

## Chapter One: Statement of the Problem

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the number of workers who were union members continued to decline in 1997. Union members accounted for only 14.1 percent of wage and salary employment in 1997 and this union membership rate has been steadily falling from a rate of 20.1 percent in 1983, the first year comparable data are available. At the same time, however, union members had a reported median weekly earning of \$640 while those not represented by a union had a \$478 median weekly earning (BLS 1997). Faced with this vast difference in weekly earnings, why aren't United States workers expressing a greater desire to organize collectively for better pay and working conditions?

According to Fantasia (1988), the lack of collective bargaining strength in U.S. workers is based on a tradition of tight control by management and owners--a concerted effort, both politically and organizationally, to weaken or break worker solidarity. Is top-down structural control the appropriate theory or could the answer lie with a unique U.S. worker attitude? By comparing the responses of workers in the U.S. to their counterparts in the Netherlands, this paper will attempt to determine if there is an attitude difference between the two populations. The Netherlands was chosen as the comparison group because of its more collective orientation (DiPrete et al. 1997) while still sharing a generally similar work culture to the U.S.

Specifically, I will be examining the relationship between country of employment (independent variable) and attitudes toward unions, work satisfaction, and collective orientation (dependent variable).

## Chapter Two: Review of Previous Literature

In examining the relationship between country of employment (independent variable) with attitudes toward unions, work satisfaction, and collective orientations (dependent variable) as an explanation for a lack of unionization in the U.S. major themes of conflict and a call for structural change emerge from the previous literature. Perhaps the most prevalent is that of conflict--specifically, management versus workers.

The Marxist approach defines Fantasia's (1988) opinion of why unions are not more prevalent in the United States. His is mainly a work of case studies showing how the management structure can defeat any union activity. Furthermore his approach is chronographic, consisting of participant observations, oral histories through open-ended interviews, and archival research. Of particular interest is his reasoning for not using survey research. Fantasia "abandons survey research as essentially inappropriate to a dynamic approach to working-class consciousness" (p. 247). While he does acknowledge problems with this "on the ground" method, stating that since it takes place in a conflictual context, the researcher is directly confronted with the question of partisanship (p. 249); he also felt this method allowed him greater access to the union inner core. Specifically, one wonders if Fantasia has gone too far in his assistance of a

union (p. 251). While this research does open the question of attitudes toward management and authority, it begs a more unbiased approach.

Other literature takes a more statistical and social psychological approach towards explaining unionism in the a U.S. Fiorito, Stepina, and Bozeman (1996) contend that the variables influencing pro-union intentions fall into the general categories of beliefs about...

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