

EVIDENCE ON SCOTTISH TRADE UNION MEMBERS' JOB DISSATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

This paper includes insights on trade union members' expectations of trade union membership and its influence on their experiences of job dissatisfaction. Trade union members have been shown to report higher levels of job dissatisfaction than non-union members across five decades of research, and in multi-country analyses, although the factors that influence trade union members' perceptions remain unclear. Given that previous studies are mostly quantitative, the present study uses a qualitative approach of interviews with 20 trade union member employees at a manufacturer in Scotland, and adds insights to debates on employee participation. The results suggest that trade union members may join unions mainly for protection from managers and express dissatisfaction when their trade unions do not protect them in accordance to their expectations. Furthermore, this study suggests that trade union member employees may prefer stronger forms of trade unionism that enable long-term job security. The site used in this study, a factory, will close in 2020, and many companies are exiting the UK as a result of Brexit. As such, the data in this work may be some of the last, if not the last, data collected from trade union member employees at a major manufacturer in Scotland.

JEL: J5, J50

KEYWORDS: Collective Bargaining, Labor-Management, Union Data, Union Membership

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, the phenomenon of job dissatisfaction is explored with trade union member employees in an attempt to better understand a topic that has puzzled researchers of industrial relations for more than five decades. Despite the positive effects that trade unions have on various aspects of employment, unionized employees consistently report higher levels of dissatisfaction with their jobs than non-unionized employees in studies that have analysed large national, as well as multi-country, datasets. Previous works have not, however, been able to reach an agreement on why trade union members express dissatisfaction with their jobs and most of those used quantitative methods. Yet, understanding the phenomenon in greater depth remains important, because job satisfaction impacts on employee well-being and organizational performance. Furthermore, insights on the effectiveness of employee representation are central to informing debates on employee participation within the field of industrial relations. Given that prior quantitative studies have failed to provide a salient explanation for the phenomenon, the present research opted to use a qualitative approach to explore the topic of trade union membership and job dissatisfaction, so that new insights could be revealed and added to what is known about the topic in the industrial relations literature. This paper is organized into four main sections and begins with a literature review to describe the problem of trade union membership and job dissatisfaction. Afterward, a section includes the approach used to gather insights into the phenomenon, followed by a section that imparts the empirical results. The last main section in this paper is devoted to concluding comments, or a discussion of the key insights gained from having conducted this research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job satisfaction and its antecedents have been the subject of much empirical research during the last twenty years (Clark, 1996; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza, 2000; Green and Tsitsianis, 2005; Timming, 2010). The value of findings gained by research of job satisfaction have made it the most popular topic to research in management studies, as shown in Spector (1997, p.1): ‘In fact, it is the most frequently studied variable in organizational behavior’. There are still many questions about the factors that contribute to job dissatisfaction, however (ibid), such as the link between trade union membership and job dissatisfaction. Although previous works indicate that trade union members report lower levels of job satisfaction than non-union employees (Freeman, 1978; Borjas, 1979; Berger et al, 1983; Schwochau, 1987; Hersch and Stone, 1990; Miller, 1990; Clark, 1996; Bender and Sloane, 1998; Heywood et al, 2002; Bryson et al, 2004; Guest and Conway, 2004; Green and Heywood, 2015; Haile, 2015; Laroche 2016; Laroche, 2017), there is no agreed explanation for why this is the case. At least part of this is due to previous research of trade union membership and job satisfaction not being able to address ‘differences across individuals, jobs, and workplaces’ (Bryson et al, 2004; 441), and the failure of these quantitative works to control for sorting, workplace, and individual heterogeneity (Powdthavee, 2011). The present work uses a qualitative approach to address one potential source of trade union members’ job dissatisfaction, their expectations of union membership, so that more can be understood about the phenomenon in the field of industrial relations.

The breadth of job satisfaction as a research area is underscored by this definition from Robbins and Judge (2017, p. 80), who leave feeling, evaluation, and job characteristics open to interpretation: ‘Our definition of job satisfaction—a positive feeling about a job resulting from an evaluation of its characteristics—is broad’. There are obvious difficulties in trying to capture such a broadly conceived topic in its wholeness. Yet, job satisfaction is important to understand, given its links to individual-level as well as organizational-level outcomes. For individual employees, job (dis)satisfaction can impact on their home life, finances, work, and health (Easterlin, 2006), as well as their mental health (van den Berg and Grout, 1992; Kopp et al, 2008); and risk of cardiovascular disease that leads to death (Kivimaki et al, 2002). With regard to organizational-level outcomes, job satisfaction has been positively linked to organizational productivity (Whitman et al, 2010; Bockermann and Ilmakunnas, 2012), organizational citizenship behavior (Foote and Tang, 2008; Whitman et al, 2010), and trust in managers (Timming, 2012). Some of the implications of employee job dissatisfaction to organizational outcomes have included high employee turnover (Freeman and Medoff, 1984; Clark, 2005) and links to negative employee work behaviors (Freeman, 1976; Bolin and Heatherly, 2001; Lau et al, 2003; Roelen et al, 2008).

Job satisfaction is especially important to researchers of industrial relations as it is central to the field’s main debate, which Johnstone and Ackers (2015) suggest is participation. Employee relations scholars have argued which of the three main types of participation - employee involvement (E.I.), workers’ control, or representative participation - ‘works best’ (ibid: 3). According to Greene (2015: 73), ‘Much of the debate around employee voice within the industrial relations field concerns the level of influence over decision-making that is offered by the particular voice mechanism’. Additionally, Handel and Levine (2004: 2) suggest a ‘broad consensus emerged’ during the 1990s that participation in organizational decision-making may enable employees to experience higher levels of job satisfaction. There is no agreement, however, on how workers’ participation can be improved (Ackers, 2010). The results of the present study will therefore help in shaping debates in the field of industrial relations, as it captured the perceptions of trade union members with regard to their expectations of trade union membership and its influence on job dissatisfaction.

How trade union members decide if their unions have met their expectations is by evaluating pragmatic aspects of their jobs, such as pay and benefits (Hammer and Avgar, 2005). There is, moreover, reason to believe that trade unions should fulfil those expectations, as trade unions are known to have a ‘responsibility’ to improve their members’ terms and conditions of employment (Salamon 1998: 77). One

would also expect trade union members' to report more satisfaction with their jobs because research has shown that workers do tend to join trade unions for the 'union wage mark up' it affords them (Guest and Conway, 2004: 107), and there is ample research to suggest that the effects of trade unions on pay has been largely positive (Freeman and Medoff, 1984; Jarrell and Stanley, 1990; Booth, 1995; Arabsheibani and Marin, 2001; Blanchflower and Bryson, 2004; Hirsch, 2004; Pencavel, 2009; Delery et al, 2000; West and Mykerezzi, 2011; Long, 2013; Rios-Avila and Hirsch, 2014; Torm, 2014; Bryson and White, 2016). Furthermore, income is positively associated with job satisfaction in studies that included large, multi-country datasets and non-unionized as well as unionized workers (Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza, 2000; Warr, 2008; Timming, 2010). Given the largely positive effects of pay on job satisfaction, it should seem unlikely that it would be a source of dissatisfaction for trade union member employees.

Trade unions are also known to positively influence aspects of employment contracts in areas such as employer-provided health and family benefits (Buchmueller et al, 2002; Budd and Mumford, 2004) and job security (Mitchell, 1983; Long, 2013; Goerke and Pannenberg, 2011), both of which are linked to job satisfaction in multi-country studies (Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza; Clark, 2005). Employer-provided training has been linked to higher levels of job satisfaction (Jones and Sloane, 2009) as well, and trade unions have been shown to increase access to training for their members (Arulampalam and Booth, 1998; Green et al, 1999; Boheim and Booth, 2004). Even more, trade unions are known to have positive effects on job control and decision making (Freeman, 1976; Freeman and Medoff, 1984; Belonger, 1989; Gall, 2010; Lyness et al, 2012). Like pay, then, it should seem counterintuitive that terms and conditions of employment would be a salient factor in trade union members' reports of job dissatisfaction, especially since the phenomenon has been shown across five decades of research.

The present work therefore sought out alternative explanations to explore, so as to add insights towards explaining trade union members' reports of job dissatisfaction. One such explanation is used in this paper, loosely referred to here as *expectations*, and its origins are based on previous works in the field of industrial relations. The concept of expectations is tentative and its dimensions were substantiated during the course of research. It should be noted that this work is part of a larger study that formed the basis of a dissertation for which the author was awarded a PhD. Within that larger work, four alternative and loosely constructed explanations for trade union members' job dissatisfaction were explored in total. To maintain the integrity of the insights gained as a result of that project, however, each of those four explanations are treated separately.

The idea of expectations begins with the understanding that the purpose (Sverke and Goslinga, 2003) and function (van den Berg and Groot, 1992; Stinglhamber et al, 2013) of trade unions are to protect their members and to represent their members' interests (Simms and Charlwood, 2010). Trade unions are known to address an 'employment relationship' that is inherently unequal, wherein the 'employee is subjugated and consents to' managerial control (Colling and Terry, 2010:8). By means of collective power, trade unions are known to enable their members to voice concerns to managements without fear of reprisal (Freeman and Medoff, 1984), and to provide representative or indirect participation to their members. They are known to protect their members' rights, represent their members' interests to management (Stinglhamber et al, 2013), and to protect their members from 'managerial abuse' (Kaufman, 2004: 377). As political institutions, trade unions pressure governments and affect the distribution of resources (Turner, 1986). Hammer and Avgar (2005: 241) have described these kinds of positive effects of trade union membership as 'social benefits'. They also suggest that trade union member employees report job dissatisfaction that is due to trade unions having raised their members' expectations 'beyond what is realistic' (ibid: 243). Another work suggests the possibility that perhaps trade union member employees expect more from their jobs than non-union members (Bryson et al, 2004). The aim of the present research is to understand more about trade union members' expectations of union membership, and to gain insights into how it could be related to their job dissatisfaction, if at all.

A few clarifications are in order, as they highlight major changes in trade union membership and trade union ideology. First, many interviewees in this project used the words ‘working class’ to describe themselves to the interviewer, absent the interviewer’s use of the words working class to guide them towards that response. This suggests that interviewees in this project might have shared in an identity, perhaps a strong one, and so it is important to mention that trade unions were known as a voice mechanism used by working class people (Freeman and Medoff, 1984). In the U.K., trade unions historically aligned their beliefs with those of the Labour Party to garner strength from their mainly working-class membership (Hyman, 1995). That idea has evolved, as Kelly (1998) suggests that trade union members no longer share in strong, collective, working-class identities. Even more, trade unions have changed their focus towards recruiting and advocating for an increasingly diverse workforce (Simms, et al, 2010). It could have been, then, that interviewees in the present work shared beliefs about an older form of trade unionism that may no longer have the same relevance as it did in the past.

It is also widely known that trade union membership has declined in the U.K. (Kelly, 1998; Monastrirotis, 2007; Parker and Foley, 2010). This decline is due, at least in part, to economic recession-related and political changes (Edwards, 1995; Hyman, 1995; Nolan and Walsh, 1995), and a ‘decline within the manufacturing sector where membership was strong’ (Simms et al, 2013: 20). The extent to which jobs were lost as a result of that decline, as well as the impact of that decline on powerful unions, is described in detail by Colling and Terry (2010: 12):

‘Over 25 years between 1981 and 2006, employment in the primary (e.g. mining and agriculture) and secondary industries (e.g. manufacturing and construction) more or less halved to 4.7 million jobs (Self and Zealey 2007: 46). The implosion of British manufacturing employment has been especially dramatic, falling by 58% between 1978 and 2008 to just 2.9 million employees (Hughes 2009: 53). Within this period, or during the ‘harsher climate of the 1980s’, unemployment rose, manufacturers with powerful trade unions closed, and the product and labour market in the U.K. changed so that trade union representatives had less power in their negotiations with their respective managements (Edwards and Terry, 1988: 232). Trade unions have had to contend with a general restructuring of employment across the U.K., pervasive job insecurity, and the ability of some employers to resist trade unions (Waddington and Whiston, 1997). Overwhelmingly, the long-term shift has been inexorably towards service sector employment’.

Yet, Hill and Hult (2017: 5) suggest that ‘the rise of skilled workers in developing countries imply that many services no longer need to be performed where they are delivered’. It is therefore important to consider that there is a general climate of job insecurity, rather than job insecurity that is tied to the manufacturing industry or trade union member employees, in the UK.

The data for the present work was collected in Scotland during an 7-month period in the Spring of 2015 at a site in a pro-Referendum city. It is important to mention that the Scottish Referendum vote occurred on September 18, 2014, or four months prior to the start of data collection. Secondly, the Brexit vote occurred on June 23, 2016, or a year after data collection ended for the present study. When the field work was conducted for this work in 2015, there was nothing to indicate that the case study organization, ‘XYZ’, would close its doors. Indeed, there were 800 employees at XYZ in 2015 and in 2018, when XYZ publicly announced its intentions to close its factory in 2020, it had 850 employees. Although little is known about the impending closure of XYZ, it is an event that must be mentioned in the present work. Indeed, many services and manufacturing organizations are exiting the UK as a result of Brexit although, it must be emphasized, this work does not suggest a link between the closure of XYZ and Brexit. Whatever the case may be, the present work still adds valuable insights on the interplay between institutional structures and organizational outcomes, or an association that has not received sufficient attention in employee relations research (Marsden, 2013 as referenced in Barry and Wilkinson, 2016). Furthermore, given that external changes surrounded XYZ that were impossible to avoid, the present work supports the findings of Dobbins

and Dundon (2017), who showed that trade union and management partnerships may not be able to survive difficult external market conditions.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Yin (2014) suggests that case studies are useful to researchers of real-life situations in which contexts (i.e., organization) and phenomena (i.e., trade union members' job dissatisfaction) must be studied together. The context here is a manufacturer (XYZ) in Scotland, and with the exception of its management staff, all of the employees were members of one trade union. Given the high concentration of trade union member employees and the historically unionized environment of manufacturing, the case study organization used in this research seemed especially suited to collecting strong insights into the research phenomenon. XYZ was in the automotive-related sector and it competed against lower-cost manufacturers whose factories were located in countries outside the UK. It was the last remaining major manufacturer of any kind in its region, one of its city's last remaining major employers, and its role in the local economy was critical. The site was a part of the city's industrial heritage and considered a landmark in a city that had a large working-class population and a history of militant trade unionism. During the 1980s and 1990s, most of the factories in the city closed and at least one of those closures occurred after a lengthy and well-publicized labor dispute. The city had lost many of its manufacturing jobs and XYZ had almost closed in the ten years prior to 2015. However, the trade union and management at XYZ had worked together to keep the site open, and interviewees at XYZ indicated that they had agreed to wage concessions and lower pay to enable that. Many interviewees in this project indicated that the parent company had closed one of its factories in Western Europe instead.

Prior to gaining access to XYZ, the researcher tried to find a site to use in this study by contacting trade union representatives at Unite, Prospect, UNISON, the Scottish Trades Union Congress, and Nautilus. Previous attempts were unsuccessful, however, and in at least one instance, a trade union representative told the researcher that management at the trade union representative's organization refused to allow the researcher on-site because the research topic was 'too risky'. In another instance, the researcher was granted access to a paper-products factory in the Northeast of Scotland with the help of a shop steward from the site. However, the management of that manufacturer announced it was going to close the factory a week before the researcher was to start conducting interviews there. After many failed attempts to gain access to organizations, an employee of the University of St. Andrews introduced the researcher to a human resources manager at XYZ in an e-mail, and the human resources manager allowed the researcher access to the site. The human resources manager then introduced the researcher to the site's senior-most shop steward by e-mail. Shortly thereafter, the researcher met with the shop steward and human resources manager to discuss the study and to address any concerns. The shop steward became the point of contact for, and was the first interviewee at, XYZ.

To develop insights towards understanding the associations between expectations of trade union membership and job dissatisfaction, a qualitative approach was used so that a fresh perspective could be added to the mostly quantitative body of research on trade union members' job dissatisfaction. The use of a qualitative approach is an important aspect of this work, as qualitative methods enrich and deepen analyses (Ackers et al, 2006; Brown et al, 2007; Timming, 2011). Qualitative research, described as an 'art' as well as a 'science', consists of analyses in which researchers build 'stories' from data using their own interpretations, so that multiple interpretations of the same data are a certainty (Corbin and Strauss, 2008: 47). Qualitative methods are also flexible and modifiable (Creswell, 2013: 47), and so granted this researcher the space to engage in self-reflection whilst interacting with the data (Mason, 2002). An interview format was used, given that qualitative techniques allow researchers to capture real-life contexts (Miles et al, 2014) in environments where 'meaning, interpretation, and representation are deeply intertwined in one another' (Denzin, 1998: 322). Twenty trade union member employees were interviewed using semi-structured and open-ended questions that allowed data to emerge, but were focused enough so

that the interviewer was able to guide interviewees back to the subject of their expectations and job (dis)satisfaction as needed. The number of workers interviewed met the threshold described in Creswell (2013), who recommends that data be collected from at least twenty to thirty interviewees. A key criterion was that interviewees had to be trade union member employees, as only they would have the necessary ‘first-hand experience’ of the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014: 56).

Table 1 below includes a description of the interviewees; the total number of employees and the number of trade union member employees that were present at XYZ at the time data was collected; the method and duration of interviews; and the timeframe in which data was collected for the present research.

Table 1: Description of Interview Methodology

Interviewee	Age, Job Title, Gender, Tenure (where available)	Trade Union
M1	58, Senior Shop Steward and Production, Male, 35 years.	XYZ
M2	Over 40, Deputy Shop Steward and Production, Male, 26 years.	XYZ
M3	Over 60, Maintenance, Male, 40 years.	XYZ
M4	30, Female, Engineering, 13 years.	XYZ
M5	58, Male, Production, 31 years.	XYZ
M6	27, Female, Production, 3 and a half years.	XYZ
M7	27, Female, Production, 4 years.	XYZ
M8	55, Male, Production, 27 years.	XYZ
M9	44, Male, Production, 21 years.	XYZ
M10	Over 60, Male, Production, 41 years.	XYZ
M11	‘over fifty’, Male, Engineer, 44 years.	XYZ
M12	61, Male, Production, 40 years.	XYZ
M13	37, Male, Production, 11 years.	XYZ
M14	47, Female, Production, 3 months.	XYZ
M15	48, Male, Production, 14 years.	XYZ
M16	56, Male, Production, 30 years.	XYZ
M17	55, Male, Production, 15 years.	XYZ
M18	44, Female, Production, 11 years.	XYZ
M19	Over 35, Male, Services, 14 years.	XYZ
M20	55, Male, Forklift driver, 37 years.	XYZ
Total number of employees at XYZ: 800		
Approximate total number of trade union member employees at XYZ: 790		
Total number of interviewees: 20		
Each interview duration: 1 hour		
Method used to collect data: semi-structured interviews		
Data collection timeframe: January to July of 2015		

Where the interviewee did not provide their age, an approximation was made based on responses in their interview.

Each interview lasted for a minimum of one hour and each interview was transcribed by the author before conducting the next interview, so that topics were developed in iterations. Where more insight was needed to enrich the emergent themes, the researcher asked for more details. Although the interview questions in the present research were open-ended and largely unscripted, there were three questions asked of each interviewee in the overall research project. These three questions included: (i) Why did you join the trade union?; (ii) What does equal treatment mean to you?; and (iii) Would you describe this workplace as fair or unfair?. These three questions were linked to fundamental ideas within the field of industrial relations and trade unionism, and answers to these questions added insights to understanding the phenomenon of trade union membership and job dissatisfaction.

RESULTS

Two main topics emerged from the responses of trade union members in the 2015 fieldwork and these were: (i) the trade union's failure to protect its members and (ii) the trade union's loss of power. The researcher asked each interviewee why they had joined the trade union at XYZ and protection, whether the term was used directly or broadly conceived, emerged consistently in interviews. By and large, most trade union member interviewees indicated to the interviewer that they had joined the trade union for protection against management at XYZ specifically, although this included both ideological elements as well as observations and personal experiences. Protection from management also consistently emerged as the most common topic in the responses of interviewees, who were asked how their expectations of the trade union had impacted on their feelings of job dissatisfaction, if at all. Furthermore, the idea that the trade union had lost the power to effectively represent its members' interests to management at XYZ underscored discontent related to protection. As interviews unfolded, responses suggested that interviewees experienced discontent that included the trade union's not having done more for the people in the city in which XYZ was located, as well as for its members. This helped to support the idea that interviewees likely shared beliefs in trade unionism as an ideology or vehicle for social justice.

Responses from interviewees added dimensions to the expectation of protection as they described incidents, specific managers, departments, actions, beliefs, and behaviors as evidence for why they believed that protection was necessary. Trade union members' responses indicated that for them, protection had many different elements: it could be passive, conceptual, and related to trade union ideology; or a response used to address the behaviors and actions of specific managers. Some trade union member interviewees described the protection afforded to them being in the trade union as a safeguard they could use against potential negative managerial actions. The idea that interviewees wanted their trade union to protect them from management included much of what was described previously in this paper as it relates to the function and purpose of trade unions, and trade union ideology. The data suggested that interviewees at XYZ were largely aware of what trade unions in general were commonly known to do for trade union members and expected their trade union to act accordingly. However, interviewees repeatedly described situations and experiences in which the trade union's response to the behaviour or actions of managers was expected, but was not forthcoming.

It was interesting that interviewees often indicated that, in addition to themselves, the trade union at XYZ should protect the people in their city from the management at XYZ. Responses from interviewees consistently suggested that they identified closely with their city and possessed a strong awareness that XYZ was its last remaining major employer. Indeed, the idea that XYZ was the last remaining major employer in the city emerged in every interview. For example, interviewees responses included, but were not limited to: 'Before, it used to be that the trade union fought for the people of (city named)'; 'I feel the union's quite weak in (city named) as for fighting management'; 'all the big manufacturers gone, the shipyards, it's all gone now'; and '(XYZ's) the only thing here' to describe the general decline in manufacturing in the city. Although the trade union at XYZ was not responsible for the closure of other factories in the area, interviewees seemed to share the belief that the trade union at XYZ could do something protect the city from losing more jobs. This seemed to highlight the power that trade unions once had in their city to affect wider social and economic change, which was perhaps lost alongside the closure of its manufacturers.

Next, protection included behavioral dimensions that affected some interviewees at XYZ who had experience of managers mistreating employees. Interviewees provided detailed descriptions of situations and incidents on the shop floor in which managers had displayed antagonistic, and in some instances intimidating, behaviors towards trade union member employees. What's more, a specific division consistently emerged as the main area in which managers displayed the worst of these types of behaviors, even though interviewees in this research worked in different departments. Thus, while interviewees

described mistreatment by management that they had experienced directly or by observation, it also became apparent that trade union member employees had been informed of the experiences of other trade union member employees at XYZ, regardless of where they were located at the site.

The responses of one interviewee, M10, highlights the complexity of responses that substantiated the effect of trade union protection. In his responses, M10 indicated to the interviewer that he had expected the trade union to foster 'fairness' at XYZ, and expressed disappointment because it had not protected its members from managerial retaliation on the shop floor. He alluded to 'the power they don't have now, where they used to', and indicated that he had experienced a time in which the trade union had been powerful and effective in meeting his expectations. He suggested that the trade union at XYZ needed to 'make it fairer' by correcting the way managers treated the trade union members on the shop floor. M10 described situations in which he had personally experienced mistreatment by management directly:

'I think it's, a lot of time it's unfair, the way people get treated. The way they get spoken to. That sort of thing. They sort of, they'll do things properly, but it's just the way they go about it, the way they treat people. The way they speak to them. That's just my experience through the years. It used to be really bad at one time. When I first started working here. Relations got better, as I believe a lot better, and I think the last ten years it's slipped back again. What with shop stewards and employees and the company. It's just a constant battle. A lot of people feel intimidated with some of these managers, like. Like a pair of wheels. You got one on your back, you've got half a dozen on your back. It's pretty intimidating for some young boy or lassie. So if you're arguing with them about it, and you're answering them back, that's when they take umbrage. And the terminology one of them used, 'that's you on the radar'. Terrible. Absolutely intimidating'.

M12 described adversarial relations between managers and trade union members on the shop floor that he had experienced and his responses seemed similar to situations described by other interviewees such as M10:

'I seen older managers, there's guys that are my age that are dealing with guys that are my son's age. No, sorry, I can't, I can't begin to describe it. It's just, you'd have to see it to believe it. And the way some of them speak to, like you wouldn't speak to your own son like that. Or your own daughter like that. I think their management skills are non-existent. The way they speak to people. They bully young, younger guys'.

Another interviewee, M13, suggested that some managers were 'very disliked' and explained that 'there's one or two that are very, very bad'. The idea that there were 'bad' managers corroborated with responses from a shop steward, M2. However, M2's responses indicated that while XYZ might have had some bad managers, the company as a whole was experiencing financial difficulties:

'Sometimes a manager is not fair, but that's not the company. They coulda laid us off, but they haven't. We've had pay raises when they coulda jumped on the bandwagon said you know, we can't afford to pay this year, you're not getting any of your three percent or two and a half or your four percent. They coulda said well we're not paying your healthcare scheme because we got no money'.

Interviewees seemed to share perceptions that the reason why the trade union had failed to protect its members from managers was because it had grown weak. Even more, interviewees seemed to attribute a large part of their perceptions of weakness to a common topic that emerged in responses. Specifically, that their trade union worked with the management at XYZ and agreed with its decisions as opposed to influencing management's decisions on behalf of its members. The following responses from M15 and M8 are used here as examples to help highlight this:

'I just think that management make their decisions before anything, actually. Before the union even speak to them'. (M15)

'Most of the employees think that the union are in cahoots with management, rather than in cahoots with the workforce. Cuz when the management team wants something to change...then it seems to be that the union push for that to happen...whether it's good for us or bad for us...I feel the union's quite weak...as for fighting management...So the trade union was destroyed, probably about twenty years ago, when we went on strike for better pay and conditions'. (M8)

Statements such as those from M8 also helped to show that interviewees' discontent was likely embedded within a process in which the trade union had lost power over time. Similar kinds of statements and responses seemed to suggest that a process of decreasing power for the trade union at XYZ existed prior to 2015. While other manufacturers in the city had closed, however, XYZ had stayed open. Yet, as the following responses from M21 help to show, changes in the wider political landscape that had negatively impacted on trade unions in the UK dated back to Margaret Thatcher. These changes, M21's responses suggest, could be linked to the trade union's lack of influence on management decision-making at XYZ:

'I would say up to the time of Thatcher, put her foot down with the unions, the unions were quite powerful then, when I first started. Now, I don't think they're near as powerful as what they were. Not in the nearest way, any way, shape of form. They tend to agree more with what management are saying'.

Another interviewee described the strike referred to in M8's comments above as a situation in which an outsider ('some union guy') was 'sent' from London to Scotland to get trade union member employees back to work. Responses such as these seem to underscore the history of militant trade unionism and adversarial industrial relations that had once been prevalent in the city, or at least in its manufacturers:

'Because we'd been told lies by some union guy from London. And then we found out maybe six month to seven month later, the actual fact was that the company had threatened to take them to court, and sue, sue the union, half a million pound a day or whatever it was. All the plant was shut. And so, so the union panicked. And they sent this guy in, to bullshit basically, to get us back to work'.

Interviewees described different reactions to the tension that seemed to exist between the trade union member employees and the managers at XYZ. On the one hand, statements such as those from M7 suggested that by avoiding confrontations with management at XYZ, she felt less dissatisfaction with her job: 'I don't really bother with...I just come in and do my job, I've never had a run-in with them, I've never had to deal with them, in terms of disciplinary or time off'. On the other hand, at least one interviewee described having had a physical altercation in an office with a manager from another of XYZ's sites in Ireland, for which he gave no indication of having been disciplined. Responses from a third interviewee suggested that in one department, production-line trade union members had slowed down a production line in retaliation to a manager that they did not like.

Some of the insights from this research seemed counterintuitive, as interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with the trade union's having kept the factory open, as the following comments from M19 show:

'I think times have changed for the union. I think it's a lot harder now for them to negotiate things. When they had a bit more power, but everything's done to, sort a, save your job sort a thing. You know, the job situation being so tight and, what would you say, like. There isn't many jobs in (city anonymized) that you can go to. And you always get this thing that they've kept us in the job sort a thing. And it's like a record they sort a keep us in. We've been able to keep your job'. (M19)

However, when shown in the light of the insights revealed in this paper thus far, it seems that responses such as M19's included accurate perceptions that the trade union's part in keeping XYZ open was more of a temporary fix within a wider context of long-term job insecurity.

The last responses included in this section are from the senior shop steward, M1. He described competitive pressures in XYZ's industry that were having an impact on its operations. It seemed that while the trade union had perhaps lost the power to influence decisions made by management at XYZ, it was also the case that XYZ's parent company was losing power to its competitors in the form of market share. His statements are especially important to consider, given that the European Union identifies the main input in XYZ's industry as a critical resource that is mainly produced by, and imported to the EU from, Asian countries:

'In this difficult climate, have all these changes. The world's changing very rapidly. Europe, you know yourself from the USA, and Asia, is up and coming place now for manufacturing. So it's very difficult, I would have to say, but we are, we keep punching above our weight to keep XYZ in (city named). Not at any cost, we still demand that we have good wages and conditions. But we do accept we have to do some things that in the past we wouldn't have liked to do, but like everywhere else, we need to keep jobs'.

The main insights to emerge in this study suggest that trade union members may experience job dissatisfaction when their expectations of protection from trade union membership are not met. These insights are underscored by a process of decreased union power that is associated with a loss of influence over decisions made by management. The depth of dissatisfaction in the present study was perhaps evidenced by the idea that the trade union's having kept the factory open was not enough, in and of itself, to satisfy interviewees. Rather, insights from the present study suggest that dissatisfaction likely developed over time and was, at least in part, due to changes across the UK that included a decline in manufacturers, job losses, and the weakening of trade unions in general. Given that interviewees seemed to share frustrations over an uncertain future for their city that was, and could be, corroborated to real events, short-term job security might not have been enough to assuage their feelings of uncertainty about their future. This seems all the more likely, when shown in the light of what we now know about XYZ's impending closure in 2020.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The main insights to emerge from the present study included topics that have strong associations with the ideology, purpose, and function of trade unions. However, while these insights contribute towards understanding links between trade union members perceptions, expectations, and job dissatisfaction, they could not capture the processes that led to XYZ's parent company's decision to close the factory. Therefore, a potential limitation of this research must be acknowledged, as there is no way of knowing from the field work conducted at XYZ in 2015 if its parent company was in the process of deciding the fate of the factory at that time. Yet, the responses of trade union member interviewees do seem to make up for that potential weakness in that they tell us much about how human beings experience processes of change, form negative perceptions, and integrate contextual factors into feelings of job dissatisfaction. Despite their factory having remained open, the perceptions of trade union member interviewees in this research captured conditions in their environment which indicated that all was still not well. Instead of sharing perceptions of satisfaction from what could have been perceived as job security, they generally leaned towards sharing a strong awareness that the increasing powerlessness of their trade union could lead to more job losses in their city.

The responses of interviewees also related experiences and perceptions of weak trade unionism that was unable to influence decisions made by management, and to protect trade union members from management. This paper offers insights from case study analysis to debates within the field of industrial relations on effective forms of participation, as weaker forms of trade unionism may not suffice in providing trade union

members with the protection they seek from management(s) in their respective organizations. Even more, this research helps to show that managers of organizations may not be safe themselves, as organizations must undoubtedly contend with uncertainties in their external environments that could be related to competition within industries or major events such as Brexit. Indeed, the parent company in this project reportedly closed one of its factories in Europe within the last decade whilst at present, companies are exiting the UK following its decision to Brexit. It is therefore important to acknowledge that power structures may be changing at the micro and macro levels, given that industry changes are, in fact, taking place. Much remains to be understood on how changes such as those just described will impact on trade union member employees, the trade union movement, and organizations in the UK. Researchers from across disciplines will likely find many topics to explore in the wake of Brexit, given the uncertainty surrounding the event and its impact on employees. The author of this work recommends that future work include the perspectives of managers to understand more about competitive pressures and changes in power structures that could filter down to trade union member employees.

Although a limitation of qualitative analyses is that it is subject to multiple interpretations, this is overcome by the value offered by the data in the present study. This data may be some of the last, if not the last, data collected directly from trade union member employees at a manufacturer in Scotland. Future research should endeavour to understand how displaced employees, trade union members and non-union members alike, experience changes in wider economic structures. Clearly, Brexit offers a prime opportunity for researchers to do so. This work also suggests that while there is no way to link its data to Brexit, a general climate of uncertainty most likely existed in the UK that was not created at a single point in time. Rather, it is more likely that trade union member interviewees in the present work had perceptions that changes were taking place around them before the Brexit vote occurred in June of 2016. The present research therefore offers insights into the development of those perceptions to scale, as responses from interviewees referenced events and situations at the micro and macro level that occurred at different points in time. Yet, given the phenomenon studied in this work, job satisfaction was not treated in its fullness, so that future researchers could endeavour to gather insights to scale as these relate to more positive aspects of the employment relationship, such as job satisfaction. Furthermore, job satisfaction cannot be studied without a context, and this work includes but one manufacturer in Scotland. There are clearly many organizations available for researchers to conduct explorations into the phenomenon which could aid in understanding participation and job satisfaction, at the very least.

It is also important to acknowledge that this research is biased towards reporting the insights gained in interviews that were related to trade union members' job dissatisfaction at a single case study organization. This paper does not include the many aspects of their jobs that they described as satisfying. Nor does it capture the smiles, laughter, humor, or vibrant personalities of the individuals who participated in this research. In fairness to those who contributed their valuable insights as well as time to the present study, the content of this paper should not be construed as a representation of the individuals who participated in the process of its creation.

Although the path forward remains unclear, the potential effects that Brexit could have on the future of trade union membership in the UK are worth consideration. As this paper has indicated, trade union membership and the manufacturing industry in which it was once strong were in states of decline before the Brexit vote. Given that powerful trade unionism was once associated with manufacturing organizations, it is no wonder that trade unions in the UK shifted their focus to recruiting non-traditional trade union members, or workers from more diverse backgrounds and non-manufacturing organizations. The potential for that shift to foster trade union member solidarity is questionable, however, given that diversity is at odds with the idea of a unified social identity. Trade unions in the UK, moreover, have not been able to halt the decline in the services industries that is largely the result of globalization. The Brexit vote has therefore added a new dimension to an already dire set of circumstances for trade unions in the UK, as even more manufacturing and services organizations are exiting. By and large, these companies are citing Brexit as

the reason for that exit, which suggests that many organizations perceive the UK as a high-risk environment. None of this bodes well for trade unionism in the UK, as it does not suggest that any single industry or sector will have an especially strong workforce from which to recruit new members. Furthermore, the loss of industries from the UK suggests that managements and trade unions may each become weak as changes in the economic environment threaten the stability of organizations.

It could very well be that UK trade unions will have to recruit new members internationally as a matter of necessity, rather than of strategy. While some trade unions have international membership, it remains to be seen how the potential loss of power in the UK impacts on that membership. For example, the loss of power by trade unions in the UK could potentially serve as a signal that trade unionism is weak at the global level, and countries that are less favorable to trade unionism may then act on the opportunity to halt trade union activity altogether. Regardless of how speculative any discussion of trade union survival in the UK post-Brexit may be, it is clear that trade unions will have many obstacles to overcome in the UK, so that the outlook of their survival seems bleak.

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BIOGRAPHY

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