

## Third-Party Attitudes and Strain Reactions to the Threat of a Labor Strike

Arla L. Day, Veronica Stinson, Victor M. Catano, and E. Kevin Kelloway  
Saint Mary's University

The authors examined how dispute-related stressors predicted strain experienced by third parties ( $N = 270$ ) and their perceptions of a potential strike by part-time faculty. Immediately preceding a strike deadline, the authors surveyed students on their support for the union, perceived fairness, perceived effects of the impending strike, and perceived control. The authors also measured perceptions regarding information about the strike and psychological strain. Students facing increased disruptions because of the potential strike had decreased perceived control over their own tasks and over the university policies, and they experienced higher strain. Having more information about the dispute was associated with increased perceived task and policy control but was unassociated with strain. Both task and policy control moderated the relationship between disruptions and strain.

Few studies have examined the effects of strike threats on the attitudes of individuals who may be affected by a strike. Unions now represent more than 70% of employees in the Canadian public service sector, such as health and education (Statistics Canada, 2004); consequently, clients and students are increasingly affected by the withdrawal of services during a labor dispute, which can lead to increased stress and strain of these third parties. The sensitivity of events surrounding negotiations makes it difficult to examine the views of management and union members during a dispute (Barling, Fullager, Kelloway, & McKelvie, 1992). In public service sector disputes, the support of third parties may influence the outcome of the dispute through pressure exerted by third parties on organizations and unions to resolve the dispute.

Although researchers have begun to recognize that third parties, such as customers, make judgments about organizational actions (e.g., Skarlicki, Ellard, & Kelln, 1998; LeBlanc, Dupré, & Kelloway, 2005), there are at least three reasons why the reactions of

third parties may play a critical role in public sector strikes. First, unions and employers involved in strike action frequently see a strike as a battle for public support (e.g., Canadian Association of University Teachers, 1996) and campaign to present their side of the issues to members of the public. There is a trend for public sector unions to engage in corporate campaigns in which the issues surrounding a labor dispute are framed in terms of an appeal to the general good (e.g., arguing that a teachers' strike is a fight to preserve the quality of education; Perry, 1987).

Second, third-party support may be critical to determining the outcome of strike action. For example, Leung, Chiu, and Au (1993) suggested that during a public sector strike the union and the employer "will be subject to intense public pressure and may even give in as a result of such pressure" (p. 781). Unions actively work to secure the demonstrable support of third parties, who are asked to engage in other overt signs of support for striking workers (e.g., not cross a picket line; Kelloway, Francis, Catano, & Dupré, 2005).

Finally, research on third parties has typically focused on individuals who are indirectly affected by a strike action but not directly involved. In contrast, members of the public are often directly affected by public sector strike action. Patients may be denied access to health care, residents may be denied municipal services, and students may be denied education. Members of the public are third parties to a public sector strike, but they are not necessarily *neutral* third parties; they have their own interests and reactions to the events surrounding a labor dispute. The reactions of third parties who may be *directly*

---

Arla L. Day, Veronica Stinson, and Victor M. Catano, Department of Psychology; E. Kevin Kelloway, Department of Management, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Preparation of this article was supported by research grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to the third and fourth authors and by research grants from the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation to the first and fourth authors.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Arla Day, Department of Psychology, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 3C3 Canada. E-mail: arla.day@smu.ca

affected by disputes are not well understood and little research has examined the potential effects of disputes on their well-being.

Therefore, in the present study, we examined the reactions of students toward a labor dispute between a university administration and its part-time faculty. We assessed the degree to which justice issues surrounding this dispute affected the students' attitudes toward the dispute and their well-being. We also examined the extent to which perceived control buffered the effect of strike disruptions on strain experienced by students.

### Industrial Relations Stress

The practice of industrial relations involves both conflict and change, both of which are well-documented stressors (Bluen & Barling, 1988). Moreover, role stressors and perceived injustice also may play a role in industrial relations stress (Francis & Kelloway, 2005). In particular, engaging in collective bargaining increases stress for people actively involved in union activities (e.g., for negotiators—Bluen & Jublier-Lurie, 1990—and for shop stewards—Kelloway, Catano, & Carroll, 2000).

Of all aspects of industrial relations practice, the labor union strike is the most visible and has the most far-reaching effects (Bluen, 1994). Although strikes are comparatively rare, the available data suggest that they constitute situations that are stressful (Francis & Kelloway, 2005). For example, striking air-traffic controllers manifested increased psychological ill health, anxiety, and distress during the strike (MacBride, Lancee, & Freeman, 1981). Moreover, these negative effects can persist months after a strike has ended (Barling & Milligan, 1987).

In addition to research showing that the participants in collective bargaining (Bluen & Jublier-Lurie, 1990) and strikes (Barling & Milligan, 1987; MacBride et al., 1981) experience increased strain, there are conceptual and empirical grounds for hypothesizing that third parties may also experience increased stress and strain. Conceptually, third parties such as clients and customers may be adversely affected through the denial of valued services during a strike (Francis & Kelloway, 2005). Third parties may also have to make difficult decisions, such as whether to support strikers by respecting a picket line (e.g., Kelloway et al., 2005).

Several studies support the negative effect of strikes on third parties. In a retrospective survey of students after a strike, undergraduates reported greater disruption to their academic work and more

negative opinions of the university than did graduate students (Amos, Day, & Power, 1993). Students also reported experiencing negative emotions stemming from the strike, but the researchers did not measure anxiety or strain. In a telephone survey during a strike, undergraduate students reported experiencing adverse academic and financial effects from the labor dispute (Grayson, 1999). These studies shed some light on the experience of third parties (students) during a labor dispute, but they provide little information on psychological outcomes.

Because experiencing a strike may be stressful, we extend these results to the current study to consider the effects of a potential strike. Despite the fact that actual strikes occur infrequently (Bluen, 1994), the *threat* of strike action is almost always present in collective bargaining. However, does the threat of a strike act as a stressor on third parties to the dispute? Research on "survivors" of organizational downsizing may offer some suggestions. Although survivors may feel secure about their jobs, they still experience strain or negative physical symptoms (Maurier & Northcott, 2000). Third-party observers to labor disputes may react similarly to downsizing survivors. That is, although third-party observers may be secure in the knowledge that the affected services will remain in place, they may experience strain related to proposed changes that are in dispute (e.g., reducing the number of teachers or nurses), as well as strain related to the general level of uncertainty and ambiguity associated with the threat of disruption to the service and the resultant personal consequences. Therefore, our first hypothesis is as follows:

*Hypothesis 1:* Students who have experienced disruptions from the labor dispute and who anticipate disruptions from a potential strike will report higher strain than students who have experienced few disruptions from the labor dispute and who do not anticipate disruptions.

### Perceived Fairness

The perceived fairness of an industrial dispute also is associated with industrial relations stress (Francis & Kelloway, 2005). Having some control or input into the decision-making process predicts perceptions of procedural fairness (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Procedural fairness refers to perceptions of the appropriateness and fairness of the methods used to arrive at a decision (Greenberg, 1987; 1996; Lind & Tyler, 1988). Moreover, perceptions of the process used in making decisions can influence attitudes re-

garding the outcomes of that decision (Greenberg, 1987; Lind & Tyler, 1988) and may increase organizational citizenship behaviors (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000). Perceived justice may also affect the views of individuals who are only indirectly affected by negative outcomes. Survivors' reactions to organizational downsizing reflect their perceptions of procedural justice during the downsizing (Brockner & Greenberg, 1990; Brockner, Wiesenfeld, & Martin, 1995). The perceived justice of the downsizing also influences third-party observer reactions to downsizing (Catano & Veinotte, 2001; Skarlicki, Ellard, & Kelln, 1998). More specifically, in one of the few studies examining justice and third-party reactions, students who perceived they had been treated fairly and who were less adversely affected by the strike reported less anger (Greenglass, Fiksenbaum, Goldstein, & Desiato, 2002).

Informational justice (i.e., communicating to employees the reasons for certain procedures) can also influence attitudes toward negative outcomes (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). For example, providing an explanation for layoffs (Brockner, DeWitt, Grover, & Reed, 1990; Shapiro, 1991) and providing input into layoff decisions (Davy, Kinicki, Scheck, & Sutton, 1991) tend to increase perceptions of fairness of the layoff. Managerial communications had a positive effect on layoff survivors' attitudes toward the organization (Gopinath & Becker, 2000). Third-party observers felt a layoff was more fair when the victims were described as having received an explanation for the layoff and when the victims were described as having input into the decision-making process (Skarlicki et al., 1998). Students who relied on the Internet for strike information tended to have lower anger (Greenglass et al., 2002). Based on this research, we formulated the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 2:* Students who see the potential strike action as fair will report lower strain reactions.

*Hypothesis 3:* Students who see themselves as receiving timely and accurate information regarding the strike will report fewer strain reactions.

### Perceived Control

Strain is influenced by how individuals cope with potential stressors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Individuals who perceive that they do not have control over their environment and outcomes tend to experi-

ence high strain (Dwyer & Ganster, 1991). If third-party observers feel that they have some control over the process and outcomes of a dispute, as well as control over their personal outcomes (e.g., successful completion of work), they may experience less strain. Just as third parties may view an organizational decision as being more fair when they are provided with information about the decision (e.g., Skarlicki et al., 1998), third parties may also experience less strain if they feel they have received accurate information about the potential stressor (i.e., a potential downsizing or a labor dispute). In addition to these direct effects, it is also possible that perceptions of control may moderate the relationship between the disruption created by the dispute and strain. Related research has indicated that job control moderates the relationship between work stressors (i.e., work load) and job satisfaction and blood pressure (Fox, Dwyer, & Ganster, 1993). Many studies have been conducted on the specific suggestion that control moderates the effects of demands on strain (e.g., Karasek, 1979; Karasek & Theorell, 1990). In general, there is support for the first hypothesis (i.e., the main effects of control on strain) and, at best, mixed and limited support for hypothesized interactions (Pomaki & Maes, 2002). However, no research has examined control as a potential moderator in the stressor-strain relationship for third-party observers of a labor dispute.

Previous research has documented differential effects according to the nature of the control perceptions assessed (e.g., Sutton & Kahn, 1987; Tetrick & LaRocco, 1987). In the current research, therefore, we hypothesize differential effects for two specific types of control: *Task control* refers to individuals' ability to exert control over their own work. Students exert task control when they make decisions relating to the timing or quality of their work. *Policy control* refers to the individual's ability to influence the handling of the dispute between the university and the union (as well as the decisions around the potential strike action). Students exert policy control when they influence union or management decision makers. For example, students can voice their concerns about strike action in the campus media and lobby management and union representatives regarding student issues associated with the strike. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 4:* Control perceptions will be negatively associated with student strain.

Moreover, although we expect control perceptions to moderate the effects of disruptions on strain, we

anticipate differential effects according to the nature of control. Students who believe that they can influence the outcome and handling of the dispute should experience little or no strain as a result of potential disruptions. Both the demand-control model (e.g., Karasek & Theorell, 1990) and Sutton and Kahn's (1987) model of control (see also Tetrick & LaRocco, 1987) propose that control acts as a "buffer." Following this lead, we propose the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 5a:* Policy control will buffer the effects of disruptions on strain. Disruptions will be associated with strain for students with a low level of control but not for students with a high level of control.

With respect to task control, individuals who perceive themselves as having a high degree of task control should report low strain when experiencing low disruptions but report greater strain reactions as a function of disruption. We derive this hypothesis from the notion of personal initiative, which occurs when an individual takes an "active and self-starting approach to work" (Frese, Kring, Soose, & Zempel, 1996, p. 38). Such individuals may be more threatened by the potential disruptions of a labor dispute, in terms of their reduced ability to exert control over their work. The extent of the threat would be greater for those individuals who feel they have more control than it would be for those who do not see themselves as being in control of their work. Therefore, we propose this hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 5b:* Task control will buffer the effects of disruptions on strain. Disruptions will be associated with strain for students with a high level of task control but not for students with low control.

### The Current Study: Background and Context

The current study was conducted during the context of negotiations between a part-time faculty union at a Canadian university and the employer. The parties had been negotiating a new collective agreement with the university, and most of the negotiations were removed from public view. As negotiations moved toward a stalemate, the union increased the flow of information to its members and students outlining their positions. The part-time faculty held a strike vote and gave the university strike notice. In the countdown to the strike, the university community

received much information from the union and the administration about their respective positions but little information about the effects that any strike would have on the community. Complicating matters was the fact that although the full-time faculty members were not in a strike position, many of them indicated that they would walk out in support of their part-time colleagues. Students did not know whether any of their professors would be in a classroom in the event of a strike. As the strike deadline drew near, many professors told their students how they would proceed with respect to their course work during a strike (e.g., final exams), which occasionally conflicted with the official university position. All-night bargaining led to a resolution on the eve of the strike.

North American universities have increased the use of fixed-term faculty contracts in the form of part-time appointments to meet immediate staffing needs without making a commitment to tenure-based contracts. In the United States, the use of part-time faculty increased by 91% from 1976 to 1995, whereas full-time faculty grew by only 27% during the same period (Clery, 1998). Although there is no direct data regarding the number of contingent faculty in Canadian universities, salary data indicate that the number of part-time faculty has increased. From 1992 to 1999, the total salary spent on part-time faculty increased more than \$150 million CDN, whereas salary for full-time faculty remained relatively stable (Carroll, Catano, & Gallagher, 2003). Little research has examined the use of contingent faculty and its effect on students.

Contingent faculty members often feel alienated from the university, their full-time colleagues, and their home department (American Association of University Professors, 1997; Banachowski, 1996; Stolhanske, 1997) and may not have resources comparable to their full-time colleagues (e.g., office, computers). Negative outcomes may develop when contingent faculty perceive that they are not receiving the same rewards as their full-time colleagues for performing the same work (Beard & Edwards, 1995).

Organizational support theory may provide some guidance into the strain that might be experienced by part-time faculty and their students. This theory posits that employees use attributional processes to determine the extent to which an employer values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Jones, Aselage, & Sucharski, 2004). Therefore, the failure of university administrations to provide favorable treatment to part-time faculty should lead to lower levels of support (Eisenberger et al., 2004). Organizational support is linked with de-

creased psychological strain, negative moods, and strain symptoms (Eisenberger et al., 2004).

Designed to understand employer-employee relations, organizational support may be relevant to the study of third-party reactions to strikes. Third parties (i.e., students) may have a close working relationship with faculty and form opinions about the fairness with which part-time faculty are treated. Students may perceive a lack of university support for their part-time instructors, which may become magnified through communications surrounding the labor dispute. Students may empathize with part-time faculty, resulting in increased strain along with the strain that may be attributable to the threat of a strike.

Therefore, there were two primary goals of the current study: (a) to examine the extent to which disruptions from the dispute and justice issues (i.e., perceived fairness, control, and amount of information) were associated with students' strain reactions and (b) to assess whether perceived control moderated the relationship between the dispute stressors and strain.

## Method

### *Participants and Procedure*

During the three days prior to the strike deadline, booths and signs inviting students to participate were set up at several locations across campus (e.g., the coffee shop). Students were asked to complete the surveys and to return them to a secure drop box. Exactly 288 students completed the survey (95 men and 191 women; 2 of unreported gender). Of these students, 60 planned on graduating in the spring convocation. Age of participants ranged from 17 to 53 years ( $M = 21.8$ ;  $SD = 4.8$ ). Most students were aware of the negotiations between the university administration and the part-time faculty and were aware of the impending strike action (2 people did not know and 3 people did not answer this question). These 5 respondents and 13 other respondents with random missing data were deleted from further analyses.

### *Measures*

**Background Information.** Respondents indicated their age, gender, and year in program. To assess the extent to which a strike may affect them, students reported whether they were planning on graduating in the upcoming convocation (which was about 6 weeks away).

**Support for Union.** One item was developed to assess support for union or administration. Using a seven-point Likert-type scale, respondents indicated the extent of support for the union or administration (1 = *I definitely support the administration*; 7 = *I definitely support the union*).

**Disruption and Effects of Strike.** A six-item scale was developed to assess the extent to which the dispute and

strike threat created disruption for the students. Students used a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = *none*; 7 = *a great deal*) to respond to each question (e.g., "How much disruption has this *dispute* caused you?"; "How much impact would a strike have on your final grades?"). The reliability for this scale was high ( $\alpha = .84$ ). We also conducted a principal components analysis to assess the structure of this scale. One component accounting for 55.73% of the variance was extracted. All items loaded highly on this component (ranging from .61 to .81).

**Information.** Respondents completed four questions about their perceptions of the *amount* and *accuracy* of the information they received about the *potential* for a strike and about the possible *outcomes* of such a strike (e.g., "How much information have you received about the potential for a strike?"). Respondents used a seven-point Likert-type scale to respond to these questions (1 = *none/not at all accurate*; 7 = *a lot/extremely accurate*). Internal reliability for this scale was high ( $\alpha = .83$ ). We conducted a principal components analysis to assess the structure of this scale. One component was extracted, accounting for 66.45% of the variance. All items loaded highly on this component (ranging from .78 to .85).

**Perceived Fairness.** Using a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = *definitely no*; 7 = *definitely yes*), students responded to four items, indicating whether they thought the strike was (a) ethical (Leventhal, 1980), (2) justified (derived from Leventhal's accuracy criteria, 1980), (3) legitimate (Johnson, Ford, & Kaufman, 2000; Tyler, 2000), and (4) fair. The internal reliability for this scale was  $\alpha = .82$ . We conducted a principal components analysis to assess the structure of this scale. One component was extracted, accounting for 65.33% of the variance. All items loaded highly on this component (ranging from .68 to .86).

**Perceived Control.** Respondents completed 15 questions based on Dwyer and Ganster's Job Control Scale (1991), which examined their perceived control over various aspects of their work and the outcomes of the labor dispute. Respondents used a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = *none*; 7 = *a great deal*) to respond to questions on two scales: *Task control* was assessed by seven items measuring students' own perceived control over their own work (e.g., "Given this labor dispute between [this university's] part-time faculty and the university administration . . . how much control do you feel you have over the quality of your schoolwork?"). *Policy control* was assessed by eight items measuring students' own perceived control over procedures and policies (e.g., "Given this labor dispute between [this university's] part-time faculty and the university administration . . . how much control do you feel you have over the scheduling of your exams?"). The reliability was adequate for each scale (task control:  $\alpha = .76$ ; policy control:  $\alpha = .82$ ). We conducted a principal components analysis to assess the structure of this scale. Based on the scree plot, either two or three components were evident. Based on theory, we selected two components, which accounted for 45.55% of the variance. All items assessing task control loaded highly on the first component (ranging from .44 to .73), and all items assessing policy control loaded highly on the second component (ranging from .56 to .77), with no complex items.

**Strain.** We used the six items from the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983) to assess the degree to which students experienced psycholog-

ical and physical strain in the past month. Although this scale is labeled as "perceived stress," the scale items more aptly measure psychological strain, and the six items we chose clearly reflect the strain criterion. Using a five-point Likert scale (0 = *never*; 4 = *very often*), students indicated the frequency of feelings they experienced in the past month (e.g., "How often have you felt nervous and stressed?"; "How often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high?";  $\alpha = .83$ ). An exploratory principal components analysis indicated one component, which explained 54.69% of the variance in this scale. All items loaded highly on this component (ranging from .67 to .78).

## Results

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for all study variables are presented in Table 1. Students tended to support the part-time faculty union over the administration ( $M = 5.11, SD = 1.61$ ). Students who were more supportive of the union also tended to feel that a possible strike was more fair ( $r(270) = .58, p < .001$ ) and experienced greater strain ( $r(270) = .12, p < .05$ ). Perceived disruptions were positively correlated with strain symptoms ( $r(270) = .31, p < .001$ ) and with both task control ( $r(270) = -.14, p < .001$ ) and policy control ( $r(270) = -.16, p < .001$ ). Strain symptoms were also correlated with perceived control over one's own work ( $r(270) = -.19, p < .01$ ). Information was unrelated to strain but was positively related to both task control ( $r(270) = .14, p < .05$ ) and policy control ( $r(270) = .19, p < .01$ ). Similarly, fairness was related to task control ( $r(270) = .26, p < .001$ ).

## Moderated Regressions

To assess the hypothesized moderating role of control perceptions, we ran a moderated regression in which strain was regressed on the control variables on the first step, disruptions on the second step, perceived control on the third step, and the block of interactions on the fourth step. Following Aiken and West (1991), the predictor (i.e., disruptions) and the moderators (i.e., task control and policy control) were standardized prior to calculating the interaction term.

The demographic and control variables and main effects accounted for 2% of criterion variance,  $F(6, 263) = 1.07, ns$ , and none of the individual betas were significant (see Table 2). On the second step, disruptions accounted for a significant increase in the variance in strain ( $\Delta R^2 = .09; \beta = .30; F(1, 262) = 27.02, p < .001$ ). The two moderator variables did not account for a significant amount of variance in the third step ( $\Delta R^2 = .02; F(2, 260) = 2.66, ns$ ), although task control was uniquely associated with strain ( $\beta = .14, p < .05$ ). The two interactions to the equation accounted for an additional 4% of criterion variance  $F(2, 258) = 6.01, p < .01$ . Both of the interactions were significant and retained for further analysis. For each interaction, we calculated the simple slopes as outlined by Aiken and West (1991). Jointly, the study variables accounted for 17% of the variance in strain,  $F(11, 258) = 4.85, p < .001$ . When task control was low, strain was consistently high, regardless of the level of disruptions (see Figure

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations for All Study Variables (N = 270)*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age	—										
2. Gender <sup>a</sup>	.06	—									
3. Year of study	.30	.04	—								
4. Graduate this spring? <sup>b</sup>	-.12	-.05	-.59	—							
5. Support for union <sup>c</sup>	-.05	-.03	.00	.10	—						
6. Disruptions	-.01	.10	-.03	.01	.01	(.84)					
7. Information	.04	-.06	-.01	.09	.02	-.07	(.83)				
8. Perceived fairness	-.01	-.04	-.02	.15	.58	-.02	.10	(.82)			
9. Task control	.13	-.02	-.03	.02	.05	-.14	.14	.26	(.76)		
10. Policy control	-.10	-.12	-.08	.09	-.06	-.16	.19	.01	.18	(.82)	
11. Strain	-.09	.07	.03	.03	.12	.31	-.03	-.03	-.19	-.04	(.83)
<i>M</i>	21.9	1.7	2.4	1.8	5.1	4.7	3.1	4.5	4.4	2.2	2.2
<i>SD</i>	4.9	0.5	1.3	0.4	1.6	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.0	0.8	0.9

Note. Cronbach's alphas are in parenthesis along the diagonal.

<sup>a</sup> 0 = men; 1 = women. <sup>b</sup> 0 = not graduating; 1 = graduating. <sup>c</sup> Higher scores indicate higher support for the part-time faculty union.

$r \geq .12, p < .05; r \geq .16, p < .01; r \geq .20, p < .001$ , one-tailed.

Table 2  
Results of the Moderated Regression Analysis  
Predicting Perceived Stress ( $N = 270$ )

Predictor	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1		
Age	-.11	.02
Gender	.08	
Year of study	.12	
Graduate this spring	.10	
Information	-.03	
Justice	-.04	
Step 2		.09***
Disruption	.30***	
Step 3		.02
Task control	-.14*	
Policy control	.03	
Step 4		.04**
Disruption $\times$ policy control	-.17**	
Disruption $\times$ task control	.14*	
Overall $R^2$		.17***

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

1); however, when task control was high, strain was significantly lower when disruptions were low. Conversely, strain levels were unaffected by disruptions when policy control was high (see Figure 2). When policy control was low, individuals experienced the highest strain when disruptions were high.

## Discussion

This study examined the attitudes of third-party observers (i.e., students) to a labor dispute and the effects of that dispute on the students. Although most organizational research has ignored third-party observers, there is an increasing recognition of the important role they play in organizational functioning (e.g., Skarlicki et al., 1998). The two main goals of

this study were to examine how justice issues surrounding labor disputes affect students' perceptions of the dispute between part-time faculty and university administration and to examine the dispute-related factors that were associated with strain of students, as well as the moderators of this relationship.

Individuals who experienced a greater negative effect from the strike had more negative views toward the dispute and the potential strike. Perceived disruption was associated with increased strain, whereas task control was negatively associated with it. Amount of information, perceived fairness, and the demographic variables were not related to strain.

We also examined whether control perceptions moderated the effect of disruptions on strain. Our results showed that different types of control have different moderating effects. When student respondents saw themselves as having a high level of policy control, the potential for disruptions had an insignificant effect on strain. For students who felt a low level of policy control, disruptions were moderately related to increased strain. The opposite effect emerged for task control: When students had a high level of task control, disruptions were moderately associated with increased strain. When students had a low level of task control, disruptions were unrelated to strain. These results extend past research on the buffering effects of control (e.g., Dwyer & Ganster, 1991), suggesting that future research should pay more attention to identifying and measuring the specific components of control and testing the effects of these specific components.

These results have implications for practice. Universities frequently attempt to prepare students for labor disruptions by emphasizing the students' own responsibilities for learning and control over the learning process. If these information campaigns are successful at increasing task control, our data suggest

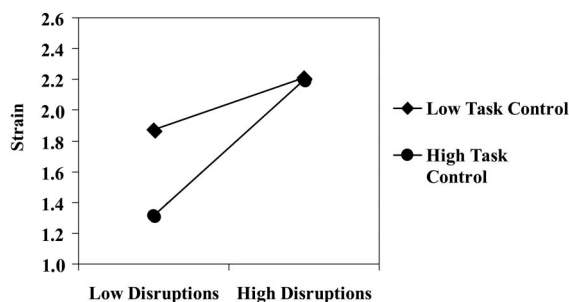


Figure 1. Interaction of task control and disruptions on strain.

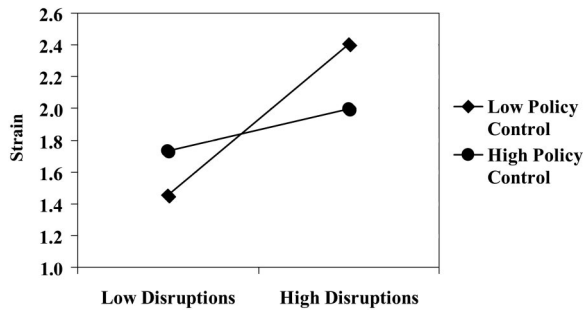


Figure 2. Interaction of policy control and disruptions on strain.

that they may result in a stronger relationship between disruptions and strain. In contrast, when students feel that they have some control over institutional decision making and dispute resolution, the link between disruptions and strain is weakened. Efforts by both parties in the dispute to provide students with a voice and a mechanism through which to influence the dispute-resolution process would seem to be beneficial for students' well-being.

We are not proposing, however, that third parties should have a role to play in the bargaining process because this suggestion would open the bargaining process to manipulation and may in fact increase third-party strain. In some university labor disputes, the employer has involved representatives from student groups as observers or members of the employer's negotiating team. In these cases, employers recognized the importance of having the student representatives on "their side" to influence student and public opinion. Rather, students should have a meaningful role to play in determining the policy that governs life during a labor dispute. For example, should all classes (even classes being taught by non-strikers) be cancelled during a strike? Allowing the third-party students a voice in these decisions will help to reduce their strain levels in stressful situations.

Whether this attempt at voice and control in labor disputes would be appropriate in other third-party situations is debatable. Academia is a unique environment that involves a greater degree of collegial decision making than most other organizations. Students are given input through representation on university senates and boards of governors. The extension of this voice and control to labor disruptions would not be foreign to this environment, but it may not be appropriate in other environments (e.g., police

or other service sectors). Before addressing this issue, we need to know whether third parties outside of academia experience strain as a result of labor disruptions.

Our results regarding the effects of strike threats on strain of third parties extend previous findings that the experience of a strike may be stressful for participants (e.g., Barling & Milligan, 1987) and that third parties may view it as disruptive and negative (Amos et al., 1993; Greenglass et al., 2002). Further research is warranted on the effects of industrial relations events on third parties, especially in labor disputes involving contingent labor. Employers, including universities, are using contingent employees, many of whom are not provided with the same level of resources as those working full time. Because of the proximity of the third parties to the part-time faculty, we speculated that the students would empathize with them to the point of increasing their strain levels. As expected, students were supportive of the union. Those students who strongly supported the union felt that a strike would be fair and tended to experience greater strain. Future research should look beyond attitudes and focus on the behavioral intentions of the students.

As with any study employing self-report measures, caution is in order when interpreting the results. Mono-method bias may have inflated the relationships of interest, although at least two features of our results reduce this concern somewhat. First, our focus is on interactions, and it is unlikely that mono-method bias could explain the emergence of interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991). Second, there were a large number of small correlations among the measures, which is inconsistent with mono-method bias (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). Nonetheless, future re-



search should incorporate non-self-report measures and use longitudinal research designs.

A broader question that arises from our research is the extent to which these topics fall within the domain of occupational health psychology. For the most part, research within occupational health psychology has focused on the experiences of employees and the extent to which they affect measures of personal and organizational functioning. Although this focus is a natural consequence of the development of the field (Sauter & Hurrell, 1999), it is not a defining characteristic of it. Stakeholder theory (e.g., Freeman, 1984), which focuses on multiple parties involved in the organization, provides a more inclusive perspective. Freeman (1984) suggested that organizations should be accountable to all stakeholders who are affected by their policies and operations. In a similar vein, occupational health researchers could profitably expand their focus to include other constituencies, such as customers, third parties, potential employees, and, more generally, society.

## References

- Aiken, L. A., & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- American Association of University Professors. (1997). Statement from the conference on the growing use of part-time and adjunct faculty. Retrieved March 4, 2005, from <http://www.aaup.org>
- Amos, M., Day, V., & Power, E. (1993). Students' reactions to a faculty strike. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 26, 86–103.
- Banachowski, G. (1996). Perspectives and perceptions: The use of part-time faculty in community colleges. *Community College Review*, 24(2), 49–63.
- Barling, J., Fullager, C., Kelloway, E. K., & McElvie, L. (1992). Union loyalty and strike propensity. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 132, 581–590.
- Barling, J., & Milligan, J. (1987). Some psychological consequences of striking: A six month, longitudinal study. *Journal of Occupational Behavior*, 8, 127–138.
- Beard, K. M., & Edwards, J. R. (1995). Employees at risk: Contingent work and the psychological experience of contingent workers. In C. L. Cooper & D. M. Rousseau (Eds.), *Trends in organizational behaviour* (Vol. 2, pp. 109–126). Chichester, England: Wiley.
- Bluen, S. D. (1994). The psychology of strikes. In C. L. Cooper & I. T. Robertson (Eds.), *International review of industrial and organizational psychology* (Vol. 9, pp. 113–135). London: Wiley.
- Bluen, S. D., & Barling, J. (1988). Psychological stressors associated with industrial relations. In C. L. Cooper & R. Payne (Eds.), *Causes, coping and consequences of stress at work*. London: Wiley.
- Bluen, S. D., & Jubiler-Lurie, V. G. (1990). Some consequences of labor-management negotiations: Laboratory and field studies. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 11, 105–118.
- Brockner, J., DeWitt, R., Grover, S., & Reed, T. (1990). When it is especially important to explain why: Factors affecting the relationship between managers' explanations of a layoff and survivors' reactions to the layoff. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 26, 389–407.
- Brockner, J., & Greenberg, J. (1990). The impact of layoffs on survivors: An organizational justice perspective. In J. S. Carrol (Ed.), *Applied social psychology and organizational settings* (pp. 45–75). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Brockner, J., Wiesenfeld, B. M., & Martin, C. (1995). Decision frame, procedural justice, and survivors' reactions to job layoffs. *Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes*, 63(1), 59–68.
- Canadian Association of University Teachers (1996). *Manual on legal strike action for faculty associations* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Ottawa, ON: Author.
- Carroll, A., Catano, V. M., & Gallagher, D. J. (2003, May). *Individual and organizational implications of the growth of fixed-term faculty contracts*. Paper presented at the biannual meeting of the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology, Lisbon, Portugal.
- Catano, V. M., & Veinotte, J. (2001, May). *Downsizing as part of a takeover: Perceptions of procedural justice*. Paper presented at the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology, Prague, Czech Republic.
- Clery, S. (1998). Faculty in academe. *NEA Update*, 4(4), 1–6.
- Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of Health & Social Behavior*, 24, 385–396.
- Colquitt, J. A., Conlon, D. E., Wesson, M. J., Porter, C. O. L. H., & Ng, K. Y. (2001). Justice at the millennium: A meta-analytic review of 25 years of organizational justice research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 425–445.
- Davy, J. A., Kinicki, A. J., Scheck, C. L., & Sutton, C. L. (1991). Developing and testing an expanded model of survivors' responses to layoffs: A longitudinal field study. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 38, 302–317.
- Dwyer, D. J., & Ganster, D. C. (1991). The effects of job demands and control on employee attendance and satisfaction. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 12, 595–608.
- Eisenberger, R., Jones, J. R., Aselage, J., & Sucharski, I. L. (2004). Perceived organizational support. In J. A. M. Coyle-Shapiro, L. M. Shore, M. S. Taylor, & L. E. Tetrick (Eds.), *The employment relationship* (pp. 206–225). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fox, M. L., Dwyer, D. J., & Ganster, D. C. (1993). Effects of stressful job demands and control on physiological and attitudinal outcomes in a hospital setting. *Academy of Management Journal*, 36(2), 289–318.
- Francis, L., & Kelloway, E. K. (2005). Industrial relations. In J. Barling, E. K. Kelloway, & M. Frone (Eds.), *Handbook of workplace stress*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Boston: Pitman.
- Frese, M., Kring, W., Soose, A., & Zempel, J. (1996). Personal initiative at work: Differences between East and West Germany. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39, 37–63.

- Gopinath, C., & Becker, T. E. (2000). Communication, procedural justice, and employee attitudes: Relationships under conditions of divestiture. *Journal of Management*, 26(1), 63–83.
- Grayson, J. P. (1999). Student hardship and support for a faculty strike. *Research in Higher Education*, 40, 589–611.
- Greenberg, J. (1987). Reactions to procedural injustice in payments distributions: Do the means justify the ends? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 72(1), 55–61.
- Greenberg, J. (1996). The distributive justice of performance evaluations. In J. Greenberg (Ed.), *The quest for justice on the job* (pp. 163–177). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Greenglass, E. R., Fiksenbaum, L., Goldstein, L., & Desiato, C. (2002). Stressful effects of a university faculty strike on students: Implications for coping. *Interchange*, 33, 261–279.
- Johnson, C., Ford, R., & Kaufman, J. (2000). Emotional reactions to conflict: Do dependence and legitimacy matter? *Social Forces*, 79, 107–137.
- Karasek, R. A. (1979). Job demands, job decision latitude and mental strain: Implications for job redesign. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24, 285–311.
- Karasek, R. A., & Theorell, T. (1990). *Healthy work: Stress productivity and the reconstruction of working life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kelloway, E. K., Catano, V. M., & Carroll, A. (2000). Psychological involvement in the union. *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science*, 32, 163–167.
- Kelloway, E. K., Francis, L. D., Catano, V. M., & Dupré, K. (2005). *Third party support for strike action*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, & coping*. New York: Springer.
- LeBlanc, M., Dupré, K. E., & Kelloway, E. K. (2005, June). *Third party reactions to a workplace accident*. Poster presented at the 66th annual convention of the Canadian Psychological Association, Montreal, Canada.
- Leung, K., Chiu, & Au, Y. (1993). Sympathy and support for industrial actions: A justice analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78(5), 781–787.
- Leventhal, G. S. (1980). What should be done with equity theory? New approaches to the study of fairness in social relationships. In K. J. Gergen, M. S. Greenberg, and R. H. Willis (Eds.), *Social exchange: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 27–55). New York: Plenum Press.
- Lind, E. A., & Tyler, T. R. (1988). *The social psychology of procedural justice*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Lindell, M. K., & Whitney, D. J. (2001). Accounting for common method variance in cross-sectional research designs. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86, 114–121.
- MacBride, A., Lancee, W., & Freeman, S. J. J. (1981). The psychosocial impact of a labor dispute. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 54, 125–133.
- Masterson, S. S., Lewis, K., Goldman, B. M., & Taylor, M. S. (2000). Integrating justice and social exchange: The differing effects of fair procedures and treatment on work relationships. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43(4), 738–748.
- Maurier, W. L., & Northcott, H. C. (2000). Job uncertainty and health status for nurses during restructuring of health care in Alberta. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 22(5), 623–641.
- Perry, C. R. (1987). *Union corporate campaigns*. Philadelphia: Industrial Research Unit, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.
- Pomaki, G., & Maes, S. (2002). Predicting quality of work-life: From work conditions to self-regulation. In E. Gul-lione & R. A. Cummins (Eds.), *The universality of subjective well-being indicators* (pp. 141–173). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic.
- Sauter, S. L., & Hurrell, J. J. (1999). Occupational health psychology: Origins, content and direction. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 30, 117–122.
- Shapiro, D. L. (1991). The effects of explanations on negative reactions to deceit. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36, 614–630.
- Skarlicki, D. P., Ellard, J. H., & Kelln, B. R. (1998). Third party perceptions of a layoff: Procedural, derogation, and retributive aspects of justice. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 83(1), 119–127.
- Statistics Canada (2004). The union movement in transition, 1977–2003. *The Daily*. Retrieved June 20, 2005, from <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/040831/d040831b.htm>
- Stolhanske, L. (1997). Ain't I a scholar? Reflection and scholarship in the land of part-time faculty. Paper presented at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Phoenix, AZ. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. Ed. 414 582)
- Sutton, R. I., & Kahn, R. L. (1987). Prediction, understanding, and control as antidotes to organizational stress. In J. W. Lorsch (Ed.), *Handbook of organizational behavior* (pp. 272–285). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Tetrick, L. E., & LaRocco, J. M. (1987). Understanding, prediction, and control as moderators of the relationships between perceived stress, satisfaction, and psychological well-being. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 72, 538–543.
- Thibaut, J., & Walker. (1975). *Procedural justice: A psychological analysis*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Tyler, T. R. (2000). Social justice: Outcome and procedure. *International Journal of Psychology*, 35, 117–125.

Received December 29, 2004

Revision received April 30, 2005

Accepted June 15, 2005 ■