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Vickie Coleman Gallagher
Florida State University

Jack Firorito
Florida State University

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Generational Differences in Attitudes About Unions: A Segmented Dispositional Marketing Approach

Vickie Coleman Gallagher and Jack Fiorito

Labor union membership as a percentage of the U.S. workforce continues to decline, down to 12.4 percent in 2004 compared to 12.9 percent in 2003. This downward trend is most notable when compared to 1983 data (the first year that comparable data are available), at which time membership stood at 20.1 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005). As noted by

Vickie Coleman Gallagher is a Ph.D. student at Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306.

Jack Fiorito, Ph.D., is the J. Frank Dame Professor of Management, College of Business, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306.

Recipient, Best Paper Award, 26th Annual Southern Industrial Relations and Human Resource Conference (SIRHRC), Savannah, GA 31401.

Bernstein (2004), labor leaders such as Andy Stern believe that a top-to-bottom overhaul of the AFL-CIO is necessary to address this steady decline. Stern and his colleagues in the New Unity Partnership, a small group of influential unions, believe that constitutional and top leadership changes are needed in the AFL-CIO. They call for consolidation of the AFL-CIO's 60 unions to 15 or 20, in order to increase clout and lift wages; however, while a detailed roadmap of their plan is beyond the scope of this article, and while they believe a "full and vigorous debate" is necessary, it appears their preliminary suggestions are tactical rather than strategic.

Strategic marketers would likely argue that to attract new members and increase membership, unions need to develop messages and campaigns that tap the hearts and minds of their audiences, moving beyond the tactical messages of policy and procedures. As Ries and Trout

(1986: 5) argued, "The basic approach of positioning is not to create something new and different, but to manipulate what's already up there in the mind, to retie the connections that already exist." Marketers speak in terms of values and emotional benefits that can be communicated directly to the particular niche of interest. Further, Meyers (1996) explains that segmentation is based upon the proposition that markets are not monolithic. Sub-markets exist with individuals with relatively homogeneous needs and wants, but they respond in unique ways to particular stimuli. Lifestyle research, also called psychographics, includes understanding consumers, beyond their basic demographics or benefits desired, by linking the message to an understanding of their activities, interests, opinions, personality, and values (Meyers, 1996). Although the marketing literature naturally focuses on consumers, labor unions are

clearly organized around “producer interests,” i.e., the individual as a worker rather than as a consumer (Jarley & Fiorito, 1990; Perlman, 1928). Thus, in melding a segmented marketing approach and a labor relations perspective on worker support for unions, this paper adopts concepts from marketing but adapts these concepts to a *producer* (worker) rather than consumer perspective.

A similar adaptation of a market segments concept is supported by Flood, Turner, and Willman’s (2000: 108) work, who noted,

a key feature in understanding union participation is the segmented nature of members’ participation in union-related activities. The bulk of empirical investigations of union participation tend to treat the union membership in general rather than specific categorical terms.

Despite his clear success in winning over service workers (Bai, 2005), the tactic suggested by Stern, of merging smaller unions into larger units, is moving labor from niche organizations with separate identities to larger “melting pots” of members. While this may benefit bargaining power, the loss in identity may outweigh the benefits. Marketers have

realized that individual differences in attitudes and emotions can be powerful mechanisms to tap and leverage one’s message, and that mass marketing may not always fit one’s strategic marketing plan. As an observed analogy, the U.S. may no longer be perceived as a melting pot, but a salad with unique, but complementary, ingredients.

The purpose of this research is to analyze attitudes about union representation from a segmented marketing perspective. Specifically, it uses marketing concepts that tap into the generational differences between age cohorts—*Matures* (born between 1909 and 1945), *Baby Boomers* (born between 1946 and 1964), and *Generation X* (born after 1964)—each purported to require unique marketing strategies based upon their cohort (Moschis, 2003). These differences are based upon values, preferences, and behaviors unique to each generation, based primarily on individuals’ formative experiences shared as a generation (Smith & Clurman, 1997). This research examines intentions to vote for a union, including analysis of differences between the above three cohorts, finishing with recommendations for future targeted marketing efforts.

Specifically, this research addresses the call for a more segmented view of union phenomena (Flood, Turner, & Willman, 2000) and

contributes to the literature by bringing a pragmatic, marketing-oriented perspective to a body of labor relations literature that appears to be lacking such a view. Savvy marketers do not develop or design a product or service and then see who will buy it; they conduct strategic research in order to understand the market’s needs, design a product to meet those needs, and launch a marketing campaign to communicate those values and benefits that connect with the audience. After their message is properly communicated, they must close the deal through conversion. American unions developed as a grass roots movement grounded in producer interests, of course, not as a commercial venture guided by marketing strategy (Perlman, 1928). Yet, many clear parallels between selling products or services to consumers and organizing workers into unions based upon their producer interests exist. Thus, marketing concepts may shed new light on an old, but important, question: Why do workers support or fail to support unions?

In examining another aspect of this same question, Deshpande and Fiorito (1989) found that roughly three-fourths of non-union employees view unions as effective in improving wages and working conditions, but only about one-third would vote for unionization. Why is this the case? Only a deeper

understanding of values and attitudes can provide an explanation for this apparent disconnect between beliefs and behavioral intentions.

The theoretical underpinnings of generational marketing concepts provides a lens for examining data from the Worker Representation and Participation Survey (WRPS), a nationally representative sample of 2,408 employed adults (interviewed by telephone in 1994). In addition to drawing on marketing literature, this paper draws from organizational development and human resources (HR) theories. The "interactionist" perspective provides the foundation for this article's argument that individual differences have an incremental effect on attitudes (and subsequently perceptions about unions), above and beyond the situation (e.g., HR policies) of a given organization. Finally, this article overlays theories about union joining and membership to find a common understanding between marketing, organizational behavior, and labor relations.

Theory and Hypotheses

Interactionist Perspective

As Murtha, Kanfer, and Ackerman (1996) explain, trait theorists have historically argued that dispositions affect behaviors, responses, and intentions across multiple

situations. On the other hand, situationalists argue that one's environment drives behaviors; however, Murtha et al. (1996), following in the footsteps of others such as Schneider (1983), have shown that it is indeed the interplay of these two that affect outcomes. Hence, this research explores the incremental effect of one's values or disposition (generational cohorts as a proxy) above and beyond the situation (represented by HR practices).

Theories of Unionism

A review of the literature (Fiorito, Gallagher, & Greer, 1986) highlights the numerous methodological and disciplinary perspectives on the determinants of unionism. Independent variables included demographics, worker orientation, job or work context, job content, job dissatisfaction, union beliefs and characteristics, campaign conduct, and macro influences. While many of the same variables are important to the current study, this paper proposes a unique arrangement and perspective not yet studied by labor relations scholars. Furthermore, as noted by Fiorito et al. (1986), findings with regard to the age/unionism relationship have shown conflicting results.

Freeman and Medoff (1984) and others have noted that job dissatisfaction is a

powerful predictor of unionism. Therefore, this research was designed to investigate this most basic relationship—that job dissatisfaction is positively related to likelihood to vote for a union.

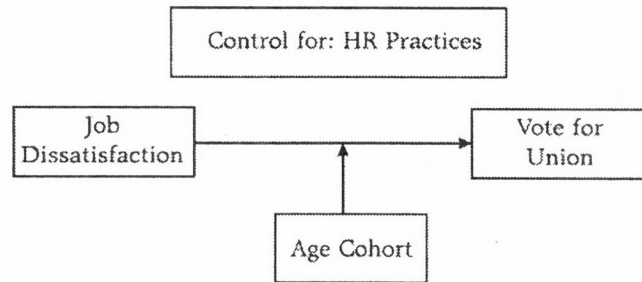
Hypothesis 1:

Job dissatisfaction is positively related to likelihood to vote for a union.

Beyond this main effect, however, this research is also designed to explore differences by generational cohorts, as illustrated in Figure 1.

As Fiorito (2001) reported, HR management practices, such as teams, open-door policies, and profit sharing, reduce unionism and serve as a substitute in many instances. That is, positive employer practices can reduce worker dissatisfaction (which is often a genesis for unions). Hence, the question is what role do generational differences have in explaining attitudes about unions, beyond the situation (i.e., HR practices)? Again, taking an interactionist perspective, this article proposes that disposition adds incremental variance to attitudes about unions, beyond the situation (HR practices), and hence offers added explanatory power. For each generational cohort, this paper offers predictions on voting intentions—intentions that can be explained, in part,

Figure 1
Generational Differences in Attitudes About Unions



by dispositional differences caused by age cohort and associated shared life experiences.

Generational Differences

As previously mentioned, generational marketers have identified three age cohorts—Matures, Baby Boomers, and Generation X. These generations are “linked through the shared life experiences of their formative years—things like pop culture, economic conditions, world events, natural disasters, heroes, villains, politics, and technology” (Smith & Clurman, 1997), creating bonds that allow segmentation of these groups into cohorts for marketing purposes. Smith and Clurman (1997) acknowledge that one cannot ignore life stage—almost everyone comes of age, gets a driver’s license, starts a family, and faces retirement; however, the generation one belongs to is a significant part of identity. While scholars have indeed explored age differences in union

membership (Lipset & Katchanovski, 2001), research has focused on age as a continuum as opposed to a distinct segment with unique views or dispositions due to generational experiences. Therefore, this research explores the following.

Hypothesis 2:

Age cohort moderates the relationship between job dissatisfaction and intentions to vote for a union.

Matures. Matures have a sense of cohesion rooted in their shared experiences of the Depression, the New Deal, World War II, and the GI Bill (Smith & Clurman, 1997). They have traditional values, such as discipline, self-sacrifice, hard work, conformity, and obedience to authority. But work is perceived as separate from leisure due to strong family values. During this cohort’s formative years and entry into the workplace, private sector union membership density grew from approximately 12

percent in 1929 to its peak of just over 35 percent in the mid 1950’s (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005).

Therefore, this cohort is likely to be more sensitive to injustice in the workplace when work infringes on their personal time. In addition, their familiarity with the benefits of unions will increase their likelihood to support a union as dissatisfaction rises. Hence, among the Mature age cohort, this article proposes the following with regard to union attitudes.

Hypothesis 2a:

Age cohort moderates the relationship between job dissatisfaction and intentions to vote for a union, such that for a given level of dissatisfaction, the Mature cohort will be more likely to vote for a union than comparable Boomers but less likely to vote for a union than comparable Generation X’ers.

Baby Boomers. For Baby Boomers, their shared experiences are the 1960’s

and some marketers have referred to them as “self-absorbed” rule breakers (Higgins, 1998). Their shared identity includes attitudes about war, love, and acid trips (Smith & Clurman, 1997).

This idealistic cohort, however, evolved into one that bragged about long hours at work, with a mentality of “no pain, no gain” (Smith & Clurman, 1997: p. 210), with a strong belief that they are in control of their own destinies. Obviously, an individualistic (Morten, 1996) perspective does not necessarily bode well for unions. In fact, as Smith and Clurman explain, “commitment to company or union...yielded to a commitment to the self” (1997: p. 209). This generation-based analysis blends easily with previous analyses of union growth and decline that portray the 1935-55 era of American union ascendance as a case of exceptionalism with subsequent union decline reflecting a return to more traditional individualistic values (e.g., Lipset, 1995).

Furthermore, Boomers were born during the era in which private sector union density began to decline (Lipset & Katchanovski, 2001); hence, while job dissatisfaction will lead to likelihood to vote for a union, in general, Boomers will be less inclined to support unions compared to Matures and Generation X’ers. Specifically,

Hypothesis 2b:

Age cohort moderates the relationship between job dissatisfaction and intentions to vote for a union, such that for a given level of dissatisfaction, the Boomer cohort will be less likely to vote for a union than comparable Matures and Generation X’ers.

Generation X. Finally, Generation X’ers have been described as disappointed with the downsizing of the 1980’s, dismantling of safety nets, coupled with social and interpersonal insecurities (Stoneman, 1998). They grew up in an era of abrupt realities, including holes in the ozone layer, an AIDS epidemic, drugs, the Iran hostage crisis, long gas lines, stagflation, nuclear threats and nuclear accidents, junk bonds, and corporate scandals (Smith & Clurman, 1997). Yin (2002) highlights that, contrary to some reports that this cohort are job-hoppers, a recent survey found that 47 percent of Generation X’ers would prefer to stay with their employer for the rest of their careers. In addition, X’ers keep life in perspective, like to have fun, yet are willing to work at a boring job as long as they are paid well (Smith & Clurman, 1997). This desire for stability, coupled with sensitivity to their own injustices, has direct implications and untapped opportunities for union

organizers and membership growth campaigns. Yet Generation X’ers are not idealists. They are not as likely to latch on to a cause, posing a delicate balance for communicators attempting to reach this audience. Similarly, while they would prefer stability (perhaps due to the lack of stability in their lives), they will not “wholeheartedly give themselves to companies to the exclusion of everything else” (Smith & Clurman, 1997: 220).

Hence, this research predicts that Generation X’ers’ values are likely to make this cohort most sensitive to injustices or dissatisfaction in the workplace. Specifically,

Hypothesis 2c:

Age cohort moderates the relationship between job dissatisfaction and intentions to vote for a union, such that for a given level of dissatisfaction, the Generation X cohort will be more likely to vote for a union than comparable Boomers and Matures.

Method

Samples and Procedure

The data were derived from the 1994 Worker Participation and Representation Survey (Freeman and Rogers, 1999), a nationally representative sample of 2,408 adults, 18 years of age and older,

working in a private company or non-profit organization in the continental U.S. with 25 or more employees (excluding company owners and their families and upper management). Interviews were conducted from September 15, 1994, through October 13, 1994.

For purposes of this analysis, a total of 21.6 percent of the sample (n = 508) were employed by a company that already had a union; hence, these individuals were excluded. Furthermore, a total of 14.9 percent of the sample (n = 349) were managers and were subsequently not asked key questions about union voting intent; hence, managers were also excluded from the analysis. Therefore, after these exclusions and those deleted due to missing data on key questions, the resulting sample size used in the regression equation was 1,069.

Measures

Vote for a union.

Respondents were asked intentions to vote for a union "if an election were held today." Those who would vote *against the union* were coded 0 and those who would vote *for the union* were coded 1.

Job dissatisfaction. An item used as a proxy for general job dissatisfaction asked respondents how satisfied they were with the influence they had in company decisions that affected their jobs or work lives. The ordinal

measure was on a 1-4 four scale with 1 representing *very satisfied*, 2 representing *somewhat satisfied*, 3 representing *not too satisfied*, and 4 representing *not satisfied at all*.

Generational cohorts.

Based upon the years in which each cohort was born recoding was used to aggregate this ratio data (based upon their ages at the time of the survey in 1994). This aggregation resulted in three nominal values, with a total of 393 Generation X'ers, 566 Boomers, and 177 Matures (n = 1,136 before cases were deleted due to missing values in other key questions). Hence, those under the age of 30 at the time of this study were recoded to 1 (Generation X'ers), those between the ages of 30 and 48 were recoded to 2 (Boomers), and those 49 and over were recoded to 3 (Matures). For regression analyses, dummy variables for Boomers and Generation X'ers were used, with Matures representing the omitted category.

Control Variables

HR practices. Following the work by Fiorito (2001), a total of 12 items were used to measure positive HR practices, serving as a proxy for a key situational control variable. These 12 items were dummy coded to 1 = yes, the employer had such a program, and 0 = no, the employer did not have such a program. Cases with missing data for a

given item were recoded to the mean score for each item.

This 12 item composite scale ($\alpha = .67$) was used as a situational control variable in order to effectively measure the impact age cohort has on voting intentions, above and beyond the situation. Items include yes/no answers to questions relating to whether a respondent's employer had the following: quality circles/teams, an HR department, an open door policy for individuals, grievance procedures, town meetings, an open door policy for groups, an employee committee, profit sharing, goal bonuses, stocks or ESOP, health insurance, and/or paid vacation.

Demographic controls.

Certain segments of the population are more likely to join and vote for unions (Fiorito, 2001). Hence, age, education, race, and gender were used as control variables.

Other controls. Lastly, as proxies for pro-union beliefs and attitudes, political affiliation and prior union experience (e.g., with a previous employer) were used as additional control variables since these have been shown to be related to the likelihood to vote for a union (Fiorito, 2001). Specifically, prior union experience was recoded as 1 = yes and 0 = no; political affiliation was recoded 1 = Republican, 2 = Independent, and 3 = Democratic based upon a higher likelihood to vote for a union.

Data Analyses

Moderated multiple regression analysis was used since it accounts for the contingent relationship brought about by a moderator variable (age cohort). Following the suggestions by Schwab (2005), given that the moderator variable included a three-value nominal variable, each age cohort was set to 1 or 0. As noted earlier, the Mature cohort represented the omitted category.

Step 1 entered six control variables (age, education, race, gender, political affiliation, and prior union experience). The second step entered HR practices, for purposes of controlling for the situation. The third step entered the independent variable of job dissatisfaction. The fourth step entered the main effects of age cohorts (with Matures as the omitted category), and the fifth step entered the interaction term of job satisfaction by age cohorts. The resulting regression equation is

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{age}) + \beta_2 (\text{education}) + \beta_3 (\text{black}) + \beta_4 (\text{female}) + \beta_5 (\text{political affiliation}) + \beta_6 (\text{prior union experience}) + \beta_7 (\text{HR}) + \beta_8 (\text{Job Dissatisfaction}) + \beta_9 (\text{Generation X}) + \beta_{10} (\text{Boomers}) + \beta_{11} (\text{Generation X*Job Dissatf.}) + \beta_{12} (\text{Boomers*Job Dissatf.}) + \text{error} \quad (1)$$

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and intercorrelations for the study variables. The alpha (.67) for the summated scale of HR practices is also shown. As expected, the demographic variables were related to intentions to vote for a union, underscoring the need to control for these variables. Political party affiliation was correlated with intentions to vote for a union ($r = .21$, $p < .01$), but, interestingly, prior union experience was not correlated ($r = .04$, *ns*). As expected, the array of positive HR practices and benefits offered by an organization is negatively correlated with intentions to vote ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$). Lastly, Generation X status and the interaction term (Generation X'ers and Job Dissatisfaction) were positively related to intentions to vote for a union ($r = .10$, $p < .01$ and $r = .15$, $p < .01$ respectively), whereas Boomer status was negatively related to intentions to vote for a union ($r = -.07$, $p < .05$).

Moderated Regression Results

Moderated regression analyses results are shown in Table 2. Strictly speaking, ordinary least squares (OLS)

estimation is inappropriate for a dichotomous dependent variable. Results for logistic versions of the equations in Table 2 were quite comparable to the OLS results, and the latter are shown for ease of interpretation.

The total R^2 for the model was .20 (not shown in Table 2), and it was significant at $p < .01$. The addition of the main effects of Generation X and Boomers together accounted for a small but significant amount of incremental variance beyond the control variables ($\Delta R^2 = .004$, Joint F Test = 2.81, $p < .10$). This result appears to be driven by the Generation X cohort; the main effect (or intercept differential) for Generation X had a significant standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = .16$, $t = 1.68$, $p < .05$, one-tail) in the hypothesized direction. Further analysis of the main effects of Generation X versus Boomers indicated that these cohorts differed in their likelihood to vote for a union ($t = 2.33$, $p < .01$, one tail). These results support the predictions that Generation X'ers are more likely to vote for a union compared to Matures and Boomers.

On the other hand, the interaction effect of cohorts with job dissatisfaction (or slope differentials for job dissatisfaction), as illustrated in Table 2, Step 5, were not

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Vote For Union (1 = yes; 0 = no)	0.38	0.49	--												
Age	35.93	11.92	-0.07*	--											
Education	4.43	1.47	-0.17**	-0.07*	--										
Black (1 = yes; 0 = no)	0.11	0.32	.22**	-0.08**	-0.12**	--									
Female (1 = yes; 0 = no)	.50	0.50	.09**	.10**	-0.03	.00	--								
Political Affiliation (1 = Republican, 2 = Independent, 3 = Democrat)	2.01	0.80	.21**	.08**	-0.08**	.20**	.12**	--							
Prior Union Experience (1 = yes; 0 = no)	0.22	0.42	.04	.22**	-0.02	.00	-.13**	.05	--						
HR Practice Index (12 items)	6.13	2.44	-.26**	.06	.12**	-.06*	-.02	.01	-.05	(<i>R</i> = .67)					
Job Dissatisf. (1-4 scale, 4 = not satisfy, at all)	2.11	0.87	.23**	.01	-0.01	.05	.04	.01	.02	-.25**	--				
Generation X Boomers	.35	0.48	.10**	-.74**	.03	.11**	-.10**	-.07*	-.16**	-.09**	-.06	--			
Generation X * Job Dissatisf.	.50	0.50	-.07*	.18**	.06	-.09**	.02	.02	.07*	.09**	.08**	-.73**	--		
Boomers * Job Dissatisfaction	.72	1.08	.15**	-.67**	.02	.10**	-.08**	-.05	-.14**	-.14**	.18**	.90**	-.66**	--	
Boomers * Job Dissatisfaction	1.08	1.26	.03	.16**	.04	-.04	.08**	.03	.08**	-.01	.43**	-.63**	.87**	-.57**	--

N = 1069

| *p* < .10

* *p* < .05

** *p* < .01

Note: Omitted category is Matures.

Table 2
Results of Hierarchical Moderated Regression Analyses Predicting Intentions to Vote for Union (Standardized b)

Step and Variable	Step 1	Step 2		Step 3		Step 4		Step 5		
	b	R ²	b	DR ²	b	DR ²	b	DR ²	b	DR ²
Step 1: Controls										
Age	-.10**		-.09**		-.09**		.02		.14	
Education	-.14**		-.11**		-.12**		-.12**		-.12**	
Black (1 = yes; 0 = no)	.16**		.15**		.14**		.14**		.14	
Female (1 = yes; 0 = no)	.08**		.07*		.07*		.07*		.07	
Political Affiliation (1 = Rep., 2 = Independent, 3 = Dem.)	.16**		.17**		.17**		.18**		.17	
Prior Union Experience (1 = yes; 0 = no)	.07*	.11**	.05		.05		.05		.04	
Step 2: Situation										
HR Practice Index (12 items)			-.23**	.05**	-.19**		-.18**		-.18**	
Step 3: Job Dissatisfaction										
Job Dissatisfaction (1-4 scale, 4 = not satisfied at all)					.17**	.03**	.18**		.14*	
Step 4: Cohort Main Effects^a										
Generation X							.16		.11	
Boomers							.05	.004	-.02	
Step 5: Cohort Interactions^b										
Generation X * Job Dissatf.									.05	
Boomers * Job Dissatf.									.08	.001
N = 1069										
p < .10 * p < .05** p < .01										
Note: Omitted category is Matures.										
^a Joint F Test = 2.81 (p < .07) ^b Joint F Test = 0.29 (p > .10)										

N = 1069
 | p < .10 * p < .05** p < .01
 Note: Omitted category is Matures.
^a Joint F Test = 2.81 (p < .07)^b Joint F Test = 0.29 (p > .10)

significant ($DR^2 = .001$, joint $F = 0.29$, *ns*). In fact, an overall joint F-test for the combined effects of main and interaction effects was not significant ($F = 1.55$, *ns*). The t-test for the Generation X main effect difference relative to Matures yielded a nonsignificant result ($t = .80$, *ns*) in contrast to the Step 4 equation; however, the t-test for the Generation X main effect relative to Boomers was significant ($t = 1.45$, $p < .10$, one tail), as in the Step 4 equation.

Figure 2 illustrates the unstandardized intercept terms and slopes for each of the age cohorts, again illustrating the uniqueness of Generation X attitudes about voting for a union relative to the other two cohorts; however, the slope differentials were not

significantly different from zero, as previously mentioned (i.e., the null that each generation responds similarly to job dissatisfaction could not be rejected).

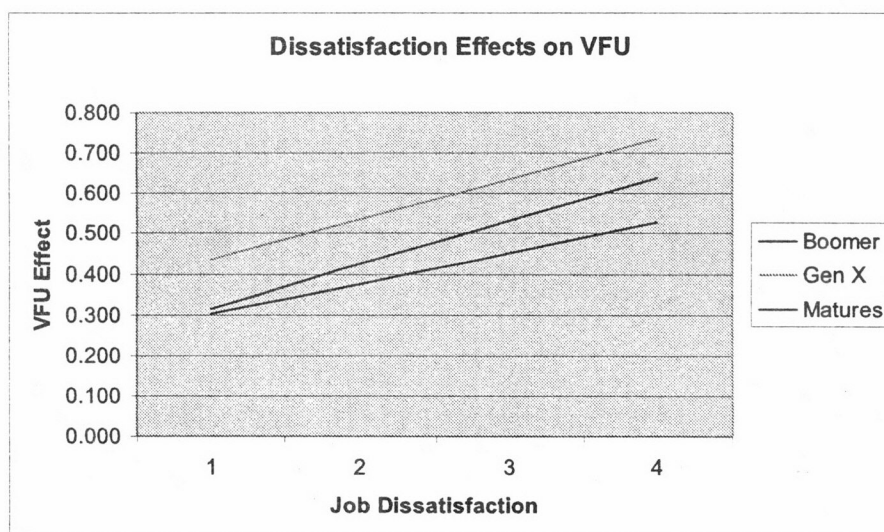
Discussion

Research continues to support the proposition that job dissatisfaction is a powerful predictor of union support. That is, Hypothesis 1 was supported through this research. In addition, based upon the simple statistics as well as the cohort main effects in the multivariate models, Generation X'ers are somewhat more likely to support a union (compared to Matures and Boomers), partially supporting Hypothesis 2c. Generation X'ers may be more likely to support unions due to their disappointment with the

partial dismantling of societal safety nets during the 1980's (Stoneman, 1998).

Furthermore, Generation X'ers believe it is important to balance work and leisure (Smith & Clurman, 1997), posing a marketing opportunity for union organizers who can tap into potential feelings of workplace disenfranchisement. On the other hand, a challenge for union organizers, and perhaps an explanation for the lack of stronger support for Hypothesis 2c beyond the main effect, is the fact that Generation X'ers are focused on "getting by." They are not inclined to get "caught up in bigger causes and movements" (Smith & Clurman, 1997: 100) that are driven by ideology. Again, basic survival and work/life balance are

Figure 2
Job Satisfaction Effects on Vote for Union (VFU)



more important to this age cohort. Generation X'ers saw neither the "stability that the Matures enjoyed nor the opportunities Boomers had (enjoyed)...realizing they will have to train and retrain themselves to stay on top of opportunities" (Smith & Clurman, 1997: 220-221).

As illustrated by the complexities of the Generation X mindset, union organizers must carefully consider their current messages and tailor their efforts to a deeper understanding of this complex cohort. Perhaps services such as training and development and a message of stability could resonate with this segment, focusing not only on message but also on new models of unionism that would meet not only their desires for stability, but also their desires for excitement and diversity.

Hypothesis 2a and 2b were not supported. Specifically, Matures are not more inclined to vote for a union compared to Baby Boomers. Based upon the simple bivariate statistics, a negative relationship was observed between Boomers and the likelihood to vote for a union, with a statistically significant (yet small) negative correlation ($r = -.07, p < .05$). This result did not hold up in the multivariate analysis; however, and, thus, on the whole, evidence of differences in union support between Boomers and Matures was weak. As discussed earlier, Boomers are individualistic

and believe that they control their own destinies (Smith & Clurman, 1997). Yet one issue that was less relevant at the time of this survey in 1994, but perhaps more relevant to Boomers today, is the issue of age discrimination. A recent article about marketing to older adults notes that the aging population is affecting governments, institutions, individuals, and, ultimately, the workplace (Moschis, 2003). As Moschis notes, companies trade off between hiring younger workers who need more costly training versus the costs of keeping older workers with higher salaries and healthcare costs.

A deeper understanding of the Boomer cohort, particularly as they approach the latter parts of their careers, can also allow union organizers to identify a unique message to draw their attention to the benefits of unionism; however, communicators of the union's message must recognize the obstacles of the Boomer mindset—individualism, commitment to career, and entitlement (Smith & Clurman, 1997).

Matures may not offer a viable opportunity for unions at this juncture. Born between 1909 and 1945, even the latter part of this segment is now rapidly disappearing from the workplace; however, it is interesting to reflect on the evolution of this cohort's attitudes about unionism. While they were born during an era of union growth, they

also shared the experience of the declining union influence with Boomers. While purely speculation, the sometimes negative press of union corruption may have remained with this cohort, causing a tainted view of the benefits of unions as members of this segment established themselves in their careers. In addition, one could speculate that, as member of this cohort neared the ends of their careers, affiliation with a union became a riskier proposition.

One recent study that can perhaps shed some light on this study's findings is by Bryson, Gomes, Gunderson, and Meltz (2005) who found that under-representation of younger workers was more a product of supply side constraints (and an unsatisfied desire for representation) rather than a lack of support for union representation. Given the findings of the present study, similar propositions could be made. While attitudes with regard to intentions to vote for a union may not be sharply different by segment, younger cohorts may simply represent an untapped potential market that warrants further understanding and targeted marketing efforts.

Strengths and Limitations

A significant strength of this research is the large nationally representative sample; however, it is a

convenience sample not specifically designed for these research propositions. One variable in particular may have posed a problem for the results—job dissatisfaction. When considering interaction effects of both situation and disposition, it would be helpful to measure both intrinsic as well as extrinsic job dissatisfaction. For example, some researchers measure intrinsic work dissatisfaction (as a result of one's job) in addition to life or family dissatisfaction (as a result of one's job) (e.g., Judge, Bono, Erez, & Locke, 2005).

Furthermore, unionism is measured as voting *intentions*, not actual behavior, which is a proxy with limitations (Fiorito et al., 1986). In addition the union attitude proxies, union experience and political party affiliation, while somewhat successful in the models, are far less desirable measures than subjects' views of union instrumentality and union generally. Future research should consider additional control variables, as used by Fiorito, Stepina and Bozeman (1996), such as region (south versus other), occupation (professional versus other), and attitudes about one's employer. It may be particularly notable, however, that this article assessed generational effects while controlling for age per se. Thus, the cohort effects suggested are more clearly interpretable as true cohort

effects than if age were not controlled. Lastly, this study is subject to common method variance since opinions were gathered during one wave of data collection. Alternative designs should consider separate data collection time-periods using multiple survey formats for the independent and dependent variables.

Directions for Future Research

Generational cohorts move through time together (Smith & Clurman, 1997), taking with them their own unique identities from their era, but simultaneously sharing the life experiences that touch all. A profound life experience that altered the nation, and the world, are the attacks on September 11, 2001. The "Yankelovich Report" and its findings as reported by Smith and Clurman in 1997 do not take into account the myriad of changes that have taken place since the mid-1990's. Hence, future research into attitudes about unions and job satisfaction, with the backdrop of disposition or generational marketing, needs to consider the ramifications of new developments in shared life experiences. These complexities are not easily understood through quantitative paper and pencil self-administered surveys. In-depth, qualitative research is needed in order to re-tool the profiles of these cohorts, as

well as emerging cohorts, such as the Twixters (born 1977 to 1981) or Generation Y (born 1980 to 1990). For example, a recent article in *Time* magazine (Grossman, 2005) discussed the profile of the Twixters—full-grown men and women between the ages of 24 and 28, still living with their parents, jumping from job to job, and going out three nights a week. The implications for employers as well as unions have yet to be seen. Similarly, Generation Y is purported to have a sense of entitlement to a job and a lack of authority, which could confound even perceptive marketers (Anonymous, 2004).

Furthermore, as new survey data become available, new research opportunities arise. These surveys offer opportunities to explore similar hypotheses with more recent data. Further analysis should be conducted analyzing both intentions to vote for a union, as well as other proxies for one's potential to be sympathetic to a union. Items from the 1994 survey include questions about alternative employee organizations or forms of participation, such as preferences for workplace intervention by an arbitrator, a fully or jointly employee-run organization, etc. These nuances may point to an affinity for "union-esque" types of organizational structures without the negative stigma that some workers attach to unions.

Conclusion

A segmented marketing approach to attracting new union members is mildly encouraged by this research. Generational cohorts provide untapped opportunities for applying niche marketing concepts to studies of union support among workers. The messages must be tailored to the cohort of interest, delving deeper into the potential conflicting messages that these cohorts often present. Generation X'ers are pragmatic, yet they value leisure. They can be loyal, but also feel disenfranchised. Tapping into the appropriate emotions in a novel and targeted manner may hold considerable potential for union organizing. From the "other side of the fence," so to speak, managers need to appreciate possible generational differences within the workforce in order to design optimal human resource policies and practices.

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