Employer and Worker Collective Action is at its best when the analysis and discussions are based on detailed historical reconstructions and narratives. Developments from the late 19th century until the end of World War II are empirically rooted and anchored in the steel industry because of the importance of this sector for emerging and evolving employment relations across the three countries. Grounding the empirical narrative in a specific sector in this time period gives the analysis depth and makes it incisive. The empirical approach for the subsequent time period, from the end of World War II to the economic and financial crisis in the 21st century (pp. 229–327), is somewhat less specific. For example, the chapter “From Tripartism to the Global Economic Crisis” has the purpose of covering the period from the 1990s to the global economic crisis. Lawrence takes issue with unions engaging in tripartism and suggests that these attempts “tend to dissipate rather than consolidate prior worker gains” (p. 305). The discussion across the three countries is uneven. In the South African case, the author discusses important developments during the global economic crisis including the Lonmin massacre in 2012; while the discussion of the U.S. and German cases stops well before the crisis. The U.S. section discusses the 1994 Dunlop report to illuminate the question of why tripartism is not in the United States. The discussion on Germany is critical of the “welfare to work” reforms from 2003–2004, the so-called Hartz reforms, and the author discusses this under the heading of failed tripartism. My own interpretation would be different. The tripartite Alliance for Jobs finished working in 2002, and the subsequent reforms were pursued unilaterally by the center-left government without significant union and employer involvement.

This volume will be appreciated by researchers who are uncomfortable with the overly parsimonious, causal arguments that so often can be found in mainstream comparative political economy. Such researchers will recognize the value of the more complex analysis in this book, which considers a wide range of explanatory factors. Lawrence provides readers with a sense that the origins, institutionalization, and transformation of employment relations in different countries occurred with many twists and turns along the way and is more multifaceted than what path-dependency theory and historical institutionalism would suggest.

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Corrigendum


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In this book review in the May 2015 issue of *ILR Review*, Germany should have been named instead of Denmark in the last sentence. The corrected sentence is as follows: “This prevented Germany from following their Scandinavian counterparts in creating, at an early stage, the conditions for well-paid work for the growing number of women entering the labor market and organizing service-sector workers more effectively.”