

Walsh, David J., *On Different Planes: An Organizational Analysis of Cooperation and Conflict Among Airline Unions*

Martin M. Perline

Volume 50, Number 2, 1995

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/051023ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/051023ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (print)

1703-8138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Perline, M. M. (1995). Review of [Walsh, David J., *On Different Planes: An Organizational Analysis of Cooperation and Conflict Among Airline Unions*]. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 50(2), 454–455.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/051023ar>

On Different Planes: An Organizational Analysis of Cooperation and Conflict Among Airline Unions

by David J. WALSH, Ithaca, N.Y., ILR Press, 1994, 208 p., ISBN 0-87546-323-1 (Cloth) and ISBN 0-87546-329-0.

At a time when many industrial relations researchers are studying various cooperative and conflicting relations between labor and management, David Walsh's book *On Different Planes* (which started as the author's Ph.D. dissertation) is of particular interest since it studies cooperation and conflict between unions.

In an effort to better understand these inter-union relations, the author places his focus on the airline unions that represented workers at nine major U.S. carriers during the period from 1987 to mid-1989. The question is raised as to why some inter-union relations are cooperative while others tend toward conflict? It is his contention that one can learn more about the possibilities and limits of labor cooperation by examining an industry where the crafts, and the unions which represent them, are very different from each other; i.e., pilots (ALPA); mechanics, baggage handlers, clerical (IAM); flight attendants (AFA and others); dispatchers (TWU); and various others (IBT). This is also an industry in which inter-union relations have not been particularly cooperative. In seeking an answer to his query, Walsh receives guidance from organizational theory and analyzes data on pairs of unions, coalitions, and the airline union network as a whole.

The book is divided into eight chapters, a conclusion, and an afterword which briefly attempts to update some of the happenings in the airline industry through 1993. There are also three appendices.

Following an introductory chapter, the author discusses a theoretical framework in which to conceptualize inter-union relations; follows this with a discussion of the U.S. airline industry as a context

for these inter-union relations; and then provides a look at these relations in an historical perspective. The heart of the book is embodied in chapters five and six which contain an analysis of union pairs and the structure of the airline union network respectively. Following this statistical analysis, chapters seven and eight provide case studies of inter-union relations. Chapter seven explores these relations at United Airlines and Pan Am and chapter eight illustrates the need to mobilize the airline union network during the struggle with Frank Lorenzo at Eastern Airlines.

The appendices cover the survey instrument utilized to gather the data, the categories used in constructing interdependence measures, and an explanation of the techniques used in the analysis — the multiple regression/quadratic assignment procedure, and the convergence of iterated correlations (CONCOR).

The data for the study were gathered by approximate one-hour telephone interviews with union officials who had received the survey instrument prior to the telephone contact, and encompassed information from some thirty-three of the potential thirty-seven national unions and their subunits involved.

Given its prior life as a dissertation, it is not surprising that this is a very tightly written book. Indeed, it is impossible to do justice to the numerous conclusions reached concerning the various extensive interrelations among the airline unions. (The reader is directed to Tables 5-2 and 5-3 of the book for the numerous regression coefficients and a summary of the findings.) Nevertheless, it is possible to indicate some general conclusions.

Walsh finds that unions are most likely to establish relations with each

other when there is some interdependence between them; and for sustained relations to prevail, substantial interdependence is required. Although this interdependence can lead to conflict or cooperation, a crisis situation at the airline will likely bring forth more cooperation. The period under study saw increased cohesiveness among unions most likely reflected by the numerous crises faced by the industry. Nevertheless, even under a crisis situation union cooperation may not be complete as seen by the differences among the various unions on the question of the recent United Airlines buy-out. This is not necessarily surprising since mutual dependence is not the same as common interests. Given the fact that the situation in the airline industry will no doubt create more interdependence among the unions it is concluded that inter-union relations will continue at least at their current levels and possibly even increase.

To what extent can these conclusions concerning inter-union relations in

the airline industry be generalized to other unions in other industries? This is an important industrial relations question because how unions relate to each other may also affect the outcome of the overall labor-management relationship. The author suggests further empirical research is necessary to answer this question. Nevertheless, one would expect that as other industries with multi-union representation find themselves in similar crisis situations, there will be an increase in inter-union relations. As these inter-union relations change one can expect the general overall labor-management relationship also to change. The specific manner in which this relationship changes remains to be seen.

For anyone interested in inter-union relations, labor relations in the airline industry, or indeed, organizational behavior in general, this book is well worth reading.

MARTIN M. PERLINE
Wichita State University

When Strikes Make Sense and Why: Lessons from Third Republic French Coal Miners

by Samuel COHN, New York and London, Plenum Press, 1993, 254 p., ISBN 0-306-44445-3.

Dans cet ouvrage, Cohn essaie de répondre à une question dont il constate, à juste titre, qu'elle a été fort peu analysée malgré son importance pour le champ des relations professionnelles : comment les stratégies des syndicats en matière de grève affectent-elles les salaires de ceux et celles qu'ils représentent ?

Pour ce faire, il utilise des données relatives aux mineurs de charbon français entre 1890 et 1935. Elles présentent selon lui des avantages particuliers : fiabilité des statistiques salariales, bons éléments pour établir les déterminants du salaire non liés au conflit sur les salaires, excellentes statistiques de conflit social pour la période, stratégies

divergentes des syndicats dans l'industrie (avec notamment, mais pas seulement, la scission de 1922 entre la CGT et la CGT-U), main-d'œuvre militante des mineurs. L'auteur applique ensuite des analyses de régression sur les séries temporelles (modèle de Parks) qu'il a recueillies et il double cette analyse quantitative d'une étude historique des sites sur la période.

Cette démarche l'amène à conclure que la stratégie syndicale optimale pour accroître les salaires est de déclencher des grèves fréquentes. Celles-ci donnent à un syndicat une réputation d'activisme qui, à son tour, impressionne les employeurs et les amène à conclure des accords plus généreux qu'ils ne seraient