Teacher unions have been demonized by their critics and canonized by their advocates for years, but the actual relationship between teacher unions and educational performance has received very little empirical scrutiny. In this article, Lala Carr Steelman, Brian Powell, and Robert Carini examine the question, "Do teacher unions hinder educational performance?" Focusing on two of the best-known standardized tests, the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT), the authors examine whether interstate variation in standardized test performance is negatively linked to interstate variation in teacher unions. They find a significant and positive relationship: that is, the presence of teacher unions appears to be linked to stronger state performance on these exams. These findings challenge the position that teacher unions depress student academic performance, and in so doing invite further empirical scholarship on this topic from a range of academic disciplines.

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