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See table of contents

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Article abstract

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This paper examines the relationship between stressful working conditions, social support at work, employee distress, and union members' (dis)satisfaction with their union. It might be assumed that under stressful working conditions, unionized workers would turn to their union to seek better working conditions and would have a positive orientation toward their union. However, it is also possible that stressful working conditions and distressed, alienated employees will become dissatisfied not only with their job but also with their union. The data for this study come from a survey of unionized postal workers employed by Canada Post Corporation in Edmonton in 1983.

Concerns about the negative impacts of job stress have been mounting. The International Labour Organization argues that "stress has become one of the most serious health issues of the twentieth century" (1993:65). In Canada, this trend is reflected in rising Workers' Compensation Board claims for job-induced psychological distress (Lippel 1990). Stress also has moved onto the agenda of a growing number of Canadian unions. However, it is one of the more difficult occupational health issues facing unions in part due to the complex and diverse causes and effects of stress. In addition, dealing with stress pushes unions outside of traditional collective bargaining. Moreover, employers typically resist the work environment changes required to make jobs less stressful.

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Solutions to stressful work entail organizational reform (Karasek and Theorell 1990). Historically workers have turned to unions to improve working conditions. However, stressful working conditions also may generate dissatisfaction with the union, undermining its ability to mobilize members in pursuit of less stressful working conditions. There is considerable evidence that stressful work creates job dissatisfaction (e.g., Lowe and Northcott 1986; Baker 1985; Kasl 1978). Yet few studies have examined the connections between stressful work and dissatisfaction with one's union.

This oversight partly reflects a lack of dialogue among job stress researchers, who have examined the effects of stressful work, and industrial relations researchers, who have focused on union dissatisfaction (Barling et al. 1992). That is, the job stress researchers have not incorporated the industrial relations context into their models while the industrial relations researchers tend to ignore the possibility that job stress may lead to union dissatisfaction. This article is an attempt to bring these two perspectives together by examining the connection between stressful working conditions and union members' dissatisfaction with their union.

JOB STRESS, INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, AND UNION DISSATISFACTION

The dominant perspective on job stress is the "demand-control model" (Karasek 1979; Karasek and Theorell 1990). The demand-control model contrasts with the individual perspective on stress which views stress as an individual pathology (Baker 1985) and essentially "blames the victim". Instead, the demand-control model has an organizational focus, both in terms of its identification of the causes of stress and the solutions proposed. Accordingly, stress is viewed as the result of psychologically demanding work and job designs which do not allow workers sufficient opportunity to make decisions or to use their skills in responding to job demands. Over time, these conditions may result in a range of mental and physical health problems and in diminished organizational productivity through increased absenteeism, turnover, and reduced employee performance.

While the demand-control model does not explicitly incorporate industrial relations variables, it is capable of doing so. For example, the model recognizes social support as a potential mediator in the causal link between stressful working conditions and employees' health outcomes (Karasek and Theorell 1990; also see House 1981). Accordingly, Karasek and Theorell (1990:74-75) suggest that there is a strong correlation between social support among Swedish workers, because of pervasive unionization and relatively high levels of employee participation in unions, and increased

decision latitude on the job – a working condition that reduces employee distress.

In a related vein, Johnson's (1991) discussion of "collective control" builds on the idea that supportive resources are provided by employees in the workplace. Collective control is based on the importance of the work group and informal worker culture. Johnson's research in the pressroom of a daily newspaper shows how unionized workers devise collective means of exerting control over their work and resisting management (Johnson 1991:128). Similarly, Aronsson (1989:84) cites Swedish research on bus drivers which finds that union support for improving working conditions was one of four main types of resources drivers could call upon to cope with job demands. Karasek and Theorell's (1990) discussion of participative approaches to organizational change, aimed at creating healthy working conditions, also suggests how unions may provide social support. Most of their examples are from Scandinavian countries where unions play an active role in workplace reforms.

In sum, the demand-control model suggests that there is a potential role for unions in stress reduction. This is consistent with the view in the occupational health literature that unions are the most effective means for workers to exercise their rights under occupational health and safety legislation (Sass 1991; Robinson 1988; Walters and Haines 1988). Clearly it is important to understand the conditions under which unions become involved in specific occupational health problems. A crucial link in this process, we believe, is union members' attitudes towards their union. There are many examples of how rank-and-file pressure for action on a problem has mobilized the resources of a union (e.g., White 1990; Yates 1990). However, little is known about how the converse – membership apathy or dissatisfaction – inhibits this mobilization process.

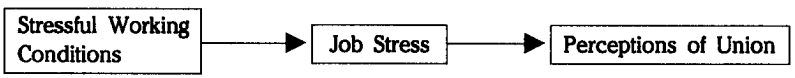
A brief look at the relevant literature underscores the need to further investigate the link between working conditions, on the one hand, and members' relations with and attitudes towards their union, on the other hand. For example, research on union commitment and satisfaction tends to show that dissatisfying jobs make workers more committed to their union (Barling et al. 1992:83). Yet this is not a consistent finding. Several studies show that satisfying jobs (rather than dissatisfying jobs) are associated with union satisfaction and that dissatisfying jobs are associated with union dissatisfaction (Freeman and Medoff 1984:142-143; Fiorito et al. 1988:302). Further, while cautioning against making causal inferences, Freeman and Medoff conclude that "most workers are either satisfied with both union and job or dissatisfied with both" (1984:143). Thus, there is considerable ambiguity as to the nature of the relationship between job (dis)satisfaction and union (dis)satisfaction

Few studies have directly examined the impact of job stress on members' relationships with their union. Shirom and Kirmeyer (1988) found that the lower a worker's reported stress and somatic complaints, the higher his or her rating of union performance. In other words, workers may credit the union with positively influencing their work environment. Similarly, in another study, members who reported high job satisfaction and greater participation in decisions affecting their work – factors the demand-control model associates with low stress (Carillon and Sutton 1982) – perceived their union to be effective. Looking at the other side of the coin, Miller (1990) claims that the burn-out (a stress reaction) of union activists attempting to improve working conditions may contribute to increased apathy and decreased participation among union members. However, another study casts doubt on the existence of any relationship at all between job stress and union attitudes (Fukami and Larson 1984).

These disparate research findings underscore the need to further explore the links between stressful working conditions and union dissatisfaction. There are several possibilities. Stressful working conditions and consequent job stress may lead to increased satisfaction with the union if the union is perceived to be a potential and/or effective means of improving working conditions. However, the (long-term) existence of stressful working conditions and consequent job stress may lead to decreased satisfaction with the union if the union is perceived to be ineffective in improving working conditions. In the first scenario, stressful working conditions foster union satisfaction; in the second scenario, stressful working conditions lead to union dissatisfaction. The theoretical model is as follows:

FIGURE 1

Model Showing Perceptions of Union as a Consequence of Stressful Working Conditions and Job Stress



It is the purpose of this paper to examine the plausibility of this model and, in particular, to examine the possibility that long-term stressful working conditions and endemic job stress lead to worker dissatisfaction with their union.

It is important to note two limitations in this study. First, the process by which union (dis)satisfaction emerges would be best studied using longitudinal data. This study is therefore limited in that the data analyzed are cross-sectional. Second, it follows that the cross-sectional nature of this

study cannot definitively verify the model described above. In other words, while the findings might indicate this model is plausible, alternative causal models are not necessarily eliminated. Just the same, this study will contribute to the needed integration of industrial relations and job stress research (Barling et al. 1992).

DATA AND METHODS

The data for this study come from a survey of unionized postal workers employed by Canada Post Corporation in Edmonton. The research was a collaborative effort with the two unions representing non-supervisory employees: the Letter Carriers Union of Canada (LCUC) whose members delivered the mail, and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) which represented mail sorters and handlers working mainly in a large, central postal plant.[1] The letter carriers experienced considerable job autonomy, being relatively free from direct supervision, while the mail sorters experienced regimented, factory-like working conditions.

All members of both unions in Edmonton were mailed a questionnaire early in 1983 (see Lowe and Northcott 1986, ch. 2, for details). Using a multi-stage mailing and follow-up procedure we obtained a total of 992 useable questionnaires, for a response rate of 65% (68% for CUPW and 62% for LCUC). While demographic data on the total memberships of the two unions was unavailable, we were able to determine that respondents were similar to the total memberships in terms of gender composition. Furthermore, because working conditions in Canada Post are highly standardized across Canada, our results are probably typical for postal workers in other major urban centres.

MEASURES

Our focus is on the link between stressful working conditions and job stress, on one hand, and workers' satisfaction with their union, on the other. We therefore have included a variety of measures of working conditions (including job characteristics, psychological job demands, decision latitude, and social support), job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and physical well-being. These comprise the basic elements of the demand-control model of job stress (Karasek and Theorell 1990). We expand this model to include employees' relationships to their union through the addition of measures of union involvement, union satisfaction, and specific

1. Since the fieldwork, LCUC merged with CUPW.

criticisms of the union. The independent and intervening variables in our model include the following:

Working conditions were assessed by union membership (CUPW, LCUC) and shift (day, afternoon, night). We also asked whether respondents experienced problems with their work hours. Further, we measured exposure to seventeen occupational health hazards, ranging from dangerous chemicals, noise and air pollution, to bad weather and poorly maintained or dangerous work areas (Lowe and Northcott 1986:35-39). Self-reported job characteristics were measured by 29 items adapted from the 1977 U.S. Quality of Employment Survey (Quinn and Staines 1979) and used a 7-point agree-disagree scale. Factor analysis (Lowe and Northcott 1988: 60-61) identified seven discrete indices: supervision, work intensity, decision-making autonomy, financial rewards, co-worker relations, role conflict, and variety/challenge.

Social support was assessed by the question: "How much can each of the following people be relied on for support on or off the job when things get tough at work (1 = not at all, 4 = very much): your immediate supervisor(s), shop steward or union representative, and other people at work?" By including the union representative we can test the assumption implicit in the demand-control model that unions are a source of social support.

Union involvement was measured by asking: "Have you ever held a position in your union?" and "Have you filed a grievance through your union in the last 12 months?" We also measured the industrial relations climate in the post office, tapping into perceived union-management conflict that may be linked to distress (Bluen and Barling 1988:177-179). That is, respondents were asked to describe union-management relations in the post office on a 7-point scale (1 = very hostile, 7 = very friendly).

We used multiple measures of *job satisfaction.* This reflects the importance of both subjective and behavioural indicators of satisfaction identified in previous studies of the relationship between job satisfaction and union satisfaction (Freeman and Medoff 1984: ch. 8). Overall job satisfaction was measured by: "All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your job (1 = very dissatisfied, 7 = very satisfied)? "I could get a better job if I quit working for the post office (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree)." "If you had to make the choice again, would you choose the same type of work you do now (no, yes)?" "If you had to opportunity to take a similar job at the same pay in another organization would you take it or stay in your current job (take it, stay)?" From the exit-voice perspective (Freeman and Medoff 1984: ch. 6), it is important to know if employees are planning to quit, so we asked: "Have you looked for another job with an employer other than the post office in the last year (no, yes)?"

We also added a behavioural intention measure: "How likely is it that you will make a genuine effort to find a new job with another employer within the next year (1 = very unlikely, 7 = very likely)?"

Psychological well-being was assessed with the 20-item CES-D scale for depression (Markush and Favero 1974) and Peterson and Kellam's (1977) 7-item anger/aggression scale for measuring hostility. We used summary scores for both scales, each of which has good inter-item reliability (alphas of .92 and .89, respectively). We also included 3 more general items tapping overall mental health, perceived work pressure, and job family conflict: "In the past 12 months, how healthy have you felt mentally (1 = very healthy, 7 = very unhealthy)"? "How often do you feel under pressure at work (1 = never, 5 = always)?" "How much do your job and your family life interfere with each other [asked only of respondents who were married/living common law] (1 = a lot, 7 = not at all)?"

Physical well-being was assessed by the following: "In the past 12 months, how healthy have you felt physically (1 = very healthy, 7 = very unhealthy)?" and a summary score for 6 psychophysiological complaints (tiredness, loss of appetite, irritability, sleeplessness, dizziness, headaches) during the past 3 months (1 = never, 5 = always) (alpha = .81).

Perceived impact of work on health was measured by the following: "Do you feel your overall health has been better, worse, or about the same as a result of: the kind of work you do, the hours you work, your general work environment? (1 = much worse, 5 = much better)?"

Turning to the dependent variable, *union (dis)satisfaction*, previous studies of members' perceptions of their union have taken a variety of approaches. Overall union satisfaction typically is measured the same way as global job satisfaction (e.g., Freeman and Medoff 1984: ch. 9). Other researchers utilize measures of perceived union performance in areas such as economic benefits, job security, improving working conditions, handling grievances, responsiveness to members (e.g., Shirom and Kirmeyer 1988; Carrilon and Sutton 1982). An innovation on this approach is to view union satisfaction as a function of the discrepancy between members' expectations of union performance and the perceived effectiveness of outcomes (Fiorito et al. 1988). Related research explores union commitment, a concept incorporating attitudes of loyalty to the union, a sense of responsibility to the union, willingness to work for the union, and a belief in union goals (see Barling et al. 1992: ch. 4).

In short, there is little consensus on how to measure union satisfaction. This no doubt reflects the fact that workers' perceptions of their union have received considerably less attention from researchers in comparison with job satisfaction. The concept of union commitment, as first developed by

Gordon et al. (1980) and refined by Barling and his colleagues (1992), is perhaps the most theoretically developed. Even so, its focus on the integration of members into the union does not address union satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In terms of union satisfaction, Fiorito and his colleagues (1988) have attempted to develop a model that draws on discrepancy theories of job satisfaction. However, because this and other studies of union performance deal with general areas of union activity, they may not capture the specific issues that energize local industrial relations and lead particular union members to become critics of their union.

We took a qualitative approach, in part, to assessing the level and type of dissatisfaction of union members toward their union. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked: "Do you have any comments or suggestions on how your union could better serve you?" Of the 992 postal workers who completed the questionnaire, 311 (31%) answered this open-ended question. Allowing for multiple responses, they provided a total of 441 comments (74 gave 2 comments and 28 provided 3).

Only 22 of the comments (5%) were positive, indicating that the union was doing a good job. Given that the question was worded to elicit constructive feedback – information that both unions involved in the study wanted – it is not surprising that members took the opportunity to express negative views. Indeed, this question seems to have tapped a vein of discontent within both unions.

Given the possibility of response bias to the open-ended question, we also included the question: "All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your union? (1 = very dissatisfied, 7 = very satisfied)?" By combining this standard union satisfaction measure with responses to the open-ended question, we constructed a three category dependent variable measuring the intensity of union discontent. *Strong critics* were defined as those respondents who gave negative comments on the open-ended question *and* scored 1, 2, or 3 on the union (dis)satisfaction item. *Moderate critics* gave negative comments on the open-ended question *or* scored 1, 2, or 3 on the union (dis)satisfaction item. *Non-critics* met neither of these conditions.

While this composite variable lacks the refinement of an interval-level psychometric scale (such as some of the psychological well-being scales, above, or Gordon et al.'s (1980) union commitment scale), it nonetheless provides a more grounded basis for determining the extent of dissatisfaction within union membership ranks.

SOURCES OF UNION DISSATISFACTION

Table 1 summarizes the results of the content analysis of employee comments on "how your union could serve you better." Five categories of

criticisms emerged: better representation and leadership; better collective agreement provisions; better union management relations; better communication and information to members; and reduced dues or better use of dues. A sixth category, accounting for only 22 responses (5%), was comprised of positive responses indicating that the union was doing a good job.

We are fairly confident that these categories, and the coding procedures used to arrive at them, accurately reflect the major issues from the perspective of postal workers. This is because a former president of the CUPW local directly participated with researchers in all phases of the content analysis, verifying that the coding and categorization "made sense" from the perspective of the shop floor.[2]

The most pervasive comment dealt with the type of union representation and leadership. This accounted for 30% of all responses. The most common specific criticisms were that the union was too concerned with general or political issues, did not consult members, and that shop stewards were not meeting members' needs.

Another 23% of the comments concerned collective agreement provisions. The leading issue in this category was the perception that the union "protected unproductive workers." Economic benefits did not figure prominently in this category. Rather, respondents suggested improvements in working conditions, the grievance procedure, and other specific contract provisions.

A distinct set of comments (17% of the total) focused on the union's relations with management and, more generally, the industrial relations climate at the post office. This is not surprising, given that post office industrial relations have been highly conflictual for decades (Stewart-Patterson 1987; White 1990). This image is reinforced by displays of militancy among postal workers, especially members of CUPW. Some respondents to the open-ended question were unhappy with this situation, for the most frequent suggestion in this category (42 of the 76 comments) called for more cooperative and less antagonistic union-management relations. Members of CUPW, compared with LCUC, were more likely to perceive union-management relations as hostile. In light of this finding, it is not surprising that a significantly higher proportion of CUPW members were critics of their union.

Communications were mentioned in 13% of the comments. Respondents suggested increased contact between union officials and the rank-and-file through meetings, on-site visits, and greater availability. Better

2. We are especially grateful to Carol Read for her assistance in this regard.

information and communication were also suggested in these comments. Finally, dues were the focus of 12% of the comments, reflecting the view that dues were too high generally or were too high for the services received.

TABLE 1

Content Analysis of Responses to the Open-Ended Question "Do you have any comments or suggestions on how your union could better serve you?[1]

Type of Comment	*Percent*	*N of Comments*
Better representation and leadership	30.2	133
Better collective agreement provisions	23.1	102
Better union-management relations/ change the role of the union	17.2	76
Better communication and information to members	12.7	56
Reduce dues/better use of dues	11.8	52
Union is doing a good job	5.0	22
TOTAL	100.0	441

1. The 311 respondents to this question provided 441 comments. Up to three comments per respondent were coded.

WHO ARE THE UNION CRITICS?

Using the "union critic" measure as a dependent variable (that is, combining responses to the open-ended question on how your union could serve you better with responses to the 7-point union (dis)satisfaction scale), we now examine to what extent "strong critics" differ from "moderate critics" or "non-critics" on the following dimensions: personal and employment characteristics, job characteristics, social support, involvement with their union, and health and well-being.

Personal and Employment Differences

Table 2 shows that the critics are no different from moderate critics or non-critics in terms of age or gender. There are, however, statistically significant differences on the basis of union, shift, problems with work schedules, and exposure to occupational health hazards. That is, members of CUPW, workers on afternoon or night shifts, those reporting problems with their work hours, and respondents reporting higher levels of exposure to hazards are significantly more likely to be strong critics than non-critics of their union.

TABLE 2

Comparison of Strong Union Critics with Moderate Critics and Non-Critics[1]: Personal and Employment Characteristics

Personal and Employment Characteristics		*Strong Critics (n=192)*		*Moderate Critics (n=360)*		*Non-Critics (n=440)*	
Mean age (standard deviation)		33	(11)	33	(11)	35	(12)
Percent female		48%		46%		47%	
Percent CUPW	*	62%		50%		49%	
Percent afternoon or night shift	*	40%		35%		30%	
Percent reporting problems with hours worked	*	29%		19%		16%	
Mean number of self-reported hazards employees exposed to in present job (standard deviation)	*	8.3	(3.6)	7.4	(3.7)	6.9	(3.6)

1. This variable was constructed by combining responses to the open-ended question, "Do you have any comments or suggestions on how your union could serve you better?" and a union satisfaction item, "All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your union?" (1=very dissatisfied, 7=very satisfied). *Strong critics* gave negative comments to the open-ended question *and* scored 1, 2 or 3 on the union satisfaction item; *moderate critics* gave negative comments to the open-ended question *or* scored 1, 2 or 3 on the union satisfaction item; *non-critics* met neither of these conditions.

* $p \leq .05$. The Scheffé multiple comparison test was used to examine differences between means and the chi-square test was used to examine differences between frequency distributions. For the Scheffé tests, the asterisks in the left hand column indicate that the means for the strong critic and non-critic groups are significantly different. Asterisks between the strong critic and moderate critic and between the moderate critic and non-critic mean scores similarly identify significant differences (there were none in Table 2) for those comparisons respectively.

Job Characteristics, Social Support, and Union Involvement Differences

Turning to Table 3, three of the job characteristics measures differentiate strong critics from moderate critics or non-critics: poor quality of supervision (scale items are: handles discipline fairly, gets people to work together, concerned about employee welfare, is friendly, is competent, is helpful to me, treats some employees better than others), limited task variety and challenge, and having coworkers who fail to be helpful or take

a personal interest. In addition, those respondents reporting little social support from their shop steward or union representatives are significantly more likely to be critical of their union.

TABLE 3

Comparison of Strong Union Critics with Moderate Critics and Non-Critics[1]: Job Characteristics, Social Support, and Union Involvement

	Strong Critics (n=192)		*Moderate Critics (n=360)*		*Non-Critics (n=440)*	
	$\bar{X}$	*(s)*	$\bar{X}$	*(s)*	$\bar{X}$	*(s)*
Perceived Job Characteristic Scale Scores						
(1=most negative evaluation; 7=most positive evaluation)						
Supervision	* 3.3	(1.4)	3.5	(1.5)	* 3.9	(1.4)
Variety/Challenge	* 3.0	(1.4)	3.1	(1.4)	* 3.5	(1.5)
Work intensity	4.8	(1.6)	4.9	(1.5)	5.0	(1.4)
Autonomy	3.7	(1.5)	3.9	(1.4)	4.0	(1.4)
Financial Rewards	4.9	(1.2)	5.0	(1.2)	5.2	(1.2)
Co-workers	* 3.9	(1.6)	4.1	(1.5)	4.3	(1.4)
Role Conflict	3.4	(1.6)	3.3	(1.5)	3.4	(1.5)
Perceived Social Support at Work						
(1=low support; 4=high support)						
From supervisor	2.2	(0.9)	2.2	(0.9)	2.3	(0.9)
From shop steward/ union representative	* 2.1	(0.9)	* 2.4	(0.9)	* 2.8	(0.9)
From co-workers	2.7	(0.8)	2.6	(0.8)	2.7	(0.8)
Relationship with Union						
Percent ever held union office	18%		16%		14%	
Percent who filed a grievance in past 12 months	37%		34%		31%	
Perceived union-management relations (1=very hostile; 7=very friendly)	* 2.6	(1.4)	* 3.1	(1.4)	* 3.7	(1.5)

1. See Notes, Table 2.

Table 3 also presents two measures of members' involvement with their union. While not statistically significant, strong critics are more likely than the comparison groups to have ever held a union office or to have filed a grievance in the past twelve months. We also measured perceived union-management relations on the assumption that this would influence workers' views of their union. Indeed, we find that critics are significantly more likely than non-critics to perceive union-management relations in the post office as hostile.

Health and Well-being Differences

Table 4 compares strong critics, moderate critics, and non-critics to see if they differ in terms of well-being and job satisfaction. Looking first at psychological well-being, a key indicator of stressful work, we find that strong critics are significantly more likely than the comparison groups (especially non-critics) to report overall worse mental health, increased hostility, and greater job-family conflict. Overall, it appears that strong critics are more distressed than non-critics.

Looking at the indicators of job satisfaction, both strong and moderate union critics are significantly more dissatisfied with their jobs than non-critics as measured by overall job satisfaction, willingness to choose the same type of work again, or willingness to take a similar job in another organization. Overall, it appears that those who are critical of their union are less satisfied with their job.

The physical well-being measures indicate that strong critics have worse health than the two comparison groups. They rate their overall physical health as worse and report more frequent psychophysiological problems. Strong critics also are more likely to perceive that their health has been negatively affected by the work they do, the hours they work, and the overall work environment.

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

In order to bring these diverse findings together to provide a test of the model described in Figure 1, a logistic regression analysis was performed. For the logistic regression, the strong and moderate critics were combined (n=552) and coded 1 while the non-critics (n=440) were coded 0. This comprised the dependent variable. The independent variables were selected from those variables that had been identified in the previous bivariate analyses as significantly related to union orientation. Two of these variables (number of hazards experienced at work and job-family conflict) were

subsequently eliminated because of large numbers of missing cases (n=162 and 273 missing cases respectively). The remaining variables had 0-5% missing cases and mean values were substituted for missing data. A total of 992 cases were then analyzed.

TABLE 4

Comparison of Strong Union Critics with Moderate Critics and Non-Critics[1]: Well-Being and Job Satisfaction

	Strong Critics (n=192)		*Moderate Critics (n=360)*		*Non-Critics (n=440)*	
	$\bar{X}$	*(s)*	$\bar{X}$	*(s)*	$\bar{X}$	*(s)*
Psychological Well-being						
Overall mental health past 12 months (1=very healthy; 7=very unhealthy)	* 3.4	(1.8)	3.1	(1.7)	2.8	(1.6)
Hostility scale (1=never; 7=always)	* 2.5	(0.7)	2.4	(0.7)	* 2.2	(0.6)
Depression scale (1=never; 7=always)	2.4	(0.5)	2.4	(0.6)	2.3	(0.6)
Job-family conflict (1=not at all; 7=a lot)	* 3.3	(2.1)	* 2.8	(1.9)	2.6	(1.9)
Often pressure at work (1=never; 5=always)	3.2	(0.9)	3.2	(0.9)	3.0	(0.9)
Job Satisfaction						
Overall job satisfaction (1=very dissatisfied; 7=very satisfied)	* 4.3	(1.7)	4.6	(1.7)	* 5.0	(1.6)
Could get better job if quit Post Office (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree)	3.2	(1.9)	3.1	(1.8)	2.9	(1.6)
Likelihood of looking for a new job (1=very unlikely; 7=very likely)	2.7	(2.2)	2.6	(2.2)	2.4	(2.0)
Percent who would choose same type of work	* 46%		52%		59%	
Percent who would take similar job in another organization	* 47%		43%		30%	
Percent who have looked for another job in past year	15%		11%		11%	

TABLE 4 (continued)

	Strong Critics (n=192)		*Moderate Critics (n=360)*		*Non-Critics (n=440)*	
	$\bar{X}$	*(s)*	$\bar{X}$	*(s)*	$\bar{X}$	*(s)*
Physical Well-being						
Overall physical health past 12 months (1=very healthy; 7=very unhealthy)	* 3.6	(1.8)	* 3.2	(1.7)	3.0	(1.6)
Psychophysiological complaints past 3 months[2] (1=never; 5=always)	* 2.7	(0.6)	2.6	(0.7)	* 2.5	(0.7)
Perceived Impact of Work on Overall Health						
(1=much worse; 5=much better)						
Health affected by work	* 2.7	(1.0)	2.9	(1.0)	3.0	(1.0)
Health affected by work hours	* 2.9	(0.9)	2.9	(0.9)	* 3.2	(0.9)
Health affected by work environment	* 2.6	(1.1)	2.7	(1.0)	2.9	(1.0)

1. See Notes, Table 2.
2. Includes the following health problems: general tiredness, loss of appetite, irritability, sleeplessness, dizziness, headaches.

The independent variables selected were grouped so as to test three separate models. In the first model, variables assessing job characteristics were entered into the logistic regression analysis. In model 2, variables measuring social characteristics of the work situation (quality of supervision, co-worker support, support from union representative, and nature of union-management relations) were added to the equation. Finally, in model 3, variables assessing job stress were included in the analysis.

The final model correctly classified 67% of cases (77% of critics and 55% of non-critics). The model chi-square was 158 with 18 df and was highly significant at $p<.0000$ indicating that the overall model has statistically significant predictive power. Furthermore, the goodness-of-fit chi-square (χ^2=983; df=973; $p>.40$) indicates that the model is not significantly different from a "perfect" model (Norusis 1990).

The logistic regression coefficients are shown in Table 5. Model 1 examines the effects of working conditions on union orientation. The results show that the less variety and challenge workers find on the job, the

more likely workers are to be critics of their union. This model suggests that stressful working conditions can result in employee dissatisfaction with their union. Nevertheless, this effect disappears in Model 2 when variables measuring social support at work are added to the analysis.

Model 2 shows that the more supportive that workers perceive their shop steward/union representative to be, the less likely they are to be critics of their union. Conversely, the less supportive workers perceive their union representative, the more critical they are of the union. However, the better union-management relations are perceived to be, the less likely the worker is to be a critic of the union. In short, it would appear that employees expect their union to be not only supportive of their interests but also effective in creating a pleasant working environment, one without hostility and continuing ill-will.

The effects of a supportive union representative and positive union-management relations remain evident in Model 3 when various measures of job stress are added to the analysis. Further, Model 3 indicates that the more workers feel that their work schedule negatively affects their health, the more likely they are to be critics of their union. In short, employees have a tendency to blame their union for stress experienced on the job.

DISCUSSION

In summary, it is apparent that strong union critics share a cluster of job conditions — lack of variety and challenge, ineffective workplace social supports, shift work — that are well known to be stressful (Karasek and Theorell 1990; Baker 1985; Lowe and Northcott 1986). Equally important in terms of the demand-control model of stress, strong critics also are significantly more likely than moderate critics or non-critics to report stress-related mental and physical ill-health symptoms, as well as be more dissatisfied with their job. Given the cross-sectional nature of our data, however, it is not possible to infer a causal direction to the relationship between stress and union dissatisfaction. However, intuitively it seems rather unlikely that workers' relationships with their union, or negative perceptions of the union, would "cause" such consistent patterns of distress and ill-health.

These bivariate and multivariate results are a first step toward unravelling the links between stressful working conditions and union dissatisfaction. Our measure of union satisfaction is categoric and development of a better measure of union satisfaction is called for, perhaps along the lines of Gordon et al.'s (1980) careful construction of a union commitment measure. While Fiorito and his colleagues (1988) have moved in this

TABLE 5

Coefficients for Logistic Regression of Strong and Moderate Union Critics versus Non-Critics on Selected Independent Variables

Independent Variables	*Model 1*		*Model 2*		*Model 3*	
Working Conditions: Job Characteristics						
Union (1=CUPW; 0=LCUC)	.049	(.157)	-.117	(.170)	-.162	(.181)
PM/Night Shift	.098	(.169)	.139	(.180)	.041	(.190)
Problems with Hours Worked	.261	(.170)	.059	(.182)	-.121	(.193)
Variety/Challenge	-.170***	(.048)	-.064	(.054)	-.031	(.061)
Working Conditions: Social Support						
Supervision			-.080	(.058)	-.057	(.062)
Co-Workers			.020	(.052)	.037	(.053)
Union Representative			-.630***	(.082)	-.634***	(.083)
Union-Management Relations			-.311***	(.053)	-.309***	(.055)
Job Stress						
Job Satisfaction					.015	(.063)
Would Choose Same Work					-.025	(.164)
Would Take Similar Job in Another Organization					.301	(.165)
Mental Health Problems					.032	(.056)
Hostility					.193	(.140)
Physical Health Problems					.033	(.056)
Psychophysiological Complaints					-.011	(.152)
Health Benefitted by Work					.034	(.102)
Health Benefitted by Work Hours					-.314**	(.104)
Health Benefitted by Work Environment					.152	(.107)
Constant	.677	(.202)	3.276	(.373)	2.756	(.699)
Goodness-of-Fit χ^2	993		989		983	
df	987		989		973	
χ^2 probability	.44		.44		.40	
N	992		992		992	

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Probability is according to the Wald statistic.

direction, our findings suggest that the relationship between quality of work and union satisfaction deserves a fuller exploration than provided in their discrepancy model.

With respect to the demand-control model, job demands, job stress, and a perceived lack of social support on the job were significant predictors of union criticism. However, decision latitude was not. The latter is in line with other studies, which often find employee participation in decision making per se accounting for only about 5% of the variance in self-reported mental and physical health outcomes (Ganster 1989:7).

Viewing these findings cautiously, it is interesting that they reinforce our earlier arguments for an expanded demand-control model of stress incorporating industrial relations variables. As Bluen and Barling (1988:177-179) suggest, the conflict inherent in industrial relations may itself be a source of stress. What future research must determine is how the industrial relations environment of a workplace interacts with job conditions to produce stress and, in turn, how this stress may turn some workers into critics of the union. Sorting out where in the causal chain workers' relationship with their union fits will require a theoretical integration of stress and industrial relations research.

To return to the bivariate and multivariate results, there are a number of findings that deserve further comment. Social support provided a conceptual means of incorporating unions into the demand-control model of job stress. Supportive coworkers and supervisors are seen in the literature as moderating the impacts of stressful working conditions (House 1981; Aronsson 1989). Karasek and Theorell go further, arguing that unionization also provides social support (1990:75). Perhaps this claim needs to be revised in the face of our evidence that workers who perceive that they do not receive support from their union representative are more likely to be critics of the union. At a practical level, unions must endeavour to provide the kinds of support workers experiencing stress require. A greater challenge, of course, is for unions to negotiate with management changes in the work environment so that the root causes of stress are alleviated.

Our study also reinforces key criticisms that have been levelled against the demand-control model of job stress. Specifically, the concept of job control requires further refinement so that we are able to pin-point the specific ways in which control is manifested in jobs and, in turn, how these conditions give rise to stress (Ganster 1989:16-17; Kasl 1989:175-176). A clearer conceptual distinction between individual and collective control may help to better interpret our findings (Aronsson 1989:86). It may be that workers who feel little or no control in their jobs may be prone to generalizing this to their union, in effect blaming the union for their

powerlessness. This is a troubling scenario, given the high levels of stress in many workplaces today and workers' lack of knowledge about occupational health issues (ILO 1993; Walters and Haines 1988).

Commenting on unions' ability to address occupational health problems, Walters and Haines (1988:1190) argue that "for labour to have a strong voice it is important for workers ... to press their case individually and collectively in situations where they feel their health or safety is at risk." However, the preconditions for unions to promote healthier workplaces could be undermined by stressful job conditions. Perhaps we need to revise the exit-voice perspective on unions (Freeman and Medoff 1984:138-140; Meng 1990). The workers in our study clearly have voiced dissatisfaction, but their criticisms are not, as implied in exit-voice analysis, channelled through the union and directed only at working conditions. This dissatisfaction also casts a negative shadow over their relationship with their union, throwing up yet another major stumbling block in unions' quest for improved quality of working life.

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RÉSUMÉ

Conditions de travail stressantes et insatisfaction envers le syndicat

Les conditions de travail stressantes et l'angoisse qui en résulte pour les employés reçoivent de plus en plus d'attention. De telles conditions de travail mènent à des symptômes physiologiques et psychologiques d'angoisse, d'insatisfaction envers le travail, d'aliénation, de basse productivité et de roulement. Dans un tel contexte, les employés syndiqués peuvent se tourner vers leur syndicat dans l'espoir que celui-ci obtienne de meilleures conditions de travail. De plus, on peut supposer que les travailleurs qui perçoivent leur syndicat comme un allié ont envers lui une orientation positive. En d'autres termes, l'hypothèse est à l'effet que plus les conditions de travail sont stressantes, et plus l'angoisse est grande chez les travailleurs, plus leur orientation envers le syndicat sera positive. Cependant, il est également possible que des employés aux conditions de travail stressantes, angoissés et aliénés deviendront insatisfaits non seulement de leur travail mais également de leur syndicat qu'ils peuvent blâmer de n'avoir pu obtenir de meilleures conditions de travail.

Peu d'études, à ce jour, ont examiné les relations entre le travail stressant et le degré de satisfaction envers son syndicat. De plus, le peu de littérature qui existe à ce sujet est équivoque. Quelques études concluent que le travail stressant est associé avec la satisfaction envers le syndicat alors d'autres concluent le contraire, ou encore à l'absence de relations

entre ces deux variables. Nous cherchons ici à examiner la relation entre les conditions de travail stressantes, l'angoisse des employés et l'orientation des travailleurs envers leur syndicat.

Les données pour la présente étude viennent d'une enquête effectuée en 1983 auprès des postiers syndiqués (n=992) travaillant pour Poste Canada à Edmonton. Les conditions de travail sont évaluées par membership syndical (postiers et facteurs), quart de travail, rapports des travailleurs eu égard aux problèmes avec les heures travaillées, nombre de risques eu égard à la santé et la sécurité au travail et les caractéristiques du travail incluant la supervision, l'intensité de travail, l'autonomie décisionnelle, les récompenses financières, les relations entre les travailleurs, les conflits de travail et le degré de routine. Nous avons mesuré le support social au travail en demandant aux employés jusqu'à quel point il pouvait compter sur leur supérieur, le délégué ou représentant syndical et sur d'autres personnes au travail. Nous avons également interrogé les répondants sur leur implication dans leur syndicat et sur leurs perceptions des relations du travail. Finalement, quant au stress vécu par ces travailleurs, nous avons utilisé de multiple mesures de satisfaction au travail, de bien-être psychologique/angoisse, de bien-être physique/angoisse, et l'impact perçu du travail sur la santé.

La variable dépendante pour cette étude est la (in)satisfaction envers le syndicat. Cette variable combine une échelle de rangement de sept échelons du syndicat avec les réponses des employés à une question ouverte « comment votre syndicat pourrait mieux vous servir ? ». Nous avons créé trois catégories: fortes critiques du syndicat (n=192), critiques modérées (n=360) et aucune critique (n=440). Aux fins de l'analyse de régression, les critiques fortes et modérées ont été fusionnées.

Les analyses bi-variées montrent que les membres du syndicat des postiers, les travailleurs des quarts d'après-midi ou de nuit, ceux rapportant des problèmes avec les heures de travail et les répondants qui disent être exposés à de hauts niveaux de risques au travail sont plus enclins à être fortement critiques de leur syndicat. De plus, les employés rapportant une supervision pauvre, un défi et une variété limités dans leurs tâches et des collègues et représentants syndicaux qui ne les supportent pas critiquent plus leur syndicat, comme cela est d'ailleurs le cas de ceux qui perçoivent les relations du travail comme hostiles. Finalement, ceux qui rapportent les pires santés physiques et mentales, de plus grands conflits travail-famille, et de l'insatisfaction envers leur travail, sont aussi de forts critiques de leur syndicat. En résumé, il semble que les différentes mesures de conditions de travail stressantes et l'angoisse des employés soient reliées avec une position critique envers le syndicat.

Une analyse de régression multivariée confirme qu'un modèle qui inclut ces variables prédit, à un degré statistiquement significatif, l'orientation des employés envers leur syndicat. Plus particulièrement, l'analyse multivariée démontre que les employés qui considèrent leur travail stressant, leur représentant syndical inutile, et leur syndicat inefficace à améliorer les conditions de travail, tendent à être de forts critiques de leur syndicat.

En conclusion, cette étude établit que des conditions de travail stressantes et le stress au travail en résultant associés avec un manque de support au travail (supérieur, collègue, syndicat) mènent à une orientation négative envers le syndicat. Alors, des conditions de travail stressantes peuvent non seulement aliéner les travailleurs eu égard à leur travail et compromettre leur santé, mais également les aliéner eu égard à leur syndicat.