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# Retention Strategies of Labor Union Membership

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Nina Hatcher

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2017

Abstract

Retention Strategies of Labor Union Membership

by

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MBA, Virginia College, 2009

BS, Virginia College, 2005

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

June 2017

## Abstract

Labor union membership decline spans more than 4 decades since 1954. In 2012, union membership decreased from 14.1% to 11.3%, which is the lowest since the post-Second World War Era. Union membership decline leads to the inability of some union leaders to retain union members, resulting in a loss of profitability. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies union leaders use in improving membership retention. Twenty union, former union, and nonunion participants from governmental and industrial firms of Jefferson County, Alabama participated in the study offering their lived experiences in industries with active union environments. In this study's conceptual framework, 3 models were used, consisting of demographic factors of union and non-union members, recruitment factors, and collective bargaining factors to explore the issues that affect membership recruitment and retention. Participants engaged in semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. Interview data were collected, transcribed, and inductively coded, revealing emergent trends that membership sizes influenced the number of people joining unions, and that poor union representation adversely affected union decline. These findings could improve the relationship between union representation and union members, thereby affecting positive social change by improving employee attitudes and social values regarding unions.

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## Dedication

This study is dedicated to my Heavenly Father, who has given me strength and endurance throughout the entire process. I also dedicate this study to my family for their commitment, support and the sacrifices that they have given continuously.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my husband, children and grandchildren for the many sacrifices that they continually made to accommodate my diverse schedule while pursuing my DBA. I want to acknowledge my parents for their continued encouragement. I acknowledge and thank my committee members Dr. Tim Truitt and Dr. Gail Ferreira for their ability to make sure my project was worthy of publication. Dr. Truitt provided continued guidance and encouragement throughout the program. Thanks to Dr. Freda Turner for personally inspiring me at my first residency. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Ron Iden as my Editor for his guidance in making sure my writing met Walden University requirements.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Since 1954, labor union membership decline has spanned more than 4 decades (Mizruchi & Hyman, 2014). The market decline, globalization, technology, and polarization have contributed to declining union representation and membership (Bhebe & Mahapa, 2014; Ibrahim, 2013; Milligan, 2014; Rivers, 2014; Schnabel, 2013). Leaders of corporations initiated campaigns to limit unions' and workers' rights following the ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1937 to uphold the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA; Rachieff, 2012). Union leaders rely on active members to sustain the organization by climbing from the subordinate to become union leaders who influence policymaking (Chaison & Bigelow, 2002). According to Grissom and Strunk (2012), districts without collective bargaining contracts salary premiums are twice as smaller than districts that do employ bargaining contracts. Districts that operate under the meet-and-confer rule function under experience premium issues when deciding salary levels for their teachers. The salary schedules have salary premiums 77% larger than districts with no bargaining contracts (Grissom & Strunk, 2012). In this study, I focused on how business leaders, union representatives, and the workforce in Jefferson County, Alabama experienced the decline in union membership and representation. Republicans are the leaders in some of the attacks on trade unionism following the 2010 Republican mid-term election victories (Rachieff, 2012).

### **Background of the Problem**

The NLRA of 1935 is an organization that provides protection for employees and employers (Getman, 2016). The NLRA Act limits certain private sector labor-

management practices because of the harm that it would cause to the general welfare of the economy, workers, and businesses. The NLRA Act also encourages collective bargaining. Over the past 4 decades, union membership declined (Sharma, 2012). In 2012, union membership decreased from 14.1% to 11.3%, which is the lowest since the post-Second World War Era (Magdoff & Foster, 2013). The labor unions' primary purpose in the workforce is to coerce employers into representing employees, restoring power to workers, and increasing solidarity in the workplace (Ottati, 2012). Scholars classify unions as social movement contributors (Lee & Guloglu, 2014; Lewis & Luce, 2012). Under the NLRA, the U.S. worker has the right to organize, bargain, and strike cooperatively with the labor unions' protection. Union workers have a 25% possibility that they will obtain an employer-sponsored retirement plan and health insurance (Jones & Schmitt, 2014).

### **Problem Statement**

Membership of U.S.-based unions is declining at high rates (Fiorito & Jarley, 2012; Sharma, 2012). Union leaders use the strategies to improve union member retention. According to Mishel (2012), union membership caused an increase in inequality in the workplace by 33.9% for men and 20.4% for women. U.S. union membership union represented 16.2 million wage and salary workers in 2014 (The Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Workers consist of 14.6 union members who are under contract and 1.6 million nonunion members (The Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). According to Kristal and Cohen (2015), when jobs move from unionized core industries to less unionized service industries, unions decline. The general business problem is the

inability of some union leaders to retain union members resulting in a loss of profitability (Rios-Avila & Hirsch, 2014). The specific business problem is that some union leaders often lack the strategies to improve union member retention.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore strategies union leaders use in improving membership retention. The aim of a case study is to obtain a complex, fresh, rich description of phenomena within real life context (Boblin, Ireland, & Kirkpatrick, 2013). According to Yin (2013), case study research is a frequent trend that is prominent in researcher portfolios. The case study design was appropriate for the qualitative method of this study because it enabled me to identify the key source of the factors that causes the decline in union membership and union representation. The specific population size used in this study was 20 past and present union representatives, leaders, and managers in Jefferson County, Alabama.

Data from this qualitative case study might be used to affect social change by changing employee attitudes and social values regarding unions that affect unionization negatively. An increase in union membership could lead to an increase in employee representation in protecting workers' rights and bargaining power. The results of the study might be useful in developing strategies for membership retention and growth. Reversing declining union membership might lead to an increase in representation for employee rights in the workplace and collective bargaining (Farber & Western, 2016).

### **Nature of the Study**

The three different research approaches identified by Ranga and Panda (2015) are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative research starts with the assumptions that individuals have an active role in the construction of social reality, which requires that researchers capture this process of social construction (Burr, 2015). Qualitative data collection includes observations, focus groups, and interviews (McManamny, Sheen, Boyd, & Jennings, 2014).

Quantitative researchers focus on developing an understanding of complex processes or realities. In quantitative research, there are no exact measurements or preset hypothesis (Ranga & Panda, 2015). Mixed methods researchers integrate both quantitative and qualitative methods for analysis and data collection (Mertens, 2014). I chose the qualitative method and a case study design because I aimed to obtain a complex, fresh, rich description of phenomena as the participants actually lived it.

### **Research Questions**

I structured the research questions to explore the effects that declining union memberships cause in the workplace. The following research question was used to explore the lived experiences of union and nonunion members in the workplace: What strategies do union leaders use in improving membership retention?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What is your relationship with union leaders?
2. What is your view on declining union membership?



3. How would you describe union employee participation within the union?
4. How effective are you with your union in the workplace?
5. How well do you communicate with union members?
6. How does union participation influence membership?
7. How do union leaders involve union members in contract negotiations?
8. In your opinion, what is the cause of union membership decline?
9. Does union membership affect outside organizations?
10. If an opportunity arises to join or rejoin the union are you: (a) more likely to join, (b) less likely to join, or (c) undecided. Why?

### **Conceptual Framework**

In this study's conceptual framework, I combined three models: (a) Toubøl and Jensen (2014) on the demographic factors of union and nonunion members; (b) Tuckman and Snook (2014) on recruitment factors; and (c) Hoque, Earls, Conway, and Bacon (2014) on collective bargaining factors to explore the issues that affect membership recruitment and retention. I used each of these models to explore the factors that affect membership recruitment and retention. The three variables of demographic, recruitment, and union collective bargaining factors may contribute to the decline in union membership.

According to Jones and McKenna (1994), when a positive function of wage rate and employment outweighs not being a member, union membership increases. Jones and

McKenna also stated that union members feel that the benefits of collective bargaining should be more than the cost of union dues. Unions are instrumental in providing support to its members and the possibility to improve labor conditions in the workplace (Fiorito & Jarley, 2012). The theory of Jones and McKenna applied to this study because of the clarification of specific decisions about union membership. The contribution of unions determine the needs of the employee. The existence of low union contribution precludes the deterioration of unions (Gahan, 2012). According to Shin (2014), the presence of union representation results in the reduction of the use of high performance work systems. Collective bargaining is the process that employers use to satisfy employee needs. The collective bargaining process in the workplace does not involve direct employee involvement (Shin, 2014). Jones and McKenna stated that collective bargaining agreements are instruments that union members use to determine the utility of union membership. An investigation of the factors that causes the decline in union membership was the basis of the study.

Physiological, self-actualization and esteem, love, and safety are identifiable needs organized according to the order of relative potency (Kearney-Nunnery, 2015). Kearney-Nunnery (2015) viewed each of the needs as a level of motivation for humanity. Rivers (2014) explained activities perceived to meet the needs of individual and what motivates an individual to participate in those activities. Zhang and Morris (2014) revealed that high performing work systems increase organizational performance due to motivation and employee training. However, the presence of union representatives caused a decrease in the use of high performance work systems (Zhang & Morris, 2014).

Engagement of collective bargaining through labor organizations for federal employees spans more than 52 years. The primary framework for employees to participate in collective bargaining and labor organizations is attributed to the statute of the federal service labor-management relations. In this collaboration, management and labor can share customer service improvement, cost cutting goals, and productivity enhancement. According to The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (2014), the public demands employee performance with high standards. Collective bargaining and labor organizations in civil service could be in the best interest of the public (The U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2014).

### **Definition of Terms**

*Collective bargaining:* A process that is collective because employees associate together, normally if not invariably in trade unions, to bargain with their employers in regards to benefits, wages, and workplace conflict resolution (Walpole, 2015).

*Membership utility:* Weighing the costs versus the benefits; the advantages of membership and retention outweighing the cost of membership (Jones & McKenna, 1994).

*Union representative:* A trade union member elected as a leader to represent employees in a workplace engaged in working with management (Hoque & Bacon, 2015).

## **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

### **Assumptions**

In this qualitative case study, I assumed the following: (a) the participants answered the interview questions honestly, (b) the participants did not provide misleading information, (c) the participants were knowledgeable about their union's organization, and (d) I recorded and accurately interpreted the participants' responses.

To alleviate risk, I applied the purposive sampling method to select participants in the study based on criteria for qualification (Bernard, 2013). Purposive sampling allowed me to decide the purpose I wanted the units of analysis to serve. I used open-ended interview questions to reduce any bias and to promote impartiality.

### **Limitations**

Participants' requirements in this study were current or past union members, had experience as a union representative, or were employed in an organization with union representation. The participants in this study were from industries that currently or previously have union representation in the workplace. The participants' information limitations centered around the above criteria and not on age, gender, or ethnicity. Each participant worked in the Jefferson County, Alabama area. The limits of this study were those unions within the Jefferson County, Alabama area. The demographics and geographical location of the participants may or may not have a significant effect on being a limiting factor on the outcome of this study.

## **Delimitations**

Defining boundaries and focusing the scope of a study are the characteristics of select delimitations by the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The study did not include union representatives outside the Jefferson County, Alabama area. The participants were current or past union members, had experience as a union representative, or were an employee in an organization with union representation. Twenty interviews and 20 participants are sufficient to reach data saturation in a qualitative study (Green & Thorogood, 2013). In conjunction with the theoretical framework, I distinguished areas that are instrumental to union membership decisions.

## **Significance of the Study**

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

Scholars have documented the concern of union membership decline (Farber, 2014; Freeman, 2014; Keune, 2015; Waddington, 2014). Farber (2014) suggested that union membership decline attributed to the deterioration of organizing the environment for labor unions in the United States. Freeman (2014) posited that industrial composition of unemployment is the resulting factor of declining union membership. Keune (2015) argued that declining union membership is due to an aging membership, and unions need new young members that will revitalize and strengthen their ranks. Waddington (2014) explored the reasons that union members retain their membership. The results of a qualitative case study designed to explore the decline in union membership provided an understanding of the factors that cause the deterioration. The data might be useful for developing programs to assist union leaders in increasing union membership.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Deery, Iverson, Buttigieg, and Zatzick (2014) found that members with a high level of union satisfaction have a tendency to express their voice when they perceive their leaders to be responsive to their concerns and needs. Motivation is the foundation of need and is a necessity for employees. Employees have needs that are also fundamental for motivation (Deery et al., 2014). The capability to fulfill needs through collective bargaining was essential to this study's conceptual framework (Maslow, 1943). Promoting a healthy and productive work environment leads to job security (Finney & Stergiopoulos, 2013). The likelihood of a public-sector union members being a registered voter are 2.4 points greater than nonmembers, and private-sector union members being a registered voter is 6.7 points greater than that of nonmembers (Rosenfeld, 2014). Farber (2014) indicated there is a connection with declining union membership and the decrease in represented elections. Union membership and political participation are related in the United States.

The results of this study might be used to devise retention strategies to improve practice, procedures, and unionization. As discussed by Jacobs and Dirlam (2016), unionization presents political equality through narrowing the gap in income-centered equality amongst the voters. An increase in political representation can affect social change.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand why unions are experiencing declining union membership. To comprehend this trend, I conducted a

review of the literature to provide transparency and understanding of union membership decline. The literature review covers the history of unions and the trend of declining union membership. Union membership trends that relate to the decline occurs in numerous areas: (a) economics, (b) membership retention, (c) union density, (d) workplace representation, (e) union membership recruitment, (f) wages, (g) member demographic influences, (h) union member equality vs. inequality, and (i) unionization. The literature review provides information with regards to the theoretical framework application. The sources for this literature review were obtained from the Walden library through various search engines such as Business Source, Sage Journals, ABI/INFORM Complete, and Google Scholar. Table 1 consists of a list of peer-reviewed journals in the literature review from varying years, with 89% between the years of 2013-2016. Also, contained in the literature review are books, dissertations, and non-peer-reviewed journals. The search terms for articles on my subject matter were as follows: *union, decline, economy, collective bargaining, labor union, and membership*.

Table 1

*Literature Review Source Content*

Reference type	Total	<5 years	>5 years	% Total <5 years old
Peer-reviewed journals	99	88	12	89%
Dissertations	5	5	0	100%
Books	16	14	1	88%
Non-peer-reviewed journals	6	5	1	83%
Total	126	112	14	89%

## **Union History**

During the colonial period (1619-1776) and thereafter, 90% of the population resided in the Eastern United States (also known as the New World). The Eastern United States was a rural society for 2 1/2 centuries of colonization (Dubofsky & Dulles, 2014). In the mid-18th century, the emergence of the Industrial Revolution in England freed employers' authority from governmental laws and regulations. In the workplace, conditions, employment terms, and wages were a determination of the employer, and workers had no opportunity to influence the nature of work or compensation (Kearney & Mareschal, 2014). The conditions in factories were horrendous with inadequate ventilation and lighting, and dangerous, dirty, and noisy conditions. Workers worked 7 days per week and 12 to 14 hours per day with employees as young as 6 years of age. The laws forbid organizing efforts of trade unions. The law felt as if the organization would become a criminal conspiracy that could interfere with commerce (Kearney & Mareschal, 2014). According to Kearney and Mareschal (2014), it took almost 200 years to transition from autocratic corporate authority to organized labor and collective bargaining. In 1842, a Massachusetts court made U.S. unions legal. However, the Massachusetts courts rejected the doctrine of *Commonwealth v. Hunt* conspiracy; but was accepted by other state courts (Gallaway, 2016). The acceptance of *Commonwealth v. Hunt* conspiracy by other state courts prompted a neutral stance due to the presence of an employee protection organization in the workplace on behalf of workers (Gallaway, 2016). Union membership peaked in 1954 at 34%; however, in the past 4 decades, it has declined (Sharma, 2012).



U.S. workers had the right to bargain collectively, and strike for the protection of labor unions by the NLRA of 1935, also known as the Wagner Act. The NLRA supports the high wage doctrine to stimulate the growth of the economy and aid the United States in recovery after the Great Depression (Gallaway, 2016; Gallaway & Robe, 2014; Gross, 2012; Taylor & Neumann, 2013). The wage doctrine also aids in the establishment of governing the legal formation of unions (Helfand, 1977). The formation of unions under the NLRA requires representation. The representation stemmed from elections and collective bargaining with employers (Warren, 2015). In the Wagner Act, Section 8.5 prohibited an employer from denying the right for employees to bargain with union representatives (Taylor, 2013). The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) recommended Senator Robert Wagner include in his bill a nondiscrimination provision (Taylor, 2013). The National Labor Relations settles union complaints and unfair labor practices by employers. The Taft-Hartley Act (T-HA) amendment allows the NLRA to refrain from unionization for employees (Fisk & Sachs, 2014; Helfand, 1977; Lee, 2014). After the T-HA passed, the union-sponsored strike activity significantly reduced from 1948 to 1980 leading up to the Reagan Administration (Rivers, 2014).

The efforts to enforce workplace rights of immigrant workers in the United States are evolving. Bada and Gleeson (2015) surveyed 52 Mexican consulates in the United States. Délano (2014) confirmed a shift from limited to active engagement over the last decade. Bada and Gleeson also documented how workplace rights are evolving into creating an annual Labor Rights Week. Labor Rights Week coordinates local, federal,

and worker advocate enforcement agencies (Bada & Gleeson, 2015). The American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) is an organization that regulates individual unions that vary in the size of the membership and staff, whether they organize craft, industrial unions, or both. The varying types of unions are democratic and effective, ineffective, autocratic, or corrupt (Stepan-Norris, 2015).

The Interstate Commerce Act (ICA) of 1887 led to the establishment of the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), which is an established regulatory agency that offered supervision of entry and rate of interstate commerce in the rail business. Later, the ICC's jurisdiction comprised of the regulation of bus and trucking transportation. The development of labor markets is an unintended consequence of ICC regulation. These sectors of the labor markets help promote labor rent sharing and labor organization (Peoples, 2013). Many prominent unions in U.S. labor history represent workers in ICC-regulated businesses (Peoples, 2013).

Unions with weak bargaining positions often enable employers to decentralize bargaining further (Waddington, 2013). Waddington (2013) added that weak bargaining positions also deter union efforts to secure recognition in sections of employment progression. When union membership declines, the number of bargaining units in the public sector will continue to grow. Privatization and decentralization of bargaining affect unions that traditionally service only central negotiations; therefore, increasing the strength of bargaining positions that unions should not merge (Waddington, 2013).

Across the United States, the percentage of the labor force is not consistent. The first year for which a complete data set described state-by-state variation in union activity

was 1964 (Gallaway & Robe, 2014). Unionized workers ranged from 44.8% in Michigan to 7.6% in South Carolina (Gallaway & Robe, 2014). In 1964, union membership averaged approximately 29.3% for all states and continues to decline (Gallaway & Robe, 2014). The workers' percentage of union members declined to below 12%, with 11.8% in 2011 and 11.3% in 2012 (Gallaway & Robe, 2014). Despite the declining membership, the union activity in 2011 was still substantial, with New York the highest at 24.1% of unionized workers (Gallaway & Robe, 2014). North Carolina's 2.9% of unionized members was the lowest proportion of all states (Gallaway & Robe, 2014).

In a basic statistical model design, Gallaway and Robe (2014) explained the salary growth in real per capita income (RPCI) in New York and North Carolina. Heavily unionized states are almost six times smaller than the states with higher union activity (Gallaway & Robe, 2014). Between the years of 1964 and 2011, this basic model (Table 1) showed a dependent variable, which was the percentage growth in real per capita personal income (Gallaway & Robe, 2014). The key independent variable in the analysis was the availability of union data for each state, which aids in the determination of the choice of those years (Gallaway & Robe, 2014). The five independent variables in the basic statistical model that account for additional factors that might affect income growth (Gallaway & Robe, 2014) are: (a) manufacturing – the percentage of employment in manufacturing in 1964, (b) income tax – the average top marginal income tax rate for the period 1977 through 2010, (c) INC64 – real per capita income in 1964, (d) politics – the percentage of the population voting for Ronald Reagan in the 1984 presidential election,

and (e) the percentage of the college population over 25 years of age with a college education or its equivalent as of the 1980 census.

Table 2

*Dependent Variable: Real Per Capita Income Growth, 1964–2011*

	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>t-Ratio</b>	<b>p-Value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Const.	3.27589	0.529334	6.1887	<0.00001	***
Politics	-1.61199	0.452771	-3.5603	0.00090	***
College	2.71075	1.67594	1.6174	0.11293	
NC64	-5.69575e-05	1.96551e-05	-2.8978	0.00584	***
Unionization	1.73537	0.84761	-2.472	0.04663	**
Manuf	0.0112495	0.349459	0.0322	0.97447	
Income Tax	-1.03384	3.51499	-0.2941	0.77005	
Mean Dependent Var.	1.301897		S.D. Dependent Var.	0.333967	
Sum Squared Resid.	2.336413		S.E. of Regression	0.230435	
R-squared	0.581041		Adjusted R-squared	0.523910	
F(6, 44)	10.17036		P-value(F)	4.83e-07	
Log-likelihood	6.255961		Akaike Criterion	1.488077	
Schwarz Criterion	15.01086		Hannan-Quinn	6.655531	

### **Economics**

Change to the structure of the U.S. economy has resulted in a decline in union membership. The two reasons for declining union membership are the lack of union commitment and job-related satisfaction (Danish, Shahid, Aslam, & Ali, 2015; Godard & Frege, 2013; Zeytinoglu et al., 2012). According to Ozimek (2014), labor unions serve as a catalyst for high wage business models and worker-owned companies. Ozimek also noted that unions should construct plans with claims that are profitable and offer positive opportunities that will benefit workers. Adding profitable and positive opportunities such as health insurance, administering unemployment insurance, and providing human resource services could create value for the firms (Ozimek, 2014). The development of

wage determination models has become popular over the past few decades. Labor economics is moving beyond justifying regulation or intervention due to labor economics incorporating new ideas into modeling wage determination in competitive labor markets (Booth, 2014).

Employers' labor costs and the effectiveness of collective bargaining are lower; however, employers are creating the availability of higher cost labor. Scholars claim that globalization influences union membership (Ibrahim 2013; Saminathan, 2012; Waddington, 2014). The benefits of globalization outweigh the negative effects on collective bargaining (Waddington, 2014). Outsourcing causes union wage premiums to increase, with no effect on union membership (Sarina & Wright, 2015). Unions use social movement unionism and corporate campaigning as a strategy to contest and influence corporate policy decisions. Corporate campaigning plays a role in making sure that the mobility of capital does not override justice in a global economy (Sarina & Wright, 2015).

Gross domestic product, as it relates to imports, increased from 6% to 23%, while union membership decreased from 14.1% to 11.3% (Griswold, 2010; Magdoff & Foster, 2013). Unions are facing unfavorable political and legislative environments and a dwindling membership base. Globalization of capital allows for organizational progress and a decrease in commitment to workers or communities (Holland & Pyman, 2012).

### **Membership Retention**

According to Toubøl and Jensen (2014), union membership is in decline despite a range of initiatives to reverse this trend. Toubøl and Jensen continued that the primary

areas of focus are workplace union density and individual political attitudes. During the research, a self-placement test on a political left-right scale that measures the attitude of individuals, was performed. This self-placement test assumed to constitute a value-rational motive for joining the union (Toubøl & Jensen, 2014). Toubøl and Jensen stated that the statistical test revealed that union density is the leading predictor of whether or not a workers join a union, even when other variables are considered such as occupation, industry worked and gender. Toubøl and Jensen also revealed that political attitude is a significant factor when applying for union membership consideration.

A general (multitrade) union in the UK – the Union of Shop, Distributive, and Allied Workers (USDAW) – is a union organizing in the distribution and retail sectors. Membership has grown since 2006 by 26% with 84,000 additional members (Parker & Rees, 2013). USDAW's growth corresponds to operating as an organizing union (Parker & Rees, 2013). In the U.S., some states permit or require bargaining depending upon the laws of the states and jurisdictions and the nature of the rapport that exists between members and unions. The *Right to Work* states cannot collect union dues unless the employee consents. However, in some states, employees must compensate the union for its role in contract negotiation whether they are union members or not (Fowles & Cowen, 2015).

The quality of member services associates with membership retention (Waddington, 2013). Many European trade unions have made a range of financial services available to its members as an incentive for membership retention. The differences vary from different unions of nationalities, male and female, and age groups.

In Europe, representation of the workplace is central to retaining members (Waddington, 2014).

Unions may warrant separate strategies for recruiting and retaining members. According to Oesch (2012), recruitment efforts determine union decline or growth and not retention policies. These determining factors attribute to recruitment and organizing, mainly because of the large scope of unions. They can be the result of external conditions, such as circumstantial job changes (Oesch, 2012). Gall and Fiorito (2012) pointed out that supplementing the call for union renewal, with the insights resulting from the union participation and commitment literature, is done to achieve a better understanding of how to activate union members.

Competitive interest often exists between unions and organizations. Exit behavior of workers are reduced and a mechanism to lower organizational costs are benefits that are provided by unions. Union citizenship conduct is a form of voice for members in the workplace, and it can be used to analyze employee absenteeism. Absenteeism in the workplace on the branch level reduces when union citizenship conduct steers toward aiding union members with workplace grievances (Deery et al., 2014). However, the influence of many of the union-related variables on union citizenship conduct attributed to union loyalty (Deery et al., 2014).

### **Union Density**

Vachon and Wallace (2013) indicated the determinants of total public and private sector union density among 191 U.S. metropolitan statistical areas in 2003 was a topic of scholarly discussion. Vachon and Wallace revealed that labor market transformation has

crosscutting, but negative effects on union density and globalization. There are resemblances and differences in the determinants of private and public unionism. Even though there is a significant drop in union membership in the U.S. workforce, voter turnout is consistently lower among nonunion members and higher with union members (Francia & Orr, 2014). Some regions in the United States remain strong with union membership (Francia, 2012). Franica (2012) explored the faculty and staff in education and the means faculty must have as a collective voice for unions. A union must be entirely independent of any administrative coercive influence and must be broadly representative, competent, and of respect (Nissen, 2014).

Australian unions are concerned about declining union density and membership. Between 2005 and 2008, the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures showed a decline or workforce union membership from 22.4% to 18.9% (Oliver, 2014). Despite what other trends revealed, statistics and studies showed consistent union membership and density are the lowest in Western Austria (Oliver, 2014). Oliver (2014) explored whether privatization contributed to declining union density and membership in Australia (Oliver, 2014).

A survey of data and empirical literature is a catalyst on the determinants and unionization in other countries (Schnabel, 2013). Unionization has a positive relation to the public sector. There are facts that unionization has a positive relation to public sector employment, establishment size, the business cycle, and public sector occupation. There are still questions of whether changes in employee attitudes, their social values, and employee attitudes towards unions negatively affect unionization (Schnabel, 2013).



## **Workplace Representation**

The results of a study of workplace union delegates revealed typology of the experience of workplace union representative. The assessment consisted of the degree of control over their work as a union representative, as well as their degree of influence in their workplace union. To increase workplace representative, unions reinforce the power resources and strategic capabilities of delegates (Murray, Levesque, & Le Capitaine, 2014). Unions should also look for ways to strengthen their capability to deal with challenging contexts that relate to the loss of control (Murray, Levesque, & Le Capitaine, 2014). The natural tendency of workplace delegates is to behave in a certain way, as well as play a more vital role, as it relates to union policies and practices, and the capabilities of the delegates. In a study, Bryant-Anderson and Roby (2012) and Cranford (2012) found the need for specific recognition of inequality, identity, and the racial and gendered nature of local steward representation.

Following the 2008 recession, the European trade unions response to racism against migrant, and minority workers in the workplace was significant. Before the recession, the pressure of unions to provide equal treatment is already weaker (Quali & Jefferys, 2015). The focus of the study is mainly in Bulgaria, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Belgium during the years of 2003-2005, 2008-2009, and 2013. Because of the increase, migrant, and minority worker unemployment levels are seeing growth faster than for 'national majority' workers (Quali & Jefferys, 2015). The four union responses are as follows: (a) protection of the interests of national majority workers and racism denial; (b) the demand that minorities conform without special provisions; (c) recognition

of the need for minorities to have some special support and services; and (d) the implementation of positive processes to promote equal treatment (Quali & Jefferys, 2015). A study of the migration of unions in Spain, United Kingdom, and the Netherlands identified three main logics that inform trade union action that included race/ethnicity, social rights, and class. Industrial relations traditions and national regulatory structures shape these responses. The results of this study by Quali & Jefferys (2015) also revealed how unions in the country tend to give priority to certain particular logics rather than others. Union migration comes with certain challenges for unions when identifying strategies to prevent membership decline (Connolly, Marino, & Lucio, 2014).

Butler and Tregaskis (2015) indicated workplace partnership phenomenon attracted academic interest. Evidence from a customary heavy engineering MNC context examined how the pursuit of combined strategies affected the responsibilities of a multi-layered, mature community of trade union shop stewards. The analytical lens of legitimacy provided understanding into the diverse experiences of sectional and senior stewards (Butler & Tregaskis, 2015). The conclusions of the study suggested the limitations at one level of representation were offset by advances on another (Butler & Tregaskis, 2015). In a context that provided sufficient privileges for representation, the Belgian unions improved the working conditions by responding to workers through plant level agreements contributing to the equality of regular and agency workers (Doerflinger & Pulignano, 2015).

Los Angeles, California sought to transform the city's expansive, low-rent carwash industry, from a sustainable, long-term existence in South Los Angeles, where

many of the carwash union members work and live. The CLEAN (Community, Labor, Environmental Action Network) Carwash Initiative, in association with some community groups, was established as a self-sustaining United Steelworkers' local union to raise up both the community and the industry since 2008 (Avendaño & Fanning, 2014). There is a growing initiative within the increasing transnational conversation on alternative forms of worker representation and labor's responses to power, anti-worker fiscal austerity, and declining union density (Avendaño & Fanning, 2014). This initiative explored the unique institutional structures and its efforts to preserve public services and expanded health care access for carwash workers (Avendaño & Fanning, 2014).

### **Union Membership Recruitment**

In Central and Eastern Europe, there are differences in trade union methods of membership recruitment. According to Mrozowicki (2014), the focus areas are the retail and automobile sectors in Poland, Slovenia, Estonia, and Romania. The trade union organizing efforts at the sectoral level are apparent in the perspective of the characteristics of the automotive and retail sectors. Interview performance implementations are with national union leaders in the automotive and retail sectors, which makes it possible to explore the practices and outcomes regarding membership numbers of trade unions (Mrozowicki, 2014). The most often repeated theme in interviews with sectoral union leaders is the lack of sufficient financial resources for membership recruitment (Milkman & Voss, 2004).

Experimental data resulted from three types of sources that included 20 interviews with national leaders of major trade union federations active in both sectors (see Table 2)

and interviews with some regional union leaders for the context supplementing (Mrozowicki, 2014). The interviews comprised NSZZ Solidarność, OPZZ and Sierpień 80 (Free Trade Union August 80) in Poland, CSNRL-Fratria, and CNS Cartel Alfa in Romania, EAKL (Eesti Ametiühingute Keskliit) in Estonia and ZSSS (Zveze Svobodnih Sindikatov Slovenije) in Slovenia. The select unionized companies are new and original or have a significant increase in their workforce (regarding influence on work organization and wages) after the stage of privatization and reorganization (Mrozowicki, 2014).

Table 3

*Trade Union Organizing Strategies*

Trade union organizing strategies.					
Country	Union	Organizing Strategies	Membership Change (available years)		
			Year	Number	Trend (%)
<i>Automotive</i>					
Estonia	EMAF ( <i>Eesti Metallitöötajate Ametiühingute Föderatsioon</i> ) <sup>a</sup>	No explicit organizing, legal help in establishing unions	2006 2010	2645 1360	-48.6
Poland	NSZZ <i>Solidarność</i> (Automotive Section)	Regional Union Development Offices; no sectoral involvement	2006 2010	14,000	Stable <sup>b</sup>
	The Metalworkers Federation of OPZZ ( <i>Metalowcy</i> )	Legal help, company-level activist training	2006 2009	25,000 18,950	-24.2
Romania	FSAR ( <i>Federația Sindicatelor Automobilului Românesc</i> )	Organizing by national federation leaders, direct contacts in workplaces, conflict-based organizing	2003 2010	18,000 21,862	+21.45
	FSCM ( <i>Federatia Sindicatelor din Constructii de Masini</i> ) <sup>a</sup>	No explicit organizing, servicing	2010	18,000	Decline <sup>b</sup>

Slovenia	SKEI ( <i>Sindikatske in elektroindustrije Slovenije</i> ) <sup>a</sup>	Organizing by youth section and regional branches; officer training, school visits; special budget for organizing	2005 2010	40,000 38,000	-5
Retail Estonia	ETKA ( <i>Eesti Teenindus- ja Kaubandustöötajate Ametiühing</i> )	Organizing by regional branches, media campaigns, protest-based organizing, international support	2006 2009	742 1002	+35
Country	Union	Organizing strategies	Membership change (available years)		
			Year	Number	Trend (%)
	FZZPSPHiU (OPZZ)	No explicit organizing; servicing	2006 2010	11,528 7510	-34,8
Romania	FSC ( <i>Federația Sindicatelor din Comerț</i> )	Organizer training; international support; special budget	2001 2010	2800 12,000	+428
Slovenia	SDTS ( <i>Sindikatske delavcev trgovine Slovenije</i> )	Media campaigns, recruitment by shop stewards, direct contacts	2000 2009	36,000 17,450	-51,5
	STS (KS 90)	Recruitment by shop stewards, direct contacts	Exact data not available;		Decline <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Trade unions partially covering the sectors under study; membership data for the whole sector. <sup>b</sup>No comparative data available.

Estimate of trend based on union leaders' statements. <sup>c</sup>Although the trend seems realistic the data seem to be overestimated.

## Wages

In 1996, a bold experiment embracing employment-at-will (EAW) for public employees and public management, reformed by the state of Georgia, is now in place. Since the implementation of Georgia reform, Public Human Resource Management (PHRM) research calls for an appreciation of the connection between performance and personnel changes (Jordan & Battaglio, 2014). Public human resource management (PHRM) reforms intend to cultivate the efficiency of government personnel functions and embraced a significant view of standard civil service systems (Jordan & Battaglio, 2014). Jordan and Battaglio (2014) explored the plea to gather research that has more rigor. The

research analysis provided an overview of public personnel reform, with a focus on five themes that included performance-based pay, declassification, decentralization, privatization and deregulation (Jordan & Battaglio, 2014).

Sociological neo-institutionalism aided in understanding transnational trade union wage policy. According to Pernicka & Glassner (2014), existing approaches to the role of trade unions are topics for review. These trade unions act as organizational actors in wage bargaining coordination and contrasted the concepts of organizational fields and institutional labor (Pernicka & Glassner, 2014). Empirical evidence draws from existing European studies on wage bargaining coordination in metalworking (Pernicka & Glassner, 2014).

In this study, I also explored the exchange of the relationship between coverage and work hours, wages and company spending on health insurance for public sector workers. Qin and Chernew's (2014) approach to this issue primarily compared wage and hour trends for public employees, with or without local and state government provided health insurance, using individual-level micro-data from the 1992-2011 CPS. The results of the assessment of the relationship between state contribution to the health plan premium, state-level health care spending, and the wages and hours of state and local government employees revealed a modest wage reduction in association with having employer-sponsored health insurance (ESHI). The relationship in wage reduction is larger among non-union workers; however, no evidence confirmed that providing health insurance increased the number of hours worked (Qin & Chernew, 2014).

The majority of experimental evidence implies that educator's union strength and unionization relates to increases in district expenditures and salaries, primarily salaries for veteran teachers (Cowen and Strunk, 2015). Cowen and Strunk (2015) also showed mixed outcomes as evidence for union-related differences in students, but indicative of irrelevant or moderately adverse union outcomes. Social equality is available when employees utilize unions as a pathway. Initially, there is a start with increasing the wages of the lower paid workers to provide better wages. Secondly, unions often try to bargain for equal pay for certain skills and experience levels that are more, or less, the same and eliminate racial, gender, age, and other prejudices in pay and treatment. Lastly, organizational connections to political issues that influence lives are available to workers. Strong unions help elect empathetic politicians that will place constraints on the authority some businesses (Cowen and Strunk, 2015). Given this, the rise and fall of unionism has much to tell us about the current state of unions (McCallum, 2015).

A current population survey of the union membership by state in 2014 shows the rates of employed wage and salary workers by state as well as the 2014 annual averages (The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015) in Table 4 below.

Table 4

*Union Membership Rates of Employed Wage and Salary Workers by State, 2014 Annual Averages*

<b>Union membership rates of employed wage and salary workers by state, 2014 annual averages</b>	
<b>State</b>	<b>Percent of employed who are members of unions</b>
<b>Alabama</b>	10.8

<b>Union membership rates of employed wage and salary workers by state, 2014 annual averages</b>	
<b>State</b>	<b>Percent of employed who are members of unions</b>
<b>Alaska</b>	22.8
<b>Arizona</b>	5.3
<b>Arkansas</b>	4.7
<b>California</b>	16.3
<b>Colorado</b>	9.5
<b>Connecticut</b>	14.8
<b>Delaware</b>	9.9
<b>District of Columbia</b>	8.6
<b>Florida</b>	5.7
<b>Georgia</b>	4.3
<b>Hawaii</b>	21.8
<b>Idaho</b>	5.3
<b>Illinois</b>	15.1
<b>Indiana</b>	10.7
<b>Iowa</b>	10.7
<b>Kansas</b>	7.4
<b>Kentucky</b>	11.0
<b>Louisiana</b>	5.2
<b>Maine</b>	11.0
<b>Maryland</b>	11.9
<b>Massachusetts</b>	13.7
<b>Michigan</b>	14.5
<b>Minnesota</b>	14.2



<b>Union membership rates of employed wage and salary workers by state, 2014 annual averages</b>	
<b>State</b>	<b>Percent of employed who are members of unions</b>
<b>Mississippi</b>	3.7
<b>Missouri</b>	8.4
<b>Montana</b>	12.7
<b>Nebraska</b>	7.3
<b>Nevada</b>	14.4
<b>New Hampshire</b>	9.9
<b>New Jersey</b>	16.5
<b>New Mexico</b>	5.7
<b>New York</b>	24.6
<b>North Carolina</b>	1.9
<b>North Dakota</b>	5.0
<b>Ohio</b>	12.4
<b>Oklahoma</b>	6.0
<b>Oregon</b>	15.6
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	12.7
<b>Rhode Island</b>	15.1
<b>South Carolina</b>	2.2
<b>South Dakota</b>	4.9
<b>Tennessee</b>	5.0
<b>Texas</b>	4.8
<b>Utah</b>	3.7
<b>Vermont</b>	11.1
<b>Virginia</b>	4.9

<b>Union membership rates of employed wage and salary workers by state, 2014 annual averages</b>	
<b>State</b>	<b>Percent of employed who are members of unions</b>
<b>Washington</b>	16.8
<b>West Virginia</b>	10.6
<b>Wisconsin</b>	11.7
<b>Wyoming</b>	6.7

Note: Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union. Data refer to the sole or principal job of full- and part-time wage and salary workers. All self-employed workers are excluded, both those with incorporated businesses as well as those with

### **Member Demographic Influences**

African American workers endure internal segregation as employees. As a result, the creation of a civil union to prevent unions from entering southern oil refineries is in place (Priest & Botson, 2012). Non-immigrant white workers join unions at slower rates than the Hispanic minority population (Rosenfeld, 2014). The Hispanics citizenship and residence duration are the main deterrents of becoming union members (Zullo, 2012). Unions representing the entertainment industry play an adversarial role in preventing immigrants in the industry (Moon, 2012). Unions play a significant role in protecting African Americans when leaders keep them from obtaining high paying stable employment. Increasing union membership percentages can subsequently aid African Americans in avoiding on-the-job racial discriminatory treatment. Unions in the workplace are vital to American women and women (Rosenfeld & Kleykamp, 2012).

An exploration of how victories in the Republican party in the 2010 elections sparked a new round of attacks on labor unions (Rachieff, 2012). Rachieff (2012) revealed the rights of public employees, collective bargaining, and perceives them as a threat to each state and their capability to stabilize the budget. According to Rachieff, anti-union protests encouraged unions to become active in their recovery efforts. Statistics showed that there are negative effects on employer-sponsored health insurance, employee wages, and pension plans in right-to-work states. Statistics also disclosed that right-to-work states have chosen to include this research in the discussion of union demographics. According to Kaufman (2012) and Godard and Frege (2013), workplace relations improved with employer-sponsored programs. However, they are a threat to wage-led organized labor because the results revealed that 54% of workers with employer-sponsored programs are content with a consultation and 41% unionization. Despite employers decreasing inequality, raising wages and giving voice to workers over the past 60 years, labor unions have been on the decline in the United States (Stepan-Norris, 2015).

### **Union Member Equality vs. Inequality**

Bargaining gender equality in the United States analysis is insufficient and misunderstood. Current theories of gender equality bargaining and collective bargaining, the process and state of collective and gender equality bargaining in the United States and the contextual components that inhibits and facilitates its development were analyzed (Berg & Piszczek, 2014). An interview with leaders of the national labor unions revealed that the gender equality bargaining practice among United States unions have their limits,

particularly since there are exclusive inhibitive attributes of the United States (Berg & Piszczek, 2014). Inequality decreases when union leaders grant union members a voice and improvement to worker's social and economic status. When improving inequality and workplace conditions, representation in the political realm and wages will improve.

Common union objections are (Stepan-Norris, 2015):

1. Common objections to unions emphasize high dues.
2. Bloated bureaucracies.
3. Corruption.
4. A tendency to raise employers' labor and retirement costs to uncompetitive levels.
5. Reductions in efficiency.

According to Cox (2013), 11% of the fastest growing sectors in the workforce are women with children, and of all female segments, and 50% are in the labor force (Karim & Beardsley, 2016). Comas-Diaz (2014) noted that nearly half of the United States workforce makeup is of women with a higher education level that is critical to the backbone of the United States employment, as well as an important source family income (as cited in Boushey & O'Leary, 2009). Also among couples, 80% had both husband and wife in the workforce outside the home, which 45% of the income between the dual-earners earned by the woman (The Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) reported 57.2% of all women are in the labor force. Among women in the labor force, those women with children between the ages of 6 to 17 years old are 74.8%. Those women with children between the ages of 6

years old are 64.7% and women with children under the age of 3 years old are 62.1% (BLS, 2014).

Researchers aimed to assess whether there is an association between employer-equality policy practice and union recognition pronunciation in cases where negotiation over equality occurs more often than in anywhere else. During the research, select individuals participate in a survey where they answer questions on whether managers typically inform, negotiate, or consult with unions while making a decision on equal opportunity (EO) issues. The five-part categorical variables research findings are as follows (Hogue & Bacon, 2014):

1. Managers negotiate with unions when deciding EO issues (3.7% of workplaces).
2. Managers consult unions when deciding EO issues (9.6% of workplaces).
3. Managers provide unions with information on EO (4.1% of workplaces).
4. Managers do not involve unions when making EO decisions (4.3% of workplaces).
5. Non-union workplaces (78.3% of workplaces).

In 1885, there were 10,000 African Americans, living in the city of Chicago. By the year 1890, there were more than 15,000. Fifteen thousand was less than 2% of the total population at that time. Black laborers obtained industrial jobs or became members of labor unions. Black women could not secure employment in hotel dining rooms or city restaurants, without the protection of labor unions (Garb, 2014).

Transgender employees encounter a host of problems as it relates to their gender. These employees often experience discrimination, harassment, and sometimes job loss and unemployment. Federal, state and local requirements for changing identifying gender markers on documents also makes it difficult to find work (Connell 2014). Transgender employees who had positive experiences still wrestled with negative health consequences and anxiety due to the anticipatory stress of harassment and discrimination from customers, clients, supervisors, and coworkers. Many of the respondents had negative experiences; however, 10 of the respondents report positive experiences in the workplace, often referring to them as lucky when they compare themselves to their fellow transgender co-workers (Connell, 2014).

It is also important to carefully plan a workplace transition or disclosure and reveal the positive effect of using third party mediators (such as HR and labor union representatives) in transition negotiation (Connell, 2014). Even though Connell (2014) agree upon these processes, the solutions did not address the more contradictory and difficult problems the interviews uncovered. Thirty-one percent of the United States workforce toiled as contingency workers, outside full-time regular year-round employment in 2005, and equaled to 46.6 million workers. In an estimation, by the year 2020, 40% of the workforce may work under unsecure conditions such as a lack of health benefits, underpaid, lack of job protection, vacations with pay, or pensions. Six percent of part-time workers are members of a union compared to 12.5% of full-time workers (Greenberg, 2014).

Unique data from a local educational agency in a midsize American city revealed that union membership rates are highest in areas where schools are more difficult to staff and where working conditions are problematic (Fowles & Cowen, 2015). Despite employers improving inequality, increasing wages, and giving voice to workers over the past sixty years, labor unions have continued to decline in the United States (Stepan-Norris, 2015).

### **Unionization**

Schneider's (2015) work on this article gives an understanding of the different relationships between minorities and immigrants to organized labor in the U.S. between 1994 to 2013. Current population survey data investigated the unionization of Chinese, Filipino, and Hispanic Americans. Native-born and immigrant Filipinos are more likely to become union members; however, Chinese immigrants are more likely to leave unions and not become unionized. Higher rates of unionization occurred with immigrant Hispanics and native-born Hispanics when compared to whites. The position of the labor market affects unionization, but harmonic characteristics shape unionization patterns (Schneider, 2015). Free movement is one of the European Union's (EU) foundations. It is noticeable that EU's aversion towards immigration has increased. The net migration on GDP per capita have significant positive effects despite negative public belief and contributing a portion of the support for the EU's free movement position (Bernskiöld & Perman, 2015).

Unionizing federal employees is a strategic move to reduce bureaucratic turnover and anchor the ideological composition of like-minded agency workforces. Federal

employee bureaucratic ideology via the campaign contributions is tested using a method of estimating (Chen & Johnson, 2014). The bureaucratic ideal point is another model of estimating in a comprehensive empirical test of the estimating model. Consistent with predictions of Chen & Johnson's (2014) model's, the results of empirical tests found that unionization of federal employees suppresses the agency-staff renewal rate, overturns ideological volatility when the president's partisanship changes, and arises more often in agencies ideology closer to that of the president (Chen & Johnson, 2014; Doerner & Doerner, 2013). Florida sheriff deputies were informative in an analysis of unionization. The results of the study failed to provide a comprehensive picture of all the unionization of law enforcement in the State of Florida. However, approximately half of all Florida's sworn personnel have only been involved in collective bargaining for approximately 10 years. The results emphasized the significance of implementing a broader orientation to comprehend the progression of collective bargaining (Doerner & Doener, 2013).

Increased security of employment and input into reward systems are due to unions providing a voice in the workplace, which can vary with national perspectives (Brewster, Wood, & Goergen, 2015). Brewster, Wood, and Goergen (2015) explored the impact of unions and collective bargaining, and the relative impact of setting on these problems. Firms with stronger shareholders equally oppose to shareholder rights and are less likely to deal with unions and formal collective representative systems. Unions have formal representative voice processes in place to protect the employees. According to Brewster et al. (2015), there are geographical differences in union representation.



### **Transition**

The literature review detailed the phenomenon of union membership decline. The historical background outlined in this study revealed the trends of declining union membership. The literature review covered the trends relating to the decline such as membership retention, union density, economics, workplace representation, union membership recruitment, and wages.

In Section 2, I elaborate on the following: (a) the purpose statement, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) the participants, (d) research method and design, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection, (h) data analysis technique, (i) reliability and validity, and (j) transition.

## Section 2: The Project

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore strategies union leaders use in improving union membership retention. The purpose of a case study approach is to obtain a complex, fresh, rich description of phenomena within real life context (Boblin et al., 2013). According to Yin (2013), case study research is a frequent trend that is prominent in researcher portfolios. The case study design is appropriate for the qualitative method of this study as it enabled me to identify the key source of the factors that cause the decline in union membership and union representation. The specific population size used in this study was 20 past and present union representatives, leaders, and managers in Jefferson County, Alabama.

Data from this qualitative case study might affect social change by altering employee attitudes, and social values regarding unions (Schnabel, 2013). Growth with union membership could increase employee representation in bargaining power and protecting workers' rights. The results of the study might be useful in developing strategies for membership retention and growth. Reversing declining union membership might increase representation for employee rights for protection in the workplace and collective bargaining (Farber & Western, 2016).

### **Role of the Researcher**

In a case study, the researcher will actively engage and continue to reflect on the data collection and evaluate it (Willig, 2013). In this qualitative case study, I addressed ethical issues that may occur during each stage of the research. My responsibility as the

researcher was to communicate with participants to identify our common goals. My responsibilities also included organizing collected data, interpreting data, and presenting findings. Using historical data and previous studies to validate these sources is a part of the triangulation method (Kaiser-Bunbury, Fleischer-Dogly, Dogly, & Bunbury, 2014). Lastly, I randomly selected previous current union and nonunion members for semistructured, face-to-face interviews. I asked each participant open-ended interview questions. Among those participants interviewed were employees in the governmental and industrial firm in Jefferson County, Alabama.

### **Participants**

The selected participants in this study were from various locations, but essentially from the same geographical location. I used a random sampling method to attain the 20 participants needed to gather their lived experiences as present, past, or nonunion members. Select participants were current, past, or nonunion members from one industrial operated firm and one governmental firm that both have unions. I collected data using personal interviews with 20 participants in the overall population.

Van Deventer (2009) recommended that legal, ethical, and social responsibility requirements be followed to ensure justice, respect, and beneficence. All participants received written documentation regarding the study, and they signed a statement giving their informed consent to participate. I did not anticipate any risk or harm to the participants, and the participants were confident of such. The participants each received information about the study so that they could decide on their participation.

Participants' records will remain private, and their participation was anonymous and confidential. Participants were not placed into compromising their positions, professional status, or well-being. I asked 10 open-ended questions by formally speaking with 20 past and present union representatives, leaders, and managers in Jefferson County, Alabama. I acquired historical data and previous studies from the Walden Library, Google Scholar, and the Birmingham Public Library.

### **Research Method and Design**

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore strategies union leaders use in improving union membership retention. The case study method describes and interprets perspectives of individuals with regard to a particular phenomenon (Pietkiewicz & Smith., 2014). In this study, I used personal interview techniques. Union members, previous union members, and nonmembers in the Jefferson County, Alabama workforce consented for personal interviews. Historical data and previous studies were helpful in tracking union membership decline.

### **Method**

The research method for this study was qualitative. Qualitative researchers could provide insights into the cause of declining union membership (Bernard, 2013). Qualitative researchers analyze and collect information from forms, primarily nonnumeric information, to understand the experience of the participants (Yin, 2015). Unlike other methods, qualitative researchers focus on exploring data (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). This research setting was in the workplace of two occupational plants where each participant was either a current, previous, or nonunion

member. This multiple case study design allowed me to interview participants in four occupational plants and collect data on the experiences of current, previous, and nonunion members.

Qualitative researchers use a systematic formal method for data analysis and data collection. Researchers use this format to ensure the integrity of their work and to make sure that their work meets rigorous standards (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). In using a qualitative multiple case study, interviews were useful in exploring the cause of declining union membership. The quantitative methodology approach is preferred when research questions involve hypothesis testing. Therefore, this method was not appropriate for this study. The mixed method approach also requires hypothesis testing, as well as providing support for quantitative and qualitative parts of the study. In this case study, I explored the lived experiences of the participants as union members. Quantitative and mixed methods are not appropriate for this study because those methods require the collection of predetermined amounts of data (Houghton et al., 2013). In this multiple case study, I used a semistructured, face-to-face interview technique with open-ended questions to promote impulsive in-depth answers. Participants received a consent form before the interviews, which included the basis of the study, procedures, and confidentiality of the information, and how it will be stored. Member checking occurred one week after all interviews were completed via email and phone.

### **Research Design**

Qualitative and quantitative are the two most common methods of research. Qualitative research data covers a broad range of information from a variety of sources

such as previous studies, literature, a semi-structured technique using open-ended questions, and case studies. Quantitative researchers test hypotheses (Wiggins, 2016). The research design in this study was case study design. I chose a case study approach because it is a useful method to explore the decline in union membership in Jefferson County. The conceptual framework of this study includes Toubøl and Jensen (2014) on the demographic factors of union and non-union members, Tuckman and Snook on recruitment factors, and Hoque, Earls, Conway, and Bacon (2014) on collective bargaining factors to explore the issues that affect membership recruitment and retention. Triangulation offers a solid platform for safeguarding the systematic collection and analysis of data and the distinctive awareness into the complex phenomenon (Kornhaber, de Jong, & McClean, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

### **Population and Sampling**

According to Jex and Britt (2014), interviewing is not only a research method, but also can be a complicated public and structural phenomena. The interview sample size is often justifiable to the selected participants until researchers reach data saturation (Walker, 2012). Robinson (2014) stated that a sampling size between 10 and 30 is appropriate for qualitative research. The sample location, site, and size is determined by the aim of the research. The size of the sample does not determine the quality of the data or the importance of the study (Holloway & Weaver, 2013). The participants in the study were from a random population of past and present union representatives, leaders, and managers in Jefferson County, Alabama. I began interviewing with a selection of a small sample of union representation. I interviewed participants to gather reliable and credible

lived experiences to answer my research question. The selection process consisted of interviewing a population of past and present union representatives, leaders, and managers.

Random sampling is considered a fair way of selecting samples from a given population (Babbie, 2015). I chose this random sampling because the given population had a number of participants who were accessible for the study. Using a random sampling method, I attained the 20 participants that provided their lived experiences involving past and present union representatives, leaders, and managers in Jefferson County, Alabama. I did not choose nonrandom sampling because that method does not give all participants an equal chance of being selected (Babbie, 2015).

### **Ethical Research**

I provided all participants with informed consent forms. The consent process is a requirement in research between a participant and the researcher (Kim, Caine, Currier, Leibovici, & Ryan, 2015). I provided candidates with pertinent information about the study and provided them the opportunity to ask any questions about their participation of the interview process. Candidates were given one week to decide on participation. The names of individuals or organizations were not included in this research. The questions were open-ended questions. The candidates and I signed and dated the consent forms. All participants received a copy of the signed consent form. Prior to the interviews, the participants were informed that the interviews were voluntary. Each participant had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. No incentives were offered for agreeing to participate in the study. All written data are secured and will be kept in a lock box for 5

years; I have possession of the only key to the lock box to ensure the protection of the rights of the participants. In 5 years, all data will be destroyed.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

#### **Instruments**

Researchers can use a variety of data collection instruments, such as aptitude tests, leadership tests, attitude tests, questionnaires, interviews, personality tests, existing documents, and records (Johnston, 2014). In the qualitative approach, phone interviews and face-to-face interviewing are the primary ways for researchers to investigate the experience of individuals (Seidman, 2013). The instrument guiding the interviews were 10 open-ended questions (see Appendix A). All participant interviews were face-to-face. During the interview, necessary modifications to the questions were made as needed to ensure that the instrument was suitable for the study. According to Stewart and Shamdasani (2014), some interviews can become time-consuming. The time consumption could limit access to a larger number of participants and data (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). Member checking took place via email and phone.

#### **Data Collection Technique**

The qualitative method in this study was used to explore the lived experiences of past, present, and nonmembers of the union. Interviews were the primary tools to collect data from the participants. The interviewing method for this study provided an unbiased, systematic, and efficient approach to data collection (Jones, Rodger, Boyd, & Ziviani, 2012). Before each interview, each participant was aware of the questions and signed a consent form. Participant interviews were conducted face-to-face, using open-ended



questions to reduce the possibility of bias in the participants' answers (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012).

Participants were aware of the commitment to confidentiality and anonymity of the responses prior to the interviews. Each participant answered 10 identical questions. All participants were nonfamily members. According to Damianakis and Woodford (2012), an authentic representation of participants provides contextualized, rich raw data. A relational presence also increases confidentiality and aids in reducing vulnerability (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012).

### **Data Organization Technique**

Organization, management, and logging of participant interviews were accessible to only me via Microsoft Word. The interview transcript was prepared via TranscribeMe® and NVivo 11®. I followed strict procedures for each interview to help maintain consistency with data collection and organization. Participants answered the same open-ended questions. I recorded notes in a journal and transcribed the interviews verbatim while eliminating information that posed a threat to the confidentiality of the participant. Each participant received a code name starting with the letter "P" and a corresponding number from 1-20 to protect their identity. I performed 20 interviews starting with P1 through P20 with each participant's information listed as a separate dataset. Electronic data placement was on a password-protected computer. Electronic data were backed up to a password-protected hard drive. I stored each participant's raw data for 5 years in a lock-box that only I have access.

### **Data Analysis**

I followed three steps of data analysis. First, I transcribed all data; second, I organized the data; and third, the first set of field notes received codes drawn from observations, interviews, or document reviews. According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2013), qualitative research consists of a variety of data analysis methods. Case studies are suitable to research questions that entail understanding organizational or social procedures (Moll, 2014). Participants answered a series of 10 questions about their lived experiences as a present, former, or nonunion member. The interview questions were as follows:

1. What is your relationship with union leaders?
2. What is your view on declining union membership?
3. How would you describe union employee participation within the union?
4. How effective are you with your union in the workplace?
5. How well do you communicate with union members?
6. How does union participation influence membership?
7. How do union leaders involve union members in contract negotiations?
8. In your opinion, what is the cause of union membership decline?
9. Does union membership affect outside organizations?
10. If an opportunity arises to join or rejoin the union, are you: (a) more likely to join, (b) less likely to join, or (c) undecided? Why?

In this qualitative study, I explored the experiences of past, present, or nonunion members. Participants answered in-depth, open-ended questions on the decline of union

membership. A transcription of interview responses was made in textual form using TranscribeMe and analysis with NVivo 11® software. I used NVivo 11® software to perform content analysis to determine distinctive patterns and themes from the interviews.

### **Reliability and Validity**

In a case study research, reliability and validity are essential elements. According to Briggs, Morrison, and Coleman (2012), it is difficult to apply reliability to case study research. The problems are more notably in the areas of unstructured and semistructured observation and interviews. Interpretive research has less of an association with reliability than with positivist research (Briggs et al., 2012). According to Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014), reliability is used in qualitative research testing or in an evaluation tool. Reproducing results using a similar method means the instrument is reliable (Braun & Clark, 2013). In testing and maximizing the reliability and validity in the qualitative research paradigm, the qualitative research provides the catalyst to assess both research methods (Carter et al., 2014). The use of the triangulation is to maximize or test the validity and reliability of a qualitative study (Carter et al., 2014). Results are reliable if they are constant over time and they provide an accurate representation of the total population under study. The research instrument is reliable if the outcome of a study is duplicable under a related methodology (Zohrabi, 2013). The root of validity is a positivist tradition, in which positivism is a systematic theory of validity. Validity is also the result of additional empirical origins that involves evidence, objectivity, universal laws, reason, actuality, deduction, mathematical data, truth, and fact. Validity assures

accuracy and trustworthiness of the information by the researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). The determining factor of validity is that which intends to measure the magnitude of that truth of the research (Golafshani, 2003). The naturalistic approach to qualitative research is used to understand the real-world setting.

According to Golafshani (2003), real-world settings are context-specific settings, which the researcher does not endeavor to manipulate the phenomenon of interest. Reliability tests or evaluate quantitative research but reliability is available for use in all types of research. The validity concept has been non-applicable to qualitative studies, but researchers realized that there was a need to measure their research (Golafshani, 2003).

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 2 described the strategies and methods of this study. In this qualitative study, the data from the past, present, and non-union members originated from interviews. Section 2 also covered research methods and design, data collection, reliability and validity, and data analysis. Section 3 comprises of the research outcomes and the social change implications.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

In this section, I identify the source of the factors that caused the decline in union membership and union representation. The results of this study identified the key themes that participants identified as the leading contributors to the decline of union membership. I conducted interviews using 10 open-ended questions with 10 union representatives at a governmental firm, and 10 union representatives at an industrial firm. The topics in this section are: (a) study overview, (b) research findings, (c) application to professional practice, (d) implications for social change, (e) recommendations, (f) reflections, (g) summary, and (h) study conclusions.

#### **Overview of Study**

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore strategies union leaders use in improving union membership retention. Labor union membership decline has taken place over each decade since 1954 (Mizruchi & Hyman, 2014). Market decline, technology, polarization and globalization are identified as contributing factors to declining union membership and representation (Bhebe & Mahapa, 2014; Ibrahim, 2013; Milligan, 2014; Rivers, 2014; Schnabel, 2013). Following the ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1937 that upholds the NLRA, the leadership of corporations initiated campaigns to limit unions' and workers' rights (Rachieff, 2012). Union representatives rely on functional members to sustain the organization by climbing from the subordinate to develop into union leaders who influence policymaking (Chaison & Bigelow, 2002).

The NLRA of 1935 provides protection for employees and employers (Sharma, 2012). The NLRA Act of 1935 restricts certain private sector labor-management practices

due to the harm that it would cause to the common well-being of the economy, businesses and workers. Union membership is experiencing a decline since 1954 over the past 6 decades (Sharma, 2012). Union membership decreased from 14.1% to 11.3% in 2012, which is the lowest since the post-Second World War Era (Magdoff & Foster, 2013). The primary purpose of labor unions in the workforce is to compel employers in representing employees, increasing solidarity in the workplace and restoring power to workers (Ottati, 2012). Unions are classified by scholars as the social movement contributors (Lee & Guloglu, 2014; Lewis & Luce, 2012). The U.S. worker has the right to bargain, organize, and strike cooperatively with the protection of the NLRA labor unions protection. Twenty-five percent of labor union workers have the possibility to obtain an employer-sponsored health insurance and retirement plan (Jones & Schmitt, 2014).

I interviewed 20 participants who consisted of 10 industrial union and nonunion members and 10 governmental union and nonunion members by asking them 10 of the same open-ended questions. I explored the lived experiences of 10 industrial and 10 governmental firm employees as union, nonunion, or former union members in Jefferson County, Alabama. Industrial participants were coded P1-P10, and governmental participants were coded P11-P20). According to the results of the study, eight out of 20 participants (P8, P6, P5, P1, P10, P14, P12, and P11) believed that membership size influences the number of people who join. However, four out of 20 participants believed that union membership is not influenced by membership size (P4, P19, P18, and P15). The main objectives of unions are to bargain for: (a) member benefits, (b) wages, (c) union representation in labor issues, and (d) improvement of labor conditions (P7, P17,

P10, P4, P20, and P2). According to my research results, 11 out of 20 participants' perception of union leadership communication were good (P12, P15, P11, P14, P13, P16, P10, P9, P20, P18 and P2). I also found that one out of 20 participants' perceptions of union leadership communication were poor (P17). Poor union representation adversely affected union decline (P12, P10, P8, P18, and P9). During the analysis, I found that none of the participants indicated that union representation was good.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The research question was the following: What strategies do union leaders use in improving membership retention in the workplace? To answer this question, I conducted 20 interviews, asking each participant 10 open-ended questions. To ensure the reliability of this study, each participant responded to the same questions. I used triangulation to maximize or test the validity and reliability of the study (Carter et al., 2014). Upon completing data collection, each interview was summarized and transcribed to eliminate redundancy using the NVivo 11® software.

Performing a content analysis helped me to determine distinctive patterns and themes from the interviews. Content analysis is a method that explores individual human minds (Krippendorff, 2012). The interview questions were each linked separately to coded nodes in NVivo 11®. Each participant response was placed in the coded node for that question, and each node contained all 20 participants' responses. A text query search was performed to create a word cloud, and from those results, each emerging theme was coded. The emerging themes are identified in Table 5.

Table 5

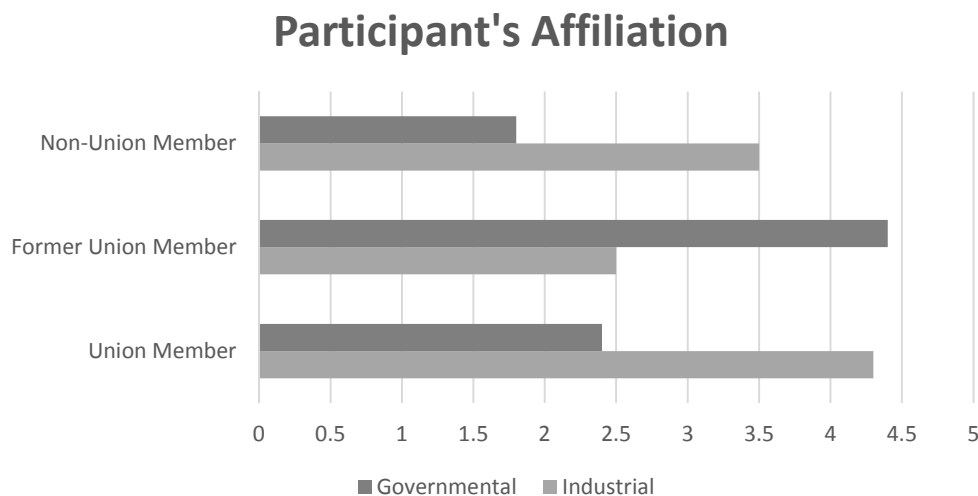
*Emerging Themes with Union Participation Responses*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Categorical Node</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
Contract Negotiations	Employee Protection	57%
Confidence in union leadership	Poor Representation	35%
Communication Quality	Poor Communication	35%
Membership Influence	Non-membership Influence	30%
Union Participation	Union Decline	25%
Non-union Participation	Union no longer effective	25%

**Demographics**

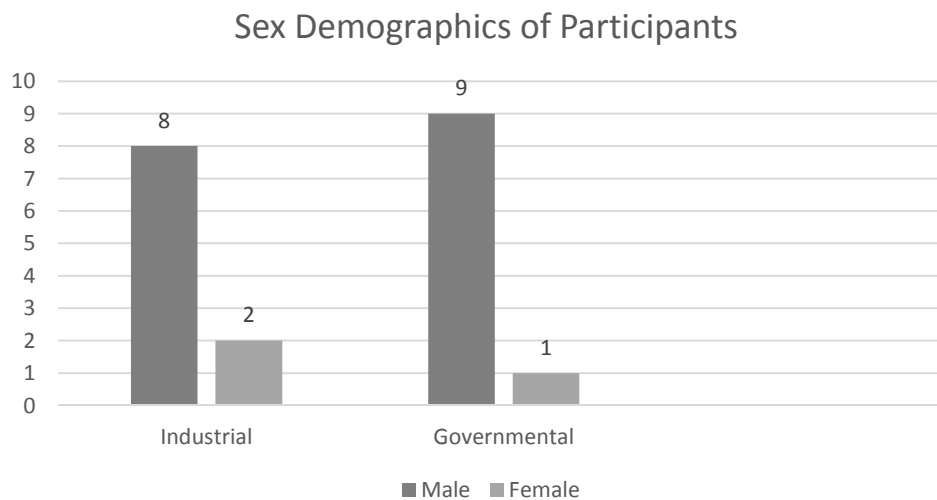
The participants comprised two industries: industrial and governmental firms. The participants were either a union member, former union member, or nonunion member, as illustrated in Figure 1.





*Figure 1.* Participant affiliation with a union in this study.

There were 20 participants; of those, there were three females and 17 male participants, as represented in Figure 2.



*Figure 2.* Sex demographics of participants in this study.

The participants’ marital stats varied from nine married males, one married female, four single males, one separated female, three divorced males, one single female, and one widow, as represented in Figure 3.

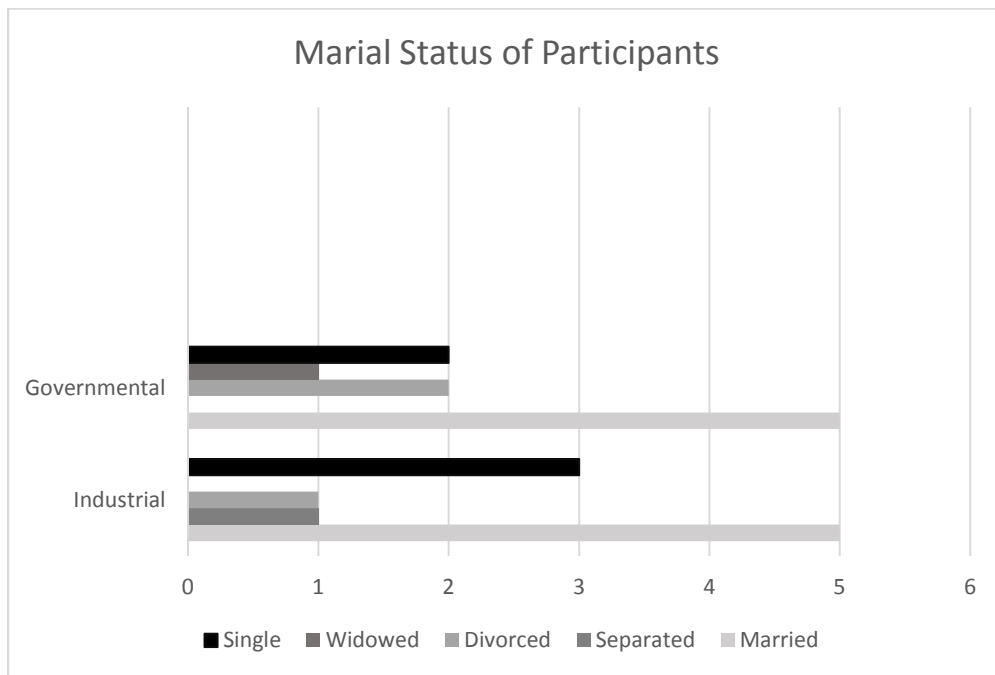
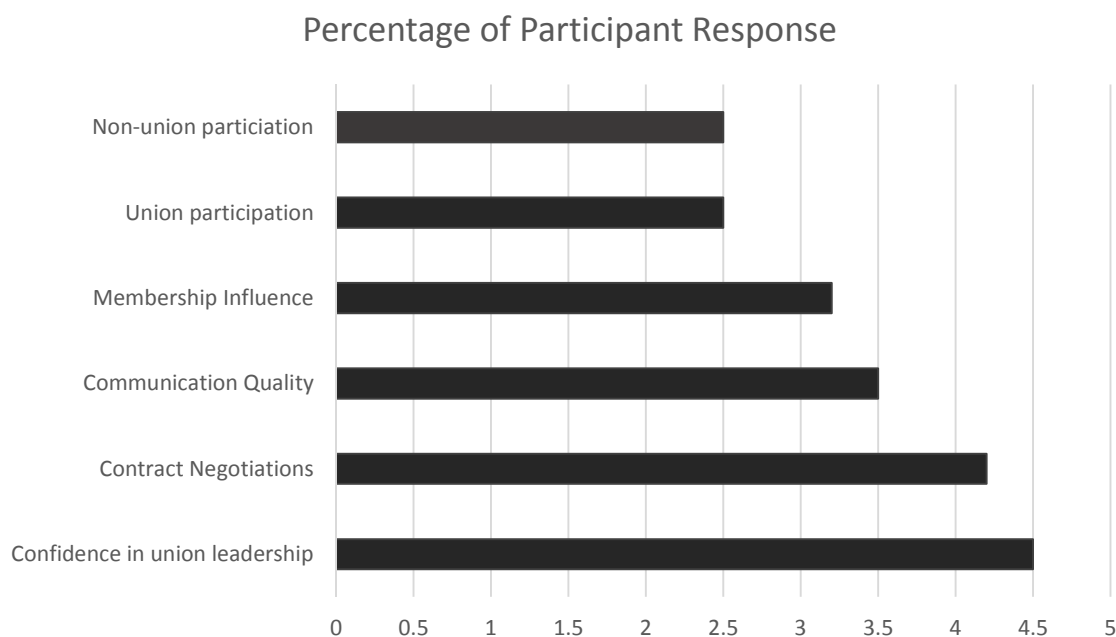


Figure 3. Marital status of participants in this study.

**Emerging Themes**

The emerging themes of this multiple case study represents responses with the highest percentage within a categorical node. Each categorical node represented the individual interview questions. Each question in the interview reflected a category with the potential to influence union membership. I organized the data to evaluate the union as an organization. I used the emerging themes in this study to illustrate the areas that are considered factors leading to the decline of union membership as shown in Figure 4.



*Figure 4.* Emerging themes from interviews

**Theme 1: Contract negotiations.** The contract negotiations theme emerged to bargain on behalf of union members. The theme from contract negotiations emerged from and employee protection. Fifty-seven percent of participants said union members have been involved in contract negotiations and 22% of those participants did not have confidence in the collective bargaining process. Participant P5 said, “I was involved in a contract negotiation at a former employer and the union leader kept the employees well informed on what was going on.” However, participant P6 said, “I was not pleased with the communication that was received from the union leader during contract negotiations because members had to constantly seek information.” Twenty-one percent of participants have never been involved in contract negotiations.

**Theme 2: Confidence in union leadership.** The relationship with union members and union leaders varied with many complaints. The theme of confidence in union leadership emerged from poor representation. Thirty-five percent of participants described their union representative as poor. Participant P8 said, “I have been noticing and hearing from other people that they are not joining or have gotten out of the union because of poor representation.” Participant P18 said, “It have become increasingly non-effective due to poor leadership and declining membership.” Participant P8 said, “I am least likely to join or rejoin a union because I feel that there is poor representation.”

**Theme 3: Communication quality.** The theme emerged from poor communication. During the interview and the analysis, 35% of the participants viewed the communication as a factor that contributes to declining union membership. The participants did not agree overwhelmingly that union decline is due to poor communication, but did agree that it is a contributing factor. Participant P6 said, “I was not pleased with the communication that I received from my union leader during contract negotiations because we had to constantly seek information.” However, as mentioned earlier in this section, some participants are pleased with the quality of communication of the union in the workplace. Participant P10 said, “When I was in the union I had good communication with other members and union leaders.”

**Theme 4: Membership influence.** The theme emerged from non-membership influence. The results of the interviews revealed that 30% of the study participants identified membership participation to be an influence on membership. Participant P5 said, “Participation can be an influence on membership, because there are some that feel

that there is strength in numbers.” Participant P6 said, “Participation in my opinion influences membership because we as individuals tend to take on the opinions of others.” Participant P14 said, “I joined the union because the co-workers that I work closely with decided to join so I can definitely see how participating could influence membership.” However, there are some participants that did not believe that membership numbers influence membership. Participant P7 said, “I do not think that union participation influence membership, but having great leadership and positive outcomes does.” Participant P13 said, “I am not convinced that union participation influence membership because at my workplace there were a nice amount of members participating but their participation did not influence me.” Participant P15 said, “I think people join unions based on their own reasons and do not feel that others participating in a union would influence membership.”

**Theme 5: Union participation.** The theme emerged from union decline. Twenty-five percent of the study participants identified union participation as a contributing factor in union decline. The participants had varying reasons on why union participation is declining, and of those participants, the responses include: (a) Participant P20 said, “I enjoy being a part of the union, but my view on union decline is some might feel that the union is ineffective and will eventually become non-existent.” (b) Participant P5 said, “I enjoy being a part of the union, but my view on union decline is some might feel that the union is ineffective and will eventually become non-existent.” (c) Participant P8 said, “Employee participation in the union is not good due to the number of employees that are no longer members and those who have decided not to join.”

**Theme 6: Non-union participation.** The theme non-union participation emerged from a union no longer effective. When asked about the effectiveness of the union, 25% of the study participants identified non-union participation as a contribution factor to union decline. Participant P13 said, “I do not feel unions are effective in this day and time, because there are too many new options available.” Participant P16 said, “The union is no longer effective because employers have improved on how they do things and there have been new laws put into place that would protect the employee.” Participant P18 said, “It have become increasingly non-effective due to poor leadership and declining membership.” There are some members, who believe unions are effective. Participant P14 said, “The union in my organization is very effective in protecting its members’ rights.”

### **Analysis of the Research Findings**

The emerging themes in this multiple case study supported the conceptual framework. The concepts of: (a) demographic factors of union and non-union members, (b) recruitment factors, and (c) collective bargaining factors exemplified the limited amount of potential union members. The emerging themes validated the conceptual framework. Maslow (1943) articulated needs motivation people. As a result, participants recognized the needs are factors in union participation. Participants in this study believed that poor representation and lack of effectiveness is significant to declining union membership. Participants view poor representation as a contributing factor to union decline.

The research and findings of this study are useful to evaluate the decline in union membership and its' effectiveness. The Table 4 themes provided information on the participant lived experience. There are existing studies on union decline and this study is an addition to that body of knowledge. This study focused on declining union membership from a union, non-union, former union members, and union representative's perspective. This data could be helpful to union representatives to improve membership, communication, and leadership confidence.

The confidence in union leadership emerging theme reflects that members are not satisfied with the union representatives. Union participation is less than 30% and only 35% have confidence in union leadership. According to Estlund (2012) and Strauss & Mapes (2012), when businesses involve the employee in the contract negotiation process, the concerns of the members are ensured to be addressed. Comparing the industrial and governmental industries revealed no significant differences among members. There was no disparity between the male and female participants. The complaints of union participants repeatedly stated are: (a) poor communication, (b) poor representation, (c) non-membership influence, (d) union no longer effective, and (e) poor contract negotiation. Benefits under collective bargaining include: (a) wages, (b) benefits, and (c) worker's compensation (Clark, 2012).

The data in this study may be useful by other organizations and industries other than the industrial and governmental firms. Union leaders can gain insight on: (a) the demographic factors of union and non-union members, (b) recruitment factors, and (c) collective bargaining. The interests of the employees are within the span of the

conceptual framework in this study. The demographic factors of union and non-union members, recruitment factors, and the collective bargaining agreement are the determining factors that are pertinent to the decisions, with regard to membership.

### **Additional Information from Participants**

The participants in this study received an invitation to voluntarily offer additional information that might provide more insight on union membership decline. The analysis of the additional information reveals that ineffectiveness, confidence in union leadership and membership influence to be the most repeated participant responses. Participant P20 said, “I enjoy being a part of the union, but my view on union decline is some might feel that the union is ineffective and will eventually become non-existent.” Participant P18 said, “It have become increasingly non-effective due to poor leadership and declining membership.” Participant P6 said, “Participation in my opinion influences membership because we as individuals tend to take on the opinions of others.”

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

Six themes arose as leading factors in declining union membership. The findings revealed union, non-union, and former union members perceive union representatives poorly, communication is poor, members are not involved in the contract negotiations, and membership is influenced by the union participation and non-union participation. Each of these themes is substantial to the innovation of new initiatives to influence union membership.

The analysis and study data in this paper is useful to evaluate unions’ organizational performance. The Table 4 themes provided information on the lived



experiences of the participants. There are existing studies on union decline and this study is an addition to that body of knowledge. This study was a qualitative view of declining union membership from a union, non-union, and former union member representative's point of view. Union representatives can use the information from this study to implement retention strategies and improve union membership.

### **Implications for Social Change**

In my exploration of primary concerns and views of union members and representatives on factors that contributes to declining membership, the themes in this study provides insight on the participants concerns, as well as how union leaders can address those concerns. The danger of declining union membership is the harm that it would cause to the general welfare of the economy, workers, and businesses (Hogler, Hunt, & Weiler, 2015). Positive social change affects society socially, politically, and economically by any increase in union membership (Bisom-Rapp, 2016).

Unions could improve the experience of being a union member by implementing renewed innovations such as ways of communication through webinars, interactive software, apps, social media, and more interaction with members during meetings. Contract negotiations should be more inclusive of members. Improving union membership could improve the economy, job stability, and improve communication between union members and union leaders.

The decline in union membership does not appear it will turn around in the near future due to the lack of confidence union members have in the union and union representatives. The recommendations for action are as follows:

1. Union representatives meet and listen to the concerns of the members.
2. Union representatives work to build confidence with the members.
3. Allow union members to participate in the collective bargaining process.
4. Union representative provide members with all the benefits of membership.
5. Allow an open forum of communication using new technology.
6. Union representative should build a relationship with its members.

The results of this study could improve the relationship between the union representative and its members. Union representatives should pay attention to their conferences and training manuals to ensure that they and their members are educated on the attractiveness of unions.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The union members' perceptions of the primary factors leading to union membership decline through this study. Additional research needs to occur exploring this phenomenon on a broader level. To compare emerging themes, I recommend researchers to perform the study in diverse individual industries.

I recommend using a quantitative study approach with survey questions. The researcher can choose participants who are union, non-union, and former union members. Performing a quantitative study may be helpful in discovering variances in the participants' responses.

### **Reflections**

As a scholar, when preparing for data collection the reality of the process does not become apparent, until the process actually begins. This has been a daunting process as a researcher and scholar. The most difficult part of the process was obtaining participants and scheduling the interviews. The question that participants asked most frequently was pertaining to confidentiality. During the process of asking questions, no preparations are present for the distractions that the participants prompt. Six of the participants did not offer enough details. Therefore, I had to contact those participants to provide additional information using the same research questions, but only specific questions. Member checking occurred one week following the initial interviews. Four of the participants were questioned via phone and two were questioned via email. Educating the public on the importance of unions can be a contributing factor in increasing union membership. Union leaders have the ability to influence change that can ultimately increase union membership by implementing new strategies that will attract new members.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

The negative responses are the complaints that union, non-union, and former union members deem as the contributing factor to union membership decline. The factors that have contributed to declining membership have all been internal. I recommend that union representatives educate members and non-members on the internal and economic benefits. I also recommend that the union representative build a relationship with members. The influence of the current members could aid in increasing union membership.

Union representatives should focus on the member needs; therefore, involving the members in the collective bargaining process can help improve relations. Communication is very important and it is imperative that understanding of multiple ways of delivering information. In the new age of communication and information, I recommend that each time new technology evolves, implementation should focus on new and innovative ways to prompt more inclusion between the union member, and union leaders to ensure proper communication. Implementing these recommendations might improve communication between union members and union representatives, which can ultimately increase union membership.

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## Appendix A: Interview Questions

This section contains a list of questions that are asked during the interviews. The responses will be used to determine the cause of the flight of residents and if the cause is related to the change in socioeconomics. The results of these interviews are analyzed and included into Section 3.

1. What is your relationship with union leaders?
2. What are your views on declining union membership?
3. How would you describe union employee participation within the union?
4. How effective are you with your union in the workplace?
5. How well do you communicate with union members?
6. How does union participation influence membership?
7. How does union leaders involve union members in contract negotiations?
8. In your opinion, what is the cause of union membership decline?
9. Does union membership affect outside organizations?
10. If an opportunity arises to join or rejoin the union are you: (a) more likely to join, (b) less likely to join, or (c) undecided. Why?

## Appendix B: Consent Forms

### A Qualitative Case Study of the Decline in Union Membership in the Workforce Consent Form

You are invited to voluntarily participate in a research study exploring your lived experiences as a union leader, union member, past union member or non-union member in Jefferson County, Alabama. Past, present and non-union members will be the study participants. You are selected as a possible participant, because, you fit the criteria and are a resident in Jefferson County, Alabama. I ask that you read this form in its entirety and ask any questions you may have prior to agreeing to participate in the study.

Nina W. Hatcher, a doctoral candidate at Walden University, is conducting this study.

#### **Background Information:**

Over the past 4 decades, union membership is experiencing a decline (Mizruchi & Hyman, 2014). In 2012, union membership decreased from 14.1% to 11.3%, which is the lowest since the post-Second World War Era (Magdoff & Foster, 2013). The general business problem is the inability of some union leaders to retain union members resulting in a loss of profitability. Data from this qualitative case study might affect social change by changing employee attitudes and social values regarding unions as well as affect unionization positively (Schnabel, 2013).

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following:

Past, present and non-union representative and union leaders in Jefferson County, Alabama.

1. Participate in a one-on-one interview conducted by Nina Hatcher. The interview will take approximately 20-25 minutes with an expected follow-up of an additional 15 minutes.
2. Participants will be asked 10 open-ended non-intrusive questions.

**Example:** How will union participation affect the workplace?

#### **Compensation:**

Participants are not compensated for this interview.

**Confidentiality:**

The records and all information obtained are kept in confidentiality. All participant names are kept confidential and will be published as participant. Participants' identity is protected by using a coding system using letters and numbers. Information is used only for the purpose of this study. A password protected computer will contain electronic data. All electronic data will be backed up to a password protected hard drive. Research records are kept in a locked file for a period of 5 years with access limited to only the researcher. I will do all interviewing and no research assistance is needed.

Individual tape recordings are kept in my possession, and it will be locked in a file and maintained for a period of 5 years with access limited to only the researcher.

**Contracts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Nina W. Hatcher. If you have any questions, you may contact:

Nina W. Hatcher  
(205) 261-1321  
Nina.hatcher@waldenu.edu

Dr. Tim Truitt  
Tim.truitt@waldenu.edu

Research Participant Advocate  
irb@waldenu.edu

IRB Approval # \_\_\_\_\_ IRB Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participants are given a copy of this form to keep for their records. Only documents containing non-private information, which, can be obtained publically, may be requested or obtained from the researcher in the course of completing this study. Documents containing private and/or non-public information will not be requested by the researcher.

**Demographic Information:**

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Marital Status (circle one):** Married    Single    Divorced    Separated    Widowed

**Affiliation:** Union Leader / Union Member / Former Union Member / Non-Union Member

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I understand that my participation in this \_\_\_\_\_ is voluntary and I can decline or discontinue participation at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_ I consent to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not consent to participate in this study.

Name of Participant (Print): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Researcher (Print): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_