance, are nonetheless quite important for women.

These 'women's issues' are the focus of the final analysis. Tables 3a and 3b present the results of the logistic regression models. Again, this analysis includes only women and is searching for factors which divide their beliefs. The 'arrive' item has five significant predictors. The odds ratios indicate that women who have faith in their co-workers and who have protest experience are more than twice as likely to be pro-worker control in respect to scheduling. Likewise, married women are 1.95 times more likely to support workers' ability to choose what time to come to and leave work. Women of color are significantly more supportive than white women.

The strongest predictor of the 'overtime' variable is 'authority2'. Those women *with* sanctioning supervisory power are 1.62 times more likely to be pro-worker control than those without such power. This is inconsistent with my expectations and does highlight

FIGURE 3
Attitudinal Percentage Differences between Women and Men

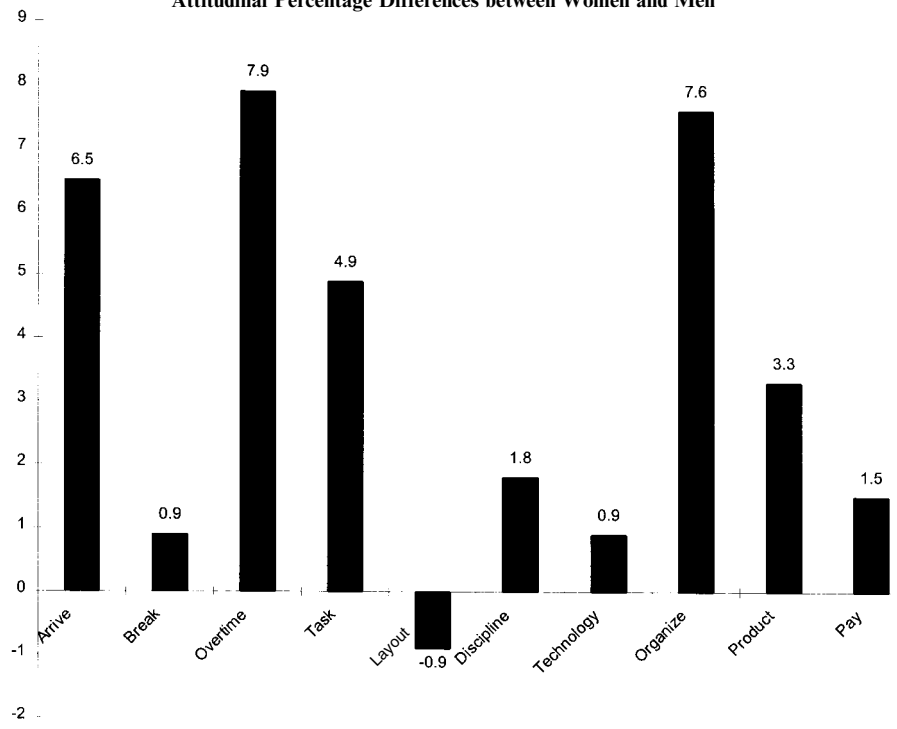


TABLE 3a
The Bases of Women's Support for Worker Control

Covariate	Arrive			Overtime		
	b	(SE)	OR	b	(SE)	OR
Age	-0.013	(0.001)	0.987	0.021***	(0.007)	1.021
Education	0.220	(0.144)	1.246	-0.273***	(0.111)	0.761
Married (1 = yes)	0.670***	(0.242)	1.953	0.231	(0.175)	1.26
Race (1 = minority)	0.570*	(0.300)	1.769	0.074	(0.238)	1.077
Faith in co-workers (1 = strong)	0.752****	(0.227)	2.121	-0.235	(0.168)	0.790
Political views (1 = liberal)	0.663***	(0.255)	1.941	-0.254	(0.219)	0.776
Hourly wage (1 = ≤\$6.25)	-0.323	(0.232)	0.724	-0.229	(0.177)	0.795
Profession (1 = skilled)	0.345	(0.264)	1.412	0.141	(0.211)	1.151
Authority1 (1 = low authority)	0.232	(0.339)	1.261	0.197	(0.272)	1.217
Authority2 (1 = high authority)	0.100	(0.279)	1.106	0.483**	(0.225)	1.621
Decisions1 (1 = advises)	0.101	(0.249)	1.106	-0.381**	(0.190)	0.683
Decisions2 (1 = makes)	0.178	(0.369)	1.195	-0.417	(0.292)	0.659
Job satisfaction (1 = unsatisfied)	0.397	(0.246)	1.487	-0.264	(0.192)	0.768
Demonstrate (1 = protester)	0.738***	(0.241)	2.092	-0.064	(0.203)	0.938
Intercept	-3.174****	(0.637)		0.550	(0.454)	
				828.993		
Log likelihood	544.921			40.363		
Likelihood ratio	66.282			14		
d.f.	14			641		
N	641					

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$; **** $p < .001$; two-tailed tests.

the limitations of survey research. That is, it is impossible to know how these managers interpreted the question. Although it is pure speculation, perhaps such managers find overtime assignments burdensome and prefer to defer this responsibility to the workers themselves. The model also indicates that women without the power to advise in decision-making processes are 1.46 (inverse of .683) times more likely to support workers in this respect. Lesser educated women are also more likely to support workers deciding overtime assignments.

In respect to the 'task' variable, those women who have faith in their co-workers are 2.16 times more likely to support workers deciding task assignments. Both of the authority variables are significant as those women lacking authority are more pro-worker. Also, women who currently have the power to make decisions are 1.73 times more likely to support workers deciding task assignments. This is also a contradiction as these decision-makers are apparently willing to give some of their job power to their subordinates.

The 'organize' item has the fewest number of significant predictors and all three are negative relationships. Women who lack advisory power in decision-making are more likely to support workers controlling the introduction of new ways of organizing work. Women who are satisfied with their jobs are 1.66 times more likely to be pro-worker. Again, this is the opposite effect to what I would have predicted since satisfaction implies contentment with the status quo. Lastly, women who *do not* have faith in their co-workers are 1.85 times more likely to support workers in this respect.

Overall, the 'faith in co-workers' variable is the strongest predictor. Why its direction of influence changes for the 'organize' item is a mystery and again reflects the limitations of survey research. It makes sense that those women who feel that their co-workers are able to run their workplaces effectively would support worker control. However, it is not clear why those without faith in their co-workers would support workers' control over the introduction of new means of organizing work. The only consistent significant predictor throughout is 'decisions1'. On two of the items it was shown that those women who lack advisory power in decision-making are more likely to support worker control. In toto, the results send no clear message. While women are not homogeneous in their thought toward worker control, there are no clear patterns of the bases of their support.

TABLE 3b
The Bases of Women's Support for Worker Control (continued)

Covariate	Task			Organize		
	b	(SE)	OR	b	(SE)	OR
Age	-0.014	(0.008)	0.986	0.011	(0.007)	1.011
Education	0.345***	(0.135)	1.412	-0.115	(0.112)	0.891
Married (1 = yes)	0.225	(0.212)	1.253	-0.278	(0.180)	0.757
Race (1 = minority)	0.240	(0.277)	1.271	0.019	(0.241)	1.02
Faith in co-workers (1 = strong)	0.768****	(0.207)	2.156	-0.616****	(0.172)	0.540
Political views (1 = liberal)	-0.022	(0.256)	0.978	0.028	(0.232)	1.028
Hourly wage (1 = ≤US\$6.25)	-0.030	(0.210)	0.970	0.231	(0.181)	1.260
Profession (1 = skilled)	0.179	(0.248)	1.196	-0.066	(0.217)	0.936
Authority1 (1 = low authority)	-0.580*	(0.348)	0.560	-0.480	(0.296)	0.619
Authority2 (1 = high authority)	-0.478*	(0.272)	0.620	-0.148	(0.229)	0.862
Decisions1 (1 = advises)	0.061	(0.228)	1.063	-0.459**	(0.193)	0.632
Decisions2 (1 = makes)	0.549*	(0.332)	1.732	-0.429	(0.301)	0.651
Job satisfaction (1 = unsatisfied)	0.234	(0.225)	1.264	-0.507***	(0.206)	0.602
Demonstrate (1 = protester)	-0.116	(0.242)	0.891	-0.302	(0.213)	0.740
Intercept	-2.357****	(0.563)		0.298	(0.460)	
Log likelihood	635.894			800.868		
Likelihood ratio	38.008			46.481		
d.f.	14			14		
N	641			641		

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$; **** $p < .001$; two-tailed tests.

Discussion and Conclusion

The first analysis illustrates that support for worker control of decision-making is not widespread. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that four of the ten items received significant support. The idea of workers independently controlling these workplace decisions is a major departure from the status quo. The analysis of the gender gap indicates that women are not overwhelmingly more supportive of worker control than men. This implies that women do not have a generic predisposition toward worker control as the female ethic of care arguments (socialist and psychoanalytic feminism) predict. Moreover, the regression analysis shows that the work-based variables (wages, profession, authority, decision-making power) have inconsistent effects on attitudes. This casts a shadow of doubt over the existence of a subordinate consciousness as the Marxist feminist approach predicts. Therefore, by default, the liberal feminist approach may provide the most insight about the bases of women's support. Women may see participation in decision-making as valuable job experience and as a means of obtaining important skills. Unfortunately, I am not able to directly test the effects of feminist theory's predictions with these data. Qualitative data would be an extremely valuable complement to this type of research.

In respect to the gender gap on specific issues, the item concerning when to arrive and leave work might be partially interpreted as women with family responsibilities (such as childcare) supporting the right to create their own schedules. Many women also feel that workers should be able to decide who gets overtime. Currently, male managers tend to make such decisions. It is likely that they favor other men in granting overtime, perhaps due to prejudices surrounding women's desire for extra work (Reskin and Padavic, 1994). If workers could make such decisions, women would have a greater voice since they form a large segment of the working class.

Although they are the least important on the Karlsson typology, scheduling issues are extremely relevant to working women with families. Despite a labor force participation rate that nearly mirrors that of men, the gender division of labor persists and women continue to be overwhelmingly responsible for domestic work within the family household (Baxter, 1993). On a daily basis, these women face the 'double burden' of paid and unpaid work. Women's responsibilities within the home are intimately connected to their

paid work (Baxter et al., 1990). Thus, scheduling issues are more important to women than they are to men.

There is also a notable gender gap on the task and the organizing of work items. While scheduling issues tap the relationship between unpaid and paid work, organizational assignments are more reflective of the division of labor under paid work. Women tend to carry out the most unfavorable tasks in the workplace. Jobs become stereotyped as 'women's work' (Reskin and Padavic, 1994) and managers make gendered job assignments. Again, if workers had the ability to make such decisions, women could demand a more equitable division of labor.

While I have argued that worker control is advantageous for women, others are more skeptical. Feldberg (1981) claims that changes in the labor market and the status of women must accompany a self-management agenda. Women must have equal claims to good jobs and have fewer familial responsibilities. Otherwise, men may solely benefit from worker control and the existing inequalities would become exacerbated. Kaul and Lie (1982) claim that there are three prerequisites for the democratization of working life: acquisition of knowledge, development of commitment and formation of solidarity. Women's peripheral positions hamper their chances of meeting these prerequisites. Women are involved in a vicious circle as their current poor working conditions affect their future possibilities to change and influence their working conditions. Katz-Fishman (1992) notes that women's exploitation cannot be eliminated by workplace democracy alone. Since much of women's oppression is not located in the workplace, there needs to be a larger project with explicit policies for women. Mansbridge (1994) is concerned that consensual procedures in a group of unequals (men and women) can suppress the conflict over such inequalities. In the classic face-to-face assembly, the interests of the disadvantaged are not usually protected equally.

Studies of women's experience at Mondragón also raise skepticism. The Mondragón cooperatives in the Basque region of Spain are internationally renowned as the most successful example of democratic decision-making and worker ownership. Hacker (1988) finds mixed results in comparing women's conditions in the cooperatives with similar capitalist firms in the area. In the cooperatives, women have greater levels of employment and more job security. Women in the cooperatives also earn more than their counterparts in private industry. Nonetheless, there remains a gendered division of

labor in the cooperatives and women are located in the lower-paid jobs that are considered less skilled. In her study of Mondragón, Kasmir (1996) finds similar mixed results. In the cooperatives there are more women managers than there are in comparable private firms. But, women still disproportionately work in the lowest-skilled, lowest-paying jobs and are subjected to biased job rating programs.

In addition to these concerns, it is not at all clear how women are to secure participation or control rights in the workplace. Unions have historically been skeptical (if not hostile) to worker empowerment programs, as they are seen as eradicating the role of the union by fostering labor-management cooperation (Fantasia et al., 1988; Bluestone and Bluestone, 1992). Moreover, women have traditionally been neglected by labor unions (Feldberg, 1981; Milkman, 1985; Balsler, 1987; Brenner, 1998; Coventry and Morrissey, 1998) and unions often collude in organizational practices that produce gender divisions (Acker, 1992). When labor does express interest in workplace democracy, the tone and content remains fixated on the needs of skilled male workers (Phillips, 1983). Women have been found to be more receptive to management and their proposals of worker empowerment than unions themselves (Pollert, 1981; Valentine, 1992). When offering participation programs, management usually presents them as incompatible with unions (Lamphere and Grenier, 1994).

Thus, working women find themselves in strained relationships with both unions and employers when it comes to workplace democracy. It is very doubtful that substantive workplace democracy that can improve women's working conditions will be implemented by employers. Management-initiated schemes are typically negligible as corporate interests dominate. As a strategy of the democratic left, workplace democracy has been coopted by capital. The bottom line of today's participation schemes is improving competitiveness and the theoretical underpinning is the idea that workers and management have *mutual* interests (Parker and Slaughter, 1988, 1994). Through such cooperation, workers' job knowledge (the 'secrets of production') is transferred to management. As workers' interests are tied to the company, they are placed into competition with each other and solidarity quickly dwindles.

Union leaders have more recently expressed strong interest in workplace democracy. The AFL-CIO and heads of other national unions have become strong advocates (Heckscher, 1996). Some

unions have even established democratic employee stock ownership plans, or ESOPs, and support worker ownership because it is seen as a vehicle for advancing democratic control of the workplace (Rothschild-Whitt, 1984). Union-implemented workplace democracy could return the vision to its democratic roots and increase solidarity among workers. Unlike the consultative forms of participation, employers have little interest in genuine workplace democracy. Systems of shopfloor governance that grant workers greater shopfloor power threaten the sanctity of managerial prerogatives in production (Fairris, 1997). Union involvement will help ensure that the interests of workers are first and foremost and that the changes are substantive (Bluestone and Bluestone, 1992). Moreover, if American labor unions embrace workplace democracy as part of their agenda, they may potentially enhance the attractiveness of unions to the unorganized (Kochan et al., 1984). If worker participation is modeled on the tradition of collective bargaining, it is likely to be union empowering and can expedite the labor movement's transition from a service model of unionism to an organizing model (Banks and Metzgar, 1989).

Therefore, unions offer the best hope for substantive women's participation in workplace decision-making. This is ironic given unions' historical neglect of women. Fortunately, this history is being reversed (Cobble, 1993) and the labor movement has recently focused great attention on women's issues and has been more successful in organizing women (Goldfield, 1997; Moody, 1997). Women are currently overrepresented in the membership of the fastest growing union in the USA, the Service Employees' International Union (1999). Moreover, women are significantly more likely than men to want unions (Freeman and Rogers, 1999). By continuing to address women's issues, unions will continue to organize more women. As the power of organized labor grows, workplace democracy may become a feasible strategy. As all workers become empowered, women gain the most.

Notes

An earlier version of this article was presented at the 1999 meeting of the American Sociological Association. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their suggestions.

1. Burawoy (1985) distinguishes the relations *in* production from the relations *of* production. In general, the former deals primarily with issues of control whereas the latter concerns ownership issues.

2. See Jaggard and Rothenberg (1978), Elshtain (1981), Tong (1989) and Donovan (1992) for examples of typologies of feminist theory. Of the four branches I engage, socialist feminism is the most heterogeneous. While not all socialist feminists accept the female ethic of care arguments, many do (see Mitchell, 1975). As my criteria imply, Tong (1989: 173) notes that 'the socialist feminist project can be understood as nothing less than the confluence of Marxist, radical, and more arguably, psycho-analytic streams of feminist thought'.

3. See Wright (1989) for a full description of the data and the Comparative Project.

4. Overall, the items from the survey mapped onto Karlsson's (cited in Stephens, 1980) typology fairly well. There were only a few 'subjective' decisions that I was forced to make and I did not see any of the survey items as representative of Karlsson's fifth level.

5. The gender gap was computed by simply taking the difference between the percentage of men who are pro-worker control from the percentage of women who are pro-worker control.

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