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Grocery Unions under the Gun in New York City and the Nation

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By the end of the 2010s, only 6 percent of U.S. private sector workers were union members—the lowest share in a century. Density in the retail sector is even lower: in 2019, 4 percent of the nation's retail workers, and 6 percent of those in the New York City metropolitan area, were union members.[1] Against that background, grocery worker union density appears relatively robust, at roughly quadruple the retail average: 16 percent of the nation's grocery workers, and 25 percent of those in the New York City metropolitan area, were members of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) in the 2010s.[2] An industry expert declared in a recent interview, "New York is one of the last bastions of heavy [grocery] unionization."[3]

But unions in this sector—nationally and in New York—are increasingly besieged. U.S. supermarket chains launched aggressive growth and acquisition strategies in the 1990s, generating a wave of corporate consolidation that shifted the balance of power between employers and unions. Labor relations in the retail grocery industry had previously been geographically decentralized. But with consolidation, as labor relations scholar Richard Hurd[4] notes, "each local market area has come to count for a smaller part of the companies' revenues and profits," making employers less financially vulnerable to strikes and increasingly resistant to labor organizing.

The retail grocery industry was less affected than other sectors by many of the forces driving neoliberal transformation and union decline. For example, while deregulation had weakened unions dramatically in industries like trucking by the late 1970s, the retail food sector remained highly regulated, at least on paper.[5] Another protective factor was the place-bound character of brick-and-mortar grocery retailing: New York City residents could not do their food shopping in China or Mexico, or even in Arizona or Texas. Thus, the industry was not vulnerable to the outsourcing that decimated manufacturing starting in the 1970s.

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Globalization did affect some aspects of the grocery industry. Produce and seafood sold in American food stores are increasingly imported from other parts of the world. And several major U.S. supermarkets are foreign-owned, including non-union Trader Joe's and Aldi (both German-owned), and the unionized chain Stop & Shop (part of a Dutch transnational conglomerate).[6] But at the retail level, the industry remains locally oriented, reflecting the high costs of shipping perishable items from distant locations.

The rapidly expanding (and largely non-union) online grocery delivery business is similarly place-bound, reliant on local distribution centers. But the non-perishable, packaged products that fill the central aisles of modern

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supermarkets are another matter. "If Amazon has its way, that stuff in the center of the store will all be delivered to your door," a New York supermarket owner recently predicted.[7]

From the 1950s to the 1970s, the average supermarket carried about nine thousand items; by the 1990s, many stocked up to sixty thousand. That increased the demand for labor and canceled out the productivity effects of new technology.

Technological change, which helped undermine unionism in many other industries, has had limited impact in the grocery sector. In the 1980s, barcode scanners became ubiquitous, and soon afterward, many food stores introduced self-checkout machines. These innovations were meant to increase productivity and reduce employment levels, but that did not occur. The countervailing factor was the simultaneous enhancement of supermarket offerings to include "ready-to-go" and prepared foods, along with seafood, flowers, and other merchandise. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the average supermarket carried about nine thousand items; by the 1990s, many stocked up to sixty thousand. That increased the demand for labor and canceled out the productivity effects of new technology.[8] And while some retail grocery employers did try to cut labor costs, there were notable exceptions, like Trader Joe's and Costco, which adopted a different business model. They hired more workers than traditional supermarkets, paid them relatively high wages, and invested in training to improve customer service. These firms were highly profitable, generating more sales per worker and per square foot than traditional food stores—partly because it also involved stocking fewer items, sold in huge volume at discounted prices.[9]

The most consequential competition for the legacy supermarkets came from another source, however, namely the notoriously anti-union Walmart corporation, which entered the grocery business in 1988.[10] Unionized supermarket workers' pay and benefit costs (including health insurance and pensions) were about 30 percent higher than Walmart's at that time.[11] Starting in the 1990s, that led the newly consolidated supermarket chains to demand wage cuts and other concessions from the UFCW. They also began to expand their part-time workforce, often with unpredictable schedules.

Walmart's footprint was geographically uneven, and not all its stores sold groceries. Those that did were concentrated in the South and the Midwest, with very few on the East or West coasts where the UFCW was strongest.[12] Nevertheless, the traditional supermarket owners pressed for extensive concessions across the nation. In Southern California, long a fortress of grocery unionism, the large supermarket chains provoked a region-wide strike in 2003 (and then locked out workers in the stores that were not struck), in a months-long standoff that ended in a devastating defeat for the UFCW. The region's stores remained unionized, but the strike settlement brought draconian wage and benefit reductions.[13]

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Competition for traditional supermarkets also came from discount stores like Target, K-Mart, and Costco, which began carrying groceries in the 1990s, along with drugstores like CVS and Walgreens.[14] Some Costco stores and drugstores were unionized, but Target and K-Mart were as fiercely anti-union as Walmart.[15] Other new players emerged in this period as well, most importantly Whole Foods—which began as a local store in Austin, Texas but entered the national market in 1988, the same year Walmart began selling groceries. Aimed at upmarket consumers, Whole Foods, Trader Joe's, and regional stores like Wegmans paid relatively high wages (albeit with minimal benefits), in part to discourage unionization. Amazon's 2017 acquisition of Whole Foods soon led to explosive growth in grocery home delivery, and further challenged grocery unions.

Not only did the unionized share of the industry decline with these developments but also union power and leverage were severely eroded even where the UFCW retained a foothold. Supermarkets, once a source of well-paid unionized jobs with excellent benefits and job security, increasingly devolved to resemble the rest of the retail sector, where precarious employment was the norm and unions were scarce.

The Rise of Supermarket Unionism

Unions developed alongside the emergence of supermarkets, which gradually expanded to overtake the family-owned stores that dominated the grocery industry in the early twentieth century. Costs of entry were low, although from the outset retail food stores faced intense competition and low profit margins. Chain supermarkets emerged in the 1920s, most notably A&P, which was widely reviled at the time for undercutting independent stores—just as Walmart and Amazon would be in the 2000s.[16] Yet the retail grocery industry retained a stubbornly local orientation.

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By the 1960s, the major supermarket chains were solidly unionized in many regions, mostly by the Retail Clerks International Association (RCIA), which boasted forty thousand members in its metropolitan New York unit in the early 1960s and was then the nation's seventh largest union. Most of its members were employed in supermarkets, but some worked in other retail sectors, from department stores to subway newsstands. Three other unions—the Meat Cutters; the Teamsters; and the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union (RWDSU)—represented some grocery store workers (although RWDSU had an insignificant share outside New York).[17]

The Teamsters represented grocery warehouse workers and delivery truck drivers, and only rarely retail supermarket workers. Yet because Teamsters routinely refused to cross picket lines at grocery stores in support of the RCIA and other unions, they played a pivotal role in organizing. As labor relations scholar Herbert Northrup and his colleagues noted in an influential study of the industry for the RCIA, "unionization [was] often based on coercion, pressure, and arrangements with employers rather than upon enrollment of employees."[18]

Grocery unions became entrenched in cities across the nation, especially on the West Coast and in the Northeast. By the 1960s, about 40 percent of all U.S. retail food store workers (and 12 percent of all retail workers) were unionized.[19] New York City, with its many specialty grocers and bodegas, never achieved the wall-to-wall unionization that the West Coast exemplified in this period.[20] But by 1984, 47 percent of New York City retail grocery store workers were union members.[21] As UFCW Local 1500 President Robert Newell recalled, when he began his career in New York in the early 1980s, "If you opened a supermarket, you needed a union contract, or you didn't open. There'd be a picket line in front of your store!"

Unionized grocery and supermarket workers won stable jobs, seniority rights, grievance procedures, and protection against arbitrary firings. Those who spent their careers in the industry could advance into better-paying positions through an internal promotion system. Union contracts restricted the hours of part-time workers and regulated other aspects of scheduling. Wages rose substantially over the postwar decades, especially in chain stores. "Union rates in supermarkets compare with those in light manufacturing union plants, and are generally superior to . . . comparable rates in other retail establishments and service," Northrup and his colleagues noted in 1967. Unionized grocery workers had affordable health insurance and defined benefit pension plans; some contracts also provided dental and vision care.[22]

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Collective bargaining remained geographically decentralized, and wage rates varied

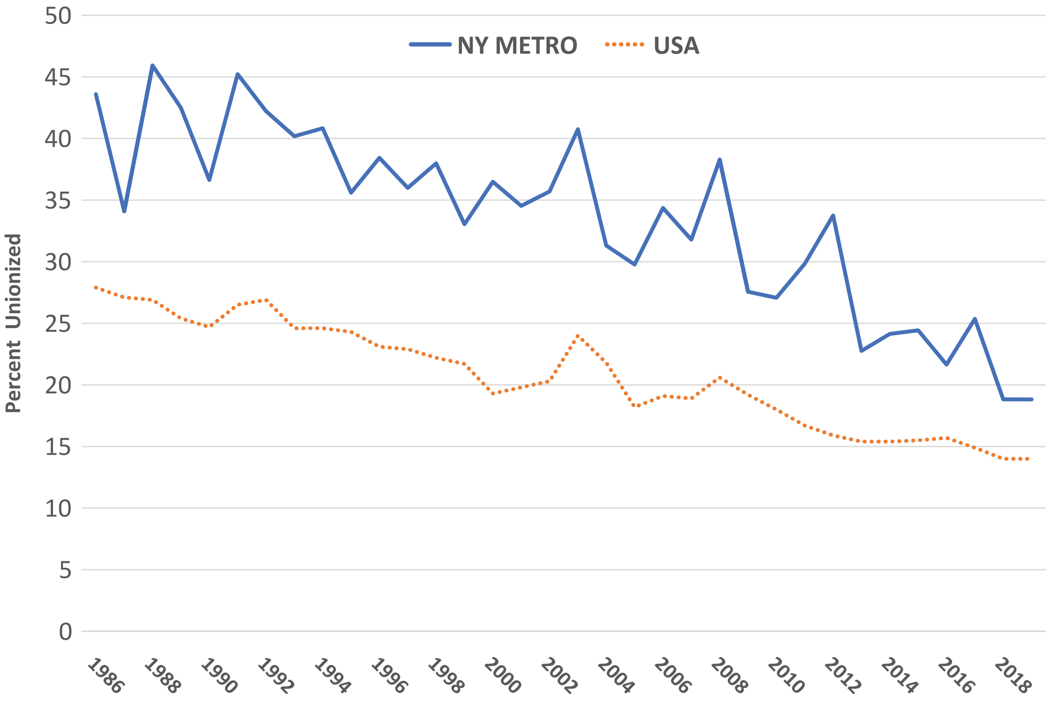

Figure 1. Union density in retail grocery stores, New York City metropolitan area and United States, 1986-2019.[28]

Source. National Data are from unionstats.com; New York metropolitan area data are computed from U.S. Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group, using unrevised CPS sampling weights. The data shown are for wage and salary workers aged sixteen years and over, employed in retail grocery stores (SIC 4970). For the New York metropolitan area, the data include respondents *residing* in the New York-Newark-Bridgeport NY-NJ-CT-PA Combined Statistical Area (CSA), using the 2003 CSA definition.

accordingly.[23] In 1965, union contracts guaranteed hourly wages for full-time retail clerks at $1.90 in Jacksonville, $2.65 in New York City, $2.89 in Chicago, and $3.00 in Los Angeles.[24] Ten years later, unionized full-time grocery clerks in New York City had a top hourly rate of $5.15 per hour, compared to $6.05 in Chicago, $6.31 in Kansas City, and $6.67 in Oakland.[25]

When unionization was at its height, most RCIA contracts included "accretion" clauses, under which all newly opened stores in the covered area automatically became union shops. Multi-employer collective bargaining agreements covered 60-80 percent of RCIA members in the 1960s.[26] That meant all employers in a given region had the same labor costs, so they competed on the basis of the quality of goods and services, not by squeezing workers.

An early sign of declining labor clout was a series of union mergers. In 1979 RCIA and the Amalgamated Meat Cutters (which had previously absorbed the meatpacking unions) merged to form the UFCW; in 1993, RWDSU became a semi-autonomous affiliate of the UFCW. By early 2021, 835,000 of the UFCW's 1.3 million members were grocery or supermarket workers.[27]

A decade after the formation of the UFCW, de-unionization took off, as Figure 1 shows. Nationally, union density among retail grocery store workers fell from 28 percent in 1986 to 14 percent in 2019. The industry's unionization rate in the New York metropolitan area was consistently higher, and at first fell more slowly, but the overall decline was greater: from 44 percent in 1986 to 19 percent in 2019.

New York Exceptionalism

New York City has high population density and a large base of well-heeled consumers who regularly buy high-profit food items. On the other hand, supermarkets have very high operating costs in the city, particularly in Manhattan. Although real estate prices and rents have risen to stratospheric levels in cities like San Francisco and Seattle in recent years, that has been the case much longer in New York. In Manhattan below 96th Street, stores pay a hefty commercial rent tax, in addition to premium rents and high insurance premiums. The city's legendary traffic congestion and narrow streets make trucking (required for both food deliveries to the stores and trash disposal from them) unusually time-consuming and expensive. "The costs of doing business in the City of New York are prohibitive," an industry expert stated, "and then there are the restrictions, the inspections, the health department and so on—it's all more complicated within the five boroughs."

Reflecting these realities, most New York City supermarkets are far smaller than the gargantuan stores that the United States is famous for worldwide. And key players in the national industry are conspicuously absent. Walmart accounts for over 25 percent of the U.S. grocery market, but only 5 percent in the Northeast.[29] Walmart has *no* stores in New York City's five boroughs, reflecting vigorous political opposition from the UFCW and its allies; its brief foray into the city's food delivery market was abandoned in late 2019.[30] Kroger, a unionized chain whose national market share is second only to Walmart's, is also absent in New York City, where relatively small supermarket chains and cooperatives, along with locally owned firms, long dominated the industry.[31]

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The corporate consolidation that transformed the industry in the 1990s occurred later in New York, but as one local unionist stated, by the 2010s "consolidation was affecting everything we do." Supermarket mergers and acquisitions, along with the entry of multinationals and private equity into the industry, dramatically altered the landscape. "The first generation of store owners established the companies, and they brought their sons and daughters into the business, but as the generations passed, there was less attachment to the business that made your family wealthy," a union official noted. Some began to sell their stores, often to non-union entities.

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Meanwhile, companies like Target, Whole Foods, and Trader Joe's, already well established elsewhere in the United States, began to open stores in New York. They were intransigently opposed to any hint of unionization. "They can outspend any independent labor organization, and it's always going to be in their interest to do that," a union staffer explained. CVS, Rite Aid, and Walgreens drugstores, ubiquitous across the city and mostly non-union, also began to carry groceries.[32] Non-union K-Mart, BJ's, and Target developed a New York presence as well, along with Costco (which has some unionized stores).

As the competition ramped up, the UFCW came under pressure to make concessions to the unionized employers, whose very survival was threatened. Traditional supermarkets not only have notoriously thin profit margins but also, as a UFCW official explained, "union operators have higher costs, because they're investing in their workforce. They're providing better wages and benefits and assuming most of the cost of health insurance and other benefits."

Trader Joe's and Whole Foods offer *higher* entry-level wages than union supermarkets do—a few dollars above New York City's $15 per hour minimum wage. However, workers who stay long enough to accumulate seniority in union stores can attain much higher wage rates and far superior benefits. Many full-time workers at Trader Joe's and Whole Foods (and some Trader Joe's part-timers) are offered

401(k) plans and employer-sponsored health insurance, but those health plans have higher premiums and more limited coverage than those in union stores.[33]

Prior to the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), UFCW contracts provided benefits for both full- and part-time workers. But once the ACA required employers to offer health insurance only to employees averaging thirty hours or more a week, "the employers turned around and ended it for part-timers. Thousands lost all their benefits," a UFCW staffer recalled. Grocery employers had once considered part-time workers to be "an expensive necessity," and union contracts had limited the conditions under which they could be employed.[34] But once part-time benefits were eliminated, that changed dramatically. In the mid-1960s, part-timers had been less than half of New York's supermarket workers; by the 2010s, UFCW Local 1500 President Robert Newell estimated, they made up over three-quarters.[35]

In the 1970s and 1980s, "medical benefits didn't cost what they cost today, and multi-employer pension funds were in their infancy," another unionist recalled.

> The cost of pension benefits back then was almost nothing. But soon the cost of pensions and health benefits rose, and the drug companies were allowed to charge whatever they wanted, so the cost of doing business for the [union] employers became astronomical.

In a bid to restore the union stores' competitiveness, the UFCW increasingly agreed to two-tier (or in some cases multi-tier) contracts under which senior full-time workers retained their health and pension benefits, while new hires' benefits were scaled back.[36] In this respect, union power was reduced more than the decline in density shown in Figure 1.

The new non-union companies, as an industry expert explained, recruit disproportionately youthful workers for whom

> benefits aren't the most important part of the story. Working for Whole Foods or Trader Joe's is thought of as "cool," and they're not necessarily looking for a long-term career in the retail food realm. A higher starting wage and lesser benefits, that's a more attractive package to them than what the union stores offer.

And from the customers' perspective, too, he added, the union stores lag behind the new entrants:

> In New York, the new is *really new*. For a long time, it was like a market frozen in time. Whole Foods and Trader Joe's and Wegmans have changed that. They emit a vibe, that it's a fun place to shop, it's a treasure hunt kind of experience. In response, some of the unionized players were able to grow from within. But there are also the bodegas, and others, that if you came out of a time capsule from 1978, you'd be right in step!

A UFCW representative agreed, noting that the lag also reflects the deep pockets of the new entrants. "If Trader Joe's or Whole Foods has a bad day, a bad month, they can absorb that. They also have the capital to reinvest in their stores, to modernize, to keep up with trends." Moreover, "sales per employee-hour at the union shops are significantly lower than at the nonunion shops," a store owner noted.

> Operating expenses in New York are so high, if you have more sales per square foot, and you have more flexibility in terms of labor, and on top of that, you're offering a format that's hot and that people distinguish from old, boring, plain vanilla—that's the winner!

In the 2010s, and even more so during the Covid-19 pandemic, the explosion of grocery delivery services further eroded the market share of the union stores. Many of them had long delivered to customers' homes—an important feature in a city where few residents own cars. "That was a value-added service that gave the independents an edge: 'We deliver, they don't,'" a store owner recalled. "But now, everybody delivers, and it's expensive. It's something retailers of all sizes have to do—but whether or not it's profitable is an open question."

Rebuilding Supermarket Unionism in New York City

The UFCW has responded to these challenges with a series of efforts to organize New York's non-union stores, albeit with mixed results. "New organizing is more difficult than at any time during my career," a veteran UFCW official declared.

One union drive began in 2010, when Local 338 RWDSU-UFCW, partnering with the community-based organization New York Communities for Change, targeted non-union supermarkets in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn.[37] Wage theft in these stores was widespread, threatening the viability of nearby union stores. "You have customers on tight budgets, and if they are going down the street to the nonunion guy who is not complying with the minimum wage and has lower prices, we simply become uncompetitive," an employer complained. RWDSU threatened lawsuits to rectify wage and hour violations, while engaging the local community, and eventually won union elections in these stores.

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Other organizing efforts were less successful. UFCW Local 1500 embarked on a union drive at a Target store just outside the city, in Valley Stream, Long Island in 2011. Not one of Target's many stores across the country was unionized, and management was determined not to let this one become an exception. The union lost a representation election, although the results were thrown out after a government finding revealed that management had engaged in illegal worker intimidation. Target then closed the store for "renovations" for six months, dispersing the workforce, and the unionizing effort was abandoned.[38]

A Local 338 campaign at Brooklyn CVS store had a similar outcome. Although many CVS stores in California are unionized, this would have been the first inroad on the East Coast. The union won a representation election at the store in 2015, and the company's attempt to overturn the result failed. Contract negotiations began in 2017, but three years later, there was still no agreement.[39] Then CVS unceremoniously closed the store. "They said the lease ran out and they closed it," an organizer recalled. "It was one of their most profitable stores."

Another Local 338 organizing effort at a Trader Joe's store on Manhattan's Upper West Side fizzled after the 2016 firing of a worker who was involved in an effort to unionize the store. Trader Joe's has successfully resisted organizing around the country, including recent efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic.[40]

New York's $15 minimum wage and paid sick days laws may have added to the union's challenges. As an employer puts it,

> If the union is campaigning, and they say, "Here's a basket of things we've gotten for other workers: we've won higher wages, we've gotten paid sick time." If workers are already getting those things, why should they vote for a union and pay dues?

Yet the grocery unions refuse to die. As UFCW Local 1500 President Robert Newell noted, the Covid-19 pandemic made grocery workers more visible than ever, sparking hopes for the future:

> Our industry has been on the front page of every newspaper. All of a sudden, supermarket workers are sexy! We're "essential." Everyone's talking about us. We've been in your communities all along, but no one noticed us until Covid-19 hit, and there was no toilet paper. So now our members have achieved a status that, quite frankly, they deserved long ago. Maybe now they'll stop calling our members unskilled, replaceable, disposable. Because no matter how much money you have, what kind of car you drive, or how expensive your apartment is, when you walk through the door of a supermarket, you're exactly the same as everybody else. You need to be given a

service, to feed your family. We can never allow this moment in time to be lost!

Whether this clarion call can lead to a reversal of fortune for grocery unionism—in New York or nationally—is difficult to predict. Absent a broader upsurge in labor organizing and/or substantial reform of U.S. labor law, it seems unlikely. On the other hand, the pandemic has exposed not only the vital role of "essential workers" like those in the retail food industry but also the stark inequities between the nation's haves and have-nots. And the pandemic-induced labor shortage has allowed workers to flex their muscles to a greater degree than at any time in recent memory. Moreover, public opinion is more pro-union today than it has been in decades, especially among the young people who would likely spearhead any new upsurge.[41] So a revival of retail food unionism is within the realm of the possible, if not the probable.

Author's Note

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Notes

1. www.unionstats.com.
2. Ruth Milkman and Stephanie Luce, "State of the Unions 2020," 12-13. The data in the text for retail grocery workers in "the 2010s" are the average for the Jan. 2009-June 2020 period—roughly quadruple (but not strictly comparable to) the 4 percent unionization rate in the national retail sector in 2019. For annual figures, see Figure 1, available at https://www.ruthmilkman.info/_files/ugd/90d188_c187b30a233a4b0f90fade4c51d2a1e8.pdf.
3. This interview and the others cited below were conducted by the author and Jake Head in Spring 2020.
4. Richard W. Hurd, "Collective Bargaining in the Era of Grocery Industry Restructuring," July 2, 2008, available at https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/articles/284/.
5. Enforcement of regulations is poor, especially for imported foods. See Marion Nestle, "The FDA's Food Inspection Problem," *The Atlantic*, December 22, 2011, available at https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2011/12/the-fdas-inspection-problem-one-reason-our-food-supply-isnt-safe/250111/.
6. Benjamin Lorr, *The Secret Life of Groceries* (Avery, 2020), 190; Michael Ruhlman, *Grocery: The Buying and Selling of Food in America* (Abrams Press, 2017), ch. 16.
7. Quoted in Ruhlman, *Grocery*, 272.
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11. Lichtenstein, The Retail Revolution, 133.
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13. Ruth Milkman, "Win or Lose: Lessons from Two Contrasting Union Campaigns," *Social Policy* 35, no. 2 (2004): 43-47.

14. Ruhlman, *Grocery*, 55.
15. Target defeated a 2011 UFCW organizing drive on Long Island. Benjamin Becker, "Taking Aim at Target: West Indian Immigrant Workers Confront the Difficulties of Big Box Organizing," in *New Labor in New York: Precarious Workers and the Future of the Labor Movement*, ed. Ruth Milkman and Ed Ott (Cornell University Press, 2014), 25-48.
16. See Ruhlman, *Grocery*; Herbert R. Northrup and Gordon R. Storholm, with Paul A. Abodeely, *Restrictive Labor Practices in the Supermarket Industry* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1967), 17, 27.
17. Marten Estey, "The Grocery Clerks: Center of Retail Unionism," *Industrial Relations* 7 (1968): 252, and Michael Harrington, *The Retail Clerks* (New York: John Wiley, 1962), 58. The RCIA, founded in 1890, and the MeatCutters, founded in 1896, were affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, while RWDSU, founded in 1937, was affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations. In 1955, both unions became part of the merged AFL-CIO. See Marten Estey, "Patterns of Union Membership in the Retail Trades," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 8 (1955): 558-59.
18. Northrup et al., *Restrictive Labor Practices*, 35, 37-38.
19. Estey, "The Grocery Clerks." In an earlier study, Estey estimated that in the late 1940s, between 25 and 30 percent of all food store workers were unionized, compared to 7 percent in the retail trades overall. See Estey, "Patterns of Union Membership," 561.
20. In the 1960s, 90 percent of the industry was unionized in Los Angeles and San Francisco. See Northrup et al., *Restrictive Labor Practices*, 6, 57.
21. U.S. Current Population Survey, Outgoing Rotation Group. Note that this figure is for New York City only, whereas the data shown in Figure 1 for 1986-2019 are for the New York City metropolitan area.
22. Northrup et al., *Restrictive Labor Practices*, 45, 56.
23. Hurd, "Collective Bargaining." See also Northrup et al., *Restrictive Labor Practices*, 123.
24. Northrup et al., *Restrictive Labor Practices*, 45.
25. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin 1925, *Union Wages and Hours: Grocery Stores, July 1, 1975* (Washington, DC, 1976), 2, 6, available at https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/files/docs/publications/bls/bls_1925_1976.pdf.
26. Northrup et al., *Restrictive Labor Practices*, 38, 124-25.
27. Available at http://www.ufcw.org/who-we-represent/grocery. These figures include both U.S and Canadian UFCW members.
28. The CPS is based on place of residence, not place of employment; thus, some of the respondents shown for the New York metro may be employed outside the CSA. In addition, due to the relatively small CPS sample, some cell sizes for grocery store workers at the CSA level are too small to be reliable, especially for 1994, 1995, and 2004-2019. The downward trend is unambiguous, but the year-to-year data points should be interpreted with caution.
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31. Kroger recently acquired a small gourmet cheese shop in Manhattan. Nick Turner and Craig Giammono, "Kroger Makes New York City Debut with Murray's Cheese Purchase," Bloomberg.com, Feb. 7, 2017, available at https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-02-07/kroger-makes-new-york-city-debut-with-murray-s-cheese-purchase.
32. These are all non-union operations (although some CVS stores are unionized on the West Coast), with the partial exception of Walgreens, whose recently acquired Duane Reade and Rite Aid branches are unionized.
33. Trader Joe's employees pay premiums of $85 per month for individual health insurance coverage. Available at https://www.traderjoes.com/careers. At Whole Foods, full-time workers have access to a high-deductible plan with limited benefits. In 2019, soon after Amazon acquired Whole Foods, it eliminated health benefits for part-timers. See Lorr, *Secret Life*, 270.
34. Northrup et al., *Restrictive Labor Practices*, 99-100.
35. Northrup et al., *Restrictive Labor Practices*, 32.
36. For a critique of two-tier union contracts in both retail supermarkets and other industries, see Ken Jacobs, "A Tale of Two Tiers: Dividing

Workers in the Age of Neoliberalism," *New Labor Forum* 18, no. 1 (2009): 67-77.

37. Ben Shapiro, "Organizing Immigrant Supermarket Workers in Brooklyn: A Union-Community Partnership," in *New Labor in New York: Precarious Workers and the Future of the Labor Movement*, ed. Ruth Milkman and Ed Ott (Cornell University Press, 2014), 49-69; Kirk Semple, "Union Efforts over Conditions at Grocers Split 2 Immigrant Groups," *The New York Times*, July 15, 2012, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/16/nyregion/union-efforts-over-conditions-at-greengrocers-splits-2-immigrant-groups.html. About a decade earlier, several small Korean greengrocers in New York City were successfully organized by Local 169 of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, documented by Immanuel Ness in chapter 4 of his *Immigrants, Unions and the New U.S. Labor Market* (Temple University Press, 2005).
38. Becker, "Taking Aim at Target."
39. Available at https://www.rwdsu.info/brooklyn_cvs_workers_demand_first_contract.
40. Noam Scheiber, "At Trader Joe's, Good Cheer May Hide Complaints," *The New York Times*, November 3, 2016, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/04/business/at-trader-joes-good-cheer-may-hide-complaints.html; David Yaffe-Bellany, "Employee Efforts to Unionize Collide with the Pandemic at Trader Joe's," *The New York Times*, April 3, 2020.
41. Available at https://news.gallup.com/poll/354455/approval-labor-unions-highest-point-1965.aspx.

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